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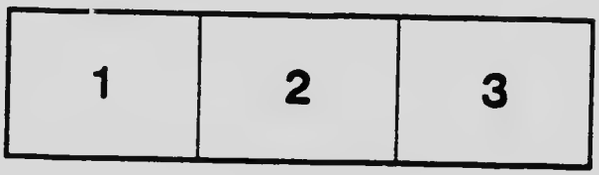

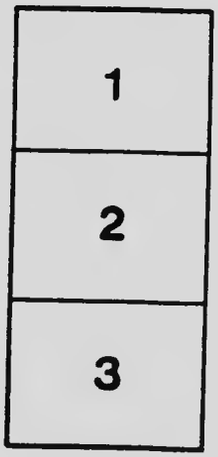

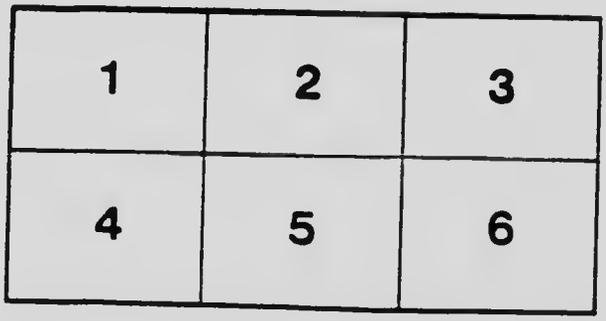

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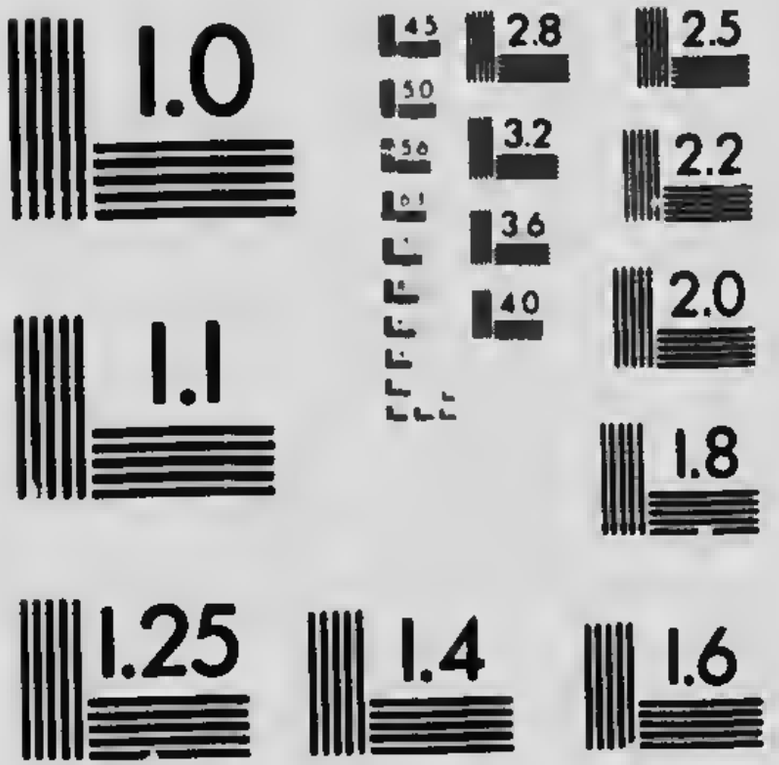

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG'S CAMBRAI DISPATCH.

IN foregoing chapters I have told you the story of the first part of the Cambrai battle as related by the correspondents with our forces. On March 5, 1918, Sir Douglas Haig's Cambrai dispatch was published in our newspapers, and we were afforded an opportunity of seeing the great fight through the eyes of our Commander-in-Chief. In this chapter I propose to take you through his dispatch, and thus to give you the official account of what I have called the greatest battle of the war since the German defeat on the Marne.

Sir Douglas Haig begins by telling us that his object was to gain a local success by a sudden attack at a point where the enemy did not expect it. Our offensive in Flanders and the campaigns of our Allies elsewhere had forced the Germans to collect large forces on the threatened fronts. They were only able to do this by weakening their line in certain sectors. One of the sectors thus weakened was that in front of Cambrai. In this part of the line the ground was favourable for the employment of the Tanks which he meant to use in his great surprise.

His plan of campaign was as follows. If he could break through the Hindenburg Line in front of Cambrai, he proposed to capture Bourlon Hill, and to establish a good flank position to the east in the direction of Cambrai. This done, he would be able to push forward to the north between Bourlon and the river Sensée. If a sufficiently deep wedge could be thrust into the German positions in this direction, the enemy would be forced to abandon his defences for many a mile. You observe that the capture of Cambrai itself was not the primary object of the attack.

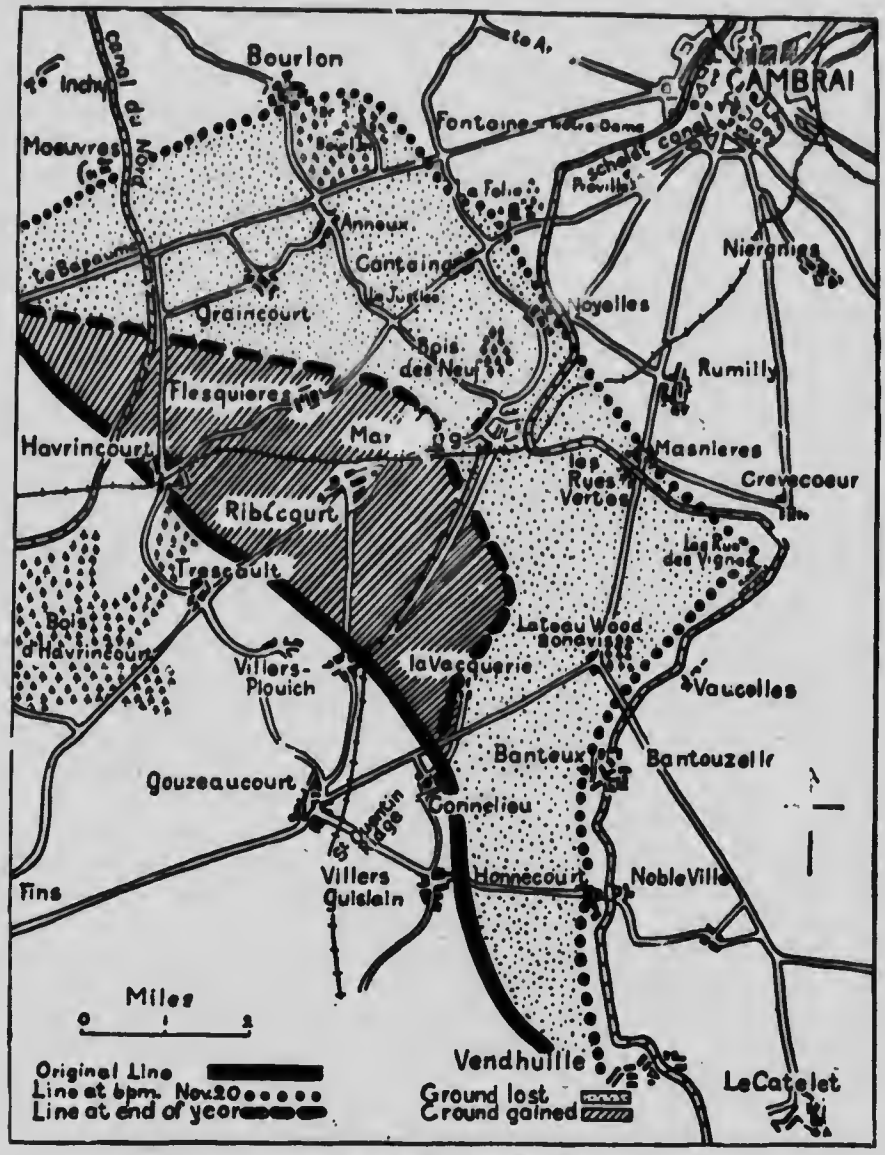
Sir Douglas Haig next proceeds to tell us why he struck his

sudden blow so late in the year. While the Flanders battle was proceeding the Germans were laying out fresh lines of defence behind the Hindenburg Line, and it was supposed that, as soon as the Ypres fighting came to an end, enemy troops would be brought from the north and placed in these new positions. The Germans had already shifted large forces from Russia, and no doubt many more troops would be transferred from East to West during the winter. Further, the enemy divisions in the West were tired, and a postponement of the attack to the new year would give them the winter's rest in which to recover their strength. All the conditions were favourable for a surprise, and if we did not move at once many months might elapse before such an opportunity occurred again.

Such were the arguments for immediate action. What was there to consider on the other side? Our troops had been engaged for many months in heavy fighting, and though they had been successful their strength had been greatly taxed. Further, only part of the losses in the various divisions so engaged had been replaced, and many of the new drafts were not fully trained. It was, therefore, a serious matter to make a further heavy call on our troops at the end of a hard-fought year. On the other hand, the forces which could be employed would not be numerous; for success depended on secrecy, and the bringing together of large masses of men would inform the enemy that an attack was pending. After carefully weighing the pros and cons, Sir Douglas Haig decided to undertake the great adventure without delay.

He had learned that if his secret could be kept no hostile reinforcements would be able to reach the scene of action for forty-eight hours after the commencement of the attack. He therefore decided that for forty-eight hours the troops were to go forward. At the end of that time, or even before, if the results were not favourable, the advance was to be stopped. It was only to proceed if a promising success was won in the first two days.

You already know that the novel feature of the attack was the employment of Tanks to play the part of artillery and smash through the enemy's wire. When the Tanks and the infantry, working together, began to press forward, then, and only then, would the artillery assist by creating a barrage, and by engaging the enemy's batteries. If Tanks, infantry, and



Map of the Cambrai Salient.

This map shows the British line at the beginning of the battle, the extreme limit of the advance, and the line which roughly corresponds to the Hindenburg Reserve Line, to which we had retired by the morning of 7th December. This retiral was forced on us because the south-east face of the salient, from Bonavis Ridge to Gonnelieu, gave way under a German surprise attack delivered on 30th November. The ground won and lost is indicated by shading.

artillery could break through all the enemy's lines of defence on the first day, cavalry were to advance in order to raid the German communications, damage the railways, and interfere as much as possible with the arrival of reinforcements. All the commanders were warned that everything depended on secrecy up to the very moment of starting, and after that, on bold, determined, and rapid action.

At 6.20 on the morning of 20th November, without any previous artillery bombardment, the Tanks and infantry went forward on a front of about six miles, extending from east of Gonnelieu to the Canal du Nord, opposite Hermies. As soon as they started gas and smoke were discharged along almost the whole of the British front south of the Scarpe, and the artillery opened fire. On the principal front the Tanks crashed through the enemy's wire, forming great lanes through which the infantry could pass. Protected by smoke barrages from the view of the enemy gunners, they rolled across the Hindenburg trenches, smashing up the machine guns and driving his infantry to ground. Close behind the Tanks our infantry followed, "mopping up" the trenches. In this way the advance and the main system of the Hindenburg Line were overrun, and an attack was made upon the reserve line.

In this advance the 12th (Eastern) Division, moving along the Bonavis Ridge on the right of our attack, had a hard struggle at Lateau Wood, in which a number of German batteries had been installed. Fierce fighting, in which infantry and Tank crews displayed the greatest gallantry, continued throughout the morning at this point, and ended in the capture of the position, together with the enemy's guns. Meanwhile the 20th Division, which had seized La Vacquerie at the opening of the attack, stormed the powerful defences of Welsh Ridge. The 6th Division, after sharp fighting among the streets and houses, carried the village of Ribecourt, while the 62nd (West Riding Territorial) Division stormed Havrincourt, where parties of the enemy held out for a time.

The capture of these two villages secured the flanks of the 51st (Highland Territorial) Division, which advanced up the slopes of Flesquières Hill against the German trench lines on the south side of the village. Here very heavy fighting took place. The stout brick wall skirting the grounds of the chateau proved a formidable barrier, and German machine guns swept

the ground in front of it. Nevertheless, we gained all the defences in the area, with the exception of the village itself, before midday. It was at Flesquières that several hits were made on our Tanks. A German artillery officer at this point behaved with the utmost bravery, and won the admiration of our men. He remained alone with his battery, which he served single-handed, and did not cease firing until he fell beside his gun. A correspondent gives us a few further details regarding this valiant German :—

"This officer was an ober-leutnant, and was in command of a party serving an anti-Tank gun. An almost direct hit from one of our guns wiped out four of his party of eight, and severely wounded him. He stuck to his post, however, and his remaining men continued to fire away at point-blank range at the advancing Tanks. Machine-gun fire accounted for the survivors, and again severely wounded the officer. Nevertheless, he continued, single-handed, to serve his gun. No fewer than eight direct hits did he unaided obtain on eight separate Tanks, putting them out of action. Time after time he was hit by splinters of shells and by machine-gun bullets, but he still stuck to his work. At last a shell exploding close beside him so wounded him that he was unable to rise off the ground. But even then he made one last effort to fire the gun which he had just loaded. A direct hit, however, from a Tank put an end to all opposition; and when our men passed by the spot, no trace of either officer or gun could be found.

