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Battlefields Tour.

("Times" Correspondent).

The first signs of the revival of the devastated regions are so fine a sight that they seem to fill the foreground of the battlefield picture. Yet, on closer examination this proves to be more than an exquisite panel imposed upon a huge canvas of a world in ruins. The material waste which resulted from the German invasion of Belgium and Northern France can only be realised when it is seen in all its brutal nakedness. It is so colossal as to rend the heart and oppress the mind.

As one surveys the almost immeasurable extent of the catastrophe which has befallen our Allies across the narrow seas, it is difficult to resist the feeling that the British people might do more than they have yet done to help the French and Belgians in their gigantic task of rebuilding their shattered towns and bringing back into cultivation their wasted fields. The returning population is very poor. It lost all it had in the war, and the French Government cannot afford more than a limited measure of compensation. The only assets that the people have are pluck, patience, and energy. They are showing a dauntless spirit, and a will to work which will assuredly overcome every obstacle in the end. Time is on their side, but they deserve a more active ally. One would like to think that each of these reviving communities was being assisted on its way, in the true spirit of the Great Alliance, out of our richer store, which the Germans coveted but were prevented from looting by the heroism of our soldiers joined to that of these unconquerable fighters.

WARDS OF THE HOMELAND.

The case for some measure of organised assistance is overwhelming, and it is not too late for the more flourishing communities in our midst to give their earnest consideration to some such plan as that of "adopting" towns and villages in whose ruins their youth so lately fought and died. It is extraordinary how strong an appeal this country makes to the Englishman. When our soldiers landed in France on what was, in most cases, their first journey to a foreign land, they were surprised to discover how closely the country resembled their native land. The same thought must often occur to the battlefield tourist, as he makes his way from the coast through the lowlands and over the ridges to the heart of the land. The sand dunes along the Belgian coast might have been transplanted from our Norfolk coast around Wells and Hunstanton. The Ypres battlefield, in the low-lying Flanders plain, is very little different from our Fen country. A Lancashire miner would soon feel at home amid the pit-shafts of the flat country around Lens. And the Somme has been well likened to the uplands of our own down country Surrey and Sussex.

If Lens recalls the source of his wealth to the Lancashire man, is it not the natural ward of the great city of Manchester, thriving as never before? I put the case of Lens first because, in all the devastated regions, it shows the largest area of absolute destruction. Many years must pass before its wrecked and flooded collieries are at work again, and the town itself is more like Pompeii than any other on the whole front. That is to say, there is hardly a building from end to end of this large industrial town which has retained any of its superstructure above the ground floor. So like Pompeii in this respect, so unlike it in another, for Lens again has to-day a considerable population. All the way down the long main street there are to be seen clearings among the ruins for the dwellings which proclaim the coming of the new Lens. The spirit which has brought these people back to the sites of their old homes should appeal with special force to the Manchester man. Lens does not ask for charity, nor does the humblest village between the Yser and the Somme. In the whole of my tour I did not see a single beggar.

If Manchester "adopted" Lens, Bradford might follow its example by stretching out its hand to, say, Armentieres. The outpost of Lille is probably the least battered of the large towns on the British front. With a little patching a large proportion of its houses have been or can be, made at least habitable. To pass through Armentieres by the slow train from Calais to Lille after night has fallen is an eerie experience. The town looks more dead than it is, for every third or fourth house shows forth the faint light of a candle, and it is clear that, although roofs may have fallen and upper windows have been shattered, the daily round has

been resumed on the lower floors. To what finer use could Bradford put some of its newly-gotten wealth than the more speedy restoration of Armentieres than its impoverished citizens can secure by their own unaided efforts?

OUR DEBT TO ARRAS.

So it is of Ypres and Arras. We can never do too much for the two martyr cities, which the British Army held in trust for Belgium and France and never surrendered to the enemy. Ypres was the soul of the struggle for Britain. It is the foremost goal of our every peace-time pilgrimage. The ruins of the Cloth Hall, with the swallows nesting in its still beautiful tower, are the most impressive spectacle along the whole Western Front, not excepting the Cathedral of Reims and the Grande Place of Arras. That Ypres will never be far from the thoughts of Englishmen was shown when Lord French went over with the Military Cross which the King had conferred upon the immortal city.

But what of Arras? Saving only Ypres, Arras probably arouses more exalted memories in the mind of the British soldier than any other spot through which he passed in the years of war. Arras, too, was a constant battle comrade of the British Army, playing its part with no less fortitude and sacrificing almost everything it held dear for the sake of France. Arras is not an industrial town with a staple industry of the type of the textile centres farther north. But it has a longer history, and it must be restored. The British race, it would seem, has here a debt of honour to pay. One would like to think of one of the more historic English communities sharing the proud responsibility for the restoration of the ancient capital of Artois to its former placid beauty. The City of London could undertake no higher duty.

