

A ROUND TRIP TO THE FRONT:—France at Night

By Mordaunt Hall



It was a commander in the Royal Navy, who at the commencement of hostilities was taken with marked suddenness from his cheerful and busy tea plantation in Ceylon to China, where he superintended the arming of a passenger ship transformed into an auxiliary cruiser. This vessel went out in search of the enemy, and after all the Germans in that section of the globe had been destroyed or captured he was ordered to report to the Admiralty.

Two days after reaching the English metropolis he was bound north, and from then on he hunted submarines and took part in one of the significant naval engagements. The war had run for three years when he obtained leave, not to go home, not to spend a few days in London, but to look over the war on land. It appealed to him as marvellous—some of the things these fellows did. He had seen the naval guns at sea in action, but he was extremely keen to pull the trigger or the string of a big land gun and send a shell over to the Hun.

I met him outside the Admiralty in Whitehall, London, and he then informed me that he had four days' leave, and that as I was going to the front, I might accompany him and we would see this land fighting. His eagerness prevented me from obtaining any attire with which to travel. He did not even have an overcoat, and off we bowled in a high powered automobile for a British east coast port. Beyond the scattered soldiers there was little to remind us of war as we sped along the first stretch of country roads, except the many busy women and aged men in the farms and allotments. Finally we came to a mobile air station. It was a touch one might never have seen in peace time, something that made one think of the war.

Aboard the railroad car was an aeroplane, its wings folded, like a bird which had settled, but ready to soar up to the skies at short notice in the event of an enemy air raid. Then we passed camps with officers shouting orders, and I could not help observing that there was a set expression on the face of every man, as if the country's freedom depended upon him.

Activity on the Coast.
In the east coast port, however, there was military activity everywhere—civilians seemed to have disappeared. We looked out at sea, a sea which one believes stripped of vessels because of the Germans. Before us were scores of vessels, apparently taking their time, and in my mind there arose a fear that any second one of these craft might be blown up by a mine or a torpedo. There were large vessels, too, and the sight fascinated me.

At the dock railroad station soldiers were marching with regular steps, singing Scotch songs. There were thousands of them, all bound for France, some who had been on leave, others going over for the first time. A couple of thousand of these men belonged to the Scotch Labor Battalion, who were going over to a foreign country to make roads passable with pick and shovel. They chanted and sang "Loch Lomond" and "Jack'd and Donald" when they had ended their singing and swung up the gangway of the little vessel. I saw generals and other high officers with the insignia of the General Staff on their tunic lapels, young lieutenants who looked bored with the war, and others intensely enthusiastic about it.

The boat was packed. There was no



"All Aboard for France!"

available space for another soul by the time she was ready to leave. Every seat was taken on the top deck and the men were jammed so closely together on the lower deck that they did not think of seats. Some of the officers checked their kitbags into the staterooms and then with difficulty made their way through the throng to the deck above. The exact time we were to leave was known to only a very few and we were not of that number. Lieutenants, captains and majors pulled out novels and began to read, looking as if they did not care when the ship left. I marvelled at the rapid interest of these officers in their novels and stories, for they were men for the most part who were going to fight in the trenches, and quite a number of them, it occurred to me, were having, perhaps, their last good read in a long while.

Suddenly, without any warning of handkerchiefs or a goodbye, the black-and-tan craft left the dock. The skipper was on the bridge with a general. He had nodded to an officer ashore. The hawsers had been slipped and we were off for France with a nod or two.

Soon, timed to a minute, our escort met us. They were destroyers who came on the scene with such suddenness that I wondered where they had been when we

started to steam away. But these slender guardians never stop. They go to France and back again, to France and thence to England, without a rest on many occasions, and they all look as if they had a hateful, painful job. The four destroyers took up their places, one aft, one before, one to port and one to starboard, and we struck forward with full speed.

