

Pen Pct res of the War.

SERIES IV.

We shall conclude our comments on Philip Gibbs by quoting a choice criticism of the military clique. To the reader who, like Oliver Twist, asks for more we heartily recommend the original work: "The Realities of War," which is obtainable at the Athenaeum.

"FAWNING AND FLATTERY."

There was one whose conversation I remember (having taken notes of it before I turned in that night). It was a remarkable conversation, summing up many things of the same kind which I had heard in stray sentences by other officers, and month by month, years afterwards, heard again, spoken with passion. This officer who had come out to France in 1914 and had been fighting ever since by a luck which had spared his life when so many of his comrades had fallen round him, did speak with passion. He spoke with a bitter mocking irony. He said that G.H.Q. was a close corporation in the hands of the military clique who had muddled through the South African War, and were now going to muddle through a worse one. They were, he said, entrenched behind impregnable barricades of old moss-eaten traditions, red tape, and caste privilege. They were, of course, patriots who believed that the Empire depended upon their system. They had no doubt of their inherent right to conduct the war, which was "their war" without interference, or criticism, or publicity. They spent many hours of the days and nights in writing letters to each other, and those who wrote most letters received most decorations and felt, with a patriotic fire, within their breasts that they were getting on with the war.

Within their close corporation there were rivalries, intrigues, perjuries, and treacheries like those of a medieval court. Each general and staff officer had his followers and his sycophants who jostled for each other's jobs, fawned on the great man, flattered his vanity, and made him believe in his omniscience. Among the General Staff there were various grades—G.S.O. I., G.S.O. II., G.S.O. III., and those in the lower grades fought for a higher grade with every kind of artfulness, and diplomacy, and backstairs influence. They worked late into the night. That is to say, they went back to their offices after dining at mess—"so frightfully busy, you know, old man!"—and kept their lights burning, and smoked cigarettes, and rang up each other on the telephone with futile questions, and invented new ways of preventing something from being done somewhere. The war to them was a far-off thing essential to their way of life, as miners in the coal-fields are essential to statesmen in Downing street, especially in cold weather. But it did not touch their souls or their bodies. They did not see its agony, or imagine it, or worry about it. They were always cheerful, breezy, bright and optimistic. They made a little work go a long way. They were haughty and arrogant with subordinate officers, or at the best affable and condescending; and to superior officers they said, "Yes, sir," "No, sir," "Quite so, sir," to any statement, however absurd in its ignorance and dogmatism. If the major-general said, "Wagner was a mountebank in music," G.S.O. III., who had once studied at Munich, said, "Yes, sir," or, "You think so, sir? Of course, you're right."

If a lieutenant-colonel said, "Browning was not a poet, a staff captain, who had read Browning at Cambridge, with passionate admiration, said, "I quite agree with you, sir. And who do you think was a poet, sir?"

It was the army system. The opinion of a superior officer was correct, always. It did not admit of contradiction. It was not to be criticised. Its ignorance was wisdom.

G.H.Q. lived, said our guest, in a world of its own, rose-coloured, remote from the ugly things of war. They had heard of the trenches, yes, but as the West End hears of the East End—a nasty place where common people lived. Occasionally they visited the trenches as society folk go slumming, and came back proud of having seen a shell burst, having braved the lice and the dirt.

"The trenches are the slums," said our guest. "We are the Great Unwashed. We are the mud-larks."

There was a trench in the salient called J.3. It was away out in advance of our lines. It was not connected with our own trench system. It had been left derelict by both sides, and was a ditch in No Man's Land. But our men were ordered to hold it "to save sniping." A battalion commander protested to the head-quarters staff. There was no object in holding J.3. It was a target for German

guns and a temptation to German miners. "J.3," came the staff command, "must be held until further orders."

We lost 500 men in holding it. The trench and all in it were thrown up by mines. Among those killed was the Hon. Lyndhurst Bruce, the husband of Camille Clifford, with other husbands of women unknown.

Our guest told the story of the massacre in Neuve Chapelle. "This is a death sentence," said the officers who were ordered to attack. But they attacked, and died, with great gallantry as usual.

"In the slums," said our guest, "we are expected to die if G.H.Q. tells us so, or if the Corps arranges our funeral. And generally we do."

That night when the snow lay on the ground I listened to the rumbling of the gunning away in the salient, and seemed to hear the groans of men at Hooge, at St. Eloi, in awful places. The irony of that guest of ours was frightful. It was bitter beyond justice, though with truth in the mockery, the truth of a soul shocked by the waste of life and heroism. . . . When I met him later in the war he was on the staff.

We now leave Gibbs and turn to a writer of distinction on the works of the Navy.

SUBMARINE v. SUBMARINE.

Rear-Admiral Sims of the American Navy has written a series of articles on "The Victories at Sea," with special reference to the American Navy. To any Digger who had a high opinion of the actual fighting contributed by the Americans to the cause of the Allies we would recommend the original articles which are being published in "The Worlds Work," and may be obtained from the Municipal Library.

