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ILLUSTRATED MICHELIN GUIDES
TO THE BATTLE-FIELDS (1914-1918)

THE YSER

AND

THE BELGIAN COAST

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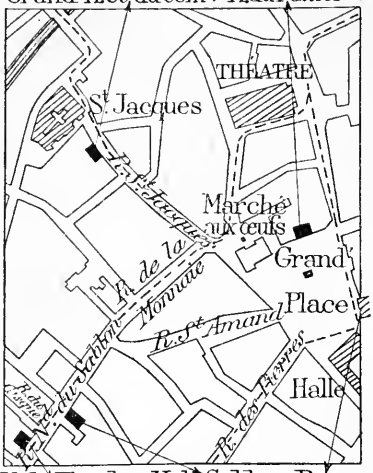

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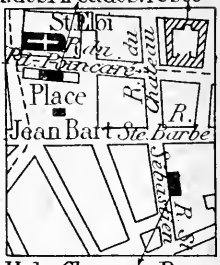

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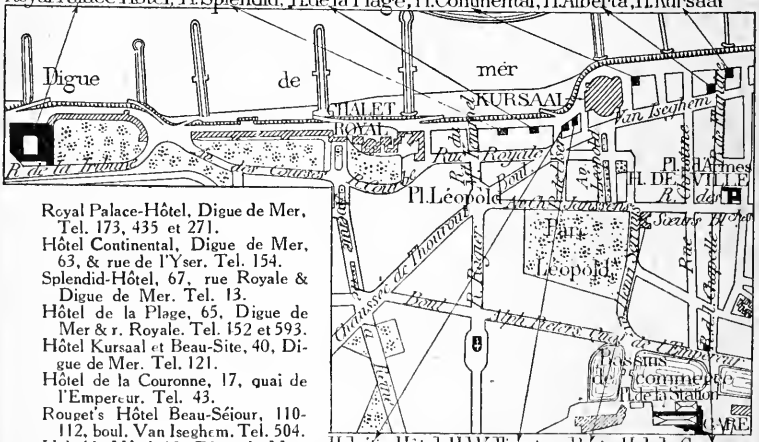

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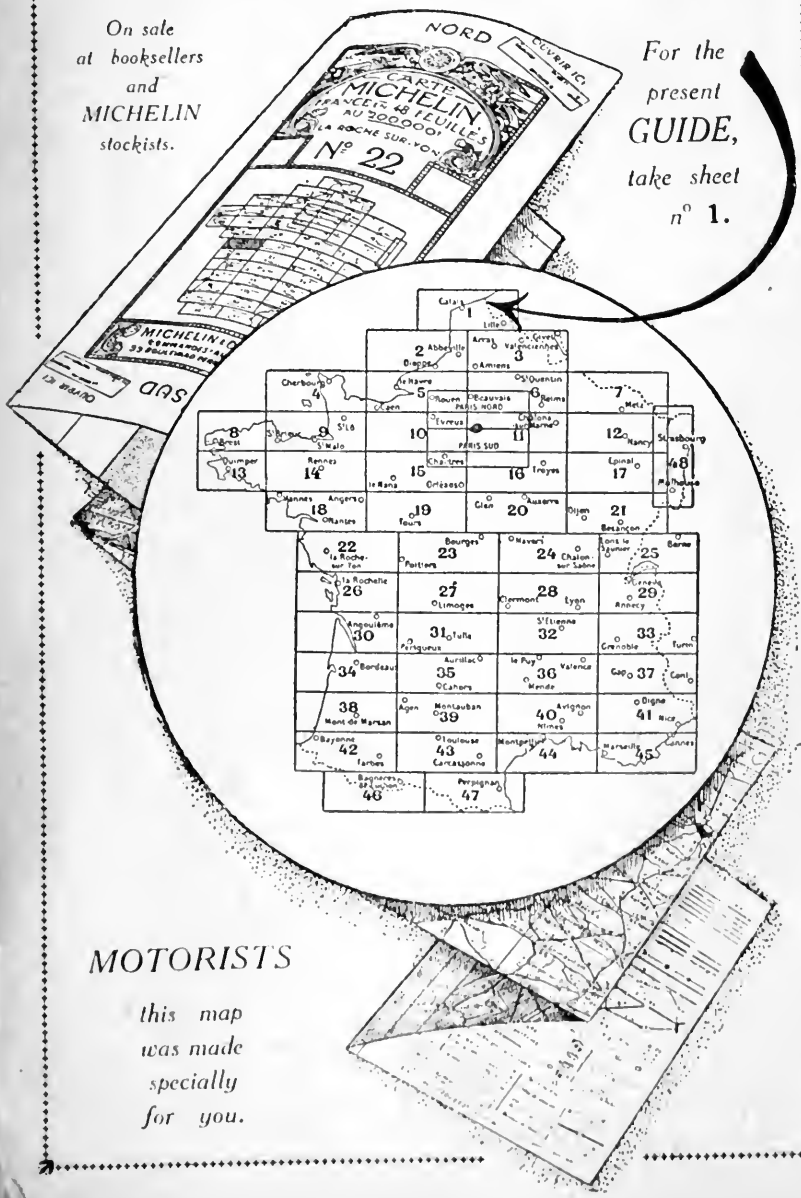

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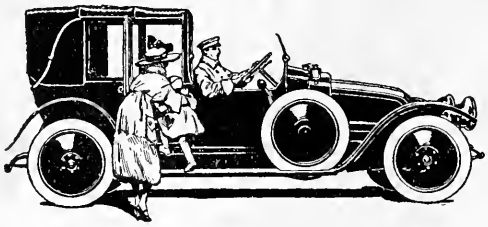

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THE

YSER

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BELGIAN COAST

Ce n'est qu'un bout de sol dans l'infini du monde...
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Mais qui renferme encore et sa reine et son roi,
Et l'amour condensé d'un peuple qui les aime...
Dixmude et ses remparts, Nieuport et ses canaux,
Et Furnes, avec sa tour pareille à un flambeau,
Vivent encore où sont défunts sous la mitraille.

ÉMILE VERHAEREN.

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THE BATTLE OF THE YSER.

The Race to the Sea.

In September 1914, after the Battle of the Marne and the German retreat, the centre and right of the French Armies quickly became fixed in front of the lines which the enemy had prepared in the rear, and were then fortifying. While the Allies' right, abutting on the Swiss frontier, was protected against any turning movement on the part of the enemy, their left (the 6th Army) was exposed.

King Albert and General Joffre.

The French 6th Army (General Maunoury) held the right bank of the Oise, north of Compiègne (*See map p.* 3). The Germans attacked it in force and attempted their favourite turning movement.

General Joffre parried the manœuvre, and while strengthening the 6th Army, formed a mobile corps on his left wing, strong enough to withstand the enemy's outflanking movement.

The 2nd Army, consisting of corps brought up from the east, was formed and placed under the command of General de Castelnau. Preceded and protected by divisions of cavalry, it gradually extended its front to the south of Arras.

The Germans carried out a similar movement, and the opposing armies, in their attempt to outflank each other, gradually prolonged their front northwards and approached the sea.

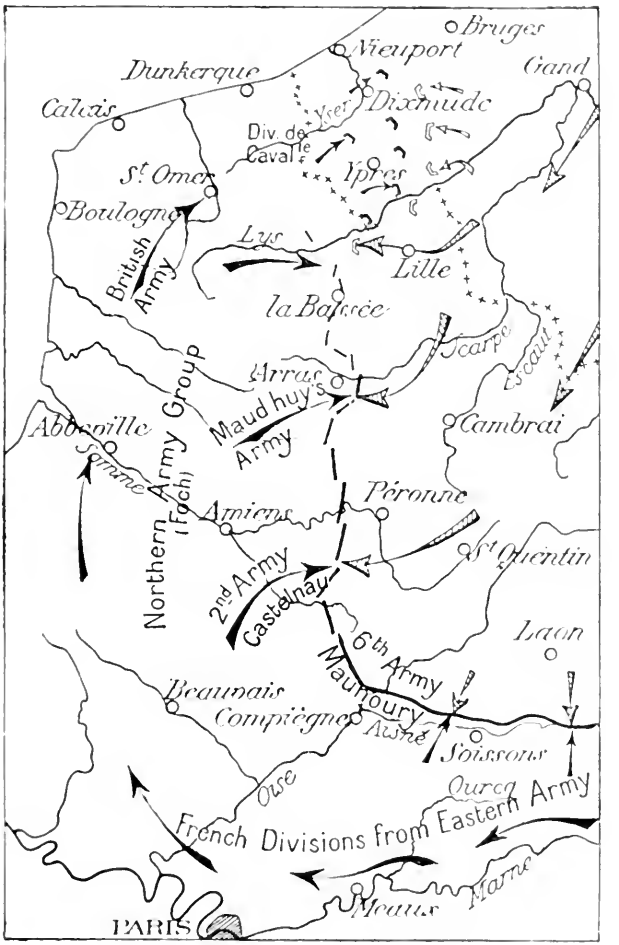
Against the German right wing, which steadily extended itself northwards, General de Maud'huy's Army deployed from the Somme to La Bassée, and gave battle in front of Arras.

The Germans attacked furiously and attempted both to crush the Allied front and continue their turning movement. Six Army Corps and two Cavalry Corps were thrown against General de Maud'huy's Army but the latter, reinforced, held its ground.

The command of the Northern Army Group was entrusted to General Foch.

The new chief promptly co-ordinated the dispositions, in view of a general action.

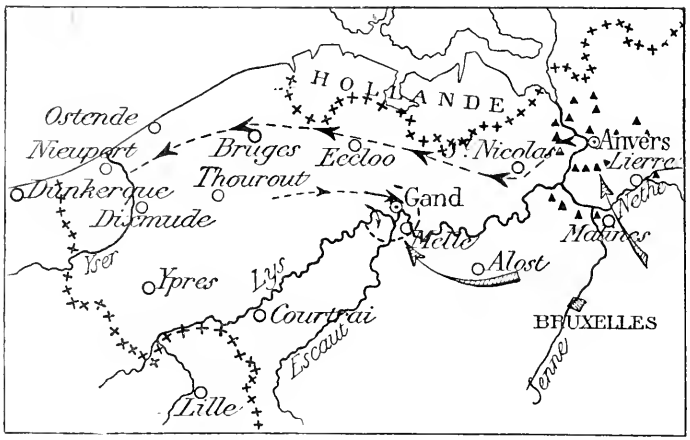
Queen Elizabeth in the Belgian Lines, on the Yser.



The Race to the Sea.

The northward movement of the armies became more pronounced. The cavalry divisions of the Corps commanded by Generals de Mitry and Conneau advanced towards the Plains of Flanders.

Simultaneously, the British Army was relieved on the Aisne, and drew nearer to their threatened coast bases, in the region of Saint-Omer. By October 19, they were completely installed in their new positions from La Bassée to Ypres, thus prolonging northwards the Army of General de Maudhuy. Between the British left and the North Sea Coast, there still remained a gap crossed from west to east by the roads leading to the Channel Ports. It was this gap which the Belgian Army, after its escape from Antwerp was destined to stop.



The fall of Antwerp and the Belgian retreat.

To capture Antwerp, the Germans adopted their usual tactics. Concentrating their powerful siege artillery—which had previously destroyed the forts of Liége, Namur and Maubeuge—in the sector south of the Nethe, they effected a breach in the outer line of forts, and having crossed the Nethe, with a loss of nearly 50,000 men, they attacked the inner line of forts, so as to be able to bombard and reduce the town.

After consultation with the French General Staff, it was decided to abandon the town, in order to save the Belgian Army.

Leaving a small number of troops in the forts, with orders to mask the evacuation of the town, the Belgian Army, after destroying everything likely to be of use to the enemy, crossed the Escaut by night, together with the British forces, which, as early as September, had been despatched to help in defending the city. These troops withdrew westward, via St. Nicolas and Ecloo. On October 9, Antwerp capitulated.

To protect the flank of the columns retreating towards Bruges, the French Marine Brigade, a detachment of Belgian Cavalry and volunteers, and the British 7th Division took up positions in front of the eastern outskirts of Ghent.

On October 4, Admiral Ronarc'h who had meanwhile concentrated his brigade in the entrenched camp of Paris, received orders to transfer his quarters to Dunkirk. Leaving St. Denis on the 7th, accompanied by his staff, and closely followed by the Brigade, he reached Dunkirk in the evening, proceeding thence to Antwerp. On the evening of the 8th, they were met at the railway station of Ghent by General Pau with orders to defend that town.

The Marines took up positions east of Ghent, and to the north and south of Melle. Belgian volunteers occupied the bend in the Escaut. These troops were supported by a group of Belgian artillery belonging to the 4th Mixed Brigade.

The Germans violently attacked in greatly superior numbers along the Alost-Ghent road, but for forty-eight hours the Marines carried out their mission of flank-guard. On receiving orders to retreat, the Franco-Belgian detachment, covered by units of the British 7th Division, re-crossed the Escaut and fell back towards the Yser, via Thourout, where the Belgian Army was arriving, closely followed by detachments of German cavalry.

CAVALRY ON THE BEACH AT MALO-LES-BAINS.
(Note the barbed-wire entanglements).

The Battlefield.

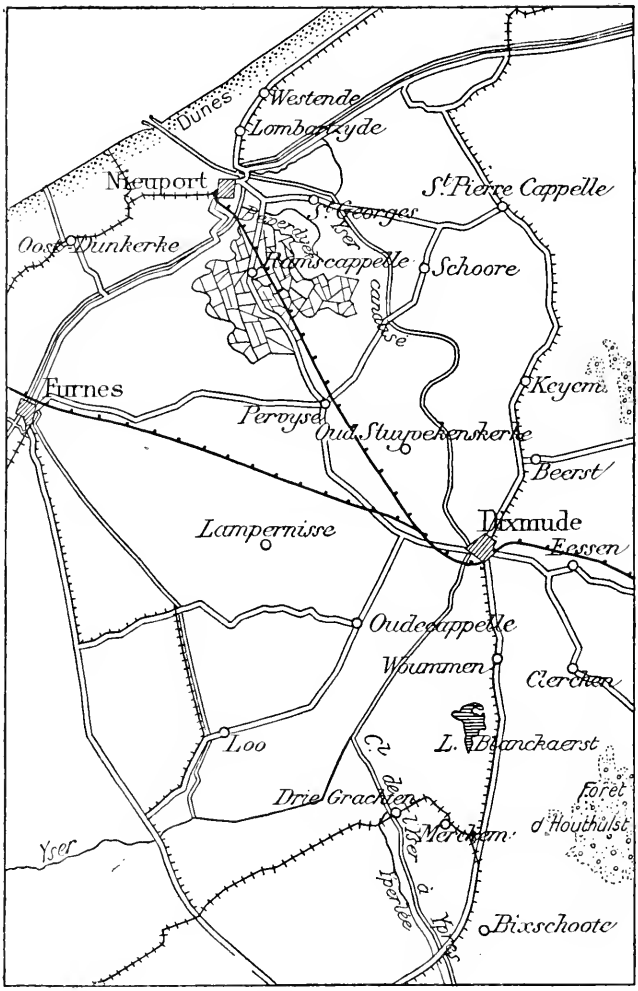
The last strip of unconquered Belgian territory, on which the German thrust was destined to be broken, forms part of Maritime Flanders (*See map, p. 6*).

This vast plain was formerly a sea-gulf, and as late as the 11th century, was often raided by the "drakkers" of the Scandinavian pirates. In the Middle-Ages, the gulf gradually filled up with sand. This vast *polder* is almost entirely below sea-level at high tide, and is each day invaded by the waves.

Water is everywhere: in the air, on the ground, under the ground.

It is the land of dampness, the kingdom of water. It rains three days out of four. The north-west winds, breaking off the tops of the stunted trees, making them bend as if with age, carry heavy clouds of cold rain formed in the open sea. As soon as the rain ceases to fall, thick white mists rise from the ground, giving a ghost-like appearance to men and things alike. (LT. GOFFIC'S, "Dixmude").

LINE OF DEFENCE NEAR NOORD-SCHOTE.



THE BATTLEFIELD.

Water, which oozes up out of the soil, giving a blister-like appearance to the soft clay covering, is found at a depth of less than three feet.

This water was carefully drained off, under the control of the Belgian State, by associations of farmers and land-owners ("gardes wateringues"). Countless ditches and canals ("watergands") skirting the willow hedges and intersecting the entire plain, carried away this surplus water.

All the canals and ditches communicate with numerous water-courses, e. g. the Yperlée, Kemmelbeck, Berteartaart, Vliet and many other nameless ones, which run between embankments into the Yser.

The road from Furnes to Yeres, near Westvleteren, in December 1915.
(See page 127).

The Yser, a small coastal river, having its source in French Flanders empties itself into the sea between two jetties. Its shallow bed, dredged along the greater part of its course, describes a wide semi-circle. At its mouth, at Nieuport, the Yser and the canals which likewise end there, are closed by a series of locks, which shut out the sea at high tide and prevent it from invading the plain through the streams and canals.

The few roads and the Nieuport-Dixmude railway run along embankments seven to ten feet high.

Formerly, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, tended by grey-coated shepherds, grazed in this plain. Immense fields of beet and turnips alternated with the meadows. Hedges, willows, clusters of bending poplars, and the roofs of the low farmsteads built on little hillocks, broke the monotony of the landscape. Here, where peace and prosperity reigned, the inundations and war have left a vast expanse of reeds, in which the roads, ruined farmhouses and a few broken trees stand out dismally.

The plain is bounded on the west by a line of wind-formed sand dunes planted with *oyats*. These dunes extend along the straight unbroken coast. To the east of Dixmude rises a series of heights, which, marking the beginning of the solid ground, are continued further east by the long unbroken crest of Clerken.

South of this crest stretches the Forest of Houthulst, now entirely devastated by shell-fire.

The spongy nature of the soil makes it impossible to excavate to any depth nor was there any high ground to mask the defence-works and batteries of artillery.

Two great embankments: that of the Yser, arc-shaped, and that of the Nieuport-Dixmude railway, connecting up to the two ends of the former, were the framework of the defence lines. However, the dominating element: water, provided the defenders with a supreme and irresistible arm.

The Opposing Forces.

The right wing of the German IVth Army, under the command of the Prince of Wurtemberg, marched via Bruges towards Dunkirk. This newly formed army was partly composed of young men belonging to the German aristocracy, volunteers and former students, worked up to frenzied patriotism by the German victories.

These admirably equipped troops were supported by at least 500 guns of all calibres, to which was soon added the heavy siege artillery that had just crushed the forts of Antwerp.

This mass of 160,000 men, drunk with the *furor teutonicus*, pursued its victorious march on the Channel ports, certain of crushing the small Belgian Army which had again escaped them at Antwerp, but which this time was to be annihilated.

Without losing a single gun during their stirring retreat, the Belgian Army reached the Yser line. In its death-grapple with the invader, it had been seriously reduced by more than two months of hard fighting.

Minus the greater part of its officers, and reduced to 43,000 rifles, 300 75's and 23 6in. howitzers, its reserves of munitions were barely sufficient to deliver another battle. There was no hope of new supplies, as the army was deprived of its arsenals.

The men, with their torn and muddy uniforms, seemed to have reached the limits of physical endurance, and to be incapable of further prolonged effort.

It was then that King Albert issued his stirring Order of the Day :

Soldiers,

For two months and more you have been fighting for the most just of causes : your homes and national independance.

You have held the enemy's armies, sustained three sieges, executed several sorties, and successfully carried out a long retreat through a narrow defile.

So far, you have been alone in this tremendous struggle. Now you are at the side of the valiant French and British Armies.

It is your duty to uphold the reputation of our arms with that spirit of tenacity and bravery of which you have given so many proofs. Our national honour is at stake.

Soldiers,

Look on the future with confidence, and fight with courage.

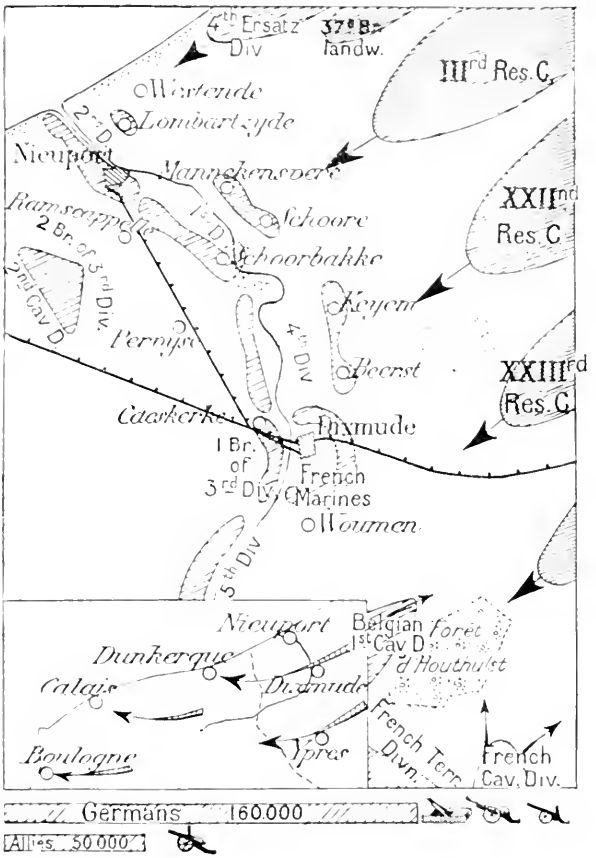
In whatever positions I place you, look ahead, and consider as a traitor to the Motherland whoever speaks of retreat, without the formal order having been given.

The time has come for us, with the aid of our powerful allies, to drive the enemy from our dear country, which they invaded in contempt of their word and of the sacred rights of a free people.

(*Signed*) ALBERT.

The supreme battle was about to begin. To hold the enemy's thrust against Dunkirk and Calais, the Belgian Army, supported by the Allies, once again resolutely placed itself across his path and barred the way.

From the sea to Zuydschoote (8 km. North of Ypres), the Belgian Army was at first obliged, with the help of only 6,000 French Marines, to hold a twenty-two mile front.



The unequal strength of the opposing forces seemed to warrant the enemy's expectations of crushing in the Allied front and breaking through to the Channel ports.

To defend this wide front, the whole Army was deployed. From the coast to Dixmude, the 2nd, 1st and 4th Divisions were echeloned, with units beyond the Yser holding the advance posts of Lombartzyde, Mannekensvere, Schoore, Keyem, Beerst and the two bridgeheads of Nieuport and Schoorbakke.

The bridgehead of Dixmude was held by the brigade of French Marines and a brigade of the Belgian 3rd Division. South of Dixmude, the 5th Division, in positions along the canalised portion of the Yperlee, occupied the region of Boesinghe in liaison, on the right, with divisions of Brittany Territorials.

The 1st Division of Belgian cavalry operated near the woods of Houthulst and Roulers, with French Cavalry divisions of General de Mitry's 2nd Corps, thus protecting the Belgian right.

There remained in reserve only two Brigades of the 3rd Division and 2nd Cavalry Division to the south-west of Nieuport.

THE BATTLE OF THE YSER.

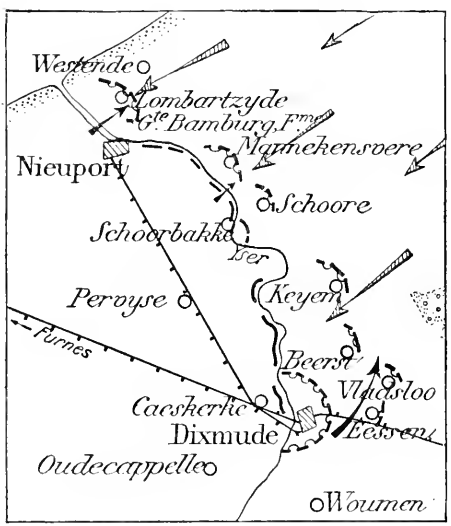
The fighting in the advance-positions.

The Franco-Belgian troops had hardly taken up their defensive positions when, on October 15, the guns began to roar in the direction of Dixmude.

On October 16 and 17, strong German reconnoitering parties, supported by field artillery, came into contact with the Allies' positions.

On the 18th, the enemy hurriedly attempted to crush the defenders, before reinforcements arrived. After a violent bombardment, a powerful attack was launched against the Mannekensvere-Schoore-Keyem-Beerst line, held by units of the Belgian 2nd, 1st and 4th Divisions.

Assault after assault was beaten off, but finally, after very heavy losses, fresh enemy masses carried Mannekensvere and Keyem, where they were held by the volley fire of the Belgian 75's. The defenders of Mannekensvere withdrew behind the Yser, while those of Keyem (units of the 1st Division) held their ground on the right bank of the river. The same night a spirited counter-attack gave them back their lost positions.



On the 19th, the attacks doubled in fury, the enemy's main effort being made against the two wings.

Nieuport and the advanced lines of Lombartzyde were violently bombarded. The Belgian 2nd Division stood firm, and beat off three German assaults.

On the right wing, the Germans, driven out of Keyem on the previous day, attacked this village again and also Beerst, further south. Under a terrific artillery fire, the defenders gave way.

However, the Belgian 5th Division and the French Marines debouching from Dixmude, captured Vladsloo and Beerst, in spite of considerable losses. With their left threatened, the enemy's efforts before Keyem weakened.

This brilliant counter-offensive was held by a new menace. Strong enemy columns were signalled to the south-east, debouching from Roulers and marching on Dixmude.

The 5th Division and the Marines fell back upon their original positions before Dixmude, their retreat bringing about the fall of Beerst and Keyem, whose defenders withdrew beyond the Yser.

On the 20th the Germans threw themselves against the advanced positions of Lombartzyde. The defenders were supported by the artillery of the British monitors, whose guns swept the coastline. To the south-east of Lombartzyde, Groote-Bamburg Farm was first lost, then reoccupied after a spirited counter-attack.

The Germans redoubled their costly efforts, and succeeded in getting a footing in Lombartzyde in the evening, but were unable to debouch.

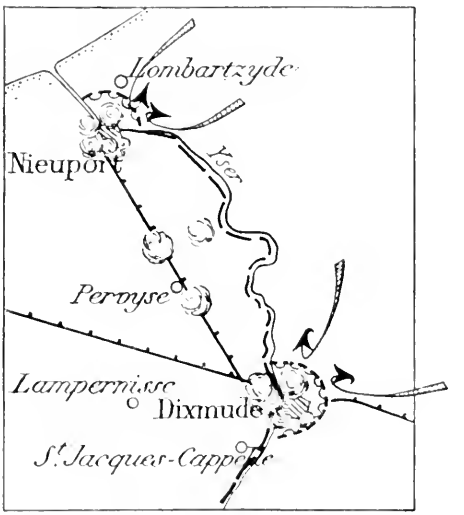
Only after five days of sanguinary fighting, were the enemy able to reach the Allies' main line of defences, formed by the Yser and the two bridgeheads of Nieuport and Dixmude.

The Battle on the Main Line of Defence.

The situation was none the less critical, and the battle waxed more and more furious. The Yser front was continuously deluged with shells. The Belgian batteries of 75's were unable to engage the German heavy guns. None of the villages could be held; Nieuport and Dixmude were in flames.

Supported by the Brigade of French Marines, the remains of the six Belgian Divisions still defended, single-handed, the twelve-mile front between St. Jacques-Cappelle and the sea. They were reinforced by the 6th Division near Lampernisse and Pervyse, thus strengthening the centre.

Against these depleted, exhausted and ill-revictualled troops, crushed beneath a continuous bombardment, the Germans brought up heavy reinforcements from Roulers.



The Attack on Dixmude and Nieuport.

Nieuport and Dixmude formed the bastions of the Allied defences, and their capture meant the falling of the Yser and the railway lines into the enemy's hands.

The brunt of the German attack was directed against Dixmude.

The French Marine Brigade and the mixed brigade of the Belgian 3rd I. D. under the command of Admiral Ronarc'h, were deployed in a semi-circle, about 500 yards from the outskirts of Dixmude, resting on the Yser. A second line was established along the canalised river.

On October 20, after an artillery preparation which lasted all the morning, the enemy made an unsuccessful attack on Dixmude. A fresh attack the same night was likewise repulsed. Meanwhile the town continued to burn.

On the 21st, at dawn, the bombardment redoubled in violence. The Germans attacked again, only to be mown down and repulsed.

In the afternoon, new enemy reinforcements delivered converging attacks of great violence, combining them with a furious thrust against the Schoorbakke Pass, situated half-way between Dixmude and Nieuport. At both points the German rush was broken.

In exasperation, the enemy threw fresh battalions into the battle. This time the blow was aimed directly at the town itself and the canal to the south, but the defence remained unshaken. Simultaneously, the Germans were threatening the entire front, and in particular, the bridgehead of Nieuport. This town suffered the same fate as Dixmude.

Still the Yser remained impassable. Both Dixmude and Nieuport held out, and the end of the day registered a fresh enemy check.

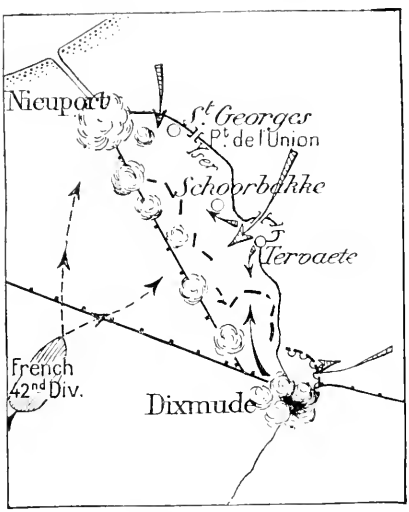
The Breach in the Centre of the Line.

After their failure before Nieuport and Dixmude, the enemy made a surprise attack against the centre, on the night of the 21st.