Order for Life Belts.
The general on the bridge then shouted:—"All aboard put on your life belts." This caused the men who had been overboard to groan and the others to raise their eyebrows, as if something exciting was expected. The Scotties hastened down to the aft cabin of the vessel to search for the dryest belts they could obtain. The officers were late and had to take what was left. Men who had overcoats found it more convenient to adjust the lifebelts under the coats, so that the lot looked like extremely corpulent fighters, and the space aboard was even more limited than it had been. The commander and I sat about the smoke-stack, considering ourselves extremely fortunate to have observed this unoccupied strait. It was not one minute and chilly the next and hardly the place which would have been picked by a traveller in peace days. After about thirty minutes out, when probably nearly half the distance had been covered, we met an opposite number vessel coming home. She had



A Scene on Board a Transport on the Way Back from "Blighy"

an escort of three war ships, so that for an instant there were seven destroyers and two well laden vessels right close to one another.

But the sight did not last long. There was a swish, a little hand waving and they were nearer England and we nearer to France, they getting some of our smoke and we some of theirs. A number of other vessels, taking advantage of the escort, were beating their way over a short distance behind us.

It was too soon for any of the men to be seen, and in the time that it takes to go from Burnish Hill, Brixton, to Van Gorpout, we were from the land to France. Steamships enter a French port stern first. After the ropes had been thrown over and we had a chance to view the French harbor and some of the persons aboard the commander and I observed an English staff officer who was waiting us. Just at that instant it occurred to me that it would be interesting to note what the destroyers decked.

They were showing us a clean coat of heels and were then were dots on the horizon, gliding back to the white cliffs of England.

A Train for Paris.
Of course, we had to see Paris. Awaiting us was the longest train ever seen anywhere. One end of it seemed to be in the dock station while the head of it was on the outskirts of the town. It was so long that it had to stop twice at all stations. It also was the slowest train that I had ever travelled on, although, to give it credit, an attempt at speed was made when we were probably twenty miles from the French capital. In the railroad station the commander met a friend, an officer of the Royal Naval Air Service. Whatever other invitations we had we decided that this was our best chance of a better life of the war than this officer. Time was very limited. We bought a khaki shirt each and some underwear and two tooth brushes and were ready with our brown paper parcels to join the flying officer.

War stared at us with a vengeance after we passed Chantilly, the old town so famous for racing and which is known to every jockey. We only hesitated there, the fast automobile sped on to Amiens. On the road before we entered that town we passed half a hundred ambulances.

All of us were ravenously hungry and glad to step out at Amiens to have lunch on at the Café Hubert. The waiter told us that the place had been bombed the night before, and that five soldiers fresh from the front had been killed in an automobile crushed by a aeroplane missile.

Fire Engines in Khaki.
"One woman," said the waiter, "heard the explosion, noticed that we had and then looked out of her window and was killed by a bomb which practically missed the building or at least caused very little damage to it. She would be alive perhaps today if she had stayed where she had been."

From him, I learned that Amiens is bombed most generously until there is a raid and then all the lights are darkened. Meanwhile the Huns have discovered the locality, and it takes time at night to locate an enemy three miles in the sky. Nevertheless, the town was crowded with unobtrusive women and blue civil coats. The waiter had evidently no intention of leaving Amiens because it was a target for Huns' planes, and the girls of Amiens were casting affectionate glances at soldiers and officers. After our repast we encountered troops and guns, aeroplanes and then more guns of all calibers. There must have been two miles of them in one batch that we passed on one way to Arras. And then there were out end of lorries and parks of these vehicles.

The first steam engine or locomotive we saw, we had a chance to look over. "An old hand from the London, Chatham and Dover," quoth the commander. It was attached to a long train of cars filled with provisions and material and was pulled out in the long, long pull by French and Belgian locomotives. The rail head, not far from that particular "somewhere," reminded us of a Sixth army department store. We all laughed when we saw a dozen fire engines, formerly employed in a lovely vermilion, but now chad in khaki. There were officers' bulks and wood on lorries, tents and every thing one could think of, and a lot one could not. Ammunition dumps were on our right and left, and the occasional gleam of a sentry's bayonet announced that somebody was on guard.