He praises the Allied submarines as being the most effective agency in the destruction of German underwater craft. The Allied destroyers, about 500 in number, sank 34 German submarines with gunfire and depth charges; Auxiliary patrol craft, such as trawlers, yachts and the like, about 3000 in number, sank 31; while the Allied submarines which were about 100 in number sank 20.

The German submarine, in search of harmless merchantmen, spent most of its time on the surface with its conning tower and deck exposed, thereby keeping its batteries fully charged against the event of being attacked. The Allied submarine when once on its hunting ground spent all the daylight hours under water with only the periscope visible from time to time for a few seconds. Just as the U-boat could spot an Allied destroyer at a great distance without being itself seen, so could the lurking periscope invariably see the U-boat on the surface long before this tiny object came within the view of the enemy's conning tower. Our submarine commander could remain submerged, sweep the ocean with his periscope until he had picked up the enemy; then, still unseen beneath the water, he could steal up to a position within range and discharge a torpedo into the U-boat's fragile side. The German submarine received the same treatment that it was itself administering to harmless merchantmen, being torpedoed without warning.

The combat was usually one-sided and the issue was determined in a few minutes. More often than not our torpedoes missed for the U-boat is a small target. The missile would usually pass a few feet ahead or astern or would glide a few inches over or under the submarine bulk. Once an American torpedo hit its enemy squarely on the side but failed to explode. If once the torpedo struck and functioned, however, it was all over in a few seconds. A huge geyser of water would leap into the air; the submarine would fly into parts in a dozen directions, then the water would gradually subside leaving a mammoth oil patch in which two or three members of the crew might be struggling in the waves.

One of the most interesting exploits is that of the E.35, a British submarine, in May 1918, patrolling in the Atlantic about 200 miles west of Gibraltar. Two or three miles away appeared a low lying object which to the practised eye at the periscope soon revealed itself as a huge U-boat proceeding north at a leisurely pace and never suspecting that one of its own kind was on its trail. Several times the British commander dived to forty feet and made at full speed towards the German, coming up to periscope depth from time to time to make sure of his distance. When the range had been decreased to 250 yards the missile was launched in the direction of the foe. But this was only one of the numerous occasions when the shot missed. A surface ship, from its elevation would have seen the tell-tale wake of the torpedo and probably escaped by flight; but the U-boat awash with the waves sailed nonchalantly on its way never suspecting for

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a moment that torpedo had missed its vitals by a few feet.

The E.35 crept still closer and fired two torpedoes simultaneously, both hit at the same moment. A terrific explosion was heard, a mountain of water rose in the air, then in a few seconds everything was still. A small patch of oil appeared on the surface this gradually expanded; and then a few German survivors came up and swam towards the British vessel.

Admiral Sims claims that the inventor of the modern submarine was an American, an undergraduate of Yale University, named David Burtwell, who in 1777 invented an under water craft which contained all the principles of construction embodied in the submarine of to-day. His chief inspiration was his hostility to Great Britain which was at that time at war with America, but his invention failed to account for any of the British war vessels which were then anchored off the coast. His successor, Robert Fulton, was inspired by a similar ambition. In 1801 Fulton took his "Nautilus" into the harbour of Brest and blew a merchant ship into a thousand pieces. This dramatic experiment was intended to convince Napoleon that there was one way in which he could destroy the English fleet. The demonstration failed to convince Napoleon of the value of the submarine and Fulton eventually returned to America to become famous in developing the steam-boat.

HOUSING LEGISLATION.

A review of the amendments to the Housing Act made last session has been supplied by a member of the legal profession, by whom the principal changes effected by the new legislation have been summarised. The powers of magistrates have been widened, and there are several points of importance which both landlord and tenants will do well to note. The reviewer states that until 1916 the law of New Zealand was much the same as that of England as to dwellings, in relation to landlord and tenant. If a tenant was a weekly tenant, a week's notice to him, or from him, was sufficient, but if there was no agreement as to the term of the tenancy or the notice required a month's notice on either side was necessary. The war brought changes. Many wives during their husband's absence came to live in towns, and rents went up. Many were turned out to make room for better paying tenants, and to relieve the situation the War Legislation Amendment Act, 1916, contained provisions against the increase of rents. Rents were fixed at what they were for the dwellings on August 3, 1914, or if not let on that date, the last rent paid before that date or the rent paid when first let after that date. Increases were allowed when improvements and additions were made during the tenancy. This increase was fixed at 8 per cent. on the cost of the improvements and additions. In addition to fixing the rents, the Act limited an owner's right to get possession. He could get it only when he needed it for himself or his family, or someone in his employ, or some other ground satisfactory to the Court. A landlord could not increase rent where the increase was allowed unless he gave 28 days' notice to the tenant with certain particulars added. There were other restrictions, but these need not be mentioned.