Between Nieuport and Dixmude, the easterly loop in the Yser at Tervaete facilitated flank, enfilade and rear firing, and was consequently a weak point in the defences.

Under cover of darkness, the enemy threw a bridge over the river, near Tervaete, and effected a crossing. The situation was critical, as if the front were pierced, the two centres of resistance, Nieuport and Dixmude, which until then had proved impregnable, would be taken in the rear.

In a supreme effort, units of the Belgian 1st Division counter-attacked furiously, and in spite of terrible losses, held the enemy. Reinforcements of Grenadiers and Carabiniers succeeded, in a further attack, in driving back the Germans across the river, and in reoccupying their positions. However, on the night of the 22nd, the enemy recaptured Tervaete, but the Belgians remained masters of the line between the two ends of the loop.



On the 23rd, the situation was still very critical. To fill the gaps in the fighting line and to "hold out to the last, in spite of all", in accordance with the orders of the Belgian General Headquarters, the last reserves were thrown into the battle.

Fortunately, the first French reinforcements, — the famous "Grossetti" (42nd) Division which General Foch, at Fère-Champenoise, in the centre of the battle-line at the Marne, had thrown against the flank of the German columns, thereby turning the scales at the psychological moment (*See the Michelin Guide: The Marshes of St. Gond — part 2 of The First Battle of the Marne*),—arrived at this juncture.

The first units to arrive relieved the exhausted Belgians before Nieuport. Meanwhile, the bombardment of the town and bridgehead had reached an incredible degree of violence.

In the centre, the situation was still more serious, the exhausted remnants of the Belgian 1st and 4th Divisions having reached the limit of endurance.

The enemy threw ten battalions with machine-guns and artillery into the loop at Tervaete. The bridgehead of Schoorbakke, attacked from the rear was captured.

On the 24th, the 83rd Brigade of Grossetti's Division was moved to the centre, to oppose the German thrust, at the time when the enemy had just carried the Union Bridge.

Encouraged by the advantage which they had just secured, the Germans renewed their efforts against Dixmude, where their left wing was being held in check.

They had already gained a footing on the left bank of the Yser, north of the town, and were threatening to outflank it from the west.

General Grossetti, commanding the 42nd Division.

A supreme effort was made against the bridgehead, no less than fifteen assaults being delivered on the 24th.

The fierceness and horror of the struggle were indescribable, the men grappling with one another in pitch darkness.

However, the German *furor* spent itself against the heroism of the Belgian Infantry and French Marines who, for more than a week, remained in the breach day and night.

Dixmude remained inviolate.

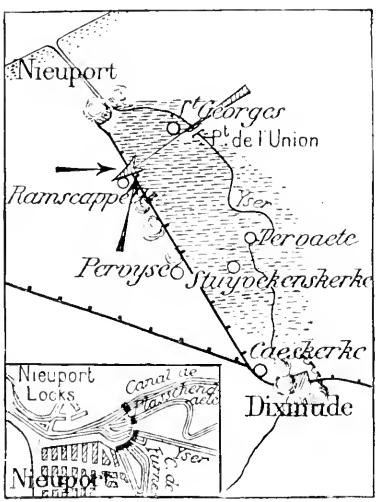
Pontoon Bridge Across the Yser.

The Inundations.

October 25 brought a pause in the German thrust, the enemy being visibly exhausted.

4But the Belgian Army also was exhausted ; many of their 75's were out of action through intensive firing ; scarcely a hundred shells per gun remained. Would they be able to hold out against another desperate assault?

The General Staff were considering a retreat on Dunkirk—which would have spelt disaster—when, informed of this by telephone, Foch hurried to the G. H. Q. where he arrived during a sitting of the War Council. In despair, the last dispositions for the retreat were being discussed, when in his simple unaffected way, Foch indicated a line of resistance and suggested inundating the country. "Inundation formerly saved Holland, and may well save Belgium. The men will hold out as best they can until the country is under water". (Commandant GRASSET's, "Foch").



To Staff-Captain Nuyten, assisted by Charles Louis Kogge, a "wateringue' guard of long experience and thoroughly acquainted with the working of the system of canals and locks, was entrusted the task of carrying out the plan.

The plain between Dixmude and Nieuport, being level with the sea, is protected at Nieuport against high water by a system of locks (sketch opposite). The canals and the Yser are dammed by embankments. The railway itself runs along a wide straight dike three to six feet in height.

Under bombardment, Belgian Engineers transformed this railway embankment into a water-tight dike, by stopping up all the openings through which the roads passed and then made wide breaches in the embankments of the drainage-canals, so as to allow the water to spread. The whole plain, between Nieuport and Dixmude was thus transformed into a vast basin closed on the Belgian side by the railway embankment, the latter being at the same time organized as a line of resistance.

Certain locks were secretly opened at high-tide, through which the sea gradually and imperceptibly invaded the basin.

While the sea was thus preparing to play its all important rôle, a fresh enemy attack forced the Franco-Belgian troops, on the 26th, to withdraw behind the railway. Orders were given to hold the latter at all cost.

Nieuport and Dixmude were still holding out. At Dixmude, two battalions of Senegalese relieved the most exhausted units of the defenders.

Behind the railway, units of the 42nd Division and a few battalions of Territorials supported the desperate efforts of the Belgians.

On the 26th and 27th, while the bombardment continued, the water began, little by little, to invade the trenches of the enemy, who, however, did not yet realise the position.

On the 28th, the water began to rise and, on the 29th, spread southwards.

An extremely violent bombardment on the 29th preceded the German

Fortified Embankment at Ramscappelle.

attacks of the 30th. against the railway. Thanks to their *minenwerfer*, the Germans gained a footing on the railway, and advanced as far as the villages of Ramscappelle and Pervyse. It was a critical moment, the main line of resistance being pierced.

The defenders pulled themselves together for a last effort, and after a violent concentration of artillery fire, counter-attacked.

On the 31st, at nightfall, the 42nd Division and Belgian units—remnants of battalions belonging to the 6th, 7th and 11th line regiments—charged furiously with the bayonet, to the sound of the bugles. The enemy was thrown into disorder, Ramscappelle recaptured, and the line re-established.

Imperceptibly but relentlessly the floods invaded the enemy's entrenchments, turning their retreat into a rout; their dead, wounded, heavy guns, arms and munitions were swallowed up in the huge swamp. The Battle of the Yser was over.

The Belgian Army, whose original mission was to hold out for forty-eight hours, had, with the help of 6,000 French Marines, fought first single-handed, and then with the support of a single French Division, continued the struggle until October 31, thus fighting for fifteen days without interruption.

The Allies' Supreme Resource. The Inundations.

BELGIAN PATROLS ON RAFTS.

Throughout these 360 hours of deadly strife, the entire Belgian forces had been in the thick of the battle, without respite. Crouching in their shallow half-formed trenches, or in the muddy ditches, with no shelters, ill-fed, and fully exposed to the inclement weather, the men nevertheless stood firm. In their tattered muddy uniforms, they scarcely looked human. The number of wounded during the last thirteen days was more than 9,000, that of the killed and missing over 11,000. The numbers of sick and exhausted ran into hundreds. The units were reduced to skeletons. The losses in officers were particularly heavy; in one regiment only six were left.

Thanks to the sacrifices stoically borne, the Belgian Army barred the way to Dunkirk and Calais; the Allies' left wing was not turned, and the enemy failed to reach the coast, from which they expected to threaten England in her very vitals.

For the Germans, the battle ended in total and bloody defeat. For Belgium the name "Yser", which their gallant king caused to be embroidered on the flags of his heroic regiments, is that of glorious victory. (Comm. Willy BRETON).

BUILDING A TEMPORARY BRIDGE.

Temporary Bridges across the inundated Plain.

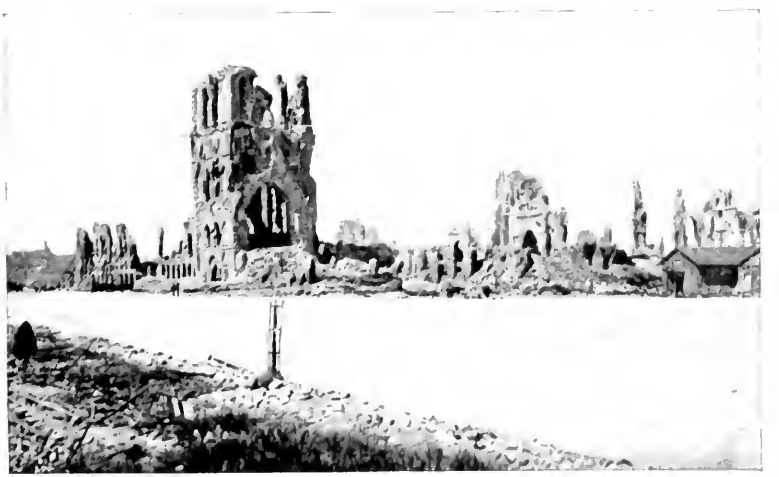
The fall of Dixmude.

The useless sacrifices on the Yser did not turn the Germans from their plans for taking Calais.

They now attempted to pierce the Allied front in the neighbouring sector, between Dixmude and Ypres, where the 87th Territorials, 12nd Division, (withdrawn from the Yser front), and the 9th Corps strengthened the defences.

On November 9, the bombardment grew more violent. On the 10th, from Dixmude to Bixschoote, along the whole of the canalised Yser and the Yser-Ypres canal, huge masses of enemy troops attacked in deep column formation.

After prolonged sanguinary street fighting, in which the French Marine Brigade again distinguished itself, Dixmude succumbed. The Germans were, however, unable to cross the Yser, and the respective front lines became fixed on the canal embankments. The battle spread eastwards, around the salient of Ypres (*See the Michelin Guide : "Ypres and the Battles of Ypres"*.)



The Cloth Hall at Ypres in 1919.
See the Michelin Guide : "Ypres, and the Battles of Ypres".

THE PERIOD OF STATIONARY WARFARE.

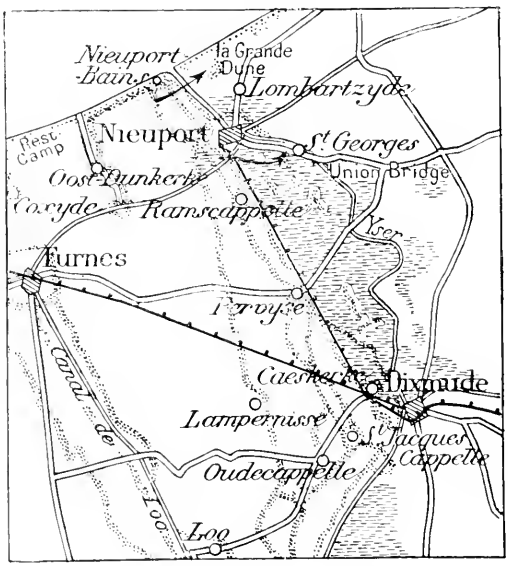
Photos, pp. 19-21.

The front-line became fixed in the partially inundated maritime plain of Flanders, in the oozy soil of which it was impossible to make any trenches. The defence-works, *boyaux*, and battery emplacements consequently took the form of superstructures, strengthened with piled-up sacks of earth (*photos*, pp. 19-21).

Being above the ground, these defences were easily marked down by the German gunners and levelled with each bombardment. Thus the fruit of weeks of hard work was wiped out again and again.

The ground, soaked with the frequent rains and churned up by the shells, quickly became a vast quagmire which swallowed up everything.

During the first winter, all the heavy materials used in the construction of the shelters, etc., as well as the food and munitions had to be carried by the men, — combatants, stretcher-bearers and fatigue parties alike wading knee-deep in the slime.



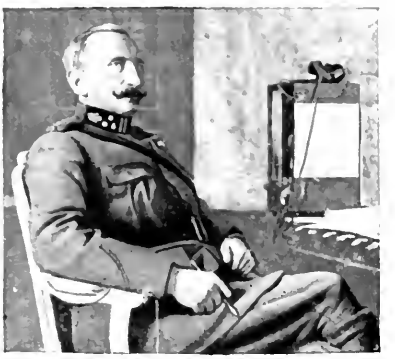
Little by little, the situation improved. Narrow-gauge railways were laid down to bring up supplies and munitions to the front lines. Stronger and more confortable shelters were built, together with casemates and concrete observation-posts right up to the front lines.

Nieuport-Ville was connected to Nieuport-Bains by two tunnels through the dunes, propped, brick-paved and lighted by electricity. Along the coast were deep lines of barbed wire. Concrete cupolas sheltered naval guns. Further south, in the dunes, stretched lines of carefully camouflaged huts, parks, stores and rest camps. In places, along the Yser, the inundations did not give absolute protection. Isolated farms built on elevated points and the roads along the dikes rose out of the water, like so many islets. These fiercely disputed points formed a line of small posts and advance guards in front of the main line of resistance, being connected with that along the railway embankment by long foot-bridges built on piles. The line of resistance followed the railway, then curved inwards to the left bank of the Yser, finally passing in front of the town.

This line was strengthened by two other lines which took in Ramscappelle, Pervyse, Lampernisse and St. Jacques-Cappelle. A second system of defence-works ran in front of and behind Loo Canal.

The sector of the inundated plain was held throughout by the Belgian Army. That of the dunes and Nieuport was held in 1914-1915 by the French Tirailleurs, Zouaves, and dismounted cavalry, grouped under the command of General de Mitry, and the brigade of Marines; in 1916, by a division of the 36th Corps (General Hély d'Oissel); in 1917, by regiments of the British 4th Army (General Rawlinson) which attacked along the coast in co-operation with British warships.

Finally, the Belgian Army, completely reformed and newly equipped, took over the entire sector of the Yser, and extended its lines as far as the outskirts of Ypres.



General Gillain.
Chief of the General Staff of the Belgian Army.

The enemy front was held by the German Marine Corps and Landwehr units.

For four years, the whole sector in front of the Yser Plain remained relatively quiet, with occasional daring raids or short bombardments.

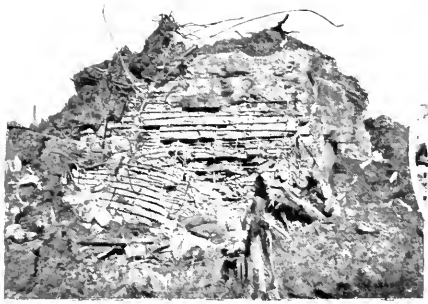
Before Dixmude and Nieuport, the operations were more active. The "Boyau de la Mort", in front of Dixmude, cost the Belgians some losses, the trench, which ran alongside the Yser, being enfiladed. The enemy's rifle fire came mostly from the Flour Mill (*photo, p. 124*), a large concrete building on the banks of the Yser, which it was difficult to destroy with the heavy artillery, on account of its proximity to the Belgian lines (about thirty yards away).

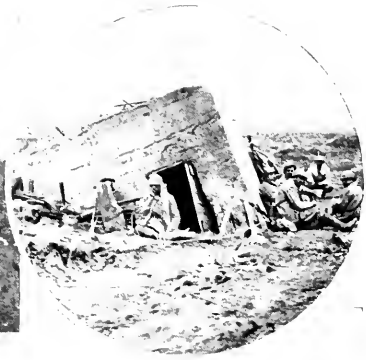
The liveliest part of the sector was that in front of Nieuport.

In 1914-1915, the troops under General de Mitry, and later the French Marines, succeeded in clearing the town, by capturing the great dune north of St. Georges and various redoubts on the east.

In 1917, the Germans attacked units of the British 4th Army, which was then taking up its positions, and recaptured the dunes as far as the Yser Channel.

Line of Defence between Nieuport and Lombartzyde (*held by the Territorials*).





At top of page: Two German Block-houses wrecked by shell-fire. *Underneath:* Line of Defence before Lombartzyde. *On the left (inset):* Belgian trench along the Yser, with splinter-proof shelters. *On the right (upper):* Advance boyau on the coast, near the Grande Dune. *On the right (lower):* German Temporary Bridge partly captured during a raid, with chevaux-de-frise separating the Allied and enemy lines.

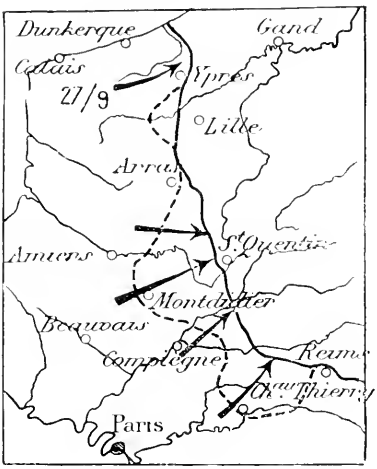
At top of page: Donkeys bringing up supplies. — Machine gun Dog Teams.

In the middle: Building road on piles. — Making a log road.

At bottom of page: Isolated Post surrounded by water, and raft used for communicating same. — Front line Post before the inundated plain.

THE VICTORY OFFENSIVE.

In 1918, after the fiasco of the enemy's Spring offensives, the initiative passed into the hands of the Allies. The latter, victorious on the Marne, Vesle, Aisne and before Compiègne, continued to press the enemy without respite. The battle spread northwards. On September 28, the "Liberty" Offensive in Flanders began. The group of armies operating in Flanders under the command of King Albert with General Degoutte as Major-General, comprised the valiant Belgian Army, the British 2nd Army, and the French 6th Army.



THE GENERAL SITUATION, WHEN THE OFFENSIVE IN FLANDERS WAS LAUNCHED.

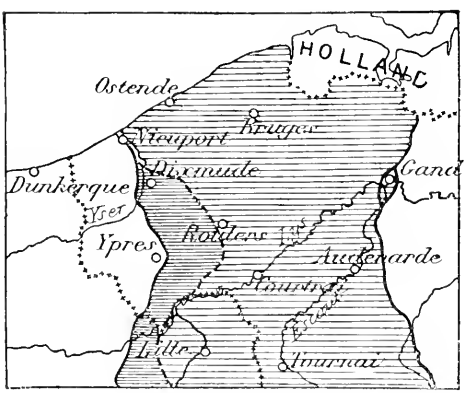
On the 28th the first two enemy positions, north and east of the Ypres Salient, were captured. On the 29th, the Belgian 4th Division following up this success and pivoting east of Dixmude, captured Eessen to the north and occupied the banks of the Handzaeme Canal (*See p. 120*). Dixmude, outflanked on the north, fell.

All the heights of Flanders were now in the Allies' hands. In danger of being cut off, the Germans began to prepare their withdrawal from the Belgian Coast on September 28.

After an interruption of several days, owing to bad weather, the offensive was continued on October 14.

On October 15, Belgian divisions holding the inundated front, from Dixmude to Nieuport, crossed the Yser in pursuit of the enemy, who hurriedly retreated to the north-east.

On October 17, the Belgian infantry reached Ostend, while their cavalry, before the gates of Bruges, heard the belfry chimes joyfully announce the precipitate departure of the last of the enemy troops. The Allies' advance had been so rapid that the Germans had not time to set fire to the city. On the coast, the port of Zeebrugge, together with huge quantities of stores, fell into the hands of the Belgians.



THE TWO STAGES IN THE FLANDERS OFFENSIVE.

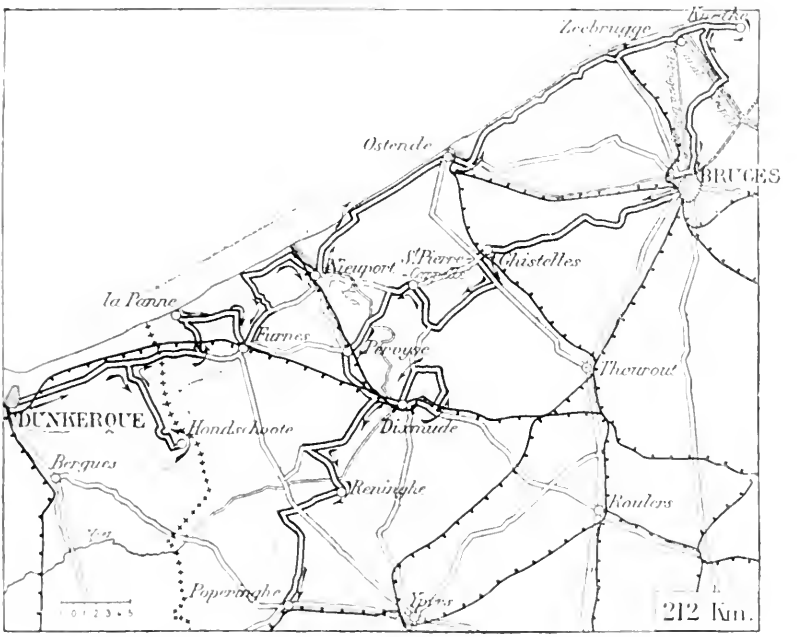
The whole of the maritime Plain of Flanders was thus liberated. The exhausted, demoralised enemy were in full retreat.

On November 11, beyond Ghent, the Armistice saved them from the utter rout into which their defeat was fast degenerating.

A Visit to the Battlefield of the YSER

AND

THE BELGIAN COAST.



The Itinerary starts from Dunkirk and is divided into four days.

First day :

Dunkirk, Nieuport, Ostend (*pp. 24-66*).

Second day :

Ostend, Zeebrugge, Bruges (*pp. 67-85*).

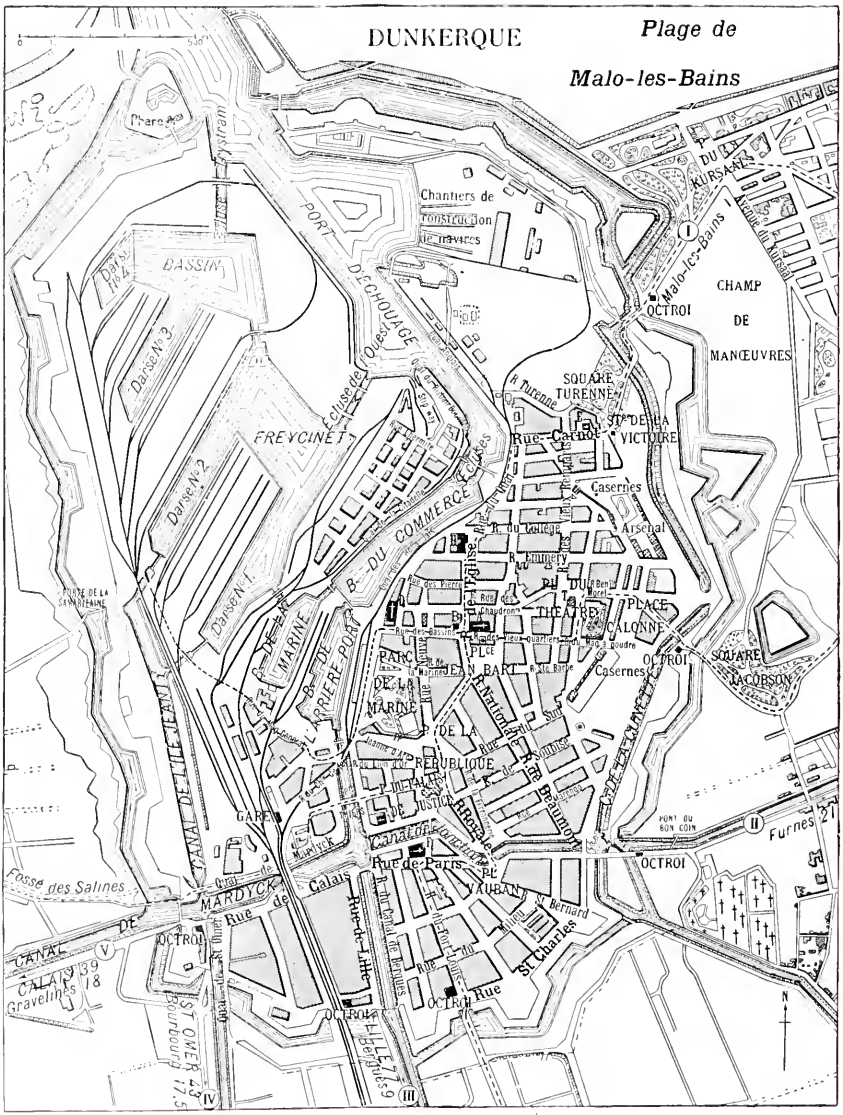
Third day

Bruges (*pp. 86-111*).

Fourth day :

Bruges, Dixmude, Poperinghe (*pp. 112-127*).

Poperinghe is the nearest touring centre to Ypres. For the itineraries between Ypres and Lille, see the Michelin Guide : "**Ypres, and the Battles of Ypres**".



PLAN OF DUNKIRK.

A. Church of St-Eloi.
B. Belfry.
D. Church of John-the-Baptist.
E. Chapel of Notre-Dame des Dunes.
F. Church of St-Martin.
H. Hotel-de-Ville.
T. Theatre.

DUNKIRK.

Origin and Chief Historical Events.

The first mention in history of Dunkirk goes back to the 10th century. As early as the 12th century, it proved to be an "Apple of Discord" between the kings of France and the counts of Flanders. Few towns have had such a stirring history. Ten times besieged, it was taken by Conde in 1646. Recaptured at a later period by the Spaniards, it was given back to the French by Turenne, after the battle of the Dunes (1658). Louis XIV ceded it to his ally Cromwell, but redeemed it from Charles II of England in 1662.

The Dunkirkian corsairs —most famous among whom was Jean-Bart (1651-1702)— inflicted such losses on the English, that the Treaties of Utrecht and Paris (1713 and 1763) provided for the destruction of the port. In 1793, the town was besieged for the last time. By holding out for three weeks against 40,000 men under the Duke of York, it enabled General Houchard to reach Hondschoote, where the English were decisively defeated. This feat of arms was commemorated by the device : "*Dunkirk deserved well of the country*, 1793", which was inscribed on the city's coat-of arms.

During the Great War of 1914-1918, Dunkirk was an extremely important revictualling centre for the Allied troops. It also played a great part in helping to keep the mastery of the North Sea, and as such, was constantly bombarded by the enemy. It was to reach Dunkirk and Calais, that the Germans made their furious thrusts at Ypres and on the Yser. Of all the towns not directly in the front line, Dunkirk was probably the one which suffered most. It was bombarded once by Zeppelins, seventy-seven times by aeroplanes and four times by warships. Lastly, a 15 in. naval gun posted twenty-three miles away, shelled the town at regular intervals from April 1915 onwards. In all, more than eight thousand shells fell in the town, killing five hundred people and wounding over one thousand others. In spite of all, the town maintained considerable activity throughout the war.

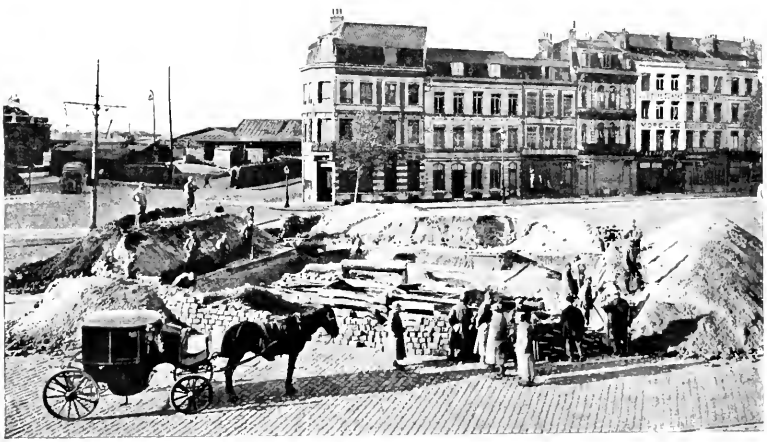
The damaged and destroyed buildings were rapidly cleared away or repaired. Under bombardment, the shipbuilding yards turned out three vessels of

Quai de la Citadelle struck by a 15in. shell.

19,000 tons. Munitions of war were also manufactured in very large quantities. The following *citation* in the Army Order of October 17, 1917, which is to be incorporated in the city's coat-of-arms, was well deserved :

Subjected for three years to violent and frequent bombardments, Dunkirk was able, thanks to the admirable coolness and courage of her inhabitants, to maintain and develop its economic life in the interests of National Defence, thereby rendering invaluable service to the Army and Country. This heroic city is an example to the whole nation.

The Croix de la Légion d'Honneur was conferred on Dunkirk by Président Poincaré on August 11, 1919.



Building a bomb-proof shelter in front of the Station.

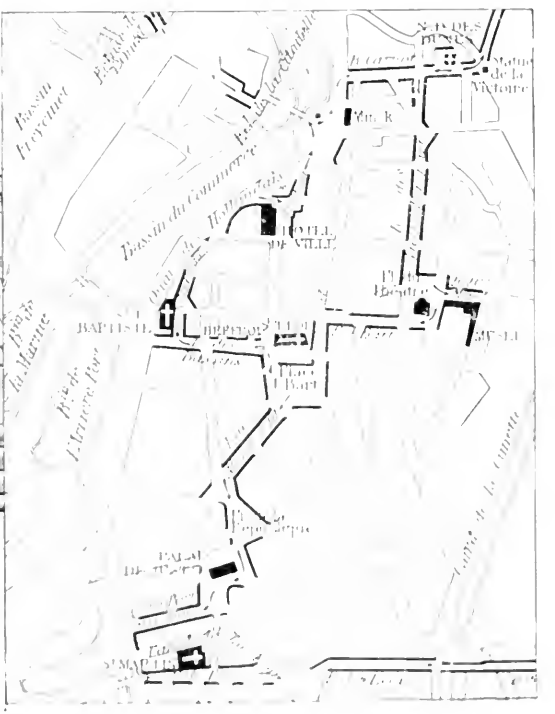
Protecting the mechanism of the Locks from the Shells.

A Visit to Dunkirk.

Follow the arrows along the streets indicated by thick lines in the plan below.

