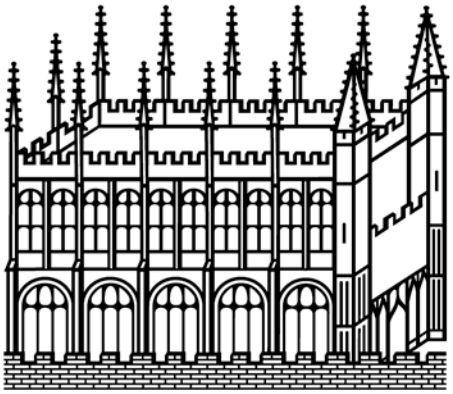


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THE GREAT WAR
1914-1918

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE GREAT WAR
1914-1918

A BRIEF SKETCH

BY C. R. L. FLETCHER
FORMERLY FELLOW OF ALL SOULS' AND MAGDALEN COLLEGES, OXFORD

WITH MAPS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1920



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PREFACE

I FEAR that this little book may be found to contain many mistakes. It is far too early for any history of the war, official or unofficial—perhaps even for such a slight sketch as is here submitted. I can only plead that it was tempting to have a try at one. While I was writing the first lines the boys at Eton were decorating the statue of Henry VI with Allied flags. Since that time I have added, altered, cut out, and rewritten much of it. I have continually been gleaning fresh information which often upset what I had written, and yet may not be true after all. But substantially the sketch stands as it was made in the six weeks following the armistice.

Many friends, including all those whose opinion I most value, have given me another reason, in addition to the difficulty of obtaining information, for deferring publication. They say 'The war is not yet over, we have not won peace, our politicians are going to throw away the fruits of victory.' This may be true, but it does not concern me for the moment. There may be new bitternesses, new complications, which may quite conceivably rob us of some of those fruits. The Allies may be led, by

their politicians and their 'profiteers,' to quarrel in such ways that they will try to rob each other of those fruits. *Soit*; but I should not like to stand in the shoes of such men when

> Liber scriptus proferetur
> in quo totum continetur
> unde mundus judicetur.

There may even be a new war with the old enemy, reborn from the agonies of hapless Russia and in alliance with her worst elements, and such a war would undoubtedly rob us of some of the fruits of our recent victory. But it can never, and nothing can ever, rob us of the deeds which Britain and France have done in the war that began in 1914. That war (*the* war it must ever be to us old people, some of whom lost in it all that made life worth living) is over. It ended on November 11, 1918. I grant that it ended, as the months that have since elapsed have proved, a little too soon. It was a pity that Marshal Foch was not allowed to have 'his battle,' that the armistice was granted before the southern arm of his giant pincers could close upon the Rhine from Lorraine, and before Germany had been made to suffer at least some fraction of what her insensate arrogance and cruelty made the rest of Europe suffer. But with that also I am not concerned; it is not within the sphere of operations which I planned for this little book.

'Again,' say the same friends, 'you don't know what the internal condition of Britain may be two

years hence. One of the quite possible results of the war is sheer economic ruin, probably followed by a revolution.' Well, I shall be very sorry if such things happen, but I can't help it. It won't affect the story of the great things we did in those four years. The hills, and the fields, and the rivers, and the seas of Britain will be there all right at the end of it, whatever ruin may overtake the generation that survived the war. Change, beyond and beside our wildest contemporary expectations and estimates, is a law of nature. Perhaps the changes that will come will breed a better, more humane, more sober and serious race; it is difficult to believe that they will breed sons more enduring and more virile than the heroes of the Great War. When I was an undergraduate our Oxford tutors used to tell us that there was no such thing as 'national character.' What absurd nonsense it was! Upon my soul, I believe it must have been a bit of *camouflage* spread abroad by the Germans (our tutors in the seventies were all steeped in German *Kultur*) in order to sap our belief in ourselves. For it was essentially the veriest 'hard-shell' national characters of France and Britain that won the war. My friend Sir Walter Raleigh said to me, in one of the darkest hours of 1917, 'I found my optimism on the conversations that I invariably hear when I travel in a third-class railway carriage.' We now hear a vast amount about the disputes between capital and labour and about the chaos that must inevitably result from them; we hear far less about

the immense good feeling between all classes of the British people that lies at the root of our national character. It was this that manifested itself so splendidly, on the sea and in the field, during the war. Nay, it was this which enabled us to endure to the end.

It is a thing quite independent of Governments or forms of government. We hear a great deal about the war having been 'a great struggle to make the world safe for democracy.' I think that, in plain English, much of this is what the soldiers call 'hot air.' I prefer the word 'freedom.' I have no greater opinion of democracy as a form of government than Aristotle had; if it could ever be completely put in force it would show itself intensely hostile to true freedom, for it would prohibit intelligence and energy from coming to the top or reaping its due reward if it got there. It was not because they were governed democratically, or any-other-cratically, that France and Britain won the war. It was not their Governments, or their forms of government, that won it; it was the national character of their peoples. 'There never was a Government with so much power and so little authority' as our Cabinet in 1914. But the nation took charge and compelled the Government to wake up and, having woke up, to stand firm. It was the same in France. 'We shall be all right,' said the *poilus*, '*pourvu que les civils y tiennent.*' The two nations did this because each had the spirit of true freedom, and the long inheritance of a glorious

past, to defend. And they had immense indifference to any forms of government, and to any persons in office, except those who would stand firm to the death. And so they won.

I have gratefully to acknowledge the valuable assistance which I have received from the Hon. J. W. Fortescue, C.V.O., Colonel H. Lewin, R.A., C.M.G., Mr. H. W. C. Davis of Balliol College, and, above all, from Mr. (late Captain) C. T. Atkinson, without whose wonderful notes my task would have been impossible.

C. R. L. FLETCHER.

OXFORD, 1920.

MAPS

THE WESTERN FRONT . . . *At end*

THE EASTERN THEATRES OF WAR . „

Κοινῇ γὰρ τὰ σώματα διδόντες ἰδίᾳ τὸν ἀγήρων ἔπαινον ἐλάμβανον καὶ τὸν τάφον ἐπισημότατον, οὐκ ἐν ᾧ κεῖνται μᾶλλον, ἀλλ' ἐν ᾧ ἡ δόξα αὐτῶν παρὰ τῷ ἐντυχόντι aleὶ καὶ λόγου καὶ ἔργου καιρῷ aleίμνηστος καταλείπεται· ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ἐπιφανῶν πᾶσα γῆ τάφος.

Thucydides, ii. 43.



THE GREAT WAR

1914-1918

I

In a little school-book published in 1911, the author ventured to point out the need for some form of national service on account of the well-known ambitions and extensive preparations of Germany; he was also rash enough to remark that nowadays people who commit high treason are too apt to escape without penalty. The result of this was that, on two separate occasions, the book was denounced by politicians in the House of Commons; and on the second of these occasions the Minister for Education declared that he did not consider the book to be a fitting one to be used in National Schools.

Time seems rather to have vindicated the author's point of view, and the following pages may perhaps be accepted as a sort of sequel to the little book of 1911. They were begun on the evening of the day on which the armistice with our chief enemy was signed. They are written not in any spirit of exul-

tation but in all humbleness of heart and with deep thankfulness to Almighty God the only giver of all victory.

It is too early to attempt any detailed account of the most dreadful war in human history, but a few plain facts may be given. If you look at a map of 1914 you will see, in the Balkan Peninsula, in South-East Europe, a little country called Serbia, stretching in a southerly direction from the River Danube towards the Ægean Sea, from which it was then divided by a strip of Greek territory. Greece and the neighbour kingdoms of Bulgaria and Roumania were in 1914 in the hands of kings either of German descent or wholly German in sympathy, though all the Balkan nationalities are mainly of Slavonic descent, and are, therefore, of kin to the Russians, Poles, and Bohemians; all had formed, in comparatively recent times, part of the Turkish Empire. Just north of the Serbs, and north-west of the Roumanians, lay another people of Asiatic race, the Magyars or Hungarians; and you will see in the map that these divide the Southern, or Balkan, Slavs from the Northern, Polish and Bohemian, Slavs. These Hungarians formed part of the Austrian Empire.

The Serbs were nearly all peasants, and the main products of Serbia are plums, pigs, and honey. They had a fine old hero for king, whose grandfather had been a well-to-do pig-breeder. They had no outlet to the sea, but one railway ran through Serbia to the Greek port of Salonica, and another

through Serbia and Bulgaria to Constantinople, the capital of the Turkish Empire. So their territory was to some extent a ' highway ' coveted by more powerful nations. Quite recently, in the rapid decay of Turkey, these Balkan peoples had had a great scramble for territory among themselves, and all were unsettled and pretty jealous of each other.

We ought not to think of these peoples as 'civilized' in the sense in which we can apply the word to the peoples of Western Europe; four or five centuries of Turkish misrule had quenched such civilization as had lingered on from the days when the Balkan peninsula had been part of the old Roman Empire, and in addition to their racial hatreds the advent of the Turk had brought in the fearful religious division between the new Mohammedan rulers and the subject Christian populations. The country south of the Danube is excessively mountainous and roads are still very few and very bad. In such circumstances it seems perhaps rather absurd that, when the Balkan peoples were successively liberated from their Turkish oppressors, the only thing that the diplomatists of Europe could devise for them was a copy of ' parliamentary government ' as we know it in the West; but the fabric of the new States became even more shaky when at the head of several of them were placed German or semi-German princes as kings. Such kings might be reckoned among the ' principal exports ' of Germany, and naturally looked for political inspiration to their fatherland, went themselves,

and sent their generals, to be trained for war in the school of the German Staff. And the result was that the art of government in South-Eastern Europe had become a series of adventures and *coups d'état*, occasionally spiced with murder.

Serbia had in 1914 a greater reason for anxiety than her neighbours; for she was the nearest of the Balkan peoples to the great Austro-Hungarian Empire. If left to themselves the rulers of this ancient but ill-compacted state would probably have kept quiet; but ever since her defeat by Prussia in 1866 Austria had been more or less a satellite of the young and powerful Prussian monarchy; and ever since Prussia, after her victory over France in 1871, had put herself at the head of the newly created 'German Empire,' this new Germany intended to use Austria to further her own ambitions. During the last thirty years these ambitions had swollen until they had become nothing less than the dominion of the world; in particular they included one or more high roads to the East, to be entirely in the control, if not in the actual territory, of Germany. The Germans spoke of this high road as the 'Berlin-Bagdad' railway; it was to run right through to the port of Basra at the head of the Persian Gulf. Germany knew that this would sooner or later bring her into conflict with Great Britain (for it was a direct and open threat to our Indian Empire) but she hoped to be able to lull us to sleep with promises until all her plans were complete. This railway was in 1914 being rapidly completed by German engineers

with German money.[1] For the greater part of the way it would run, across Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, through Turkish territory.

What did the Turks think of this? Their rulers were being bribed or persuaded into agreeing; Germany promised to 'bolster up' Turkey if she would become her ally. For the purpose in hand Turkey was an ally worth having. She had an army of about a million and a half[2] very brave men, and Germany supplied her with guns and staff-officers. The German Emperor was fond of posing as the protector of the Mohammedan faith; a war, if it came, could be represented as a Mohammedan adventure against Christian England and Russia; in the event of victory the Crescent could

[1] The most serious gap was at the Cilician Gates through the Taurus, not yet tunnelled in August 1914; there was another, further east, between Nisibin and Samarra.

[2] Some writers are inclined to halve even this figure; yet we have fairly good evidence that in the autumn of 1917, after suffering above half a million casualties, the Turks had still about a million men under arms or liable to service. But it is extremely risky to trust to statistics in an Empire consisting of such heterogeneous elements, Arabs (many of them hostile and poor fighters at best), Armenians (nearly all hostile, many of them murdered early in the war), Kurds (probably in insurrection or unrecruitable), and the true peasant Turks of Anatolia—these last being by far the most loyal and best soldiers the Sultan owned. Probably even Enver Pasha himself never really knew on how many men he could reckon. The total population of the Turkish Empire in 1914 is believed to have been about 20 millions.

be hoisted again over Cyprus and Egypt. Turkey still governed (if you can call tax-collecting, varied by an occasional massacre, a government) a small south-eastern corner of the Balkan peninsula, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Arabia; her Sultan was still nominally the head of the Mohammedan faith.

So Germany, you see, had Austria and Turkey in her pocket, Bulgaria (through her German king) more or less in her pocket; King Constantine of Greece, though only indirectly of German blood, was wholly German in sympathy; perhaps some day we shall learn what part he took in the planning of the great crime of 1914. Only Serbia blocked the way. It would not be very difficult to make Austria pick a quarrel with Serbia, though the poor old Emperor Francis Joseph, aged 86, was probably only wishful to die in peace. A travelling Archduke of Austria was cruelly murdered by a 'nationalist' in the Austrian province of Bosnia, next door to Serbia, in June 1914. The Austrian Government at once, but without any evidence, accused the Serbian Government of having been the prompters of the crime, and demanded such terms of reparation that Serbia could not possibly retain any shadow of independence or national self-respect if she accepted them. King Peter did, indeed, make every offer of reparation, short of complete submission. There can be no doubt that the Austrian demand was, like our cheap toys, 'made in Germany,' in fact that Germany was its principal author.

The Serbian king and his people therefore prepared to defend their country to the last drop of their blood. But they also cried aloud to the state which was the natural protector of all the small Slav nationalities, Russia. The Emperor of Russia, ill prepared as his country was for war, honeycombed as it was with treason and discontent owing to its shockingly antiquated and tyrannous system of government, could not possibly refuse to listen to this Serbian cry.

It is quite clear that Germany had always till recent years entertained a wholesome fear of Russia. The greatest German statesman, Bismarck, had always kept on good terms with her. The Russian frontier against Germany and Austria was 1,500 miles long. Russia's vast size, her great natural riches, her rapidly increasing population of brave peasant soldiers, had made a great impression on all who believed, as Germans did, that victory would ultimately rest with the 'big battalions.' This army, it was almost certain, would be very largely increased by wholesale desertions from the Austrian colours of every conceivable breed of the Slavonic subjects of Austria; and it was, indeed, desertion on a gigantic scale during the two first years of the war which did so much to paralyse Austrian strategy. On the other hand the task of feeding and equipping some scores of thousands of Austro-Slav deserters, fell to Russia, who was already unable to feed or equip her own soldiers. Few people in Europe realized how rotten at the core

the Russian State really was, and yet how unfit for any form of free self-government were the Russian people. Perhaps the German Government knew this: for many years it had been worming its way into the hearts (and pockets) of Russian traitors in high places. The Empress of Russia was a German princess. The Emperor of Russia, however, whatever his faults before or afterwards, seems to have been perfectly loyal when he decided to put his huge armies in motion against Austria to come to the help of the Serbs.

But if Russia moved there would be another hand, and a very different kind of hand, in the game. Astonishing as it may sound, Germany coveted a large strip of French territory in addition to that which she had seized in 1871. At the least (because her own ironfields were believed to be within measurable distance of exhaustion) she wished to annex the very rich ironfield of French Lorraine. Far beyond this, moreover, went the champions of the 'Pan-Germanic' movement; these desired to grab into the German Empire all provinces inhabited by people who had any drop of Teutonic blood in their veins, and this was interpreted so as to include a strip of territory reaching from the mouth of the Somme to the sources of the Saône and from that point to the mouth of the Rhone—say one quarter, and by far the richest quarter, of France. Belgium would thus be wholly cut off from her western neighbour, and might, together with Holland, be swallowed and digested at leisure.

The German Government, while officially pretending to pour cold water on the 'Pan-Germans,' secretly encouraged them, and there can be little doubt that in the event of victory, Germany would not have shrunk from this enormous annexation.

For some ten years after her terrible trial and defeat in 1870–1 France had perhaps cherished thoughts of revenge on Germany for the insults then heaped upon her, and of recovery of the two provinces then torn from her, Alsace and the greater part of Lorraine. During the last thirty years, however, she had put all these thoughts behind her, and, though obliged to keep all her people in military training in order to watch against a fresh German invasion, she was wholly devoted to the arts of peace and to the task of keeping the peace of Europe. One guarantee of this peace, and it seemed to the French a very good one, was the alliance with Russia, which took shape about 1896. It was difficult for Frenchmen to believe that any German ruler would lightly incur the risk of war on his eastern and western fronts at the same time. Yet the early years of the twentieth century were full of portents proving that even this was possible. And so France began to seek a still greater alliance, a still firmer guarantee of peace, the friendship of Great Britain. No formal 'alliance' existed between us in 1914; but, before our King Edward VII died in 1910, there was a very close 'understanding' between the two great free nations of the West to the effect that, if

Germany attacked either of us, each would come to the help of the other. This understanding also drew us nearer to Russia, with whom we had not been really on good terms since the Crimean War. So during the few years preceding 1914 the stage had been set, France, Britain, and Russia on the one side determined to keep the peace, Germany and Austria on the other side waiting for a favourable opportunity to break it. Italy was still (since 1886) nominally the ally of these 'Central Powers,' but was pretty sure to desert them if they broke the peace wantonly, for all her past history and all her instincts of freedom drew her towards the Western Powers.[1] When therefore Austria declared war on Serbia on July 28 and Russia set her armies in motion to help the Serbs on the 31st, France loyally responded and took the first steps in a like direction. Yet so anxious was she to avoid even the least appearance of provocation that she actually withdrew her army seven miles behind her own frontier at the very moment when the Germans were preparing to cross it. Then she called upon England.

And then followed, for those of us who knew the habits of British parliamentary leaders, some ninety-six hours of intense anxiety. Would our 'rulers' dare to choose the path of honour (which was also the only path of ultimate safety), or would they allow Germany to go on lulling them to sleep?

[1] As a matter of fact it seems to have been Italy that first discovered what was afoot early in the summer of 1914, and Italy gave timely warning to France and Britain.

They had been definitely warned in 1911 that Germany was only waiting for pretext and opportunity, and in 1912 they had learned at first hand how gigantic were her preparations for war. The aged Field-Marshal Lord Roberts had 'stumped the country' to awaken it to this danger, and to urge the need for some form of military training for the whole nation; the country had remained deaf and blind, and our rulers had poured cold water on his warnings. Germany had been carefully fomenting strikes and class-hatred in Great Britain, and was at that very moment rejoicing in the expectation of something like a civil war in Ireland. But it is difficult to believe that, if we had adopted even the least measure towards universal military service, Germany would have dared to go to war; and so I suppose that she believed that *nothing* would ever provoke our rulers to stand in earnest by their French friends. Indeed, one leading English newspaper, the *Daily News*, openly besought them to remain neutral.

Then suddenly—for, as the old saying goes, 'those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad'—Germany went and did the very thing that must at once drive any British Government to take the field and to take the sea. She invaded Belgium.[1]

[1] Germany had declared war on Russia on August 1, on France on August 3, on Belgium August 4. The first shots of the war were fired by the Austrians into Belgrade on July 29.

To defend Belgium against any great power has always been an obligation both of honour and interest for England from the days of Edward III to those of George V. All the great states of Europe had recognized the neutrality of Belgium, and Germany herself had guaranteed it by the most solemn treaty: that neutrality was the keystone of the arch of peace in Europe. Germany now declared such treaties to be 'scraps of paper.' The British Lion gave an awful roar of grief, pity, and wrath, and Sir Edward Grey, who had for many days been offering every concession, every guarantee, that Germany could possibly wish for, in the hope of preserving peace, denounced in the House of Commons the infamous violation of the rights of small nations, and declared that Great Britain would stand to the last by the side of Belgium, Serbia, France, Russia, and any one else whom the robbers should attack. This was on August 3, 1914; on the next day our ultimatum was presented to the German Government, and, no answer to this being received, a state of war between Great Britain and Germany began on August 4, at 10.30 p.m. Few of us who were then old enough to understand will ever forget that night.

II

We were not wholly unprepared for war. On July 27 the British Navy had put to sea with 'sealed orders' but ready for action in case the

peace were broken. It could then have caught the German Navy (which was off the coast of Norway) and sent it to the bottom of the North Sea, which at that moment, though perhaps not later, would have effectually prevented any further war. But this would have made *us* the first to break the peace, and we were rightly resolved not to be the first. Also ready for action was the small British 'Expeditionary Force' of one cavalry and six infantry divisions, barely 110,000 fighting men, but perhaps the finest fighting machine for its size, according to any existing standard of the art of war, that ever took the field. Within a week of Germany's declaration of war upon us, the first units of that force were on French soil. 'From the time we passed the sentries on the mole (at Havre) till we reached our base far inland,' wrote one who landed on August 13, 'our progress was punctuated by shouts of passionate welcome.' It is amazing that the enemy, who had no scruples about 'aggression,' made no attempt to hinder the passage of our army across the Channel in the first three weeks; it only shows how timid his naval strategy was.

It is probable that, in their attack on Belgium, the Germans had something more in view than merely to 'hack their way through' to Paris by the shortest route. They dared not attack only on the actual French frontier between Luxemburg and Switzerland, for it was held by the greatest strength of the French army, and guarded by mighty fortresses, Verdun, Toul, Épinal, Belfort. Even if,

after many weeks or months of siege, and at the cost of awful slaughter of their men, the enemy could successively reduce these great fortresses, the delay would both enable France to get all her people under arms, and give the Russians time to come into line. But if they invaded Belgium they might not only get round all the French armies from the north, and so cut them off from Paris, but they might also raise such an outcry of pity in France that the Government would be obliged to divert its main army northwards, and thus weaken the force guarding the southern road through Lorraine to Châlons (the Aldershot of France) and Paris. By either road they must be quick, and finish off France before Russia could get her huge masses to work; they evidently thought that a month at longest would enable them to annihilate the French Army and compel France to sue for peace; then they would turn on the Russians.

Indeed they seem to have been actually disappointed to discover no French forces in Belgium. They found, instead, a heroic resistance from the tiny Belgian Army under its gallant King Albert, and from the great Belgian fortress of Liége; and a priceless, if brief, delay was thus gained for the Allies. Cruelties unheard of in the previous history of civilized war were perpetrated on the Belgians from the first moment of the invasion, in fact first at the frontier town of Visé. Now it is an accepted doctrine of military law (so far as we can speak of 'law' as existing during the invasion of a country)

that a civilian, not being in uniform, who resists the invader by force may be punished with death; yet in modern times this law has seldom been enforced except by the Germans in 1870–1. But it has never been a law of war that other civilians besides the resisters should be so punished, still less that their women and children should be punished, that whole villages and even big towns should be destroyed because some civilian, goaded perhaps to madness at the sight of his home being plundered and his wife insulted by the enemy, has shot at one of the plunderers. But all these things were done by the Germans when they entered Belgium in 1914, and it is now evident that they were often deliberately ordered by the German commanders for the purpose of striking terror into the hearts of the population. In some cases such cruelties may have been merely the work of private soldiers broken loose from all restraint and getting into a country where they found plenty of wine to drink; but far oftener they were deliberate executions of batches of civilians—men, women, and children. 'They shot my husband before my eyes and trampled two of my children to death: I was the mother of nine and have five with me, the other two are lost,' said a peasant woman who had fled for refuge to Brussels. Perhaps even more infamous was the practice of some advanced guards of the Germans who actually drove troops of civilians of both sexes in front of themselves as screens to prevent the Belgian Army from firing on them.

When the last of the forts which surrounded Liége fell on August 15 (the town had surrendered on August 7), the enemy's road to Brussels was open and the Belgian Government fled to Antwerp on the 17th. It still cherished vain hopes that a British force might land in Belgium in time to save the coast-line, or that the French would be able to hurry an army down the Sambre in time to save the third great Belgian fortress, Namur, at the junction of the rivers Sambre and Meuse. This last might perhaps have been possible had Namur been able to hold out even as long as Liége; it was defended by a similar ring of steel-covered forts, and is a stronger place by nature. But Namur was evacuated on August 23, after a bombardment of twenty-four hours, and its fall compelled the French to begin their operations in the north by a backward instead of a forward movement. Meanwhile, the Belgian Army had fallen back towards the coast, making a sturdy resistance and inflicting great loss on the enemy in its retreat. On August 20 the enemy made his triumphal entry into the Belgian capital, seizing and imprisoning, with horrid threats on his life, Burgomaster (Lord Mayor) Max of Brussels, who refused to attempt to raise a sum of eight million pounds which the Germans demanded as an 'indemnity' because Belgium had resisted their arms. In revenge for this, and *after* the Belgians had evacuated these places, the Germans successively destroyed the beautiful city of Louvain—'the Oxford of Belgium'

—with its priceless library and its wonderful mediæval buildings; the almost equally venerable city of Malines, where the finest lace in Europe was made; and the city of Termonde. In doing such things they violated another of the established 'laws of war:' they burned, besides, innumerable villages, in which they alleged that resistance had been made by one or more civilians.

Cruelties almost as bad were repeated on many of the French cities and villages when the French frontier was reached, and some people were not slow to blame the 'inaction' of the French, who apparently had done so little to succour Belgium or to guard their own northern outposts.

But the great French commander, soon to be called 'Marshal' Joffre, was not going to be led into any traps by sentimental or political outcries; in spite of the danger in the north he took the daring step of holding up large forces of the enemy in the south, in the very first fortnight of the war, by two successive invasions of Alsace and one of Lorraine. These looked like, and indeed were, failures at the moment, but they tempted the enemy to his first great defeat, they lured him on to an appalling death-trap at Joffre's carefully prepared position of Grand-Couronné in front of Nancy in French Lorraine, where in thirteen desperate days of assault he threw away a very large number of men and fell back baffled. Yet most people's eyes continued to be fixed on the north, where by August 23 the small British contingent under

French,[1] Haig, Smith-Dorrien, and Allenby were, in line with their French allies, meeting the onrush of the Germans on the southern frontier of Belgium.

Before describing the events of the next three weeks, I must ask you to bear in mind that General Joffre knew that he must sacrifice any amount of Belgian and French territory, or even Paris itself, rather than be led into a great battle at a disadvantage. He meant to fight when and where *he* willed, not when and where the Germans willed. It was in the northern section that the Germans intended to employ nearly half of the forces which they were assembling on the Western front, an intention which the French Intelligence Department had failed to discover. It must not be supposed, then, that Joffre had planned the 'Great Retreat' from the beginning in order to lure the enemy on to destruction; rather he had intended to begin with an attack, in which the British force was to play an important part, on the southern flank of that portion of the German Army which was coming south-west from Brussels. It was not until August 23, by which time the British had already advanced to Mons, that Joffre discovered that he had to deal with Germans nearly double in numbers of those he had expected to find in Belgium; that these were already in possession of the bridges across the Lower Sambre;

[1] Sir John French held the chief command of our troops in France till December 19, 1915, when he was succeeded by Sir Douglas Haig.

and that Namur, on which he had intended to 'pivot' his forces, was just surrendering. It was a most difficult country to fight in; not only is it a network of slow, deep rivers and canals, but it is simply packed with colliery-works, slag-heaps, railway stations, and squalid streets of miners' houses. Besides Generals von Kluck and von Bülow, who were rapidly advancing from the north-east, a third German army, von Hausen's, was crossing the Meuse at Dinant, southwards from Namur, and compelling the French armies on the Sambre and in the Ardennes to fall back and to lose touch with the British right. The worst discovery of all, perhaps, was that of the enormous preponderance of the Germans in heavy artillery and high-explosive shells; some of their siege guns were of the calibre of 16 inches, bigger, in fact, than our largest naval guns.

The British force at Mons was thus 'left in the air,' and in imminent danger of being cut off; indeed, on the 23rd Bülow's Germans were actually to the south of our right flank. Kluck alone was two and a half times in men, and twice in guns, as strong as our force; that he did not overwhelm us at Mons was mainly due to his faulty tactics of attacking in successive waves of men, massed closely together, which our excellent rifle-shooting simply mowed down as fast as they came on. Sir John French was thus able to fall back from Mons next morning in good order, having given the Germans such a lesson in British

stubbornness as effectually damped Kluck's ardour for effective pursuit. But while Haig, who led our right corps, escaped unmolested, Smith-Dorrien on the left had on the 24th a very hard fight, and only the splendid resistance of a tiny flank-guard at Audregnies saved him from being cut off.

So the famous 'Retreat from Mons' had now begun, and for the first three days it was, especially to the British forces, hazardous in the extreme: no one knew where his neighbour was, where his own transport was (indeed much of it was abandoned), by what roads he was supposed to fall back, nor where, if at all, he was to get his rations. A man who had 'carried his pack all through the retreat' was apt afterwards to become a legendary hero among his comrades. The weight each British soldier was supposed to carry was indeed considerable—great-coat, mackintosh sheet, spare boots and socks, rifle, and 150 rounds of ammunition.

'We have known what it is not to sleep for several nights, and to go on a biscuit or two for a whole day: a column of sleepless, foodless men staggering along mile after mile, hour after hour, is a mighty different thing from a route-march of the Guards at home.' The pace would get slower and slower as the fierce sun poured down on the limping columns which were only sheltered from that blaze by the cloud of dust the men themselves made; every now and then a man staggered out of the ranks and fell forward on his face by the roadside. The want of

sleep was probably worse than the want of food: 'I have learned not to care whether one sleeps wet or dry, to dispense with washing, to sleep whenever and wherever possible.' Some were more powerfully affected by the horrible sights and still more horrible smells; 'the sight of horse lines after being surprised by artillery fire, or the sight of the road from the firing line to the rear during a big battle—these are things not sung of by Homer or by Scott or by anyone else.' One of the most tragic of all the sights was that of the French villagers abandoning their homes and fleeing towards Paris, old men with the memories of 1870 revived, women wheeling their children and scraps of their household goods in barrows. German aeroplanes whizzed over the retreating British, very low down, and with perfect impunity; 'we hardly saw any of our own'—indeed there were at first but forty-six with the whole British Expeditionary Force. All the way the gunners guarded the rear, firing till the last moment, then limbering up and moving on to a fresh position. Behind us the burning villages marked the track of the pursuing Huns.