"An eye-witness said: 'Our men were almost sorry they had to put him out like that, for he deserved to live. It was, I think, the finest piece of heroism I have ever seen.'"

On the left of our attack, west of the Canal du Nord, the 36th (Ulster) Division captured a spoil bank, and pushed northward in touch with the West Riding troops who had taken Havrincourt. By 10.30 a.m. we were on our way to the Hindenburg Reserve Line, and cavalry were moving up behind our infantry. Before long, Tanks and their followers of the famous 29th Division, which had won imperishable renown in Gallipoli, entered Masnières, captured Marcoing and Neuf Wood, and thus secured the passages of the Scheldt Canal at both villages.

At Marcoing the Tanks arrived just as a party of the enemy was in the act of running out wires to blow up one of the bridges by electricity. The Tank opened fire on the party, and drove it off, thus securing the bridge intact. At Masnières, however, the enemy was able to destroy partially the bridge crossing the main road. The first Tank which en-

deavoured to cross at this point fell through the bridge, and thus completed its destruction.

As the advance of a number of our guns had been delayed in the sunken roads of this part of the battlefield, and the bridge had broken down, the infantry had to go on beyond Masnières without the assistance of Tanks or guns, and were not able at first to clear the enemy entirely from the northern portion of the village. Parties of Germans held out during the afternoon, and enabled their comrades to come up and occupy Rumilly and a section of the line to the south of it. The destruction of the bridge prevented our cavalry from crossing the canal in sufficient strength to overcome the resistance; nevertheless a squadron of the Fort Garry Horse, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, managed to get across by a temporary bridge which was constructed during the day. This gallant squadron pushed through the German lines north of Masnières, and captured a German battery. Then riding on, it dispersed a body of about three hundred Germans, and did not call a halt until the greater part of its horses had been killed or wounded. The dismounted men took up a position in a sunken road, and fought on until nightfall, when they withdrew to our lines, bringing with them several prisoners. The Fort Garry Horse were the heroes of the White Arm that day.

During the afternoon, patrols of the 6th Division entered Noyelles, and, reinforced by cavalry, pushed towards Cantaing. The 62nd Division, advancing from Havrincourt, captured Graincourt, where the Tanks destroyed two anti-Tank guns. Before nightfall, infantry and cavalry had entered Anneux, though the enemy in this village was not thoroughly overcome until the following morning. The advance of the 62nd Division was the most brilliant achievement of the day. It pushed forward four and a half miles from its starting-point, and in the course of its advance overran two German systems of defence and captured three villages.

On the left flank of our attack Ulster battalions pushed northward along the Hindenburg Line and its forward defences, and, keeping touch with the West Riding troops, carried the whole of the German trench systems west of the Canal du Nord as far as the Bapaume-Cambrai road.

At the end of the first day of the attack three German lines of defence had been broken through to a depth of some four

and a half miles on a wide front, and over five thousand prisoners had been brought in. But for the wrecking of the bridge at Masnières and the check at Flesquières still greater results might have been attained. Sir Douglas Haig, at this point in his narrative, pauses to pay a warm tribute to the Tanks. Without their aid an opening could not have been secretly made through the German wire. Praise is also given to the Royal Flying Corps for very gallant and valuable work carried out amidst low clouds and driving mist.

Next morning the attack on Flesquières was resumed. By eight o'clock this obstacle to our advance had been removed, and the whole line went forward once more. By eleven our troops had established themselves east and north of Masnières, and had beaten off a heavy counter-attack from the direction of Rumilly. As the day wore on the counter-attacks increased in vigour, and held us up in this part of the line. Progress, however, was made towards Crèvecœur; and during the afternoon the canal was crossed, but the passage of the river was found to be impossible in face of the enemy's machine-gun fire. Our men were now becoming exhausted, and no further headway was made in this direction.

At 10.30 the 51st and 62nd Divisions, along with Tanks and cavalry, made a push towards Fontaine-notre-Dame and Bourlon. They completed the capture of Anneux, seized Cantaing, made progress on the outskirts of Bourlon Wood, and in the afternoon captured Fontaine. The attack on Bourlon Wood itself was checked by machine-gun fire, though Tanks advanced some distance amidst the trees. Meanwhile the 36th Division, advancing north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road, reached the southern outskirts of Mœuvres, where it met with a strong resistance.

The forty-eight hours during which the enemy could not bring his reserves into the fight had now expired, and we had not yet cleared the Germans from the high ground at Bourlon village and wood, nor from other important points in the neighbourhood. Sir Douglas Haig had now to decide whether he would proceed with the attack or withdraw. He could not stand fast on the line which he had won, because the enemy on the Bourlon Ridge commanded his positions round Flesquières. Further, he knew that if he continued to press on he would help the Italians by preventing the enemy

The Guards at Gouzeaucourt:

(From the picture by R. Caton Woodville. By

When the Germans suddenly drove through our positions on the south-eastern face of the salient, the recaptured Gouzeaucourt, and pushed up the St. Quentin Ridge to the east of the village. Our illustration In their advance on Gouzeaucourt the Guards were met by the fiercest machine-gun fire. Nevertheless close quarters against snipers, machine gunners, and bodies of riflemen under cover of walls.

manhauling a Gun into Safety.

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Guards, who were in reserve, were brought up. In the most heroic fashion they counter-attacked, shows some of them saving one of our guns while their comrades are stemming the onset of the Germans. they fought their way into the village and beyond it, and drove out the enemy after a hard struggle at

from sending further help to North Italy. So, though his troops were worn out and the German reinforcements were coming up, he decided to make a big effort to seize Bourlon Ridge.

The 22nd November was spent in trench-digging and in giving the troops a much-needed rest. Soon after midday the enemy regained Fontaine; but as our men still held the outskirts of Bourlon Wood and Cantaing, it was thought that its recapture would not be difficult. That night a battalion of the Queen's Westminsters carried Tadpole Copse, which would form a valuable point on our left flank if the Bourlon position could be secured.

On the morning of the 23rd, the 51st Division, supported by Tanks, attacked Fontaine, but could not force an entrance. Early in the afternoon another attempt was made, and a number of Tanks pushed into the village, where they remained until nightfall. The village, however, was not cleared, and at the close of the day no progress had been made on this part of our front.

At 10.30 a.m. the 40th Division attacked Bourlon Wood, and after four and a half hours of hard fighting, in which the Tanks played a leading part, the whole of the wood was captured, and we entered Bourlon village. Heavy counter-attacks now held us up, though we beat them off time after time. Thereafter for several days fierce fighting went on, and English, Scottish. Welsh, and Irish battalions, together with dismounted cavalry, performed most gallant service, and inflicted heavy loss on the enemy. At the end of five days of incessant struggle we still held a strong position on the hill and in the wood, but had not succeeded in gaining all the ground which would enable us to hold on securely to our gains.

During the two following days there was a lull. The troops which had borne the brunt of the heaviest struggle were relieved, and preparations were made for a new attack. Meanwhile, as rapidly as possible, our line was being put into a condition of defence. By the end of November we had taken more than 10,500 prisoners, had seized 142 guns, some 350 machine guns, and 70 trench mortars, together with great quantities of ammunition, material, and stores of all kinds.

The Battle of Cambrai had so far resulted in victory. We are now to hear how in its later stages we suffered a serious

reverse. During the last days of November there were many signs that the enemy was about to make a big effort to regain the positions which we had wrested from him. He was massing his infantry apparently for an attack upon the high ground about Bourlon. Fresh divisions had been sent up to this sector, and the Commander-in-Chief felt confident that we could hold our own in this part of the line. He was equally confident that the sector from Cantaing to Banteux could be held, even though the five divisions holding the line were weary with continual fighting.

From Banteux southward the front was weakly held, and our troops were thinly spread over extended ground. We must, however, remember that this southern part of our line had been in our hands for several months, and that its defences were more complete and better organized than those on the newly won ground. Further, the capture of Bonavis Ridge had added to the security of our positions farther south. The reserves in this area consisted of the Guards and the 2nd Cavalry Division, both of which had been engaged in the recent fighting at Fontaine and Bourlon Wood. They were stationed behind the front from La Vacquerie to Villers-Guislain, while the 62nd Division, which also had been recently engaged, was held in reserve in the direction of the Bapaume-Cambrai road. A fresh South Midland Division was assembling farther back, and three other cavalry divisions were only a few hours distant. The troops holding this weak part of our line were warned to expect attack; additional machine guns were placed in positions where they could lend special support, and divisional reserves were moved up. Patrols were also sent out to watch the enemy, and to report any sign of advance.

We now come to the 30th November, a day of glory, but also a day of disaster. Between seven and eight in the morning, after a short but very heavy bombardment, the enemy attacked on a front of some ten miles from Vendhuille to Masnières. From Masnières to Banteux four German divisions were probably employed against three British divisions. Between Banteux and Vendhuille one German division and portions of two others were hurled against the northern half of one British division. On the Masnières front the famous 29th Division—composed of English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Guern-

sey, and Newfoundland battalions—was seriously threatened as the day wore on by the progress made by the enemy farther south. Its batteries were taken in reverse; nevertheless it resisted most gallantly, and beat off one powerful assault after another. At the end of the day the line of the 29th Division was intact.

It was at the northern end of the Bonavis Ridge, and in the Gonnelieu sector, that we suffered disaster. So swiftly did the enemy's battalions advance after his opening bombardment that our troops appear to have been overwhelmed almost before they realized that the attack had begun. The bombardment was heavy enough to make them take to their dug-outs, but not so heavy as to seriously alarm them at first. They saw no steadily-advancing barrage to warn them that the Germans were coming on. The enemy's columns had assembled secretly in the many deep folds and hollows of the chalk hills, and our airmen had been prevented by the early morning mist from spying them out.

The attack came with great suddenness. As the Germans approached our trenches, swarms of their low-flying aeroplanes swooped down on our positions and rained machine-gun fire upon our infantry. At the same time smoke shells and showers of bombs raised such a dense cloud that our men could not see what was happening on other parts of the battlefield or follow the movements of the enemy. Just as we had surprised the Germans on the morning of the 20th they now surprised us.

Nevertheless, though our lines were broken, parties of our troops cut off from their fellows made a stubborn resistance. Our machine-gun detachments in the neighbourhood of Lateau Wood, to the south-east of La Vacquerie, and at other points played their part manfully, and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy at short range. North-east of La Vacquerie the 92nd Field Artillery Brigade beat back four attacks, during which some of the enemy's infantry approached to within two hundred yards of our guns. Only then did the surviving gunners withdraw, after removing the breech-blocks from their pieces, and thus rendering them useless. East of Villers-Guislain the troops holding forward positions on the high ground were still making a stout fight, though large bodies of German infantry had advanced up the valley between them

and the village. A post known as Limerick Post, and lying to the south of the village, though heavily assailed time after time, was held throughout the day by troops of the 1/5th Battalion (King's Own) Royal Lancaster Regiment and the 1/10th Battalion Liverpool Regiment.

The enemy pushed on across the northern end of Bonavis Ridge and up the deep gully towards Villers-Guislain and Gonnelieu, and by so doing turned our positions both on the ridge and in the two villages. Taken in flank and rear, the defences of Villers-Guislain, Gonnelieu, and Bonavis were rapidly overrun. Then the enemy pushed into Gouzeaucourt, which he captured by nine o'clock. He also seized a number of our guns, which had been brought up close to the line in order that they could cover the battle front about Masnières and Marcoing.

The enemy had now reached the high-water mark of his success. Our local reserves near Gouzeaucourt held up his advance, and meanwhile additional troops were hurried up with all speed. About midday the Guards appeared west of Gouzeaucourt, while cavalry moved up to close the gap on their right, and advanced towards Villers-Guislain from the south and south-west.

The Guards, true to their grand old traditions, advanced as steadily as though on parade. With the greatest gallantry and resolution they drove the enemy right out of Gouzeaucourt, and pushed up the St. Quentin Ridge to the east of the village. They were ably assisted by a party of the 29th Division, which, along with a company of North Midland Royal Engineers, held on to a position in an old trench near Gouzeaucourt and refused to be ousted. Valuable work was also done by a brigade of field artillery of the 47th Division, which was on the march when the alarming news reached them that the Germans had broken through. They moved direct into action, and got their guns going in record time. During the afternoon three battalions of Tanks came into the fray. They were on the way to the rear to refit when they heard of the attack. Immediately they made for Gouzeaucourt, and aided the infantry to hold the recaptured ground. An Indian cavalry regiment displayed such gallantry on the occasion that the Guards afterwards presented it with a service of plate. Meanwhile the defence of La Vacquerie had been successfully maintained.

I shall not trouble you with Sir Douglas Haig's account of the superb stand made by our troops on the northern face of the salient. I have already devoted a chapter to this stubborn resistance. "But for their steady courage and staunchness in defence," says the Commander-in-Chief, "the success gained by the enemy on the right of our battle front might have had serious consequences."