Starting-point: **Place Jean-Bart** *in the middle of which is* a statue of Jean-Bart (1841) *(photo below).*

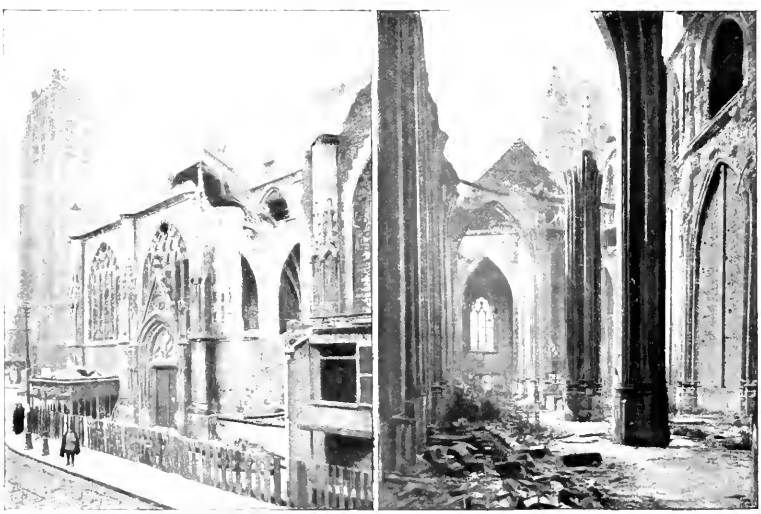
Statue of Jean Bart.



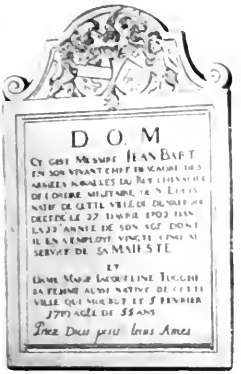
Church of St. Eloi.

Take Rue de l'Eglise (*Rue Clemenceau*) *in which, immediately to the right, stands* the **Church of St. Éloi** with the **Belfry** opposite.

Built in the 16th century, St. Éloi Church contains a nave flanked by four side-aisles. The first bays, nearest the façade, having being pulled down, the belfry—an old watch-tower, which formerly abutted on the church—is now separated from it by the width of the street. The façade was rebuilt in 1890. In the interior are a fine XVIIIth century pulpit, some old paintings, and the tomb of Jean-Bart (*left aisle*) (*photo, p. 29*). The right aisle was torn open by the shells (*photo below*).



The Belfry, and ruined side aisle of St. Eloi Church.
Exterior. *Interior.*



The **Belfry,** a large square tower of brick, 190 feet high, was built in 1440. It contains a peal of bells. From the top, there is a very fine view.

The entrance is on the rear side of the tower.

Take Rue des Bassins, opposite the church, and turn to the right along Rue de La Panne, in which stands the CHURCH OF JOHN-THE-BAPTIST. This 18th century church contains some fine paintings. On the altar: *The Consecration of Dunkirk to the Virgin* (Elias); in the chancel, *The Death of Mary the Egyptian* (G. de Crayer); *The Holy Family* (Erasme Quellin); *The Holy Family* (Le Guide); *Jesus crowned with thorns* (Van Dyck). In the nave: *Paintings by Elias and de Janssens.* On the northern side of the church are the cloister and modern chapel of St. Philomene (shrine).

CHURCH OF JOHN-THE-BAPTIST.

Keep along Rue de la Panne; follow Quai des Hollandais, and turn to the right into Place d'Armes, in which stands the **Hôtel-de-Ville.**

The Hôtel-de-Ville was rebuilt in 1896-1901 of brick and stone (architect, L. Cordonnier). On the first floor are statues of illustrious Dunkirkians. Just below the roof there is an equestrian statue of Louis XIV. The tower is 250 feet high.

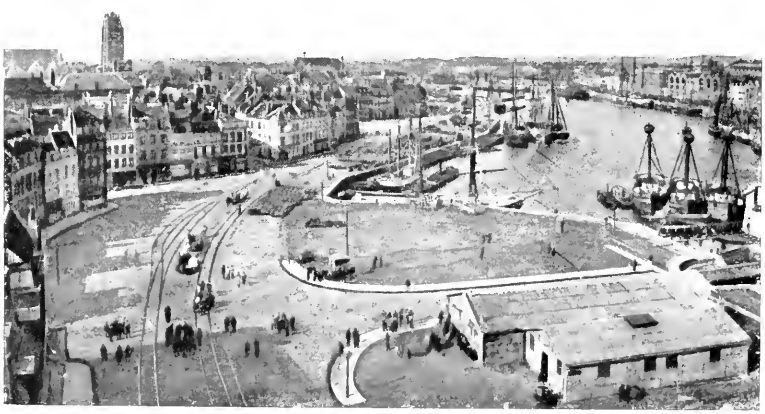
QUAI DES HOLLANDAIS AND THE HOTEL DE VILLE.

Fishing-boat Dock. *In the background :* Hotel-de-ville and Belfry.

Take Rue du Quai, on the left, to the large square in front of the port, in which is the **Fish-Market (Mynk).** (*See sketch-map, p. 27*).

The port of Dunkirk.

One of the busiest fishing and coast-trading ports in France, Dunkirk is especially important by reason of its import trade. The raw materials required for the industries of Northern France are discharged there, whilst iron ore, oil and metals are exported. Since the beginning of the 19th century Dunkirk has steadily grown and the fortifications have twice had to be extended (1861-1906). The ruined industries of the North and the competition of the Rhine may retard this growth, but the port's natural situation will always ensure a fine future for it. In 1920, the docks covered an area of about 100 acres, whilst the total length of the wharves was about six miles.



General View of Dunkirk and the Docks.

Trystram Lock.

The port consists of a series of parallel docks, i. e., the extended rear port, the naval dock, the commerce dock, and wet-docks 1, 2, 3, 4, connected by the Freycinet dock. All these docks lie at right-angles to the great water-line formed by the grounding port and outer harbour, into which the channel debouches. Dunkirk also possesses extensive naval stocks provided with five large dry docks and a launching dock fifteen acres in extent (*See plan, p. 24*).

To visit the port, cross the bridges over Citadelle Lock and Western Lock; turn to the right along the quay, passing behind the wet-docks and skirting the graving-docks. On the right, on the other side of the grounding port, the naval dock-yards come into view. *Cross the bridge of Trystram Lock, which connects up Freycinet Dock with the channel, then turn immediately to the right and cross the small bridge opposite the lighthouse, leaving the latter on the left. Skirt the channel (about 230 yards long and 27 yards wide), as far as the two booms which terminate it.* There are several observation-posts and armoured concrete machine-gun shelters near the lighthouse.

The Outer Port of Dunkirk and the Channel

Return to the square in front of the port and follow the quay, on the left, as far as Rue Carnot on the right, which leads to the Chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Dunes. (*See itinerary, p. 27*).

This chapel is a favourite pilgrimage. The fisherwomen of Dunkirk made it the headquarters of their Sisterhood.

A little further on stands the **Statue of Victory** commemorating the siege of 1793. This monument is the work of Ed. Lormier (1893) and was erected on the site of the old ramparts.

Statue of Victory.

Follow the tram-lines to **Malo-les-Bains,** Dunkirk's beach.

Return to Rue Carnot and take Rue des Vieux-Remparts on the left to Place du Théatre, where turn to the left into Rue Benjamin-Morel, in which stands **The Museum** (*photo below*).

The Museum.

Take Rue Jean-Bart on the right, behind the theatre, then Rue Thévenet on the left, leading back to Place Jean-Bart. Cross the latter diagonally to Rue Alexandre III (*see Itinerary, p. 27*) *which leads to Place de la République.* Here stands the monument erected to the memory of the Dunkirkians who fell fighting for their country. (*L. Morice, 1906*).

Cross Place de la République, then Place du Palais-de-Justice, turn to the right along Quai du Port au Bois then cross the bridge on the left (*see Itinerary, p. 27*). *Take Rue de Paris on the left, in which stands* **St. Martin's Church.** This modern church, primitive Gothic in style, is flanked by two towers with spires.

The tourist leaves Dunkirk by Rue de Paris and Rue des 4-Ecluses, which prolongs it, to follow the itinerary of the first day.

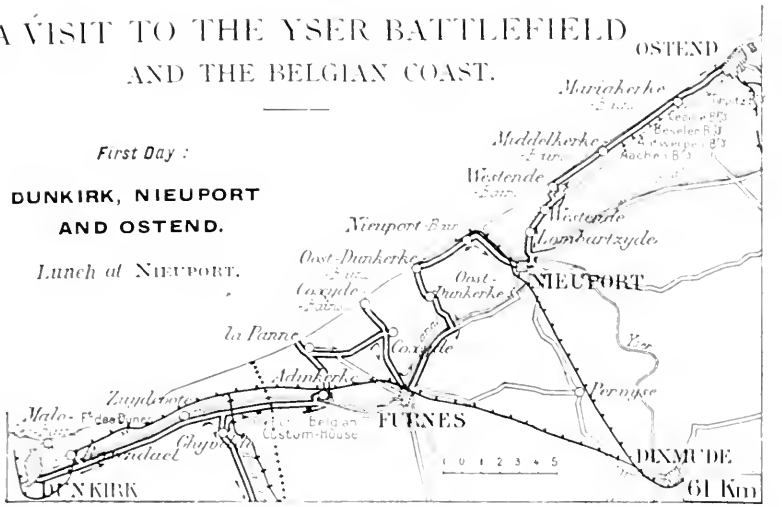
Church of St. Martin and Rue de Paris.

A VISIT TO THE YSER BATTLEFIELD
AND THE BELGIAN COAST.

First Day :

DUNKIRK, NIEUPORT AND OSTEND.

Lunch at NIEUPORT.

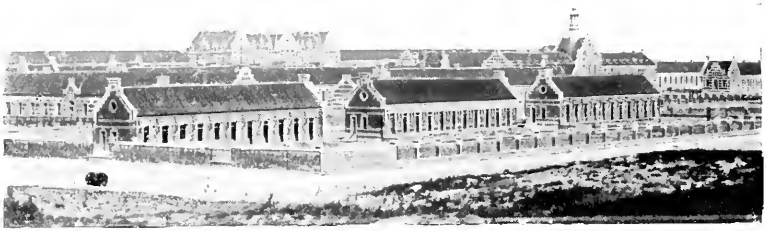


Leave **Dunkirk** *by Rue de Paris, continued by Rue des 4-Ecluses, cross the Canal de la Cunette (see lower half of itinerary, p. 27, and text, p. 32), and take the Furnes road (D. 15) which follows the right bank of the Dunkirk-Furnes Canal.*

At **Rosendael** *(2 1/2 kms. on the other side of the canal) stood* the Civilian Hospital of Dunkirk, which was shelled several times during the war.

On the left, 3 kms. further on, is **Dunes Fort.**

HOSPITAL AT ROSENDAEL BOMBED BY A GERMAN AEROPLANE.
The baby in the medallion had one of its hands cut off by a splinter.

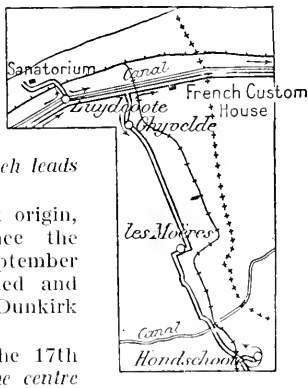


Sanatorium at Zuydcoote. *(Cliché LL.)*

At the first cross-roads (9 kms. from Dunkirk), the tourist may take the left-hand road to Zuydcoote, *to see the great* Sanatorium for children, *on the coast, founded by M. Van Covenberghe.* Converted into a military hospital, it rendered invaluable service during the War (*photo above*).

To visit, go through **Zuydcoote,** *turn to the left, beyond the level-crossing, then to the right 200 yards further on.*

Return to D. 15, and follow same on the left. At the first cross-roads (2 kms.) take G. C. 4 on the right to Hondschoote (*12 kms.*).



Pass through Ghyvelde, *then at* Les Moeres *turn to the right, and on leaving, to the left.*

Beyond the level-crossing, **Hondschoote** *is reached. Take Rue de la Prévôté on the left, which leads to the Grand'Place.*

Hondschoote is a small town of ancient origin, whose population has greatly decreased since the 16th century. It was there that, on September 8, 1793 the French, under Houchard, defeated and drove back the English who were besieging Dunkirk (*engraving below*).

On the right of the Square (photos, p. 35) is the 17th century Renaissance Hôtel-de-Ville, *while in the centre stands* the early 16th century church, in which are a fine pulpit and organ loft (1755). *Near by is* a monument (Darcq) commemorating the victory of 1793.

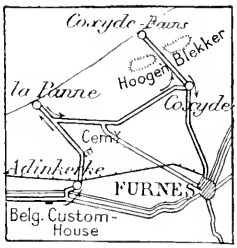
The Victory at Hondschoote. (21 Fructidor, Year 1.)

Hondschoote Church.
Infront : 9in. Mortars.
In the medallion :
The Pulpit.

Hondschoote. The Hotel-de-Ville.

VERHAEREN'S TOMB AT ADINKERKE (1918).

Return to D. 15 and follow same to the right; cross the railway (l.c.); 2 kms. further on is the French Custom-House. The Belgian Custom-House is 3 kms. further on, near ADINKERQUE.



Cross the canal and enter **Adinkerke.**

Take the street on the left which skirts the churchyard. Behind the church is a large Franco-Belgian cemetery, containing the grave of the Belgian poet Verhaeren. After the Armistice, his remains were transferred to his native town.

Keep straight on along the La Panne road; 600 yards beyond the Dunkirk-Furnes railway, a small foot-path on the right leads to a military cemetery. **La Panne** *is next reached (3 kms.).* This small seaside resort was one of the least modern places on the coast. *Follow Avenue de la Mer as far as the dike, to the left of which are* three villas which were occupied during the war by King Albert and his staff.

RECEPTION OF PRESIDENT POINCARÉ BY KING ALBERT AT THE ROYAL VILLA, LA PANNE, JANUARY 22, 1917.

Return along Avenue de la Mer to the first street on the left, in which is the Hôpital de l'Océan. 0 *km.* 800 *further on, on the left, take the street which runs alongside the local railway. At the first fork, take the left-hand road to* **Coxyde** (5 *kms. from La Panne*). Wire entanglements and shelters in the Dunes may be seen all along the road. There is a military cemetery on the left, 0 *km.* 500 *before reaching Coxyde.*

Villa of the French Mission at La Panne *(October* 1916*).*

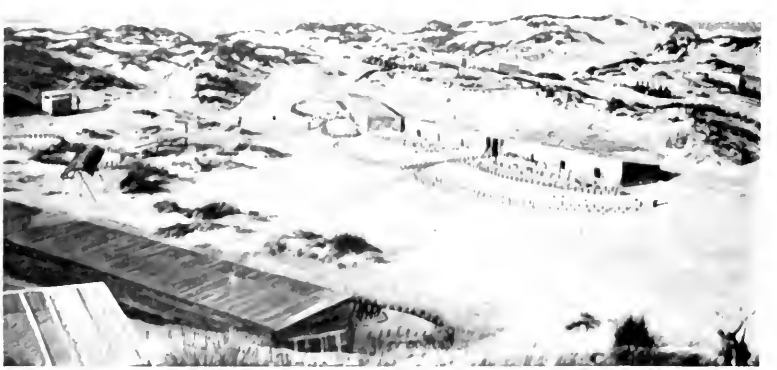
Coxyde, like most of the towns on the coast, is divided into the town proper, situated behind the Dunes, and the Baths on the coast.

Turn to the left on entering the village. The road crosses the Dunes, which are highest at Hoogen-Blekker (105 feet). Vestiges of trenches, wire entanglements, shelters and gun emplacements are to be seen on every hand.

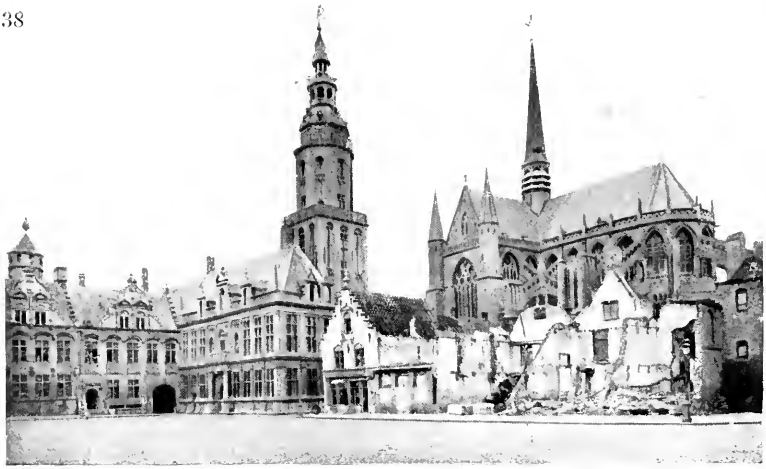
In the Dunes, on the right, is an emplacement for naval guns (*Photo opposite*). Between this position and the sea is the camp known as that of Adjutant Lefèvre (*Photo below*).

The tourist may go as far as **Coxyde-Bains** (2 *kms.*). *Return to and cross through Coxyde, keeping straight on to* **Furnes** (3 $^{1}/_{2}$ *kms.*).

Concrete Gun Shelter, 100 *yards east of Coxyde-Bains.*



The Camp of Adjutant Lefèvre at Coxyde-Bains.



Hôtel-de-Ville, Palais-de-Justice, Belfry, Church of St-Walburge.
THE GRAND'PLACE, FURNES.

FURNES

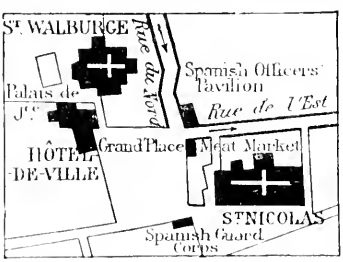
Furnes (Veurne) is a small town of about 6,000 inhabitants. Of ancient origin, it was the chief town of the "Veurne Ambacht" castellany, in the Middle-Ages. By the Treaty of 1715, the Dutch were empowered to place a garrison there, as a barrier against France.

During the War, Furnes became, after Antwerp and Ostend, the General Head-Quarters of the Belgian Army for a few months (1914-1915), the same being subsequently transferred to La Panne. More fortunate than Dixmude and Nieuport, practically all its public buildings and monuments escaped uninjured, although parts of the town were seriously damaged by the bombardments.

On January 28, 1920, Président Poincaré, in the presence of King Albert, fastened the French *Croix de Guerre* to the town's arms, with the following *citation* :

"*During four trying years, in spite of incessant bombardments by aeroplanes and long-range guns, always set a fine example of unshakeable faith in the final Victory*".

Tourists arrive by Rue du Nord which opens out into the Grand'Place, the ancient ornamental paving of which is very fine. Around the square are grouped the principal buildings.



FURNES. THE GRAND'PLACE.

The **Hôtel-de-Ville** *is on the right.*

Renaissance in style, it was erected in 1596-1612, from the plans of Lieven Lukas. The façade has two gables, one of which was preceded by a graceful *loggia* which was removed during the war (*Photo p.* 40). The high belfry dates from 1628. *On the ground-floor see:* the Council Chamber, with Spanish leather hangings : the College Chamber, with Utrecht velvet hangings ; the Marriage Hall, with a still-

Spanish Officers' Pavilion. *Rue de l'Est.* *Meat Market.* *St-Nicolas' Tower.*
THE GRAND'PLACE, FURNES.

life painting attributed to Snyders (*on the mantelpiece*). The Great Hall on the first floor, with Spanish leather hangings, contains several royal portraits.

Near by, is the **Palais de Justice,** formerly the ancient castellany, built in 1612-1628 from the plans of Sylvain Boulin. Behind the Palais-de-Justice is the **Belfry.** The interior, restored in 1894, comprises several finely decorated rooms: the Waiting-Hall, the Justice Chamber (17th century), and the old Inquisition Chamber (*on the first floor*). The Chapel contains some fine vaulting and a carved wooden gallery. A number of bronze tablets recording judgments are kept there.

A narrow street between the Palais-de-Justice and a block of old houses with ruined gables, of which only mutilated fragments of the facades remain, leads to the **Church of St. Walburge.**

Of very ancient origin, its reconstruction was begun in the 11th century. The choir was completed in the 15th century. The nave is 14th century. The church contains magnificent stalls (early 17th century), wood-work, doors, and pulpit, also a *Descent from the Cross* attributed to Pourbus. In the sacristy there is a 15th century shrine. The stalls, organ and altars were removed to a place of safety during the war. Much of the stained-glass was destroyed.

At the corner of the Grand'Place and the Rue de l'Est stands the **Pavilion of the Spanish Officiers,** built by the Spaniards in the 16th century as a barracks. Restored at

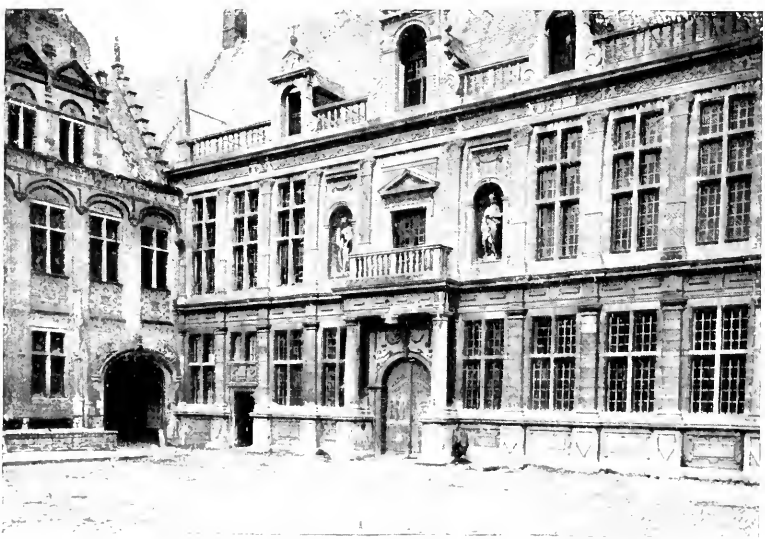
St. Nicolas' Tower. *Spanish Guard House*
THE GRAND PLACE, FURNES.

FURNES. THE LOGGIA OF THE HOTEL-DE-VILLE.
(Sept. 4, 1917.)

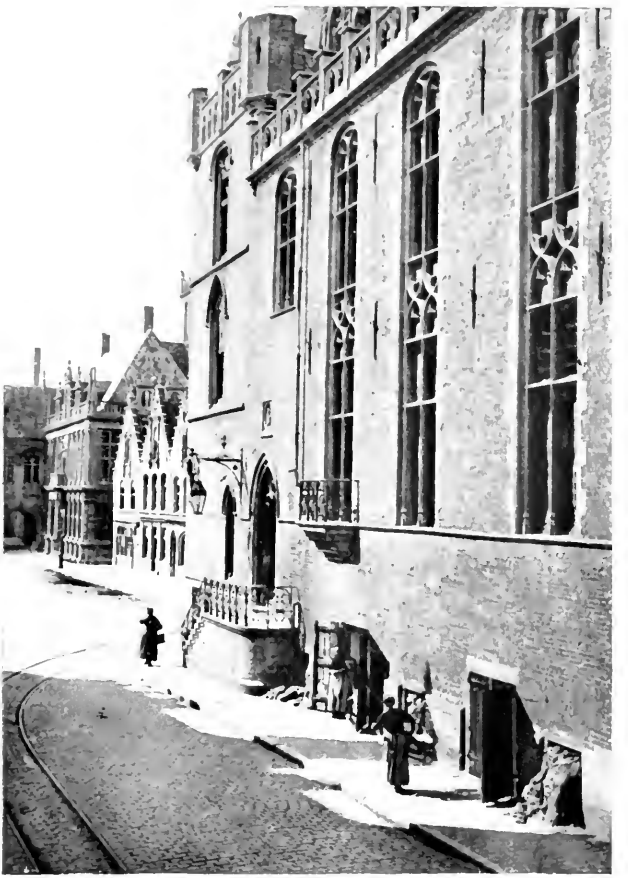
a later date, it now serves as the Town Library and Archives (*Photos, pp. 39 and 41*).

Opposite is the old **Meat Market,** now a theatre, with its fine early 17th century façade.

At the end of the square, facing the Rue du Nord, is the **Old Spanish Guard House,** an arcaded building of early 17th century construction. The lateral façade overlooks the Place du Marché-aux-Pommes, in which stands ST. NICOLAS' CHURCH. Begun in the 14th century, building was continued in the 15th, and completed in the 16th centuries. The church,



FURNES. THE PALAIS-DE-JUSTICE (ANCIENT CASTELLANY).
On the left, the Hôtel-de-Ville whose "loggia" (photo above) was taken down (1918).



The door of the Spanish Officers' Pavilion (Sept. 4, 1917).
In the background: The Palais-de-Justice *and* Hotel-de-Ville *(photos, p. 40).*
In the foreground: Rue de l'Est, *by which tourists leave Furnes.*

which has a high, unfinished tower suffered little during the war, although some of the stained-glass was broken.

Furnes possesses a number of curious old houses, the most noteworthy of which are the Noble Rose Hostelry, 11, *Rue du Nord, near the Grand'-Place, and* the Pomme d'Or Hostelry *in the Grand'Place.*

Victor Hugo lived in one of them in August 1837. The "Pomme d'Or" was used as a residence by the Spanish Officers (16th–17th centuries). Rebuilt in the 16th century, the "Noble Rose" was restored shortly before the War; it is now partly destroyed.

Every year, since the 12th century, a famous penitential procession took place at Furnes on the last Sunday in July, when the "Sodalite Brotherhood" performed the "Passion Play" in Flemish.

OOST-DUNKIRK-BAINS.

From Furnes to Nieuport.

Leave Furnes by the Rue de l'Est, and immediately after crossing the canal, take the Nieuport road, on the left. At **Wulpen** (5 *kms.*), *cross the canal to go to* OOST-DUNKIRK (2 *kms.*). Numerous shelters, trenches, and wire entanglements are to be seen along the road.

After crossing the railway (*l.c.*) *turn to the left into* **Oost Dunkirk.** Like Coxyde, Oost-Dunkirk comprises the town proper—situated behind the dunes, on a road which, via Coxyde, linked up Furnes with Nieuport—and the baths, 2 kms. further north, on the coast. Both places served as billeting quarters for the French Marines in 1915. The immense camps of wooden huts were occupied later by the Zouaves.

The town was practically destroyed by the bombardments : most of the houses are in ruins, but the church is still standing.

To visit the Baths (2 *kms.*) *take the road on the right, beyond the church*, noticing the numerous shelters in the dunes. *Coming back from the dike, take the first road on the left to* NIEUPORT-BAINS (4 *kms.*). The road crosses a region covered with defence-works, trenches and wire entanglements, alternating with shelters and battery positions. The battle zone began there. All vestiges of life and vegetation have disappeared.

Before reaching Nieuport-Bains, a Franco-British cemetery (*photo below*) *is seen on the left, and a little further on*, the ruins of the church, with a cemetery in front.

Nieuport-Bains, a small watering-place situated 3 kms. from Nieuport and 17 kms. from Ostend, was perhaps the prettiest of the Belgian seaside places. There the dunes rise in places to a height of 100 feet.

As witness the trenches and *boyaux* which run through the ruins of its pretty villas and fine hotels, Nieuport-Bains stood in the front line.

CEMETERY AT THE ENTRANCE TO NIEUPORT-BAINS.

At the end of the dike the road turns to the right in the direction of **Nieuport-Ville.** *From here the tourist crosses the dunes parallelly to the sea.* Traversing the zone which formed the first line during the stabilisation period, the mouth of the

The Hotels on the sea-front at Nieuport-Bains.

Yser, protected by two wooden piers about three-quarters of a mile long and covered with sacks of earth, is reached. The Grande Dune, which General de Mitry attacked in January 1915, is on the right bank of the estuary, opposite Nieuport-Bains. The polders of Lombartzyde are somewhat to the south-west (*See p. 53*).

Broken fragments of walls mark the site of the station on the dune. In front are a derelict engine and train, which have been there since 1914. Near by is the entrance to the covered trench which connected Nieuport-Ville with Nieuport-Bains; same may be visited.

Return to the car and take the road to the left towards Nieuport-Ville (photo below).

Proceed to Nieuport (3 *kms.*) *by the road* (*very rough*) *running parallel to the estuary of the Yser, past* several shelters and artillery positions. *After crossing the bridge over a small canal, the tourist comes out on the wharves of Nieuport.* Once an important fishing port, little remains today of its former prosperity. A few fishing boats still give some little activity to the place.

Road leading to the mouth of the Yser

At the end of the dike, leave the car and go on foot, in the direction of arrow A, along the path leading to the mouth of the river (photos, p. 111). Return to the car and take the road to the left (arrow B) to Nieuport-Ville.

WOODEN PIER AT THE MOUTH OF THE YSER.

On the right:

VIEW, LOOKING TOWARDS THE SEA.

On the left:
VIEW LOOKING TOWARDS NIEUPORT.
In the foreground: Concrete Shelter and destroyed Wooden Pier.

Below:
French Trench along the Beach, to the left of the river mouth. In the background: Nieuport Pier.

NIEUPORT.

The small town of Nieuport is of very ancient origin. As early as the 9th century its site was occupied by a castle built by the Counts of Flanders to defend the coast against the Normans. The burgh, first known as Santhoven, took the name of Nieuport (*Neoportus*) after the inhabitants of Lombaertzyde had migrated there. Situated on the Yser, the town served as a port for Ypres, and was an important business centre. It was besieged by the English in 1383 and by the French in 1489.