Being the guests of the Royal Naval

Air Service, it was gratifying to the commander and myself when we reached the home or camp of a squadron of that service. The fields had been barren and interesting two days before, but now they were the scene of great activity. Mess tents were fixed up, lighted by electricity obtained from dynamo on lorries. There were workshops on lorries, and near by was a station of the Royal Flying Corps. These lorries, all men travel like a circus, and moreover are ready to do all their replying on the spot they make their home for the time being. It impressed us that there was nothing to stop their activities when we saw a great lorry stuck in the mud. They tried to pull it out with one lorry, and finally with two. These are the trucks of the Hun.

We jumped into the Rolls-Royce and scampered on. The machine bumped on a bad stretch of road and then we were bound to realize that the battery had been bumped out. Perforce we had to make our way in the dark behind a staff car.

Soon the commander and myself realized that we were at the war, we were passing between two lines of guns—heavy artillery which occasionally thundered defiance to the Huns, and splashes of blood red illuminated the midnight blue, making a memorable picture. Every minute or so a star shell would rain from the heavens, dropping like a rain of gold to somewhere in No Man's Land. The sound of the guns was pleasing, as each shell sped on its deadly errand and the silhouettes of men fighting men, were shown in the flames and lights. In some spots the roads were camouflaged with a netting of matting to prevent the enemy from seeing the endless stream of vehicles going back and forth.

"Qui va là?" The voice was that of a sentry, and we knew that he would not repeat the question.

"Aviation Anglaise," said the Royal Naval Air Service officer. The sentry did not take this for granted, but carefully examined our automobile, and this being done he permitted us with the true hospitality of a sentry to force on ahead, the staff car waiting for us. Further on we learned that a lorry had broken down on a bridge, and that if our car could not pass it we would have to make a detour

of nine miles. But our excellent chauffeur solved the problem. He bent the mudguards, took careful measurements and then drove over in safety with not half an inch to spare.

Guns boomed along the line. It was an unusually busy and brilliant night. Sometimes we caught sight of the gunners stripped to their waists, shoving in the charge and then awaiting the signal to fire. The ground trembled and it seemed to me that the shell might strike our car, as we waited for the missile to be let loose. And it occurs to you every time you hear these guns that they have been ceaselessly carrying on for years to meet the barbarian. We ultimately reached a more or less peaceful stretch and then entered Dunkirk, the northern town of France, which is shelled by the German lines and which they would so dearly love to occupy. An old woman in a restaurant leaned forth from a rear room as we entered.

Out at the Front.
"Nous avons faim," said the woman. "Eh, bien, vous allez bien manger," said the woman, who then listened to us preparing beefsteaks and potatoes for a week for four hungry men. We had a bottle of beer, and not far distant a beastly shell exploded.

"Encore les boches. Dieu nous protège," said the old woman, who had been assisted by a younger woman in the preparation of the meal.

And we were ready for bed when the time came.

Next morning we arose early and went out to look at the seaplanes. In the sky I saw a seaplane turning and twisting, dropping tall downward, head down, and then righting itself, apparently not looting the look ideas. I ventured commendation for this pilot's exploits to an officer.

"Pretty good youngster," said he. "We'll soon be able to let him have a go at the Hun."

To me the youngster seemed a past master in the flying art.

Later in the day our interest was centered on several lorries pushing their way through the canal, manned by British in khaki. They were men of the I W T—Inland Water Transport.

The next day the commander had the satisfaction of firing off one of the big land guns at the Huns, following which we both went over to an observation post and watched burning British shells on the German lines. The Germans were comparatively silent, which means anything but silence to the average civilian. The commander had a shot with "Colt," a famous gun, which sent forth a missile at her opposite number, known on the British side as "Peasout."

It was by no means a comfortable feeling when we walked through the front line trenches the third day and heard the crack of rifles and the distant noise of big guns. We were told that a German sniper was busy, and to add hate to our footsteps we heard the bangs of German trench mortars exploding at an uncomfortable distance. These are the "Minnies," scuffed at until they hit the mark. The trench lines were only eighty yards from the German lines—eighty yards! A machine shot in the green! I thought how quickly it could have been run, and wondered what was happening that instant in the German fire line, while British Tommies sent over plumb pudding trench mortar missiles from our side.