On 1st December fierce fighting continued on the whole front. The Guards completed the capture of Quentin Ridge, and recovered Gonnelieu, where they captured over three hundred and fifty prisoners and many machine guns. Tanks greatly assisted in the recovery of the ridge. At one point where our infantry were held up by fire from a hostile trench, a single Tank made for the position, and, firing up and down it, inflicted great loss on the enemy. When our infantry pushed into it they found it full of dead, and also discovered fifteen machine guns that had been silenced by the Tank. Farther south Tanks also played a leading part in capturing Gauche Wood. When the Guards and dismounted cavalry entered the wood, they found great numbers of German dead and many smashed machine guns. In one spot four machine guns, with their crews lying around them, were seen within a radius of twenty yards. In front of La Vacquerie, however, the Tanks were held up, and could not proceed.

Now that Bonavis Ridge was in the hands of the enemy, Masnières was exposed to attack on three sides, and could not be held. On the night of the 1st–2nd December our troops were withdrawn to a line west of the village. The enemy had not yet shot his bolt. He heavily attacked Welsh Ridge, Masnières, and Bourlon; and though his assaults were broken by our machine-gun fire, he gradually gained ground on Welsh Ridge. By nightfall we had been pushed back to the west and north of Gonnelieu. Next day the enemy renewed his attacks all along the line, and won La Vacquerie. The assaults still continued, and our positions beyond the Scheldt Canal were too much exposed to be maintained. During the night our men were ordered to fall back to the west bank of the canal.

Exhausted by his fierce attacks and disheartened by his awful losses, the enemy relaxed his efforts; but renewed them again on 5th December and the two following days, when he strove without success to drive us off Welsh Ridge. Sir Douglas

Haig now saw that only by long and costly fighting could he recapture Bonavis Ridge. Unless this was done, his troops in the salient north of Flesquières would be in a dangerous situation, even if he could maintain his hold on Bourlon Hill. He therefore decided to withdraw from the position north of the Flesquières Ridge. The troops began to retire, and on the morning of the 7th reached their new positions without interference from the enemy. Before retiring they destroyed all their field defences, and rendered useless the guns which they could not remove.

Much skill and courage were shown by our covering troops during the withdrawal. On the afternoon of 6th December two companies of the 1/15th Battalion London Regiment, 47th Division, when greatly reduced in strength by the fighting at Bourlon Wood, found while retiring near Graincourt that they were being gradually surrounded. With splendid courage they cut their way through the German lines, and reached our advanced position in good order, after having taken heavy toll of the enemy. Our new line corresponded roughly with the old Hindenburg Reserve Line. You can follow it for yourselves on the map (page 371).

What was the net result of the three weeks' fighting described in this chapter? We had captured and held 12,000 yards of the former German front line from La Vacquerie to the Canal du Nord, about two and a half miles north of Havrincourt. We had captured 11,100 German prisoners and 145 guns. On the other hand, the enemy had taken from us an important section of our front line between Vendhuille and Gonnelieu, and had captured some 9,000 of our men, as well as a large number of guns. Though loss had succeeded gain, we had undoubtedly helped our sore-beset Allies in Italy. We had forced the enemy to push certain of his divisions intended for the Italian front into the fiery furnace in front of Cambrai, and had prevented him from reinforcing his troops in North Italy for at least two weeks. Remember that this was done during the very critical time when the Italians were making their first stand on the Piave line.

Sir Douglas Haig concludes his dispatch by giving his reasons for continuing the fight after November 21st. He confesses that on the 30th of November he took risks at some points in order to increase his strength at other points. He

threw in his reserves on the Bourlon front, and there his three divisions held their own against the seven German divisions sent against them. Between Masnières and Vendhuille we fought against odds of about four to three, and the enemy's partial success was due to our insufficient numbers, to the lack of training of our men, and to the exhaustion which was the result of the hard previous fighting. Though our troops gave way for a time in one area, the weak forces still left and the reserves within reach made a great recovery, and displayed great gallantry, promptness, and skill.

Finally, Sir Douglas Haig tells us that the sudden breaking through of an immense system of defences by our troops had a most inspiring effect upon them and an equally depressing effect upon the enemy. The great value of the Tanks had been proved beyond doubt. After the enemy's experiences in front of Cambrai Sir Douglas Haig was sure that he would hesitate before he again weakened any part of his front in order to set free troops for a big attack elsewhere.

* * * * * * *

So with the story of a victory and a reverse our record of the year 1917 comes to an end. Though the year had closed with a set-back, no Briton had lost one shred of faith in the gallant men who were upholding the cause of their country on the battlefield. All knew that misfortunes must be expected in war; that no campaign is a continuous success; and that every wise commander learns valuable lessons from his failures. Though we had passed through a year of grievous disappointment and grave anxiety, our confidence in ultimate victory had not been shaken. True to the British tradition, our people at home set a stout heart to a stey brae, and steeled their resolution to bear grimly those trials and to make cheerfully those sacrifices without which success could not be attained. The nation still stood firm, relying upon the undoubted justice of its cause, the steadfast endurance of its people, and the superb courage of its fighting men.

END OF VOL. VIII.

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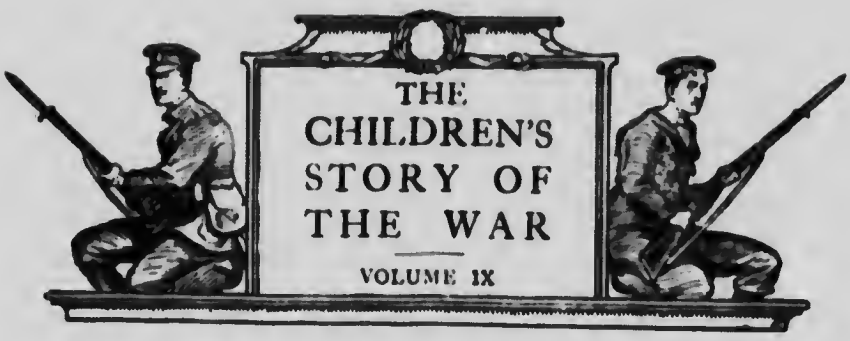

CHAPTER I.

THE LOWERING SKY.

"THOUGH the sun was only peeping above the horizon, the sky was already glowing with the promise of victory." With these cheering words I opened my record of the year 1917. Alas! the year came to a close with the promise unfulfilled, and the sky darker and more lowering than it had been since those early weeks of the war when our fate was hanging in the balance. We looked back on a year which began with radiant hope and ended in bitter disappointment. It was a year in which the Allies were put to a severe test, and were called upon to suffer and be strong. Great and costly battles were fought, and in our own land there was scarcely a household which did not mourn the loss of a dearly-loved son, brother, or father. Food was scarce, prices ruled high, and long queues of women and children besieged shops which had but little to sell. London was raided again and again by hostile aeroplanes, and the "jackals of the sea" took a heavy toll of our shipping.

Worst of all, Russia, our ally with the greatest man-power, brought about her own ruin, and delivered herself bound hand and foot into the hands of the foe. The Muscovite Samson, having shorn his own locks and being thus reduced to the feebleness of the child, lay helpless before the Philistines. There is no sadder story in the whole of history than the suicide of Russia.

As this disaster had such grave consequences for the Allies, I must remind you of the course of events in that distracted

land. In the former volume I described the rising of the Russians against the tyranny which had enslaved them for ages. I told you that on 14th March the Tsar gave up his throne, and a free government was set up under Prince Lvov. Western nations rejoiced that Russia had at last broken her shackles, and had set her feet upon the path of freedom. They hoped and believed that a free Russia would take the field in irresistible might, and fight with all the fervour and self-sacrifice which the French had displayed after their revolution of 1789. Money and munitions were poured into the country, and in July Brussilov and the Cossack general Kornilov began an offensive in Galicia which opened brilliantly. In the course of a few weeks they reached Kaliscz, and captured 40,000 prisoners. But when German reinforcements were hurried up and the Russian advance was stayed, the fatal canker began to reveal itself.

Mr. Gerard, the American ambassador in Germany, tells us in his diary that as far back as July 1915 the Germans began sending back to Russia many of their Socialist Russian prisoners amply supplied with money for the purpose of stirring up trouble at home. These traitors went to and fro amongst their fellows, sapping and undermining their loyalty, and persuading them that their best policy was to make peace with the enemy. Had Prince Lvov and the moderate men who formed his Government remained in power, Russia might have recovered herself and played a gallant part in the war. But unhappily the government passed into the hands of wild, unpractical dreamers led by M. Kerensky. He urged the soldiers to continue the war, but could not make headway against the treachery that gained ground every day. Kornilov made an attempt to sweep away Kerensky and his followers, and to restore order; but he failed, and the country continued to slide with ever-increasing speed down the steep road to ruin.

By slow and painful degrees discipline in the army was broken down; generals were removed from their commands, and were either exiled or murdered. Soldiers deserted by the thousand, and made friends with their foes in the opposing trenches. The Russian armies became wrangling mobs, quite useless for the work of war. When, in September and October, the Germans captured Riga and the islands in its gulf, the

An Old Russian Peasant on his Way to Market.

(*Photo, The Sphere.*)

The peasants form the vast majority of the Russian people. Most of them can neither read nor write, and their ignorance makes them the prey of clever talkers. They are a peaceable people, and their thoughts and desires hardly extend beyond their own villages.

Russians, though superior in numbers, made no sort of stand, but fell back in hopeless disorder.

Early in November one of the sections of Russian Socialists, known as the Bolshevists—that is, those belonging to the Socialist majority—seized the reins of power. They had already undermined the discipline of the army, had stirred up the soldiers against their officers, had urged the people to do what seemed right in their own eyes, and had cried aloud for a peace which would bring the war to an end without the loss of territory or the payment of a money fine.

The leader of this party was a man of Russian and gentle birth, named Lenin. It is said that he set himself to bring about the ruin of Russia in revenge for the execution of his brother, who had tried to murder the Tsar Alexander III. in 1887. He was assisted in this foul work by a man named Trotsky, who made bitter speeches against the Allies, and also by a gang of clever lawyers and dreamers who were lavishly supplied with German gold. They professed that they were anxious only for the happiness of the people, and to further this end they stirred up the peasants and workmen against the rich, and encouraged them to seize land and plunder the houses of the well-to-do. Before long the country was rent with civil strife, and was breaking up into separate republics.

Perhaps you wonder why sober, level-headed Russians did not unite to put down the Bolshevists. You must remember that most of the Russian peasants are terribly ignorant. Probably eight out of every ten cannot read or write, and as they have never known what freedom means, they have not learnt how to combine and work out their own salvation by lawful means. Then, too, we must not forget that they had suffered greatly during the war, and were eager for peace at any price. Further, the Bolshevists had gained control of the State money, and had raised a force of Red Guards composed of the old secret police, mutinous soldiers and sailors, rogues and vagabonds, and criminals of all sorts. These men, who were paid high wages and were given many privileges, set up a reign of terror, and ruthlessly put down every attempt to hand over the government to sane, law-abiding men.

In December the Bolshevists met German representatives at Brest-Litovsk, and there agreed to suspend the war for a period, during which they could discuss terms of peace. Some

of these blind, unreasoning men actually believed that if they talked to their enemies long enough and loud enough the Germans would rise against the Kaiser and bring about a revolution. One of the conditions of this agreement was that the Germans should not withdraw troops from the Russian front for service against the Allies until the armistice, or temporary peace, came to an end. The Germans promised, but they had already sent many divisions to the West, and despite their promise they continued to do so. You may judge of the depth of insane folly to which the Bolshevists had sunk when you observe that they actually believed the Germans would be bound by their promises.

While the enemy was thus fooling the Bolshevists to the top of their bent, the people of Finland, the Ukraine or Little Russia, Cossackland, Caucasia, and Siberia cut themselves adrift and set up home rule governments. German agents were probably responsible for the breaking away of Little Russia. You will understand why Germany wished Little Russia to become independent when I tell you that one-third of all the wheat in European Russia is grown in this part of the country. The Germans needed food badly, and they hoped by making a separate peace with the Ukraine to get this rich and fertile land in their own hands. The Romans in the days of old always set themselves to sow discord between the peoples of the countries which they coveted; then when they had brought about hatred and strife they slipped in and ruled. "Divide and rule" was their motto, and the Germans had now taken a leaf out of the Roman book.

In a later chapter you will learn how the Bolshevists, having brought Russia to a state of awful confusion and bloodshed, were obliged to make peace on Germany's terms. Before the end of the year 1917 Russia had abandoned her Allies. The tower of strength on which we relied in the East had been brought to the ground in shapeless ruin by the treachery and folly and ignorance of those who inhabited it. Russia was to all intents and purposes out of the war. She no longer counted as a military power, and before the close of the year the guns and munitions with which we had supplied her were being used against us on the Western front.