After a long period of stagnation, the enclosing walls were pulled down in 1860. However, with laudable respect for the past, the Municipality saw to it that the charming old-world aspect of the place was carefully preserved, by severely controlling the plans of all new constructions, and by prohibiting the use of materials not in harmony with the buildings already existent.

Nieuport, of which nothing remains but a few scattered ruins, was the scene of desperate fighting.

With Dixmude, it was one of the two main centres in the Yser defences, these two towns being in fact, the bastions of the line of resistance.

Amongst other things, Nieuport possessed an elaborate system of lock-gates and sluices, by means of which the water in the canals throughout maritime Flanders was regulated.

It was easier to defend than Dixmude. The canals and water-courses which united in its port, separated the town from the enemy. It could, moreover, be more effectively protected by the guns of the Allied Fleet.

In October 1914, the Belgian 2nd Division held the outlying defences at Lombartzyde and Mannekensvere (east of St. Georges).

On October 19, it was attacked by the German 4th Reserve Division. Three consecutive attacks against Lombartzyde having failed, the enemy began to shell Nieuport with their heavy artillery.

Renewing their attacks, the enemy captured Lombartzyde, but were unable to debouch. Crushed by the bombardment, Nieuport fell into ruins.

From October 18 to 25, in spite of the heavy bombardment, the Belgian 7th Infantry Regiment held the banks of the Yser, to the east, in front of St. Georges, near the Union Bridge, which the Germans, debouching from Mannekensvere, tried in vain to carry. The Belgian batteries, often without

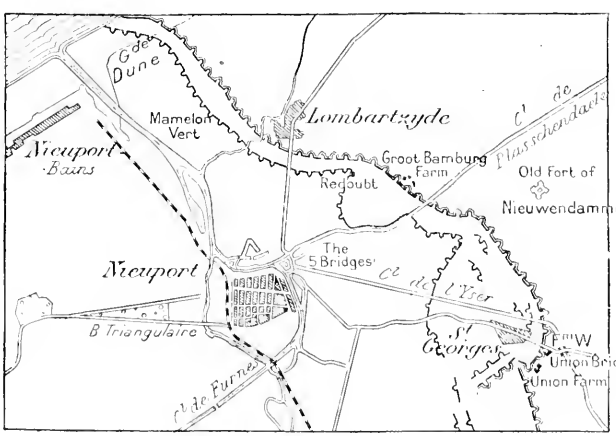
Panorama of the ruins of Nieupo

cover, stubbornly supported the defenders. On several occasions, guns were hauled up on the river bank into the infantry lines, whence their direct hits smashed the farm-houses and German machine-guns concealed in them.

The enemy crossed the Yser at Schoorbakke, outflanking St. Georges from the south, which had to be evacuated.

Instantly, batteries of the Belgian 5th Brigade, brought up by hand, opened a rapid fire at short range with high explosive shells upon St. Georges and the approaches to the canal, where the enemy were concentrating.

Mowed down where they stood, the assailants vainly attempted to debouch from the village, where piles of their dead lay among the ruins.



The Defences of Nieuport

EN FROM KING ALBERT'S HOTEL.

The 14th Line Regiment, which had meanwhile relieved the 7th, was able to withdraw in good order.

At nightfall, the batteries were gradually withdrawn behind the railway whence they helped first to hold, then to force back the German attack upon Ramscappelle.

The defenders being now exhausted, and the enemy's attack gathering strength, the Belgian General Staff gave orders to flood the area between the Yser and the railway embankment. The road to Calais, via Nieuport, was thus definitely barred to the invaders.

The Germans revenged themselves by bombarding Nieuport, attempting at the same time to slip along the dunes of Lombartzyde, towards the town, in order to seize the locks. Before the unflinching resistance of the defenders supported by the fire of the British and French monitors, the attack broke down.

TEMPORARY FOOT BRIDGE ACROSS THE YSER AT NIEUPORT

Nieuport, the Grand'Place and the Markets, before the War. (*Photo Nels*).

At the beginning of November Lombartzyde, in the northern sector, was the scene of uninterrupted fighting, with alternating advances and retreats.

In December a powerful offensive, having for its objective the capture of the German defences along the Belgian sea-coast, was begun, with General de Mitry in command of the Nieuport forces.

On December 16, the French carried the western outskirts of Lombartzyde in a single rush, and reached the first houses of St. Georges. The enemy, however, resisted desperately, and progress was slow. By the end

Ruins of the Grand'Place in 1919. (*See photo above*).

NIEUPORT. THE RUINED CHURCH.

of the month, the Moroccan Brigade succeeded, with great difficulty, in reaching the Grande Dune. On January 7, the 4th Regiment of Zouaves scaled the Mamelon Vert. A few days later the French Marines, who had been relieved in the Steenstraate sector, by Tirailleurs and dismounted cavalry units of the 2nd Corps, attacked the Grande Dune and Lombartzyde. After extremely desperate fighting, entailing heavy losses, the Grande Dune was captured.

The attack was stayed, and the French clung to the thin strip of land on the right bank of the Yser.

The bombardment of Nieuport increased in violence. Each morning, the huge 16 1/2in. shells wrecked the houses and public buildings, and crushed in the cellars where the defenders had taken shelter. One after another, the 12th century Church, the Abbey on the Dunes, the "HALLES" with their graceful belfry, and the massive Templars' Tower crashed to the ground.

Meanwhile, the battle continued to rage all around the town.

On May 9, a German attack from Lombartzyde to St. Georges was broken, and on the following day the French marines carried "W" and Union Farms, with fine dash, and destroyed the enemy's blockhouses.

NIEUPORT. RUINS OF THE HOTEL-DE-VILLE.

In 1916 (January 24), after a bombardment of more than 20,000 shells, the Germans attempted to debouch from their positions near the mouth of the Yser. Repulsed with heavy loss, they once more deluged the unhappy town with shells.

In 1917, the British prepared their great Spring and Summer offensives, extending from east of Arras to the region of Ypres, and relieved their French comrades in the sector stretching from St. Georges to the sea.

They had hardly taken up their positions, when the Germans attacked (July 10). Thrown back into their trenches before Lombartzyde, the enemy renewed their attacks with increased violence, and forced back the British in the direction of Nieuport. The latter managed, however, to keep a bridgehead at the exit from the town.

Meanwhile, in the Dunes sector, two British Battalions, in spite of their gallant resistance, were forced back upon the river. Of these, only four officers and seventy men escaped, by swimming across during the night.

The Germans on the right bank of the river occupied the Dunes.

The pressure on Nieuport increased, but the Yser remained impassable.

In 1918 (September 28), the great liberating offensive, under the command of King Albert, was launched in the plains, to the east of Dixmude and Ypres. On October 16, the Belgian 5th Division, east of Nieuport, charged from the famous islets in front of the Yser. The enemy, badly shaken, retreated, closely followed by the Belgians, who harried their rear-guards and completely swept the coast to a point beyond Ostend.

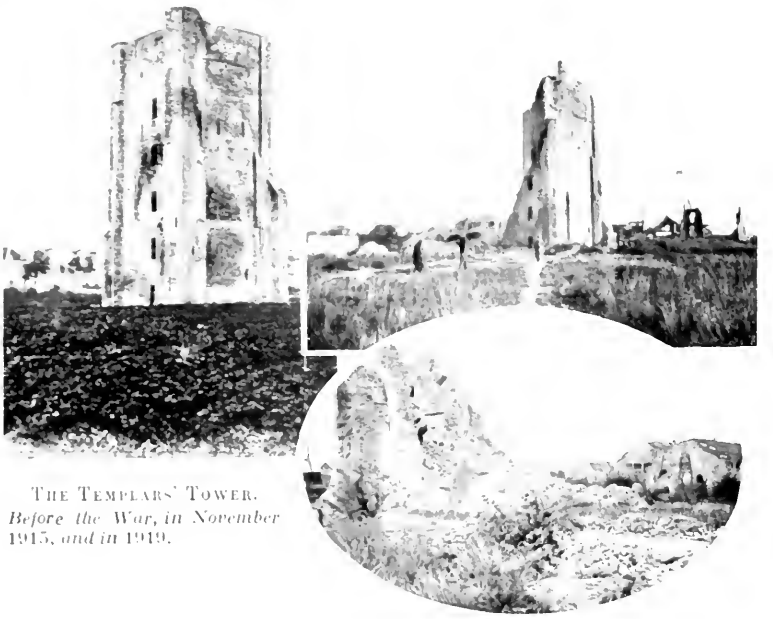
Nieuport, terribly ravaged by four years of the fiercest fighting at its very gates, was at last delivered.

On January 25, 1920, in the presence of King Albert and the Burgomaster, President Poincaré conferred the *Croix de Guerre* with the following mention on the indomitable city :

" *Martyred City, involved in all the vicissitudes of a desperate struggle lasting four years, Nieuport maintained intact her faith in the future, in spite of all her trials.*

Her ruins bear witness to the heroism of her defenders and to the bravery of her inhabitants. "

NIEUPORT. FURNES CANAL LOCK *(Nov. 11, 1915)* *Inset:* LOCK-KEEPER GERAERT, WHO FLOODED THE PLAIN (*See p.* 51).



THE TEMPLARS' TOWER. *Before the War, in November 1915, and in 1919.*

On reaching the wharves, take the first street on the right, then the second on the left, to the Grand' Place, in which the COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF NOTRE-DAME *used to stand.*

Consecrated in 1163, this gothic edifice had retained portions of the original 12th century church. The northern doorway was 15th century, and the main entrance 16th century. The tower was somewhat massive. In the interior, a 15th century rood-loft, the high altar (1630), the 17th century stalls (by Desmet), a 15th century pulpit, an ancient tabernacle (by Jean Aert of Bruges-1733), and several old tombs, were noteworthy.

Nothing remains of the church but broken fragments of walls and the ruined belfry. In the surrounding graveyard, among the broken tombstones, Belgian and French soldiers lie buried. Their graves were often devasted by the shells.

In the same square stood the 14th-15th century **Cloth-Hall**, whose belfry was restored in recent times. Only a portion of the façade remains.

At the end of the Square, opposite the Markets, take Rue du Marché, then the first street on the right (Rue Longue). At the corner of these two streets is the **Hôtel-de-Ville** (in ruins) which used to contain portraits of the kings of Spain and the arch-dukes.

Continue to the end of Rue Longue, where, on the right, are the ruins of the **Templars' Tower.** The square donjon is all that remains of a commandery which formerly belonged to the Templars, and which was destroyed during the siege of 1383. Behind, are vestiges of the ancient city ramparts.

Return to the port by the first (very wide) street on the right, which leads to the Ostend Road Bridge across the Yser. To the right of the bridge are the Nieuport locks which served, during the War, to inundate the surrounding country, being opened at high water and closed at low water (*see photo, p. 50*).

LOMBARTZYDE. AVENUE DE LA REINE, BEFORE THE WAR (*Photo Nels*).

From Nieuport to Ostend.

1 1/2 *kms. further on, the tourist reaches the site on which Lombartzyde used to stand* (2 kms.) : the scarcely visible ruins are now overrun with grass and weeds. A few huts and a wooden church have recently been built.

Lombartzyde (the Lombards' Corner) owed its name and prosperity to the merchants and bankers, many of them Lombards, who settled there in the Middle-Ages. The town was, however, soon deserted in favour of Nieuport. Its large plain church, of no particular interest, contained a statue of the Virgin, much venerated by the fisher-people, who often visited it in the summer-time. Lombartzyde, formerly a sea-port, was later cut off from the sea by the Dunes, and Lombartzyde-Bains—the sea-side portion of the town —grew up there. The steam-trams running between Nieuport and Ostend may be taken to reach it.

LOMBARTZYDE. AVENUE DE LA REINE, IN 1919. (*See photo above*).

LOMBARTZYDE. GRAVES AND TRENCHES ON THE SITE OF THE CHURCH (ENTIRELY RAZED).

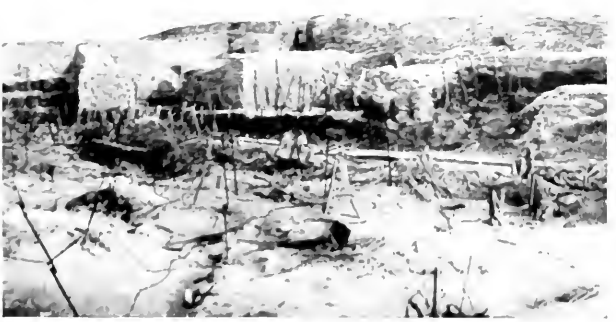
Situated about 1 km. in front of Nieuport, on the right bank, Lombartzyde was occupied on September 15, 1914, by the advanced posts of the Belgian 2nd Division.

In danger of being turned, it had to be abandoned on the 20th, at about 3 p.m., together with Groote-Bamburg Farm, likewise situated in front of Nieuport.

For a short time the town was reoccupied by the French, but finally remained in German hands. Neither the attack on the Grande-Dune in December 1914, nor the Belgian advance to the outskirts of the town a little later, could drive the enemy out.

Groote-Bamburg Farm, formerly belonging to the lay monks, lies to the east of Lombartzyde ; *there is no carriage road, but a foot-path, starting opposite the church, leads there in 20 minutes.* Of the farm, nothing remains but a maze of trenches, wire entanglements and concrete shelters.

Opposite the church, the old Avenue de la Reine (*photos*, p. 52) *leads to* the Dunes, the importance of whose defences will become apparent (*photo below*).

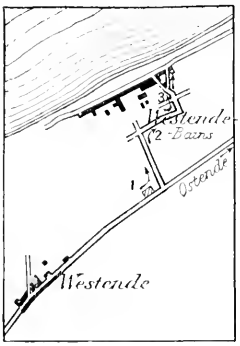


LOMBARTZYDE. THE MAMELON VERT.

ROAD TO WESTENDE BAINS. *Arrow* **No 1**: *Turning to the left, tourists leave the main road from Westende to Ostend (See sketch below.)*

ARROW NO. 2: *Turn to the right, towards the ruins of a large hotel.*

ARROW NO. 3: *Take the road to the left, passing near this hotel.*



Road from Westende to Westende-Bains. The arrows correspond with those on the photos above.

Keep along the road to Westende (1 1/2 *kms.*), *a small village situated on the road from Nieuport to Ostend ; steam-trams run between the latter towns.*

The village was entirely razed, and the site cut up with trenches.

Westende-Bains is 1 km. further along the coast.

The Germans installed themselves in both places, which accordingly became targets for the British monitors.

Beyond Westende-Village, take the rough road on the left (photo above). Before reaching the ruins of Westende-Bains (2 kms.) (photo above), turn to the right, then take the left-hand road leading to the sea dike (photo above), which follow on the right, in the direction of Ostend.

Before setting out for Ostend, visit the ruins of **Westende-Bains,** intersected with trenches.

Westende-Bains. Machine-Gun Post and Electrified Barbed Wire.

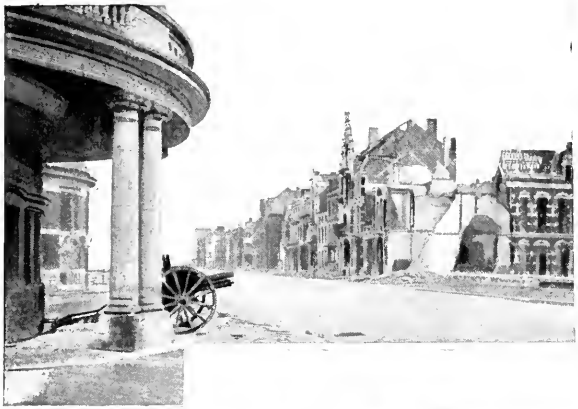
The cellars of the houses were consolidated, and turned into shelters and battery positions.

All along the dike, and along the whole coast runs a line of barbed-wire, through which the Germans caused a high-tension electric current to pass (*photo above*).

Follow the dike, bordered on the right with trenches, numerous observation-posts and concrete machine-gun shelters.

Middelkerke-Bains (3 *kms.*), formerly a small sea-side resort,

Westende-Bains. The sea-front. *Among the ruins of the houses: machine-guns in shelters.*



MIDDELKERKE-BAINS.
The Promenade along the dike. On the left, in the foreground: The Entrance to the Kursaal. Below: The Kursaal, used by the Germans as an observation-post.

is next reached. All the hotels and villas are in ruins, their fronts having been either ripped open by shells or blackened by fires. The Germans organised powerful defence-works there, in view of Allied air raids and the possible landing of troops. Observation and signalling posts, as well as shelters for machine-guns and searchlights are to be seen all along the dike.

The Kursaal, an isolated building standing in front of the village, was turned into a blockhouse, facing seawards ; same includes two superimposed observation-posts, a signalling post, and machine-gun shelters.

Continue along the dike, noticing the observation-posts, machine-gun and small calibre artillery emplacements, *as far as* the **"Aachen" Battery** *on the right.*

This is the first of the formidable coast-defence batteries organised by the Germans. The itinerary takes the tourist to most of these batteries, all of which were fitted with heavy guns.

They were served by standard or narrow-gauge tracks, some having as many as three tracks of different gauges.

BLOCKHOUSE OF THE AACHEN BATTERY
(north-east of Middelkerke-Bains).

At the time of the Armistice the Germans blew up a large number of the shelters, before leaving, and destroyed most of the guns which they had been unable to evacuate.

They also removed all apparatus from the observation and telemetric posts.

An enormous blockhouse, situated on the left of the "AACHEN" BATTERY, contained an observation-post and the post-of commandment of the officer in charge of the firing. Near by, are the four 6in. armour-protected guns

General View of the Aachen Battery (*north-east of Middelkerke-Bains*).

on concrete platforms, with concrete personnel and ammunition shelters on either side. In front of the battery, near the beach, were anti-aircraft machine-gun posts.

The "Aachen" Battery was connected by infantry defence-works to the next or **"Antwerpen" Battery,** situated on top of the dune. The latter comprised four 4in. guns in armoured turrets, with sand-covered concrete shelters behind. In front, on the dike, are machine-gun emplacements.

The **"Beseler" Battery,** *next reached*, comprises four 6in. guns on concrete platforms, with circular armour-plate protection. On each side two elevated emplacements served as telemetric and observation-posts.

Further on is a large infantry entrenchment, with a shelter on the dike for the searchlight, and an emplacement on either side for machine-guns or small calibre artillery.

One of the Beseler Battery's guns.

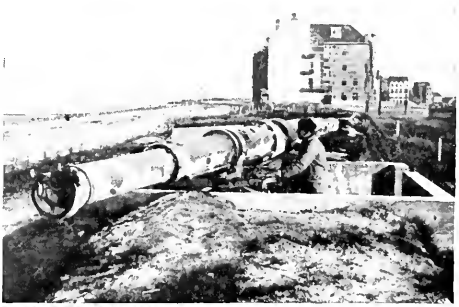
One of the Cecilia Battery's guns.

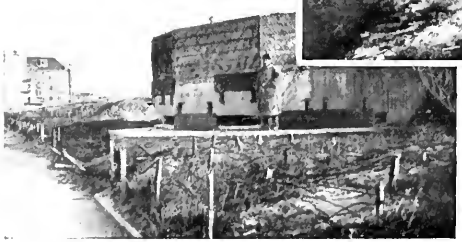
The Cecilia Battery, *photographed from an aeroplane at 13,000 feet. in July, 1916.*

Next comes the **"Cecilia" Battery,** similar to the "Beseler" Battery, except that the guns are longer, and the armour-plate protection rectangular.

Having passed a series of observation-posts, including that of the **"Tirpitz" Battery,** with its telemetric installation and machine-gun shelters, *the tourist enters* **Mariakerke-Bains** (6 *kms.*), a small seaside resort in the suburbs of Ostend.

Follow the tram-lines along Avenue Léopold, separated from the dike by a row of houses, to **Ostend** (2 1/2 *kms.*) *coming out opposite the entrance to* the old Wellington Fort.





Observation-Post and Telemetric Station of the Tirpitz Battery, near Mariakerke-Bains.

(*See pages* 63-64).

OSTEND.

In the 9th century, Ostend, then a hamlet, was situated at the eastern end (*Oostende*) of a sand-bar belonging to the powerful St. Bertin Abbey of St. Omer. Incursions by the Normans and the ravages of the sea had almost entirely annihilated it when, in the 9th century, Robert le Frison built a chapel to Our Lady there, around which a new village grew up. Thanks to the herring fisheries on the Flemish coast—a flourishing industry in the Middle-Ages, but since abandoned—Ostend grew and prospered. The construction of defence-works at the end of the 16th century, by Guillaume-le-Taciturne, conferred on the town the dangerous honour of becoming the last rampart of the Utrecht Confederation against the Spaniards of the southern provinces, and resulted in one of the longest and bloodiest sieges (1601-1603) recorded in history. This three years' struggle cost one hundred thousand lives and reduced the town to ruins.

Later, Ostend sustained further destructive sieges, e.g. by the English, under Marlborough, in 1706; by the French under Marshal Lowendhal in 1745. Meanwhile, and in the latter part of the 18th century, various factors helped to restore the town's former prosperity, i.e. the "Peace of Utrecht" (1713) which closed the Escaut, thus paralysing Antwerp in favour of Ostend; and the wealthy "Indian Company" founded there, but broken up ten years later for political reasons. The "Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle" (1748) having ceded the town to Austria, Joseph II caused the maritime installations to be completed, and made it a free port, into which the belligerent ships put during the American War. This revived prosperity was again annihilated by revolution and the Napoleonic wars.

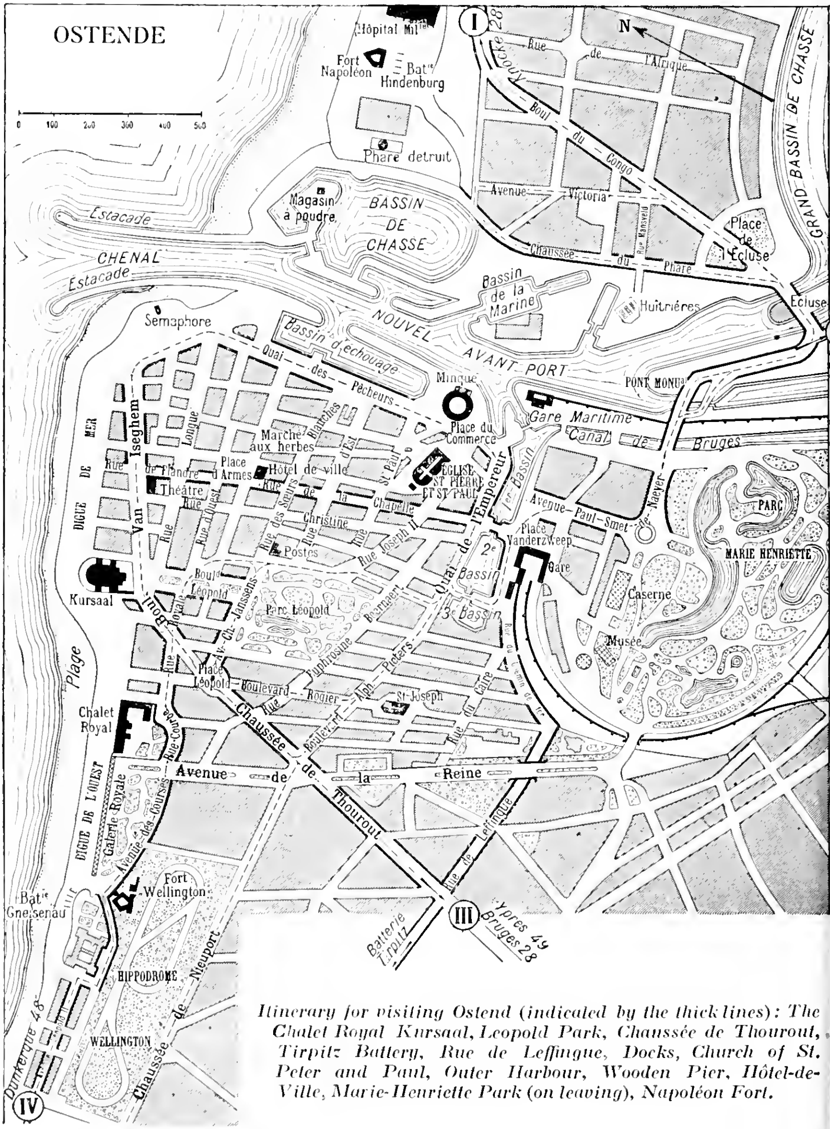
In the 19th century, Ostend discovered a new and fruitful source of wealth in sea-bathing, and eventually developed into one of Europe's premier seaside resorts.

Under the impulsion of Leopold II, who frequently resided there, extensive works were carried out in the town and port at the beginning of the present century. The channel was widened, the jetties rebuilt, the port enlarged. A monumental bridge, the present maritime station, and the church of St. Peter and Paul were built. The dike was prolonged westwards and bordered with luxurious buildings. Parks and public gardens were laid out. To the east, the Lighthouse Quarter was transformed, and the Royal Road in the Dunes to Blankenberghe was made.

When, in August 1914, the Germans invaded Belgium, this "queen of watering-places" offered a strangely moving sight until the middle of October. British troops disembarked from the transports, marched in long files through the streets, and encamped in the surroundings. Refugees from all parts were temporarily housed in the bathing cabins. "Zeppelins" and "Taubes" completed the terror and panic caused by the approach of the invaders. The trains were crammed, and the maritime station crowded with thousands of people seeking to get across to Britain. The retirement of the Belgian Army along the littoral, after the fall of Antwerp, marked the end of the season of 1914.

On October 14, the Germans occupied the town, from which the visitors and part of the inhabitants had fled. Naval defences were organised, the dike and dunes armed, while the palaces and villas along the dike, the Kursaal, and other public buildings were occupied by the military staffs. The town suffered severely from this occupation. British shells and aeroplane bombs unavoidably increased the damage. The maritime station, and a number of hotels and private residences in the central and eastern districts were partly destroyed, while the glazed roof of the Banqueting Hall of the Kursaal collapsed.

Many public buildings were transformed into Hospitals, dressing-stations, and even stables. The furniture of the fine villas along the sea-front was either sent to Germany or burnt as firewood. The wine-cellars were emptied. Defilements, in accordance with Kultur's best practice, went hand-in-hand with the destructions. Reconstruction and cleansing will require much time and work. Yet, true to her past, Ostend will rise again, more beautiful than ever, from her ruins.



Itinerary for visiting Ostend (indicated by the thick lines): The Chalet Royal Kursaal, Leopold Park, Chaussée de Thourout, Tirpitz Battery, Rue de Leffingue, Docks, Church of St. Peter and Paul, Outer Harbour, Wooden Pier, Hôtel-de-Ville, Marie-Henriette Park (on leaving), Napoléon Fort.

OSTEND SANDS.
Gneisenau Battery, in front of the Royal Palace Hotel.

A VISIT TO OSTEND.

On entering the town, skirt the WELLINGTON HIPPODROME, *in front of which* portions of the old Wellington Fort *may still be seen at the end of the Western Dike. In front of the terrace of the Royal Palace Hotel, on the dike, is* the **"Gneisenau" Battery** armed with 4in. guns (*photo above*).

Take Avenue des Courses to the **Chalet Royal.** *Go round the latter by Rue Courbe.*

Between Avenue des Courses and Rue Courbe opens out, on the right, the fine Avenue de la Reine, which connects the dike with the Grand Parc Marie-Henriette (*see p.* 67).

THE SANDS AND CHALET ROYAL, BEFORE THE WAR (*Photo Nels*).

OSTEND.
THE SEA WALL.
On the left :
THE KURSAAL.
On the right :
CONCRETE SHELTER
Further on (to the left)
THE CHALET ROYAL
In the background :
MARIAKERKE.

The Chalet Royal.

This *ensemble* of light constructions occupies a fine dominating position. Instead of levelling the dune, the side facing the sea was consolidated with masonry-work.

The opposite side of the hill is laid out with terraced gardens, through which winds the road leading to the Chalet. The latter comprises two large pavilions connected by a central gallery.

In the large square, situated in the rear, were collected the bathing cabins, in which refugees from all parts were sheltered during the first months of the war.

Take Rue Royale, Boulevard van Iseghem, then the road on the left leading up to the dike, near the Kursaal. (*Vehicular traffic on the dike is prohibited from 9 a. m. till midnight.*)

The Sea Wall.

Here the dike is separated by some 150 yards from the line of the dunes, being bounded on the west by the terrace of the Kursaal, on the east by a *perré*, rounded off in front of the port jetties. The effect of this bold promontory, which seems to defy the waves, is most striking.

The eastern end, on which stands the old lighthouse (now a semaphore station), was built at the beginning of the 19th century. It is now a *promenade* bordered with fine buildings, some eighty yards in length by thirty in width. The masonry embankment rises thirty feet above the foundations and is protected by four massive breakwaters.

At low water, only about 200 yards of the beach is uncovered, or about half as much as at the Western Baths, where the shore forms an angle immediately to the left.

In front stretches the New Western Dike, set further back than the old one, and prolonged as far as Mariakerke. The sea-wall at Ostend has thus a total length of 3 1/2 kms.

The Sands.

Each summer, before the War, the WESTERN BEACH, with its vast expanse of golden sands, its countless bathing-machines and coloured tents, offered, in the bright sunshine and clear air, an extraordinarily animated and gay scene.

The Eastern Sands, at the other end of the dike, in front of the wooden pier, although less popular, were nevertheless crowded with bathers during the season.

The Kursaal.

From 1831, when Ostend-Bains was "discovered", until 1875, the Kursaal stood on the old brick-paved dike. It was a modest construction (now at Malo-les-Bains) but had, till then, sufficed for the town's needs. In 1875, the new sumptuous Kursaal was begun on its present magnificent site.