One of the saving clauses in the situation was that the French fortress of Maubeuge on the Sambre held out (till September 7) and held up a large number of Bülow's troops; it also covered the retirement of our right, as Allenby's glorious cavalry, overmatched by four to one, covered that of our left. When Maubeuge was left

behind and Kluck had again failed on the 25th to envelop either Haig or Smith-Dorrien, though these had to separate and march one each side of the impenetrable Mormal Forest, Haig had only to stand a sharp night attack at Landrecies and was able to continue his retreat to the River Oise, while Smith-Dorrien, acting on his own responsibility, made early on the 26th his immortal stand at Le Cateau. He had three to one in artillery and seven to three in men against him. Some of his divisions (he had the 3rd, 4th, and 5th, the 19th Infantry Brigade, and one cavalry division) had suffered severely in the previous fighting, so we may perhaps allow him 60,000 fighting men with which to hold up 130,000. If Mons had proved the marvellous accuracy of our rifle fire, Le Cateau was the birthday of our new field artillery. The enemy from the first had shown himself astounded and horrified at both, as well as at our cohesion and discipline during a sullen, prolonged, and unwilling retreat for which our men could see no cause. We lost perhaps 8,000 men in that battle, but we made Kluck pay two for one in losses, and most marvellous of all was the way in which Smith-Dorrien, early in the afternoon, drew off in reasonably good order to continue his retreat towards Saint-Quentin. This was a feat of tactics hitherto believed to be impossible, and reflects the highest credit on the general who dared and did it. After the battle our men ' walked till 1 a.m., slept in the rain till 3 a.m., and then walked on most of the next

day'; the victors of Le Cateau (for it had the effect of a British victory) marched 25 miles before dawn of the 27th, and early on the 28th reached the Oise at Noyon; Haig had just reached the same river at La Fère. Both corps were safely across the Aisne by the 31st.

From the hour of Le Cateau, our prospects had improved; 'things began to straighten themselves out,' roads and halting-places[1] were marked out beforehand, rations arrived, transport kept touch. A French army was brought up to cover our left towards Amiens; another on our right made a splendid and effective counter-attack on Bülow on the Oise. The German pursuit, if pursuit it could be called, seems to have been not only timorous in execution, but uncertain in aim, as Kluck's next two moves will show. He crossed the Somme at Péronne on the 28th, drove the French on the 29th out of Amiens (which he actually occupied for some hours) on to the Paris road, and thus appeared to be threatening the British line of communications with Havre, our sea-base; in fact all the Channel ports might soon be in danger, and wild rumours reached our reinforcements waiting at Havre of German cavalry scouts having been seen advancing thither; British guns with broken

[1] There is a fine story told of a single military policeman who stood at a certain cross-roads at dawn on the 27th, saying, 'Third Division to the right, Fifth straight on.' Did he also wait for the pursuing Germans and order them 'Halt'?

dial-sights, and with still more gruesome evidences of battle showing on them, began to reach Havre. Sir John French therefore ordered Havre to be evacuated and our sea-base to be transferred to Saint-Nazaire at the mouth of the Loire; one can fancy the feelings of our 'first reinforcements' at this apparent scuttle; well, we might have to make a Torres Vedras somewhere in the Breton peninsula, and we would make the enemy pay dearly if he attacked it.

Yet this move of Kluck's was not a very safe one, for fresh British landings might still take place at the Belgian ports in his rear, and there were wild rumours (which he perhaps believed to be true) of Russian troops coming round by sea. And so at some time on the 31st a new inspiration, perhaps a fresh order from his headquarters, came to Kluck. He had learned that the French, when they had abandoned the line of the Somme, were falling back to the Marne above (i.e. east of) Paris, and apparently thereby leaving their capital uncovered. He had hitherto driven everything before him, so he thought the troops so driven must be already beaten, almost negligible. Therefore, before troubling to cut off the British from the Channel, or tackling the problem (which he would know to be a serious one) of besieging the vast entrenched camp of Paris,[1] he would turn due south and south-east and cut off the whole Allied armies by driving

[1] Some German troops actually reached Claye (September 5), within ten miles of the city. The French Govern-

them on to the German left on the Upper Meuse; Paris could then be reduced at leisure. The first of his steps in this new direction (September 1) ought to have begun to undeceive him about 'beaten troops'; for a single British cavalry brigade, caught in the early morning mist at Néry in the Forest of Compiègne, held up a whole German cavalry division until relief arrived; it was upon this occasion that 'L Battery' of the Royal Horse Artillery, which had already earned great honour at Audregnies on August 24, reduced at last to a single gun, worked till all but three of its crew were killed, put twelve German guns out of action, and saved all its own battered guns; then another British cavalry brigade and the famous 19th Infantry Brigade arrived and drove the German division in headlong flight.

Kluck, then, vastly underrated the *morale* of the Allies. By September 3, these lay all to the south of the Marne, the British being between Lagny and La Ferté; by the 5th we were south of the tributary Grand-Morin, and Kluck and Bülow were across the Marne in great strength. In attaining this forward position Kluck must have known that he exposed his own right flank to some danger; but the last he had heard of a certain French General called Manoury was when he had driven him back from the Somme towards Paris ('quite finished, of course, with him'). Manoury, though he was just going to make a big mistake, had never been less

ment had already (September 3) moved to Bordeaux; it returned to Paris on November 18.

finished in his life, and General Gallieni, the Governor of Paris, was secretly building up a new army to feed Manoury; part of it was arriving from the French colony of Algiers, part from the French right in Lorraine. German Headquarters were still quite unable to understand the failure at the Grand-Couronné except upon the supposition that an enormous French army (instead of a mere skeleton, heavily armed with guns and machine-guns in carefully concealed positions) had held them up there;[1] therefore, they argued, Joffre could not possibly have enough troops to resist Kluck, Bülow, and Hausen in the region of the Marne.

So when Joffre on September 5 issued his proclamation, *urbi et orbi*, that the retreat was at an end, and 'no man must go back any further, but each be killed on the spot rather than give way an inch,' it seemed to Kluck an empty bombast or a proclamation of despair. But before that day was out Kluck began to realise that all was not well with his right flank; a 'new' French army, or rather one in whose existence he disbelieved, was pouring out of Paris in motor-buses and taxicabs, and hitting his extreme right on the River Ourcq. If General Manoury had been able to restrain his own ardour, and that of the

[1] General Castelnau, the victor of Grand-Couronné, bore a name of good omen for the Alliance; for it was his direct ancestor who had commanded the French cavalry at Dunkirk in 1658, on one of the few occasions in which British and French troops had fought side by side (against the Spaniards in Belgium).

troops of this army, until the main French left, the British, and yet another unsuspected army under General FOCH, had begun to tackle him in front, Kluck and Bülow, and perhaps Hausen with them, might have been surrounded and compelled to capitulate. But Manoury hurled his fresh and ardent men recklessly forward in detail, and not only spoiled Joffre's great strategic plan, but got an ugly knock from Kluck on his own pate; for Kluck now suddenly woke up to the fact that he was almost in a trap and fell rapidly backwards (September 6, 7, and 8).

It would be difficult to paint the joy of the British troops when they found that after walking 170 miles in the wrong direction they were now to turn and walk in the right one. We recrossed the Grand, and then the Petit, Morin, though Kluck's rearguard put up a very fierce fight at the latter passage; then we flew at the Marne, which Kluck had recrossed so hastily that he had only time to destroy one of the bridges. On the 9th we were over, and hot pursuit followed; the *débris* of the beaten army seemed incredible to our men, who hardly realised that they had left souvenirs of a similar kind behind them on their long retreat. The most significant souvenir that we now found was thousands upon thousands of empty champagne bottles. Kluck, however, was in nothing like so bad a plight as his brethren on his left; Bülow's right was caught at Montmirail on the Petit-Morin by General Franchet-d'Espérey and escaped only by an almost total

abandonment of guns and stores; it was the place where a handful of Napoleon's worn-out conscripts had inflicted a fearful defeat on Blucher's Prussians in 1814. But the 'crowning mercy' of the Marne was won not against Kluck, who by the 10th was in full retreat to the Aisne without having suffered any extravagant loss in men, but over Hausen and Bülow's left; for these went on doggedly delivering fierce blows at Fère-Champenoise against Foch (in whose existence as a striking-back force they continued to disbelieve) until they found themselves in a mere salient, i.e. a bulging position. Then Foch struck (September 9, 10) in between them and hurled them into utter ruin. There are few examples in history of such a swift and complete turn of the tide of victory.

In all our previous wars no greater honour had been won than was won by the veteran troops of the retreat from Mons; for it was on them that the full weight of Kluck had fallen, and for the purposes of the German plan of campaign Kluck had been the principal striking-force. One would like, in view of the events of 1918 as well as those of 1914, to be a poet, in order to write an ode to *Diva Matrona*, that clear-flowing river of Champagne, the lure of which twice proved fatal to the modern Huns, as it had proved to the most dangerous of their predecessors, the Scandinavian pirates in the days of Charles the Bald, 861.

In those same days General Sarrail had beaten off with great loss the first enemy attack on Verdun,

and the first phase of the war was over. Joffre [1] had triumphed simply by superior strategy; and the great point of his strategy lay in his 'armies of manœuvre' which could be thrown in, unsuspected by the enemy, at any critical point. 'Joffre,' says Sir Frederick Maurice, 'stood the test of early failure; the German commanders did not stand the test of early success.'

III

Indeed, it was wonderful that after such defeats the enemy was able to fall back and soon to entrench himself strongly on the River Aisne, between two points north of Compiègne and north of Rheims (on the Vesle), from the latter of which he was able to begin throwing shells on Rheims cathedral, the most famous church of France. In the hurry of his retreat, he had abandoned many important places, Soissons, Rheims, and, further back, Lille. But the victors were almost as exhausted as the vanquished, especially in munitions, and there was a pause of over three weeks, during which the Germans were very strongly reinforced. The British had reached the Aisne in hot pursuit of the enemy and had given him no rest till he was forced over the river (which we bridged under heavy fire) and

[1] Or perhaps really Foch, from whose lectures at the French Staff College before the war this principle of strategy (which bears a curious resemblance to Napoleon's) might have been deduced.

on to the heights on its north bank along which runs the 'Ladies' Road' (*Chemin des Dames*). We could just touch that road at one point, but could get no further. For the next fortnight, September 15 to 27, our front, some 15 miles in length, had to withstand a series of fierce counter-attacks, which then gradually died away. The survivors of the First Division will not easily forget the ridge of Troyon.

The enemy entrenched himself, and we entrenched ourselves, and the trenches were often pushed up to within 80 yards of each other, the ridge between them being piled higher and higher each day with German dead. 'The Germans usually deliver their infantry attacks about an hour after dark; our fellows see them coming over the sky-line, wait till they are near and mow them down in heaps; the Germans simply pour on and on till halved or quartered, and then go back. They shoot with rifle-butt down on thigh, so their fire isn't effective except in volume.' It was then that our gunners began writing love-poems to their guns, whose fearful accuracy led a captured German officer to say that he was sure we must have spies in their trenches; we had the range of these (say at 2,500 yards) to a foot; we skilfully concealed our batteries with branches of trees or haystacks from the enemy aeroplanes, which were ubiquitous on fine days. But it was then too that we made acquaintance with the terrible power of the huge German guns which fired, from 12,000 yards away,

300-lb. shells filled with high explosive. These as they fell would make pits seven feet deep and twenty-five feet across—our men christened them 'Black Maria' or 'Jack Johnson.' It was on the Aisne that the famous joke first began to go round that if you called 'Waiter' from our trench a dozen heads would bob up automatically from the enemy's. It was there too that his darker treachery of raising a white flag as a token of surrender, and then pouring in a withering fire on those who came forward to receive the surrender, was first practised.

Meanwhile Joffre had begun another great series of turning movements towards the north; he would get in touch with the Belgian Army (still holding out at Antwerp), then get round between the Flemish coast and the German right, and come down in force on several points of that right wing. But, while he planned, in those weeks, our politicians, in the teeth of expert advice, made the bad mistake of encouraging the Belgians to hold on to Antwerp, and of sending a very badly equipped force of 8,000 Marines and sailors, with many untrained civilians in their ranks, to 'relieve' that city (October 5); and, at the same time, a new and excellent force, the 7th Division, under General Rawlinson, was also landed at Ostend to join in the turning movement in Flanders. This movement, which was to be superintended by General Foch, involved the transference of the whole British force from the Aisne to the north, to the

valleys of the Lys and Yser; it was no mean feat to pull out, on a few dark nights, 120,000 men [1] from under the nose of the enemy and to replace them with as many second-line French troops. There were many anxious moments as we crossed the bridges and climbed the steep hills on the south bank; but the early mornings were shrouded in mist, and the shift was accomplished without serious mishap. Partly by night-marches and partly by train the whole was brought round to Saint-Omer (which became and long remained British head-quarters), to Cassel and to Hazebrouck. Many a British soldier must have looked longingly from the train at the white cliffs of Dover as he passed, but few of those who then passed them were ever to see those cliffs again. By October 13 the new campaign was in full swing; Smith-Dorrien and Pulteney were fighting their way towards La Bassée and Lille.

Yet too late for the realisation of Joffre's plan. The German left was able to grip the positions on the southern bank of the Lys as far up as Comines, and to recover Lille in the process; their right struck hard and successfully at Antwerp, where the 'relieving force' of British Marines was involved in the fall of the city (October 10). The Belgian Army, though saved from annihilation by Rawlinson's guarding force, had already lost half its numbers in retreating from Antwerp. The

[1] The 6th Division had joined on the Aisne, but too late to affect the result of the battle.

remainder of it, well stiffened by some French divisions, took up a strong position on the Yser between the coast and the British force in the third week of October. The enemy at once resolved to remain on the defensive everywhere else, and to bend all his efforts to a straight drive at Calais and Boulogne by way of the Flemish coast.

If we cast our eyes northwards of the high road which runs from east to west up the Sambre and down the Oise, we shall see that there are four possible gaps for an invasion of France from the north-east. Of the southernmost of these, the valley of the River Scheldt, the Germans had already got hold, for they held its two upper fortresses, Valenciennes and Cambrai; on the next, its tributary the Scarpe, they held Douai, but not Arras (though for a long time to come they held the ridges overlooking Arras and were able to destroy its beautiful buildings). The third gap, that of the Lys, was throughout the war the scene of some of the fiercest and most prolonged fighting, but in this October, 1914, the enemy was just being turned out of all the positions on its upper waters, down to and including Armentières, by the British 2nd and 3rd Corps. The former did for a fleeting moment set a foot on the Aubers ridge, which guarded Lille, but could not hold on to it, while the latter had a desperate task under General Pulteney, during the late autumn and the whole winter, to cling to what they had won. Between the Scarpe and the Lys lies Lille, one of the

greatest manufacturing cities of France, and Lille remained in the enemy's hands for four years, plundered from garret to basement; although it was long within range of our heavy artillery it would have done us little good, and would have damaged France much, if we had bombarded it, as we were ultimately obliged to bombard its neighbour city of Lens. From Lille northwards to Menin on the Lys it is nearly all one vast street of houses and manufactories.

The valley of the Lys is separated from the fourth and last of these gaps, that of the Yser, by a series of low wooded ridges running west from Passchendaele; at intervals these rise to quite considerable, but rather isolated, heights, such as Messines, Wytschaete, Kemmel, Mont-Rouge, Mont-des-Cats, each one of them commanding a considerable extent of plain, and the whole terminating in the huge mass crowned by the little town of Cassel, from which, according to the old French jest, you can see four kingdoms.[1] To the northward of this line the country is almost perfectly flat, and is cut up by innumerable sluggish waterways, either natural or artificial. The Lys joins the Scheldt at Ghent, the Yser reaches the sea at Nieuport; but for our purpose far more important than the Yser are the two canals which from north to south connect it with the Lys at Comines: the northern section of this has in places enormously high banks, into the western sides of

[1] France, England, Belgium, and *Heaven*.

which our men could dig themselves in comparative safety while the great German shells thudded into the eastern side and only sent the mud flying fifty feet high over their heads. Besides the canals the important features to remember are the hills of Messines and Kemmel, the lesser hill of Wytschaete (' White Sheet ') and the wood of Ploegsteert (' Plug Street ') to the south, the great forest of Houlthulst to the N.N.E., and the low ridge of Passchendaele to the east.

The key of the position was a little medieval city, whose name will be for ever immortal, and for ever associated with the *old* British Army, which saved it and perished in the task—the city of Ypres. If Ypres had fallen nothing could have saved the Channel ports, and from Calais and Boulogne the enemy's big guns would have made shipping pretty uncomfortable in the Straits of Dover. This, then, is the significance of the ' First Battle of Ypres,' and the turning-point of that four weeks of battle came on October 31, when the German onrush was stayed a few miles eastward of the city. To attempt any connected description of this battle day by day would be a task far beyond my powers. To the few survivors the whole thing now appears as a series of nightmares galloping at racing speed through their memories.

But one or two points at least may be made clear; first that it was all one battle from the sea in the north to La Bassée in the south, and that this is roughly a distance of 40 miles as the crow

flies; therefore the anxiety of Sir John French was just as great lest our right should be pierced from Lille, as for the safety of Ypres itself. Secondly, that the enemy was not only able to throw forward, at any given point, four men at least for every one of ours, but that he was incessantly able to throw fresh men against tired ones. We simply had to send the same brigades, battalions, and even detached companies, forward again and again, however worn and decimated they were. I may perhaps be allowed to quote a few instances from Lord Ernest Hamilton's *First Seven Divisions* to prove this:—Two battalions of the Coldstream had to hold their very wet trenches under incessant shell-fire, unrelieved for twenty-two days: the 1st Royal Welch Fusiliers, having lost twenty-three officers and nearly 700 men in three days (October 19 to 21) out of 1,100, were again in action (at Zandvoorde, due south of Ypres) on the 29th, and the survivors were the quartermaster and eighty-six men: on the same day, about two miles to the east on the Menin road, the 1st Grenadier Guards lost twelve out of sixteen officers and 500 out of 650 men, the 1st Coldstream lost all their officers and all but 180 of their men, the losses of the Black Watch were hardly less. And the same writer estimates the total loss of the 7th Division as being 356 out of 400 officers, 9,600 out of 12,000 men. Now in previous wars it has always been reckoned a great feat when a unit stood up to a loss in killed and wounded of half its numbers—Albuera in 1811

being the classic example of a victory after such a loss. But here, you see, was a unit which fought on after a loss of four-fifths of its numbers incurred in the space of three weeks. There was no 'replacing of casualties'; such drafts from home as reached Ypres were swallowed up at once.[1]

Thirdly, it is difficult to estimate the enemy's superiority in weight of artillery except by saying that in howitzers it was enormous, and in machine guns, which were to prove the deadliest of all weapons, it was ten to one; a single machine gun concealed in a house might well hold up a battalion as long as its ammunition lasted. Deadly as was the accuracy of our 18-lb. guns, the Royal Regiment was none too well off for ammunition, and in such a flat country was almost wholly without satisfactory observation posts; its officers constantly had to go forward to the infantry trenches to observe, and suffered severe casualties in doing so. But 'any hardships we have are nothing to what the infantry have to endure . . . up there you can't show your head for an instant during the daytime, or the snipers will have you to a certainty, and there is shrapnel and Black Maria always in the air. During the night the Germans usually make at least three attacks, and they keep relays of snipers going

[1] Those were not the days of multiplied decorations; and it has been well said that a simple mention in despatches earned in 1914 was worth more than many a M.C. and D.S.O. given (as these honours so lavishly were) in the later years of the war.

the whole time. I think the infantry are really marvellous. . . . For some reason they put enormous faith in us, and frequently we get messages from the trenches, "enemy's corpses piled high by your fire last night." '

Fourthly, it must not be forgotten that the transference of our troops from the Aisne took time, and meanwhile, at the beginning of October, the German cavalry had been out over the whole country in a gigantic raid, which spread alarm as far as Calais itself. They had burned many villages and windmills, and they burned a good bit of Ypres itself before they evacuated it. This raid had been splendidly countered, first by French and then by British cavalry; and British infantry of the 2nd and 3rd Corps following on the heels of the cavalry as early as October 12, 13, completed its discomfiture.

The first brunt of the fighting at Ypres fell about October 19 on Rawlinson with the 7th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division, which force (perhaps to bluff the enemy) was paraded as a 'Fourth Army Corps.' They were ordered to force a passage to Menin, to secure the crossing of the Lys, but were met by German forces too great to allow them to get more than half-way. Yet when Sir Douglas Haig with the First Army Corps reached Ypres on that same 19th it is pretty clear that Sir John French was still contemplating the carrying out of the great turning movement in the direction of Ostend. What is not clear is at what date he

realised that this would be impossible; the actual orders issued for each day would warrant us in supposing that he clung to this hope for almost a week.

French aid was asked for on the northern section of the position east of the Yser Canal, and by the 24th and 25th excellent French troops were in possession of this line as far south as Zonnebeke. But the battle seems to have been begun without the knowledge that it would draw upon the Ypres position, held by a force of less than 40,000 men, the whole weight of 120,000, which could be replaced by as many more from day to day. And it is clear that this vast numerical preponderance of the enemy, far beyond anything that he had been led to expect, must have gradually opened Sir John French's eyes to the fact that nothing beyond a stubborn defence was possible.

The actual ramparts of Ypres, vast eighteenth-century masses of earth faced with brick and surrounded by a wide moat, would no doubt be impervious to shells, but this would not save the buildings and the men behind them from shelling. To hold a city nowadays you must hold and entrench a considerable strip outside it, and it was the narrowness of the strip that we were eventually able to hold on the east and south which made the First (and likewise the Second) Battle of Ypres so terrible. But *ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλις καὶ οὐ τείχη*: Sir John French at least knew that the best, i.e. the most British, method of defence was by counter-attack, and accordingly he began by counter-attacking at

every possible place: first, before the French arrived, towards Houlthulst Forest, then eastwards towards Roulers and south-eastwards towards Menin. Footings in advance in all three directions were gained, though always at great cost, yet soon after each was gained the battalions holding it were decimated by shell-fire and so compelled to fall back, or were isolated and swamped by the tide of advancing enemies, and usually slain to a man.

From the 24th, our noses were wholly turned eastwards and south-eastwards. Our line then extended in a curve, some twelve miles long, from Zonnebeke across the Menin road east of Gheluvelt, over the ridge at Zandvoorde, to the southern canal at Hollebeke: its right was very weak and the prolongation of it (towards the position of the Third Army Corps) in the direction of Messines was weaker still, and was commonly held by various units of General Allenby's Cavalry Corps—for dismounted cavalrymen, yea often the very cooks and orderlies, had to be thrown into the trenches to make a line. But the Menin road was the crucial point of all, and the little slope of Gheluvelt, half-way between Ypres and Menin, was the centre of this point. Once we reached out a little south-east of this to the village of Kruseik, in attempts to hold on to which terrible loss was incurred on the 26th. On the 27th the remnants of the Fourth Corps had to be incorporated into the First Corps, and Haig took over the command of the whole (October 27). On the 29th began the greatest of all the battles for the road,

and it went on increasing in ferocity till the evening of the 31st. The German Emperor was there to see it, and had given out that he would be in Ypres by November 1. Twenty-five thousand men hurled themselves on a bare five thousand and drove them back on Gheluvelt; on the 30th they drove us from the very important ridge at Zandvoorde which commanded the southern defences of Ypres. Cavalry and Guards threw themselves into the breach and held the enemy off from Klein Zillebeke, the last, or innermost, defensive position. October 31 opened (at 5.30 a.m.) with a terrific bombardment of Gheluvelt, followed by a series of infantry attacks in the proportion of nine men against one. The line of the 1st Division was broken, its headquarters were blown to bits, its general and all his staff killed or rendered senseless; the left of the 7th Division was cut off and surrounded, its right was pushed back, Gheluvelt was lost. Allenby's cavalry were at the same time losing ground near Hollebeke, and Sir John French knew that a fierce attack on Messines was in progress. The whole thing looked like an overwhelming disaster. The story goes that the Higher Command was on the point of ordering a general retirement, which must have involved the evacuation of Ypres and of all Belgium. The official despatch does not mention this, nor does it give the details of the event which turned the tide.

It must have been about 2 p.m. (but there are many discrepancies in the several accounts, espe-

cially as to time) when the Germans were beginning to get round our position on all sides, that General Fitzclarence, V.C., commanding a Brigade of Guards, observed the 2nd Worcesters halted at a cross road a little in the rear. They were not a unit of his division, still less of his brigade, so his action was most irregular; but he appealed to the Major in command of them to waive all formalities and to lead a counter-attack. He seized the Worcesters, so to speak, with both his hands and hurled them forward into the very centre of the battle. He seized the 42nd Artillery Brigade and hurled it on too. 'Steer straight for the church steeple of Gheluvelt and you can't go wrong,' was the word: the gallant fellows rushed forward, deployed just east of Veldhoek, and by a series of fierce rushes carried the *château* of Gheluvelt with the bayonet, but were held up at the outskirts of the village. Their example at once rallied the remnants of the 1st and 7th Divisions, and a counter-attack all along the line, most splendidly supported by our gunners, took place. When the night fell we had not indeed (as the official despatch says we had) recovered the whole of Gheluvelt, the soil of which remained in enemy hands till the very last weeks of the war: but we had thoroughly made good a line of some sort at a very critical point of the Menin road. We had written across that blood-soaked highway 'No road here'; '*On ne passe pas*,' as our Allies afterwards wrote in front of Verdun. But our three divisions had by the end of that day been reduced

below the normal strength of one, and far to the south the hills of Messines and Wytschaete had been lost.

To counterbalance this, several things were beginning to operate in our favour: first, Joffre was able to send more troops to Flanders; the Ninth French Army Corps, which had been fighting beside us, had been almost annihilated, but in rapid succession there arrived in the early days of November other five French Corps. Secondly, the Belgian Army had succeeded in creating a huge inundation five miles across between Nieuport and Dixmude, and could remain in great security behind it. Thirdly, British monitors were pounding very successfully at the German right flank on the sea coast and sending their shells far inland. Fourthly, the two Indian divisions, which had landed at Marseilles, were rapidly coming up and were being sent to strengthen our Second Army Corps, which thus for the first time, about November 1 or 2, was able to spare some units to fill up the awful gaps recently made in the First.

I do not mean to imply that the First Battle of Ypres ended on October 31; indeed it lasted for a full fortnight more. But the greatest danger was over; the enemy never seriously improved upon the line he had won on the last day of October, in spite of repeated attacks on all our positions from Zonnebeke to Hollebeke. On November 6 and 7 the attacks from the south were particularly fierce, and on November 11, simultaneously with

the first appearance of really wintry weather (bitterly cold rain and fog), came the attack of the Prussian Guard, over 11,000 strong, on the Menin road, and to a lesser extent on our whole position. These fellows had been hurried up with great secrecy from the far south; they were unquestionably the flower of the German Army. They almost annihilated a British brigade and they killed the gallant Fitzclarence, the hero of October 31, who led it. But they gained hardly anything, or lost at once most of their gains, and though they held on and attacked again and again till the evening of the 17th, they finally fell back shattered by such losses as their commanders did not dare to make public.

We are fortunate in possessing, among the German 'Monographs on the Great War,' published by the German Staff, for home consumption, an account, written in 1917, of this great battle from our enemy's point of view, and this account has been well translated into English.[1] Not only does the book claim the battle as a victory over the British, 'who brought on the war for the sake of their money-bags,' but it claims it as being won by 25 German over 40 Allied divisions. It asserts that our superiority in material, guns, trench-mortars, machine-guns, aeroplanes, was two, three, and even fourfold. We may, no doubt, in estimating the courage of this magnificent falsehood, allow something for the fact that a German infantry brigade in 1914 consisted of six

[1] 'Ypres, 1914.' Translation by G. C. W., London, 1919.

battalions, a British of four, that a German artillery brigade had seventy-two guns, a British eighteen; and we may also admit that our rifle-shooting was so rapid and so accurate that he may have occasionally mistaken it for machine-gun fire. But even these allowances will hardly explain away the truth that, if we count by battalions (and this is the only fair way, as a battalion is in all armies approximately of the same strength), the Allies in this battle put into the field, between the sea and La Bassée, 263 against the enemy's 426 infantry battalions, that is to say a proportion of 13 to 21. His superiority in cavalry was not so clearly marked, and stood only at about 3 to 2; and with regard to his statement about 'material, guns, and aeroplanes,' we shall not go far wrong if we exactly invert his outside figure and give him four to our one; of trench-mortars, however, we had as yet none, and in machine-guns he was ten to our one. One of the few humorous things in the book is the scolding the author administers to the Belgians for destroying the productiveness of their own soil by letting in the waters of the sea, but I suppose we can hardly expect a German to realise that he would be a much more pestilential invader than Father Neptune.

The total Allied losses in those four weeks, October 16 to November 17, in the battle raging from La Bassée to the sea, have been calculated at 130,000, of which 80,000 were British, while those of the enemy in the same area may have been

about double that number. And the second phase of the war was over.