The time came when we had to scurry back to England. The commander had not worn an overcoat all the time. He had been quite comfortable, but did hope that he could get an extra covering aboard the destroyer which was to take us back to England. We went on board the war ship and were given coffee and, in a very short time we were in an English east coast port, the commander ready to return to his ship, glad of what he had seen of the war on land.

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WELL DONE, AMERICA! PRIMATE'S VERDICT

HE naked reality of war has not yet been brought home to the United States.

The Allies recognize a great debt to President Wilson for his clearness of vision and the strength of his statesmanship.

Camp Upton compares favorably with the English training camps, and the American soldiers are equal to the Tommies.

England—tired but determined—has been heartened by the entrance of the United States into the war.

Those are the views of the Most Reverend Cosmo Gordon Lang, Archbishop of York and Primate of England, who expects to remain in this country until the middle of April on an unofficial mission of friendship, co-operation and good will.

America's latest distinguished visitor is a striking figure—strong of face, rugged of build, genial of manner and with just a suggestion of Gladstone in his profile. His bearing is dignified but democratic, and he wears with modesty and distinction the honors of his high ecclesiastical office. The snows of responsibility, rather than of age, have whitened his hair, but his step is elastic, his speech is crisp and incisive, his face is rosy with the glow of health, and his eyes sparkle with the light of a kindly optimism, while his robust physique conveys a hint of vast reserves of vitality.

The Archbishop of York combines childlike simplicity with the ability to grasp great problems, and his breadth of vision and cordiality of spirit mark him as a leader well qualified to speak, as he stands upon public platforms in America,

the outstretched arm of England seeking to clasp hands with the United States in the fellowship and privilege of a common service—that of riveting irrevocably the links of the chain with which to bind mad Germany.

Religious leaders are predicting that, standing on a unique connecting link between America and the Allies, with his message to the United States enforced by the influence of the outstanding of face which he occupies and with his own remarkable personality touching his words into flame, the mission of the Archbishop of York will kindle a sympathetic sentiment, strengthen fraternal bonds and afford an exchange of views that will be of incalculable value to the allied nations in advancing their common interests.

"Does the United States impress you as being dead in earnest in her preparations for war?" the Archbishop was asked.

"I have been impressed everywhere with the keenness and determination of the American people, but in order to express an opinion regarding the difference between your country and my own I must turn the hands of the clock of my mind back three years," he replied.

"The present attitude of the United States toward the war is that of England in the first year of the conflict, when we were full of interest and hopefulness. Since then we have learned something of the tremendous toll of war in the sacrifice of life and in the ever increasing strain upon the nerve and spirit of the people. With you in America the war is to front, but in England we have it behind us. Your casualty lists have been

practically nothing as compared with ours—individuals against hundreds."

In response to the question "What is the attitude of England toward President Wilson?" the Archbishop said—"The English mind feels that it owes a very great debt to your President for the clearness, fulness and nobility both of language and of outlook with which he has expressed in recorded history the highest ideals for which any nation can fight.

"If I may say a word regarding my own attitude toward President Wilson, I feel a great debt of gratitude to him for the way in which he has been able to bring into the struggle a people united, clearly convinced and strongly determined. Undoubtedly his value and strength as a statesman, at a time when strong willed and clear sighted leaders are needed, is that to him these great qualities have been given.

"I might add that one of the great needs in furthering the future friendship between England and the United States is that we shall know the leading public men—each side better. My object in coming to America is my desire to represent not the official mind of England but the bulk of her citizens, and to do whatever may be possible to a man naturally moving about in the public eye to strengthen the ties that have brought us together, and to keep them united for the sake of the peace and freedom of the other nations."

The Archbishop of York displayed great interest in his trip to Camp Upton, and in summarizing his impressions paid a tribute both to the conditions prevailing at the camp and to the men at Yaphank.

"I am very familiar with the great training camps at home in which five millions of men have entered as civilians and left as a highly efficient army, and Camp Upton stands comparison with the English camps. I was particularly impressed with the carefulness with which the health of the men is guarded, the thoroughness of the arrangements made for the comfort of the troops, the substantial character of the buildings and the completeness of the sanitary safeguards.

"I had the privilege of speaking to 2,000 of the officers, and I felt that they were a strong and capable body of men, full of keenness and force. I also was allowed to speak to four or five thousand of the men.