The building, designed by the architects Naert and Lauwereins, covers with its grounds an area of about three acres. Originally, its general aspect was somewhat bizarre, and reminded one of a gigantic turtle basking in front of the sea. The alterations since carried out at different times, particularly the ceramic ornamentation, has considerably improved its original appearance.

Its curved façade follows that of the dike, the latter forming solid foundations. The façade consists of a covered terrace, thirty feet wide, extending round the central rotunda. The latter, elliptical in shape, is 200 feet long, 120 feet wide and 75 feet high, and forms an immense hall capable of holding some 5,000 people. Symphony concerts are given there.

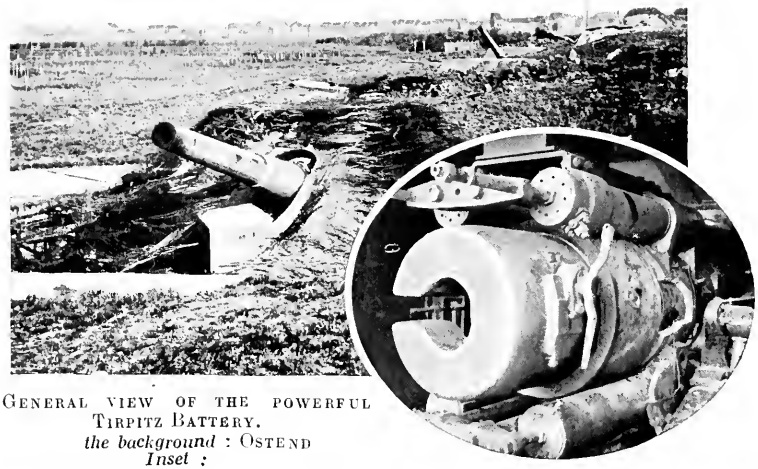
Return by the path on the west side and take the broad Avenue Léopold, opposite, ornamented with gardens, to **Leopold Park** (*see plan, p. 60*).

Leopold Park.

Leopold Park was laid out in former days on the site of the old fortifications, near the Western Gate, the *glacis* of the bastions being used to break the monotony of the level ground.

After visiting the park, return to Avenue Ch. Janssens, which separates it from Boulevard Léopold, and take same on the left. In Place Léopold, take Chaussée de Thourout, on the left, then Rue de Leffinghe as far as the entrance to the **"Tirpitz" Battery**, (*photos below and p. 64.*), *situated on the right some few hundred yards outside the town.*

The Tirpitz Battery, photographed from Allied aeroplane, July 31, 1916



General view of the powerful Tirpitz Battery.
the background : Ostend
Inset :
Breech of one of the Guns.

The Tirpitz Battery.

This powerful battery has four 11in. armour-protected guns, mounted on circular tracks on hollow platforms of masonry about 46 feet in diameter. The shelters behind the guns were destroyed. The battery was protected by trenches and barbed-wire entanglements.

On the left, facing the sea, are screens which masked the fire of the guns from the land observation-posts. In front of the right-hand gun was the post of commandment.

The guns of this battery were being built by Krupps in 1914, to the order of the Belgian Government, for the forts of Antwerp.

Return to the town by Rue de Leffingue, Rue du Chemin-de-fer, and Quai du Châtelet; the latter skirts the 3rd and 2nd Commercial Docks *and ends at Place Vanderzweep, near the station* (*see plan, p.* 60). *Cross the bridge, on the left, between the 2nd and 1st Docks, then turn to the right along Quai de l'Empereur.*

The Place du Commerce is next reached, at the end of which stands the Church of St. Peter and Paul.

Dock No. 2, Church of St. Peter and Paul *(left) and the* Station *(right).*

Ostend. The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul.

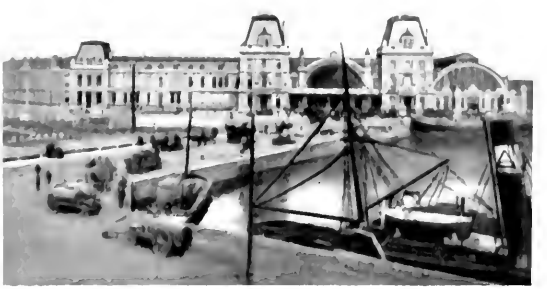
The modern Church of St Peter and Paul stands on the site of a former church of that name (1717) which was burnt down in 1896, with the exception of the campanile still standing behind the new building.

At the foot of the new choir is an allegorical group in white marble (by Fraikin), to the memory of Louis-Marie d'Orléans, first Queen of the Belgians and wife of Léopold I, who died at Ostend in 1850.

Opposite the church, facing the port, is the **Maritime Station**, which suffered severely from the aerial bombardments.

The port of Ostend.

The port of Ostend dates back to the 15th century. In 1445, Philippe-le-Bon authorised the inhabitants of the town to make an opening in the dike, in order to construct a fishing harbour. The latter was situated opposite the present port, i.e. to the west, near Mariakerke. At the end of the following century it was moved eastwards, the sea having opened up a passage on that side, in consequence of the levelling of the dunes for the construction of the fortifications. How-



The Maritime Station. (*Ph. Nels*).

Ostend. Place d'Armes and Hotel-de-Ville, (*Photo Nels*).

ever, the maritime installations which, until the end of the last century, formed the port of Ostend, dated from the time of the Emperor Joseph II. They were completely transformed and considerably extended in 1898-1914, the work being almost complete when the war broke out.

The new vast outer-harbour communicates with the sea by means of a wide channel enclosed between two open-work piers. The channel is also connected by a powerful lock to an immense modern impounding-dock, over 200 acres in extent. The tide supplies the water necessary for flushing the channel clear of sand.

The landing-stage of the Maritime Station borders on the outer harbour where the boats plying daily between Ostend and Dover were moored. Words cannot describe the scenes which took place here during the first half of October 1914, after the fall of Antwerp. At the approach of the German armies, panic-stricken crowds of refugees filled the stations and their approaches to overflowing, in frantic endeavours to get on board the ships that were to take them to Britain.

Quai de l'Empereur is prolonged, beyond Place du Commerce, by Quai des Pêcheurs which skirts the **Minque** (*or* Fish Market) *and the* **Bassin des Pêcheurs.**

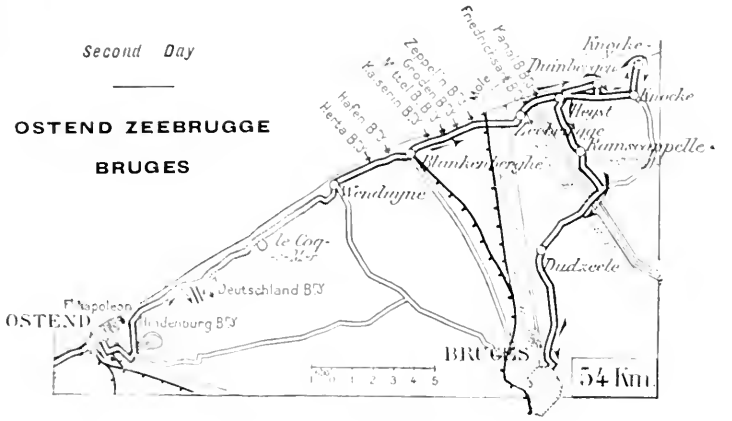
The Bassin des Pêcheurs (Fishing Dock) is connected with the outer-harbour, which precedes the channel. Near by is the "**Minque**" (Fish-Market),—a circular building in which the fish is sold by auction daily, the proceedings being announced by the ringing of a bell.

During the fine season the natives fish mainly along the English and Dutch shores, but go as far as the entrance to the Channel in the winter. Their boats are of the trawler type, fitted with conical drag-nets, the mouths of which, thirty to forty feet wide, are kept open by cross-stays. The nets are dragged along the bottom of the sea.

Keeping along the dock-sides, the tourist next reaches the old lighthouse at the end of the dike. Take Boulevard Van Iseghem on the left, then Rue de Flandre on the left, in front of the theatre, leading to the Place d'Armes, in which stands the **Hôtel-de-ville** (*see plan, p.* 60).

The Hôtel-de-Ville, built in 1711, and restored later, after mutilation, occupies the whole of one side of the Place d'Armes, in the centre of the old city. The long façade was flanked at either end by high towers, only one of which remains.

To leave Ostend, for the second day's itinerary (*Ostend-Zeebrugge-Bruges*) *take Rue de la Chapelle* (*continuation of Rue de Flandre*) *in front of the Hôtel-de-Ville* (*See, p.* 60).



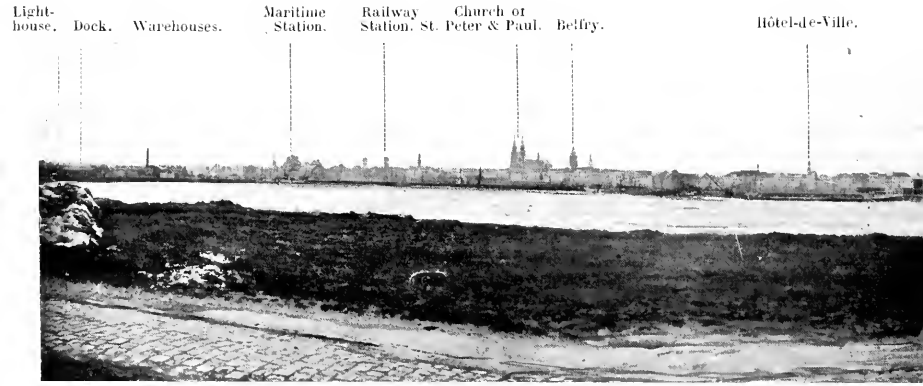
Itinerary for the Second Day.

Leave Ostend by Rue de la Chapelle, which passes in front of the Hôtel-de-Ville (pp. 60 and 66) and leads to Place Vanderzweep. In this square, at the end opposite the Bassin du Commerce, take Avenue de Smet de Naeyer, which leads to the **Parc Marie-Henriette.**

Situated south of the town, between the two railways ending at each of the two stations, is Marie-Henriette Park, which owing to its great size, numerous winding alleys, clusters of trees, and artificial lakes with pleasure boats, was often deservedly called the "Bois de Boulogne". The long Avenue de la Reine connects it directly with the Western Dike ; on the other hand it borders on the new maritime installations.

Cross the two bridges over the lateral canal, then the railway and maritime lock; take the first street *on the left, which passes over the Ghent-Ostend canal and the sluice-gates. Take Chaussée du Phare, on the left, then the first* street *on the left, opposite Rue Mansveld, to the* **Oyster-Beds.**

Ostend. The Monumental Bridge. Exit for Zeebrugge.



Panorama of Ostend seen

Ostend oysters, of world-wide repute among gourmets, are not natives of these shores. Gathered from the rocks on the English and Brittany coasts by the Ostend fishing-boats, they are fattened by a special process in the Ostend oyster-beds. The latter, situated in the lighthouse quarter communicate with the outer-harbour. They consist of reservoirs divided into compartments with planks, in which the sea-water, renewed every day, deposes its slimy sediment. During the War, the oyster-beds were closed.

Taking Chaussée du Phare again on the left (*see plan, p.* 60), *the tourist reaches the site on which* the lighthouse used to stand, now a heap of ruins.

Built in 1859, its round tower, 175 feet high, showed a fixed white light. Behind is the old Napoleon Fort. Facing the lighthouse, at the end of the sluice dock, stands the Powder Magazine, a kind of fort where the Germans had two batteries.

Tourists may go round the powder magazine by following the dike which is terminated by the Eastern Wooden Pier. It was at the end of the latter that the British sank the "Vindictive" on May 11, 1918.

The Blocking of Ostend Port.

On April 21, the British Admiralty undertook to block up the ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge.

British Cruisers "Sirius" and "Brilliant" sunk to the east of the wooden pier at Ostend, April 22, 1918.

FROM THE OLD LIGHTHOUSE.

Under the command of Commodore Hubert Lynes, the flotilla left Dover at the same time as the one which was to block up Zeebrugge.

The Ostend flotilla was composed of the cruisers *Sirius* and *Brilliant* (Commodore Godsal), loaded with concrete, which were to be sunk at the entrance to the port. Destroyers, scouts and motor-boats were to reconnoitre the way and pick up the crews of the blockading ships. Lastly, smoke-boats provided a protecting screen of smoke, which hid the flotilla's movements from the enemy.

When twelve miles from Ostend this flotilla parted company with that bound for Zeebrugge.

The smoke screen hiding the *Sirius* and *Brilliant* was swept away by a sudden veering of the wind. The enemy's gunfire had extinguished the lights which were to guide the two cruisers, and the latter thus ran past the Stroom Bank buoy which should have marked the entrance to Ostend but which the Germans had displaced. They were therefore sunk to the east of the stockade.

This operation having proved unsuccessful, it was decided to make a further attempt, which was again entrusted to Commodore Lynes. This

THE VINDICTIVE

undergoing repairs after her return from Zeebrugge, previous to leaving for Ostend where she was destined to finish her career.

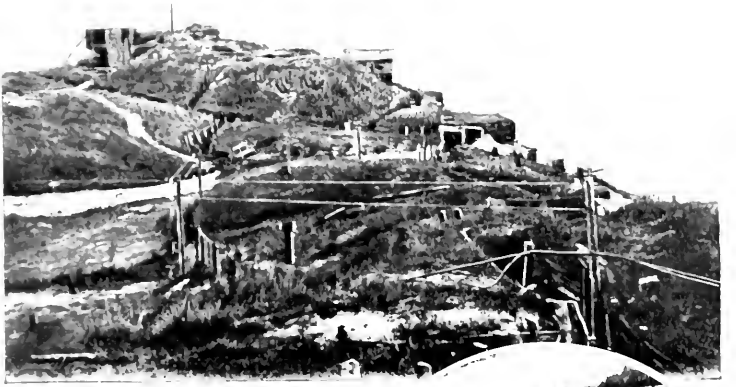
Napoleon Fort, and the road leading to the Hindenburg Battery *(on the left)*.

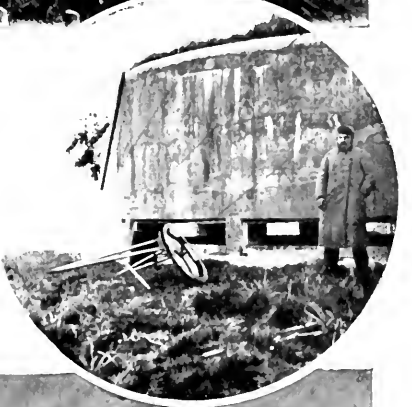
time the blockading ship was the *Vindictive* (Captain Godsal), and the Air Service took part in the enterprise. On the night of May 9, the weather being favorable, the *Vindictive* steamed towards a limelight placed by a motor-boat on the site of the Stroom Bank buoy.

Two motor-scouts torpedoed both ends of the wooden piers, at which signal the whole of the British artillery opened fire, and was immediately answered by the German guns. A thick fog soon swallowed up everything.

The *Vindictive* had to be led by scouts and, notwithstanding the death of her commander, and the numerous shells which hit the ship, Lieutenant Crutchley was able to carry out the manœuvre, swing the cruiser across the channel, and blow her up. The crew were picked up by a scout, and the flotilla put back to Dover.

The Hindenburg Battery, north-east of Ostend.





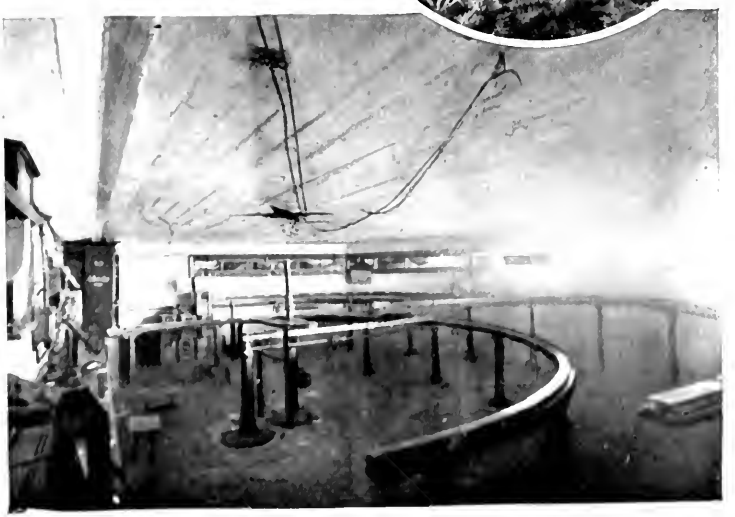
OBSERVATION-POST OF COAST BATTERIES.

Upper photo: General View of the Post.

Near the sky-line: one of the two British cruisers sunk during the first attempt to block the Ostend Harbour.

Middle photo: Exterior View of the Observation-Post.

Lower photo: Interior View of the Observation-Post.



By-road (*see arrow*) leading to the Jacobinessen Battery.

The Germans were eventually able to displace the *Vindictive* and partly free the passage.

Return via Chaussée du Phare to Place de l'Ecluse, turn to the left into Boulevard du Congo, which crosses the new eastern quarter of Ostend (*see plan, p.* 60).

Just outside the town, a short distance before reaching the "Hôpital" (to the left of the road), turn to the left and skirt the left side of the "Hôpital", as far as the **"Hindenburg" Battery,** consisting of four 11in. guns on semi-circular concrete platforms.

In front of this battery is the Old Napoleon Fort, which the Germans turned into a Casino during the war. Some of their mural paintings may still be seen in the rooms.

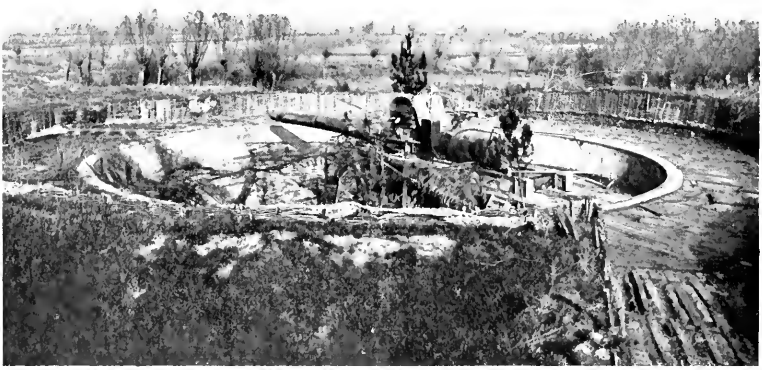
Farther on, is the post of commandment of the "Hindenburg" Battery.

Return to the road and continue in the direction of Blankenberghe.

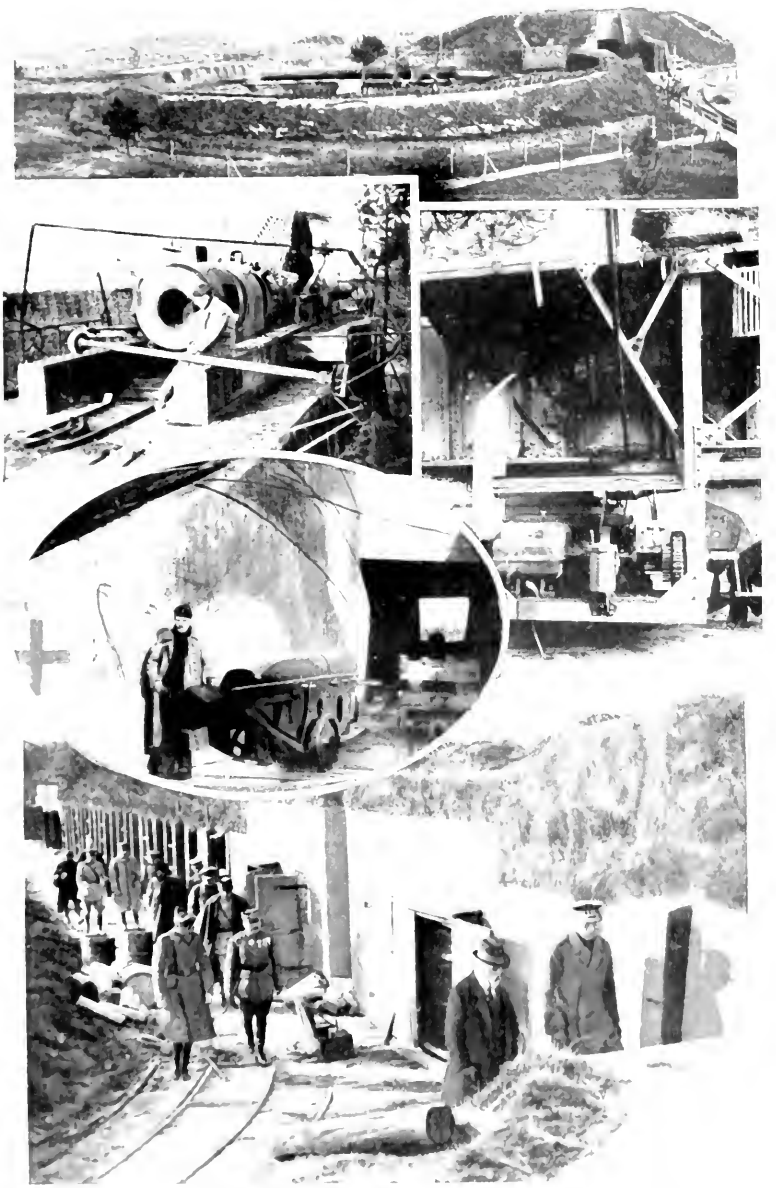
Beyond Milestone No. 6, *which bears the inscription "Le Coq* 5 *km.* 1", *there is* an observation-post, *on the left*, with telemetric posts and machine-gun shelters (*photos, p.* 71).

On the coast, some distance ahead, may be seen one of the cruisers which were to have blocked the port of Ostend.

On the road to Blankenberghe, at the point shown by an arrow in the photo



One of the Deutschland (Jacobinessen) Battery's Guns.



THE "DEUTSCHLAND" OR "JACOBINE" EN" BATTERY;
One of the guns with shelter for the men and munitions. Below: 1. Breech of the gun; 2. Electric gear for laying; 3. Munitions Shelter; 4. King Albert and President Poin are visiting the Battery.

on p. 72), *take the road on the right leading to* the **"Deutschland" Battery,** also known as the "Jacobinessen" Battery (*photos,* p. 72 and 73).

This was the most powerful battery on the Belgian coast. Armed with four 15in. guns, it was used to bombard Dunkirk.

Grouped in pairs, these naval guns, mounted on bridges, were installed in concrete pits about seventy feet in diameter. The right-hand gun only was protected with armour.

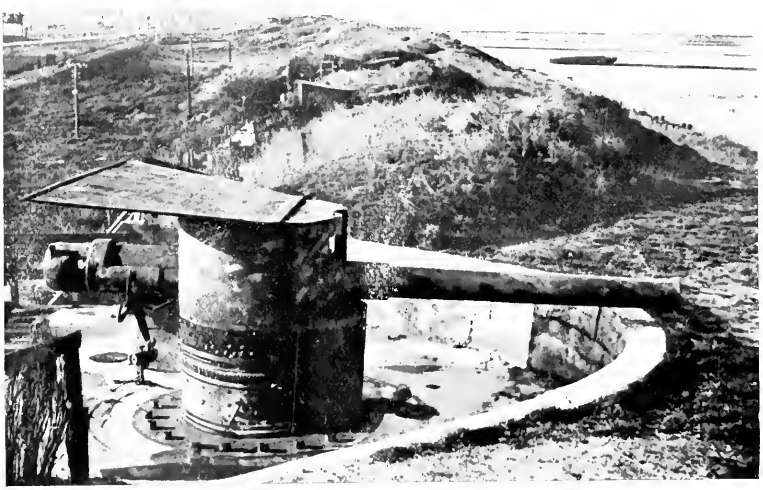
The gun laying was effected by means of electric motors. Near each gun immense shelters of reinforced concrete were used to store the shells, while the large shelter between the two groups was probably the post of commandment.

Camouflaging of barbed-wire covered with branches of trees may still be seen hanging above the battery

The latter was protected by deep lines of barbed wire and infantry defence-works.

Return to the Blankenberghe road and pass through the village of **Le Coq** (*Flemish: de Haan*). *On the top of the last turretted house on the right, is* an observation post, *and opposite, on the top of the dune,* a searchlight. *On the dike are* two 3in. anti aircraft guns, *and in the surroundings,* numerous shelters. *Further on, to the left, are* a lighthouse, *and on the high dune,* an observation-post. *Pass through* WENDUYNE (1 1/2 *kms.*) *arriving at* the **"Herta" Battery,** *on the left of the road.* This battery comprises four 8in. guns. *A little further on is* the **"Hafen" Battery,** comprising four 3 1/2in. guns. **Blankenberghe** (4 *kms.*) *is reached by going between the Fishing Dock and Impounding Dock.*

Blankenberghe was one of the most popular resorts on the Belgian coast. *On the dike,* the Kursaal, erected in memory of Lieutenant Lippens and Sergeant de Bruyne, both natives of Blankenberghe, who were killed in the Congo in 1893, *and* the Pier (Promenade) are of interest.



THE KAISERIN BATTERY, TO THE EAST OF BLANKENBERGHE.
In the background: The houses of Blankenberghe.

Follow Avenue Smet de Naeyer as far as the station, then turn left along Rue de l'Eglise, to the steps leading up to the dike. If it is not desired to visit the dike, turn to the right along Rue de l'Eglise and Rue des Pierres, then follow Avenue Jules de Trooz, and turn left along Avenue du Littoral. There are tram-lines along both avenues. Tourists who go as far as the dike should take Rue du Casino (on the right, at the top of Rue de l'Eglise), then Avenue Rogier which joins up with Avenue du Littoral.

Beyond Blankenberghe the road is bordered, on the left, with fortifications and batteries. *Follow it as far as* **Zeebrugge-Plage** (1 1/2 *kms.*).

The following batteries will be passed on the way :

The **"Kaiserin" Battery,** with four 6in. guns ; the **"Mittel B" Battery,** with four 4in. long guns on concrete platforms, adjusted for firing against aircraft (this battery is on the top of the dune, with shelters below) ; the **"Groden" Battery,** comprising four 11in. howitzers.

Lastly, near the port of Zeebrugge, is the **" Zeppelin " Battery,** of four 4in. guns. The entrance to it is situated a short distance before reaching Zeebrugge-Plage.

ZEEBRUGGE.

At Zeebrugge-Plage (Beach), near the Pilots' House, *turn to the left alongside the railway, to* the mole which bounds the Port of Zeebrugge on the west (*photo below, and sketch-map on page* 77).

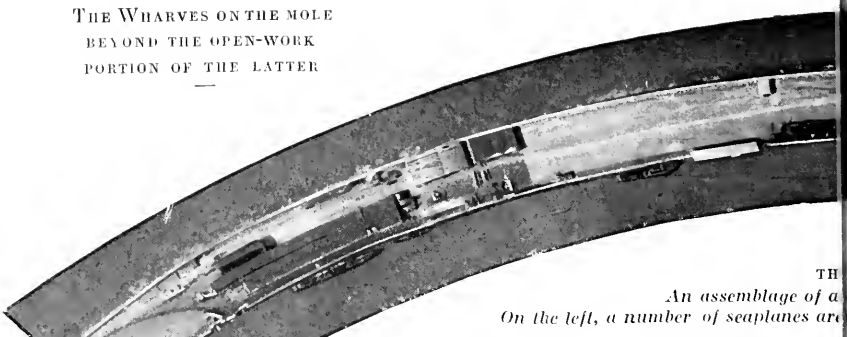
The port is situated about ten kilometers from Bruges, with which it is connected by a ship canal running straight across the littoral plain.

This canal, which is about 230 feet wide and 26 feet deep, is accessible to large ships. It cost forty-two million francs to construct. Communication with the roadstead is obtained by means of an inner-harbour which is provided with locks and sluice-gates.

The port is protected by a semi-circular jetty or mole which stretches

ENTRANCE TO THE MOLE AT ZEEBRUGGE (*see sketch, p. 77*).
At the entrance to mole : 6 in. guns on concrete platforms. To the right, at the end of the Mole : German Destroyer sunk by the British during the blockading operations (photo, p. 78).

THE WHARVES ON THE MOLE BEYOND THE OPEN-WORK PORTION OF THE LATTER



TH
An assemblage of a
On the left, a number of seaplanes are

THE BLOCKING O

Apr

out into the sea for a distance of about two kilometres ; an elevated side-walk leads to the end of the jetty. The latter, built of blocks of concrete each weighing three thousand tons, is divided into four parts : the first, which spans the beach, is solid ; the second is of openwork, to prevent the port becoming choked with sand ; the third comprises the wharves proper, and forms the terminus of a special railway siding ; it is solid and has an elevated walk running along the left hand side ; the fourth, or Lighthouse Jetty, is also solid and acts as a break-water. This immense undertaking, begun in 1893, was completed ten years later, and the new port, on which great hopes were set, was solemnly opened, amid popular rejoicings, by King Leopold.

In October 1914, the Germans made a "pirates nest" of the port, which was consequently attacked unceasingly by British ships and Allied aeroplanes. The most important of these attacks was that which resulted in the blocking of the port.

VICE-ADMIRAL KEYES.

Motor-cars may go along the mole as far as the end of the wharves. See text and photographs on pages 80 *and* 81.