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Nor was this the only disaster which befell the Allies in the

course of the year. From May to August the Italians fought with great courage and every hope of success on the Isonzo front. In May they made considerable advances, and captured 23,000 Austrians, besides thirty-six guns. In August they bridged the Isonzo and carried parts of the Bainsizza plateau, 23,000 further prisoners and seventy-five additional guns being taken. When the bad weather of September suspended operations their prospects were excellent. The Central Powers now realized that unless the Italians were checked Trieste must fall.

A great surprise attack was planned. The break-up of the Russian armies had enabled the Germans to withdraw four divisions from the Eastern front. To these they added two divisions from France and four picked Austrian divisions, and thus formed a 14th Army under General von Below. This force, along with forty Austrian divisions, was detailed to fall suddenly upon the Italians and overwhelm them. It was hoped that the Venetian plain, with its glorious old cities and its richly-fertile fields, would be overrun, and that the disaster would so dishearten the Italians that they would sue for peace, and thus weaken the Allies by the loss of another member.

The Germans did not rely upon military force alone; they practised those dark, underground manœuvres which had been so successful in Russia. There is good reason to believe that the Italian troops holding the one good road from the mountains to the plains were corrupted, and played a foul and treacherous part. When the blow fell they offered no resistance; the line of the Second Italian Army was pierced, and the troops composing it were almost destroyed. Then the Third Army was forced to retreat or suffer the same fate.

A period of the gravest anxiety now set in. The Italian Third Army fell back upon the Tagliamento, but owing to the swollen state of the river, many of the troops were forced to surrender before they could cross it. The enemy pressed on remorselessly, and the line of the river had to be abandoned. An attempt was made to oppose the enemy along the river Livenza, but in vain, and the remnants of the defeated armies were forced to retreat again to the Piave, where at last they stood firm. Their losses had been enormous: 250,000 men and 2,300 guns had fallen into the hands of the Austro-Germans. The Allies had suffered a defeat unequalled in the whole history of the war.

At once the British and French strove with all their might to repair the disaster. Sir Douglas Haig began an offensive in Artois in order to relieve the pressure, and troops were sent to the help of the Italians who were struggling along the line of the river and amidst the mountains to hold back the enemy. Happily, the Italians rose superior to their defeat. All attempts to force the line of the Piave failed. Then the enemy took to the mountains, and strove to break through the last remaining barrier, and descend to the plains in the rear of the river. This effort also failed, and when the year came to a close the Italians, under a new commander, had recovered their confidence, and for the time being were safe.

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While the Russian horizon was shrouded in gloom, a star of the brightest hope blazed in the Western sky. The great republic of the United States of America, goaded beyond endurance by the treachery and inhumanity of the Germans, determined to throw in its lot with the Allies. The unrestricted U-boat campaign which began in February was the last straw that broke the patient camel's back. The German war lords had persuaded themselves that the Americans were too spiritless to resent any treatment, however faithless or insulting, and by so doing they made the most grievous mistake in the long catalogue of their errors. They brought down upon themselves the wrath of a nation of ninety-two millions of people, renowned for activity and enterprise, and inhabiting a land of wondrous richness. All and more than all that the Germans had won in Russia by fraud and treachery they lost by the same fraud and treachery when they forced the United States to fling down the gage of battle.

Though the Allies had gained that assistance which was to give them final victory, they knew that many months of peril and deep anxiety lay before them. The United States, with her vast resources, was three thousand miles across the Atlantic. Her man-power was vast, but her standing army was trifling in numbers; and though the Government set about the task of raising armed forces with astonishing vigour, it could give no immediate assistance to the Allies. Not only had the Americans to array and train their men and manufacture weapons of war and munitions in vast quantity, but they had to build the ships which would be required for carrying their troops across the

The Supreme War Council at Versailles:

(From the picture by S. Begg from a sketch made on the spot by

This picture shows a meeting of the Council as seen through the glass doors of the session chamber ceau (France); Baron Sonnino (back to spectator—Italy); Mr. Lloyd George and General Sir W. Robertson an interpreter (standing) and Sir Douglas Haig (Great Britain).

"One front, one army, one nation."

Lucien Jonas. By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

in the Trianon Palace at Versailles. The personages shown are—(left to right) M. Pichon and M. Clemen- (Great Britain); General Cadorna (back to spectator—Italy); General Sir H. H. Wilson (Great Britain);

seas, and for supplying them with food and other necessities. Meanwhile the enemy's U-boats were destroying the vessels of both Allies and neutrals faster than new ships could be built. It was clear that not until the year 1919 could America be expected to pull her full weight.

Nevertheless the Americans soon had two million men under training. General Pershing, in command of the American Expeditionary Force, reached France in June, and month by month his troops in France increased. Before the end of the year American soldiers had received their baptism of fire. Meanwhile great progress had been made with the lines of communication which were to supply the American armies when they arrived in sufficient numbers to play a large part in the struggle. Less than one month after the declaration of war American cruisers and destroyers were operating in European waters.

Though the Americans could not render much immediate assistance to the Allies, they added great moral strength to our cause. We ourselves had entered the great struggle with the purest of motives. We declared war to help a little friend shamefully assailed in defiance of a sacred promise, to prevent France from being trampled under foot by a fierce and greedy foe, and to establish once and for all those principles of honour and honesty between states without which civilization cannot continue. But unselfish as were our motives, those of the United States were even more unselfish. She had no treaty ties with Belgium, and apparently had nothing to fear from a victorious Germany; though Mr. Gerard believed, even in January 1916, that Germany would "either attack America or land in South America, if successful in this war." The great majority of the American people, however, foresaw no such danger; and if they had done so, they felt sure that they could withstand it. They entered the war simply to support the cause of international righteousness. They could no longer permit murder on the high seas to go on unchecked, and they knew that the world would never be "safe for democracy" until those who trusted in the sword had been overcome by the sword. America's entrance into the quarrel was a testimony to all the world that the Allies were waging war lest the world should become a jungle of ravening beasts, "red in tooth and claw."

Though at the close of the year we British stood in dire

peril, we consoled ourselves with the knowledge that in the long course of our history we had been in even worse case, and had yet emerged victorious. During the great struggle with Napoleon, Britain saw her allies drop off one by one, until she alone was left to maintain the struggle against a conqueror who was master of almost all continental Europe. In the years 1796–1797 we had our backs to the wall. In December 1796 a French fleet with 16,000 troops on board anchored in Bantry Bay, and the Irish were eager to receive them. Six weeks later French troops actually landed in England with the object of burning Bristol. In the same month the Bank of England stopped payment. In April 1797 our fleets in the Channel and in the North Sea were in open mutiny, and throughout June the mutineers blockaded the mouth of the Thames. In May of the same year an Irish rebellion broke out, and in September a powerful French squadron sailed from Brest for the invasion of England.

"Four times—that is, within less than two years—England was threatened with invasion; thrice her own fleets broke out into open mutiny; twice the flames of civil war were kindled. For seven years lean harvests had cursed the fields. And over this whole gloomy landscape of civil strife, revolting fleets, invading enemies, and Europe leagued to overthrow the national existence, brooded the black shadow of national bankruptcy. Where else does history show the spectacle of a nation threatened within a space so brief by perils so deadly and yet surviving them all?" *

Despite their anxieties and sufferings during the year 1917, the British people still remained staunch in their determination to carry on the war to a victorious conclusion. The voices that were raised for peace at any price were few, and were scarcely heeded. Though all the world yearned for the end of hostilities, neither in Britain nor in France was there any weakening of resolve. The Allies knew that the war had become a trial of endurance, and that if they could hold on until America was ready to fling her millions into the fray, victory was bound to be their reward.

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There were many in January 1917 who prophesied that

* From *How England saved Europe*, by W. H. Fitchett, vol. i., p. 146.

before the year ended the Germans would be defeated, and, sooth to say, they seemed to have good grounds for their belief. Though Rumania had been overrun in the previous autumn and the Russians had failed to make headway, the armies of the Central Powers had been everywhere beaten or checked. At Verdun and on the Somme, in Galicia and on the Isonzo, the Austro-Germans had suffered heavy losses, with no corresponding gain. General Maude had begun his victorious campaign in Mesopotamia, and our troops were invading Palestine. The spirit of the Allies was admirable. As fighting men, both British and French soldiers knew themselves to be superior to either German, Austrian, Bulgar, or Turk. Russia was recovering from her set-back, and seemed to be ready to repeat her Galician victories. The wish was not father to the thought when many prophesied that "the sky was already glowing with the promise of victory."

From the beginning of the campaigning season right down to the last day of November, the Anglo-French forces in the West held the upper hand. An offensive on a large scale had been planned for the early months of the year; but the removal of General Joffre from the chief command of the French armies and the appointment of General Nivelle, the hero of Verdun, entailed a number of changes which were largely responsible for our lack of full success. In February, and more especially in March, the Germans, as a result of the Battle of the Somme, were forced to withdraw their front in the West. This withdrawal, though it upset many of our preparations for the next attack, did not much alter our plan of campaign. The first step in this campaign was the capture of Vimy Ridge, and this was accomplished by our First and Third Armies, under Generals Horne and Allenby, in the early morning of 3rd April. Some 20,000 prisoners were captured, along with 257 guns and over 700 trench mortars and machine guns. The attack had been most carefully planned, and was brilliantly carried out.

Then came the turn of the French to strike. Nivelle flung his troops against the enemy trenches on the Aisne and in Champagne, and carried the first line from Soissons to Craonne, as well as parts of the second line. He was also successful at Moronvillers. But his success was dearly won, and it was clear that France, with her dwindling resources of men, could

not afford the price of such victories. Though 20,780 prisoners and 175 guns had been captured by the French up to 29th April, the results were not equal to the sacrifices involved, and a fresh change in the command took place. General Nivelle gave way to General Pétain. As the situation of the French north of the Aisne was still unsatisfactory, Sir Douglas Haig was forced to continue his Arras offensive, which he had hoped to break off in order to launch a big and early attack against the Germans in front of Ypres.

On 23rd April, Allenby, assisted by a corps on the right of the First Army, led his Third Army forward in the Arras region. The Germans had, however, mustered their reserves, and one of the hardest day's fighting in the whole course of the war took place. Our artillery caused the enemy enormous losses, but we made little headway. The attack continued until 3rd May, when we pushed into a large section of the Hindenburg Line. Again the enemy thrust his reserves into the breach, and the offensive came to an end without much advantage to either side.

The Ypres offensive, which continued from June 7th to October 10th and gave us all the high ground from Messines to Passchendaele, is still fresh in your memory, and so is the story of gain and loss before Cambrai in the closing days of the year. You have not forgotten, I am sure, the French offensive of the autumn. You will remember that in the Malmaison region on 23rd October, at 5.15 in the morning, the French scored a brilliant success. By the 25th they had captured 11,000 prisoners and 120 guns, and had hit the enemy so hard that a few days later he retreated from the whole position on a front of twelve miles. The capture of Vimy Ridge on 9th April, of Whitesheet Ridge on 7th June, of the positions in front of Verdun on 20th August, and of the Malmaison quarries and strongholds on 23rd October, were the red-letter days of the Allies in the West during the year.

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Our most brilliant successes, however, were attained on Asiatic battlefields. In Mesopotamia Sir Stanley Maude completely restored the prestige which we had lost by our surrender at Kut and by our failures to pierce the Turkish defences. In January and February he drove the Turks before him, and on 11th March entered Bagdad, where he established himself

firmly, and struck heavily at the Turkish columns to the north. Then when the season for campaigning again came round he brilliantly defeated, surrounded, and received the surrender of a Turkish force at Ramadie. Without delay he then turned upon the enemy on the Tigris, and on 5th November drove him out of very strong positions. This was the gallant general's last fight. The story of how he was stricken down by cholera and died at the very height of his fame was well told by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on March 4, 1918 :—

"He died a victim to the inbred courtesy of his fine character. I heard a story from a member of his staff the other day. Sir Stanley Maude visited a plague-stricken area at the invitation of its inhabitants. They were anxious to extend to him a welcome for the many kindnesses which he had displayed. They gave him a great one, and they offered him a small act of hospitality. Though he so well knew the peril that he had actually forbidden any soldier in his escort to eat or drink while on that visit, he himself ran the risk rather than disappoint the people who were anxious to give him a welcome. There was cholera in the cup, and he died within a few days.

"Sir Stanley Maude will always be remembered as one of the great figures of this war, not merely for what he achieved, but for what he was. I know not what destiny may have in store for the famed land which he has conquered, but of two things I am certain. The first is, that the whole course of its history will be changed for the better as the result of the victory and the rule of Sir Stanley Maude; and the second is, that his name will always be cherished by the inhabitants of that land as that of the gentlest conqueror who ever entered the gates of Bagdad."

No less successful were the operations of Sir Edmund Allenby in Palestine. He assumed the command in June after two failures to capture Gaza, and five months later brought about a remarkable change in the condition of affairs. While holding the Turks in front of Gaza, he struck at Beersheba, and by capturing it turned the flank of the former town. After a stiff fight Gaza was abandoned, and the Turks retired to the north. They were vigorously followed up, and did not rally until they were twelve miles north of Ascalon. On 13th November they were driven from this position, and six days later our advance guard was only fifteen miles from Jerusalem. On 9th December the Holy City surrendered, and on the 11th the British commander made his formal entry. No event in all the year gave such satisfaction to the British people.

