

THE INFLUENZA IN EUROPE.

Before Foch in July struck the blow near the Marne which turned the fortunes of war the Allies lived for an anxious interval in hourly expectation of the renewal of the enemy's drive toward Amiens and the Channel ports. The Germans had organized the territory won in their spring offensive, and had effected an extraordinary concentration of troops, guns, and material opposite the British part of the line. The British Prime Minister betrayed no secret when he announced in June that at any moment the British forces might meet the sternest test of the war. The Allied Command could not at the time understand why the Germans, after their gigantic preparations, allowed precious weeks to pass in inactivity, while Americans poured into France by hundreds of thousands. It is now generally believed that the enemy was compelled to stay by the ravages of influenza. The epidemic, starting in Spain, spread over Germany before its full effects were felt in France and Britain. Apparently the German army was the first to be swept by it. These interesting extracts from a private letter from a Canadian in Montreaux, Switzerland, dated August 5, illustrate the prevalence and virulence of the influenza in Germany during the critical period:

"This strange epidemic they call grippe has swept over the whole land, carrying off some of its most promising people. It has been most severe among the soldiers and most fatal, and those who have lived through it say they would rather have gone through a battle and been wounded. It leaves them complete wrecks for some time. Switzerland is now quarantined in France. No foreigner may enter it at all and its own people have to be detained on the frontier some days. All the French and British prisoners arriving from Germany have had it there and were confined to their hotels for a fortnight, which is very tiresome for them and not what they expected on regaining their semi-liberty.

"The French refugees have been stopped coming for a time. We have seen over four hundred thousand pass our door. They grow always more and more wretched, so that they now resemble vagrants often, and the children are mostly clad in paper garments. The Germans take everything they have from them when they enter the trains, even their prayer books, telling them they will be returned to them, with their money, in Switzerland! Immediately they arrive they begin crying out for their possessions, which, of course, they will never see again. What the Huns cannot carry off they destroy with the instinct of the savage."

When all the records of the war come to light it will probably be found that the influenza proved a valuable ally of the Allies at a decisive time. The letter also throws a light on the growing misery behind the German lines. The refugees are from the occupied parts of France. The Germans would rather repatriate them than free them by evacuation, and no doubt seized the stocks of food consigned to them by the Relief Commission.