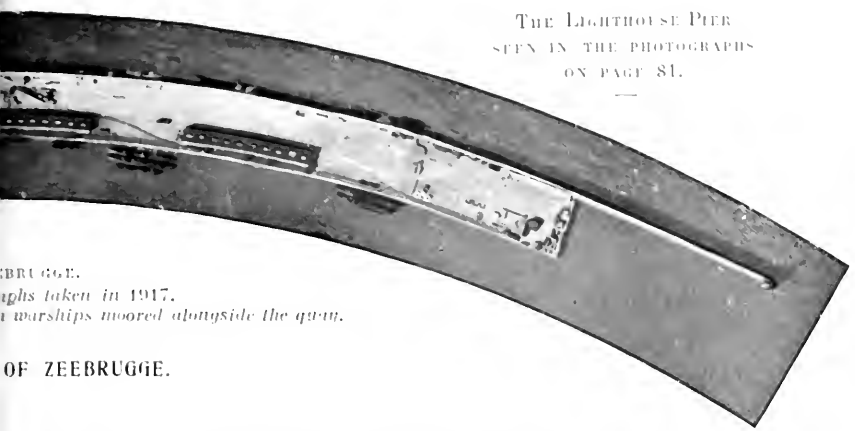
In spite of the enemy's formidable defences around Zeebrugge, the British determined to block that port, at the same time as Ostend (*See page* 68).

The operations, carefully planned in all details, were extremely perilous on account of the mine-fields, the nature of the landing-places (unmarked by any lights), and the difficulty of finding one's bearings near a coast where the dunes of varying heights are indistinguishable one from another. The enterprise was entrusted to Vice-Admiral Keyes, Commander of the Naval Forces at Dover. The attacking flotilla was composed as follows :

Three old cruisers the *Iphigenia* (Lieut. Billyard-Leake), the *Intrepid* (Lieut. Stuart Bonham-Carter) and the *Thetis* (Captain Sneyd), which, loaded with concrete, were to be sunk in the channel.

The protected cruiser *Vindictive* (Capt. Carpenter), was armed for an attack on the mole

THE LIGHTHOUSE PIER
SEEN IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS
ON PAGE 81.



EBRUGGE.
aphs taken in 1917.
warships moored alongside the quay.

OF ZEEBRUGGE.

sailors and marines were to land, destroy the guns, drive back the Germans, and create a diversion, thus enabling the blockading ships to carry out their mission.

Two ferry-boats: the *Iris* and *Daffodil*, armed for landing operations: two submarines, loaded with explosives, to attack the mole; destroyers to defend the flotilla against enemy attacks; launches and motor-scouts to pick up the crews of destroyed or sunken vessels, and smoke boats.

Vice-Admiral Keyes was on board the *Warwick*. All the men were picked volunteers of tried courage and energy.

The attack, several times postponed owing to the unfavourable weather, was carried out on April 22, 1918. The flotilla put to sea during the day. When about twelve miles off Zeebrugge, the boats parted company, each taking up its assigned position. The *Vindictive*, *Iris* and *Daffodil* advanced behind a smoke screen to within a few cable-lengths of the mole, when a change of wind dispersed the smoke, leaving them fully exposed to view. Enemy sirens immediately gave the alarm. Searchlights, rockets and starshells lit up the scene, and the air was immediately filled with the roar of artillery and the crackling of machine-guns.

Amid bursting shells and swept by machine-gun fire, the *Vindictive* succeeded in anchoring alon-

THE ATTACK ON ZEEBRUGGE.

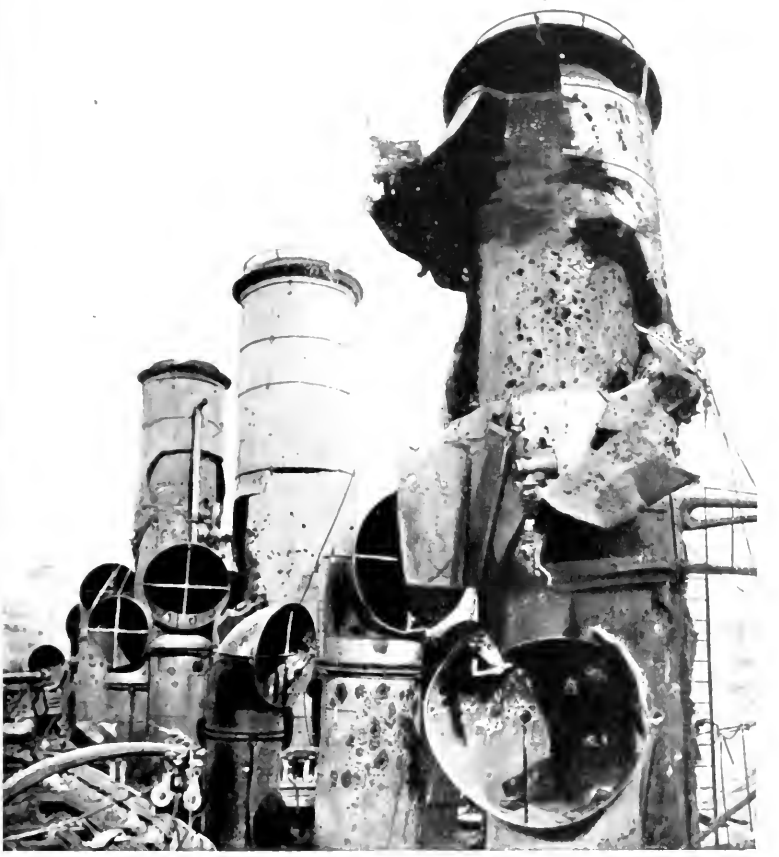
1. *The "Vindictive" alongside the mole, on which the Marines disembarked.*
2. *The "Daffodil" holding the "Vindictive".*
3. *The "Iris" alongside the mole.*
4. *The "Thetis" sunk in front of the Channel.*
5. *The "Intrepid" and "Iphigenia" sunk in the Channel.*
6. *Submarine blown up alongside the open-work pier.*
7. *Gun guns at entrance to mole* (photo. p. 75).
8. *Church and cemetery in which several of the British killed during the operations were buried* (photo, p. 80).

ZEEBRUGGE. ONE OF THE GERMAN DESTROYERS SUNK BY THE BRITISH.
(*See photo, p.* 75).

side the mole, but her deep draught and the surf prevented her remaining in position, until held by the *Daffodil*. Most of the eighteen gangways were smashed by the cruiser's rolling. The *Iris* was also in difficulties, her grappling irons being too small to catch hold. Two officers, Capt. Bradford and Lieut. Hawkins, climbed up the side of the mole and endeavoured to fasten the grappling irons. Both were killed. A landing was nevertheless effected, and in spite of heavy losses and the death of Colonel Elliot and Captain H. C. Halahan, the sailors and marines advanced along the mole, under very heavy fire, and for an hour destroyed the enemy's organisations, magazines, sheds, machine-gun posts, etc.

Meanwhile, the blockading cruisers had entered the port and were steering

ZEEBRUGGE. THE "INTREPID" AND "IPHIGENIA", SUNK IN THE CHANNEL.
Beyond, in the harbour : THE "THETIS" (*See sketch, p.* 77).



THE FUNNELS OF THE "VINDICTIVE", ON HER RETURN FROM ZEEBRUGGE. *After being summarily repaired, the "Vindictive" accomplished her last exploit, by bottling up Ostend Harbour on May* 11, 1918. (*See page* 68).

for the channel, despite the violence of the bombardment. The *Thetis* was leading, but her propeller becoming entangled in a net, she was unable to advance further, and her crew blew her up on a sandbank in front of the channel. The *Intrepid*, followed by the *Iphigenia*, reached the channel, placed themselves across it and were then blown up. The crews were picked up by the motor-boats.

Just at the time when these operations were being completed, Lieutenant Sandford's submarine succeeded, despite the terrific artillery fire, in reaching the open-work part of the mole, where she was blown up, shooting flames to a height of nearly 5,000 feet, and making a breach over 60 feet wide in the jetty. A motor-boat picked up her crew.

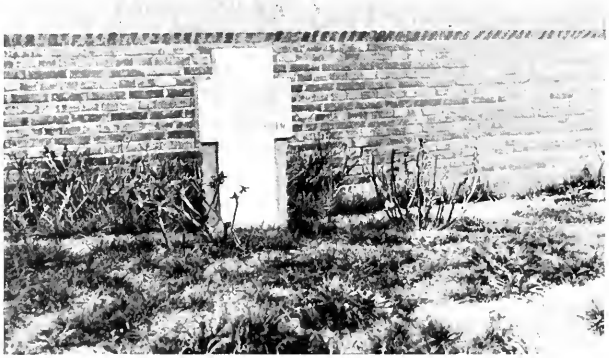
A German torpedo-boat and the *Brussels* were sunk by motor-launches. *(The "Brussels" was captured by the Germans on June 21, 1916. Her commander, Captain Fryatt, was shot on July 27, for having rammed the German submarine U-33).*

The open-work portion of the Mole destroyed by the British submarine, (Lieut. Sandford). Inset : temporary bridge built by the Germans and destroyed by them before their retreat.

The *Vindictive's* siren recalled the landing-party, who succeeded in bringing back most of their killed and wounded. The flotilla then weighed anchor and returned to Dover.

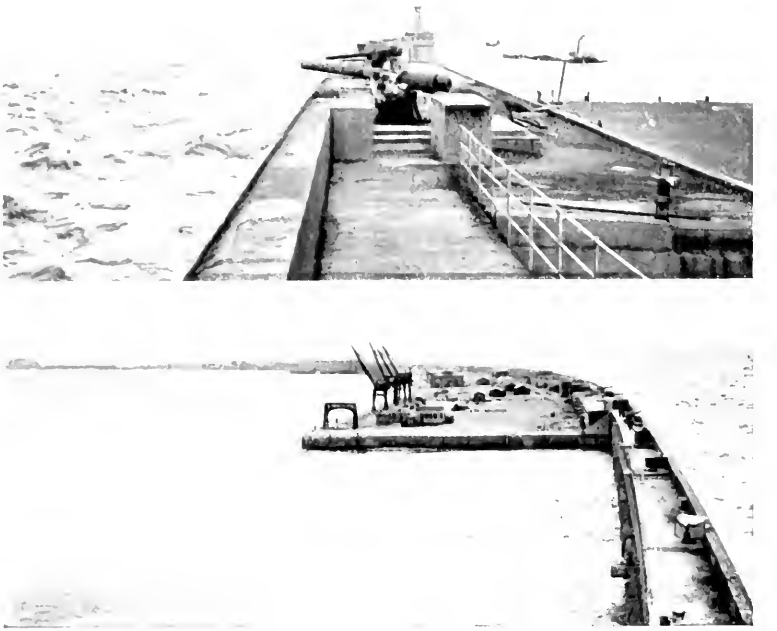
The operation had succeeded as well as could be expected. The two cruisers, although displaced slightly later by the Germans, blocked the channel, making it impossible for ships of other than light draught to go through. The *Thetis* also helped to obstruct the entrance to the channel.

Cars can go to the end of the wharves on the mole. Right and left of the entrance to the jetty are two 6in. guns on concrete platforms (*photo*, p. 75). Next comes the openwork part, repaired by a temporary bridge built



British Graves in Zeebrugge Cemetery.

The cross bears the following inscription (in German) : "Three English officers, seven English marines, two English sailors, two English stokers".



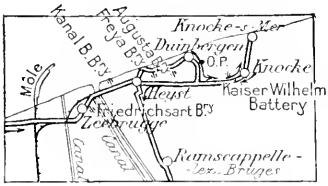
THE END OF THE WHARVES AND THE LIGHTHOUSE PIER.
The upper view is looking from the lighthouse; the lower view takes in the whole of the roadstead. See photos. pp. 76 and 77.

in the first instance by the Germans to replace that part of the jetty destroyed by Lieut. Sandford's submarine, and later rebuilt by the Belgians, after the Germans had destroyed it previous to retreating (*photos, p.* 90). The tourist now arrives at the mole, on the right side of which are the wharves with their sidings, sheds and cranes which were damaged either by air-raids and the British attack, or by the Germans previous to their retreat. On the left are concrete shelters which were used by the gunners for storing shells, etc. During the German occupation, the enemy's torpedo-boats and submarines were

A NEST OF SUBMARINES WITH THEIR SHELTERS OF REINFORCED CONCRETE.
These were the only shelters built by the Germans at Zeebrugge which they failed to destroy before retreating

THE FOUR GUNS OF THE "FRIEDRIECHSART" BATTERY.

moored alongside the wharves. Along the elevated side-walk are a battery of four 3 1/2in. guns and a number of 6in., 4in., 3in. and 1 1/2in. guns. The entrance to the channel, with the sunken cruisers and the "*Thetis*" stranded in front of them, can clearly be seen from the side-walk.



Return to the road and before crossing the canal take the road on the left which leads close to where the "Intrepid" and "Iphigenia" still lie. The work of clearing the entrance to the canal has begun.

Cross the **Bruges Canal** *by the locks, and proceed to* **Zeebrugge** (2 *kms.*), an important town which grew up around the port. On the left, in the cemetery behind the church, are the graves of several of the British who were killed in the expedition against Zeebrugge (*photo, p.* 80), and of the aviators who were brought down in the neighbourhood.

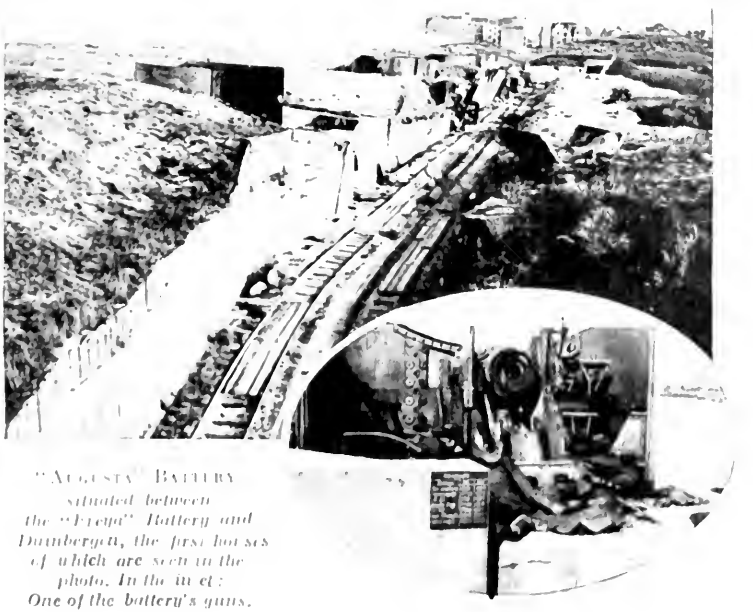
On leaving Zeebrugge, notice the "**Friedriechsart**" **Battery,** on the right

THE "FRIEDRIECHSART" BATTERY. ONE OF THE GUNS IN CASEMATE, AND SHELTERS.

THE "FREYA" BATTERY.
On the left: Heyst-sur-Mer. On the skyline: Zeebrugge Mole.

armed with four 6 1/2in. naval guns in closed turrets, turning on circular rail tracks mounted on concrete platforms. Between the guns are ammunition shelters connected with the guns by lifts, as on a battleship. In front are infantry defence-works which extend on both sides as far as the Bruges and Leopold Canals.

Cross the Léopold Canal; immediately beyond, on the left, is the **"Kanal B" Battery,** armed with 3 1/2in. guns, and on the right a battery of 3in. anti aircraft guns.

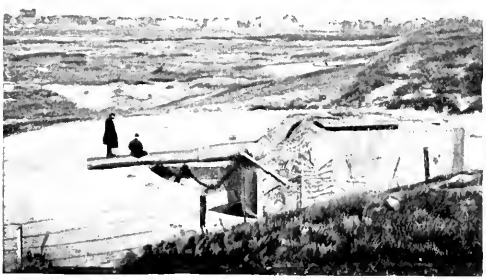


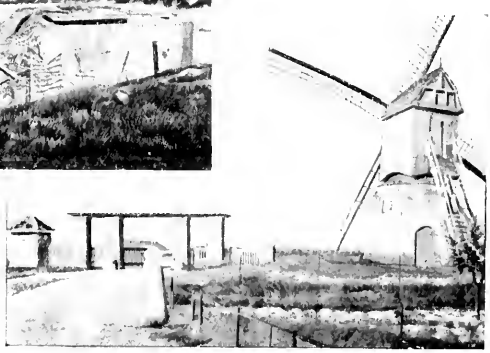
"AUGUSTA" BATTERY
situated between the "Freya" Battery and Dunbergen, the first houses of which are seen in the photo. In the inset: One of the battery's guns.

DUINBERGEN.
A, B and C: German observation-Posts on the house-tops. Seen from the observation-post on the Dune reached by following the arrow shown in the lower half of photo).

Continuing along the road, the tourist next reaches **Heyst-sur-Mer** (2 *kms.*) *skirting the hotels and villas on the dike. Beyond the last houses of Heyst, on the right, is* the **"Freya" Battery,** armed with four 8in. protected long-range guns, on circular concrete platforms. Between the left-hand gun and Heyst are two large ammunition shelters; the gunners' shelters are behind. This battery is prolonged by the **"Augusta" Battery,** armed with three 6in. guns on concrete platforms. There is a searchlight on the dike in front of the two batteries.

The road next passes through **Duinbergen** (1 1/2 *kms.*), where the Germans had observation-posts on the roofs of three houses. *In the village, turn to the right, at the corner of Pauwers*





KAISER-WILHELM II BATTERY,
to the west of Knocke (seen in the upper half of photo). Lower photo: the entrance to the battery, near the windmill.

Hotel (photo, p. 84) coming out behind the square which stretches as far as the dike, near a concrete observation-post, built on the top of a high dune, and commanding a fine view over the sea (*Photo, p. 84*).

Keep along the street in front of the square, going away from the sea; about 100 *yards beyond the tram-lines, turn left towards* **Knocke** (2 1/2 *kms.*).

Turn left, before reaching the church, to the mill, near which is the entrance to the **"Kaiser Wilhelm II" Battery.** The latter is armed with four 12in. long range guns, mounted on bridges, and pivoting round circular tracks in concrete pits, by means of electric motors (*Photos, p. 81*).

If it is desired to go as far as **Knocke-sur-Mer** (1 *km.*), *turn left, beyond the church, along Boulevard de Lippens.*

This is the most northern seaside place on the Belgian coast. Its church (St. Margaret's) possesses a 15th century tower. During the war, the Germans transformed several houses on the dike into concrete shelters.

Return to Knocke, proceeding thence to **Heyst** *along the road previously taken. Enter* HEYST (3 *kms.*) *by the Chaussée de Knocke; take Rue du Kursaal, on the left, then the Ramscappelle Road, on the right, bearing left again* 400 *yards further on.* 2 1/2 *kms. beyond* **Ramscappelle-lez-Bruges** *take the road on the right and cross the Leopold Canal.*

Go through **Dudzeele** *village, to the right of which are* the remains of a battery position, *and further along the road,* several concrete shelters.

Bruges (18 *kms.*) *is entered by the Chaussée de Dudzeele. Take the* **Fort Lapin**, *on the left, then cross the bridges, on the right, to the* **Plaine des Ecluses.**

Beyond the latter, follow Rempart des Bassins, then, on the left, Rue du Calvaire, prolonged by Rue St. Claire, Rue St. Georges and Rue Flamande, coming out at the **Grand'Place** (*See plan between pp. 88 and 89*).

BRUGES, *seen from Quai du Rosaire. In the background:* THE BELFRY, (*See* p. 97).

Bruges. Triumphal Entry of the Belgian Army, with King Albert and Queen Elizabeth at their head, on October 25, 1918.

BRUGES.

Origin and Chief Historical Events.

A burgh and a fortified bridge (whence the name of "Bruges" ("Brugge") on the Reye, a brook since absorbed by the canals,—such was the origin of the town.

In the 9th century Baudouin-Bras-de-fer, first count of Flanders and vassal of the French King replaced the original establishment with a fortified castle, around which, in spite of civil discords, quarrels between the rulers and their turbulent subjects, dissensions between the vassal and his suzerain, and rebellions by those two powerful Flemish *communes*—Ghent and Bruges—the town grew and prospered. These troubles were marked by sanguinary episodes, chief among which were the "Bruges Matins" (1302) in which thousands of the "Gens du Lys" (*Leliaerts*) partisans of France, lost their lives, and shortly afterwards the famous "Battle of the Golden Spurs", in which the flower of France's chivalry, lured into the Groeninghe Marshes, was annihilated by the Flemish pikemen (*clauwaerts*) led by Breydel the butcher, and Coninck the draper.

The era which followed this crisis was one of great prosperity for Bruges, then a vast emporium of European trade, being in close relation with London, Genoa, Venice, Augsburg and the Hanseatic towns. Wealth abounded. The rich foreign merchants built sumptuous mansions, several of which still exist. Bruges attained the height of its prosperity in the 15th century, under Burgundian rule. Favoured by the long reign of Philippe-le-Bon, "the Great Duke of the West", the arts, today the glory of the old city, flourished exceedingly.

Decadence set in, chiefly owing to the retreating of the sea and the gradual filling up of the creeks and harbours with sand. Trade steadily declined, whilst in the 16th century, political and religious troubles hastened the

BRUGES. THE GOVERNOR OF FLANDERS AND THE BURGOMASTER OF THE CITY WELCOMING KING ALBERT, QUEEN ELIZABETH AND PRINCE LEOPOLD IN THE GRAND'PLACE.

downfall of the city. The population of 200,000 dwindled away to 50,000, and at last the place came to be known as "Bruges-la-Morte".

Under the Republic and the Empire, the city, under French domination, became the capital of the Department of the Lys, and later, under Dutch rule (1815-1830), of Western Flanders. When, later, the kingdom of Belgium was constituted, it retained this rank.

Since that time, Bruges with her melancholic chimes has remained a quiet old-world place, the delight of lovers of art, who each year come to admire her treasures, amid the charm of quaintly picturesque scenery.

The boundaries of the city have remained unchanged since the time when Bruge's prosperity was at its height. The area of the town being the same as in the 14th century, it follows that the present-day population of 50,000—all that remains of the former 200,000 inhabitants—has plenty of elbow-room. However, the numerous open spaces and gardens in no way detract from the aesthetic appearance of the place. In shape an oval, stretching from the south-west to the north-east, the town is surrounded by ramparts and a wide exterior moat, except on the north (between the Gates of Ostend and Dammes) where they were demolished at the beginning of the present century, in order to connect up directly with the new ship canal. Parts of the ramparts have been transformed into boulevards, promenades and gardens. Of the numerous windmills which used to form a picturesque girdle round the city, only two, situated near the Sainte-Croix Gate, remain.

At the beginning of the present century, when the ship canal from Bruges to Zeebrugge was opened, the "dead" city made an effort to revive her ancient prosperity, but the irony of fate willed that the new port should mainly serve the German invader. On October 13, 1914, amid the confusion which followed the fall of Antwerp, and whilst the remains of the Belgian Army were falling back on the Yser, the Germans entered Bruges, and there established the reign of terror under which Belgium suffered for four long years. Happily, Bruges, like Ghent and Brussels, came out of the War practically unscathed.

King Albert and Queen Elizabeth leaving the Hotel Provincial (*October 25, 1918*).

From October 14, 1914 to October 19, 1918, Bruges was occupied by the Germans, with Admiral von Schroeder as Military Governor.

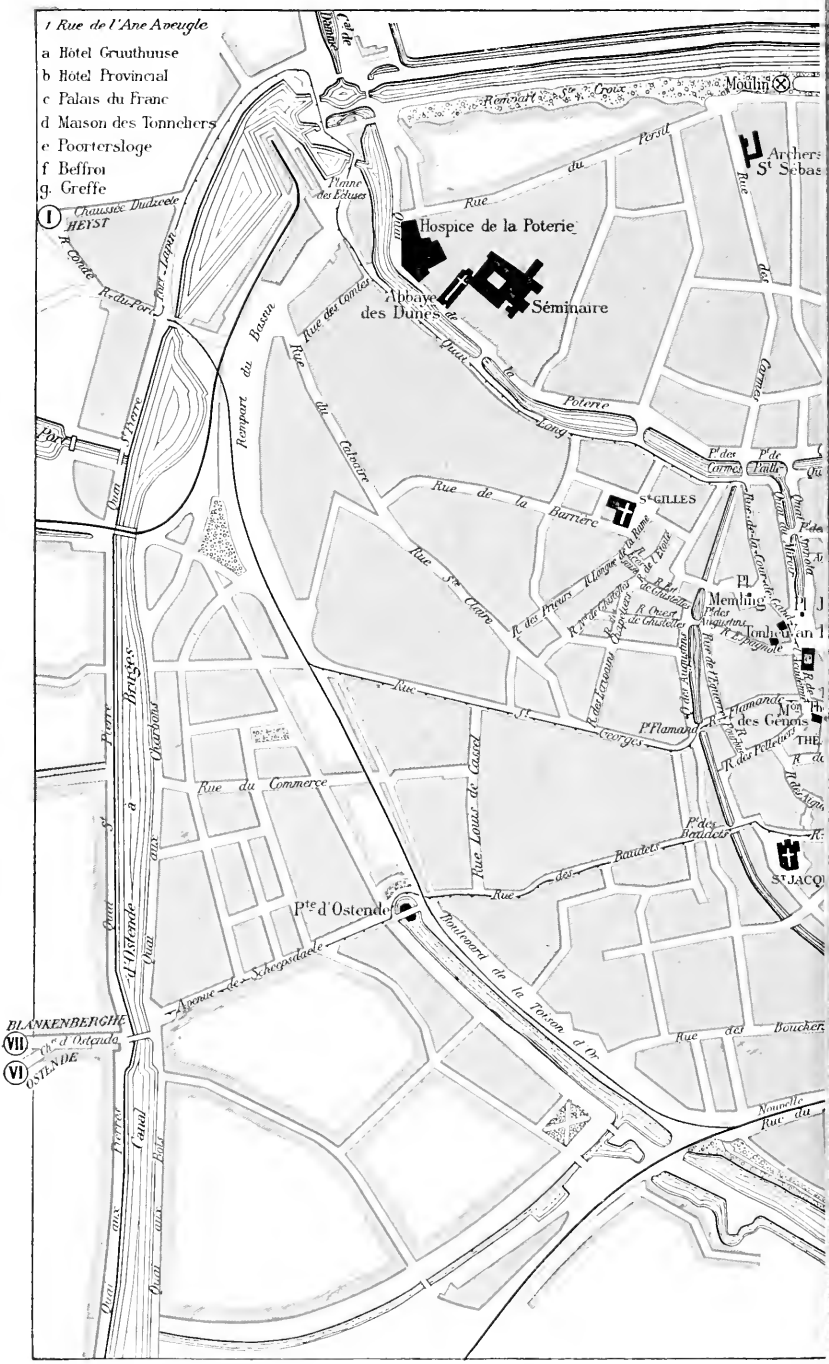
Requisitions to the amount of some sixty millions of francs were levied ; the factories were emptied of their machinery, and the warehouses of their raw materials.

The bombardments did little damage. The maritime quarter, in which were the Imperial workshops, alone received a number of aeroplane bombs.

It was in this strictly guarded arsenal that the Germans assembled and repaired their submarines. Armour-protected shelters and concrete-covered docks for the submarines not on active service, provided security for the enemy's intense activities. Immense reservoirs of crude oil furnished the boats with fuel. Before leaving, the Germans destroyed these works. The floating-docks, drags, cranes, and port machinery, etc., belonging to Belgium, were wrecked. Sunken hulls blocked up the channels. Huge quantities of stores, including girders, reinforced concrete, sand, etc., were left behind on the wharves.

After stripping the place of everything that could be carried off, after attempting to sell several captured boats which had been brought in there, and after blowing up the bridges, the enemy left the town. Through some mysterious and powerful intervention, the chimes in the belfry were left untouched, and as the Germans hurriedly departed, a peal rang out joyously. Flags and banners were taken from their hiding-places and hung in the streets and squares. "Bruges-the-dead" became "Bruges-the-living-and joyful".

On October 25, 1918, amid indescribable enthusiasm, and to the strains of "La Brabançonne" and "La Marseillaise", rung out on the old belfry chimes, King Albert, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Leopold, accompanied by the General Staff, General Degoutte and Admiral Ronarc'h, re-entered the liberated city.