Before I conclude this brief summing up of the year 1917 I must refer to one of the more important results of the Italian

A National Day of Prayer: reading the King's Proclamation in Westminster Abbey.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

"The victory will be gained only if we . . . ask the blessing of Almighty God."

disaster. On 12th November the Prime Minister made a "disagreeable" speech in Paris. It was so unlike the cheering and hopeful messages which he usually delivered that it startled the nation, as it was intended to do. The speech was made immediately after France, Italy, and Great Britain had decided to set up a Supreme Council which should ensure the working together according to one plan of all the armies on the Western front. The Prime Minister pointed out that though the Allies had command of the seas, more men, material, money, and resources than the Central Powers, they had failed to go far along the road to victory. The fault did not lie with the armies. The failure was due to the fact that they did not fight together as parts of one great whole.

Because there was no unity of plan and operation the Allies had suffered gravely. In 1915 Serbia had been overcome, and the gate to the East, with its corn, cattle, and minerals, had been unlocked. While this was happening, France and England were busy in other parts of the world, Italy had her mind on the Carso, and Russia had a thousand-mile frontier to defend. The Allies were waging four wars instead of one. Because it was no one's business in particular to guard the gates of the Balkans, the enemy had gained a great advantage. It was true that we sent forces to Salonika to rescue Serbia, but they were "too late." When Rumania in 1916 was assailed in the same fashion, there was again no authority to prepare beforehand those measures which might have saved her. The same was true when Russia collapsed.

We must, said the Prime Minister, have "unity—not sham unity, but real unity." The French Premier drove home this truth in the following striking sentence: "One front, one army, one nation—that is the programme of the future victory."

The Supreme Council, which was announced in the speeches to which I have referred, was not at first given powers to act promptly. In February 1918 full powers were given to it, and thereafter the Allies were enabled to work together as a team bent on victory. Unhappily, the arrangements which were made for this purpose led to the resignation of Sir William Robertson, who had been Chief of our Staff, and the directing brain of the British armies for two years.

CHAPTER II.

VALOROUS DEEDS AND VICTORIA CROSSES.—I.

JANUARY and February 1918 brought the usual winter's lull in the fighting on the Western front. You must not suppose, however, that calm settled down on the battle-fields. Each side made constant raids in order to feel the strength of the other, and to obtain information. The guns were rarely silent, though there was none of that intense firing which heralds the opening of a big offensive. Leave was granted to large numbers of our men, and many gallant fellows sat once more at their own firesides, thrilling their relatives with the story of fierce combats and hairbreadth escapes. We at home were chiefly interested in the problems of how to secure a fresh supply of men for our armies, how to deal with the shortage of food, and how to overcome the submarine menace, not only by waging incessant war upon the "jackals of the sea," but by building ships in the shortest possible time to make up for those which had been and were being sunk.

A painful interest centred in the peace talk that was going on at Brest-Litovsk, where the Bolshevist leaders were opposing words to the German sword. Russia was in chaos, and it was clear that before the end of many weeks she would be forced to accept the Kaiser's terms. History was about to repeat itself. When we were fighting Napoleon in 1807 Russia, our ally, withdrew from the struggle, and left us almost single-handed to continue the war against the "scourge of Europe." What she had done in 1807 she had again done in 1917.

When Russia committed suicide as a nation, all the world knew that hard times were in store for the Allies. Now that the Kaiser had little or nothing to fear on his Eastern front, he was free to mass the bulk of his forces against the British

and French in the West, and make one last desperate effort to overwhelm them. When and where will Germany strike? This was the question which was anxiously discussed by Britons and Frenchmen during the first two months of the year. On 20th March the great blow fell, with what result we shall learn in later chapters.

Echoes of the fierce strife which had raged during the latter half of the year 1917 reached us from time to time when we read in our newspapers the accounts of those thrice-gallant men who had been awarded the cross of valour for deeds of the highest heroism. Thirty-three Victoria Crosses were awarded during January and February, and I now propose to give you some account of each of the recipients. Our Canadian readers will rejoice to notice that no fewer than eight of this gallant company were soldiers of the Dominion. It will interest you to try to discover from the narratives when and where each particular act of heroism was performed. The first name on my list is that of

MAJOR (ACTING LIEUTENANT-COLONEL) JOHN SHERWOOD-KELLY, C.M.G., D.S.O., Norfolk Regiment, commanding a battalion of Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

Colonel Sherwood-Kelly's battalion was ordered to cross a certain canal. A party of men of another unit was detailed to cover the battalion while the crossing was being made. This party was held up on the near side of the canal by heavy rifle fire directed against the bridge. Colonel Sherwood-Kelly at once ordered his men to open rapid fire on the enemy, while at the head of the leading company he advanced across the bridge and took up a position on the other side. He then went forward, despite the fire of rifles and machine guns, to spy out the high ground held by the enemy. Meanwhile the remainder of the battalion had crossed, and all was ready for the advance. In the course of it the left flank of the battalion was held up by a thick belt of wire. At once the colonel crossed to that flank, and with a Lewis gun team forced his way through the obstacle, and got his weapon into position on the other side. In this way he was able to keep down the fire of the enemy, and enable his battalion to push through the wire and capture the enemy's trench. Later in the day the advance was checked by heavy fire from Germans sheltering in a number of pits. The colonel rapidly organized a party, and led it for-

Brothers in Arms.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

A true spirit of comradeship sprang up during the war between British and French troops. The above picture shows a British Tommy and a French *Poilu* drinking a health and toasting the Allied cause.

ward against the pits, with such success that he killed large numbers of the enemy, and captured five machine guns and forty-six prisoners. The great gallantry shown by this splendid officer inspired his men to heroic deeds. It does not need a Horace to tell us that " a good leader makes a good soldier."

CAPTAIN (ACTING MAJOR) GEORGE RANDOLPH PEARKES, M.C., Canadian Mounted Rifles.

Just before an advance Major Pearkes was wounded in the left thigh. Instead of giving up his command, he persisted in leading his men forward, and in doing so showed the utmost gallantry. At one stage in the attack his further advance was threatened by a strong point which the battalion on his left was vainly endeavouring to capture. He at once went to the rescue, and seized and held the point, thus enabling his own advance to be pushed forward. When all the objectives allotted to him were taken he saw that it was possible to capture a position still farther ahead. In this advanced post he made a remarkable defence against repeated enemy attacks. He had but few men with him, and both his flanks were unprotected. Though Germans swarmed around him he managed to hold out and to send back such valuable reports that his commanding officer was finally enabled to push forward. He showed, says the official account, " a supreme contempt for danger, and wonderful powers of control and leading."

CAPTAIN JOHN FOX RUSSELL, M.C., R.A.M.C., attached to the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

This gallant doctor repeatedly went out into the open to attend wounded men, despite the murderous fire of snipers and machine guns. In many cases he carried in the stricken men, and continued in this good work until he was almost exhausted. Even then he did not desist, and while succouring a comrade was killed. I have frequently in these pages spoken of the glorious devotion of our army doctors. Captain Russell was worthy to rank with the noblest and most gallant of his fellows. His was

> " High sacrifice, and labour without pause
> Even to the death."

LIEUTENANT (TEMPORARY CAPTAIN) ROBERT GEE, M.C., Royal Fusiliers.

A strong enemy attack had pierced our line. The brigade

headquarters and ammunition dumps in a certain village had been captured. During this attack Captain Gee had been taken prisoner. Watching his opportunity, he killed his captor with the spiked stick which he carried, and succeeded in escaping. He then organized a party of orderlies, cooks, telephone men, and other persons attached to the brigade staff, and led them forward with such fierceness that he drove the enemy back and cleared the village. Two companies of infantry now came up in support. With their assistance he established a defensive flank on the outskirts of the village. His position, however, was commanded by an enemy machine gun. Carrying a revolver in each hand, and with only one companion, he rushed and captured the gun after killing eight of the crew. During this exploit he was wounded; but he refused to have the wound dressed until he was satisfied that the post was strong enough to hold out.

LIEUTENANT (ACTING CAPTAIN) CHRISTOPHER PATRICK JOHN O'KELLY, M.C., Canadian Infantry.

This gallant Canadian showed extraordinary skill, daring, and courage at a time when the fortune of war seemed to have deserted us. Our attack had failed, and two companies of the Canadian Infantry were called upon to make another attempt. Captain O'Kelly, who was in command of one of the companies, did not wait for the protection of an artillery barrage, but, calling on his men, advanced at their head through heavy fire against the crest of a hill a thousand yards away. In the most fearless fashion the crest was stormed, and then the daring captain led a series of attacks against the "pill-boxes" behind. His company alone captured six of these little forts, and took 100 prisoners and ten machine guns. Later on in the afternoon the enemy made a strong counter-attack. Wearied as the Canadians were, they nevertheless drove off the enemy and captured more prisoners. During the night an enemy officer and ten men with a machine gun made a raid upon them. The raiders were raided, and next day found a resting-place in our prisoners' cage. The official account tells us that those dashing exploits were chiefly due to the "magnificent courage, daring, and ability" of Captain O'Kelly.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT (TEMPORARY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL) PHILIP ERIC BENT, D.S.O., Leicester Regiment.

Intense gun-fire and a desperate attack by the enemy had

forced back the right of Colonel Bent's command, and had compelled the battalion on his right to retire. There was great confusion in our ranks, and everything pointed to disaster. It was at this critical time that Colonel Bent, by his great coolness and promptness, saved the situation. With a platoon that was in reserve, and reinforced by straggling men collected from other companies, together with odds and ends from the staffs of the regiments concerned, he organized a force, and after giving orders to his officers for the defence of the line, led his motley array forward in a counter-attack. "Come on, the Tigers!" he cried, and his men responded with such spirit that the enemy was checked, and an important part of the line was held. Unhappily he was killed while leading the charge.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT (ACTING CAPTAIN) ARTHUR MOORE LASCELLES, Durham Light Infantry.

Captain Lascelles was in command of a company holding a very exposed position. The enemy bombarded his post very heavily, and during the shelling the captain was wounded. Knowing that the German infantry would follow up the bombardment with an attack, he refused to allow his wound to be dressed, but remained with his men, encouraging them by word and example to strengthen the position. Shortly afterwards the Germans came on in large numbers, but were driven off. Again they made an assault, and this time they captured the trench and took several of our men prisoners. With the twelve survivors of his company, Captain Lascelles retired to another trench some distance in the rear. Seizing the opportunity, he sprang upon the parapet, called upon his dozen followers, and at their head rushed across the intervening space under very heavy machine-gun fire, and drove over sixty of the enemy back. Once more in his old position, he made preparations for resisting the next attack. When it came his little party was overwhelmed, the trench was again captured, and Captain Lascelles with it. Later on he escaped. The official account thus concludes: "The remarkable determination and gallantry of this officer in the course of operations, during which he received two further wounds, afforded an inspiring example to all."

SERGEANT JOHN M'AULAY, D.C.M., Scots Guards.

Sergeant M'Aulay, a native of Kinghorn, Fifeshire, was a

Glasgow policeman prior to enlisting in the Scots Guards in September 1914. He speedily proved himself a good soldier, and in September 1917 was awarded the D.C.M. for clearing out two strongly held dug-outs, and bringing down several snipers. On four separate occasions he was recommended for the Victoria Cross. The exploit which gave him the coveted honour is thus described. During an attack, when all his officers had fallen, he took command of his company, and by his dashing and cheerful bearing not only led his men to their objective, but encouraged them to hold it when won. Noticing that the enemy was about to deliver a counter-attack on his exposed left flank, he and two men went out with machine guns, which they plied so vigorously that the enemy was beaten off with heavy casualties. Not only was he the life and soul of the defence, but he carried his company officer, who was mortally wounded, through very heavy fire to a place of safety. Twice during this journey he was knocked down by the air-blast from a bursting shell, and once the heel of one of his boots was blown off, but, nothing daunted, he pressed on. Two of the enemy tried to capture him, but he killed them both.

Sergeant M'Aulay's daring, skill, and coolness were the admiration of his comrades. One of his officers, writing to congratulate him on winning the Victoria Cross, said, "You ought to have got it ages ago." Lady Kinnaird of Rossie Priory, whose dying son he carried into safety, wrote to him as follows: "I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you when I think of your carrying him out of danger, never thinking of your own danger. It would have been so dreadful had he been left, perhaps to suffer more in loneliness. I love to think of the kiss he gave you, and the dear message he sent to me through you."

Sergeant George Harry Mullin, M.M., Canadian Infantry.

Sergeant Mullin was a "pill-box" hero. One of these concreted forts which stood in a commanding position had withstood a heavy bombardment, and the machine guns of its garrison were taking a heavy toll of our men. The line could not go forward until it was captured. Sergeant Mullin determined to do the deed single-handed. He rushed a sniper's post in front of the "pill-box," and from it flung bombs into the building. He killed some of the garrison in this way.