IV

The third phase, which has been called that of 'stationary warfare,' or 'warfare of fortified positions,' lasted for three and a half years (November 1914 till March 1918), and before I attempt to describe it, we had better pause and consider three subjects which it will be impossible to keep separate:

(i) The spreading of the war until most of the nations of the world were involved; (ii) the size of the armies engaged and the growth of the British army to meet the new conditions; and (iii) the part played by sea-power, and especially British sea-power, in the conflict. All the following figures are very largely a question of guess-work:

The population of the Russian Empire is over 170 millions, and the largest European army (on paper at least) was the Russian, some 5 millions of more or less drilled soldiers, and another 7 millions liable to serve, but all shockingly deficient in equipment. Germany could at the utmost put 9 or 10 millions in the field,[1] the Austro-Hungarian Empire perhaps 6 millions, Serbia 390,000, Belgium 180,000. Complete figures of the French army are not yet to be got; we only know that by the spring of 1915

[1] An interesting and probably trustworthy estimate of German man-power in the autumn of 1917 gives 6,250,000 men as being still in the field or in training; and the *permanent* casualties were already reckoned as 3,800,000.

France, with a population of 39 millions, had 3½ millions under arms and another million in training; this number must have been nearly doubled before the end.

The white population of the British Empire (62 millions) was little less than that of the German Empire (65 millions), but our own Army, counting all Reserves and Special Reserves, all Colonial and Indian garrisons, was in 1914 barely half a million,[1] our Indian native army was nearly 200,000; our Territorial regiments (successors of the old 'Volunteers'), dating from 1907, and raised for home defence only, amounted to about 250,000. In the first place by voluntary recruiting our army at home was raised by the end of 1915 to a figure of about 3 millions, and this was very largely due to the ability and energy of Lord Kitchener, who became head of the War Office on the outbreak of war, and of Lord Derby, who undertook recruiting in the autumn of 1915.[2] The Navy in 1914 had 151,000 men with a reserve of 57,000, and nearly another half-million of 'natural' though not previously professional sailors joined various branches of our naval service during the war; nor must we forget the 200,000 sailors in the merchant service, or the 80,000 sea-fishermen.

But not till the loss of the flower of our new armies

[1] Actually with the colours were 156,000 in Britain and Colonies, 78,000 in India.

[2] The first division of our 'New' Army reached France on May 9, 1915.

in the Dardanelles, and in the battles of 1915 on the West Front, and the shadow of another great disaster in Mesopotamia, had awakened them, did our politicians pluck up courage to pass early in 1916 an Act (for which the whole nation had long been crying out) making military service compulsory on all able-bodied men[1] between the ages of 18 and 41; two years later the age-limit was raised to include men up to 51. The numbers of men actually raised by these means have not yet been made public, but we may perhaps hazard a guess in the region of 9 millions as the total of the land and sea forces of the British Empire at their greatest extent in 1918; we know that in that summer we had 2,700,000 troops on the West Front alone. In these we must include the voluntary contribution of about a million of men from our great self-governing colonies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, each of which raised, paid, and equipped its own force, and cheerfully put it at the disposal of the British Government.

Half at least of our fine native Indian army[2] was soon employed in one theatre or another, and to this we must add voluntary contributions from the Indian

[1] With a folly of which British politicians alone could have been capable, Ireland was exempted from Compulsory Service, and very naturally took the opportunity of rebelling at once.

[2] The first 'Indian Expeditionary Force' sent to the West Front was of 70,000 men; by May 1915, some 230,000 Indian troops were fighting for us; by the end of the war, nearly a million.

native princes, besides a vast increase of our existing Indian army. Each of our smaller colonies also sent its contingent; nay, there was not an island, how remote so ever, over which our flag flew that did not do the same; and who shall say whether the first contingent from Fiji (188 men), who served in the 1st King's Royal Rifles, or the immortal Guernsey Light Infantry, which its colonel took into action at the Battle of the Lys (April 11–14, 1918) 540 strong and brought out 57 strong, covered themselves with the greater glory? No distinction was made in practice between Regulars and Territorials, between volunteers and conscripts, between 'new' and 'old' armies, as regards obligation or place of service. But there was, in addition, a new crop of Volunteers, self-raised for home defence, consisting largely of men over age for active service. They drilled and exercised themselves on Sundays and holidays, and after their working hours on week-days, and reached at last a total of nearly 300,000.

The only effort in historical times comparable to this British improvisation of an army at the beginning of a great war was that made by France in 1792–3–4; and there is, indeed, a curious parallel in the circumstances. On each occasion there was a spontaneous uprising of the patriotism of a nation for the sake of a great cause and a great ideal, France rising almost as one man to defend her soil from invasion and to defend the liberties newly won in her great Revolution of 1789; on each, a basis

for the new armies existed in an old and most excellent, though small, professional army, which had quite recently been reformed and educated for its task; in each instance the principle of the new as of the old armies was a territorial one, of county (in France of departmental) regiments; in each, before long, recourse to compulsory service was found necessary. Finally, in each instance the new levies had to be brought into the fighting line before they were fully trained, and achieved victory only by the most dauntless heroism and at fearful cost to themselves.

Of the total British force a considerable portion had to be kept at home. Lord Kitchener always thought invasion possible; and, if the much-vaunted German Navy had really possessed anything like the spirit of audacity and inventiveness which we were accustomed to ascribe to it, an invasion would have been tried. And if it had been tried who could have predicted its results? Would our civilian population have put up with suffering as patiently as the French did?

Let us pause for a moment and try to realise what invasion by such an enemy would mean, and let us look for our example to France rather than to Belgium, for, when the cruelties of the first few months were over, it became the interest of the Germans rather to conciliate than to drive to despair the population of the latter country, all whose resources were at their absolute disposal. Very different was the lot of the two and a quarter

millions of civilians who had been unable to escape from those ten departments of France in which the enemy had got a footing. Even the food ration grudgingly dealt out to them would have been quite insufficient to keep them in health had this not been supplemented (to a very small extent, it is true) by the grants made by the Neutrals' Relief Commission, started by the Americans for Belgium and soon extended to the occupied zones of France also. The able-bodied among these unfortunate people were practically made slaves, to dig and perform other menial work for the conquerors against their own countrymen; families were separated; young women were deported—one had better not ask for what purpose—to Germany. And their moral sufferings must have far exceeded their physical; for more than four years many of them got no news of their nearest relatives, whether these had escaped in time, which of them was fighting, which had fallen, for France; and, worst of all, false news was regularly spread by the infamous *Gazette des Ardennes*, a newspaper set up by the Germans with the special object of inspiring despair in the hearts of their prisoners.

But, happily for us, the enemy's naval strategy was either calculated on the false assumption that he would create panic, or else was timid in the extreme, and he contented himself with swift raids of his light forces (which threw a few shells by night, or at dawn, into some undefended watering-places), and with sending airships

and aeroplanes to bombard defenceless cities. This last 'frightfulness' he put in force on a really considerable scale in 1917 and 1918—whole fleets of aeroplanes sailed over London and wrecked a good many buildings. He killed over 1,000 men, women, and children in this way, and wounded three times as many; and we must remember that he also upset our own naval plans a good deal, for he made us move ships (to catch him, which we seldom did) to places whither we didn't want to move them, and he certainly made us keep at home a vast number of aeroplanes and airmen who were badly wanted by our armies abroad. But panic? No, he inspired us with none.[1] The writer was in Trafalgar Square one night in the summer of 1915 watching a Zeppelin dropping bombs on the City, and in the dense crowd which filled the Square

[1] This is not wholly true of the years 1917 and 1918; some of the foreign elements that congregate at the East End of London occasionally displayed abject cowardice. A favourite place of refuge was in the 'Twopenny Tube' railway stations. Elsewhere, when warning was given of an air-raid by the police, most people carried their sleeping children into the lower stories of their houses. Some (partly also with a view of economising coals) used to dine in their basement-kitchens, to the great amusement of their servants. One of the greatest trials in those days, especially for old people, not only in London, but in all possibly exposed towns also, was the darkness of the streets. But this was nothing compared to the darkness in French towns; the writer remembers that during a brief visit to the Front in 1915 he fell into the same hole in a journey of 200 yards between his billet and the mess-room on thirteen successive nights,

from corner to corner he heard one woman give a little scream.

The other European armies, being already 'conscript,' i.e. every one being liable to military service at the legal age, were not capable of sudden expansion, as ours was; and so, long before the end, both France and Germany, whose losses had been stupendous, were even more hard up for men than we were. If Russia was never exactly hard up for men she was very early bankrupt in munitions and, what was much worse, in political, and, with some brilliant exceptions, in military leadership. She began nobly and swiftly, and her early strokes unquestionably did much to relieve the pressure of Germany on the West Front. But when she had been very badly beaten at Tannenberg in East Prussia (August 27, 28, 1914) she turned aside from that which should have been her true aim, namely, a drive through German Poland towards Berlin, and sought instead the easier task of tackling Austrian Poland and invading Hungary through the Carpathian mountains. After a great initial success in Galicia (the province which Austria had torn from Poland in 1772) Russia failed to achieve even this object; intrigues at the Court of Petrograd, fostered by the Germans, paralysed her best generals and delayed the arrival of rifles and munitions at the front. The result was that in 1915 she left the initiative to the enemy. Austria, who had made a most pitiful show so far and been utterly beaten back on both flanks, i.e. by the

Russians and by the heroic little Serbian army (first at Shabatz on the Drina, sometimes called the Battle of the Jadar, August 19, 20), called in German help. The Germans reorganized the Austrian army, and it was, no doubt, much compensation to them that they were able both to save their ally and then to drive the poor Russians gradually back out of all Poland and all Lithuania. Roumania, indeed, with half a million soldiers, declared for the Allies in August 1916, but she did so, and we encouraged her to do so, wholly in reliance on Russian help. Without that help she was between the devil and the deep sea, between Hungarians and Turks, and, as it proved, Russia was unable to send her any serious help, and Roumania thus became more a make-weight than an advantage to the Allies. Yet she remained quite loyal, though her army was reduced to five divisions.

By the early days of 1917 Russia was in a state of complete collapse within, the Emperor abdicated in March, the German Fleet began to get hold of the Russian ports, revolution after revolution, carefully organized by the Germans, tore the unhappy country to pieces, and early in 1918 treaties of 'peace' were signed with Germany by something that called itself a 'Russian Republic' but was, and still is, a mere tyranny in the hands of a few plundering criminals, many of them Jews. This at once enabled the Germans to bring to the Western Front very large reinforcements of men and guns. Treaties like these and governments like this the

Allies firmly refused to recognize. With all that was sound in Russia we pledged ourselves to continue the alliance; but with 'mad-dog' Russia, now even more eager to bite its former allies than its former enemies, we would have nothing to do.

V

Long before this an unfortunate mistake in our naval strategy in the Mediterranean allowed two German ships to escape to Constantinople (August 1914), and Turkey was thereby heartened to go to war with us in November.

At the end of July 1914 we had three fine Battle-cruisers, eight lesser Cruisers, and sixteen Destroyers in the Mediterranean, and this fleet came to rendezvous at Malta on July 30, and rapidly prepared for war. It was known that the very fast and heavily armed *Goeben* (ten 11-inch guns and 28 knots of speed) and the light Cruiser *Breslau* (twelve 4-inch guns and 27 knots) were in these waters; they had left Messina on the night of August 2–3; they had possibly been intended to slip through the Suez Canal before war was declared, to destroy our commerce in the Indian Ocean, but were apparently too late to do this; ostensibly they were there in order to make a show of German efficiency. Perhaps in reality they were designed for the bigger *coup* which they brought off. Would they also be able to hinder the passage of the French transports which were conveying the French

troops from Algeria and Tunis to Marseilles? Well, after throwing a few shells into the French ports, Bona and Philippeville, on the African coast, they apparently decided that, in the presence of the French Fleet and our own Battle-cruisers, this was too dangerous; and they had other fish to fry, fish the breed of which our higher authorities, both at Malta and at home, must have gravely suspected. On the morning of August 4 two of our Battle-cruisers met the two Germans steering easterly and 'shadowed' them till the evening; then, to their great surprise, being about 30′ west of Marittimo, our captains were called off, and *Dublin* alone, a small Cruiser, was ordered to continue shadowing. During the night the enemy gave *Dublin* the slip, re-entering the neutral (Italian) harbour of Messina, and remained there till the evening of August 6. When they again sailed they were pursued by our little Cruiser *Gloucester* (fast but quite powerless against such a monster as *Goeben*) who exchanged a few shots at very long range with *Breslau*. The rest of our fleet, at last, early on the 7th, being ordered to pursue, never got within fifty miles of them till they were safe under the guns of the Turkish forts within the entrance to the Dardanelles.

Turkey was officially 'neutral' and the two German ships, having taken refuge in a neutral port, should have been 'interned.' Instead of that the Turks, after a lot of palaver, in the course of which the British Government showed itself both

weak and blind, declared that Germany had 'sold' these ships to the Sultan and refused an entrance to our pursuing fleet; *Goeben* and *Breslau* thereupon hoisted Turkish colours, and their officers donned the 'fez.' Late in October they sailed into the Black Sea in company with a Turkish warship, and, without declaration of war, began to bombard Odessa, the great commercial port of our ally Russia. Enver Pasha, the real ruler of Turkey, whose pockets the Germans had stuffed with gold, had been scheming for this result all the time. This altered the whole situation for the worse, for large Russian armies, which, as the event proved, Russia could ill spare, had at once to be sent southwards; and we must not forget that in the winter campaign of 1915–6 in the Caucasus the Russians broke up or destroyed at least half a dozen Turkish divisions. But this took much time and bore little immediate fruit; and meanwhile our Egypt, and our Suez Canal route to India, were at once in danger, and this at the very time at which we knew that the Germans were being largely reinforced on the West Front and would make renewed efforts to break through there.

Naval opinion was that 'someone had blundered'; but it must be remembered that the Commander-in-Chief at Malta (Admiral Berkeley Milne) had no knowledge that Italy would break her existing alliance with our enemies; her fleet looked formidable; the Austrian Fleet in the Adriatic was intact; and the French Fleet was

occupied in the Western Mediterranean. At the conclusion of a subsequent court-martial our Admiralty announced that 'the general dispositions and measures taken by him' (Sir A. Berkeley Milne) 'were fully approved.'

We faced the situation and took the bull by his amazingly sharp horns, the Straits of the Dardanelles, bravely, if rashly and a little late; Turkey has always owed much of her safety to the impregnable protection which geography affords to her capital. But it seemed to us to be of the greatest importance to open a southern sea-route to Russia, which was crying aloud to us for munitions of war and for every sort of supply. On paper the Russian Black Sea fleet ought to have been able to deal with the Turks, *Goeben* or no *Goeben*; it ought to have sealed up the Eastern entrance to the Bosphorus, and thrown troops ashore both to the northward and eastward of Constantinople. Yet in none of her many wars with the Turks has Russia ever succeeded in doing this, and in 1914 the Russian fleet was in a very unsatisfactory condition; perhaps it had never recovered the disasters of its recent war with Japan. Also the fatal Russian habit of thinking that the day after to-morrow will do quite as well as to-day is a grave drawback for those who rely on Russian co-operation.

It was certainly in reliance on such co-operation that the British Government decided to attempt the passage of the Dardanelles, a passage never before effected save by Admiral Duckworth

in 1807, on which occasion the British fleet arrived before Constantinople only to beat an inglorious retreat by the same passage; and that was before the invention of submarine mines. In the last three months of 1914, efficient German officers stood over the Turks and flogged them on to arm the peninsula of Gallipoli to its very teeth with every species of gun, heavy and light, in carefully concealed positions. Perhaps if we had sent a strong naval force in November 1914, before this armament was complete, and before the Straits had been sown with mines, we might have got through. Yet even if we had got through, with a naval force only, in 1914 or 1915, our ships might have found themselves in a very awkward position if the Turks had refused to submit.

We tried to get through in February and March 1915, and we failed. We got some four miles past the entrance to the Straits, and on March 18 we lost three important ships by mines—one Frenchman, with all hands, and two British—and we had several more put out of action. All the heroism of our small mine-sweeping vessels availed little in the fierce currents that pour westward through the Straits from the Black Sea; and the damage done to the land forts, even by the 15-inch guns of the *Queen Elizabeth*, was not proportionate to the risk incurred. So the Allied Admiralties called off the attack until troops could be fetched from the West and landed on the peninsula to co-operate with a renewed naval attack. All chances for the success

of such a desperate attempt at landing depended on the weather: for, as the despatch of the British army-commander, Sir Ian Hamilton, said, it would be madness to throw two or three thousand men ashore, and then to have to leave them, perhaps for a whole week, exposed to an attack by tenfold their number; and yet this must happen if continuous landings were interrupted by a few days of storm. Late in April the weather was favourable and the first contingent of troops had arrived. We occupied the Greek (or were they Turkish? even the diplomatists hardly seemed to know) islands nearest to the entrance of the Straits, Lemnos and Tenedos.

'*Est in conspectu Tenedos*,' as Virgil says, and from it you can look eastward towards windy Troy or northward to the forts at Cape Helles and Sedd-el-Bahr. Lemnos is nearly fifty miles away from there, and at a wretched little town overlooking the fine harbour of Mudros we had formed our advanced base; our real bases, however, were at Alexandria and Malta, very far away. The landing, on very rough open beaches, in the teeth of a heavily entrenched Turkish force, is one of the marvels of history. It had to be made in several places at once, with feints at several other places, to divert enemy troops. At dawn on April 25 the famous British 29th Division was thrown ashore, four Battleships and four Cruisers raining flaming shells over their heads. Further to the east the Australian and New Zealand con-

tingents were landed before dawn at 'Anzac Cove,' the newly raised battalions of the Royal Naval Division quickly followed, and a most gallant French force effected a diversion on the Asiatic shore of the Straits. The 'beaches' are very narrow, and were everywhere protected by barbed wire, even under water; the cliffs, which rise abruptly behind them to the height of a hundred or more feet, were filled with rifle- and gun-pits, manned by soldiers of an army famous throughout history for efficient defence of protected positions; and the whole area of the landings was dominated by the great height called Achi-Baba, barely six miles away. Just in the same way, another great hill, Sari-Bair, from about the same distance, dominates Suvla Bay, the place where in August we attempted a second landing on a large scale. The Turkish positions, says Sir Ian, commanded ours 'as the balconies of a theatre overlook the stage.'

It would be idle for me to attempt to tell the details of the tragic and glorious tale, seeing that they have been told, once for all, by a great poet in immortal prose.[1] 'Our troops achieved a feat without parallel in war, and no other troops in the world would have made good those beaches on April 25.' The Turks gradually gathered an army of something below half a million of their best troops at Constantinople, Adrianople, and Rodosto, within easy striking distance, and connected with

[1] 'Gallipoli,' by John Masefield, 1916.

their front by the only road through the peninsula; but it required scarcely a fifth of this army to hold the positions which we should have to assault; indeed, they could hardly employ more than a fifth with advantage at any one time. Yet by the end of the second day several landings had been made good at a cost of perhaps half the force that attempted them. Wave after wave of the enemy had flung itself in vain against those who had got a footing ashore. The landings of stores and guns, and above all of water for drinking, had to follow; the peninsula is all but waterless, and every drop of drink had to come on ships until machinery was landed (much later in the campaign) which made it possible to distil it from the sea. The climate is appalling—icy in winter, and swept by the fierce 'Thracian' winds which antiquity knew so well; scorching in summer. As at the siege of Lucknow, there was

> Heat like the mouth of a hell, or a deluge of cataract skies,
> Stench of old offal decaying and infinite torment of flies.

About two miles inland was all we could at first gain; and always we were on the upward slope, and looking up at things above us worse than those we had already overcome. There was no question of 'turning movements' in that cramped space; it had all to be frontal attack, and on an enemy double our own numbers, strongly entrenched and continuously reinforced. Early in May we were reinforced by the 42nd Division, in June by the 52nd, and

Indian regiments had come too, Ghurkas and Sikhs. Advances were reckoned in yards rather than in hundreds of yards, and owed everything to the bayonet. The Allied Navies continued the bombardment; but soon Germany began to send Submarines, and we lost two more Battleships by their attacks, and the Admiralty began to be very nervous about leaving such precious things exposed to such dangers. Still, advances did go on, and were hardly ever lost again. Could the troops which our Government grudgingly sent in July have arrived in mid-June, the end would have soon come. More than once, especially on June 28, we were on the very edge of a triumphant break-through, but each time we failed just for want of a few more battalions to take the place of those that were exhausted or blasted out of existence. But far more than want of men it was our poverty in guns and shells that foiled us. Bad as this poverty was on the West Front, it was far worse in Gallipoli, where the French used to speak of our guns being 'allowed one round each per day.'

Early in August came our last great attempt. Thirty thousand fresh men (not the fifty thousand for which Sir Ian had asked) were landed, one Division at Suvla some distance north-eastward of any positions yet won by us. A great co-operative movement was planned in which this new force was to be the left wing; it was to strike south-eastwards while the centre and right, Australians and New Zealanders, also reinforced, were to strike

north-eastwards at the highest entrenched positions of the enemy; thus it was hoped that, taken between two fires, the Turkish army could be cut off from its communications, and hurled downhill into the Hellespont. So skilfully was the new landing effected that the enemy was surprised and made little effort to stop it (August 6 and 7). Against desperate odds some units of the centre and the right (the 'veterans' of the campaign) actually reached the crests of the hills by August 9, and looked over into the Straits. The Turks holding these positions were falling back in most unusual confusion. But the advance of the newly landed troops from Suvla was unaccountably delayed. They, too, had had terrible sufferings from thirst; they had difficult and unknown country to cross, but it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that some of their leaders blundered very badly. And while they fumbled and hesitated Turkish reinforcements and guns were hurrying to the battle by the road, of which they had never lost command. The result was that on the 10th our battered and exhausted lines were driven down by odds of three to one from the crests they had won.

We might still continue to hold the beaches and landing-places; indeed, the enemy made no attempt to drive us from these. But without at least three fresh divisions from home we could not attempt any fresh advance. Sickness of every sort and kind, but especially dysentery, finished what the defeat of August 6–10 had begun. A terrible

storm at the end of November completed our discomfiture, and a heavy percentage of the survivors died of cold. The Allied Governments then came to the decision that the peninsula must be evacuated. We had thrown, in all, over 300,000 British, Colonial, Indian, and French troops ashore; the 100,000 who were left in any moderate condition of fitness were needed in a new area slightly nearer home. The evacuation, begun at Suvla in mid-December, was completed at the western end of the peninsula in the early days of January; and the successful withdrawal, not only of the men, but of nearly all the guns, mules, and stores, almost without loss, was nearly as fine a feat of organization as the landing had been. Upon whom should rest the blame, if blame there be, for starving the campaign in men, it will be the task of history to decide. That campaign, however, cannot be considered to have been thrown away; for, apart from the shining example of heroism displayed by its fighting men (which is worth very much), and although the flower of our new armies was mowed down in Gallipoli, the flower of the Turkish Army perished with them. We had held up for a year nearly a third of the entire force that Turkey was ever able to put into the field, and killed or disabled about half of that third; the result was seen in the enemy's failures in Mesopotamia in 1917, and Palestine in 1918.

Even the Dardanelles failed to teach the British Government what a formidable foe Turkey really

was; it seems as if each step to counter her was taken purely haphazard, and without any strategic plan. We actually allowed her to take the offensive against Egypt in February 1915, and, though this first and all subsequent attacks on the Suez Canal were beaten off with considerable loss to the Turks, it was really a very fine performance on their part. For the only reasonable track (on which wells can be found) through the desert, between Gaza and the Canal, runs close to the sea and was potentially under fire from British warships. Nevertheless, many thousands of Turks did manage to get through. Turkey, in fact, admirably as her geography is plotted for defensive warfare, is badly situated for offensive. And we could certainly have neutralized, if not altogether stopped, any move of hers on Egypt if we had seriously threatened her Syrian ports, such as Alexandretta and Beirut, by naval attacks and landings of troops in the direction of Aleppo or Damascus.

VI

The head of the Persian Gulf does not seem at first sight a very vital part of her vast Asiatic Empire to tackle, and we should probably not have thought of doing anything there had not our Admiralty owned a large pipe which brought mineral oil (fuel for our fleet) from the oil-bearing district of Persia to the head of the Gulf. It was necessary to protect this pipe from casual Arab

or Turkish raiders, and so the Indian Government was asked in October 1914 to send an expedition to occupy Basra, an important point halfway between the open Gulf and the confluence of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. It was out of this occupation of Basra that grew our campaign in those famous Bible lands which we know as 'Mesopotamia.' The Indian Government 'thought contemptuous' of Turks quite as much as did the British Cabinet, and sent the same sort of expedition which it was accustomed to send to its north-west frontier to punish a tribe of Pathans, to wit the 6th Indian Division of about 10,000 fighting men (a bare 3,000 of whom were British) with 3,000 or 4,000 camp-followers. It was an expedition grossly deficient in stores, aeroplanes, bridging material, and medical service. It was, however, assisted by a few small steam-vessels of very light draught, and by long strings of barges, most of which learned to know what it was to stick for a few days in the shallow, sandbank-strewn waters of the Tigris. This river is liable to terrible floods in the late winter and spring, and to terrible droughts in the summer and autumn. Yet our troops could never operate at any serious distance from it, as there was no drinkable water to be obtained elsewhere in the derelict 'Garden of Eden.'

Basra was occupied without difficulty and the oil-pipe was saved. Then it occurred to someone, 'Why not go on up the river? Why not, eventually, to Bagdad?' a mere trifle of 300 miles as the

crow flies from Basra, and by the windings of the river about 500 miles from open sea. The Russians would surely come and assist us from the Caucasus; and the Russians, with the best intentions in the world, promised to do so. Early in 1915 their Caucasian divisions were already holding up large bodies of Turks round Lake Van in Armenia. It did not, apparently, occur to anyone to ask how a single Indian division could hold one of the largest cities of the East, nor what would happen to it in the event of the Turks not being so badly defeated as we expected them to be in the Dardanelles; or again, in the not impossible contingency of the failure of the Russian help to materialize.

At first all went well; for nearly a year the finest Turkish troops were still being held on the defensive in Gallipoli. In every one of the earlier Mesopotamian engagements large bodies of inferior Turkish troops were easily defeated. Kurna, at the confluence of Tigris and Euphrates, was occupied in December 1914, and every sort of preparation which tireless industry, and that uncanny British knack of making a shillingsworth do the work of a poundsworth, could devise for the prolonged advance, was made. One thing was not forgotten but denied to the gallant fellows toiling there; a sufficient number of troops both to reinforce the fighters and to hold the steadily lengthening line of communication. In April 1915 the Turks were thoroughly routed, though at considerable cost to ourselves, in a three-days battle

at Shaiba—it was the first real counter-attack they had made. In June Amara was occupied, a big town with a large population of Arabs, friendly, no doubt, as long as we were successful, but certain to turn against us at the least hint of failure.

In July and August the news, magnified tenfold by rumour, of our failing fortunes in Gallipoli, began to trickle through. At the end of September the Turks were already reinforced from the West, and put up a very fine fight at Es Sin for the defence of the city of Kut. They were defeated, but saved their guns and transport and fell back, getting stronger every day. We occupied Kut and pushed on to Azizieh, half-way between Kut and Bagdad; small reinforcements from India were actually beginning to reach the lower Tigris. The great heat of summer (occasionally reaching 120° in the shade) was over, and the bitter cold, which was to be experienced on the retreat, had not begun. Milton's description of the region in 'Paradise Lost' could only have been intended to apply to its autumnal season, and must even then be pronounced to be too favourable. General Townshend, who was in command of the advanced force, was not personally responsible for the decision to make a dash on Bagdad from Azizieh, but he most gallantly undertook the task; he had to face a new and very able Turkish General, who had constructed triple lines of defence to the south of the great city. If there are two things at which Turkish soldiers are excellent, they are (1) digging, and

(2) defending what they have dug. Our famous attack, then, at the Battle of Ctesiphon (November 22–25) was one of the most daring deeds of the whole war. We broke through the first Turkish line of defence, but actually had not enough men or enough cartridges to hold it when it had been occupied. Of the 11,000 British and Indian troops who went into action on those days 4,200 were killed, wounded, or missing.

The retreat that necessarily followed was a terrible business. The river was at its lowest, and probably every one of the barges and launches stuck at least once. Then they were instantly sniped by Arabs or by advanced guards of the pursuing Turks from the banks. Much material and ammunition, including all the bridging pontoons, had to be abandoned. Townshend turned once and gave the pursuers a good taste of British quality at very close quarters, and thereby secured safety for his last marches into Kut. On the retreat he had picked up the Seventh Hussars, who were advancing to reinforce him. The town of Kut he decided to hold to the last, but he had to create afresh all his defensive positions at it, for no preparation for such an unexpected event as a retreat had been made by the Higher Authorities. Hold Kut he did for almost five heroic months (December 3, 1915, to April 29, 1916), vainly hoping for relief from the south. Indeed one wonders, not so much that relief did not come, as that the enemy did not push much further down the river and attack

Basra itself. Some of the fiercest fighting in the whole war took place in those months in the successive attempts made by Generals Aylmer and Gorringe to relieve Kut. The total loss in their attempts (for both the Indian and British Governments were now thoroughly awake to the necessity of pouring in troops) has been reckoned at 23,000 men.