1 Rue de l'Ane Aveugle
a Hôtel Gruuthuuse
b Hôtel Provincial
c Palais du Franc
d Maison des Tonneliers
e Poortersloge
f Beffroi
g. Greffe
Chaussée Dudzeele
HEYST
Hospice de la Poterie
Abbaye des Dunes
Séminaire
Moulin
Rue du Persil
Rue des Carmes
Rue des Comtes
Rue du Calvaire
Rue de la Barrière
Rue St Claire
Rue St Georges
Rempart du Bassin
Quai de la Poterie
Quai St Pierre
Quai aux Briques
Quai aux Charbons
Quai aux Fossés
Rue du Commerce
Rue Louis de Cassel
Rue des Baudets
Rue des Bouchers
Pte d'Ostende
Avenue de Scheepsdaele
Boulevard de la Toison d'Or
BLANKENBERGHE
VII
Chte d'Ostende
VI
OSTENDE
St GILLES
Memling
Tonneau
Pt Flamand
Pt des Carmes
Pt des Baudets
St JACQ
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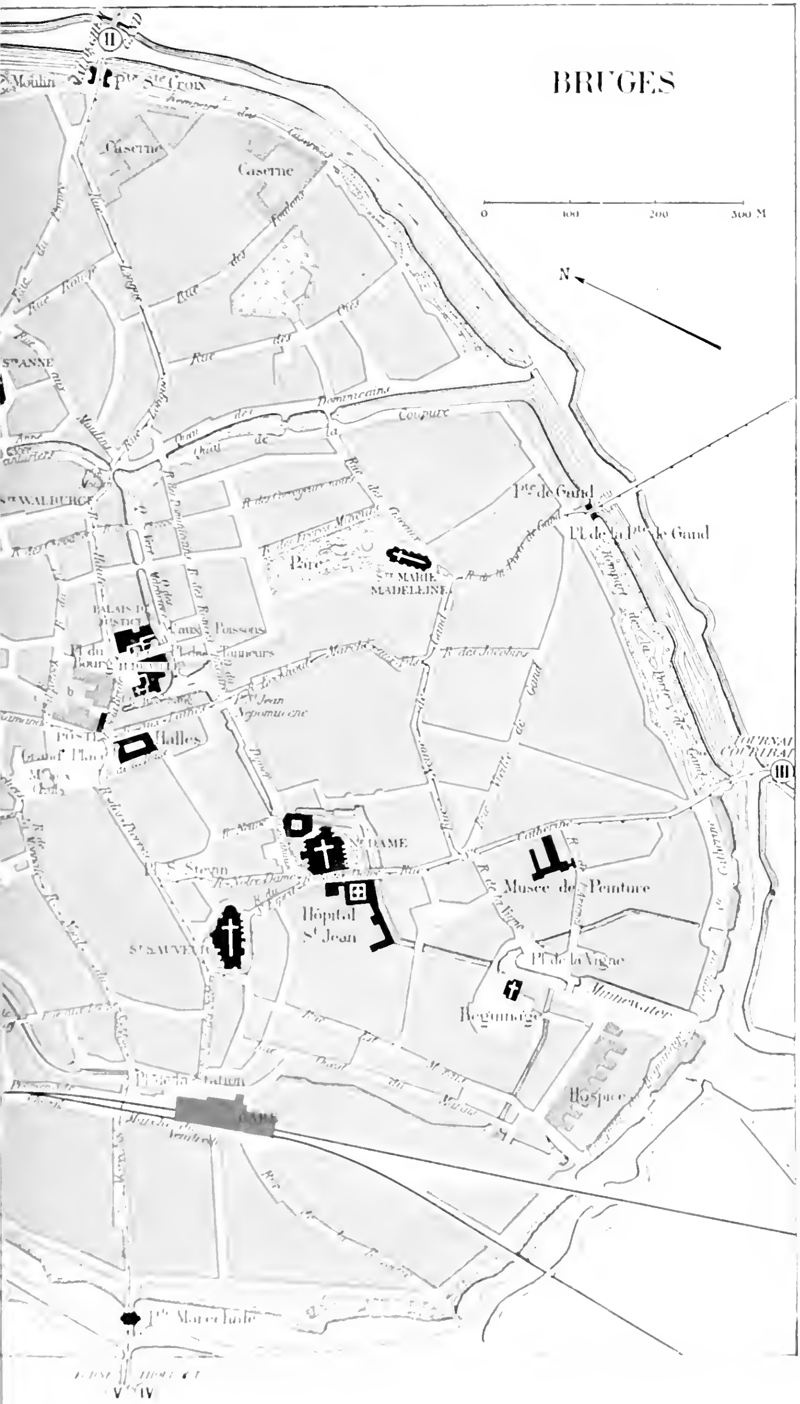
BRUGES
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Caserne
Rue des Pandours
Rue Longue
Rue des Dominicains
Coupure
Quai de la Coupure
Ste ANNE
Ste WALBURGE
Pte de Gand
Pl. de la Pte de Gand
Parc
Ste MARIE MADELEINE
R. des Jacobins
PALAIS DE JUSTICE
Poissons
Tanneurs
St Jean Nepomucene
POSTE
Halles
Grand' Place
NOTRE DAME
Pl. St Sauveur
ST SAUVEUR
Hôpital St Jean
Musée de Peinture
Pl. de la Vigne
Minnewater
Beguinage
Hospice
Pl. de la Station
GARE
Pte Maréchale
Rue de Gand
Rue Verte de Gand
Rue Ste Catherine
Rue du Marais
Rue du Vent
Rempart de la Porte de Gand
Rempart Ste Catherine
II
III
IV
V

A VISIT TO BRUGES.

See Coloured Plan between pp. 88-89.

To facilitate visiting the city, two excursions are indicated, both of which start from and return to the Grand'Place.

In Belgium, the churches are generally closed from noon to 2 p.m. The chapels, in which the works of art are kept, can be visited at specified hours, for a small fee. The same applies to the Hôtel-de-Ville.

Before starting to visit Bruges, obtain particulars from the Bureau Officiel de Renseignements, Grand'Place, underneath the Belfry (3 minutes from the station).

FIRST EXCURSION.

The Grand'Place.

The Grand'Place or Grand Marché is in the centre of the city. The "Halles" occupy the south side, and the Hôtel du Gouvernement Provincial and General Post Office the western side. On the northern side is a row of remarkable gabled houses (*photo below*), while to the east, at the corner of the Rue St. Amand, stands the Hôtel Bouchoute which, in 1839, was surmounted with a metal ball indicating the meridian line. In the centre is a monument by the sculptor Paul de Vigne, erected in 1887 to the memory of the famous communists Breydel and de Coninck.

Bruges — Ancient houses in the Grand'Place.

General View of Bruges, seen
A. *Ostend*; B. *Church of St. Jacques*; C. *Blankenberghe*; D. *The Theatre*;
H. *Heyst*; I. *Duinbergen*;

The Halles and Belfry.

The Belfry. *In front*: The Statue to Breydel and Coninck.

It is this edifice—an eloquent witness of the city's past grandeur and symbol of the ancient prosperity of the "Queen of the West"—which characterises Bruges. The building measures 270 feet in length by 110 feet in width. The low galleries with groined vaulting on the ground-floor, contain an archæological museum, whilst those on the first floor are used for exhibition purposes.

The belfry, in the centre of the façade, is 264 feet high, and comprises two massive, square, superimposed towers, decorated with pinnacles connected by a balustrade. Above rises a third octagonal tower supported by flying buttresses. This last story, which contains the famous peal of bells, was added towards the end of the 15th century. It was surmounted, first with a spire, and later, after the spire was

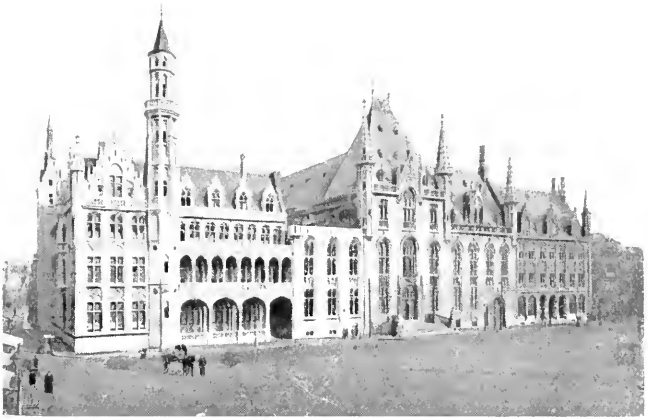
FROM THE TOP OF THE BELFRY.
E. *Water-Works of Zeebrugge*; F. *Zeebrugge Canal*; G. *Port of Bruges*; J. *Church of St. Gilles*; K. *Knocke*.

burnt, with a triple campanile, destroyed by lightning in 1741. A balustrade now crowns the tower.

The Renaissance statue of the Virgin, on a stem-like ornament over the main doorway (1819), replaced the original one which was broken during the Revolution (1793). Above is a *bretèche*, from which public announcements were made.

The "Halles" date from the 12th century, but were enlarged in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. *Pass under the vaulted entrance, to the staircase which leads to the upper stories and tower.* A spiral stair of 403 steps leads to the upper platform, which commands a very extensive and impressive view: on the one side, the littoral, with its watering-places and ports, stretching as far as Flushing; on the other side, the Flemish plain, with its towns, burghs, and villages. To the chequered history

THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. SAVIOUR
Rue du Beffroi.

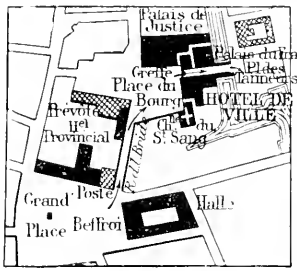


THE HOTEL DU GOUVERNEMENT PROVINCIAL.

of this region, a new and far more tragical page has just been added. The visit to the tower comprises : the first story, in which is the "Big Ben" dating from 1680, and weighing nearly six tons ; it was taken from Notre-Dame Church and placed there in 1800 ; the watchmen's room, and lastly the belfry proper, containing a peal of forty-six bells, cast in 1713, and rung either by a cylinder or a key-board. During the German occupation the bells remained dumb.

The Hôtel du Gouvernement Provincial.

This edifice was rebuilt in rich 16th century style (Gothic and Renaissance combined) after the fire which destroyed the original building in 1878. It stands on the site of the old "Water Halle" which was skirted by a canal, now covered in. The German invasion interrupted the completion of the right wing, at the corner of the Rue Philipstock. Excavations carried out on this site laid bare the old pillars of the "Water Halle".



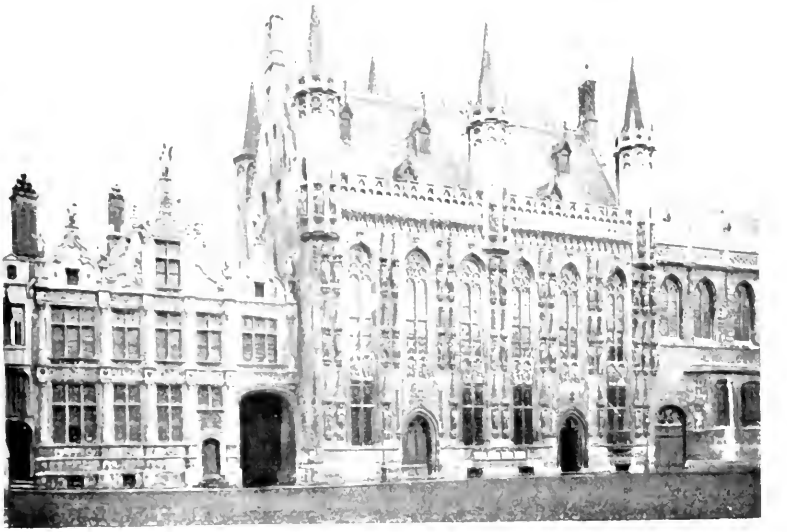
Leave the Grand'Place by Rue de la Bride, at the corner of which is the **Hôtel des Postes** *(Post Office). The tourist next reaches the Place du Bourg, in which are : on the left,* the **Prévôté** : *on the right,* the **Hôtel-de-Ville**, between the **Chapel of St. Sang** and the **Greffe**.

The Prévôté.

The Prévôté, formerly the residence of the Provosts of the Chapter of St. Donatian, was built in 1661. Its Renaissance façade has been partially restored. On the *terre-plein* planted with fine trees, which adjoins it, stood the ancient Cathedral of St. Donatian, pulled down in 1790. Charles-le-Bon, Count of Flanders, was assassinated there in 1127.

The Hôtel-de-Ville.

This beautiful Gothic structure is ornamented with six storied corbel-turrets, covered with niches and small statues of the Counts of Flanders (3716-1389).



THE HOTEL-DE-VILLE, SEPARATED FROM THE "GREFFE" (*on the left*) BY THE ENTRANCE TO THE NARROW STREET OF THE "ANE AVEUGLE".

Badly disfigured during the Revolution, the building was inartistically restored in 1851, as witness the small replace statues. The dependencies facing the narrow street "Ane Aveugle", the canal, and the rear of the Chapel of St. Sang, were either rebuilt or restored in modern times.

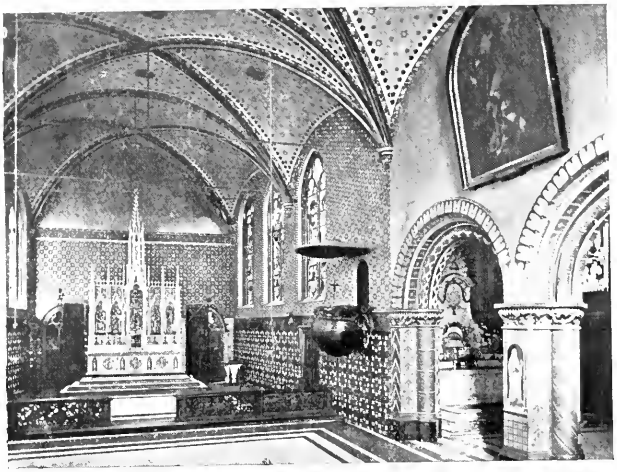
On the ground-floor are a large hall, the Council Chamber, and the Burgomaster's office. The staircase leads to the *Salle des Echevins*, which occupies practically the whole length of the story. It was decorated quite recently by A. de Vriendt with frescoes illustrating episodes from the history of Bruges. Its magnificent Gothic vaulting is ornamented with pendent wood work.

The Chapel of Saint-Sang.

Adjoining the Hotel-de-Ville, on the right, is the Chapel of Saint Sang (Holy Blood, *opposite and on p. 9.*). This famous name was given to two superimposed sanctuaries. The lower one (12th century) with short massive pillars, was dedicated to St. Basil. In the upper one (15th century), is kept the shrine of the Holy Blood, brought from Palestine

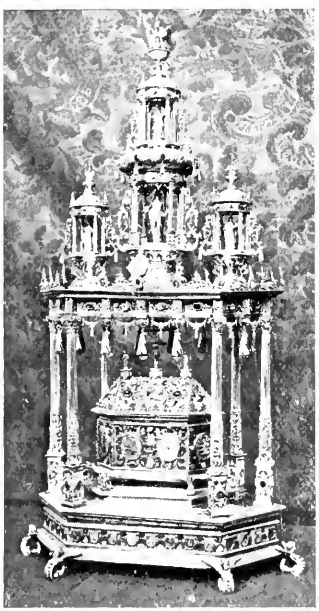
THE CHAPEL OF SAINT-SANG.

THE CHAPEL OF ST. SANG.



according to tradition, by Count Thierry d'Alsace, in 1148. This was the starting-point of the famous procession which, before the German invasion, used to attract large numbers of people to Bruges each year, and was in fact a public festival. Inaugurated in 1303, it takes place on the first Monday following May 3.

The pretty, Flamboyant, two-storied building of blue stone, containing the staircase which leads to the upper chapel, dates from 1530. The chapel is in striking contrast with the massive "crypt" of St. Basil. The stained-glass windows, representing the Dukes of Burgundy, are practically copies of the magnificent windows formerly sold by the City Authorities to a local second-hand dealer for 14 francs each, and which now adorn an English mansion.



THE SHRINE OF ST. SANG.

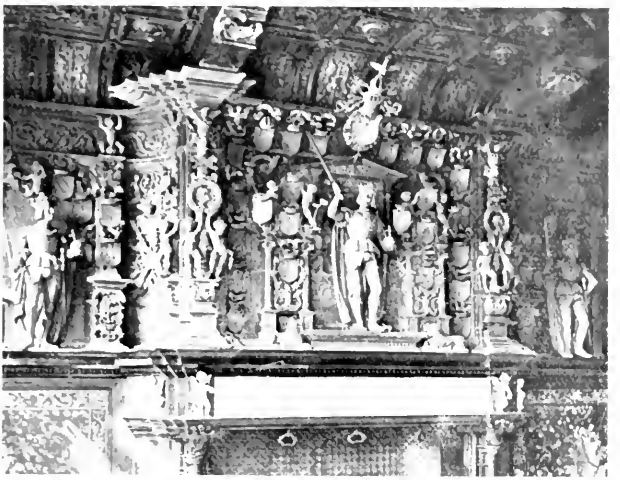
The shrine of St. Sang was made in 1611-1617 by Jean Crabbe, the Bruges goldsmith, to replace the one destroyed in 1578. It is a very fine piece of Renaissance workmanship in different metals studded with gems (*Photo opposite*).

The "Greffe".

Built in 1535-1537, the pretty façade was restored, re-gilded and adorned with statues in 1881-1884 (*Photo, p.* 93).

The Palais-de-Justice and Palais-du-Franc.

The chief interest of the Palais-de-Justice lies in the ancient *Chambre Echevinale* which contains the famous mantelpiece so often reproduced pictorially, although no image can give an adequate idea of its richness and splendour



Mantelpiece in the Palais-de-Justice.

(*Photo* above). In this "poem of carved wood", the great artist, Lancelot Blondeel, expressed with wonderful power and wealth of detail the apotheosis of Charles-Quint. The imperial effigy, forming a central *motif*, stands out boldly in relief. The other life-size figures which surmount the panels to the right and left represent: *on one side*, Maximilian of Austria and Marie of Burgundy; *on the other side*, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, ancestors of the Emperor. The mantelpiece proper is in black marble with a frieze of alabaster representing, in bas-relief, the story of Susannah. This masterpiece was conceived by Blondeel and executed by Guyot de Beaugrant.

Leave Place du Bourg by the narrow street "Ane Aveugle", which, passing under an arcade, runs between the "Greffe" and the Hôtel-de-Ville, coming out at the "*Marché-aux-Poissons*" (Fish-Market). Immediately on the left is seen the charming vista of the "Quai des Marbriers" and "Quai Vert", one of the most deservedly renowned places in Bruges.

That part of the "Palais du Franc" which was rebuilt in the 16th century overlooks the canal, with its long row of gables and graceful turrets (restored in 1880, by P. Buyck).

Ruelle de l'Ane Aveugle.

Panorama seen
On the left: Church of Notre-Dame and Bridge of

The Palais-de-Justice and Palais-du-Franc.
Seen from the Quai des Marbriers.

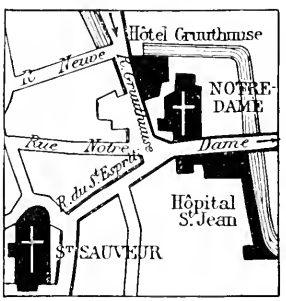
FROM THE QUAI DU ROSAIRE.
St. Jean de Nepomucen., On the right: The Belfry.

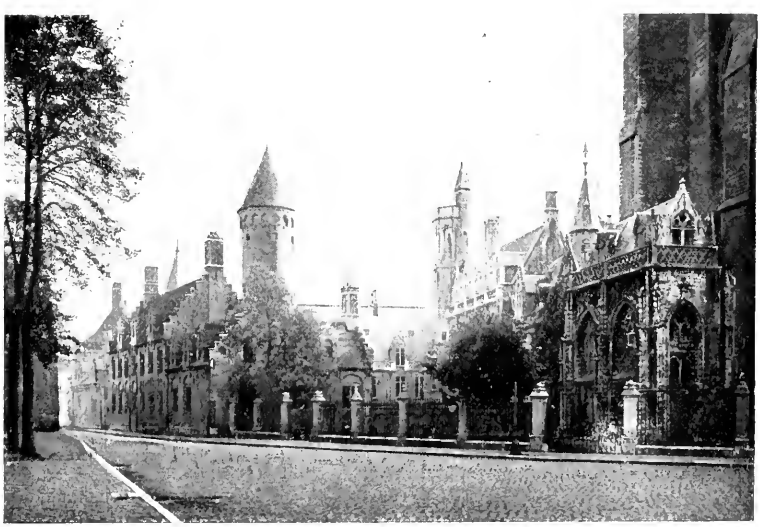
THE QUAI DU ROSAIRE.
See plan between pp. 88 and 89

Beyond the canal, turn to the right and cross the PLACETTE DES TANNEURS *leading to* the charming QUAI DU ROSAIRE and LE DYVER. The Quai du Dyver widens, and is planted with fine old trees. Opposite, picturesque buildings, nestling amidst foliage, are reflected in the still water. The lofty spire of Notre-Dame dominates all the surrounding country. *The Rue Neuve Bridge is next reached* ; there the canal (formerly the river Reye), makes a sharp bend and disappears under the building facing the bridge. (*Beyond the latter, take the Rue Gruuthuuse as far as* a new group of remarkable buildings : NOTRE-DAME CHURCH, Hôtel Gruuthuuse and St. JOHN'S HOSPITAL).

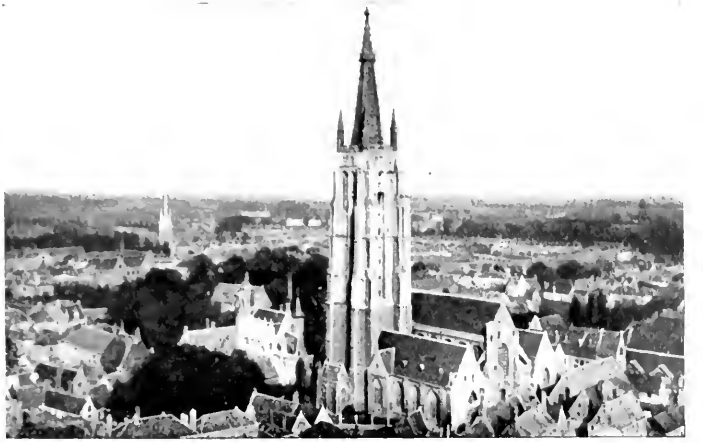
The Hôtel Gruuthuuse.

This pretty structure, situated with Notre-Dame Church in a bend of the Reye, was formerly the house of the malt tax-collector. It was leased in the 15th century to a certain Grutarius who erected that part of the building overlooking the Reye, a fine primitive Bruges style gable of which still remains. The main part of the building, with its façade, beautiful dormer windows, and a turretted stair-case, was erected some fifty years later by Louis de Gruuthuuse. The house had just been completed when, in 1471, Gruuthuuse received King Edward IV of England, who had been driven into exile by Warwick. At the end of the following century, the family having become extinct, the mansion was purchased by Philippe II. In 1628, the municipal *mont-de-piété* was installed there, where it remained until 1875, in which year the city acquired the premises to house the collections of the Archæological Museum. The mansion has been thoroughly restored in modern times.





HOTEL GRUUTHUUSE AND NORTH TRANSEPT OF NOTRE-DAME CHURCH.



Church of Notre-Dame.

Notre-Dame Church.

The church of Notre-Dame with its enormous buttressed tower surmounted by a crocketted spire, is 400 feet high and with its satellites, St. Saviour and the Belfry, dominates the entire city and surroundings. It is said

The lofty spire of Notre-Dame Church dominates the surrounding country. Its reflection is seen in the calm waters of the "Minnewater" with that of St. Saviour's (*on the left*) and the Belfry (*on the right*).

Notre-Dame Church. The Nave.

to be the largest brick construction in existence.

The church is a strange mixture of restorations, additions and alterations, which have changed its character and destroyed its harmony. The general style is early Gothic, and reveals its 13th century origin. Two side-aisles were added to the three original naves, the first about the middle of the 14th century, and the second a century later. The façade nearest the hospital, flanked with round turrets, was badly mutilated. Recent attempts have been made to restore it, and at the same time to suppress certain unbecoming, extraneous masonry-work, but through lack of documents, the work was necessarily carried out in a more or less hypothetical manner. At the foot of the gigantic tower and in striking contrast with its severe nudity is the Radial-Gothic *Baptistère*, an ancient protruding porch dating from the 15th century, the double arcade of which was walled up to form a chapel for the font.

In the interior one is struck, on entering, by the work of simple juxtaposition which added a side-aisle to the original one, by opening the arcades in the old wall and setting new pillars against the ancient buttresses. The whole of the interior bears marks of similar treatment. The vaulting of the naves was reconstructed in the 18th century, when the present heavy triforium was built. The small arcades which ornamented the walls were filled in, but portions have recently been uncovered and restored.

The Virgin and Child.
By Michael Angelo.

The building is 237 feet long and 165 feet wide. An 18th century rood-loft surmounted with an organ-case separates the nave from the choir. Above the organ a triumphal cross (1594) is suspended from the vaulting. The choir stalls, like the cathedral, bear the arms of the Knights of the Golden Fleece, in commemoration of the 11th. Chapter held in Notre-Dame in 1468.

The principal interest of the church lies in the works of art which it contains: *The Virgin and Child* by Michael Angelo, and the *Tombs of the last two Sovereigns of the House of Burgundy: Charles-le-Téméraire and his daughter Marie, wife of Maximilian of Austria*, whose mausoleum at Innsbruck, is likewise a marvel.

TOMB OF CHARLES-LE-TÉMÉRAIRE.

The Virgin and Child (on the altar of the Holy Sacrament, at the end of the right nave), was the gift of Jean Mouscroen, the donor of the altar, who paid a hundred ducats for it to the great sculptor in 1511. Its origin, which was long disputed, is now definitely established (*Photo, p. 100*).

The tombs of Charles-le-Téméraire and Marie of Burgundy, originally placed in the choir where they worthily contributed to the decoration of the sanctuary, were later removed to a closed chapel on the right, formerly the old *Chanterie* —reconstituted in 1812— of the *écoutète* Pierre Lanchals, who was tortured and beheaded in 1488 by the city burghers. His tombstone is still to be seen there, but it is the Burgundian tombs which retain the visitor's attention. Reproductions of the latter abound, and several European museums (among others, Cluny, Paris) possess plaster facsimilies. That of Marie is sixty years earlier than her father's and is greatly superior both in style and execution. It is the work of Pierre Beckee of Brussels; the other is by Junghelinck, a native of Antwerp. The *sarcophagi* are in black marble with recumbent life-size statues of gilded copper; on the sides are the enamelled armorial bearings of the numerous domains belonging to the House of Burgundy. Philippe-le-Beau dedicated this mausoleum to his mother, who died at the age of 25 in consequence of a fall from her horse. Later, the remains of Charles-le-Téméraire, killed at Nancy, having been taken to Bruges, Philippe II had a tomb built for them on the lines of the first one. At the time of the Revolution the tombs were taken to pieces and hidden; the parts were reassembled in 1816, thanks to a subsidy of 10,000 francs granted by Napoleon.

The church contains many 17th and 18th century pictures, several remarkable works dating from the 15th and 16th centuries, paintings, panels and polyptics, among others an *Adoration of the Shepherds* by P. Pourbus, a *triptych* (first chapel on the left of the Ambulatory), and a *Transfiguration* triptych, the central panel of which is attributed to Mistaert (first chapel on the south side-aisle). Claeysseus, Van Orley, Marc Gheeraerts, Gerard Zeghers (*Adoration of the Wise Men* (western wall) etc... are likewise represented. In the Ambulatory, on the left-hand side, is the Gruuthuuse *tribune* of carved stone and wood, which used to communicate with the neighbouring house and was built by Louis de Gruuthuuse in 1472. Several other tombs are worthy of note, among others, that of *Gérard David*, the famous painter of *The Unjust Judge*; deceased in 1523, he was buried near the lower staircase. The Sacristy contains some fine 16th century sacerdotal ornaments named after Marie of Burgundy.

The Cathedral of St. Saviour.

This church, with its massive tower, rises abruptly on the left. The cemetery which formerly surrounded it has been transformed into a public garden surrounded with railings and heavy modern pilasters. The church was built in 1183-1228 in the fine primitive Gothic style of the period, on the site of an ancient sanctuary which was destroyed by fire. Vestiges of its stone foundations are still visible in the tower. The building was frequently modified in the course of time, hence an *ensemble*, in which figure the various periods of the Gothic style: parts of the transept and the choir, 13th century; the naves, 14th century; the chevet and apsidal chapels, 15th and 16th centuries; the vaulting, rebuilt in 1732; the four pinnacled spires of the tower, completed in 1875. The principal measurements are as follows :—length : 330 feet ; width : 126 feet ; width at the transept : 176 feet ; height : 96 feet.

Cathedral of St. Saviour.

Like Notre-Dame (*see p. 99*), St. Saviour's is a typical specimen of the Flemish churches, as regards its rich furnishings, decoration and ornaments which form a veritable collection of works of art. Access is gained through two side doorways.

Polychrome decoration (1874-1875 by J. Bethune) replaced the previous distemper on the walls, pillars and ribs of the vaulting, itself believed to hide a former decoration of which no traces remain. A marble rood-loft of the 17th century decorated with a statue of the *The Creator* by Quellin the Younger, and surmounted by an organ-case, separates the nave from the choir. The latter contains curiously carved 15th century choir-stalls, above which are the armorial bearings of the Knights of the Golden Fleece, a famous order founded by Philippe-le-Bon in 1429, and whose 13th chapter was held in the cathedral in 1478.

The numerous paintings by local artists include : *The Martyrdom of St. Hippolytus*, a polyptych (veiled), attributed to Dierick Boute, in the third chapel of the ambulatory. On the left of the transept, in the Chapelle des Cordonniers is the *Tombstone of Burgher Wautier Copman* (1387), with its wonderful, shrouded figure — the finest tombstone that the 14th century has left us. Opposite is *another fine stone*, though inferior in style, i.e. that of Martin de Visch (1453). Various tablets of brass and bronze in relief, carved wood altar-pieces, tombs of bishops, the shrine of Charles-le-Bon, etc..., besides the art treasures in the *Salle des Marguilliers* and sacristy, are worthy of note.

Rue St. Catherine, River Reye, and Hôpital St. Jean.

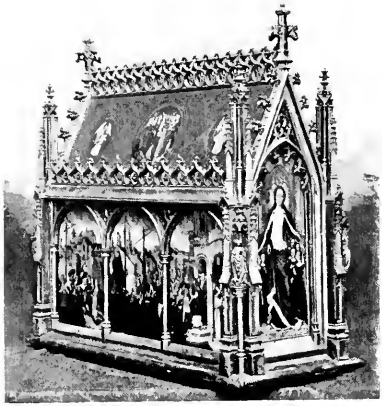
The St. John Hospital.

The broad gateway of this building, with its low vaulting, opens out in front of Notre-Dame, from which it is separated by Rue St. Catherine. A little further on, the old entrance, now walled-up, has retained its small corner columns and double tympanum, the latter containing a rare specimen of 13th century decorative art, i.e. two high reliefs depicting : *The Death of the Virgin* and *The Burial Scene*. Unfortunately, the entrance has been entirely restored in such a manner as to take away much of the interest which attached to the mutilated structure.

Here the Rue St. Catherine crosses the Reye, in whose waters are reflected the gloomy walls, pierced with high windows, and the stepped gables of the hospital, forming one of the most striking sights of old Bruges (*Photo above*).

