

**ATTACK: AN INFANTRY
SUBALTERN'S
IMPRESSIONS OF JULY
1ST, 1916**

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Attack: An Infantry Subaltern's Impressions of July 1st, 1916 by Edward G. D. Liveing & John Masfield

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EDWARD G. D. LIVEING & JOHN MASEFIELD

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ATTACK

AN INFANTRY SUBALTERN'S IMPRESSIONS
OF JULY 1st, 1916

BY
EDWARD G. D. LIVEING

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JOHN MASEFIELD

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1918

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TO
THE N. C. O.s
AND
MEN OF No. 5 PLATOON
Of a Battalion of the County of London
Regiment, whom I had the good
fortune to command in France
during 1915-1916, and in
particular to the
memory of
Hrs. C. N. DENNISON
My Platoon Observer, who fell in action
July 1st, 1916, in an attempt
to save my life

INTRODUCTION

THE attack on the fortified village of Gommecourt, which Mr. Liveing describes in these pages with such power and colour, was a part of the first great allied attack on July 1, 1916, which began the battle of the Somme. That battle, so far as it concerns our own troops, may be divided into two sectors: one, to the south of the Ancre River, a sector of advance, the other, to the north of the Ancre River, a containing sector, in which no advance was possible. Gommecourt itself, which made a slight but important salient in the enemy line in the containing sector, was the most

northern point attacked in that first day's fighting.

Though the Gommecourt position is not impressive to look at, most of our soldiers are agreed that it was one of the very strongest points in the enemy's fortified line on the Western Front. French and Russian officers, who have seen it since the enemy left it, have described it as "terrible" and as "the very devil." There can be no doubt that it was all that they say.

The country in that part is high-lying chalk downland, something like the downland of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, though generally barer of trees, and less bold in its valleys. Before the war it was cultivated, hedgeless land, under corn and sugar-beet. The chalk is usually well-