

**IN THE WHIRLPOOL  
OF WAR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649162017

In the whirlpool of war by Isabelle Rimbaud & Archibald Williams

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Cover @ 2017

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**ISABELLE RIMBAUD & ARCHIBALD WILLIAMS**

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# IN THE WHIRLPOOL OF WAR

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH  
BY  
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LONDON  
T. FISHER UNWIN LTD.  
ADELPHI TERRACE

*First Published in 1918*

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## IN THE WHIRLPOOL OF WAR

ON the 28th of July 1914 my husband and I, then living at Roche,<sup>1</sup> became positively convinced that the outbreak of war was imminent.

On the 30th, Captain Clenet, the author of that very illuminating pamphlet, *The German Invasion through Southern Belgium*,<sup>2</sup> called on us with his wife, and was astounded to hear that I had been informed, two days earlier, of the suspension of payment of the Rente. Until I told him of my part in this financial misadventure the Captain seemed assured that there was no likelihood of war with Germany, and took a sly pleasure in pooh-poohing all the arguments with which my husband Pierre met his optimism. When I had finished my story,

<sup>1</sup> One of the four sections of the commune of Chuffilly, Attigny canton, Vouziers arrondissement (Ardennes).

<sup>2</sup> Published by the "Marches de l'Est," Paris, 1912.

however, he sat up straight, and in a quite altered tone said very seriously: "If that be the case, I must see about taking up my duties again at Verdun."

We went out to accompany our visitors to the end of the street, and walked with them along the Rilly-aux-Oies road as far as the Wallart calvary. To the left, in front of us, the sun was setting, crimsoning all the sky.

*Saturday, August 1.*

Our niece Nelly's husband, Emile Lecourt, returned from Attigny at half-past three, bathed in perspiration and greatly upset. "It's all up; we've got to go," he cried, sinking down on our doorstep. The village folk who saw him arrive came up to question him. They all refused to believe him, though the young fellow angrily protested that he spoke the truth, and swore that the Attigny mayor's secretary had acquainted him with the official dispatch.

At this moment the tocsin rang out from the belfries of the surrounding villages and the general alarm sounded. "A fire!" said some. Consternation reigned, though people were still unwilling to credit what they heard. But the

mayors, in receipt of orders to post up the mobilisation notices, had sent cyclists into the fields to warn the harvesters, who came back with them. It was no longer possible to have any illusions as to the real state of affairs.

About half-past four our mayor drove up in a carriage from Chuffilly and took his stand in front of the house, facing the fatal poster. People questioned him anxiously, but he knew nothing except that he had been ordered to do the posting at four o'clock and, as Roche was the most remote section of the commune, he was half an hour behind time. "The poster is quite easily understood," he said; "every man liable to mobilisation has merely to consult his papers." Stupefaction and dismay prevailed, and one heard protesting cries of: "And the harvest is scarcely begun!" People could not bring themselves to admit the awful truth; those who had to go felt that they must get fuller information from the police at Attigny.

Emile has to join up at 10 a.m. on the second day after mobilisation. He is tortured by the gloomiest fears. Added to his sorrow at parting from his wife and child and father, and his unwillingness to leave his very flourish-