Once, in March, Aylmer got within twelve miles, and the roar of his guns across the flooded flats could be plainly heard by the besieged. The siege itself was timidly conducted; the Turks were ill provided with guns, though they were never (as we were) short of ammunition. The spring floods, which nearly drowned out the besieged, did not make the trenches of the besiegers comfortable. By February the Turks had 30,000 men round the town, while the little force within was daily diminished by battle, disease, and famine. Yet every attempt at storm (and there were many) was beaten off with great loss to the stormers. Their bodies lay unburied just outside our positions, and the smell of them was terrible. There were 19,000 'civilian' Arabs within the town, all more or less hostile to us, but all needing food (the 'efficient' German soldier, in a similar plight, would have driven out or starved these useless mouths, or perhaps would have utilised them in some still more gruesome fashion). Before the end of January the British were eating their few horses; our Indian troops were forbidden by their religion

to eat horseflesh. Hostile aeroplanes dropped bombs and we had too few machines to make reply. In April British aeroplanes from the relieving force began dropping sacks of flour, but never in sufficient quantities to keep the garrison in health.

The last of Gorringe's attempts at relief was beaten off with terrible slaughter on April 22, and a week later the starving garrison was driven to unconditional surrender. The total casualties during the siege were 3,700, of whom 1,700 were dead. The total number surrendered, including some 3,000 Indian camp-followers, was about 13,000 men. The sufferings endured by these prisoners during their long marches, often through utter desert, to their various prison camps in Asia Minor, and the horrible cruelties inflicted on the sick and wounded, will hardly bear telling. They may be read in Major Sandes's account of the campaign.[1] A perusal of that book makes one wonder that even diplomatists can now propose to treat with Turkey as if she were a civilized power. Of the 2,500 British captives, three-fifths died during the first year. The Indians, of whom many were Mohammedans, were somewhat better fed and treated. Conditions improved during the second and third years of captivity, whereas it is probable that in hungry Germany the conditions under which our prisoners lived went from bad to worse. But barely one quarter of the British captives of Kut ever saw their homes again.

[1] 'In Kut and Captivity,' by Major E. W. Sandes, D.S.O., M.C., R.E. London, J. Murray, 1919.

VII

And, while all this was but beginning, a new task awaited us in south-eastern Europe. In the first year of war Serbia had, in two separate campaigns, not only defeated, but utterly crushed, the Austrians who attempted to invade her; but by September 1915 she knew that a more formidable attack was on foot. Germany had been making her every kind of tempting offer if she would desert the Allies, but she had utterly refused to listen. Indeed, as early as July she was vainly imploring the Allies to open their eyes to what was coming. This was nothing less than a triple scheme; that Germany should reorganize and reinforce and lead the Austrians to a third attack on Serbia from the north; that Bulgaria should chime in on her eastern flank; and that Greece, if she were not to take active part in this attack, should at least display a neutrality 'benevolent' to the Germano-Austro-Bulgarians. The Queen of Greece was the sister of the German Emperor. Bulgaria could contribute a well-organized army of perhaps 750,000 men[1]; Ferdinand, her King, or Czar as he called himself, was the 'Old Fox' of the Balkans, of German blood and training. That Greece

[1] This again is not easy to estimate. Bulgaria had lost heavily in the recent Balkan wars; some of her best Mohammedan soldiers were sent at once into the Turkish Army; her Macedonian division was so hostile to the Bulgar Government that it had to be disbanded.

was bound by an existing treaty to come to the help of Serbia mattered nothing to the plotters, and less than nothing to Greece's traitor king, Constantine. Allied diplomatists and politicians simply refused to believe in this combination: 'Bulgaria could not be so ungrateful to the Russians who had liberated her,' etc., etc. When some sort of uneasiness on the subject at last began to enter the calculations of these polite gentlemen, we actually tried to induce the faithful Serbs to sacrifice territory to Bulgaria in order to buy her off.

The saving clause in the situation was this: even if we could make up our minds to desert the Serbs, we could not possibly allow the Greek ports to fall into the hands of the Germans, as the Greek king was intending them to fall. They would be filled by hostile Submarines, which would make the Eastern Mediterranean impossible for navigation by Allied ships.

Now it seems probable that the German leaders had something more in view than the mere crushing of the Serbs. Not only did they hope to gain a perfectly open land communication (by the Belgrade-Sofia-Constantinople railway) with their Turkish Ally, but also they wanted to draw off large Allied forces from the West Front, on which they were already planning a great offensive for the coming spring. Therefore, they ostentatiously made great preparations to send a large army south-eastwards, and they intended rumour to magnify that army: 'the pivot of the war was

henceforth to be in the Balkan peninsula.' But they did not send that large army, and at first they sent only a very small one—perhaps three divisions; and Marshal Joffre, at least, refused to be drawn into any trap. Yet he saw the need of saving the Serbs and of checkmating the Greek king, and therefore, when the great Greek patriot and Prime Minister, Venizelos, implored the Allies to send 150,000 men by sea, France heartily agreed to send everything she could spare, and to send it at once. She had had work to persuade us to concur: the Dardanelles campaign had not been an encouragement to us; it was steadily drawing to its tragic close; and we had already another big diversion of force (Mesopotamia) going on, and for the present going well. No doubt it was also the great danger from the enemy's Submarines in the Mediterranean that made our Admiralty shy of committing itself to the task of sending and convoying large numbers of troops thither.

But France did persuade us, and a small mixed French and British force began to land at Salonica early in October. On the day of its first landing the King of Greece dismissed Venizelos and practically took over the government of his country in defiance of the wishes of the great majority of his subjects. But he had on his side nearly all the leading officers of his army, and a considerable minority of the officials of the country, who perhaps did not reflect that the Allied Navies could lay any Greek port in ashes in a few hours. And yet (so timid was the

diplomacy of the Allies) for nineteen months this miserable king was allowed to thwart all their plans; and he achieved a very considerable success in doing so. Some powerful influence no doubt protected him, and it is now generally believed to have been the Russian Empress—which is a horrible instance of what has been called the 'trade-union of kings.' We sent our troops, then, but we sent them too late to save the unhappy Serbs.

The German-Austrian offensive burst on them on September 21, 1915, Field-Marshal Mackensen in command; Serbia had barely 300,000 men left; of these one-third had to be detached to watch the Bulgarian frontier. The remainder made one of the most heroic defences in history; Belgrade was almost annihilated before the enemy forced the passage of the Danube; the flight of the civilian population embarrassed the operations of the soldiers as they fell back to their older capital, Nish. Bulgaria fell on them, without any declaration of war, on October 11; Nish also had to be left behind on November 5, and then began the terrible winter retreat westwards towards Montenegro and Albania, in which it is believed that nearly a quarter of a million civilians, and more than half the Serbian Army, perished. The French, indeed, took the field as fast as ever General Sarrail could get men up by rail from Salonica, and made every effort to get in touch with the retreating Serbs; once only one range of mountains separated him from their left flank. But it was not to be, and we must always

remember how very risky was any forward move on the part of the Allies when at any moment the Greek Army might cut us off from our base on the sea. Sarrail conducted a very skilful retreat on Salonica in December, and the Serbs had to be left to their fate. Meanwhile the first British units on the scene were utterly overmatched by the Bulgarians coming from the east, into whose hands the Greek Army played with shameless indifference to its own honour; our fine Tenth Division, of Dardanelles fame, had on one occasion to bear unsupported the weight of 100,000 Bulgars.

All January 1916 the Allies were occupied in securing a defensive line some thirty miles north of Salonica. This port is an admirable naval station, but the country behind it is a malarial swamp at the mouths of two great rivers, and is swept by fierce winds from the mountains, every ridge of which was soon in possession of the enemy. Reinforcements did continually pour in, but for a long time they barely filled up the gaps caused by the inevitable ravages of sickness. If the Allies had five French and five British divisions there by the end of 1915, probably at no time were there over 400,000 in their armies in the Balkan peninsula. As in the Dardanelles, so in this campaign, the Navy was 'the father and mother' of the troops that were landed—the Navy and the little tramp merchantmen that had grown into a limb of the Navy itself. This enabled us to occupy what Greek islands we pleased (and after a time we had to

occupy a good many), especially Corfu, where such relics of the Serbian Army as managed to reach the Adriatic coast were gradually nursed back into health and re-equipped, until they were able to come round by sea to Salonica (say, in July 1916) and begin to revenge themselves on the treacherous Bulgars. Probably very few German troops stayed in the South-East when their victory had been won; they were soon badly wanted elsewhere, notably near Verdun and on the Somme. The Austrians in December 1915 had gained a victory over the little mountain-girt state of Montenegro, so easily that it is generally believed to have been due to treason on the part of the king of that state and his court; for Montenegro, though only possessing a population of half a million, had never been conquered before, not even by the Turks at the height of their power.

In the summer of 1916 things seemed to be going really well. Russian troops under General Broussiloff were rallying for a really successful offensive, though it proved to be their last rally. The Germans had failed at Verdun: the Allies had begun a most vigorous 'push' on the Somme: the Italians had taken Gorizia and were well across their eastern frontier. In August Roumania declared for us and invaded Hungarian Transsylvania. It was imperative for us to support them by vigorous attacks on the Bulgars. So in September the French contingent was hurled westwards towards Monastir, the British north-eastwards up the Struma, and

northwards towards Lake Doiran, the Serbian north-westwards to keep connection between the other two. Desperate fighting in a very desperate country awaited all three before Monastir was taken (November), and we seem altogether to have underrated the numbers and activity of the Bulgarian Army. For within a very few weeks these were able to inflict serious defeats on Roumania on the lower reaches of the Danube, while fresh German troops first held up and then drove back the advance of the same power in Transsylvania. Before the end of 1916 the Roumanian capital had been occupied by the enemy, and the Government had fled to Jassy, on the Russian frontier; the army was reduced to five divisions of battered men.

The renewed activity of the hostile Greek 'royalists' had also given us pause. One Greek army corps had openly 'surrendered' to the enemy and was sent as a 'guest' to Germany. Thereupon in September 1916 Venizelos openly raised the flag of revolt against his king, called to himself all the loyal elements of Greek life, and set up a provisional Government in Salonica (October). Among the Allied statesmen to whom the gratitude of Europe for its liberation is due, few have earned more evergreen laurels than M. Venizelos. Still we held our hand from any active measures against the traitors and did not even enforce a blockade of the Greek ports till the beginning of 1917. Monastir remained our outpost for many months, and even that was constantly under fire from hostile guns. At last,

on June 6, a quiet-looking French civilian gentleman, M. Jonnart, arrived in Athens and told King Constantine that the Allies were tired of him and he had better go away; 'a yacht was at his disposal and he would find republican Switzerland to be a delightful country for "*les rois en exil.*"' He abdicated with unexpected meekness and we allowed (why?) his second son to take his place on the Greek throne. It certainly does seem extraordinary that, at this period of the world's history, Western statesmen should show any tenderness for these sham anti-national royalties in the South-East; yet fifteen months later we allowed a similar substitution when Ferdinand of Bulgaria abdicated.

But 'Tino's' abdication was the turning-point—the Greek Army was henceforth to be mobilized on our side and was to do some useful fighting during our final advance to victory. Even poor Roumania raised her head at the glad tidings, and began to talk of a 'fresh offensive in alliance with the Russians.' There were, in fact, still Russian troops nominally aiding her, but they were going from bad to worse, being at the mercy of the last revolutionary intriguer who could be bought by German gold. They could never be trusted not to desert on the battlefield, and their poisonous doctrines of mutiny soon began to infect what remained of the Roumanian Army. Mackensen fell like a thunderbolt on this army in the autumn of 1917, and by the end of the year Roumania was forced, more by her Russian 'friends' than her

German foes, to beg for an armistice, which was turned into the 'Peace of Bucharest' in March 1918; Roumania had to hand over at least one-fifth of her territory to Bulgar and Hungarian, and was to be occupied, 'until the general peace,' by hostile armies.

It is not very easy to account for the long delay on the Salonica front itself, contemporary with these disastrous events. It lasted, in fact, for more than a year; Sarrail was superseded by Guillaumaut in December 1917, and Guillaumaut by the real victor—one of the ablest of the French heroes of 1914, General Franchet-d'Espérey—in June 1918. Not till the end of September were d'Espérey's preparations complete; and then in a week it was all over.

He must have been a superb tactician; for he began, with not much over 300,000 men, an offensive on the hundred miles of front from Monastir to Lake Doiran against Bulgarian forces, if not quite equal to his own in numbers, at least impregnably entrenched, as they believed, on commanding heights. For five, or perhaps only four, days these Bulgars put up some very fine fights. Then they broke and fled in utter rout and in several directions. The Serbs then proved themselves to be the greatest of all the Allied assets, both in the storming of precipitous rock-fortresses and in the relentless pursuit that followed. It was one of the greatest of the few pursuits of the war. A few German troops were rushed up from Hungary to help the fugitives,

but seem only to have added to their confusion. Hustled across their own frontier, the Bulgarian generals sent on the 26th to beg d'Espérey for an armistice; two days later their envoys reached Salonica, and on the 30th, by an unconditional surrender, the whole of the Bulgar Army, stores, railways, and administration, passed into Allied hands. Thus, after three weary years of waiting (and of waiting which cannot really be called 'effective preparation') a fortnight of victory brought the whole of the enemy plans in the Balkans to the ground. Germany was once more cut off from her Turkish ally, and the 'Berlin-Bagdad railway' had been severed at a vital point.

VIII

It will be convenient in this place to take up the tale of the Mesopotamian campaign from the fall of Kut, and to bring it into line with our advance in Palestine and Syria. We shall then have disposed of the principal 'subsidiary' operations—each, be it remembered, in itself a war on a really great scale, with many alternations of reverse and victory, but all converging to the months of September and October 1918, in the latter of which the Turks were finally 'knocked out.'

More in this war than in any previous wars since civilization began, the great object of each combatant was to *kill men*, to destroy whole armies so that they should be incapable of recovery. And

it seems as if the Turkish Army was in the end to be the most completely destroyed of all. The Dardanelles campaign had begun this process. Moreover, badly wounded Turks seldom recovered, for Turkish surgery is as clumsy as it is cruel; our wounded, except in the first Mesopotamian campaign, very often did recover. In this campaign also we had taken a heavy toll of Turks in spite of our defeat. Perhaps this was the reason why the enemy was so unaccountably unwilling to push on against those battered remains of our forces that had been attempting the relief of Kut in March and April 1916.

The British Government was awakened by the disaster of Kut, took the whole organization of Mesopotamia out of the hands of the Indian Government, superseded the Commander-in-Chief in India, and chose Sir Stanley Maude, who had already greatly distinguished himself on the Tigris, to take over the task of avenging Ctesiphon and Kut. Completely new stores, equipment, guns, and transport were provided, including a fleet of river steamers; and a railway was begun from Basra upwards. The fertile districts were sown with corn and vegetables, and embankments were built against floods. All this went on at an amazing rate through the summer and autumn of 1916, and Maude made no move till the end of the year. When he did move it was in a series of fierce little jumps forward, always with one foot ready to leap back if he thought too great losses would be

incurred by advance. He was not only a fine tactician, but exceptionally clever at all the administrative work of his profession and immensely economical of his men's lives. The Turks, or the German officers who directed them, were not so economical, and it looks as if they were often compelled by their tutors to throw away men in offensive movements, for which their troops were less suited than they were for dogged defence of trenches.

Still, once he was awake to what Maude was doing, the Turk put up a very fine defence of Kut, December 13, 1916—February 24, 1917; it fell on the latter day. By March 6 Maude was on the old battlefield of Ctesiphon, and a three days' battle, 8th to 11th, had to be fought before we got into Bagdad—we had made 110 miles of advance in fifteen days. By the end of April we held the railway north from Bagdad as far as Samarra, seventy more miles up the Tigris. Maude wisely refused to expose his men too much during the heat of summer, but he kept the Turks awake by small raids, both towards the Russian frontier and towards the Euphrates. In that summer a German soldier, Falkenhayn, took over the command of the Turkish armies and fixed his headquarters at Aleppo, ready to strike either against Maude or against a new danger that was threatening him from Egypt via Palestine and Syria. He finally decided to contest the latter advance in greater force than the former.

Maude and Allenby (who took command of the Palestine force in June), though widely separated

by difficult deserts, could more or less play into each other's hands; and the Turks in front of Maude rapidly degenerated into a rabble that knew itself beaten. They had no reinforcements nearer than Mosul, 130 miles away. Maude made his last leap, on Tekrit beyond Samarra, in November, and died of cholera on the 18th of that month. He had strictly prohibited his troops from drinking the milk of the country; but, being invited to take tea in a schoolroom at Bagdad, he drank the milk, which he well knew might be infected, rather than offend his host, and so died, a victim to his own sweet courtesy. Can you imagine a German risking his life in order to show himself such a perfect gentleman? Sir William Marshall succeeded to the command, and put in action a similar series of swift and yet cautious leaps, both up the Tigris towards Mosul, and on the road to Aleppo, which road, though mostly desert, touches the Euphrates occasionally. Much of the latter advance was made in armoured motor-cars, which made light of desert difficulties. In March 1918 Marshall won a great victory at Khan Bagdadyieh (which means 'The Inn on the Bagdad road') and his left chased the Turks for 130 miles up the Euphrates. His right had not quite reached Mosul when, seven months later, the Turks begged for peace.

It will not, then, be wholly wrong if we look on Maude and Marshall as the right wing of a great converging attack in the direction of Aleppo, and we must now turn to the progress of the left wing

of the same attack; that is, the British thrust from Egypt through Palestine and Syria. Until the Dardanelles business was at an end Egypt was mainly a feeding and training ground for that campaign, and for the Salonica campaign it remained so to the end. The Australian, New Zealand, and Indian troops were usually landed in Egyptian ports, and made a longer or shorter stay in Alexandria or Cairo, to whichever (if any) of the Eastern spheres they were to be sent. The defence of the Canal from Port Said to Suez became therefore of extreme importance; we have already seen a Turkish attack on this beaten back in February 1915. Early in 1916 the Turks were still wholly in possession of the Sinai peninsula; it is about 125 miles by the shortest road from the Canal to Rafa, the first town in Palestine (and a hundred of this is sheer desert), but the track runs close to the sea and so might be under fire from British ships.

Sir Archibald Murray took over the sole command in March 1916; he at once started to build a railway, and soon a fresh-water pipe alongside of it, eastwards from the Canal. A great advantage for us lay in the fact that, by midsummer, nearly all Arabia was in revolt against the Turks, with the 'Shereef' of Mecca, who claimed to be a true descendant of the Prophet, at its head. In spite of this the Turks made in August fierce onslaught on Murray's positions east of the Canal, and were only beaten off after hard fighting. By the end

of the year 1916 railway, pipe, and British force had reached the oasis of El Arish; this is at least three-quarters of the way to Rafa, which town we took on January 8. The next place of importance is Gaza, which had evidently replaced the gates once carried away by Samson, for the Turks held us up outside them for a very long while. Murray made two attempts to storm Gaza (March and April 1917) and was beaten off with great loss; he[1] did not improve matters by calling his reverses a victory, and evidently his tactics had been faulty. In June he was replaced by the great cavalry leader, Sir Edmund Allenby, who was reinforced by three Divisions from India and Salonica. Allenby found that the Turks still had 150,000 men in front of him, stretched from the sea at Gaza to Beersheba or beyond it. Like Maude, he would not strike till his preparations were complete, and then he, too, would strike home.

A great factor in his strokes lay in the assistance of the Arabs, so much so that these can from the first be called his right wing, and at the end they appear almost as a connecting link between him and Marshall. Young Colonel Lawrence, a scholar and explorer, had for many months been organizing the true wandering Arabs of the desert, the most independent human beings on earth. He spoke Arabic like a native, dressed and lived like one. In the two years previous to July 1917 he had been

[1] Or perhaps the politicians at home who 'edited' his despatches.

securing, with naval aid, the ports on the Red Sea; and if he ever had a base (but he generally did without one) it was the port of Akaba at the head of the north-eastern arm of that sea, won in July 1917. Your Bedouin Arab has no natural aptitude for fighting in the strict sense of the word, and has a rooted objection to facing gunfire or organized battalions, but he is a magnificent raider and sniper and will cover 100 miles a day on a trotting dromedary. Also he firmly believes in loot. To hide, with his camel, behind a rock and pick off the Turkish sentries guarding a railway bridge, to shout that 'Allah is great' when the British officer blows up the bridge with dynamite, to hide again and then 'rush' the next Turkish train that has to pull up at the broken bridge, and loot that train from end to end, was a holiday for the Bedouin. And luckily it was just what was wanted. The Hedjaz (i.e. Mohammedan pilgrims') railway, to Medina and Mecca from Constantinople, Aleppo, and Damascus, was the great artery of Turkish communication; the Shereef held Mecca, but Medina was still in enemy hands. I have heard some of the stories of the exploits of Colonel Lawrence and his Arab friends from one who saw a good deal of him in those years; and, in comparison with them, the marvels narrated in the fictitious "Arabian Nights" are cold, unromantic prose.

At the end of October 1917 Allenby suddenly pounced on Beersheba and so began to get possession

of the smaller line of railway which runs from Jerusalem north-west to Jaffa, and south towards the Sinai desert; it was by this line that the main Turkish force at Gaza got its supplies. By the loss of Beersheba the Turkish left flank was partially uncovered. There followed a tremendous land-and-sea bombardment of Gaza, and the Turks evacuated it on November 8. Ascalon fell the next day and then Ashdod. 'Philistia, be thou glad of me'; Sir Edmund had not yet 'cast out his shoe over Edom,' nor yet 'divided Sichem,' but he was going to do both, and (Mount) Ephraim was going to be the 'strength of his head' in his last great battle for them. The spirits of the victorious Godfrey de Bouillon, and of the twice baffled King Richard I, may well have greeted him as he drew near to the Holy City. Joshua and David, too, one thinks, would nod approval. The railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem was reached on the 13th, and Jaffa itself surrendered three days later; it is the natural, though a bad, port for the city. From it the coast road to the north is fairly fertile, and not difficult; but inland the stony hills of Judæa are terrible ground for fighting on. Once or twice Allenby's advance outran the progress of his water-pipe; then there was real suffering. Also the weather became atrocious, torrents of cold rain falling in November. The first view of Jerusalem was from the hills north-west of it, somewhere near the traditionary tomb of Samuel. The final 'push' for the Holy City could not

begin till Hebron (where is the 'tomb of Abraham'), on the Turkish far left, fell on December 7. The baffled Turk evacuated Jerusalem without fighting on December 9; our Generals had refused to throw a single shell or bomb on it or on Bethlehem. Sir Edmund entered the city on foot the next day, and a British civilian was appointed Governor.

The campaign was by no means over. Allenby had a front of some fifty miles from the sea to the Jerusalem—Nablus (i.e. Shechem) road, and powerful Turk forces still lay east and north of the city. The latter made a fierce counter-attack at the end of December, and earned a crushing defeat. The British general's great object now was to get in touch with his Arab friends who were still in Moab beyond the Dead Sea, but it was late in February, 1918, before he could even take Jericho and reach the Jordan; twice he crossed that river and progressed beyond it, and twice he was thrust back. And he was very badly hampered from April till July by having to send off to the Western front (where the last fierce German onslaught had to be stayed) some of his very finest British troops. These were replaced by Indian divisions from Mesopotamia and India, many of them[1] recruits or untried men. While this delayed him, the Turks received their last reinforcements from Aleppo and Damascus, and a small

[1] All honour to Sir Charles Monro, the new Commander-in-Chief in India; it was under him that our Indian Army had grown so amazingly, not merely new battalions, but wholly new regiments being raised.

number of Germans were ultimately found to have come with them. But the time was not wasted, for Sir Edmund set to work to train his new troops in the most efficient manner. Nor did Colonel Lawrence waste his time, for, by circuitous routes through the desert, he was now creeping nearer to the Hedjaz railway at its vital points southward of Damascus. In September Allenby's preparations were finished; he meant to feint with his centre on Nablus, but attack with all his might from the sea, and roll up the Turks eastward to the Jordan.

This great attack was launched before dawn on September 19; in three hours the Turkish front was utterly broken and the cavalry were in pursuit; by midday, they had ridden twenty miles, slaying many and capturing more thousands of Turks; within two days they had covered seventy miles, and Nazareth had fallen. Nablus fell on the 22nd; Haifa and Acre on the 23rd; Tiberias, on the lake of Galilee, on the 25th; 25,000 prisoners were in our hands and the Turkish Army west of the Jordan had ceased to exist. That on the east gave little trouble, for the Arabs had at last destroyed the vital railway bridges in its line of flight; and Allenby and the Arabs, now united, swept on to Damascus, which surrendered on October 1. We had then 60,000 Turkish prisoners in our hands, and the rest of the business was a walk-over. Beirut, the most important port in Syria, Sidon, Tripoli, Homs, surrendered in succession, and finally Falkenhayn fled westwards from Aleppo before

Allenby entered it on October 26. Marshall was already close to Mosul when Turkey cried for peace on October 30; she had to evacuate the whole of Syria and Mesopotamia and recross the Taurus into Asia Minor.

So ended the 'Fourth Crusade.' [1]

IX

The entry of Italy into the war on the side of the Allies [2] (May 1915) was an immense moral encouragement. Her king was devoted heart and soul to the cause, and must be reckoned one of the real heroes of the war. He deliberately broke off an existing alliance in order to range himself on the side of freedom against military tyranny. Italy had an age-long quarrel with Austria, who had dominated her down to 1859 and still retained a great deal of naturally Italian territory. She could contribute perhaps three million [3] soldiers and (on paper at least) an excellent fleet; she could give us the use of several splendid harbours as naval bases.

On the other hand she was frightfully exposed

[1] I do not think that any expedition after the Third (Richard I's) ought really to be dignified by the name of a Crusade, though I am well aware that mediæval historians have numbered these movements down to a 'tenth crusade.'

[2] At first she declared war only on Austria, and not till August 1916 on Germany also.

[3] No trustworthy figures are yet forthcoming; when Italy joined in, she was able at once to send 700,000 men to her 470-mile-long front.

to attack from the north, for in Austrian hands were all the 'jumping-off places' in the eastern Alps. She coveted a great deal of territory on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, and it would be very difficult for her to be friendly with the Serbs and (if they should come in on our side) the Greeks. She feared that Germany might at any moment violate Swiss neutrality, as she had violated Belgian, and strike at Milan through the Swiss passes; indeed, one wonders that the enemy refrained from doing this, for he could then have struck also at a wholly undefended piece of French frontier, and a considerable minority of the population of Switzerland, including most of the officers of the army, was German in sympathy.

Again, Italy was very poor, and the Allies would have to supply her almost continuously not only with munitions of war and coals, which they could ill afford to do, but even with food. For these and other reasons she made almost no use of her fine ships, which remained locked up in her great southern harbour of Taranto throughout the war. She sent, indeed, a considerable force across the Adriatic to Valona in Albania, and did something towards reviving and comforting the battered relics of the Serbian Army after their great winter retreat. Her main army at first made considerable progress, both northwards towards Trent and eastwards towards Trieste; and all 1915–16 things looked fairly rosy.

But in 1917 the second reorganization of the Austrian armies with German help, together with the results, so disastrous for the Allies, of the Russian revolutions, began to tell, and in October a very great, but not wholly unmerited, disaster fell on the Italian arms at the head of the Adriatic; it looked for a moment as if the whole of Venetia and perhaps Lombardy would be overrun.

The truth is that from the very beginning of the war there were strong anti-nationalist and pro-German influences at work in Italy. In the first place, there was a strong leaven of violent 'international' socialism in the great cities like Milan and Turin; neither France nor Britain had wholly escaped a similar infection. In the second place, there was the Pope, or rather the Jesuit clique which has directed Papal policy for several centuries. The Popes have never forgiven the Italian patriots for depriving them of their temporal power in Rome; Austria was the most Catholic country in Europe; at least half Germany was Catholic, and the other half well understood how to exploit the leanings of the Pope. Kaiser William II had no more scruple in posing as devoted to the interests of Catholicism than in pretending to the Sultan that he held Mahomet as the one and only Prophet of God. In the third place, there were great numbers of middle-class manufacturers and merchants whose commercial interests were closely bound up with Germany. The Italian mind is intensely practical, as it was in the days when

Machiavelli voiced Italian opinion. 'What are we going to get out of this?' was a question which too many Italians asked themselves.

The Germans played upon all these discordant strings with their customary unscrupulous skill; they spread, broadcast, forged copies of respectable Italian newspapers ascribing all the high prices of food to the 'machinations' of France and Britain. There were food-riots in Turin, where everything was fearfully dear, and the Germans spread the lie that British troops were being used to crush these riots before ever a British soldier had set foot in Italy. The Pope chose the supreme moment of the military disaster to launch, wholly in the interest of his German friends, an appeal in favour of 'universal peace,' and spoke of this war for liberty as a 'useless massacre.' At least one of the Italian armies holding the Alpine front was badly infected with treasonable ideas; and the result was that on October 24, at Caporetto, 5,000 of the enemy's troops simply walked through a gap which had been left by a particularly treacherous or cowardly battalion in the Italian line. On the next day German advanced parties were scouring the plain of Friuli, and the whole Italian line had to be withdrawn in confusion. The Italian Second Army broke and fled, the Third Army was badly mauled too. One hundred and eighty thousand prisoners and a large number of guns fell into enemy hands. Only the bad weather and the floods on the swift, broad rivers that pour

down to the head of the Adriatic from the Eastern Alps prevented a still greater disaster. As it was, the retreat became a tragedy, second only to that of the Serbians two years before. Some units put up fine rearguard actions; others simply looted as they ran. The Fourth Army, however, made a magnificent stand on the river Piave, and there, on a front of forty-five miles between the mountains and the sea, General Diaz, who became, *vice* Cadorna, Commander-in-Chief of the Italian forces, gathered to himself the remains of the beaten armies.