A "Sing-song" on the British Front

(*From the picture by S. Begg. By*

The soldier's life is one of sudden changes, from grave to gay and from gay to grave. Though he is picture above shows a company amusing itself during a brief respite from the enemy's attacks. The Other men are cleaning their rifles, snatching a hasty meal, reading newspapers, or patching their clothes. Suddenly the "Sing-song" is interrupted by the appearance of a sergeant (seen on the right background), occupations, snatch up their rifles, proceed to man the trench, and, let us hope, beat off an enemy assault.

interrupted by a Call to Arms.

permission of The Illustrated London News.)

almost constantly in the presence of death, no man knows better how to enjoy his hours of leisure. The gramophone is going, and a group on the left is dancing and singing in the jolliest fashion possible. The man on the right foreground is writing a letter home by the light of a candle stuck on a steel helmet. Who shouts, "Get ready to fall-in in ten minutes! Battle order!" At once the men leave their varied

Then crawling on to the top of the "pill-box," he discovered an opening through which he fired his revolver, and thus made an end of the two machine gunners. Scrambling down with all speed, he rushed to the entrance and compelled the survivors of the garrison, ten in all, to surrender. This daring deed was witnessed by many of his comrades, who marvelled at his escape. Enemy snipers constantly made him a mark, and his clothes were riddled with bullets. Nothing could daunt him, and his fearless gallantry not only enabled the line to advance, but saved many lives. Canada should be proud of Sergeant Mullin.

Sergeant Charles Edward Spackman, Border Regiment.

Sergeant Spackman, who hailed from Fulham, London, was going forward with his company when it was held up by the heavy fire of a machine gun so placed that it swept the bare, coverless ground in front. He saw at once that the advance could not continue until the gun was knocked out. Prepared to sacrifice himself in order to ensure the success of the attack, he crawled forward in full sight of the enemy gunners, and, escaping death by a miracle, succeeded in killing all but one of the crew. He then rushed the gun, and captured it single-handed. "The behaviour of this non-commissioned officer was gallant in the extreme, and he set a fine example of courage and devotion to his men."

Lance-Corporal Robert M'Beath, Seaforth Highlanders.

This gallant Highlander, whose home was at Kinlochbervie, Sutherlandshire, nobly maintained the heroic traditions of those who wear "the garb of old Gaul." When his company was approaching its final objective, a nest of enemy machine guns in the western outskirts of a village opened fire. Our progress was checked, and many of our men fell. It was impossible to continue the advance until these machine guns were silenced. A volunteer was called for to go forward with a Lewis gun and shoot down the crews. Lance-Corporal M'Beath at once answered the call. Buckling on his revolver and shouldering his Lewis gun, he moved off on his stalking expedition. He soon discovered the position of one of the machine guns, and working his way towards it, drew so near that he was able to shoot the gunner with his revolver.

Several other hostile machine guns were still in action, so a Tank was brought up to deal with them. The Tank drove

the gunners into a deep dug-out. Then Lance-Corporal M'Beath again appeared on the scene. Utterly regardless of danger, he rushed into the dug-out, shot a man who tried to bar his way on the steps, and drove out and captured the remainder of the garrison—three officers and thirty men. The dug-out was in the middle of a nest of machine guns; no fewer than five of these weapons were mounted round it. By putting them out of action the gallant lance-corporal cleared a way for the advance of his comrades. "His conduct throughout three days of severe fighting was beyond praise."

Private George William Clare, Lancers.

A devoted stretcher-bearer now figures in our record. During a most intense and continuous bombardment Private Clare dressed the wounds of many men, and conducted them over the open to the dressing-station about 500 yards away. At one period, when every man had fallen in a detached post about 150 yards to the left of our line, Private Clare made his way to this position across open ground swept by rifle and machine-gun fire. He reached the post safely, dressed the wounds of the surviving men, and then took up a rifle to hold the position until relief arrived. He afterwards carried a seriously wounded man through the fire zone to a place of shelter, and later on succeeded in getting him to the dressing-station.

Here he learnt that the enemy was firing gas shells into the valley below. As the wind was blowing the gas towards our li[illegible] trenches and shell-holes, he knew that before long many of our men would be taken unawares, and would suffer seriously. At once he started off, and went from post to post and from shell-hole to shell-hole, warning the men of the approaching gas. All the time he was under shell and rifle fire. He crowned his devotion by the supreme sacrifice, for later on he was killed by a shell.

Corporal Colin Barron, Canadian Infantry.

Three machine guns held up Corporal Barron's unit during an attack. He set out to stalk them, and reaching a position on the flank, opened fire at point-blank range. Then, all alone, he rushed the guns, killed four of the crew, and captured the survivors. Not content with silencing the guns, he turned one of them on the retreating enemy, and brought down many of them. Thus by his dash and determination he enabled the advance to proceed, and good results to be obtained.

Private Thomas William Holmes, Canadian Mounted Rifles.

Private Holmes's exploit resembled that of Sergeant Mullin. The right flank of our attack was held up by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from a "pill-box." So many of our men fell that the situation became very grave. At this moment, without waiting for orders, Private Holmes ran forward and hurled bombs at the crews of two of the guns. Then returning to his comrades, he secured another bomb, and, dashing forward through the heavy fire, succeeded in throwing it into the entrance to the "pill-box." The result was that nineteen of the occupants surrendered. "By this act of valour at a very critical moment, Private Holmes cleared the way for the advance of our troops and saved the lives of many of his comrades."

Private Cecil John Kinross, Canadian Infantry.

An almost similar deed won Private Kinross the premier award of valour. Shortly after an attack was launched, his company was assailed by fierce artillery fire and by streams of bullets from an enemy machine gun. Private Kinross, after carefully examining the situation, took off his knapsack and the rest of his equipment except his bandoleer, and picking up his rifle, rushed across the open ground in broad daylight and in full view of the enemy. He charged the machine gun, killed the crew of six, and then seized and destroyed the weapon. His superb courage inspired his comrades to emulate his example, and they pushed forward 300 yards and seized a highly important position. Throughout the day he showed wonderful coolness and courage, and fought with extraordinary determination against heavy odds until he fell seriously wounded.

Private Henry James Nicholas, New Zealand Infantry.

Private Nicholas was one of a Lewis gun section which had been ordered to form a defensive flank on the right of an advance. Heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from an enemy strong point checked our men, and no further progress could be made. Grasping the situation, Private Nicholas rushed ahead of his section, shot the officer in command of the strong point, and with bomb and bayonet overcame the garrison, which numbered sixteen. Four unwounded prisoners surrendered to him, and he seized a machine gun. He captured the strong point single-handed. Later on, when the objective

had been reached, he went to and fro under the heaviest fire, collecting ammunition for the defence of the position. His remarkable valour and coolness greatly inspired his fellows.

PRIVATE JAMES PETER ROBERTSON, Canadian Infantry.

Worthy in every respect to rank with Pearkes, O'Kelly, Mullin, Barron, and Holmes was Private Robertson, who, when his platoon was held up by uncut wire and an enemy machine gun was causing many casualties, took upon himself the task of clearing away the obstacle. Finding an opening on the flank, he dashed through it, rushed the machine gun, and engaged in a desperate struggle with the crew. Having killed four of the gunners, he turned the weapon on the remainder, who were running towards their own lines, and shot down many of them. His platoon was now able to advance, and, carrying his machine gun, he led his comrades to the final objective, where he selected an excellent position, and opened fire on the enemy with great effect. While his comrades were putting the captured position into a condition of defence he plied his gun so skilfully that the fire of enemy snipers was kept down. All the time his courage and coolness cheered his comrades, and inspired them with confidence. Later on he saw two of our snipers lying in front of the trench badly wounded. In the face of a very severe fire he went out and brought one of them into safety. While returning with the second man this most gallant Canadian was killed.

LANCE-DAFADAR GOBIND SINGH, Indian Cavalry.

Up to the end of February 1918 nine Victoria Crosses had been awarded to Indians, two of them to the members of the Rathor clan of Rajputs, the chief of which is the Maharaja of Jodhpur, Rajputana. The Rajputs are found not only in Rajputana but all over the north of India, where they form the fighting, landowning, and ruling caste. They are fine, brave men, and are exceedingly proud of their descent. No race in India can boast of finer feats of arms or brighter deeds of chivalry, and they supply some of the best material to our Indian army.

Lance-Dafadar Gobind Singh, the second Rajput to win the Victoria Cross, began his career in the Jodhpur Lancers, but was subsequently transferred to the 28th Cavalry, with whom he was serving when he performed the heroic deed which I am about to describe. During the Cambrai battle his

squadron found itself completely cut off; it was encircled by the enemy on three sides and by the Scheldt Canal on the fourth. The men dug in, and determined to sell their lives dearly. The officer in command called for a volunteer to carry a dispatch to headquarters. It was clear that the volunteer would have to take his life in his hand, for he would be obliged to brave the enemy's fire over a distance of a mile and a half.

A trooper offered himself and was accepted. Mounting his horse, he dashed off on his perilous mission. He had not gone far before German bullets struck down both him and his horse. Immediately another Indian rode out on the same errand. He, too, fell, as did several others who ventured forth. Then Gobind Singh sought his commander, and begged to be allowed to try his luck. Bestriding his charger, he galloped off at full speed, but before long machine-gun bullets were whizzing around him. They riddled the body of his horse, and actually described a curve the shape of his leg on either side of the animal. The horse fell under him, but the brave Rathor escaped unhurt, and completed the remaining 600 yards of his journey on foot.

He delivered his message and received the reply, which had to be carried back to the trench across a mile and a half of ground raked by German bullets. Nothing daunted, the gallant Dafadar secured another horse and sallied forth on his return journey. Almost immediately he was greeted by heavy machine-gun fire, and only half the distance was covered when his horse fell beneath him. Again he picked himself up, and, taking to his heels, ran for dear life, followed by German bullets, which spattered around him. A few minutes later he jumped into his own trench quite unharmed, and delivered his message.

The dispatch which he carried needed a reply, and the fearless bearer of it once more volunteered to ride through the Valley of the Shadow. He was given permission to choose any horse in the squadron; and having made his choice, he bade farewell to his comrades, and with their fervent good wishes once more plunged into the death-zone. This time the machine guns were silent; no bullet came from the German trench. Not till half his journey was over did he discover that they had another method of stopping him. The German

British Soldiers engaged in camouflaging a French Road.

(*From the picture by D. Macpherson. By permission of The Sphere.*)

To hide the movements of troops, supply lorries, guns, etc., from the prying eyes of enemy airmen, much-used roads are concealed by using overhead screens made of roughly woven material or light matting. This picture shows soldiers at work concealing a road passing through a village. The French roads are white, and unless camouflaged in this manner show up clearly amidst the green fields or brown muddy wastes across which the battle has raged.

guns suddenly began to thunder, and the Dafadar saw before him a wall of bursting shells. A British gunner sheltering in a shell-hole shouted to him to halt, for any attempt to ride through the barrage meant certain death. Gobind Singh replied that he had no fear, and forthwith charged the wall of fire.

He had not gone many yards before a shell fell upon his horse, blowing its hindquarters to atoms, and flinging him heavily to earth.

Happily he was not stunned, but when he picked himself up and discovered that he was covered with blood he made sure that he was mortally wounded. Nothing mattered now if only he could reach his goal and deliver his reply. Convinced that he could not run, he slowly walked on over the two hundred yards or so that still lay between him and safety. Though the Germans still fired at him, he was not hit, and he arrived at headquarters without any further adventure.

Having delivered his dispatch to the general, he sought the nearest doctor, who examined him carefully, only to find that he had not suffered even a scratch. His spirit was as high as ever, and he was quite ready to push into the jaws of death once more. He asked if there was another message to be sent, and declared himself quite willing to take it. Fortunately it was not necessary to risk the gallant man's life a fourth time.

It only remains to add that soon afterwards our troops dislodged the Germans and rescued the surrounded cavalry.

After receiving the Victoria Cross from the hands of the King, the gallant Dafadar attended a reception given by the National Indian Association, and was presented with an address, a piece of plate, and a gold watch. That grand old Indian soldier, Sir O'Moore Creagh, and the Maharaja Sir Pertab Singh, the clan chief, greeted the hero with words of high praise. Sir O'Moore Creagh reminded the company that since the dawn of history Rajputs had shown themselves ever ready to sacrifice their lives for the honour of their king and country.

CHAPTER III.

VALOROUS DEEDS AND VICTORIA CROSSES.—II.

CAPTAIN (TEMPORARY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL) NEVILLE BOWES ELLIOTT-COOPER, D.S.O., M.C., Royal Fusiliers.

News was brought to Colonel Elliott-Cooper that the enemy had broken through our outpost line. Immediately he rushed out of his dug-out, and as he did so saw the Germans advancing across the open. Calling upon the reserve company and every man in the neighbourhood to follow him, he mounted the parapet and made straight for the enemy. His splendid audacity saved the situation. He and his followers fell fiercely upon the attackers, and forced them back some six hundred yards. Then, while still far in advance of his men, he was severely wounded. Realizing that the Germans greatly outnumbered his little company, and that his men would suffer terribly if they advanced any farther, he signalled to them to withdraw, regardless of the fact that when they retired he would be taken prisoner. Though he himself had fallen into the hands of the enemy, his prompt and gallant leading had gained time for our reserves to move up and strengthen the line of defence.

