

## WAR BOOKS AT RANDOM

Occasionally a narrative comes to hand which for its unaffected simplicity, its total lack of striving for effect, produces in the reader an equal liking for the book and its author. In this not easily won class we place William J. Robinson's *My Fourteen Months at the Front*. At the outbreak of war, this young American found himself in London with business connections severed. Stirred by the onswEEPing enthusiasm around him, he enlisted as a trooper in the Fifth Dragoon Guards. He faithfully tells of the beginning of a soldier's career, which had barely proceeded beyond a drastic initiation when at his own request he was ordered to the front in Flanders.

Of those fourteen months of almost daily peril, dread periods when the "fear of God" was truly upon him, he writes in straightforward fashion. He frankly confesses to terror, but out of it wins respect by sticking to his task as a staff motor car driver, a task that led him along the Ypres road to one of the most calmly heroic and horrible incidents thus far recorded. He came to know the British soldier as a comrade, and he was "proud to belong to such an

army." He praises the British officers under whom he served, and he reveals the peculiar characteristics of the British soldier better than has any other war writer.

Arthur Ruhl is an extremely rapid literary traveler. In his *Antwerp to Gallipoli* you have no sooner thrillingly escaped with him from Antwerp to Paris and from the aftermath of the Marne, than he whisks you off to Bordeaux. You are just beginning to settle down comfortably there with the French Government in secure semi-exile, when you turn a page and—presto!—you find yourself in the middle of Berlin. Then you begin to learn things not hitherto imagined. You gather that "nobody had ever heard of Bernhardi," "Treitschke—who was he?" Prussian militarism is a foreign invention, and the Ruhleben British prisoners' camp has quite a cheerful atmosphere. You are eager to know more about all this, but no, this tireless spirit is off again to dandified Rumania, sturdy little Bulgaria, the amiable Turks at Gallipoli, charming Austria, and the dust of a Russian retreat. You have been going at a terrible pace with Mr. Ruhl, but nevertheless grasped the impression that the Teutonic Allies treated him very well indeed. England ought straightway to catch this traveler and entertain him at a Lord Mayor's banquet, to beat the Germans in the social field, otherwise he will likely accept an Iron Cross—"of the second class worn inside." As it is, his graphic and entertaining book will please those of German sympathies.

It has been forecast that none of the countries involved in the war will present the same national and social aspects as heretofore. To us in the United States the outlook for our close kin to the north must appear as a bright and progressive future. It is with this attitude we read *Canada in Flanders*, by Sir Max Aitken. What can we add to this record of a young people rising spontaneously to the summons of what they believe to be manifest duty, passing in splendid manner thru their national baptism of fire, to stand in the breach and hurl back the foe where an empire tottered? Ypres, Festubert, Givenchy; is it too much to venture the prediction that after the war these names will be found to have given historic birth to a nation—no longer a dependent colony, but taking equal part and responsibility with Great Britain herself, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in the affairs of empire?

If politics are said to make strange bedfellows, war would seem to make extraordinary ones. Otherwise there is no accounting for *The War Lords*, by A. G. Gardiner. Even so it takes mental ingenuity to group President Wilson and Karl Liebknecht with Von Bernhardi, the German Crown Prince, and Ferdinand of Bulgaria—the "old fox of the Balkans." The author has courage even to the point of rashness. As to Herr Dernberg, he is "stupid," while Mr. Bryan impresses him as "a quiet, still man, who does not live with his ear to the ground and his eye on the weather-

cock, who refuses to buy popularity with infinite handshaking and robustious speech." One feels inclined to make a note of "robustious speech" for future use. About the rest of his war lords Mr. Gardiner writes in a robustious (that word simply will not keep off the paper), sure-about-everything style. If he had applied the art of shading his characters a trifle—not presenting them for the most part as either white or black—and adopted a less toplofty method of expression, he would have saved himself in places from being regarded as amusing when he apparently intended to speak with almost desperate earnestness.

In presenting the case for Italy, W. O. Pitt in *Italy and Her Unholy Alliance* lucidly and logically argues that no other course was open to her but to break with the Teutonic Alliance and cast in her fortunes with the Entente Powers. The long struggle for Italian national unity was jeopardized by an old peril from the north, commercial as well as military, carried on with every device toward the subjugation of her bitterly won liberties. It was the voice of the Italian people which would not dcwn, and the king was heartily in accord with his subjects. There may be, of course, another view, but this is a strong defense of Italy's action. While his sequence of historical and political data will need an able controversial pen to outweigh him, Mr. Pitt is also personally well equipped for his task by a sympathetic grasp of Italy's economic and other problems. It is a book to be read by everyone wishing to know why Italy entered the war.

*My Fourteen Months at the Front*, by William J. Robinson. Boston: Little, Brown. \$1. *Antwerp to Gallipoli*, by Arthur Ruhl. Scribner. \$1.50. *Canada in Flanders*, by Sir Max Aitken. Doran. 50 cents. *The War Lords*, by A. G. Gardiner. Dutton. 40 cents. *Italy and the Unholy Alliance*, by W. O. Pitt. Dutton. \$1.