The West to the rescue. At the end of October 1917 a hasty conference of British, French, and Italian statesmen and generals met at Rapallo, Mr. Lloyd George and General Foch the life and soul of it all. The former there spoke in favour of creating one *Generalissimo* for the whole Allied armies, and this could only have been a Frenchman. British opinion as a whole was against this, but there can be little doubt that our Prime Minister was right. He was at least allowed to set up a permanent Council of War, in which all the Allies were to be represented. It sat at Versailles near Paris, and its first-fruits were the despatch of General Fayolle from France, Sir Herbert Plumer, fresh from the terrible Third Battle of Ypres, and Lord Cavan from the Somme, to stiffen the backs of our Italian friends.

Munitions, transport, guns, five British infantry Divisions, and, above all, food, were hurried into

Italy. Remember that there was only one railway, that through the Mont-Cenis tunnel, available; but there were many Alpine passes, and strings of British and French lorries were soon climbing these. Mr. Thomas Atkins was by this time accustomed to many strange countries, but there is no doubt that his first sight of the Alps in winter made a powerful impression on his mind. Yet, with the best will in the world, it took two months before a complete French and British force could reach the Italian fighting line. Meanwhile, Sir Herbert and Lord Cavan found the Italian leaders very doubtful of being able to hold the Piave and the Brenta; they were already talking about falling back to the Adige or even the Mincio; i.e. of abandoning another enormous slice of territory. The British generals would hear of nothing of the kind, and Diaz soon cordially agreed with them.

Although the stand on the Piave had been made before a single French or British soldier had reached the front, the interval until the arrival of our troops was an anxious one, and the greatest factor in favour of Diaz was the atrocity of the weather; also the enemy employed his time badly. The German forces had now been withdrawn, and Austria was left to 'finish off' Italy by herself. In similar circumstances she had seldom displayed much audacity; she now delayed to open her offensive movement till June 1918, and then it was easily repulsed, the French troops operating in the mountain area, and Cavan, whom Sir Herbert Plumer

had left in charge with perfect confidence, on the Asiago plateau, from which his troops were afterwards moved still further south, nearly to the mouth of the river. The Piave is broad, and splits before its mouth into many channels with numerous islands between. At last, in October, Cavan, in command of a mixed British and Italian force, performed one of the finest feats of the war, the crossing of the Piave in full flood in the teeth of the Austrian left. The first step, to the first island, was effected by a night surprise, conducted on a fleet of little boats, which had been gathered and secreted, and it was actually begun on the anniversary of the disaster of Caporetto. Bridges could then be thrown, though every step had to be fought for. From the Piave to the Livenza, and thence to the Tagliamento, the advance went on, the Austrian resistance weakening at every step. Within a week we had 28,000 prisoners, and on November 4 Austria cried for peace. French, British, and Italians had all shown the greatest valour, but the spearhead of the whole was the British Guardsman.

X

But all victories, all endurance, of the Allies, whether in these ' side-shows ' or on the main West Front, would have been impossible but for one factor, the dominant factor of all—sea-power. The Germans, in their preparation for the attempt

at dominating the world, had been quite aware of this. They had built and drilled a fleet, which was growing, and was intended to grow, so big that they believed that in a few years the British Navy would be obliged to make way for it or be sunk.

Their mistake lay in thinking that a Navy could be 'created' by force of money and steel, without a naturally seafaring population to man it. Many of their officers had become scientific and highly trained naval experts; some of them were even gentlemen and behaved as such; their men were not so good and failed them cruelly at the end. Their naval gunnery was in many instances excellent, and their guns on the whole outranged everything except our great 15-inch guns. If we were to examine Navy lists and official publications of 1914, it would appear that in numbers of Destroyers and Submarines we were ahead of them, but a great many of ours were of obsolete types, or had been long out of commission, although a few of our best were better than anything that they had. They began at once to sow the open trade routes of the sea with submarine mines in contravention of all the conventions of civilized war; the first British warship to be lost, the light Cruiser *Amphion*, fell a victim to one of these mines, just after her attendant Destroyers had sunk the German mine-layer *Königin Luise*, which, disguised as a neutral merchant ship, was laying her eggs off the Suffolk coast. The enemy's 'high explosive' shells were infinitely superior to ours, for they would go through the

armour of a ship and only burst when they got inside. In their Zeppelin airships they possessed a weapon for naval scouting to which we, even at the end of the war, had no parallel.

The small French fleet was excellent, almost perfect in its way, and most effectually, by its silent menace, kept the Austrians penned in their Adriatic ports. The Italian small craft occasionally did good service in the Adriatic, but of their big ships the Italians made no use at all. A Russian fleet was 'in being' both in the Baltic and the Black Sea, but was seething with discontent and treason, and disgraced itself in 1917 by cruel murders of its officers; the Black Sea Squadron could certainly have done much more than it did against the Turks, but only in the event of the Germans being very badly beaten by us in the North Sea could the Russian Baltic Squadron have been aggressive; then, indeed, it might have landed troops at more than one place on the German Baltic coast, and this would have been invaluable. Japan joined the Allies very early and, with the help of H.M.S. *Triumph*, took the one German settlement, Tsing-tau, in China, and she also sent in 1917 some useful small craft to help us in the Mediterranean.

But the share that Great Britain bore in sea-power, in proportion to the rest of the Allies put together, stands at something like twenty to one. Before the end of 1914 there were 600 ships of one kind or another being built for the Navy; at the date of the Armistice we had 5,000 craft afloat, manned

by 400,000 sailors. When Admiral Sims brought the American Atlantic Contingent to join our 'Grand Fleet' in the Orkney Islands in 1917 he is reported to have said, 'We are not the American Navy, we are only the sixth Battle Squadron of your fleet.' It was a saying worthy of his modesty and his loyalty, but it was no more than the truth.

Yet the part which our sea-power played in the final victory has not been realized by the world at large, or even by our own people, because it was so little seen by landsmen's eyes. At the end of July 1914 the Grand Fleet left Portland and simply disappeared from our view; no newspapers were allowed to mention the position of a single ship. For the first time in our long naval history it was clearly our duty to the Alliance to put our own feelings of pride in our pockets and to maintain a great defensive, a great police of the High Seas and the Narrow Seas. If these were not free and open for all the friendly nations, still more if Britain were invaded and paralysed, France must fall,

And when France falls, the World.

Our 'capital ships' must therefore be kept for the 'Day' of which the Germans were so fond of speaking, which most even of our naval authorities really expected them to risk. But, unseen and not directly felt by the Alliance, the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow was quite sufficiently felt by the enemy who never dared to look it full in the face. It exercised its silent pressure and issued its tranquil

mandates, like some awful god behind a cloud, to cut off, one by one, his sources of supply, to tie him down to the barren warfare on land, to ruin his commerce beyond hope of recovery, to control and shepherd the trade of the world for the benefit of the Allies without ruining the neutral nations, America, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Spain. Compared with this service, the destruction of the enemy's fleet, eminently desirable as it would have been, would have produced, once he was committed by his attack on Belgium to the great land-war, little immediate effect.

Yet it required all Sir John Jellicoe's courage to uphold these remote and cautious plans of strategy. Rash politicians in the Cabinet cried out for the immediate seizure of Heligoland (as if that could have led us into anything but a trap), for instant attempts to force a passage into the Baltic Sea, for any and every dissipation of our forces, in order to ' tear victory from the skies.'

Such men failed to see that, while the main trunk of the giant remained veiled in the Orkney mists, its myriad limbs were seen and felt all round the world; its Cruisers which cleared the remotest seas of German raiders, its Monitors which pounded the Belgian coast or felt their way up Asiatic and African rivers, its trawlers which swept up submarine mines almost as fast as they were dropped, its Destroyers which shepherded every contingent of Allied troops to the near and the far theatres of the war, its sea-planes, which hovered watchful for

Zeppelins (he who hasn't seen an aeroplane whizz off the deck of a battleship at sea in a fresh breeze has something yet to see), its flying-boats scouting for hostile Submarines, its nets to entangle them, its hydrophones which listened for the noise of their engines, its paravanes which cut the chains mooring the mines, its Submarines which alone could venture into the mouths of enemy rivers and do their unseen, awful work on enemy ships of war.

But not on anything else; the supreme disgrace of the Germans, and no doubt their greatest blunder, as well as crime, was their long series of submarine attacks on defenceless merchant ships and passenger-ships, not only of the Allies but of the neutrals as well. This was conceived in the hope of bringing Britain and France to their knees by starvation, and no doubt it did contribute to make food and many other things very dear in all Allied countries; indeed it may be many years before we and our Allies recover from the serious economic crisis which our enemies thus brought about. But when the *Lusitania* was torpedoed off the Irish coast (May 1915) and a thousand passengers were drowned, the entry of the American Republic into the war, though long delayed, became ultimately certain. Remember also that there were several instances in which enemy Submarines fired on the unarmed crew of a merchant ship, which they had just sunk, after the men had taken to their boats; there was one instance, at least (that of the *Belgian Prince*, sunk July 31,

1917), if not more, in which the crew were taken on the Submarine when she was above water, and left there to drown when she submerged. Other German crimes, even the gross ill-treatment of prisoners, even the use of poison gas and liquid fire, may perhaps in a few centuries be forgotten, but not the deeds of their 'U-boats.' Mr. Punch's famous cartoon of April 7, 1915, has inmortalized these for all time.

In February 1915 the Germans proclaimed that all seas round the British Islands were 'prohibited' to neutral merchant-ships; and it would be folly to ignore how greatly the danger grew for the next two years, as the enemy Submarines learned to go further and further to sea to seek their prey. At the end of January 1917 they proclaimed 'unrestricted submarine warfare,' i.e. they would sink at sight any ships trading with Great Britain. This made even the Chinese (not to mention the Americans) come to the help of the Allies. The attacks on merchantmen and neutrals reached their height of success in April 1917, and decreased a little till the following December, after which our losses from them remained stationary (but always very severe) until the end of the war. By far the largest percentage of these losses was in the Mediterranean, where in June–July 1916 one single Submarine, U 35, sank in three weeks 90,000 tons of shipping; over forty ships were sunk in one week of April 1917;[1] three troop-ships were sunk in one day

[1] These forty were not *all* in the Mediterranean; but he

(April 15). The 'depth charges' or explosive 'eggs'[1] which our Destroyers learned to drop on them, the guns with which all merchant ships came to be armed, the *camouflage* and 'dazzle-painting' which was practised to deceive the Submarines, the 'baits' and traps that were laid for them, were all of much effect but cannot be said to have triumphed over the iniquity. What triumphed over it was the undaunted spirit of the British merchant sailors, over 15,000 of whom have been killed or drowned.

All the efficiency of our Navy might have been wasted but for this spirit; and if one were so foolish as to ask, 'Who have been the greatest heroes in this war?' the answer might reasonably be given, 'Our merchant sailors.' These men never struck for higher wages: the only time they struck was when they learned that Mr. Ramsay Macdonald wanted to cross the sea to a conference with the enemy's Socialists. Most of us who know anything of the sea have met sailors who have been torpedoed at least once; there are instances of men who have suffered that fate five and six times, but have tranquilly signed on again for a fresh voyage a few days after they have been

who would read the story of the sinking of a huge liner with 3,000 troops on board, and of the skilful rescue of nearly all of these by our Destroyers, should consult Captain David Bone's *Merchantmen-at-Arms*, London, 1919.

[1] The first consignments of these 'eggs' supplied to our Destroyers in the Mediterranean constantly failed to explode.

landed. Without this heroism the U-boats must have triumphed, and the Allies must have starved. Remember that not only the torpedo and the submarine boat were the terrors; from the first day of the war the enemy Submarines had begun to sow explosive mines in the open sea. Remember also that it was not only food that these merchant-ships, whether liners or 'tramps,' carried; they were also constantly employed in carrying troops and munitions. By the spring of 1917 British ships had conveyed eight millions of British or Allied soldiers to one or another of the scenes of war. Not till that year did we adopt any regular system of 'convoying' (i.e. guarding by armed craft) fleets of merchant ships, and even then they were very difficult to shepherd.

But to return to naval operations. The 'awful calm' at Scapa Flow did not begin at once. The Navy started the war with not nearly enough Cruisers or Destroyers, with hardly any docks capable of containing the biggest ships, and with *no defended East-coast base at all.* We had hardly any submarine mines, and the few that we had often failed to explode. The Government had for years been thinking of nothing but votes, and had utterly neglected naval defence. On the east, that is the exposed, coast, there were no defended harbours at all of sufficient size and depth for the Grand Fleet; one had been begun at Rosyth in the Firth of Forth but had been left unfinished; Invergordon on the Cromarty Firth, where there were a few big

guns, had depth but not width, and neither this nor the magnificent bay, Scapa, in the Orkneys, fifteen miles across, and of adequate depth, had any other defences at all; Harwich, naturally defended by sandbanks, has barely depth for the smallest Cruisers to get in and out.

The result was that till October 1914, when anti-submarine defences could be begun at Scapa, the Grand Fleet was actually safer in the open, and was engaged in perpetual sweeps of the North Sea in the hope of meeting the enemy; once it had to take refuge from Submarines for a short time in Loch Ewe in Western Ross and in Lough Swilly in Ireland, and the *Audacious* struck a mine and was lost on the way (October 27). Invergordon very early became an advanced station for portions of the Grand Fleet, and the Battle-cruisers were soon based on Rosyth, where the defence works were rapidly pushed on; but it is believed that an enemy Submarine actually came in there, passed under the Forth Bridge and had a look round, in the second month of the war.

That our Admirals were often anxious there can be no doubt; over-anxious it would have been impossible for them to be. If the enemy's strategy at sea was feeble, his tactics were often excellent, and he kept on scoring little hits in the game, too often with impunity. Three fine ships, *Aboukir*, *Hogue*, and *Cressy*, were sunk by a Submarine in one day (September 22), the last two because they could not abandon the British tradition which

bids a ship stand by to save a sinking comrade; the *Hawke* fell a victim to a similar attack a few days later; the *Formidable* on the first day of 1915. The weather in the North Sea is more often hazy than not; twice in the first few months of war light German forces supported by powerful Cruisers slipped across in the dark at high speed and threw shells into open watering-places, Yarmouth (November 3, 1914), Scarborough, Whitby, and Hartlepool (December 16, 1914); twice they shelled Lowestoft (April 26 and November 26, 1916) and on each occasion our cruisers failed to catch them on their return journey.

The idea of these raids seems to have been that our Cruisers would be certain to appear and give chase, and could then be led into a prepared minefield. Late in October 1916 there was a cleverly planned enemy raid on the shipping in the very Straits of Dover, and another on April 20, 1917. It was on this occasion that the only boarding action recorded in the war took place; two of our finest Destroyers, *Swift* and *Broke*, met the German flotilla of six just after midnight, sank two of them, and drove the remainder to fly. *Broke* rammed one of her opponents and the ships were locked together; after exchanging fire at pistol range, the enemy crew actually boarded [1] *Broke*, but were all cut down

[1] Or perhaps tried to escape being killed by clambering on board *Broke*. This is the opinion of Commander Evans of the latter vessel (see his new book, *Keeping the Seas*, London, 1920).

or flung overboard in a moment. There was another raid on Ramsgate a week later. In the autumn of that year their Cruisers tried to cut off a large convoy of merchantmen coming from Norway, and the Destroyers *Strongbow* and *Mary Rose* fought them unaided and were sunk, but saved a portion of the convoy.

After the early raids the Cabinet used to interfere with Admiral Jellicoe's plans and demand greater protection for our seven hundred miles of exposed coast. Yet when the Admiral suggested, in the autumn of 1914, that we should 'seal up' the Belgian port of Zeebrugge before the enemy had made it so strong, the Government turned a deaf ear to him. Not till he himself had given up the command of the Grand Fleet and gone to be First Sea-Lord of the Admiralty in London, at the end of 1916, were really adequate steps taken against the Submarines.[1]

And, until the remote seas of the world were wholly cleared of German raiders, too many of our

[1] One of the few humorous incidents of the war occurred in December 1915. Some Austrians and Hungarians had been allowed to take passage from India to Europe in a British ship, the *Golconda*; and the Austrian Government had the unspeakable effrontery to demand that the British Government should adopt special means of protecting this ship against German *and Austrian* Submarines, and that on the ground that most of these foreigners were 'better-class people.' Sir Edward Grey administered a wholesome reproof in answer to this absurd request, with a sting in the tail for the snobbery of it.

far too few Cruisers had constantly to be detached to chase them, and to aid our troops in capturing the German colonies (in 1914, Togoland and Samoa, August; New Guinea, September; Tsing-Tau, November; South-West Africa, July 1915; Cameroon, February 1916). One German colony indeed, East Africa, made a magnificent defence until the very end of the war; it employed 100,000 of our fighting men, and cost us what was perhaps the most serious tropical campaign in our history, but it was cut off from the sea when Dar-es-Salaam surrendered to us in September 1916. Even after this there was always fear that some enemy raider would slip out disguised as a neutral merchantman; the *Moewe*, *Greif*, and *Wolf* did so slip out and do some damage; two of these actually got back safe to Germany. Not till the end of 1917 did we succeed in 'mining in' the entrance to the Heligoland Bight completely. Splendidly as our 'Tenth Cruiser Squadron,' consisting wholly of armed merchantmen and liners, kept the blockading watch between Iceland and the mouth of the Baltic, it was impossible to stop every bolt-hole in that vast sea-warren. Further south the regular daily and nightly patrol of the sea by our Cruisers and Destroyers was strengthened by periodical 'sweeps' carried out by the Grand Fleet itself. But for the unwearied labours of our gallant mine-sweepers the losses from mines, which were laid almost daily by the Submarines, would have been infinitely greater.

A word must be said on the subject of the blockade of Germany by our Navy. It was ineffective at first, and partially ineffective until the middle of the year 1916, mainly because our Foreign Office was too timid to put in motion the power of making it effective which our sailors gave us. British diplomacy was mortally afraid of being unjust to the neutral nations. In 1908 German diplomacy had trapped us into an undertaking that no full use should ever be made again of a real naval blockade; this was called the 'Declaration of London.' It had been rejected by the House of Lords, and so was not part of International Law as understood by British law-courts. But at the beginning of the war our ministers acted as if its essentials were to be respected, whereas the real weapon, with which we had saved Europe from Napoleon a century before, was the utter prohibition of neutral vessels from trading with our enemy directly or indirectly. We could have put that prohibition in force from the very beginning, and we might well have included in it, as a great French writer suggested that we should,[1] a complete suppression of all postal and telegraphic correspondence from or to Germany. The neutrals would have suffered? Yes, but they would have suffered far less in the long run, for the war would have been over in half the time.

Not till July 1916 was this 'Declaration of

[1] Maurice Barrès, 'Le Suffrage des Morts,' p. 190, Paris, 1919 (the passage was written in January 1916).

London' finally abandoned, and by that time Germany had very thoroughly stocked herself with such raw materials as she needed for the manufacture of her munitions. The most important item of these was American cotton, and, though we declared this to be 'contraband' in August 1915, it was already too late. The Americans, before they came to our assistance openly, were making vast quantities of munitions for us, while they were making none for Germany for the simple reason that these could not be landed in German ports while British ships could stop neutral ships and examine their cargoes. But the same Americans who were thus helping us (and paving their very streets with gold by doing so) were not at all averse to 'twisting the British Lion's tail,' and saying that he was acting illegally in preventing them from affording similar assistance to the Germans.

You will hear people, even now, say, 'If we had not proceeded cautiously with our blockade at first, President Wilson would have declared war upon us.' Do not believe them; to think this would be no greater insult to the President's moral sense than to his common sense. On the other hand, there was some real danger from Sweden; most influential people in Sweden were pro-German, or at least bitterly hostile to Russia, and yet our only swift means of communicating with Petrograd, the capital of our Russian Ally, was across Sweden. Sweden poured such goods as she produced herself (including a great deal of iron ore and fine steel)

directly into the German Baltic ports, and we, not being able to send anything beyond an occasional Submarine to the Baltic, were unable to stop her. But she also poured in goods which she received from other neutrals, especially the United States and the South American republics; and we must frankly admit that our diplomatists showed great skill in minimising this trade without an actual breach with Sweden.

Food had finally to be reckoned among articles that were not to be allowed to get into Germany, and the great port by which food entered was Rotterdam in Holland. Before we enforced the blockade you might, if you had studied the statistics of imports, have supposed that Mynheer van Dunk was eating about ten times as much wheat, beef, pork, etc., as he ate in 1913; as a matter of fact, the poorer classes in Holland were on the edge of starvation, and rioted against their Government in consequence; all this food was going to the 'much-maligned Germans.' It would be a great mistake to imagine that Germany at any period of the war, or in the time that has elapsed since the end of the war, has been anywhere near 'starvation point,' although her newspapers began to complain, long before the end of 1915, that she was 'under-nourished,' and raised a constantly waxing cry that we (the Allies) were 'starving German women and children.' She has been hungry, but so have all European nations been hungry; you cannot take away from the production of food the 50,000,000

persons in Europe whose lives hitherto have been devoted, directly or indirectly, to such production, and turn them on to the task, direct or indirect, of killing each other, without finding a very serious diminution of food.

Before the war Germany produced nearly four-fifths of what she ate, we not one-fifth of what we ate. Before the end of 1915, i.e. long before she had to take in a single hole of her belt, she had got hold of all Poland, had drained it of corn and had driven off its last pig. In 1916–17 she got a good deal, though not so much as she hoped, from Roumania. In 1918, if not in the previous year, the collapse of Russia opened to her the vast stores of one of the richest food-producing countries in the world. By that time, however, she was not in a condition to make the best use of them; her old amazing skill and energy at organization of supply was giving way. Lots of food was at hand, but all transport machinery was coming to a stand-still—even within Germany herself. To the end, the rich Germans were well fed, they had plenty of (paper) money to pay with. Paper money is bad money, but it is money; anything that A will take in payment for the food he sells to B is money. And the rich Germans were brutally indifferent to the wants of their own ill-fed poor. What they suffered from (and loudly they squealed about it) was the want of luxuries, especially such things as coffee, for which acorns are an indifferent substitute. The poor, especially in the great cities, and the

very young, have suffered real hardship from the lack of fats of every kind, especially of milk, but being both a really patriotic, and also a docile, down-trodden race, accustomed to obey their rich leaders, they endured suffering bravely until it became too acute. But there is no evidence yet to hand of any real starvation, even among the poorest, in Germany, whereas there is abundant proof of the same in Austria, Serbia, Roumania, Russia, Armenia. I have been led into this long digression by the word 'blockade.'

Perhaps the greatest of all the anxieties of our Admirals and our Generals was caused by the strikes and labour disputes at home. We shall be urged to forgive and forget these things, and to make excuses for the scoundrels who promoted them; but those who were responsible for the safety of the one supreme weapon of the Allies, the Grand Fleet, will never forget the strike in the Welsh coalfield of July 1915; it turned their hair white with anxiety, for it was the event in which the enemy had placed his greatest trust. The Admiralty had no reserve of coal to speak of, and coal is the very life of a fleet. Worse still, this strike set an example to irresponsible self-elected spokesmen of 'Labour' (the real leaders of Labour, both in and out of Parliament, were wholly loyal) to begin a series of strikes in almost all the industries which were of vital importance to our fighting forces by sea or land. The pace at which new merchant ships could be built, to replace those sacrificed to

Submarines, was most unsatisfactory, especially in the great yards on the Clyde, where there were incessant labour disputes, and deliberate delays in work, even after the wages of the men had been enormously raised. It is probable that the strike of aeroplane-makers at Coventry prolonged the war for many months. Little did these men reck of the blood that was being poured out daily for them by the very sailors and soldiers—often their own sons and brothers—whom they were betraying; to get more wages for less work was all they cared for.

Yet in spite of all these drawbacks, Admiral Jellicoe tells us that early in 1916 his whole force of fifty large ships and fifty Destroyers could be clear of Scapa Flow and out to sea prepared for action within an hour and a half after the signal to weigh anchor had been given.

XI

I must not linger over the story of the destruction of the German raiders in distant waters: of the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, sunk by the *Highflyer* off the African coast; of the *Karlsruhe*, which was never caught, but blew up by accident in the West Indies; of the great liner *Kap Trafalgar*, which was sunk by the *Carmania* off the coast of Brazil after the finest single-ship action of the war; nor even of the gallant *Emden*, which sailed from China at the beginning of August, did incredible damage

to British commerce in the Far East, and was ultimately sunk off Cocos Island in November, fighting to the last, by the *Sydney*, which was then convoying the first battalions of Australian troops to Europe; the *Emden's* officers have a better record than most Germans for humanity and chivalry to their prisoners.

The really great interest of the distant seas lies in the fate of the German Pacific Squadron, *Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Leipzig, Nuremberg,* and *Dresden* under Admiral von Spee. This Squadron was gathered together from various parts of the Pacific Ocean, and was bent on 'running amok' on our commerce. It could count on an extremely 'benevolent' neutrality on the part of the Government of Chile, from whose ports furtively emerged German colliers to meet von Spee. To face it came Admiral Cradock from the West Indies with two good Cruisers, *Good Hope* and *Monmouth,* but both utterly inferior in guns and range to the two best of the Germans: he had picked up off Brazil the swift little Cruiser *Glasgow,* whose guns were too small to count at all, and an armed merchantman *Otranto* which was not even able to contribute a shot. The only British Battleship (her big guns would have counted heavily) in those waters was *Canopus,* but she was far out of reach when the two Squadrons met in the 'Battle of Coronel' in a strong gale off the Chilian coast on November 1. Cradock knew, when he determined to attack at once, that he would have no chance of victory, which was sure to go to the

heavier-gunned ships; but to have left the enemy unfought would not only have been against all the traditions of the British Navy, but would allow von Spee to repeat the *Emden's* exploit on a far bigger scale; and Cradock at least hoped to be able to inflict material damage on the German ships before he should himself be sunk. He was not even able to do this, though he scored a few hits; in less than an hour *Good Hope* was sunk and *Monmouth* rapidly sinking—with all hands, for in such a sea the victors dared make no attempt at rescue; fourteen hundred officers and men went down. *Glasgow* escaped with few injuries, but one can fancy Captain Luce's feelings when positive orders compelled him to fly, in order to warn *Canopus* and the Falkland Isles; he could see the last agonies of *Monmouth* as he fled.

The disaster roused our Admiralty to send an adequate Squadron to revenge it, and of this Squadron our Battle-cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were the spearhead; they picked up on their way *Glasgow* (who had gone to the friendly harbour of Rio to refit), three armoured Cruisers, and a light Cruiser. Sir Doveton Sturdee was in command. They found *Canopus* in harbour at Port Stanley in the Falkland Isles; and so well had the secret been kept, so swift had Sturdee's voyage been, that the enemy Squadron was quietly steaming towards the same port (in order to destroy it) and was in sight of it only a few hours after Sturdee's arrival on December 7. Von Spee had been doing a lot

of damage to our Pacific shipping, but even the Chilians, pro-German as they were, had become afraid of continuing to let coal reach him. Our ships were then coaling at Port Stanley, but they dropped their colliers like hot potatoes and flew after the Germans, who had barely time to turn tail. In four hours the battle had begun, and again the heavier guns decided the issue—*Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and *Leipzig* were sunk fighting to the last, *Nuremberg* only surrendered when she was an utter wreck, and sank at once. The story was told that, just as darkness fell upon *Kent*, who was finishing off *Nuremberg*, a great four-masted barque sailed slowly by, like a ghost from the past. *Dresden* alone escaped and managed to hide herself in the region of Magellan Straits until March 1915, when she was caught and sunk off 'Robinson Crusoe's Island.' Though our ships saved after the battle every sailor who could be seen afloat, the enemy's loss was very heavy, ours was only seven men killed.

It is now time to turn our eyes to the few actions fought in that North Sea which, it is to be hoped, no atlas will ever again label as the 'German Ocean,' for it was never an 'Ocean,' and we must never let a German battle-flag insult its waves again. While every species of craft that swims or steams or sails or 'motes' or dives or flies was incessantly buzzing about, armed to its tiniest teeth, above or under or on that sea, the number of serious battles was small. The first was that of August 28, 1914,

when the *Arethusa*, Commodore Tyrwhitt, led the light forces from Harwich to a peep into the Bight of Heligoland. Heligoland is a tiny rock, less than 150 acres in extent, lying about thirty-five sea-miles from Cuxhaven at the mouth of the Elbe. It had no depth in its little haven for big ships, but was a fairly safe base for Torpedo-craft and Submarines. The 'Bight' is the channel to the north-east of the island, between it and the coast of Holstein, with nine fathoms of water. Through this channel runs the passage to the Elbe. To the south and west of the island all the sea is full of dangerous shoals from which all the buoys and sea-marks had been removed. Tyrwhitt soon found himself engaged with much heavier ships, and was only just rescued by Admiral Beatty and the Rosyth force arriving in the nick of time and sinking the enemy Cruiser *Mainz* as well as *Köln*, *Ariadne* and two Destroyers; our Destroyers were much knocked about, but none were sunk, and we lost only thirty lives to a thousand of theirs.