LIEUTENANT HUGH MACKENZIE, D.C.M., Canadian Machine Gun Corps.

Lieutenant Mackenzie, who was born in Inverness, and subsequently resided in Dundee, where he won repute as a wrestler, migrated to Canada some years before the war, and when the call came enlisted in the Canadian Infantry. During an attack, he was in charge of a section of four machine guns which accompanied the infantry. Before long the advance was held up by a nest of enemy machine guns, which from a commanding position on high ground shot down many of our men, all the officers, and most of the non-commissioned officers.

Handing over the command of his machine guns to an N.C.O., he took charge of the infantry, rallied them, formed them up for an attack, and captured the strong point. His position, however, was by no means comfortable. Gun-fire from a neighbouring "pill-box" beat down upon it, and unless the little fort could be reduced, retirement would be necessary. Lieutenant Mackenzie thereupon went out into the open and examined the situation. Then he organized two parties, one to attack in front and the other in flank. Unhappily, while leading the frontal attack he was killed. "By his valour and leadership this gallant officer ensured the capture of two strong points, and so saved the lives of many men, and enabled the objectives to be taken."

Lieutenant (Acting Captain) George Henry Tatham Paton, M.C., Grenadier Guards.

Captain Paton was the son of Mr. G. W. Paton, managing director of Bryant and May and chairman of the Match Control Board. His mother was a native of Edinburgh, and her son was born in Argyllshire. While occupying a village, a unit on his left was driven back, leaving his flank in the air. Though his company was practically surrounded, he walked up and down his line under a withering fire from the enemy, only fifty yards away, and directed his men in making new defences. Several times he carried in wounded, and was the last to leave the village when it could no longer be held. Again he re-adjusted his line, once more exposing himself to the enemy's fire, utterly regardless of danger. In his new position he was four times counter-attacked, but each time he sprang upon the parapet to give his men confidence. At last he was mortally wounded, but even while his life was ebbing away he continued to encourage his men. After the enemy had broken through on his left he dragged himself to the top of the parapet, and with a few men whom he had inspired by his example, forced the attackers to withdraw, and thus saved the left flank.

Lieutenant (Acting Captain) Walter Napleton Stone, Royal Fusiliers.

In my account of the battle of Cambrai I told you the story of this gallant officer. He was in command of a company utterly cut off from supports and a thousand yards in front of our main line. His post overlooked the enemy's position, and observing the Germans massing for an attack, he sent back

Bombers at Work.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

These men are engaged in flinging the Mills or pine-apple bomb against the enemy. In the foreground a man is seen in the act of drawing the pin from the grenade. The second man is about to throw a bomb; he holds it in the palm of his hand, with his fingers over the lever. The third man has flung his bomb with a circular sweep of the arm so as to clear the parapet of the trench.

most valuable information to headquarters. He was ordered to withdraw, leaving a rearguard to cover the retirement. As the enemy was even then coming on, he sent back three platoons, and himself remained with the rearguard. He stood on the parapet with a telephone, and though a hurricane of shells hurtled about him, continued to keep his headquarters informed of the movements of the enemy. Finally, when all hope of succour had vanished, he ordered the telephone wire to be cut. The rearguard fought heroically, but at last was surrounded and cut to pieces. The gallant captain fell shot through the head. His work, however, had been done. The information which he sent to headquarters enabled his comrades in the rear to make arrangements just in time to save this part of the line from disaster.

" To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late ;
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his gods ? "

Lieutenant (Acting Captain) Richard William Leslie Wain, Tank Corps.

This gallant young soldier—he was but twenty-one when he fell—passed direct from St. Bees College, Cumberland, to the Welsh Fusiliers. He was afterwards transferred to the Manchesters, and later on to the Tank Corps. During an attack he was in command of a section of Tanks, in one of which he was stationed. This Tank was put out of action by a direct hit from an enemy gun while it was close to a strong point which was holding up the advance. Captain Wain and one man, both seriously wounded, were the only survivors. Though bleeding freely, Captain Wain refused to have his wounds dressed, and seizing a Lewis gun, rushed from behind the Tank and captured the strong point. About half the garrison surrendered to him. Though his wounds were serious, he still persisted in " carrying on." He picked up a rifle, and continued to fire at the retreating enemy until he fell with a fatal wound in the head. " It was due to the valour displayed by Captain Wain that the infantry were able to advance."

Second-Lieutenant Stanley Henry Parry Boughey, Royal Scottish Fusiliers.

Lieutenant Boughey was another of the heroic band who

freely gave their lives to stave off disaster. The enemy in large numbers had managed to crawl up to within thirty yards of our firing-line, and with bombs and machine guns were preventing our men from replying. At this moment, when the capture of our position seemed certain, Lieutenant Boughey sprang forward all alone and rushed towards the advancing foe, hurling bombs with deadly accuracy. So fierce was his onset that a party of thirty Germans held up their hands in surrender. As the gallant young officer turned to go back for more bombs he received his death wound, and passed away while his comrades were securing the prisoners.

Lieutenant Samuel Thomas Dickson Wallace, Royal Field Artillery.

Lieutenant Wallace was in command of a section of guns at the time when enemy artillery, machine guns, infantry, and aeroplanes made a combined assault upon his group of batteries. The commander and five sergeants fell, and the gunners were reduced to five. The enemy infantry had well-nigh surrounded the little band of survivors, and all seemed lost. Nevertheless Lieutenant Wallace determined to fight his guns to the last. He swung the trails close together, and his men ran from gun to gun loading and firing. In this way he covered the other battery positions, and gave assistance to some small parties of our infantry who were holding a position against great odds. For eight hours he and his heroic comrades kept the guns going, and worked great havoc on the enemy. At last his men were too exhausted to continue. Happily at this moment an infantry support arrived. Hastily removing the breech-blocks from his guns, thus rendering them useless, he withdrew, taking with him all his wounded comrades. I am sure you will agree that by this dogged stand he had earned the highest honour that could be bestowed upon him. The story ends happily. A gunner, you know, considers the loss of his guns the greatest dishonour that can befall him. Lieutenant Wallace's lost guns were afterwards recovered.

Rifleman Albert Edward Shepherd, King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Rifleman Shepherd in civil life was a driver at New Monckton Colliery. At the age of eighteen he enlisted, and soon became renowned as an army boxer. He was gassed and twice wounded before the day on which he proved himself worthy

to rank with the bravest of the brave. When his company was held up by a machine gun which was firing at point-blank range, he determined to knock it out. Though ordered not to risk his life, he rushed forward and hurled a Mills bomb into the midst of the gun crew. Two of the gunners were killed, and he was thus able to seize the weapon. The advance then continued, but before long our men were again assailed by machine-gun fire from a flank. All the officers and N.C.O.'s fell, and the survivors were without a leader. Rifleman Shepherd sprang into the breach ; he took command of the company, and ordered the men to lie down while he himself went back some seventy yards under fierce fire to obtain the help of a Tank. He then returned to his company, and when the Tank arrived, led his men forward to their last objective. "The hour finds the man." In the hour of difficulty and danger Rifleman Shepherd proved himself a leader of the highest courage and skill.

LANCE-CORPORAL JOHN THOMAS, North Staffordshire Regiment.

Lance-Corporal Thomas was a native of Higher Openshaw, Manchester. He was a reservist, and when the war broke out was away at sea. As soon as he arrived in England he joined the Army Service Corps, and after three years again passed into the Reserve. He then returned to his former occupation, and was on board the *Lusitania* when she made her last voyage from America to Liverpool. After the liner was foully torpedoed he rejoined the A.S.C. in France, and later on was transferred to the North Staffordshire Regiment. During a period of heavy fighting he and a comrade saw the Germans making preparations for a counter-attack. Without waiting for orders, the pair went out in broad daylight, and under heavy machine-gun fire, to watch the movements of the enemy. The lance-corporal lost his comrade within a few yards of the trench, but, quite undeterred, went on alone. He worked his way round a small copse, shot three snipers who were stalking him, and then pushed on to a building used by the enemy as a night-post. Peeping out cautiously, he saw the Germans bringing up forces for an attack. At once he opened fire on them, and for a whole hour sniped them with great effect. Then he made his way back to our lines, and gave such valuable information to headquarters that the guns were trained on the spot where the enemy troops were massing, with the result

that the remnant which advanced was easily broken up. Thanks to the coolness, devotion, and skill of this enterprising lance-corporal, a dangerous attack was averted.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT JAMES SAMUEL EMERSON, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

This gallant officer, who unhappily did not survive the day, won the Victoria Cross by repeated acts of the greatest heroism. He led his company in an attack, and cleared 400 yards of trench. Though wounded when the enemy advanced to the counter-attack in great strength, he sprang out of the trench with eight of his men, fell upon them in the open, killed many, and took six prisoners. For three hours afterwards the enemy made attack after attack, and all the time Lieutenant Emerson was in the thick of the fight. He was badly wounded, but he refused to go to the dressing-station, and several times was foremost in repelling bomb attacks. Finally the enemy made a great assault. Once more the lieutenant led his men against the attackers, but this time he fell never to rise again. "His heroism, when worn out and exhausted from loss of blood, inspired his men to hold out, though almost surrounded, till reinforcements arrived and the enemy was dislodged."

SERGEANT CYRIL EDWARD GOURLEY, M.M., Royal Field Artillery.

Sergeant Gourley, a Cheshire soldier from West Kirby, in the Wirral Peninsula, had won renown as a gallant fighter before that terrible day on which he claimed the highest tribute of heroism. He was in command of a section of howitzers when the enemy well-nigh surrounded his guns. Germans in large numbers were only 400 yards to the front of him, and about the same distance on one flank, while snipers were in his rear. In this perilous position Sergeant Gourley managed single-handed to keep one of his guns in action throughout the day. Though frequently driven off, he returned again and again, carrying ammunition, laying and firing the gun himself, and taking first one and then another of his detachment to assist him. When the enemy advanced he pulled his gun out of the pit and engaged a machine gun at 500 yards, knocking it out with a direct hit.

All day he held the enemy in check, firing with open sights on parties of Germans in full view, and only from 300 to 800

yards away. Thanks to his splendid doggedness, the guns were saved, and at nightfall were withdrawn.

PRIVATE WALTER MILLS, Manchester Regiment.

Private Mills, who hailed from the Lancashire town of Oldham, was a hero who sacrificed himself to save the position confided to him and his fellows. Waves of deadly gas rolled over the trench, and while our men were gasping and choking, the enemy tried to rush the position. Mills was badly gassed, and he knew that if his life was to be saved he must lie motionless until the poisonous cloud had rolled by. Without a thought for himself, and intent only on saving the trench, he staggered out laden with bombs, and flung them one after the other at the advancing foe, with such success that this one Lancashire lad held back a multitude. Never was there a greater conquest of mind over body. Though suffering agonies, which increased with every effort he made, he continued to fling his bombs until reinforcements arrived, and the enemy was finally driven off. While the devoted fellow was being carried to the rear he died of gas poisoning. Oldham will never produce a more unselfish and devoted hero than Private Walter Mills.

CORPORAL CHARLES WILLIAM TRAIN, London Rifles.

During an advance Corporal Train's company was suddenly brought to a standstill by a party of the enemy armed with two machine guns, which opened fire at close range. Realizing that the guns must be knocked out without delay if the advance was to proceed, Corporal Train, without waiting for orders, dashed forward, and, firing grenades from his rifle, succeeded in putting some of the team out of action by a direct hit. He then shot down the officer in command, and with bomb and rifle either killed or wounded the remainder of the crew. In this way he enabled the line to advance. He then went to the assistance of a comrade who was bombing the enemy from their front, and killed a man who was carrying off the second gun. His courage and devotion to duty saved his battalion heavy casualties, and greatly helped it to make a successful advance.

LANCE-CORPORAL JOHN ALEXANDER CHRISTIE, London Rifles.

An enemy position had been captured, but barely had our men occupied it when the Germans advanced up the communication trenches with bombs. Lance-Corporal Christie at once

collected a supply of bombs, and, scrambling out of the trench, covered fifty yards in the open, and, in spite of machine-gun and shell fire, reached the edge of the communication trench. He then bombed the enemy, and continued to do so until a block had been made. Returning towards his own lines, he heard voices behind him; more Germans were moving up the trench. He turned back, and once more flung bombs, with such effect that he broke up the attacking party. By his prompt and fearless action he saved the situation at a very critical time. "He showed the greatest coolness, and a total disregard for his own safety."

PRIVATE JAMES DUFFY, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

Private Duffy was a stretcher-bearer. While his company was holding a very exposed position, he and a comrade went out to bring in a seriously wounded man. His comrade was wounded, and he returned for another helper. Again he went forward, but a second time his companion was shot down. Nothing daunted, the gallant fellow pushed out under the heavy fire all alone, and succeeded in bringing both his comrades under cover, where he attended to their injuries. His gallantry undoubtedly saved the men's lives.