—Protection for Soldiers.—

After this many soldiers began to return, most of them ill or wounded, and the difficulty they had in getting housing led to further legislation. The War Legislation Act, 1917, further interfered with the rights of owners of dwellings let to tenants. A tenant could apply in writing to have the capital value of a house determined by a magistrate, in order to have the rent fixed. The Act was made to apply to furnished dwellings, the proportion to be paid in respect of the furniture to be fixed by the magistrate. The difficulties occasioned by the returning soldiers were not removed, and, in 1918, it was enacted that no order for the ejectment of a soldier, discharged soldier or the wife or window of

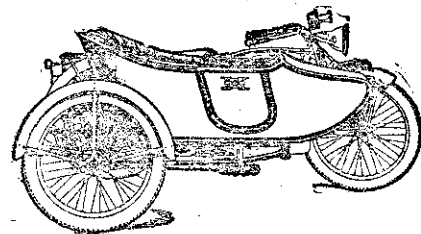
one, should be made as long as the tenant paid the proper rent and otherwise observed the conditions to be followed.

In the case of anyone else but a soldier, his wife, or widow no order for ejectment could be made, except where the owner required the place for his own occupation, or he had sold to another who wanted to live in it, or some other reason deemed sufficient by the Court. In the case of a dependent of a soldier the Court was not to make an order if it would not be just or equitable, or would be the cause of undue hardship on the tenant. "Dependant" means the father, mother, stepfather, a sister's child, stepchild, illegitimate child, wholly or partly dependent on the soldier. The Act in ordinary cases only applied to a house the proper rent of which was not more than £104 per annum. There was more legislation in 1919. By section 56 of the Housing Act it was enacted that the Court may refuse to make an order in any case where it is of opinion that the making of the order would cause undue hardship to the tenant.

The amendments of the law during the session just closed are contained in the Housing Amendment Act, 1920. They are briefly: The provisions of the Act of 1916 are not to apply to any house first let after the 1920 Act comes into force, that is, November 9 of this year. That would mean new houses completed after that date. A landlord may apply to a magistrate for relief. The magistrate, after taking into consideration the outgoings in connection with the house, such as rates, insurances, and other expenditure, may fix the standard rent at 7 per cent. net on the value of the house on August 3, 1914. He is also entitled to take into consideration, in fixing this rent, deterioration that could not be made good by repairs. Any rent paid by the tenant in excess of the standard rate fixed by the magistrate may be recovered by the tenant.

The payment of any bonus for the purpose of getting a house or the acceptance of any such bonus or the payment of any money for the purpose of getting possession of the house already occupied by another tenant are made offences and punishable by a fine up to £100. Any moneys paid as such may be recovered as a debt. As another ground for an owner recovering possession any tenant letting a portion of the dwelling house and making a profit out of it may be ordered to give up possession.

A magistrate may determine a standard rent of rooms let, whether furnished or unfurnished. In questions of hardship that which the tenant may have to bear in quitting is not the only one. The magistrate may consider the hardship that may be suffered by the owner of the premises in the event of the refusal to make an order for his possession.



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INVERCARGILL MOTOR CLUB.

AIMS AND OBJECTS.

Lately there has been a good deal of talk about the benefits to be derived from a Motor Club. As a Club has just recently been formed in Invercargill a few instances of what has been accomplished by sister clubs will be of interest to all those who have the welfare of motoring at heart. In order not to get too far from our own centre let us quote what the Otago Club has done not only for its own members but for every user of the road. In scores of places where roads were bad or metal put on a road and left unblinded the Club has been instrumental in inducing the County or Borough Council concerned to rectify matters. In some cases working bees were formed by club members to assist in the work and monetary aid often forthcoming where the borough did not feel justified in spending allocations on one particular part of a road. Throughout Otago sign posts have been erected and warning signs on dangerous corners. Bridges and culverts have been erected on the recommendation of the Club and a hundred and one things which go to make motoring a real pleasure have been accomplished. There is plenty of room for improvements in Southland and if we are to maintain our progressive policy we must have a body which is alive to the needs of the community and able to point the way. We trust the Southland Motor Club will fill the bill in this respect.

There has never before been such a need for motorists to stand shoulder to shoulder as there is at the present time. Next session of Parliament legislation is to be brought down taxing motors. No reasonable motorist objects to a tax if the money derived therefrom is to be expended on the roads. Various suggestions have been made as to the form this tax should take; one suggestion is on the h.p. of the car. This is manifestly unfair, as one man who has a high powered car may only use it a few days a week, and another man who has a low-powered car may use the car (and the road) every day and night and only pay half the tax the first man does. It is the opinion of northern motor clubs that the only fair tax is a tyre tax. This not only gets at the man who uses the roads a great deal but it gets the fast and reckless driver who while fast driving damages the road and wears his tyres out quicker. This form of tax would be very easy to collect through the Customs. Unless motorists unite they will have no say in the matter, so it behoves every motorist in Southland to join up and as a collective body tell the legislators what form of taxation should be levied.