The same Harwich force steamed across on Christmas Eve to the same region and sent up a lot of seaplanes to bombard the German ships lying at Cuxhaven in the estuary of the Elbe; we had just begun to spread a serious panic among them when the fog came down thick on Christmas morning and the raid had failed; the Grand Fleet was out, to the north of Heligoland, waiting for any Germans who might be driven to sea by the bombardment. The next battle was that off the Dogger Bank on

January 24, 1915, when secret news reached us of an intended raid on our coasts; this time Beatty and Tyrwhitt cut off the raiders before they could get across, sank the *Blücher* and damaged three more enemies, one of them very badly. But *Lion*, Admiral Beatty's flagship, got a shell in her inside which drove her out of the battle and barely allowed her to reach the Forth. This fight is famous for the appearance of a Zeppelin airship which proceeded to drop bombs on the British boats, as these were picking up the survivors of the *Blücher*.

All through 1915 the enemy could hardly be induced to put his nose above the surface of the sea, but his below-surface attentions gave us quite enough to think about. We do not yet know what it was that finally tempted him out of the Bight at the end of May 1916. Perhaps he merely came in order to cut off one of our frequent 'sweeps' of the open area; perhaps it was to satisfy some political cry in Germany demanding a more active strategy. Perhaps he was misled by false intelligence; continual as was the talk in England about 'German spies' the fact remains that there was hardly a single move of his of which we did not get previous information, whereas he really got very little information about ours; very likely we used to sell him false information in order to mislead him; it is certain that we sold him some 'bogus' inventions and put the money which he paid for these into War Loan. But, whatever the reason, out his Battle Fleet came on May 31, and

Beatty and our Cruisers got into action with them off the coast of Jutland just before four o'clock; a very calm afternoon, with drifting mists, and very bad light for shooting. Yet so excellent, until he began to be hit (not after that), was the enemy's shooting at very long range, so wonderful were his shells, so faulty the protection of our magazines on board our best Cruisers, that in barely two hours four of these had fallen victims to explosions caused by shells in their magazines or in other vital spots—*Indefatigable, Queen Mary, Invincible, Defence*; *Black Prince* blew up later, and *Warrior* was so badly damaged that she had to be abandoned, and sank during the next day.

Our Battleships from the North had obeyed the signal to come to the rescue at their utmost speed, but, when the first of them got within range of the enemy, it was already 6.30 and the mists were drifting in thin wreaths all over the sea. Barely two intervals, of half an hour and twenty minutes respectively, in which it was possible to see the enemy, were granted to Admiral Jellicoe, and during one of them their *Lutzow*, one of the finest Cruisers afloat, was sunk and many others were badly damaged. By 7.23 the enemy was discovered to be flying for home behind dense screens of his own smoke as well as the mist; and it was for our Admiral to decide whether he would continue pursuit, with all the chances of being decoyed into a prepared mine-field, as well as all the ordinary risks of a night action. In my humble judgment he made a wise decision

when he refused this; certainly it was a decision requiring the highest imaginable courage, for he was certain to be taken to task for it. Our Destroyers and Submarines did good service during the night and hit at least four of their largest ships so badly that they never reappeared; but their total loss (i.e. ships sunk in action) was trifling compared to our own—one Battle-cruiser, one second-class Battleship, four light Cruisers, five Destroyers; whereas ours was three Battle-cruisers, three armoured Cruisers, and nine Destroyers. Of our main battle Squadron, *Colossus* and *Marlborough* alone were hit at all, the latter by a torpedo; but had there been half an hour more of continuously clear sky it seems probable that hardly one big German ship would have escaped. All but two of our damaged ships were repaired and at sea again within five weeks, and the latest to return, the *Marlborough*, was back in ten weeks. Tactically 'Jutland' cannot be called a victory for us; strategically it was a very great victory, for it proved that the enemy dared not risk a stand-up fight with our biggest ships. The real tragedy was the appalling losses of our finest Cruisers almost before they had a chance of replying to their foe.

It was Admiral Jellicoe's fortune a day or two after this to receive Lord Kitchener at Scapa on his way to North Russia; that very evening (June 5) the *Hampshire*, in which Kitchener sailed, was sunk by a mine off the western coast of the Orkneys, and the great soldier was drowned.

Once, but only once more, the undamaged part of the German Fleet put out to sea on August 19, 1916. It was accompanied by a large force of Zeppelins and other airships and was probably intending to cover a swift coast raid, or else to draw our ships on to a prepared nest of Submarines. We lost two Cruisers, *Nottingham* and *Falmouth*, by submarine attack, and even our Battle-cruisers were not able to draw the enemy into action before his airships warned him that the Grand Fleet was hastening to cut him off from his base; he then promptly fled. This was the great triumph for the scouting Zeppelins, whose range of vision approaches a hundred miles.

The 'unrestricted submarine warfare' no doubt seemed to the enemy to be succeeding according to plan through most of the year 1917; he was even able to sink a considerable number of hospital ships with wounded soldiers and nurses on board. No doubt he thereby drove to the side of the Allies innumerable states which would otherwise have remained neutral; before the end of the war every South American Republic, except Chile and the Argentine, was on our side (even the black men of Hayti joined us in July 1918), but few of these could render any material assistance. A better omen was the arrival of the First American Destroyer Flotilla at Queenstown in May 1917; better still was the news, which reached the Admiralty in October, of the first mutiny of the German sailors at Kiel; this was of course kept entirely secret, and even

now the public knows nothing of the circumstances, except that the mutiny was successfully repressed —to break out again, irrepressible, thirteen months later.

Admiral Beatty had been in command of the Grand Fleet for a year, and Jellicoe, after a year of splendid secret work in London, had just been dismissed from the Admiralty by the politicians, when the plan which he had urged in October 1914, which Tyrwhitt had again urged two years later, was at last taken up, and preparations were made to tackle the most dangerous of the enemy's submarine bases, Zeebrugge and Ostend. The result was the famous raid on St. George's Day (April 23), 1918, which a French Admiral called 'the finest feat of arms in all naval history of all times and all countries.' The 'Dover Patrol' of light craft, under Sir Roger Keyes, were the heroes of it. A huge crowd of tiny vessels was sent in front to make dense screens of smoke, and afterwards to rescue any survivors there might be; about midnight three old ships were run in, right under the big guns on the mole of Zeebrugge, and two of them were successfully sunk across the channel; three more were detailed to attack the mole on the outer side and destroy the batteries there by landing-parties; and, under the viaduct leading to the mole,[1] a couple of old Submarines were to blow them-

[1] The mole ran out about a mile and a half in a big curve, and sheltered the entrance to the canal; the viaduct connected the (solid) mole with the land.

selves and the said viaduct to pieces. The only part of this wonderful scheme which did not succeed was the destruction of the batteries; but the landing, which was effected fron the deck of *Vindictive*, did almost paralyse these, and the whole thing threw the enemy into such hopeless confusion that the greater part of our heroes were rescued; our losses were 176 killed, 412 wounded, 49 left behind (of whom probably nearly all were killed); we also lost one Destroyer and two Motor-launches out of a total of 142 craft.

The simultaneous attack on Ostend failed that night (because a buoy marking the entrance had been moved, and the two blocking-ships ran aground a mile away), but it was partially successful a few nights later (May 10), when *Vindictive*, still all gaping from her Zeebrugge wounds, was sunk inside but not quite across the entrance to the harbour. One hundred feet of the viaduct of Zeebrugge mole had been torn away; the great ship canal, in which all the Submarines and Destroyers lay, was now blocked with the carcases of *Iphigenia* and *Intrepid*. From that hour the submarine menace began to decrease. But, even greater than the material success, was the enormous moral effect of such a daring feat; the men who volunteered for it (all were volunteers and carefully selected from a much larger number who were eager to go) must have realized that they were going to almost certain death, and the survivors must have been more than astonished to find themselves

alive. It braced the nerves of the country as nothing else could have done. It terrified the enemy beyond measure.

There is little else to record of naval operations until the end came. In July 1918 a fine attack was made by our air forces, off the deck of H.M.S. *Furious*, on the Zeppelin sheds on the coast of Schleswig, and two of the monsters were destroyed; a third was shot down off Ameland three weeks later. The Austrian Fleet had already mutinied (October 31) at Pola, when the second German naval mutiny broke out at Kiel on November 3, 1918. We do not know the reasons; the story at the time was that the enemy resolved, as a last desperate expedient, to take his fleet out and fight one last glorious battle in the face of odds (23 big ships to our 51), which would by this time have been overwhelming, and that the crews utterly refused to obey. If that is true one feels almost sorry for the German officers, who seem, however, to have acquiesced tamely. It is probable, also, that the flower of the German Navy had already perished in the Submarines, of which we know that 202 at least out of 338 [1] had been destroyed or captured; they had 'put all their eggs into the submarine basket,' and their big ships had been neglected and even stripped to provide for the Submarines. Only a few days before the armistice one most gallant Submarine actually penetrated the outer defences at Scapa, but was blown to bits on the

[1] One hundred and seventy were still being built.

second line of defence. On November 15, in accordance with the terms of the armistice, the Cruiser *Königsberg* arrived in the Forth to arrange for the surrender to Great Britain of the German Fleet, for internment until the Peace; the first batch of surrendered Submarines reached Harwich on the 19th, the Battle Fleet was handed over at Rosyth on the 21st. It was sent to Scapa, and a queer picture it made there, the Destroyers rotting with rust, the magnificent *Bayern* (perhaps the most powerful Battleship ever built) and her consorts unpainted, flagless, signalless. The greater part of the crews were gradually sent back to Germany, but 5,000 were left as caretakers; they were not allowed to land or even to communicate with each other; they got their sausages and beer once a fortnight from Germany.

'The German flag will be hauled down at sunset to-day, and will not be hoisted again without permission.' So ran Admiral Beatty's signal of November 21. One may well call it the greatest tragedy in naval history. When the German negotiators met Admiral Wemyss and Marshal Foch, they complained of the harsh terms, and said, 'We have not been beaten'; to which the Admiral dryly replied, 'You had only to come out.' In all our great wars of old with our noblest foe, now our noblest and dearest ally—after La Hogue, after Lagos and Quiberon, after the Nile and Trafalgar—her far inferior fleets were always ready to risk battle. The little Dutch Republic fought us

in battle after battle, nearly always with desperate loss on both sides; even the stupid Spaniards never understood or acquiesced in their defeats, from the Armada to Cape St. Vincent. But Germany surrendered her fleet without striking a blow.[1]

XII

I have left till the last the attempt to describe the course of the war on the West Front from the month of November 1914 to the conclusion of the Armistice. If in ultimate importance this was inferior to the naval war, it certainly arrested the attention of mankind more than the sea, and far more than any of the other land fronts. I have called it above (p. 46) the war of fortified positions; it has also been called a war of 'attrition,' that is, of 'wearing out,' a test of endurance, a question of man-power, not only in numbers but also in the quality of the men. To some extent we may say that the lack of unity of the Allies, both in political direction and in command in the field, did unduly prolong it. Certain broad features marked it and divided it into periods; for instance, if we say that the third phase lasted till March 1918, the next and last phase is marked by the last despairing efforts of the enemy to break through, successful to a certain extent and for a certain distance, and then

[1] I have not mentioned the subsequent scuttling of this fleet, as I do not wish to deal with any events subsequent to the Armistice.



rapidly ending in utter failure and retreat in July; from that month the Allied advance was continuous until it was stopped by the granting of the armistice on November 11, 1918.

Again we may, if we please, mark it off as a great epoch in the war when Mr. Lloyd George became Prime Minister of Great Britain at the end of 1916. It is said that he had been among those that hesitated in August 1914, though it is now rather difficult to believe that. His, at any rate, had been the trumpet-voice which had first cried out for infinitely larger supplies of ammunition from our factories at home. And, once in the saddle, he brought, by all consent, a ruthless patriotism to bear on the situation; although profoundly ignorant of history, geography, and strategy, he had vivid imagination and displayed a real power of conciliating our Allies. No less—perhaps even more—important was the day, November 16, 1917, when the greatest statesman of modern France, the aged M. Clemenceau, took over the government of his country. Men had called him 'The Tiger,' but he was going to pull splendidly in double harness with the fiery little Welshman, whom 'F. C. G.' once caricatured as a more domestic, but extremely lively, animal. A permanent inter-Allied war council was at once instituted by them. There had been attempts in this direction before, but national jealousies (on the part of the Governments rather than of the soldiers) had been too strong to allow them to bear fruit. Even this

Versailles Council of November 1917, established under the shadow of the great Italian disaster of October, had only advisory powers, and it required, as we shall see, an even worse disaster to produce that real unity of command for which France at least had never ceased to press.

Another great date is the entry of the United States on our side on April 6, 1917. The first tiny contingent of their troops appeared in France in the following June, and before the end of the war there were over two millions of these splendid fellows on this side of the Atlantic;[1] they had everything to learn in the art of war, and they set themselves to learn it with a modesty and a keenness that is beyond praise. But oh! they were late in joining us; had they come in two years before what countless lives might have been saved! And the worst of it is that, even now, one cannot find any honourable reason for their delay; for politics, that trade which so few people on either side of the Atlantic can now touch with unsoiled hands, cannot be classed among honourable reasons.

Finally, perhaps the greatest epoch of all is when, on April 14, 1918, Foch became General-in-Chief of all the Allied forces in France. The choice seems to have lain with M. Clemenceau. At the opening of the war Foch had an army corps in Lorraine; we have seen the leading part which he had

[1] In the spring of 1918 200,000 American troops reached France every month, in the summer 300,000.

played under Marshal Joffre in the September campaign of 1914, and he became Chief of the French Staff in May 1917. His reputation has yet to stand the test of time; at present it seems as if the name of Ferdinand, Marshal Foch [1] would ring through future ages as the saviour of Western civilization.

The entrenched positions on the West Front—a distance of 250 miles as the crow flies—extended in a long series of waving curves, a dent here, a bulge there, for some 540 miles from Switzerland to the sea; the most vital positions for the Allies to defend at all costs were perhaps Verdun, Rheims, Amiens, Arras, and Ypres. As the numbers of men which France was able to put into the field waned, the British share of this front grew even beyond the proportion of the growth of the British Army, until at its longest it extended for 125 or 130 miles. The Belgians always held one tiny section of their own country near the sea; to the Portuguese, who joined the Alliance in March 1916, was allotted a still more tiny section under British supervision, and they did not greatly distinguish themselves in their task. Under our supervision also came, late in 1914, two Divisions of our Indian Army, and filled gaps in the line in the hour of our greatest need. But the weather conditions of European winters tried these men very sorely, and

[1] He was only promoted Marshal on August 6, 1918, but I have given him his title somewhat earlier for convenience' sake

we gradually discovered that they could be of more use to us in the Eastern theatres of the war; in Palestine and Mesopotamia they covered themselves with glory. Most of the South African troops were employed in the African campaigns, though units of them distinguished themselves on the West Front also, 1916 to 1918.

But, whatever Allies were holding the West Front, the conditions were much the same or varied mainly with the nature of the soil into which we had to dig ourselves: perhaps the worst were in the valley of the Lys, and on both sides of Ypres, our own earliest areas, where the rich Flanders mud is bottomless, and in winter as soft as melted butter. Each side entrenched itself to the teeth, and the capture by either side of a hundred yards of ground was often reckoned a great victory and may well have cost a thousand lives. Each side pushed up its trenches, mainly by underground sapping or by digging at night, closer to the enemy, until in places barely thirty yards of 'no man's land' lay between. Thousands of miles of barbed wire were pegged down by each side, in scientific tangles, in front of these trenches, and every peg had been paid for with life or limb. If you looked through a peep-hole of your trench, at any quietest moment in any quietest area, you would be sure to see a few huddled heaps of grey or brown clothing; each of them had once been a man, perhaps last night, perhaps a year ago. The wounded could only be brought in under cover of night, and perhaps not then; the dead

had to be left to rot where they fell. All rations, all supplies, all ammunition, had to be brought up by night from the railhead to some point near the entrance to the communication-trench by horse-waggon or motor-lorry, and thence by human hands or on human backs. The lorry-drivers had to go forward without lights, often through shell-fire, and nearly always over roads pitted with shell-holes. If a single lorry in the long procession stuck, those behind would be held up till it was repaired or towed aside. The work of the Royal Army Service Corps was certainly not performed 'in the lime-light' (or any other light), but it was none the less arduous, nor the less bravely done.

At short intervals the night was rendered as clear as the day, for 'star-shells' were sent up and search-lights played from behind. And from behind, too, five miles away, the big guns boomed night and day, the little 18-pounders from a mile away, while, from the trenches themselves, the rifles and (deadliest of all) the machine-guns crackled, or the trench mortars whizzed their bombs. Every building within a few miles of the front was swiftly or gradually battered and crumbled to pieces, every village, every city, became a ruin, into the cellars and ramparts of which men dug and dug like moles; there were fortresses thirty feet below the earth. Observation balloons ('sausages' they were usually called), secured by a light wire rope, hovered at half a mile high or fell in flames over your head.

As the slow months passed a new engine of

death came into more and more constant use, for the aeroplanes, at first used only as patrolling scouts and signallers, began to enter the fight, to fight each other high in air, or to drop bombs on the fighting men in the line or on those resting in the rear; at first by day only, soon by night as well—'the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at the noonday.' A whole new race of men sprang into existence to guide these machines, surely the bravest and most splendid race the world has ever seen! While all were brave, some men, and especially some very young men, seemed to possess special gifts for the craft, and these would often be allowed by their Squadron-commanders to act entirely on their own initiative either in scouting or fighting, to go up when and whither they felt inclined. Such Kings of the Air could reckon up their tale of hostile machines destroyed by the score or the half-hundred. But even of the greatest few survived to the end; to have spent in all a hundred hours in the air without being touched was granted to very few. Even the materialistic Germans caught something of their spirit, and their airmen were generally as chivalrous and courteous to ours as ours were to them.

In all these engines of destruction, except the British 18-pounder guns and the still more famous French 'seventy-fives,' the enemy's long preparation, his scientific study of heavy artillery, his vast accumulation of munitions, and his utter

contempt for what used to be the 'courtesies of war' put him at first far ahead of the Allies. Liquid flame[1] is a singularly cruel weapon, but it is not perhaps worse than the old lost 'Greek fire' of the early Middle Ages. But poison-gas, which Germany used for the first time at the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, seems to be wholly beyond any previous limits of horror, for it corrupts the breathing organs and kills with torment; even a slight dose of it may leave a man's lungs affected for three or four years afterwards. We dressed our men in india-rubber masks against the gas, in steel hats against the shells; both sides made experiments in body-armour, like that worn in the Middle Ages, but it proved too heavy for practical use. But it was long before our Government could be waked up to realize the need of utilizing all the wealth of Great Britain for the accumulation of stores of munitions of every kind, and to set all the available hands in the country, male and female, at work to produce them. In 1914–15 our gunners were constantly reduced to a few rounds a day for each gun; nearly all the high-explosive shells we then got were made for us by the French, who had *at once* begun to set to work, whereas our monthly output was at first about one-thirtieth of that of the German and Austrian factories. Our War

[1] The flame-projector was a little tank filled with coal-tar, throwing a jet of flame through a nozzle for a distance of 40 yards; it was first used against us at Hooge in July 1915.

Office long looked askance at 'new-fangled' inventions like aeroplanes and tanks, but by the early days of 1917 there was a great change for the better in all the departments of supply.[1] As late as 1916, in the Battle of the Somme, Haig had had to economize his ammunition severely; even in 1917 he confessed that he was short of guns.

An enemy, almost as destructive as the Germans, had to be fought by both sides, all through the winters and through much of the summers as well—water. The rivers Lys, Scarpe, Scheldt, and Somme, and their many tributaries, were incessantly in flood; it was rare that a winter trench was less than ankle-deep, common to find one knee-deep, in water or mud, and waist-deep was not unknown. The difficulty of carrying wounded men back through 'communication-trenches' (for, of course, every inch of open ground was under fire) in this condition, often for several miles, may well be imagined; the stretcher-bearers would often have to walk in a crouching position if the parapets were too low. In many parts of the line these parapets, laboriously piled up during the night by men working in a foot and a half of water, would simply melt away

[1] When this was at last realised, the most lavish expenditure followed, often accompanied, one fears, by mismanagement so gross that it actually paid the owners of munition works to increase the cost of production. Prodigious fortunes have thus been made by a few individuals out of the country's necessities, and these fortunes would now be the most proper subjects for heavy taxation. Early in 1917 we were spending £7,000,000 a day!

during the day; and in this matter, if in this only, nature almost triumphed over labour and skill.

But not over courage and endurance. There were always men to dig, and men to crawl out at night up to the enemy's lines and bring back information of his doings, always men to watch amid the battered tiles or bricks of some crumbling chimney or windmill, with a telephone wire in their hands with which they could direct our gunners; when it was shot away they would sit down and mend it under any kind of fire. Nothing in the history of the war is finer than the well-deserved confidence that each arm of the service put in the others. The infantry officers keep on writing that 'our gunners are magnificent,' 'we should be nowhere without our gunners'; and their brothers in the artillery pay the same compliment to the infantry. As the British Army grew in numbers regular reliefs became possible, fresh battalions could march in at night and relieve those who had been standing, fighting, and sleeping where they stood, for a week on end up to their knees in liquid mud; mud was in the tea they drank, and covered the food they ate, and, on the rare occasions when they could sleep, they dreamed chiefly of mud; many said that the want of sleep was the hardest of all things to bear.

But in the first winter, as the old British Army slowly wasted away under these sufferings, no such system of relief was possible. I know of one gallant battalion that was over three weeks on end in front of Armentières, living in scooped-out ditches

which could by no courtesy be called trenches at all; and it was fiercely attacked by masses of the enemy almost every one of those nights; doubtless there were other battalions unrelieved for a period as long or even longer; when such a battalion came out at last, for a rest in billets behind the line, the men did not look like men but 'more like ferrets coming out of a very dirty rabbit-hole.' Here the great qualities of Britons found full play. The endurance shown by all ranks of our army surpasses anything in the recorded history of the human race. We must remember, in estimating this endurance, that while the enormous majority of officers and men kept themselves cheery under the most adverse circumstances, just because

'it was their nature to,'

there must have been—we know there were—many among the more thoughtful and intelligent who, if they sat down fairly to think out the matter any time before midsummer 1918, could hardly fail to come to the conclusion that we were overmatched, not only in man-power and gun-power, but in military skill and organisation. Yet such men went just as cheerfully and nobly as the others to their deaths for a Cause which they must often have felt to be a losing one then, however much it might triumph hereafter.

No one British general of high rank has impressed his name on the popular imagination as did Marlborough and Wellington in our last

great wars, or as Joffre and Foch have done in this; but it would be hardly too much to say that five British soldiers out of every ten would pick out the officer who immediately led them, captain, lieutenant, or second lieutenant, as the 'bravest man he ever saw'—often, too, as the cleverest and the kindest. From the beginning it was rightly called 'a second lieutenant's war'; it might, with almost equal truth, be called 'a private soldier's war.' It was the men and their regimental officers, it was the platoon, the company, and the battalion, that won it, often in spite of grave mistakes made by the division, the corps, the army. If one reads the few letters and diaries which have already been published, one is often driven to the conclusion that appalling mistakes were not infrequently made by the Staffs, that the enemy was constantly in possession of our plans beforehand, and that such plans were too often persisted in when changes of weather had made them hopeless of success. Yet it was not only superhuman courage and endurance that these young men, these almost boys, displayed; it was cleverness, invention, resourcefulness of every kind; no one will ever again be able to call the British Army 'stupid' or ignorant: our soldiers' free spirit, their boundless and well-grounded confidence in their regimental officers and themselves, their high level of education, soon rendered them far more than a match individually for the machine-made, over-drilled Germans, whose officers (gallant as they were for the most part) were not invariably

the foremost to lead their men into the hottest of the fire, as ours were.

Thus, as I have already said, the war had become, long before the end of 1914, simply a question of endurance.

The year 1915 was on the whole one of disappointment, both for ourselves and our Allies, whom German newspapers never ceased to taunt for their unwillingness to attack. France, in fact, knew better than ourselves how vast was the amount of preparation needed, and she set herself in this year methodically to pile up her stores of ammunition and to train her reserves. A witty Frenchman compared the enemy to a giant crab with an immensely hard shell but a soft interior; some day, he said, we shall crack that shell, but it will need fearful blows to do it; when it is cracked he will soon 'go *pouf*.'

It is not very difficult to see why Germany wished the Allies to attack in 1915. By midsummer she was, indeed, abundantly victorious over the Russians in Poland, but her Turkish and Austrian allies, the latter having now on their hands Italy, as well as Serbia and Russia, were anything but happy. Even in the West, dig himself, and wire himself, and 'concretify' himself in as he would, the enemy must often have felt that he was like a burglar who has broken into a house and packed up the plate, but finds that it is not going to be easy to decamp from the premises. It would pay him, then, that the Allies should use up their

man-power as early as possible; and he himself made but one attack (the Second Battle of Ypres, April) in this year 1915. Yet he hardly bargained for the shaking which he was to get from the two sets of the Allied attacks which fell on him in the spring and in the autumn. In particular he must have begun to suspect that he had underrated the qualities of the British soldier. In spite of the utter insufficiency of ammunition for the few guns which supported him, that person hurled himself forward cheerfully, and even exultingly, over and over again, against positions which too often proved more than he could storm; and yet the mere insolent daring of some of these attempts must have begun to give the enemy food for reflection.

Marshal Joffre's plans for the year seem to have been soundly conceived; and the Allied offensive was opened by the British at Neuve-Chapelle on March 10. The four divisions that fought there proved at least that a very strong German front line could be stormed, and they inflicted great loss on the enemy, though they failed to win the Aubers Ridge. This battle set the enemy digging as he had never dug before; if we had been able to repeat the attack within four weeks instead of having to wait eight (for more shells) we might have broken through. When we tried again at Fromelles and Richebourg on May 9, the German positions had been enormously strengthened with concrete breast-works and concealed machine-guns, and we suffered a really bad defeat. These two attacks had been

intended to support General Foch's attack on the Vimy Ridge from Arras in the same month of May; this achieved considerable, if costly, success in the way of clearing ground, but failed of its objective and could not be called a victory. We continued the offensive at the end of the month, attacking at Festubert and Givenchy (again as a support to Foch) without any serious gains.

There were small operations, unconnected with this spring 'push,' outside Ypres in June and July, which must be regarded mainly as intended to win back some of the frontal positions we had lost at the German offensive in April; and one of these has become famous because it drew on us the counter-attack of July 30 at Hooge, where the enemy's employment of liquid fire made havoc of the very flower of the 'First Hundred Thousand' (the 41st Brigade of the 14th Division), the very flower of civilian-England-turned-soldier. The 6th Division in August recovered a portion of what was then lost, but who that has ever seen its gaunt tree-stumps can forget the tragedy of Sanctuary Wood on July 30? Except, then, for such local operations the fortunes of our Second Army, in the Ypres salient, had in 1915 little connection with the main strategy of the Allies.

This took a fresh turn towards the end of September with what we may call the Marshal's 'autumn push' on two fronts at once. He himself was to attack in Champagne, Foch was to strike again from Arras, and the British were to support

Foch on his left as in May. Again the results were disappointing; Joffre gained a little ground, Foch suffered a severe defeat with terrible loss, and, what was worse, suffered some undeserved loss of reputation. Our own share, the Battle of Loos and Hulluch (it was really all one battle, September 25—October 13), was the biggest thing we fought in 1915, and it looked for a moment as if it were going to be a great victory. Six Divisions were used in the first attack at Loos, five more in subsidiary attacks, and six again in the later stages of the battle; of these several were 'New Army' Divisions, and the 9th, 15th, and 12th earned very great honour. The objective, which was to have been 'cut-out' by the combined attacks of Foch and the British, was the great mining city of Lens, through which runs the road from Arras to La Bassée; and, as Foch had failed, the German reserves opposite him could be employed to check our first success at Loos. The losses on both sides were very heavy, and it seems certain that the battle made the enemy most unwilling to draft any more of his men eastwards to complete the discomfiture of the Russians.

The German attacks on the Allied positions, when they did make up their minds to attack, were usually things of longer planning, greater weight, and greater persistence even *after* defeat. Our people, when they were temporarily or locally defeated, acknowledged it and drew back to reorganize in good time. The 'Boche,' as the French call him, too often had political reasons for

his persistence; or, if he thought he was acting according to the rules of strategy, it was because he had forgotten all lessons of previous wars but one; that one, which had carried him to victory at fearful cost in 1870, was to 'batter through by mere weight of men and guns.' Thus he by no means showed himself off as the 'highly trained and scientific soldier' which we had believed him to be, and which two or three of the French Commanders really were. His only attack in 1915 was the 'Second Battle of Ypres,' where his poison-gas floored the French Colonials and for a moment even the gallant Canadians;[1] it lasted from April 22 till May 24, and, though it narrowed our position grievously, it failed to give him the city.

To sum up the results of 1915 briefly, we may say that the gains on both sides were rather of experience than of territory, but while the enemy had chiefly gained experience in methods of defence (which he most certainly turned to very good account) the Allies had gained costly experience in methods of attack. But they had not allowed—it would have been fatal to allow—the initiative

[1] The first Canadian Division landed in France in February. It is eminently characteristic of the Germans that, a week before this, they had accused the French of using poison-gas near Verdun; the French had never even heard of the stuff. It was stored in cylinders kept in bomb-proof shelters all along the Ypres front at the end of March, but the fiends had to wait for an east wind to let it off.

to pass to the Germans. And finally they had compelled the Germans to keep their best troops on the West front.

