

**A YEAR AGO; EYE-
WITNESS'S NARRATIVE OF
THE WAR FROM MARCH
30TH TO JULY 18TH, 1915**

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A year ago; eye-witness's narrative of the war from March 30th to July 18th, 1915 by E. D. Swinton & Alan Percy

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E. D. SWINTON & ALAN PERCY

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A YEAR AGO

EYE-WITNESS'S NARRATIVE OF THE WAR
FROM MARCH 30TH TO JULY 18TH, 1915

BY
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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD

1916

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THIS book takes up *Eye-Witness's* Narrative of the War at the point where the volume published last year ended, and continues the Narrative from March 30th, 1915, to July 18th, 1915, when the series of descriptive accounts ceased to be issued by the Press Bureau.

The narratives are printed in full as communicated by the Press Bureau, and the two volumes together form a historical document the value of which will, it is believed, be recognized more and more as time goes on.

May, 1916.

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A YEAR AGO

I

AFTER NEUVE CHAPELLE

March 30th—April 18th, 1915

30th March, 1915.

THE quiet along our front has not been broken by any event of importance. The weather has been fine, with brilliantly sunny days and clear moonlit nights, but there has been a bitter wind which has brought the temperature down below freezing point.

Of incidents the following are alone worthy of record:—

On Thursday, the 25th, portions of our front were more heavily shelled than usual, and opposite our centre the German snipers were active. On Friday five bombs were dropped on Essars from a German aeroplane, one man being wounded. The hostile artillery fire was again heavy in places.

Saturday, the 27th, was also marked by activity by the enemy's airmen, who dropped bombs on Sully, killing two men. A Zeppelin was seen at night heading north-eastwards.

On Sunday, the 28th, bombs from German

aeroplanes were dropped near Estaires and Hazebrouck, with but small results in each case.

Since mention is not infrequently made of the capture of machine guns from the enemy it is necessary to sound a note of warning lest more importance than is justified should be attributed to these minor successes. It must be remembered that to the Germans the loss of one or several machine guns does not represent what at the beginning of operations it would have meant to us, with our then vastly inferior total and proportionate number of these weapons. It is believed that before war commenced they had available altogether a stock of 50,000 such guns, apart from any that may since have been turned out by their arsenals. Their employment of them, therefore, has in a certain sense been prodigal and carried out with a disregard of loss which is only comprehensible when the large reserve of these weapons in their possession is borne in mind.

To the Germans the machine gun represents merely a piece of machinery of immense killing and stopping power which has cost a certain sum of money, but is less vulnerable and less valuable in every way than the number of men and rifles of equivalent killing power. One principle guiding its employment, therefore, is that, provided a gun has "earned its keep" or paid for its cost by the number of the enemy slaughtered, its loss or destruction does not count. For them it has been a matter of the exchange of a mechanism costing a few pounds, which can be replaced at once, for a number of lives which cannot be replaced within a generation. This,

of course, applies to the gun alone and not to the highly trained specialists who handle it.

It may be of some interest to point out to those who are unacquainted with the weapon that a machine gun at an ordinary rate fires 500 rounds a minute. From the sector of the defences of Neuve Chapelle, therefore, where, as reported, the Germans had 15 machine guns within a length of front of 250 yards, 7500 bullets could have been poured in one minute, in addition to those from the rifles of the infantry manning the parapets. What the effect of this stream of lead would have been against assaulting infantry, either held up by obstacles or advancing over clear ground at the slow pace alone possible to heavily weighted soldiers, is obvious.

The German guns are of Maxim type on a small and inconspicuous sledge or stretcher mounting, and are carried everywhere where infantry can go. The majority of them are built by the *Deutsche Waffen Fabrik* near Berlin, and other factories in Germany, but some of the older ones were constructed in England.

Allusion has already been made to the good feeling which prevails generally between our army and the inhabitants of the districts in which it is quartered. There is one direction, however, in which the kindness of the French, especially of the women folk of all grades of society, has been most remarkable, and that is in the assistance rendered us in the care of our sick and wounded.

Most of our clearing stations for the wounded have been established in institutions, factories, or private