"I have addressed 40,000 sailors of our Grand Fleet, and great companies of soldiers in the training camps in England and back of the lines in France, but I have never spoken to any body that seemed more responsive to the higher ideals for which the allied nations are at war than the men at Camp Upton.

"One accustomed to public speaking learns to make judgments of the relative intelligence of audiences, and I felt very deeply that these men were really in earnest, intelligent, and deeply interested in the causes of the war, and in the principles for which the allied nations are fighting. I had the honor of reviewing one of the regiments, and I was struck with the steadiness, discipline and swing of their marching."

The Archbishop was enthusiastic regarding the impression created in England by the American officers seen there en route to France.

"The leading American officers," he said, "have made a great impression of strength because of their willingness to recognize that, by reason of new methods and the changed character of modern warfare, they have much to learn, and because of their anxiety to benefit by the experiences of their comrades.

"I have not had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with General Pershing," he continued, "but I followed him on his visit to five armies 1 France, and everywhere he left the same impression of capacity and good comradeship."

"What is the one test change which has come over England since the war began?" the Archbishop was asked.

"The greatest apparent change," he replied, "is seen in the inevitable effect of the tension of three and a half years of incessant warfare upon the strength of nerve and effort of the people. Undoubtedly the difficulties of obtaining food, the heavy losses of men and the return of so many of our best men maimed and disabled have made England somewhat tired, but this hasn't affected the settled will of the nation to see the business through."

"How has the war affected the religious life of England?" was the next question put to the Archbishop.

"At first the sense of the gravity of the situation caused a decided deepening on the part of the people in their remembrance of God," he said, after a moment of thought. "But as the war went on the inevitable preoccupation of the people in events and the strain of the struggle brought a reaction.

"Now, however, the pendulum has begun to swing back. On the national day of Prayer—the first Sunday in January—

there were many signs that, as the crisis of the war was reached, the hearts of the people were again touched with a sense of their need of the help and guidance of God."

"Of course," said the reporter, "church attendance may not be a fair indication of the spiritual mood and temper of a people, but has your observation shown an increase or decrease in the number of worshippers since the war began?"

"All the vigorous men are serving at the front," was the answer, "and with the workmen working so hard night and day that they find it very difficult to attend on Sunday, and with the same thing true of the masses of women employed in making munitions or busy in some other form of public service, church attendance is smaller, but on the whole and on special occasions it is really remarkable.

"Apart from church attendance, the effect of the war has been to lead many to think out again the basis upon which religion rests, and to realize the inadequacy of its present application to the problems of our common life. I have a very deep feeling that both in our nation and in others religious effort in the future must concern itself with the bettering of social conditions."

"To what extent do you think the war has brought the various religious bodies closer together?" the Archbishop was asked.

"Among the chaplains at the front, and on the part of the people at home, there is a general recognition that if the Church is to preach fellowship, classes and nations must show more fellowship in their own lives," he said.

Speaking with reference to the unity of nations and the future status of the question of international peace, the Archbishop said hopefully:—"It is unthinkable that there ever will be a return to the conditions of international politics prevailing before the war. The necessity for a concert of nations to obtain and, if need be, enforce peace is claiming place as never before.

"The organization and character of such a concert is a problem which will test the utmost powers of the world's statesmanship and is a matter to be settled by expert inquiry, but the essential thing is a common will, and a solution of the problem must be found if civilization is to be preserved. We must determine to have peace first and settle the details afterward."

When asked if there was in the English mind any thought of the present struggle as a holy and humanitarian war, the Archbishop replied:—"The English mind is not so idealistic as the American. England went into the war at first because her honor was concerned, but she has gradually come to realize that the conflict is bigger than a question of national honor; it is a titanic contest between two ideals.

"England saw clearer after the war began," he continued, "and her vision was immeasurably strengthened by the entry of the United States into the war."

"Are there any evidences in the English attitude toward Germany of the hatred and bitter animosity which the Huns display toward England?" the Archbishop was asked.

"The traces of it are very few," he said, "with no indications of vindictiveness in his voice or manner."