That the Germans had failed to gain experience in methods of attack was proved in 1916 by the glorious story of the defence of Verdun, the great fortress on the Meuse which the Prussians had taken with such ease in 1792. It is naturally defended by a series of steep ravines, and there was a ring of carefully prepared positions outside it on both banks of the river. The Germans concentrated 4,000 guns against Verdun in the third week of February 1916; one of the most vital of the outlying forts, Douaumont, fell on the sixth day of the siege. In March the assaults, which had begun on the right bank, were transferred to the left bank of the Meuse also, and there was hardly a division of the German army in France or Belgium which was not, at some time between February and July, hurled into those ravines, and hurled in vain. '*Debout les Morts*,' cried General Pétain, and the dead, they say, rose and fought beside the living. As late as June 6 another vital point, Fort Vaux, was taken, and, although in July all that was left of the 'Crown Prince's' (really General Falkenhayn's) army was sullenly withdrawn for a space, the two lost forts were not recaptured, and so the menace was not wholly removed, until the end of October. The losses of the enemy in front of Verdun have never been made public, but it is probable that they far exceeded even the terrible loss suffered by

the sixty divisions of French heroes who played their parts in the defence.

In spite of these losses France found men enough to afford substantial assistance on his right wing to Sir Douglas Haig, who began on July 1 the great Battle of the Somme. The objectives of this were Cambrai in the north, Péronne and Saint-Quentin in the south. Across the broad undulations of the chalk-lands to the north of the river Somme there run from Amiens two great roads, one north-eastward to Arras, the other east-north-east to Cambrai, through Albert and Bapaume; and from the north-east also, to join the Somme near Corbie, flows the tributary Ancre. South of the river radiate roads to Péronne, Nesle, Roye, and Montdidier. Early in November the 'Battle of the Somme' merged in the subsidiary 'Battle of the Ancre.'

It was in these battles that 'H.M. Landships,' commonly called 'Tanks,' first came into action, and, though their early success was hardly up to expectation, they at least upset the enemy very considerably. In these battles also our 'New Armies' were first used on a colossal scale;[1] and we must remember that our first three millions, the men who flew to arms in 1914 and 1915, were all volunteers, who had given up everything they had

[1] On July 1, 1916, there were in France 10 Regular Divisions, including the Guards Division; 26 New Army Divisions; 9 Territorial Divisions; 9 Colonial Divisions; and these last should properly be regarded as also 'New.'

in the world in order to save the world. The British Empire gave nothing finer to the Alliance than the best of her sons. In these battles, again, we had, for the first time, aircraft not by the score but by the hundred. Finally in these battles for the first time a substantial extent of French soil was redeemed from the enemy's grasp.

The date for our great offensive was well chosen. The last fine rally of the Russians, under General Broussiloff, began in June in Bukowina, and soon extended to Galicia, and to the Carpathian passes. He claimed 300,000 prisoners, and what he then won was not wholly lost till the autumn of 1917. The Italians were doing well; Roumania was just coming in. The British Acts for compulsory military service promised Haig an ample supply of recruits. The enemy was just going to change his 'directing-brain' in the West, Falkenhayn being shelved after his failure at Verdun and being replaced by Hindenburg, the victor of 1915 in the East, with Ludendorff as his Chief-of-Staff. This change, however, did not in the end prove to be a source of satisfaction to the Allies.

The 'Somme,' or Somme-Ancre, if we can think of it as one battle at all, was the biggest fight, both for numbers engaged and for the extent of front, in history as recorded up to that date. In the main it was a series of fiercely contested actions for certain localities (villages, ridges, crests, canal- or river-crossings) of tactical importance, many of these actions being simultaneous in different parts

of the field. To the different Divisions engaged the names 'Somme' or 'Ancre' will mean very different adventures. Some will think of Fricourt or Mametz, some of Bazentin or Longueval. Few who were there will forget the terrible last fortnight of July in 'Devil-Wood.' To the Australians Pozières will perhaps mean most, to the Canadians Courcelette, to the Guards the days of September 15 and 25 at Lesbœufs. Who best remembers Flers? or 'Martin-push'? or Morval? Even the Ulstermen cannot claim a monopoly of Thiepval; Thiepval and Beaumont-Hamel are the property of the whole British Army. Yet these are not a tithe of the names which should be inscribed on the records of the various units engaged. At the end of October, the French were nearing Péronne and the British were within striking distance of Bapaume.

There was another and a less satisfactory result of these great, though costly, victories. They caused the enemy to withdraw to a position, or set of positions, which he believed he could make, which he very nearly did make, impregnable.

The 'Hindenburg Line,' so called by our men after the old Prussian Field-Marshal, in whom it seems probable that General Ludendorff inspired the idea, was a series of entrenchments and underground fortresses lying well behind the recent battlefield. They were dug by the forced labour of prisoners, and of French civilians, whose hard fate had enclosed them within the enemy's area. In many places the works were solidified with concrete

foundations, and in some they extended eight or ten miles behind his front. The system ran from the southern end of Vimy Ridge to the broad Canal du Nord in front of Cambrai, and thence southwards by Saint-Quentin and La Fère to the hill-forest of Saint-Gobain, which guards the Western approach to Laon. Somewhat later, when we had retaken Vimy Ridge, the line was extended northwards from Quéant on the Nord Canal to Drocourt just south of Lens, where it met the southern outworks of Lille. In front of it, to secure a fair field of fire, the Germans had laid everything waste; all the villages were burned, the trees cut down, the roads and bridges blown up, and the inhabitants driven behind the line. By March 1917 the new positions were complete enough for the enemy to withdraw his troops behind them, and they went on being improved and strengthened until they were finally carried by the Allies in the autumn of 1918.

He ought never to have been allowed to move back in this easy fashion. Such a move was in itself a confession of defeat. But he was trusting that his U-boat campaign would soon reduce the Allies to famine and would prevent their reinforcements from reaching the Eastern theatres of war. He was also freed from his greatest Eastern anxiety by the rapidly approaching collapse of Russia. But if Marshal Joffre had still been in command in the West, the comparatively peaceful withdrawal of the German Army to the Hindenburg line would never have taken place. Joffre's plan had been

that the British should attack in force early in February between Vimy and Bapaume, and the French at the same moment between the Oise and the Somme; the new hostile positions might then have been broken before they were completed, and before the actual collapse in Russia had allowed large reinforcements to come westwards. In December, however, the great Marshal was 'relieved' of his command in favour of General Nivelle; it will be for some historian of the future to inform us to what particular political intrigue in Paris this change was due.

Nivelle at once altered all Joffre's plans, and requested the British to take over a large additional stretch of front (we had already taken over the Arras section at the beginning of 1916). Sir Douglas Haig's preparations had therefore to be altered and his attack deferred; when it was delivered the new German lines had grown very much in strength. For the present the Allies could do little beyond following up the slowly retreating Germans on a wide front between Arras and the Oise, the French as they advanced occupying Noyon, Nesle, and Ham, and the British Bapaume and Péronne. Early in April we were, indeed, converging on Saint-Quentin, but had there butted up against new positions quite as strong as any we had stormed in the previous July, and we had all the roads behind us to re-make before we could get our heavy guns forward.

Still France could put a million and a half of

men into her front line. The British Army, though its best and bravest had been killed in the Battle of the Somme, was now at the height of its numerical strength, and Haig loyally prepared to co-operate in the new French plan. He was to attack at Arras, as a preliminary to a tremendous blow of Nivelle's own on the Aisne, while a smaller French force was to try Saint-Quentin. On April 9, then, the campaign opened with our splendid capture of the long-disputed Vimy Ridge, and up to about April 13 we were admirably successful, gaining all our objectives and diverting large German forces from the south to oppose us. But the French failed at Saint-Quentin on the 14th, and two days later Nivelle, who had believed that he could fight his way across the Ladies' Road to Laon in forty-eight hours, incurred something not far short of a real disaster. He broke through the first German line, but was then met by reserves newly arrived from Russia, and his army suffered fearful losses. These seem to have amounted to over 100,000 in one day, and were magnified by rumour in Paris into double or treble that number. The result was a series of unpatriotic movements in some French circles (and even a mutinous spirit in some French regiments), most of which originated with the traitor Caillaux, a former Prime Minister of France; and it was subsequently proved that some disreputable French newspapers had been bribed with German money to cry out for a peace which could only have been a 'German peace.'

As for the British, this disaster turned our Arras victory to dust, for we were obliged to go on attacking in that quarter without adequate preparation, in order to prevent the Germans from sending enough men southwards to overwhelm Nivelle's beaten army. And in these unprepared attacks (by no means wholly unsuccessful—we took Bullecourt, well on the road to Cambrai, in May) our losses were extremely heavy. Thus the whole Allied plans for 1917 went wrong from the start. But one good result of their failure was the removal of Nivelle from the French command, and the substitution of General Pétain, the defender of Verdun, with Foch as Chief-of-the-Staff in Paris. This in itself contained the promise of better things to come.

All this time, as I have said, our Second Army, Sir Herbert Plumer's, was 'on its own' in the Ypres salient. In June 1917 it suddenly shot into fame and performed what was perhaps the most brilliant single operation of the whole land-war, the storming of the Messines-Wytschaete ridges in one week. Undertaken, perhaps, at first in order to divert enemy-troops from the danger-points on the French front, this success seemed likely to be the prelude to a far bigger movement by which we might hope to turn the Germans out of all Belgium. This new move was to begin at the end of July, and was to comprise attacks north-eastwards, eastwards, and south-eastwards, from Ypres itself. Unfortunately the weather, which had been exceptionally dry all the early summer, broke on the

very day on which our advance began. We did indeed recover Langemarck by mid-August, the ridge across the Menin road in September, Broodseinde in October; but each successive gain was made over ground more and more ruined by the rain, and, before we had stormed the low ridge of Passchendaele on November 6, you could walk for a mile over the backs of horses and the heads of men who had been drowned in liquid mud. The German losses in this 'Third Battle of Ypres' are not known, though it is known from Ludendorff's subsequent revelations that they were very heavy. Our own were not far short of a quarter of a million, and our gains of ground, tactically important in themselves, could hardly counterbalance such a loss. The real gain to the Allies came in our holding the enemy off from attacking the French before the latter had reorganised their army after the defeat of the previous spring.

No less disappointing was the result of our first attempt to storm the Hindenburg Line towards Cambrai in November. This began with a brilliant success on the Bapaume-Cambrai road, and we reckoned ourselves to be 'nearly through' the toughest place of all (cavalry were actually being moved up in readiness for pursuit) when a skilful German counter-attack on our flank compelled us to fall back early in December. The magnificent performance of the 29th Division (of Gallipoli fame) at Marcoing and Masnières, the counter-attack of the Guards at Gouzeaucourt, the desperate

struggles in Bourlon Wood (almost within sight of Cambrai), and the defence of Moeuvres, are incidents that deserve special mention.

It seems probable that Sir Douglas Haig would have won through to Cambrai in spite of all this had he not been obliged to send off in November five divisions to succour Italy, where the disaster of Caporetto had just taken place. Even as it was we gained ground which proved useful when the great German attack fell on us in the following March. But the continuous arrival of German troops, guns, and munitions from Russia all through 1917, the moral as well as the material effects of the collapse of that unfortunate country, taken together with the very heavy loss of the Allies in men, far more than neutralised the British victories of Arras, Messines, and Passchendaele. But for these misfortunes the collapse of Germany could hardly have been delayed beyond the end of the year 1917.

My readers will, I fear, be disconcerted by the lack of proportion here shown. I have deliberately concentrated three years of war into fourteen pages, while treating in greater detail both the few months at the beginning and the few months at the end of the campaigns on the West Front. My only excuse is that, with the exception of the process of attrition (and this was felt almost as much by the Allies as by the enemy) no real change in the situation, either military or political, was effected during those years. This was not the fault of the generals in the field, nor wholly the fault of the 'wicked politicians,'

although these last had much to answer for; in France, indeed, the appointment and the removal of those in the highest commands was too often due to political intrigues of favour or prejudice; bad as so-called democratic politics have become in Britain, they were far worse in France until M. Clemenceau took charge of the ship. But the want of a solution for the problem of 'how to move forward' lay very largely in what Richard Porson once called 'the nature of things'; the impregnability of strong opposing lines of entrenched positions with heavy reserves behind them was part of this nature; it was as old as war itself. Yet never before in history had such an uninterrupted line of entrenchments been held by the entire young manhood of three great nations; Napoleon himself never had to deal with such a problem, although there is a fine story told to the effect that, when someone suggested this to Joffre, the old Marshal scratched his chin and replied, 'Ah, I think Napoleon would have *thought of something.*'

XIII

The year 1918 opened with the British Government in a state of complacency for which there was not much justification. In Mesopotamia and Palestine, though great advances had been made and the Turk was badly hit, he was by no means beaten; in the Balkans no serious advance had begun. At sea the submarine was very nearly as active as ever. Italy was barely holding on to the

line of the Piave; the Germans were dancing on the prostrate body of poor little Roumania. Russia was quite out of it, and was just going to conclude peace. It would be an exaggeration to say that Germany was in 1917 able to shift 'enormous' numbers of men from the eastern to the western front, for she had never, since the end of 1916, needed to have enormous numbers on the eastern. What General Ludendorff, who now appears almost as dictator in the West, was able to bring from the East, was an enormous number of aeroplanes and of guns, not only his own, no longer needed in the East, but Russian guns (most of which had been supplied to Russia by France or Britain early in the war); and the Russian soldier, as he ran away, cheerfully sold these to the Germans for half-a-crown or a bottle of brandy apiece. German man-power and *morale* was no doubt waning, but there was still enough of it left to put 200 divisions on the West Front, though a division was not now much above 13,000 fighting men. French man-power was also failing, drop by drop, in spite of the skill in husbanding their men, in which the French generals exceeded all other combatants.

We were therefore not surprised when in January 1918 France asked us to take over an additional southward strip of the line, from Saint-Quentin to La Fère on the Oise. We seem to have acquiesced quite readily, though our own lack of men was already so great that we were reducing our brigades to three battalions apiece, our divisions from thirteen

battalions to ten, and drafting men quite indiscriminately from regiment to regiment.[1] The truth was that the British Government considered our own entrenched positions impregnable, and perhaps our failure to follow up our breach through the enemy's line (at Cambrai) in the previous November confirmed it in this view. It was not a very wise view, and it would never win the war. Still, the American Army was gradually 'rolling up'—there may have been 200,000 men of it in France by March 1, but few of these were as yet ready to take the field, and didn't seem to be hurrying themselves. Indeed they talked about 'ten years more of war' and were beginning their preparations, far behind, on a gigantic scale. There were other unfavourable symptoms recognizable. The enemy now dug himself in so deep, and fortified his isolated underground redoubts so skilfully, that even the heaviest artillery fire could do them little damage; he, too, seemed to be content to make a ten years' affair of it. He was building colossal 'tanks'; perhaps he had discovered that our medium-sized tanks had not brought us anything like the advantage we had expected from them.[2] Also the German

[1] Sir Frederick Maurice ('The Last Four Months,' London, 1919) reckons that in March 1918 we were 180,000 men short of our number at the corresponding date of 1917.

[2] In the deep mud which covered all the front in winter, and most of it in summer, a tank might easily make a side-slip into an invisible ditch, and then it was a very

was now taking a leaf out of the French book and holding his advanced positions, and even his first line, with skeleton forces and vast numbers of machine-guns, and keeping enormous reserves, line upon line, behind these.

In these circumstances there burst upon us a German attack the like of which had never yet been seen, March 21, 1918. It remains for time to prove whether or no our Higher Commands had realized the probability of such an overwhelming shock, or had made adequate preparations to meet it. Certainly it seems as if we had very few prepared positions behind the spot which Ludendorff selected. This was the new piece of line we had just taken over, and it was held by our Fifth Army, whose right rested on the Oise at La Fère. To the north came the Third Army (Sir Julian Byng) holding Arras, and the First (Sir Henry Horne) northwards from the Vimy Ridge. The enemy's first objective was Amiens, through which ran the main railway from Calais and Boulogne to Paris, i.e. the main artery of communication between the British and French sections of the front. It would be impossible to describe the details of the terrible week's fighting that followed. Forty German

serious matter to raise it—especially under fire. Six weeks after the Armistice the writer counted on the road between Menin and Ypres forty-one derelict tanks. The smallest and lightest variety of tank, called the 'whippet,' was the most paying. The German 'giant-tortoise' variety was far too slow.

divisions, i.e. 600,000 men, were successively thrown on the fourteen weak infantry divisions of the Fifth Army (Sir Hubert Gough's). All the gallantry in the world could not stem that tide.

The first attack, that of the 21st, was made in a mist lying so thick over the sources of the Somme and the banks of the Oise that you couldn't see fifty yards; in any ordinary spring weather these would have been swamps very difficult to cross, but the early weeks of 1918 had been unusually dry. Isolated detachments of our men holding frontal positions found the enemy streaming past them without noticing them; some of these actually fought him from behind and cut their way through him. Some never realized for two days what was happening, and only wondered why they were not being relieved according to the time-table. Many were cut off and died fighting to the last man. The first actual breach in our main front line was made just south of Saint-Quentin; by the evening of the next day the Germans were attacking Ham. Amiens, from which three roads radiate eastwards, was at once in grave danger. If it had fallen, Ludendorff would have been able to cut us off from the French and roll us northward to Boulogne and Calais.

On the 28th the Germans reached their furthest point, the hill of Villers-Bretonneux, about nine miles in front of Amiens. From the 31st to April 6 a desperate battle raged for the possession of that village; it changed hands for one night (April 4),

but was retaken the next day. Again, in a belated attack three weeks later, it changed hands, but again was retaken after a few hours. Before the end of March serious reinforcements, both French and British, were being poured in. For a hasty conference of such Allied statesmen and generals as could be collected was held at Doullens on the 26th, and General, soon to be Marshal, Foch was invested with the provisional command of all forces on the West Front and began at once to co-ordinate the strategy thereof. One of the most striking incidents of the struggle, before serious relief appeared, was enacted when General Carey was ordered to collect a 'scratch' brigade including railway men, orderlies, telegraphists, and the like, many of whom had never fought before, and to throw them into a vital point of the line in front of Amiens, to relieve the shattered brigades of the Fifth Army. This wonderful brigade, with substantial assistance from Gough's cavalry, held out unrelieved for three entire days (March 26–29), and so gave time for the Australians to arrive from the north, and the French from the south. The Germans paid an enormous toll in losses for every mile they gained, for they came on in the old way in massed formation, and so great was the superiority of the individual British soldier over the German that many said it was only utter exhaustion that compelled him to retire. No one could fight day and night for a week without relief, and it was a week before substantial relief came.

On the same opening day of the 'Battle for Amiens,' as I suppose we should call it, Ludendorff extended his attack to include Byng's right, which he broke at Hargicourt. But Byng's left and the right of Horne's First Army, on the Vimy Ridge, resisted all attacks. The mist was not so thick on those higher grounds. They say that on one part of this front our gunners could see a whole German battalion massed on every thousand yards of ground—and they dealt with these faithfully. The resistance of Byng and Horne was of incalculable value to the Allied cause. There, too, the battle raged for ten days, most fiercely, perhaps, on the 28th. And meanwhile Ludendorff's left fell on those very Frenchmen who were hurrying up to relieve Gough's broken right. They, too, were carried backwards to, and beyond, Noyon and Montdidier, the last thrust obviously endangering Amiens from the south as well as from the east.

Thus in these ten days all the fruits of the Battles of the Somme had been torn from us—Péronne, Bapaume, Albert (where the great gilt statue of the Virgin had been hanging head-downwards from the church-tower since the early days of the war), Montdidier, Roye, Noyon, and the railway junction at Tergnier. The attack had spread from the Oise to the Scarpe, and no one could say that it had not been successful. Yet, so far, it had failed of its great objective, the separation of the French and British Armies. Also it

had, for the moment, been definitely brought to a standstill at three places—Arras, Amiens, and Lassigny (just west of Noyon). Ludendorff had asked too much of his men. Would he continue to 'batter through' in the same section, or would he try elsewhere? It is tempting to suppose that if he had had the ordinary German iron will he would have chosen the former course. He chose the latter, and it is probable that his choice caused General Foch to smile one of his rare smiles.

There is a ridge of high ground running from south-west to north-east, in front of Lille, overlooking the valley of the Lys; it was usually called the 'Aubers Ridge,' because from Aubers it juts out towards Bois-Grenier, Fleurbaix, Laventie, Neuve Chapelle, Richebourg, Festubert, Givenchy (behind which lies Béthune)—all names that first became famous in 1914–5. Further north it faces Armentières (behind which is Bailleul) and Messines, Kemmel and Wytschaete, which link it up to the southern point of the Ypres defences. The great German fortresses at its southern end were La Bassée and Lens, whence it is but a step to the Vimy Ridge of 1917 fame. From this Lille ridge Ludendorff's aspiring vision sighted his shortest road to Boulogne. The blood we had poured out in the hope of setting foot on that ridge, from the early days of 1915 onwards, would have flooded the Lys. We had at least saved the valuable coalfield round Béthune, and there you might see

(just while the South Wales miners were striking for higher wages) patient old men, boys of fifteen and less, women and girls in troops, busy at the pit-mouths and carrying heavy sacks of coal (there were no carts to speak of) on their backs.

Now it happened that a section of the southern end of this line was held by a division of our Allies, the Portuguese, and immediately behind them there was no good reserve available. On April 9 a strong German army was launched against these poor fellows, perhaps at first only as a feeler, or a diversion. One battalion of them stood firm and was slain in heaps; the rest ran away as hard as they could run, ran till they reached Merville on the Lys.[1] The breach made in our line was most serious, and would have been more so if the enemy's left had not been stopped by our fine defence of Givenchy. But he was bent on the straight road to the sea, and it cost him very hard work to get across the swampy ground to the north-west of the breach he had made. Still, he did get over it, crossed the Lys, and even got in rear of Armentières, thereby threatening Bailleul, which he had held for a few days in 1914. And, emboldened by this first success, another German army threw itself forward from the northern end of the Lille ridge on April 10, and in quick succession Ploegsteert and Messines were taken. Armentières, being almost surrounded

[1] The story of five Portuguese soldiers fleeing on one mule has not been substantiated; but the French Army knows them as '*les lapins de Merville*.'

and entirely battered to pieces, was evacuated by us. Seven miles of ground had been lost on a front about twenty miles long between Givenchy and the outworks of Ypres. In order to relieve the pressure further south, Sir Herbert Plumer drew back from his outworks, abandoning Passchendaele and nearly all we had won in 1917. The railway at Hazebrouck, due west of Bailleul, was Ludendorff's objective, but it would be hard to reach, defended as it was by the great forest of Nieppe ('Nippy'). On April 14 Neuve-Église, on the 15th Bailleul, on the 16th Wytschaete and Meteren, had to be abandoned; Merville, further south, had been lost some days before, though Robecq and Saint-Venant had held good.

The most important position, that of Kemmel, held out till the 25th; a French garrison had been thrown into it early in the battle, for reinforcements from Foch were hastening to our assistance, and Ludendorff, who had started with twenty divisions against six, began to go more slowly even before the fall of Kemmel. On the 26th the Allied centre put up a magnificent resistance at Locre, on the Ypres-Bailleul road (familiarly known as the Dickebusch road, and always 'unhealthy'). Everyone knew and loved Locre; there had been a *hospice* there, and its good nuns had been immensely kind to our soldiers. Now there is not a wall of the village standing—only a signpost, 'This was Locre.' Taken for a moment on the 26th, it was soon retaken. The last great German effort in

this 'Battle of the Lys' came three days later, a fierce onslaught on the entire northern half of this section from Meteren to Ypres; at Locre again was the hottest fight, and again Locre was saved. Hazebrouck and the Channel ports behind it were saved thereby—saved not only by the incomparable valour of the Allied armies, but also by Foch's amazing skill at handling large masses of men; divisions were hurried from end to end of the line, they seemed to spring out of the ground at his bidding, and to move at twice the pace of the most sanguine estimate.

Our Government seems always to have needed great disasters to wake it up. Our losses in these six weeks had reached the terrible figure of 300,000, but in the month following March 21, no fewer than 350,000 men were hurried across to France, and the age for conscription was raised from 41 to 51; it is questionable whether any great accession to our fighting force was gained thereby, and few, at any rate, of the aged recruits were in time to take part in the final victories. The phrase 'combing out' became familiar in Britain, and many industries vital to civilian life were subjected to the process. But all too late to afford relief to the tired British Army, which had soon to come to the rescue of the French in Champagne, as the French had come to rescue us in Artois and Picardy. When Foch became permanent Commander-in-Chief on the West Front (April 14), there was no longer a French, or a British, a Belgian, or an American

Army; there was only one Allied Army, and divisions from all four nationalities were thrown in when and where the great leader needed them. It was well for us that Ludendorff found it necessary to rest his men, though we could afford but little rest for ours. He was five to one in the spot where he began his next move on May 27.

This was from Laon behind the 'Ladies' Road,' which runs along the heights north of the Aisne, his right being an immediate threat to Soissons (and so, by Noyon and Montdidier, a further threat to Amiens from the south), and his left a threat to Rheims. Here it is clear that he took Foch by surprise; Foch was in fear mainly for Amiens, and had already been obliged to weaken the defences in the north in order to protect that vital point. On the very first day, starting from that ridge above Troyon on which in September 1914 our gunners had piled the German dead in heaps, the enemy was over the Aisne and so had made a central dent in the Allied line. On the fourth day he reached, but did not yet dare to cross, the Marne at Château-Thierry and at Dormans. The French armies seemed to be falling back towards Paris, and the great capital, which had kept its courage so high during all the darkest hours of the previous four years, had again to face the prospect of a possible evacuation. For many weeks the enemy had been bombarding it with a long-range gun from seventy miles away, and had succeeded in smashing a church, in one of its poorer quarters, on Good Friday.

Everyone in England and France was asking 'Where are Foch's reserves?' and the opinion of ordinary people was 'Bah! he hasn't got any, or he would have used them long ago.' The stout-hearted, however, said, 'Wait: the arm of the Lord will be stretched out again, as it was in 1914.' They were right.

The Soissons—Rheims front was forty miles long, and Ludendorff seemed to have enough men to strike hard on his wings as well as on his centre. He might join his new Marne salient with his recent one opposite Amiens if he could capture Compiègne. He might also get right round Rheims, and pin it between his left and his centre. But General Pétain [1] was in charge of Rheims, as he had been in charge of Verdun during its dark hour in 1916, and he had five British divisions to help him. There is a big range of hill to the south of the city between it and the Marne; it is called the 'Montagne de Rheims,' and it was to prove a death-trap, a second Grand-Couronné, to the enemy. Foch was as yet unable to stop the Germans, and was obliged to take blows on his right and on his left at the same time. But in the Forest of Compiègne, and in its outlying spur, the Forest of Villers-Cotterets, he was preparing his counter-attack on their right wing, and on both sides of Rheims his counter-attack on their left. Soissons indeed fell on the night of May 29–30, and then the fight raged on the long line to the southward of Soissons in the

[1] Now Marshal, 1919.

direction of Château-Thierry, Villers-Cotterets being the scene of the fiercest blows. Not making much progress here, the Germans bravely tried, from Noyon and Montdidier, to turn the whole front area, and the French had to give some ground there. But on June 11 Foch turned on them from Compiègne and drove them back with such awful slaughter for three successive days that their right was simply put out of action for a month to come. It was the first great stroke for victory, the first employment of the mysterious 'reserves,' concerning which Foch had been allowing talk to transpire in order to deceive Ludendorff. In reality there was no 'Army of Reserve' or 'of Manœuvre'; there were only divisions pulled out of the line and moved about behind it.

The German Commander had now on his hands three salients—one at Bailleul, one opposite Amiens, and one at Château-Thierry. In the two former he had been fought to a standstill, and he had been frightfully punished in the process; in the third he had been at least held up. The battles of June 11–13 told him he could not widen it much to his right; he must therefore batter through on his front and support the battering with his left. It took him a month to prepare for this, his last, thrust; and, although early in July there were twelve American divisions at the front, he was still about a quarter of a million men to the better of us. On July 15 he was prepared to push forward, if need be, eighty-four divisions on a front of fifty miles from Château-

Thierry to the Argonne hills. The Marne should be crossed and the Montagne de Rheims assaulted from the south as well as from the east. So on that day the Germans opened a terrific bombardment on the French positions lying east of Rheims, only to find that they had been bombarding trenches evacuated the day before; they pressed on and sent waves of infantry to attack a line of hills held, not, as they had imagined, by General Gouraud's main force, but by a very few self-devoted machine-gunners in scattered, isolated positions. Then as they advanced past these they suddenly found the hills spring into flame where they thought no flame should have been, and in two days 50,000 of them lay dead or wounded out of a quarter of a million which their left had employed.