"Well done for them; and, fair Isle, well for thee!
While that thy bosom bears sons like these,
'The little gem set in the silver sea'
Shall never fear her foes!"

CHAPTER IV.

"THE BOY IN THE AEROPLANE."

IN Chapter XXXII. of our seventh volume I told you how our air service developed from small beginnings into an all-important and very efficient branch of the Army and Navy. You will remember that in July 1917, though some 958 firms and 120,000 persons were employed in manufacturing about four thousand aeroplanes a month, there were many complaints that we had not enough machines to supply all our needs. In the autumn of 1917 it was decided to establish an Air Ministry, and to bring together gradually into one Air Force the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service.

On February 21, 1918, the Under-Secretary of State to the Air Ministry for the first time presented his estimates to the House of Commons. In the course of his speech he gave many interesting details about our flying men. He said that many people were apt to judge the success of a day's operations in the air by the number of machines brought down, and that this was not unnatural, because no one could fail to be thrilled by the thought of the splendid duels fought thousands of feet above the ground. Our fighting squadrons had been described by the Prime Minister as the cavalry of the air. It did glorious and invaluable work. The air cavalry kept up a constant offensive against enemy machines in order to protect our own planes from destruction. They ceaselessly scoured the sky in search of enemy fighters whose task was to prevent out artillery-ranging and photographic machines from carrying out their duties. They formed a screen behind which the other machines did their work.

In the month of September 1917 no less than 139 enemy machines were destroyed by our aeroplanes, thirteen others

Air Attack on the Enemy's Reinforcements.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

The boy in the aeroplane has dived down upon a body of Germans concentrating for an attack, and is lashing them with a hail of bullets from his Lewis gun. In this way he throws the enemy's forces into confusion. Airmen have been known to swoop down over enemy positions and fire upon them from a height of less than fifty feet. Of course, they run great risks, but so rapid are their movements that they frequently escape.

were destroyed by anti-aircraft machine-gun and artillery fire, and 122 more were shot down out of control. Such was the record of one month alone. This air fighting, however, is only a part of the duties which fall to airmen in modern war. They are the eyes of the infantry, the artillery, and the staff. The accuracy and the destructiveness of our artillery fire do not depend merely upon brave and skilful gunners, on good guns, and on a plentiful supply of ammunition. They depend upon a boy in an aeroplane, miles away from the gun, and high up in the skies. There he constantly remains at his post, exposed to the shells of "Archies," and attacks from hostile aircraft, until he has directed the fire of the battery on to the target. This kind of work is not reported, and cannot be reported, in the newspapers, yet it is being done daily and hourly by our gallant boys.

During one day on the Western front no fewer than 127 hostile batteries were successfully engaged for destruction by means of aeroplane observation. Some twenty-eight gun-pits were destroyed, eighty more were damaged, and sixty explosions of ammunition were caused. Nor must we forget the work of the observation balloons. On the same day thirty-four hostile batteries were engaged for destruction by means of balloon observation. "I do not know," said the Under-Secretary, "what is the difference between sitting in an aeroplane and in a balloon, or which observer is the braver man; but the fact remains that this is a most wonderful record of work performed in the air."

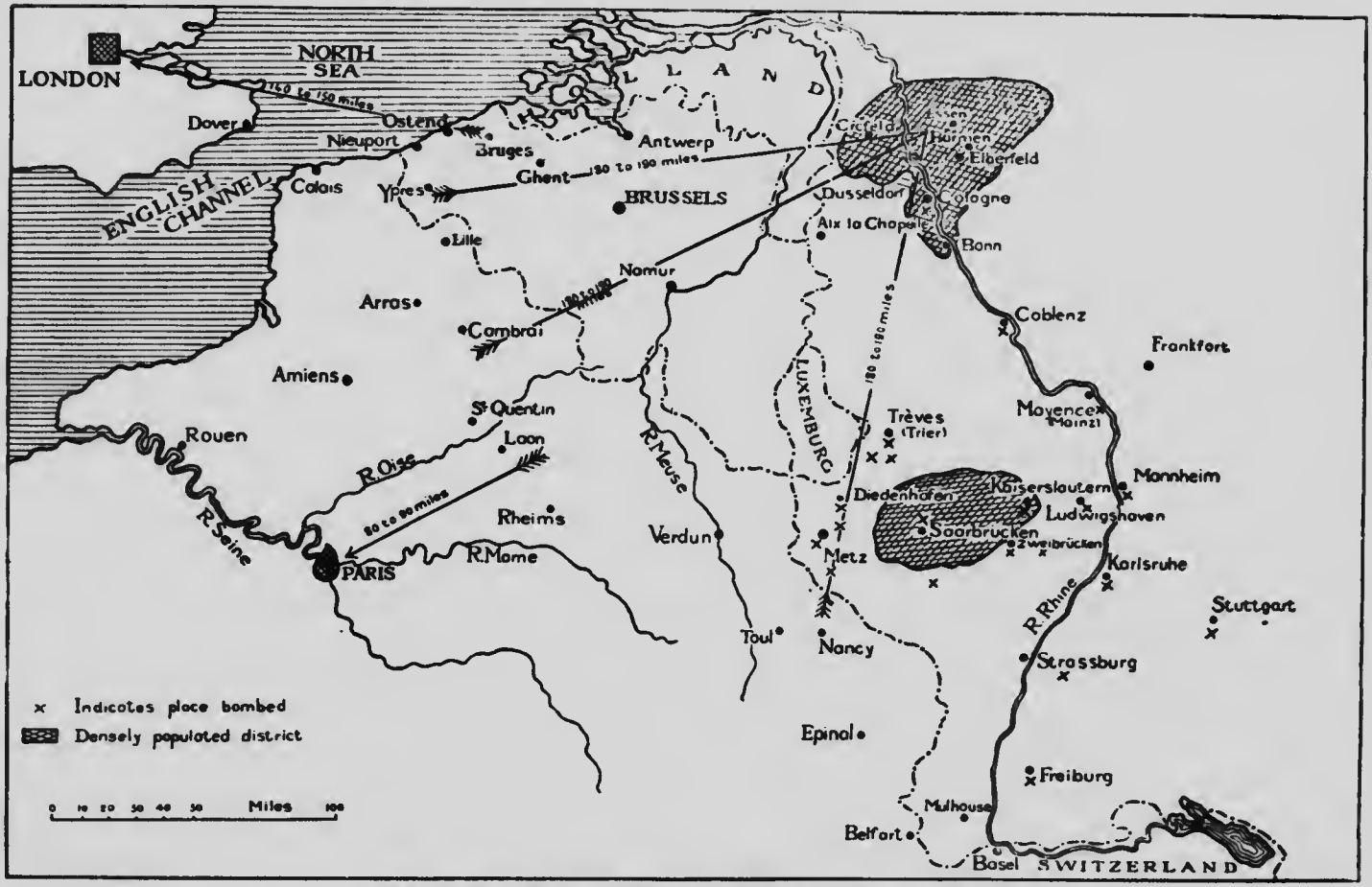
Airmen, however, are very much more than the eyes of the gunners. When we talk of batteries being engaged for destruction, we mean that a battery is ranged on to a target, and that it continues to fire until the boy in the aeroplane signals, "You have done it in," or "You have silenced it," or "The gunners have gone away." These boys are not only the eyes of the gunners, but they are the life-savers of the gunners, and the life-savers of the infantry too. Every enemy battery silenced means the end of a bombardment against a particular section of our trenches. It means so many hundreds less high explosives and gas shells bursting among our lines.

The infantry and the staff are dependent upon the daily and hourly work of our airmen both for the preparation of our attack and for information as to its progress after it has been launched.

The airman brings back information as to what the infantry are doing in the most rapid fashion possible. He also renders invaluable help to the staff by the photographs which he takes. In the month of September 1917 some 15,837 photographs were taken in the air on the Western front. These photographers were constantly under fire from anti-aircraft gunners, and were liable to be attacked by hostile machines which might get through our screen of scouts. Imagine what would be the position of the staff which had to plan an attack without the information given by photographs. Imagine also the task of the infantry ordered to assault a tangled system of pill-boxes, machine-gun emplacements, wire entanglements, and trenches of which all that they can see is the front-line parapet. The airmen who day in and day out fly over the enemy's front line photographing his defences render service of the very highest character.

Short-range bomb-dropping, both by night and by day, on aerodromes, railway junctions, billets, batteries, and other military points, has become one of the regular duties of our Air Force. During September 1917, 7,886 bombs were dropped on the Western front, and in the following month 5,113—a total weight of 238 tons. In addition, a good deal of useful work was done in attacking troops from the air. In December 123,000 rounds were expended in this manner, and in January 1918, 209,000 rounds. In addition to firing at troops on the ground, our airmen are in the habit of descending very low indeed, in order to drop a couple of light bombs when they have used up their cartridges.

Another branch of air fighting is long-range bombing. Between December 1, 1917, and the date of the speech (21st, February) we had carried out eleven raids into Germany, and during the same period the enemy had only made eight raids on Great Britain, though this country is much nearer and much more easily reached from their bases than Germany is from ours. The Under-Secretary then paid a tribute to the pilots who teach our airmen the art of flying. He said that these officers had to spend hour after hour in the air, day after day, teaching beginners and running the greatest possible risks from their lack of skill. These instructors would much prefer to be on active service, but they cheerfully gave up the chance of showing their prowess against



Map to illustrate British Bombing Raids on German Towns.

[*The crosses on the map indicate the German towns bombed between December* 8, 1917, *and the end of March* 1918. *During this period our airmen made more than fifty effective raids into Germany.*]

the enemy in order to impart their knowledge and skill to others. He also praised the work of those who had to keep the machines in order, and finally referred to the fact that our flying men come from all parts of the Empire—Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, and India all had their flying squadrons. "The comradeship of the air has indeed spun one more strand in that invisible but unbreakable thread which unites all citizens of the Empire in advancing civilization in time of peace, and in defending it in time of war."

* * * * * * *

You will remember that the Under-Secretary of the Air Ministry, in the course of his speech to the House of Commons, said that the enemy had a much easier task in bombing London or Paris than we had in attacking German towns. A glance at the map on page 46 shows you how true this statement was. The enemy, you observe, could easily raid the two capitals of the Western Allies. The distance from his starting-points in Belgium to London was something less than 150 miles, and from his lines to Paris meant a flight of only eighty or ninety miles. Further, the way to both capitals was marked out in clear weather by water which can easily be seen from a great height. After crossing the North Sea and striking the estuary of the Thames, the raiders had only to follow the gleam of the river, and they were bound, sooner or later, to reach the London area. So, too, when they raided Paris, they could follow the course of the Oise or the Marne, which would lead them to the Seine, and thence to the French capital.

Now let us see how we stood in regard to German towns. From behind Cambrai a flight of about 130 miles would bring us into Lorraine, the French province which was lost to Germany in 1871. East of Metz you will notice a shaded region round about Saarbrücken. This district contains a small but very busy coalfield, which works up the iron of Lorraine and Luxemburg. Our earlier raids were made on this region. If, however, terror was to be struck into the German people we had to go farther east and bomb the towns along the Rhine, and this meant a flight of 180 or 190 miles. Perhaps you may say, "Why, this is only thirty or forty miles more than the distance from Bruges to London." Quite true, but you must remember that on the double journey this difference amounts to sixty or eighty miles, an important fraction of the whole distance.

Look at the heart-shaped region shaded on the map to the north of Cologne, and lying for the most part in the valley of the Ruhr, a right-bank tributary of the Rhine. This river flows through the Westphalian coalfield, which produces more than half of all the coal mined in Germany. It is not far from the iron fields of Lorraine, and has become the most important iron-working region of the country. It is studded with busy towns which stand close together or run the one into the other, so that it resembles parts of Lancashire or Yorkshire. Barmen, the central town of the region, is two hundred miles as the aeroplane flies from St. Quentin. Perhaps the best known place in the coalfield is Essen, which contains Krupp's great armament and munition works.

You can easily understand that if we could bomb these munition-making towns we could do Germany great damage. We could hamper her production of guns and shells, and make her less powerful in the field. We, therefore, aimed at this region; but by the end of March 1918 we had not reached it. From behind Ypres or Cambrai a double flight of 180 or 190 miles was necessary, and our airmen had to cross the waste and tumbled country of the Ardennes, where there were no land marks to guide them. If they followed the river Moselle until they reached the Rhine and then turned north along that river, they would have to make a long addition to their flight, and this would be no light matter for machines laden with bombs.

Nevertheless we continually strove to reach our goal. In March our airmen were specially busy. Raids, many of them very destructive, were made on Mayence, Stuttgart, Freiburg, and Mannheim, as well as on other places. Between 9th and 12th March we made three raids into Germany, and on the latter date, in broad daylight, bombed Coblentz, at the junction of the Moselle and the Rhine. On the night of the 24th–25th we reached Cologne, and it was hoped that before long our bombs would be falling amidst the iron works and munition factories of the crowded towns in the valley of the Ruhr.

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