Could not a similar spirit of comradeship be established between the smaller English towns and the battlefield villages of Ypres and the Somme, which have undergone a martyrdom as terrible, though not so spectacular, as that of the cities around which they cluster. Here is a great field for the perpetuation of the Alliance in the hearts of the British and French peoples. It would solve one of the problems with which I was constantly faced in my tour, and that was how to ensure that the people at home should not forget the battlefields and all that they mean.

A TAX ON REIMS.

Yet what actually are we doing, or, rather, what is the British Government doing? Far from "adopting" Ypres or Arras, it is proposing in this year's Budget to put a tax on Reims. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's defence of the increase of the duty on sparkling wine as a sort of war levy on the British profiteer can be appreciated for the sorry jest it is as one drives through the Chemin de Dames country from Soissons to Reims and sees the poor shell of the old city. If Reims is ever to regain its former prosperity, it can only be by the aid of the champagne from the rich vineyards on the hills around, where, it should never be forgotten, British troops gave invaluable help in beating off the great German onslaught of May, 1918. None of the Allied troops fought with greater gallantry in those dark days on the Aisne than a Scottish Division. There is a spot off the main tourist road to which pilgrims from over the Border will repair for many years to come. Here stands a truncated obelisk dedicated, while the battle was still raging, to the Scottish troops, with a fine gesture of loving admiration, by the Frenchmen who had fought by their side. There is no more beautiful inscription in the French or other language than the proud declaration on this simple memorial that "here shall blossom always the glorious thistle of Scotland amid the roses of France."

How ironical is the contrast between the sublime spirit of the soldier and the harsh economics of the politician.

THE ANGEL'S SMILE.

It must not be inferred that Reims is a city of the dead. There is no better illustration of the high confidence of the French people in their destiny than the dogged way in which they are setting about the restoration of their historic city and its noble shrine. You see street upon street in ruins, with here and there a miracle of preservation, like the Roman Gate of Mars, only to be pulled up with a gasp by the sight of a well-filled electric

tramcar bowling along to one of the outer suburbs. The angel knows as the "Smile of Reims" still stands on the great door of the Cathedral for a sure sign that the city will rise again on its ashes. Wild roses are blooming on every bush in the Aisne Valley, but Reims must be deprived of its beauty for a generation. On bidding farewell to my host, I was urged to come again soon. I answered with the natural wish that, when I returned, it would be to see Reims restored. "Ah," he said, sadly, "pray do not delay so long. That will take 20 years. You see," he explained, "we have no money."

That is the heart of the matter. There is great potential wealth in all the region, but there is little money in the coffers of Reims for the biggest task which it has faced in all the centuries of its history. If no other motive can move the British Government, cannot pity stay their hand? Reims must not be taxed.

SCIENCE NOTES.

FLYING IN A GLASS CASE.

It is stated that Major Shroeder, the American airman who lately fell from a height of nearly seven miles, recovering when two miles from the earth, expects soon to be fit again, and one of his plans is to try to fly to a height of 50,000 feet by enclosing himself in a glass case with oxygen tanks.

RECONSTRUCTION OF FRANCE.

The following facts regarding the magnitude of the reconstruction task confronting the French Minister of the Liberated Regions were given out by M. Labbe, Director-General of Technical Services. Building work alone would require 22,000,000 tons of material and the labour of 700,000 people for one year; 100,000 houses are to be entirely rebuilt, requiring 5,000,000,000 bricks, 3,000,000 cubic meters of sand, 1,000,000 tons of lime, 13,000,000 square meters of tiles, and 3,000,000 cubic meters of wood. Reconstruction of highways and railroads would require 3,000,000 tons of materials and the labour of 15,000 men for one year. An addition of 20,000 trains and 5000 trucks would be required.

CONCERTS THROUGH SPACE.

News has come of a wireless telephone instrument for the home, costing but a few pounds, which can be contained in a tiny box, and will, it is claimed, receive messages in England from America. The inventor of this long-range receiving set listens regularly every Sunday afternoon and evening, in his home in London, to a concert taking place in Italy. An aerial 85ft long, stretching from his bedroom window to a tree in the garden, is used, and faint waves are picked up by this, being passed to his receiving set, which magnifies the sounds. It is said that these sets, which are to be manufactured for amateurs have such simple mechanism that they may be easily worked by anybody.