Meanwhile their centre had been allowed, nay encouraged, to cross the Marne and to spread eastwards, according to plan, towards Épernay. In this central area they could still afford to employ another quarter of a million men, and all the 16th and 17th of July men were poured forward. In the direction of Montmirail (centre) they progressed some three miles south of the river. Then they began to feel, as Kluck had felt in 1914, a bad pain in their right, and behind their right, shoulders. On the night of the 18th, in a terrific thunderstorm, Foch launched General Mangin from the Forest area in a series of attacks which convinced the Germans that they had wholly underestimated the Allied 'reserves'; a crowd of light

tanks, the cavalry of the new armies, covering seven miles in an hour, followed the short preliminary bombardment, and was in turn followed by waves of infantry. The enemy put up a very fine defence even here, and Ludendorff's last supports were launched to aid it. His advanced centre was obliged to fall back across the Marne on 19th and 20th, and Château-Thierry was retaken the next day. A general retreat from the salient was now his only possible course, and it was conducted with skill and courage, from Marne to Ourcq and from Ourcq to Aisne, which he recrossed early in August. Thus the 400,000 Germans left between Rheims and Soissons were not cut off as Foch had hoped they might be. But an immense slaughter of them was made before they got clear; Soissons was retaken on July 29, and soon they were to feel the full force of a British counter-attack from Amiens, which was to be (August 8) the beginning of the end.

We do not know—perhaps we shall never know, for the Germans won't tell the truth—at what date Ludendorff realized that his machine was cracking; but cracking it was, both in the field, where it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to bring up his supplies, as our guns and air-bombs wrecked all the roads and bridges in his rear, and at home in Germany, where the long patience of the people, sapped besides by the naval blockade, was turning into sullen discontent at the thought that victory and peace, so often promised, were so continually

deferred. Also Ludendorff had worked his men too hard, hurried them on too fast; they were no longer the fine material of 1914, and he was now asking each German soldier to carry a weight on his back far greater than that carried by the men of 1914. Napoleon had made similar mistakes in 1813–14. After July 19 Foch knew that his time was come.

Real unity of command had now been achieved on the side of the Allies, and that at the very time when such unity as there ever had been on the side of the enemy was vanishing. Old Field-Marshal Hindenburg, the burly soldier, and Ludendorff the scientific student, had been the mainsprings of the German machine for at least the last two years, and the latter had been steadily eclipsing the former. But the Emperor was Commander-in-Chief and was too apt to listen to other people; from the end of 1917 he had been persuaded to give Ludendorff a free hand in the west, and Ludendorff had now failed. The pendulum therefore swung back in favour of Hindenburg, and Hindenburg might quite possibly be inclined to play for safety; to put up, that is, such a fine defence, on a very much shortened line, that a peace by negotiation might be obtained. Ludendorff, though he made two attempts to resign, loyally did his best to conduct this defence. Unluckily for both of them the pendulum in the Emperor's brain was never very steady. During the last four months of war there was no really united policy on the enemy's side.

There was now much rearrangement of the British contingents in the Allied armies; Sir William Birdwood took over a reorganised Fifth Army, and went north to link up with Sir Herbert Plumer, of the Second, who was the most dogged and patient of all the British generals. South of Birdwood came Horne with the First, south of him again Byng with the Third; and, lastly, Sir Henry Rawlinson, with the Fourth Army, stretched to the French left near Montdidier. The French held the great strip from the Oise to the Aisne and thence through Champagne to the forest-hills of the Argonne, and, under Foch, Pétain had command of all this group. General Pershing was meanwhile building up, near Verdun, a great American force, which was intended to push down the Meuse. But Foch had more in his mind than a frontal battle 200 miles long. He was going to work on what has been well called the principle of successive 'pairs of pincers'; to nip at first comparatively small German forces in the centre by pressure on their wings, and then, after each success, to open his pincers more widely, until at last they should stretch, and begin to close, from the sea to Southern Lorraine. He was not able to bring all this to pass, but he achieved a very considerable part of it.

The first move was the British drive from Amiens and Arras, converging in the direction of Albert and Bapaume, with Péronne as ultimate objective. A strip nearly twelve miles wide was gained in the week following August 8 from the

outskirts of Albert to the outskirts of Roye. The enemy's salient towards Amiens had thus been destroyed. Then, in the second half of the month, the pair of pincers was again employed, the French working northwards by Noyon, which fell on the same day (August 29) as Bapaume; on the next day the line lay but little west of Péronne. The enemy had been obliged to withdraw troops from the area he had won on the Lys to meet these attacks, and the result was that he began to retire from the Bailleul salient also, of which withdrawal you may be sure that Plumer and Birdwood were not slow to take advantage. Before the first pincers had quite closed a fresh pair was applied (August 26) from the Scarpe to the Oise. The British began their long struggle for Cambrai, and the French started to work round the western side of the great forest of Saint-Gobain, which guarded the Germans on the Laon plateau and on the Aisne. Péronne and Ham were the great immediate gains of this pinch, which ended on September 6. About the same time Kemmel and Bailleul had also to be evacuated by the enemy. The approaches to Cambrai, however, were going to prove very tough nuts to crack. Far to the south, in thirty hours, September 12–13, the Americans took the whole of the Saint-Mihiel salient lying beyond Verdun, and so freed the railways which connected Verdun with Toul, Paris with Nancy, from continual bombardment. It was the first great victory they had won, and they took 15,000 prisoners and 200 guns;

among these prisoners were units of two Austrian divisions, which showed that Germany had been already obliged to call in help. These continued reverses induced the German Government to put out a feeler towards King Albert, with some kind of offer of evacuating Belgium. They might as well have asked Admiral Beatty to surrender the British Fleet.

Minor operations—road-making, bridging, relief of tired divisions, organisation of all sorts—occupied most of September, and it was only on the 26th that what may be called the final great battle in the centre began. The famous Nord Canal, though dry in places, was a most formidable outwork of Cambrai, the Saint-Gobain Forest almost as formidable for the defence of Laon and La Fère-sur-Oise. As the German line shortened it stiffened in most, though not in all, places; it certainly stiffened on the canal; one particular spot, Mœuvres, was the scene of desperate counter-attacks; it was there that seven men of the Highland Light Infantry, led by Corporal David Hunter, held out for three days entirely surrounded by the enemy, till the British returned. The weather was very bad and the old Somme battlefield was in the condition so familiar to both sides in 1916, a sea of mud. The Americans were not getting on quite so well; there were half a million of them working northwards between the Argonne hills and the Meuse, threatening Metz, and therewith the great railway from Metz to Brussels, with their right; but their staff-work was faulty and they had very heavy losses, while the French, to the

west of the same hills and to the east of Rheims, found it difficult to keep touch with them. The Germans seemed determined to hold the curve from Cambrai to Laon and the Argonne at all costs. But to do this they had to weaken themselves still further in the north, and eventually to begin the evacuation of northern Belgium with or without the leave of King Albert. Result—the Belgian Army on the extreme north and Plumer next to it made a grand push forward; Houlthulst Forest was 'rushed' by the Belgians and the Ypres salient was widened by some six miles towards Roulers and by three towards Menin; Gheluvelt was once more in our hands, and then Wytschaete and Messines.

Meanwhile the Nord Canal was at last carried on September 27, and the First, Third, and Fourth British armies fought forwards on the whole long front Douai—Saint-Quentin. The Saint-Quentin Canal (which we had to swim) was crossed on the 29th, and on October 1 the French were in the town of Saint-Quentin. The capture of Bourlon Wood gave us the suburbs, but only the suburbs, of Cambrai. The fighting there was perhaps the fiercest yet seen. Yet every day of autumn that passed was a loss to us and a gain to Hindenburg. 'Germany on the defensive' was a principle he had at last thoroughly grasped; he had now no allies to consider; Bulgaria, Austria, Turkey, were out of it or as good as out of it. If '*Deutschland über Alles*' was no longer a war-song applicable to the changed circumstances,

surely the heart of the Fatherland would still beat to the '*Wacht am Rhein.*' The old Field-Marshal had character as well as brains. He would hold on to southern Belgium, including as much of the valley of the Sambre as he could, make a new line northward to include Namur, Antwerp, and perhaps Ghent, and southwards of Namur he would hold the Meuse *dentibus et unguibus*; he would fight retiring actions for the Laon plateau also, and hold up the French and Americans as long as possible. Dreadful as had been the slaughter of his men (he had had to disband 22 divisions to fill up gaps), his most serious loss had been in guns; the Allies, since they had turned him back from the Marne, had captured or destroyed thousands of German guns, many of which had perhaps been taken from themselves earlier in the war.

It must have cost Hindenburg a pang or two to evacuate Armentières, La Bassée, and the shell of Lens[1] in the first week in October. But, even after that sacrifice, Marshal Foch was too quick for him; the last pair of pincers, never, as it unfortunately proved, to be wholly closed,[2] was opening; and the central battle began at Le Cateau on Octo-

[1] If one would learn what sheer destruction can mean a visit to the ruins of the once huge mining city of Lens would make people in England open their eyes. But there are people in England who, with every opportunity to see these things, deliberately avoid the sight, lest they should find the resumption of charitable feelings towards Germany somewhat difficult.

[2] It is believed that Foch had planned the final advance

ber 6. Were there any men with Byng and Rawlinson, in that terrible fight under torrents of rain, who had stood there in the sunshine with Smith-Dorrien on August 26, 1914? The peasants around were now telling us terrible tales of German cruelty to the wounded men who had been left behind as we fell back that afternoon. On the fourth day of this Second Battle of Le Cateau the Canadians at last entered Cambrai, and by the 13th the enemy was making his last stand on the Selle. His retreat in the centre had made the Laon plateau untenable, for it cut the main railway upon which the Germans there had depended for their supplies, and the French at last re-entered the fortress-rock of Laon on the 13th.

They had already been able to hold out a right hand to the Americans on the Meuse by getting through the pass of Grandpré which cuts the Argonne hills into two sections, and yet it was only very late in October that the Americans could begin to open the road to Sedan. Not until November 2 were they able to bombard the railway which ran southwards along the Meuse to Montmédy; two days later a few of them got across the Meuse, and they thereby compelled the enemy to withdraw large forces from Southern Lorraine for the defence of the vital point of Sedan. The French, on the American left, did not reach the Meuse (at Mézières) till November 10. Long before this the northern

of his right into Lorraine, with Metz as the objective, for November 14.

arm of the pincers was steadily moving south-eastward; the coast had been evacuated up to, and including, Zeebrugge, the fire from our monitors helping in the process and preventing the Germans from carrying away much of their heavy coastal artillery. The Belgians and their French supports had won Roulers and entered Courtrai on October 15; the famous Ypres-Menin road was at last cleared of Germans. British troops entered Lille, through multitudes of weeping women and old men who scattered faded autumn flowers over them as they passed, on October 18; on the previous day King Albert came to Ostend, scraping with great difficulty past the battered hull of the old *Vindictive*, in a British destroyer.[1] What a welcome was his!

The final objective of the British troops was the triangle Maubeuge—Valenciennes—Mons, and here the Germans stood in a very fine resistance, first on the River Selle till October 24, and then in the Forest of Mormal. They also broke the locks and sluices on the Scheldt, wherefore that sluggish water began to tear down into Belgium as if pretending to be a (very dirty) salmon river. Ludendorff resigned his office on October 26, and we presume that the final retreat was conducted by Hindenburg alone. Valenciennes held out till November 2; we then hurled ourselves at the

[1] This soon seemed to the Belgian king a tame method for a royal progress; he *and his Queen* preferred to return to their newly-liberated cities by aeroplane!

Sambre, jamming the enemy into very tight confusion as he fell back towards the Meuse. The gleams of fair weather were very rare; it was one of the wettest autumns within memory, and the mud was a terrible hindrance to our supply-transport, and, indeed, it was this, and this alone, which prevented us from surrounding and capturing whole armies of Germans. The difficulty had begun to be felt early in October and had increased with every day of our advance. Outposts of the enemy remained; at Le Quesnoy till November 4, at Tournay and Condé till November 7. The Americans reached the left bank of the Meuse, opposite Sedan, on November 6, but could not force a passage across the river. Maubeuge cost the British their last fight on the 9th, and in the early darkness of November 11 a Canadian battalion entered Mons. The Belgians took Ghent four hours before the Armistice. With the capture of Mons the war was brought to a conclusion by the British Army on the spot on which the British Army had begun to fight four years two months and nineteen days before.

It had become at last a race against Time and Mud; and these two potent allies of the Germans allowed the greater part of their troops to escape before we could reach the Meuse. Something under 400,000 prisoners and 6,000 guns had been taken by the Allies since midsummer, and, of the four Allied armies, our own had the largest number both of prisoners and guns. The enemy's loss in killed

and wounded during the same time is put at the almost incredible figure of 1½ millions.

In all the country which they quitted, but a thousand times more in France than in Belgium, the Germans, on their retreat, perpetrated a series of acts of wanton destruction that nothing can ever excuse. To blow up roads, bridges, and railways is lawful act of war; it hinders pursuit. To cut down all the trees, smash all the machinery, blow up and flood all the mine-shafts and mines, to carry off all that is portable from private houses, to drive off crowds of women and girls into worse than slavery—these are the acts of the lowest of savages, and the Germans did all these things. They had little spite against Belgium; but they were resolved that their old enemy France should never recover.

The Central Powers were already engulfed in a whirlpool of anarchy; Hungary had broken off from Austria, Bavaria from Prussia, before the German delegates reached Marshal Foch's head-quarters (he was living in a railway train near Compiègne) to ask for an Armistice, which he granted on the day on which we took Mons. Two days before that our arch-enemy Kaiser William II had fled to Holland, and his son the Crown Prince had followed him thither. The Austrian Emperor Charles (who had succeeded old Francis Joseph November 21, 1916), fled from Vienna the next day. Most of the German kings and grand-dukes followed these examples. One can hardly say that 'crowns were going cheap' in Germany in the

month of November, for there was no market for them; not even a solitary German, though the German aristocracy are the greatest snobs in Europe, offered a penny for any one of them. What sort of 'revolutions' broke out in Berlin and Vienna we hardly yet know, perhaps they are still to come; but it certainly seems at present as if these people had a very imperfect understanding of the art of revolution.

At 5 a.m. on November 17, the British wing of the Allied troops began their long, slow, and hungry march towards Cologne on the Rhine, the Belgian, French, and American Armies beginning to move about the same time, each to occupy its allotted section of territory on that river. The march was hungry because, as we advanced, we had to feed not only the thousands of prisoners whom the enemy at once set free without making any provision for their food, but also the starving civilian population of France in the liberated districts. Nor was it a particularly safe march, for the enemy left behind him souvenirs called 'delay-action mines,' i.e. mines buried under roads and bridges warranted to explode many days after they were set. Luckily we knew that that was just what a German might be expected to do, and so we suffered few casualties from these.

So ended the greatest war in history; the only war in which the same nation has been able to sustain at once the burden of a gigantic Army and a gigantic Navy. In the Coalitions which Great

Britain led against Louis XIV and Napoleon, her army did indeed grow from very small beginnings until it was numerically respectable enough to turn the scale, but the troops of British birth employed were, on each occasion, comparatively few in relation to the armies of our allies and our enemies. It was our sea-power and our purse-power that contributed most towards the victories of these earlier coalitions.

But now for the first time our army was wholly composed of British subjects or of English-speaking men ; [1] if it was not, at the end of the war, the largest army in the field, it certainly bore the largest share in the final victories; nay, it had borne, since the beginning of 1916, an equal share both in the victories and in the losses with the army of our great Ally. And its improvisation, out of almost nothing, from a population whose whole ways of life were antipathetic to military service, whose rulers and whose parliaments had constantly treated soldiers and soldiering with contempt, was surely a very marvellous feat. Yet it is not when we remember our seven hundred thousand dead, our three times that number of cripples, that we can think tolerantly of those politicians of 1906–14 whom a young second lieutenant of the latter year once lumped together as ' Byles and Co., who wouldn't let us have an army.' Sir Douglas Haig

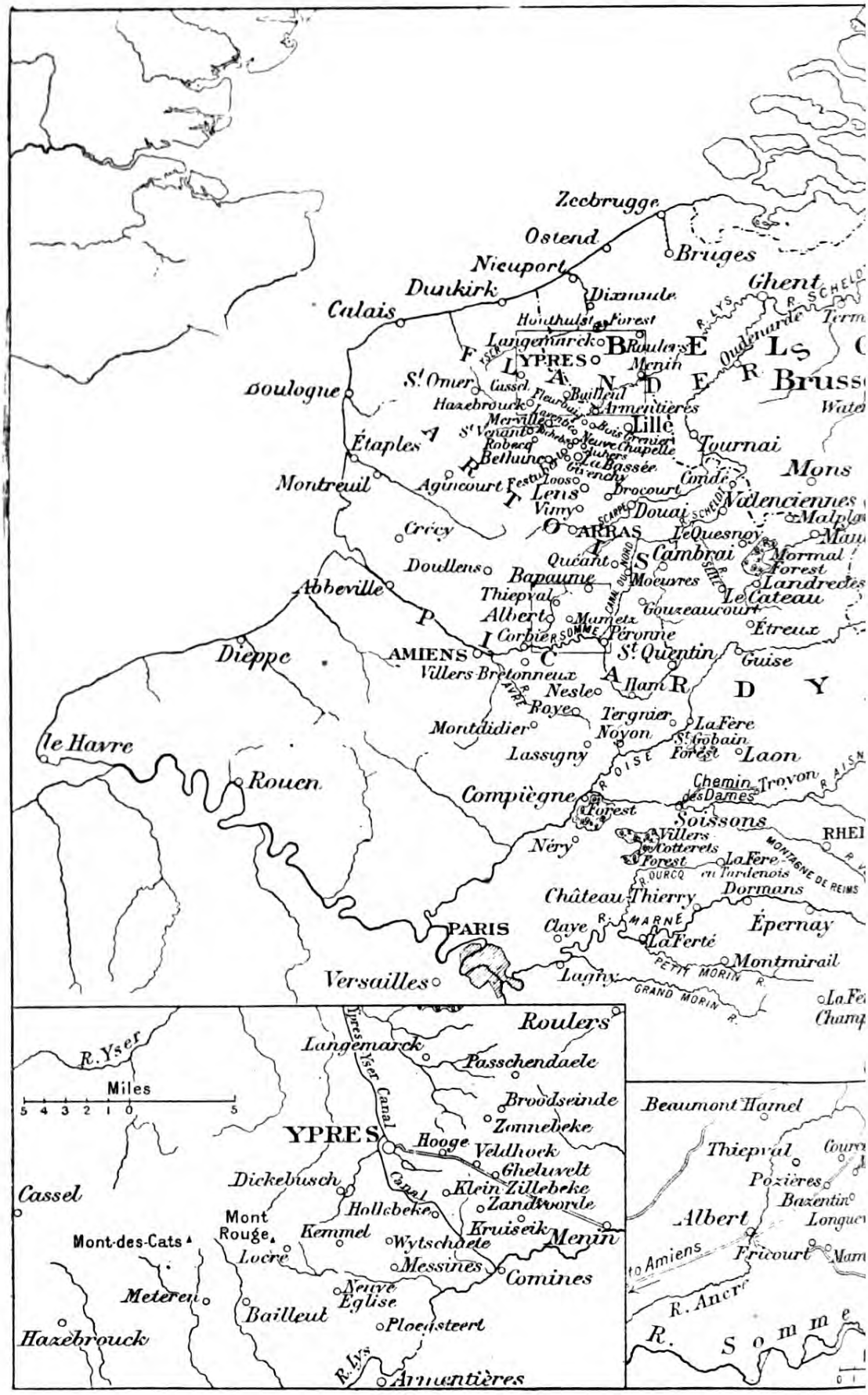
[1] Yet the writer met in hospital one British soldier, a French-Canadian, and heard of others, who could hardly speak a word of English.

estimates our total casualties (killed, wounded, prisoners, and missing) in all theatres of the war as just over 3 millions, 2½ millions of which were in France and Flanders; those of France to be nearer 5 millions, Germany 6½ millions, Austria 4½.

The unmathematical mind is apt to faint and droop when it is asked to grasp such figures as 435,000,000 pots of jam, 42,000,000 pairs of boots, 102,000,000 pairs of socks, supplied to our soldiers; 1,800 railway trains, tugged by 1,200 engines every week in that small area for our army alone; 3,600 miles of railways, light and heavy, 4,500 miles of road, laid and repaired in a single year; 700,000 tons of ammunition fired by our guns in three months (often more than 20,000 in a day). But when Sir Douglas Haig tells us that we began the war with six and ended it (on the West Front alone, not counting the other fronts) with sixty divisions, that we began it with 486 guns and ended it with 6,437, that the total number of prisoners captured by us on the West Front was more than four times the total number of our original expeditionary force, we begin to get some insight into the feats performed by Great Britain. Machine-guns were the weapon with which perhaps the enemy wrought the greatest havoc on our infantry; in 1914 we had one machine-gun to every 500 men, in 1918 we had one to every twenty men.

All honour indeed to the New Armies and their wonderful organizers! All honour to the gallant men who flew to arms from every profession and

trade, and from every corner in the Empire, the moment war was declared; (' my 'usbin', 'e didn't wait to be *fotch*,' said a poor woman contemptuously to a neighbour when compulsory service had begun). But let us never forget the Old Army. It was the old Regular Army that not only stood in the breach in those first terrible eight months, till but the fourth man of it was left to fight, but it was those who were left of it that began to train and to leaven the new armies, and to inspire them with their own dauntless valour and superb discipline. Even in the most glorious of the new battalions there could be nothing quite like the comradeship of the old, the spirit of the men to whom the Regiment was home, the colours and sword (hardly ever used in the new armies) the symbols, the Colonel the father, and the Adjutant the head-nurse. These were the fellows to greet whom the victors of Waterloo, of Ramillies and Malplaquet, of Agincourt and Crécy, rose from their graves, even as Joan of Arc rose to help the French *poilus* save the Cathedral of Rheims and to win back her own Lorraine. For, if I may again quote Sir Douglas Haig's final despatch, it must never be forgotten that ' the margin by which the German onrush in 1914 was stayed was so narrow and the subsequent struggle so severe that the word ' miraculous ' is hardly too strong a term to describe the recovery and ultimate victory of the Allies.'


Zeebrugge
Ostend
Bruges
Nieuport
Dunkirk
Ghent
Calais
Dixmude
Houthulst Forest
Langemarck
Roulers
YPRES
Menin
Oudenarde
Boulogne
St. Omer
Cassel
Bailleul
Armentières
Hazebrouck
Lille
Étaples
Tournai
Mons
Montreuil
Agincourt
Lens
Vimy
Douai
Valenciennes
Crécy
ARRAS
Le Quesnoy
Cambrai
Mormal Forest
Doullens
Quéant
Bapaume
Moeuvres
Landrecies
Abbeville
Thiepval
Albert
Le Cateau
Gouzeaucourt
Mametz
Péronne
Étreux
Dieppe
AMIENS
Corbie
St. Quentin
Guise
Villers-Bretonneux
Nesle
Roye
Tergnier
La Fère
Montdidier
Noyon
St. Gobain Forest
le Havre
Lassigny
Laon
Rouen
Chemin des Dames
Troyon
Compiègne
Forest
Soissons
Villers Cotterets Forest
Néry
La Fère en Tardenois
Château-Thierry
Dormans
Claye
Épernay
PARIS
La Ferté
Montmirail
Versailles
Lagny
Roulers
R. Yser
Langemarck
Ypres Yser Canal
Passchendaele
Miles
Broodseinde
Zonnebeke
YPRES
Hooge
Veldhoek
Gheluvelt
Dickebusch
Klein Zillebeke
Cassel
Hollebeke
Zandvoorde
Mont Rouge
Kemmel
Kruiseik
Menin
Mont-des-Cats
Wytschaete
Locre
Messines
Comines
Neuve Eglise
Bailleul
Meteren
Ploegsteert
Hazebrouck
R. Lys
Armentières
Beaumont Hamel
Thiepval
Pozières
Albert
Bazentin
to Amiens
Fricourt
R. Ancre
R. Somme

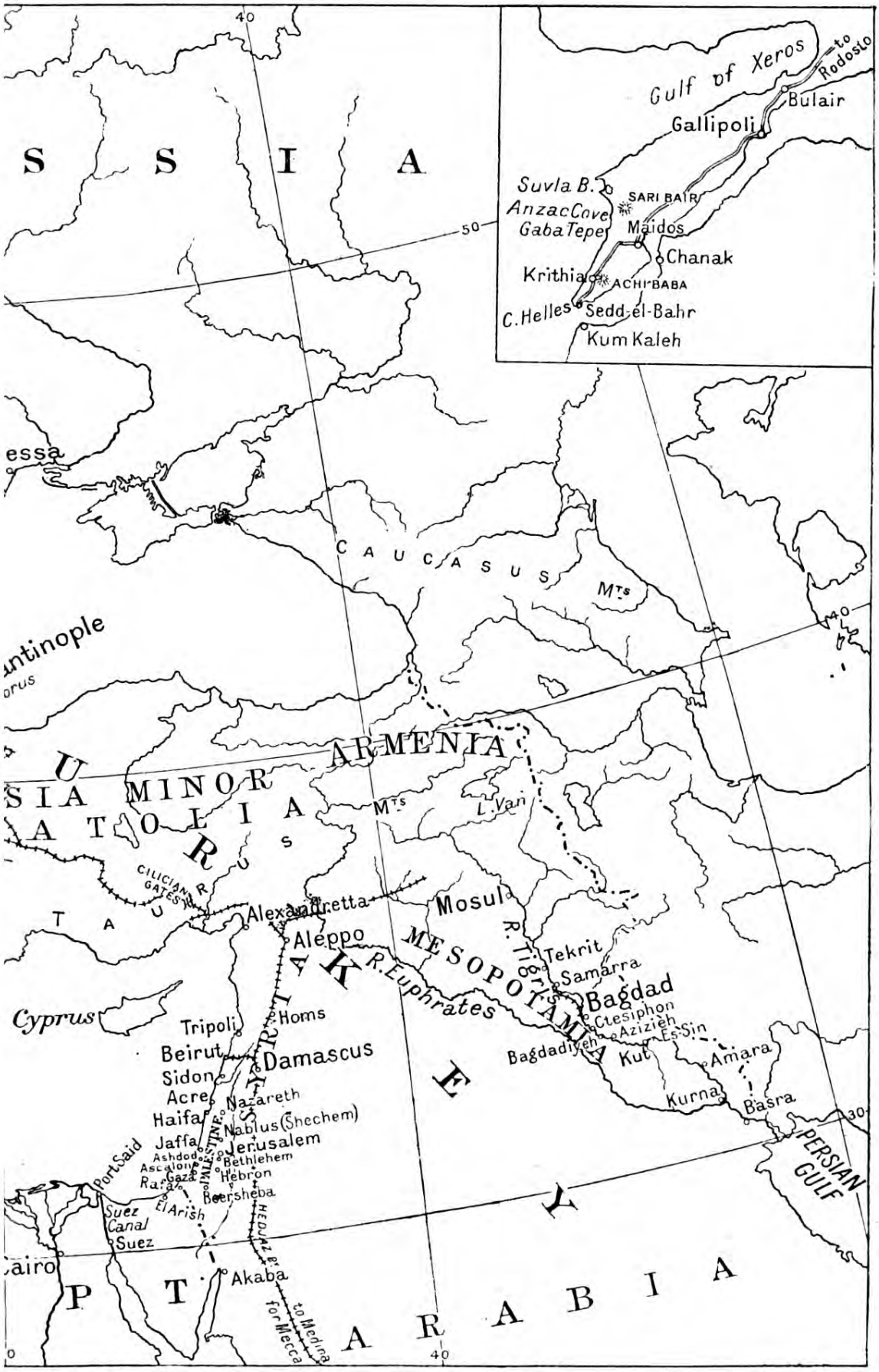

THE WESTERN FRONT
Miles
10 0 10 20 30 40 50
Wesel
Antwerp
Malines
Louvain
Liége
Visé
Aix-la-Chapelle
Cologne
R. RHINE
Ramillies
Namur
Charleroi
Dinant
Coblence
Mainz
ARDENNES
LUXEMBURG
R. MOSELLE
Trèves
Sedan
Montmédy
Grandpré
ARGONNE FOREST
R. AIRE
VERDUN
R. SARRE
Metz
LORRAINE
CHALONS
St. Mihiel
Nancy
Grand Couronné
Toul
Strasbourg
ALSACE
R. MEUSE
R. MEURTHE
to Cambrai
Bapaume
Flers
Morval
Canal du Nord
Péronne
Épinal
VOSGES MTS.
Mulhausen
Belfort
R. SAÔNE
Basel
SWITZERLAND



Map to illustrate the
EASTERN THEATRES OF WAR

Miles
100 50 0 100 200 300 400

Frontiers in 1914


Gulf of Xeros
to Rodosto
Bulair
Gallipoli
Suvla B.
SARI BAIR
Anzac Cove
Gaba Tepe
Maidos
Chanak
Krithia
ACHI BABA
C. Helles
Sedd-el-Bahr
Kum Kaleh
CAUCASUS Mts
ARMENIA
L. Van
Mts
Alexandretta
Aleppo
Mosul
R. Tigris
Tekrit
Samarra
Bagdad
Ctesiphon
Azizieh
Es-Sin
Amara
Kut
Bagdadiyeh
Kurna
Basra
PERSIAN GULF
MESOPOTAMIA
R. Euphrates
SYRIAN DESERT
Cyprus
Tripoli
Homs
Beirut
Damascus
Sidon
Acre
Nazareth
Haifa
Nablus (Shechem)
Jaffa
Jerusalem
Ashdod
Ascalon
Bethlehem
Gaza
Hebron
Raffa
Beersheba
El Arish
Port Said
Suez Canal
Suez
Akaba
HEDJAZ R.
to Medina
for Mecca
CILICIAN GATES
ARABIA
50
40
30

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