PERISCOPES FOR ENGINES.

Why not use the periscope on locomotives, the Electrical Experimenter asks? It should save many lives for its use should certainly prevent many heretofore unavoidable occurrences, such as rear-end collisions, etc. The periscope for locomotives employs a large mirror, so that the engineer need not focus his gaze accurately on a small eyepiece, as in the submarine periscope. This would hardly do owing to the many duties constantly thrust upon him. For one thing, the locomotive periscope will enable the engineer to see at all times signals from the rear of a long goods train. This means that if he should see a train on the same line approaching at a dangerous speed, he could speed up his own train so as to minimise the effect of the rear-end collision, if such really is to occur at all.

MACHINE TO DETECT UNTRUTHS.

Among the marvels of delicate mechanism is an apparatus invented by Dr. Augustus D. Waller, F.R.S., of the London University, by which it is possible to detect liars. This is done by taking electric records of the effect of cross-examination on a criminal's nervous system to indicate whether he is telling the truth. Dr. Walker discovered that the resistance of the skin to electricity varies with the state of the emotions, and has so developed the discovery that even apprehension can plainly be "spotted" by the fluctuations of a spot of light on a scale. "This," he says, "is how we shall get the criminal. He will be trying to prove an alibi. He will look the judge in the eye and say he was never, say, at Chelsea, in his life. Now we apply my method. Attach the electric wires to his hands and then show him a few pictures, including one of the place the criminal was suspected of having visited. The others will give the negative results, but when he is shown that particular one the result will be that the light will jump—and there is no power in mortal man to stop it."

MOTURING NOTES.

USING OLD OIL.

Lubricating oil that has been in the engine until it is dirty can still be put to good use. When it has been filtered, the cleansed oil can be used for oil cups and other external lubrication purposes.

THE ENGINE EXTERIOR.

The car-owner should be careful to keep the exterior of the engine clean as well as the interior. Dirt, grease, and general filth act as insulators, preventing the metal from throwing off heat into the air. Incidentally, this rule regarding cleanliness applies to other parts, such as the axle, and brake mechanism. When mud is allowed to remain on many parts of the car, it soaks up the oil designed to lubricate the points, which become dry and wear excessively. All such parts as this must be cleaned regularly and have fresh oil applied to them.

CLEANING PLUG PORCELAINS.

Spark plug porcelains may be freed of all carbonaceous or other foreign matter by soaking them in a solution of carbon disulphide, which dissolves the carbon and leaves the porcelain white. Of course this treatment applies particularly to the type of porcelain which is removable from the shell of the plug, but the same method of cleaning can be used even if the plug is of the so-called one-piece type. Just soak the whole plug, shell and all. It will do no harm and is one reasonably effective way of attacking that carbon which assists the efforts to dig it out with a knife or other tool.

CAR ON TWO WHEELS.

Designs have been submitted of a very well-thought-out little car on two wheels. Briefly the specification consists of a V twin engine forming part of a unit, with clutch and three-speed gear, the final drive being by shaft and underslung worm. The whole is carried in a simple pressed steel frame, sprung fore and aft. Steering is by wheel, with a geared reduction, and controls are rather on car lines. Two small wheels can be lowered for starting and stopping purposes, though normally the vehicle travels on two wheels only. All the details have been very carefully designed, not only from the point of view of the rider's comfort, but also from the manufacturing side.

COMPRESSED GAS AS FUEL.

In the course of the world war many motor vehicles were operated in England with coal gas, because of the scarcity of petrol. The gas was contained in collapsible bags made of rubberised balloon fabric. At present, however, compressed gas in steel cylinders is being tried. It is stated that the gas is forced into pressures as high as 2,250lb per square inch. The cost of compression is stated to vary between 40 and 75 cents per 1,000 cubic feet of free gas, and the cost as fuel in the engine is equivalent to a cost of 12 cents per gallon on the liquid fuel replaced.

THE STEEL DISC WHEEL.

There is a growing tendency on the part of motorists to favour the pressed steel disc wheel, and increasing numbers of fine cars are being equipped with them and support members of this type. The wheel used for passenger cars is a single disc type, being disc for strength. In most designs the thickness of the metal is greater at the centre than at the rim, thus proportioning the section to the strain coming upon it. A cast-steel master hub is fastened to the axle and the steel disc is attached to this by four easily removable nuts which screw on studs in the permanent hub flange. The disc wheel is as easily removed as other types, and is stronger and more easily washed than the conventional wood or wire-spoked forms.

Red-haired people, it is stated, are less liable to become bald than those with hair of any other colour.