The building dates from the 13th century and contains a number of *antiques* together with the names of the donors. Behind the remarkable old building facing the street, a new hospital was built in 1856 on the site of the cemetery ; fortunately, the uninteresting appearance of these modern constructions is hidden by the old buildings.

The hospital includes a small museum, in which are kept the famous works of Hans Memling, classified under the following names : *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine* (large folding altar-piece), *The Adoration of the Child Jesus* (triptych with oak panels), *Sibylle Sambetha* (portrait of Mary Moreel, from the Hospital of St. Julien), *The Virgin with Apple* (a diptych of the same origin), and lastly, the famous *Shrine of St. Ursula*, made of wood, with double gables, about 34 inches high, 36 inches long, and 13 inches wide, bearing on its sides, framed with archings and separated by small columns, representations of the six episodes from the Legend of St. Ursula and the eleven thousand Virgins. (*Photo p. 104.*)



St. Ursula's Shrine.

The two panels of the gables represent the Saint and the Madonna respectively ; 6 medallions, attributed to a pupil of Memling, decorate the roof.

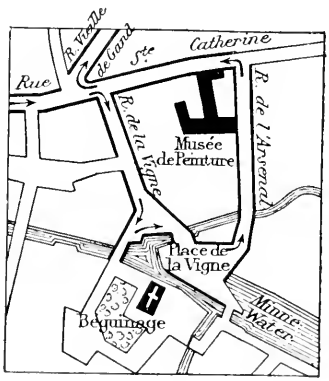
The six side panels represent the episodes of the legend : 1, *St. Ursula landing at Cologne;* 2, *Passing through Basle;* 3, *Reception in Rome* (the masterpiece of the series); 4, *Return to Basle;* 5, *The Massacre of the Virgins at Cologne;* 6, *Death of St. Ursula* (*Photo opposite*).

About sixty pictures of great value complete the Hospital Museum, together with a number of relics and pieces of carving. Most of them are by unknown masters. Among others, the masterpiece by Van Oost the Elder, the *Meditating Christian*, is especially worthy of notice. The hospital contains other curiosities, such as the Chapel, the Dispensary with its ancient furniture and fittings, and the old patients' ward with its double vaulted nave.

The Béguinage Convent and the Minnewater.

Follow Rue St. Catherine (*continuation of Rue Notre-Dame, beyond the Hospital*), *then take Rue de la Vigne* (*third on the right*) *leading to Place de la Vigne. Immediately on the right, behind the Béguinage Bridge over the Reye, at the end of Minnewater Lock, is* the Renaissance porch (1776) of the entrance to the Béguinage Convent (*photo, p. 105 and sketch below*).

A grassy courtyard shaded with slender elms and bordered by low white cottages, neat and clean like those of a Dutch village, breathes monastic calm and peace. The tiny church, dating from the beginning of the 17th century, was built on the site of the 13th century edifice (destroyed by fire). The Béguinage was founded by Countess Jeanne of Constantinople. The northern door is the only remaining vestige of the former building. In the interior are several paintings and tombs of Nuns ("Béguines"). Adjoining the house of the Supérieure (Grande Dame), is a 15th century chapel containing a carved tabernacle, a brass tablet with a 16th century effigy, and painted vaulting.



On the right, at the other side of the bridge is the Minnewater (*Photo, p. 105 and sketch opposite*).

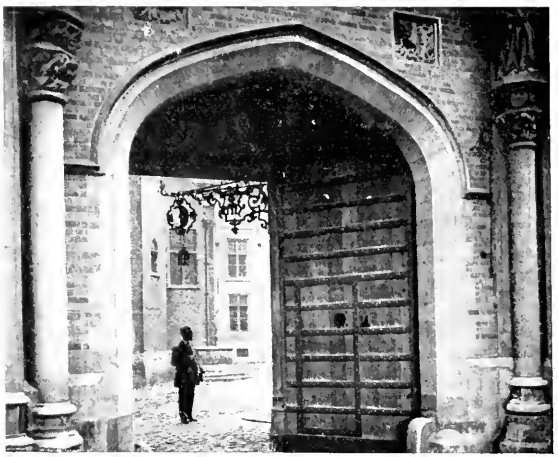
The Minnewater was formerly a navigable basin constructed at the point where the Reye enters the city. The original wooden bridge, flanked with two towers of masonry, was replaced in 1470 by the present structure. The eastern tower no longer exists, but the round

Entrance to the Béguinage.

western one still stands at the head of the bridge, and commands a charming view—often reproduced pictorially—of the town, with its towers and the Béguinage Convent in the foreground.

Follow Rue de l'Arsenal, turning left into Rue St. Catherine, at the corner of which stands the Musée de Peinture (*See sketch, p. 104*).

The Minnewater. *In the background :* Tower of Notre-Dame.



Entrance to the Musée de Peinture.

The Musée de Peinture.

This Museum contains a collection of early Flemish masterpieces. At the entrance are two famous paintings by Gérard David (1498): *The Judgment of Cambyses* and *The Chastisement of the Unjust Judge*. Next come: *The Last Judgment*, by Jean Prévost (1525); *The Baptism of Christ*, a triptych by Gérard David (1507), with portraits of the donor and his family; *The Virgin and Child, St. George* and *St. Donatian*, with a fine portrait of the donor, *Canon Van der Paele*, by Jean van Eyck (1436); a triptych by Memling (1484); *St. Christopher, St. Maurus and St. Giles*, with a portrait of the donor, W. Moreel, his wife, five sons and eleven daughters (St. George and John-the-Baptist are depicted on the folding leaves); *The Last Judgment*, by Van den Coornhuuse, a master-painter of Bruges; two miniatures, by G. David; two paintings, by Lancelot Blondeel (1545): *St. Luke* and *The Legend of St. George;* also paintings by Pourbus, Clayessens, Claeys, Van Oost and Van Goyen.

Continue along Rue St. Catherine, taking on the right. Rue Vieille-de-Gand as far as Place de la Porte de Gand.

The Porte de Gand.

The Porte de Gand.

This is one of the city's former seven gates, of which only four remain. The Ghent Gate, a specimen of the military architecture of the Middle-Ages, has like the St. Croix Gate (*p. 108*), retained much of its mediæval aspect. To the right of the gate are gardens which occupy part of the ramparts.

Quai Vert, seen from the Quai des Dominicains.

Take Rue de la Porte de Gand, opposite the gate, to the modern Church of Mary-Magdalene, Gothic in style, situated in front of a pretty park.

Take Rue des Ciseaux, which skirts the church on the right, then Rue des Corroyeurs Noirs, on the left, prolonged by Rue du Cheval.

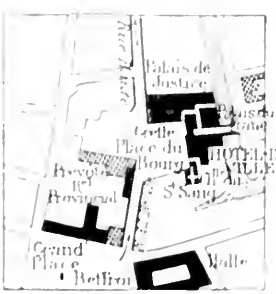
The latter crosses the Reye at the Quai Vert, which, at this point, is very pretty (*Photo above*).

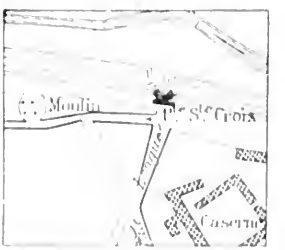
Turn left, into Rue Haute, and return to the Grand'Place.

Second Excursion.

Starting from the Grand'Place, by Rue de la Bride, continued beyond the Place du Bourg by Rue Haute, cross the Pont du Moulin and follow Rue Longue, at the end of which is the mediæval Porte St. Croix (*photo, p. 108*). The last two remaining windmills of Bruges are on the ramparts, to the left.

Follow the ramparts to Rue des Carmes, at the corner of which is the Local des Archers de St. Sebastien (16th century), with its quaint, slender tower. Portraits of Members of the Guild are preserved there, among others, those of Emperor Maximilian and Charles II of England.





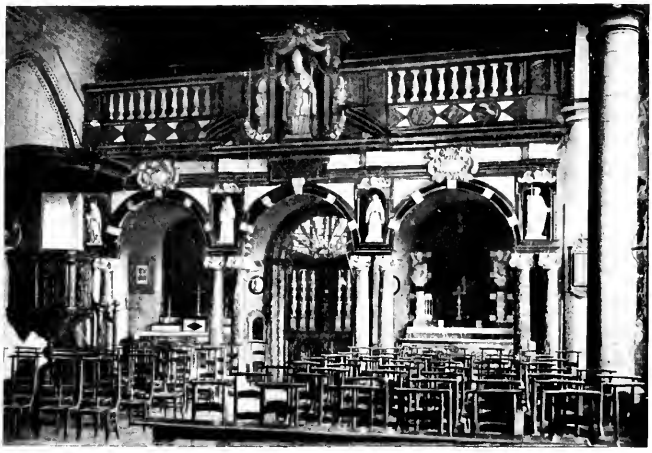
Continue along Rue du Persil which

Porte de St. Croix, and the Windmills on the Ramparts.

ends at Quai de la Poterie; take the latter on the left, as far as the Hospice de la Poterie.

La Poterie.

This is both a church and a home for the aged poor. Its gabled façades were charmingly restored by Ch. Verschelde, chief initiator of the movement for the renovation of Bruges Architecture, deceased in 1881.



Choir of the Chapelle de l'Hospice de la Poterie.

The polychrome decoration of the interior of the church recalls that of the Frauenkirch at Nuremberg.

The nave dates from 1358; the choir, marble rood-loft and other portions are 17th century. The tombs of Nicolas Despars (1597) and Jean de Beer (1608), and the rich Treasury in the Sacristy are interesting.

The Museum (parlour, refectory, corridors) contains ancient furniture, ivory carvings, antiquities, rich Flemish tapestries, and a fairly large collection of pictures.

Chapel of the Virgin, in the Chapelle de l'Hospice de la Poterie.

The Sèminaire.

The Seminary, situated immediately beyond the Poterie, is the old Abbey of the Dunes, which was reconstructed at Bruges in 1623-1628. The church, rebuilt in 1775, replaced the original edifice founded in the 12th century between Furnes and Coxyde, and destroyed by the Iconoclasts in 1556.

Since the Revolution, it has been successively a hospital, school, lycée, warehouse, and athenæum. Today it is a diocesan seminary.

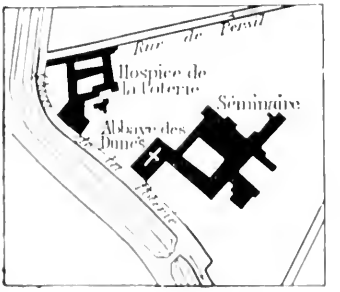
The seminary contains a collection of portraits of the bishops and abbots of Bruges and Ypres, also the famous *Visitation*, by Albert Dürer, in which that great master displays to the full his exquisite talent. It is the only piece of sculpture by Dürer in the country.

Continue along Quai de la Poterie as far as the Pont des Carmes opposite the street of the same name. Cross the bridge and take Rue de la Cour de Gand leading to the small Place Memling, in which stand a quaint statue of the artist and the ancient Hotel des Orientaux.

In the continuation of Rue de la Cour de Gand, beyond Place Memling, is one of the two last remaining wood-panelled houses of Bruges. Place Jan van Eyck (*Photo and sketch, p. 110*) *is next reached.*

Here stands the heavy bronze statue of Jan van Eyck, the gifted inventor of oil painting.

In front, is the Academy or Poorterslogie (14th century), formerly the House of the Burghers, then the meeting-place of the White Bear Company, whose emblem may still be seen in the corner of the building which overlooks the Rue



Place Jan Van Eyck.

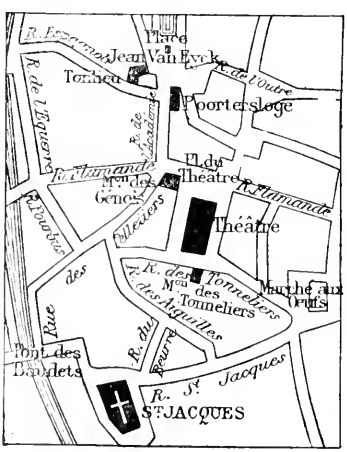
Espagnole. It is the *Beertje van Loge*, the oldest "burgher" of Bruges, just as the *Mannekenpis* is the oldest "burgher" of Brussels. However, the "Bear of Bruges" is the older of the two (1417).

The building was used as an Art Gallery from 1719 to 1898. Since then it has been entirely rebuilt in the original style, with a slender tower facing the Rue de l'Outre, and now contains the State Records.

On the right of the square stands the ancient Tonlieu, with its pretty façade, large gable and porch, the whole artistically restored in 1880. The Municipal Library, comprising some 15,000 volumes, is now housed there. The collection includes a series of *incunables* printed by Colard Mansion of Bruges (15th century), 562 *MSS*, *a collection of epitaphs, and the* Steinmetz Collection of drawings and engravings.

Take Rue de l'Académie, facing which, on arriving at the Place du Théâtre, is the Maison des Génois, a souvenir of the great prosperity of the city during the Burgundian epoch.

The tympanum of the door is decorated with a *St. George and Dragon.* This ancient warehouse of the rich Italian merchants is now a café.



In the middle of the Square is the Theatre *and behind it,* the gloomy Maison des Tonneliers.

Tourists should here take a stroll through the old picturesque streets of this quarter, especially Rue des Aiguilles and Rue au Beurre, which lead to the Church of St. Jacques.

The Church of St. Jacques.

Irregular in style, this church has a square tower with a pyramidal roof.

Erected in the 13th century and enlarged in the 15th, it bears the stamp of both periods. Especially noticeable are the irreparable marks of

restorations carried out in defiance of the principles and character of the original styles. The church was sacked during the religious troubles of the 16th century. The most unfortunate alterations were those carried out at the end of the 17th century. In 1820 a ceiling was added, cutting off the upper portion of the columns and pillars. Attempts have since been made to remedy these defects.

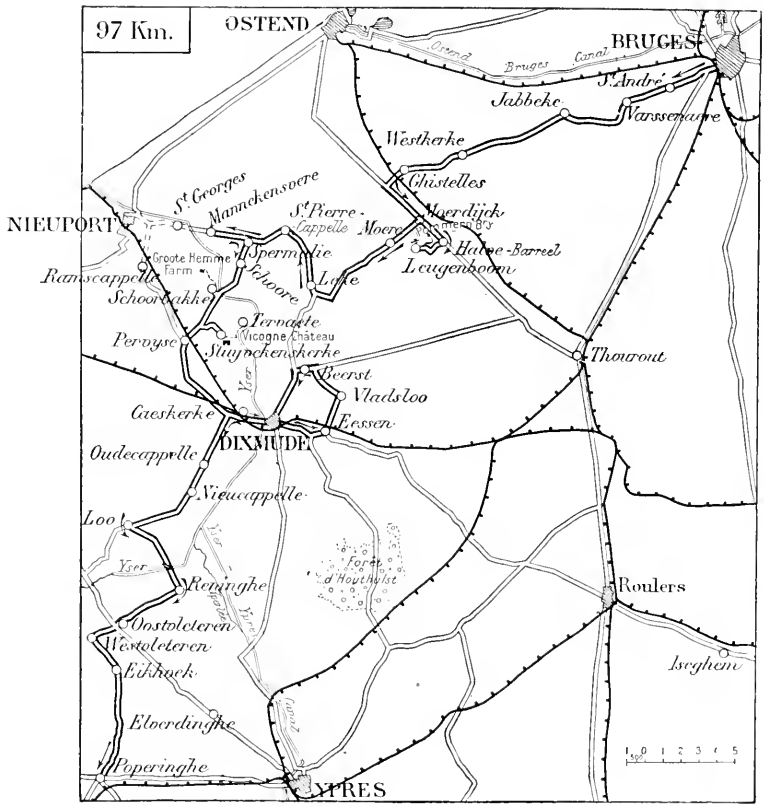
The church contains many valuable works of art, the most important of which is *The Tomb of Ferry de Gros*, treasurer of the Order of the Golden Fleece, deceased in 1511, and of his two wives, Philippine of Wiebaut and Catherine of Ailly. It is one of the very few surviving specimens of 16th century Flemish art, and remained for a long time in a walled-up chapel used as a store-room. In 1861, the chapel and tomb were completely restored. The figures are recumbent, on two superimposed stones, Ferry and his first wife being uppermost. The other stone is by far the more remarkable of the two. Attempts have been made to restore the original polychromy of the monument. The tomb and the Chapel form a very harmonious and decorative whole.

Among the paintings are : on the altar in the Chapel of Souls, a *reredos* in three parts. It represents St. Cosmas and St. Damian, and is considered to be Lancelot Blondeel's greatest masterpiece. In the same chapel : a *triptych*, by Peter Pourbus (1556), *The Virgin of the Seven Afflictions*, and a *Resurrection*, by the same painter (1578). In the south aisle : *The Presentation of the Virgin*, one of the finest works by Van Oost the Elder (1655). On the altar, in the northern nave : *The Coronation of the Virgin* by Albert Cornelis (1520), the only work of this master, and a fine *Triptych*, by Jan Mostaert (1474-1555).

In the chapels are copper and brass tablets. The carved wood pulpit, rood-loft and choir-stalls are in decadent Renaissance style (17th century). Behind the high-altar is a three-storied marble tabernacle, dating from 1593. The belfry contains some very fine bells, the oldest of which was cast in 1525.

On leaving the Church of St. Jacques, the tourist may either turn left over the bridge and along Rue des Baudets, as far as the Porte d'Ostende *(photo below) or return to the Grand'Place, by Rue St. Jacques, on the right.*

The Porte d'Ostende.



Fourth Day.

FROM BRUGES TO POPERINGHE, NEAR YPRES.

Lunch at Dixmude, but provide luncheon baskets, in case of need.

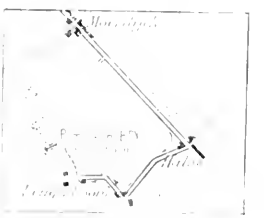
Leaving the Grand'Place, **Bruges**, *via the Place du Marché-aux Œufs, take Rue de la Monnaie, on the left, then Rue Nord du Sablon, and beyond the station and level-crossing, Rue du Maréchal. Go through* the Porte Maréchale which, like the Ostend Gate, bears traces of its 17th century restoration (*Photo, p. 113*).

At the fork, 1 km. further on, take the right-hand road to **St.-André**. *Pass through same, then through* Varssenaere, Jabbeke, Westkerke *and* Ghistelles. *Beyond Ghistelles (level-crossing), take the Ostend-Thourout road, on the left. Pass through* **Moerdijck** (24 1/2 *kms.*), *and on reaching the hamlet of* Halve-Barreel, *turn to the right.*

At the first group of houses turn to the right, then to the left at the first fork. At the first house of the hamlet of Leugenboom (3 1/2 *kms.*), *take the footpath on the right, from which,* 150 *yards to the left, can be seen* the **Pommern** or **Leugenboom Battery,** at the edge of the wood. This battery comprises

MARTCHALE GATE, BY WHICH THE TOURIST LEAVES BRUGES.

a 15in. long range gun, which did most of the bombarding of Dunkirk. The gun, protected by armour, is mounted on a steel bridge having a pivot in front, the rear part of the gun travelling along a circular rail-track in a concrete pit nearly 70 feet in diameter. The gun was manœuvred by means of electric motors. On either side are large shelters in reinforced concrete. In front of and below the platform there was an electric generator group. A large shelter of reinforced concrete, on the right, was probably the Post of Commandment. There is a dummy gun emplacement further on.



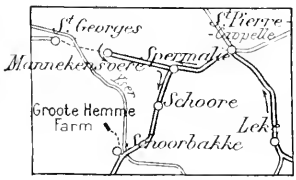
Return by the same road to **Moerdijck**, *turn left beyond the bridge, pass*

"POMMERN" OR "LEUGENBOOM BATTERY, NEAR LEUGENBOOM HAMLET.

Concrete Shelter at St. Pierre-Cappelle.

through **Moere** (2 *kms.*), *and after crossing the light railway, take the road on the right which follows the railway to* **Leke** *village* (5 1/2 *kms.*). *Beyond the* ruins of the church, *take the right-hand road to* **St. Pierre-Cappelle** (4 *kms.*), whose church is in ruins. *Continue straight along the Nieuport road*, noticing the many observation-posts and concrete shelters. *Throughout the region crossed by the itinerary, on both sides of the Yser, the ground has been completely devasted by trenches, shelters and bombardments. The villages have vanished. Today these places are the resort of pilgrims.* **Spermalie** (2 *kms.*) *is next reached.*

Beyond the bridge, at the fork, take the right-hand road (in bad condition) to **Mannekensvere.**



A few heaps of stones and *débris* are all that remains of Mannekensvere. *To visit* St. Georges, *cross the Yser by a small wooden foot-bridge, near the place where the Pont de l'Union used to stand. (It is impossible for vehicles to cross the river). Between the Yser and St. Georges, follow a "boyau" (by-trench) to* the first Belgian and German lines, marked by many concrete shelters pierced with loop-holes.

Mannekensvere was situated on the right bank of the Yser. The Pont de l'Union, which crossed the Yser 3 kms. from Nieuport, connected it with St. Georges, situated a little further back, on the left bank, along the Nieuport-Bruges Road. These two villages and the bridge were among the principal targets of the Germans. On October 18, 1914, Mannekensvere, an advance-post of the Belgian 2nd Division, was carried by the Germans, but recaptured shortly afterwards by the Belgian 7th Infantry Regiment (Major Evrard). Unfortunately, the German heavy artillery made the position untenable on the following day, and Major Evrard was forced to re-cross

The Site of Mannekensvere village.

THE INUNDATIONS NEAR DIXMUDE.

the Pont de l'Union, which he blew up. St. Georges, on the contrary, was captured only on October 23, after the crossing of the Yser by the enemy, and the loss of Groote-Hemme Farm which covered it from the south.

Return to SPERMALIE, *where turn to the right.*

TEMPORARY FOOT-BRIDGE ACROSS THE INUNDATIONS.

The whole of the region now about to be crossed was flooded throughout the war. Today, the waters have receded, leaving it covered with reeds.

Schoore (1 *km.*), completely razed, *is next reached.*

Schoore was situated slightly to the right of the Yser, on the road to Bruges. The Belgian 1st Division had its advance-posts there. The village was captured on October 18, 1914, by a battalion of the German IIIrd Corps, after a four hours' bombardment.

THE PONT DE L'UNION, BETWEEN ST. GEORGES AND MANNEKENSVERE

The Yser at Schoorbakke.

Cross the Yser at **Schoorbakke** (2 *kms.*).

This village had a bridge across the Yser, at the end and to the west of the great bend in the river, beginning at Tervaete.

This important strategical point was early threatened by the enemy. After the furious combats of October 15-22, the grand assault was launched on the night of the 22nd. A battalion of the Belgian 4th Infantry Regiment, though practically hemmed in by the enemy, defended it heroically, and only evacuated the position at dawn on the 23rd (*see p.* 12).

Between the Yser and the shelters bordering its left bank, a foot-path on the right leads to Groote-Hemme Farm (1 *km.* 300).

Keep straight along the road. The first road on the left leads to **Stuyvekenskerke** (1 1/2 *kms.*) of which only a few broken walls remain.

To the left of the church there is a temporary footway along the road ; today the latter is recognizable only by the stumps of the trees which formerly bordered it. *The footway leads to the site on which stood* the Chateau of Vicogne, *and further on, to* **Tervaete** (*Photo, p. 117*).

From this village, the Yser describes a wide curve towards the west which ends at Schoorbakke. At Tervaete, a bridge spanned the Yser. From the right bank the enemy were able to enfilade and even attack the Allies' defences on the left bank, in the rear, and effect a crossing of the river at that point. This explains the frequency and fierceness of the German attacks on Tervaete, which was first lost then recaptured on October 22, 1914, being finally captured by the Germans the next day (*See p.* 12).

From Stuyvekenskerke, return to the road previously followed, turning left towards Pervyse. *Shortly before reaching Pervyse are* the remains of an elevated footway, which formerly crossed the inundated ground. *After crossing what used to be the permanent way of the Dixmude-Nieuport railway, the village of* **Pervyse** *is reached* (3 1/2 *kms.*). The railway embankment formed the boundary of the inundated area, and was fortified. Shelters and

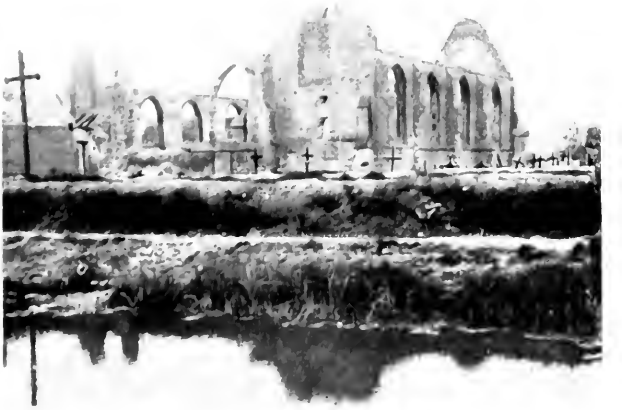
Temporary Bridge at Tervaete, on the impassable road to Stuyvekenskerke, in 1919.

graves are still to be seen all the way along. There was an observation-post on the top of the railway-station, to the left of the road.

Pervyse, in ruins, was made famous by the heroic resistance of the French Marines who beat off the enemy's fierce onslaughts of October and December 1914.

The houses bordering the road at the entrance to the village were turned into machine-gun blockhouses, thus barring the way.

Beyond the church is a crossing; the road on the right leads to **Ramscappelle** (1 1/2 *kms.*) which played an important part in 1914. On October 30, 1914,



Ramscappelle Church.

Caeskerke Church (August 1917).

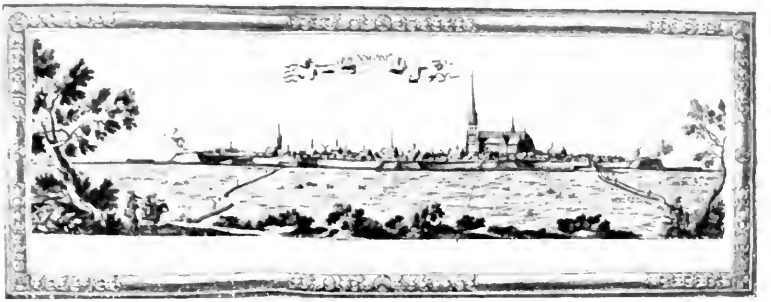
a fierce German thrust ended in the capture of the village—already on the point of being inundated—from the Belgian 5th and 6th Infantry Regiments. The loss was one of the greatest importance, as no lines of resistance had been prepared in the rear. The recapture of Ramscappelle was therefore an indispensable if very difficult operation. (*See p. 15.*).

The left-hand road leads to **Dixmude.** **Caeskerke** (5 1/2 *kms.*), *a station on the Dixmude-Nieuport railway, in next reached.* The Headquarters of Admiral Ronarc'h were established there in October 1914, and it was this fact which caused it to be bombarded by the Germans, whose shells quickly reduced it to ruins.

Beyond Caeskerke, cross the Yser; before reaching the bridge, on the left, along the riverside, is a trench with numerous shelters, known as the "Boyau de la Mort" (Death Trench). It was enfiladed by machine-guns posted in the flour-mill on the opposite bank of the Yser (*on the right, near the bridge*), which the Germans had converted into a fortress. (*Photo p. 124.*).

The tourist next reaches **Dixmude** (*2 1/2 kms.*), *arriving at the Grand' Place.*

The "Boyau de la Mort" (Death Trench). *See p. 19.* *In the background:* Dixmude.



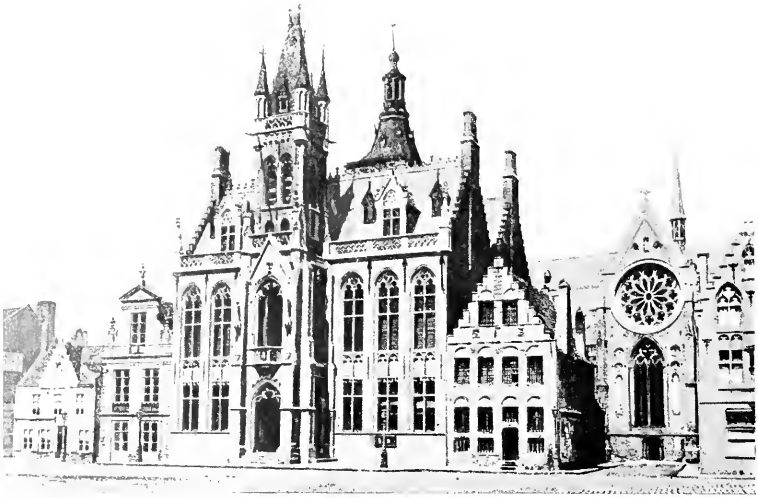
DIXMUDE.

Dixmude was a small ancient town of some 1,000 inhabitants, situated in the midst of fields on the right bank of the Yser.

It was entirely destroyed. Of the town's monuments and buildings, traces of the parish-church of St. Nicholas only remain (*on the left side of the square*). The chevet dated from the 14th century, the rest of the building being early 16th century. The church contained a magnificent rood-loft of finely carved white stone (1540). Above the high altar was a fine *Adoration of the Wise Men*, by Jordaens (1644). The rich ancient furnishings comprised : a marble font with a bronze cover (1626), choir-stalls, pulpits, a "Calvary" altar, a carved oak organ-loft, wrought copper chandeliers, candlesticks, etc.

From the heap of stones and débris—the remains of the church tower there is a good view of the ruined town. In the same square stood the Hôtel-de-Ville, Gothic in style, built about 1870. It was entirely razed (*Photo below*).

Dixmude, seen from the ruined Church (1919).



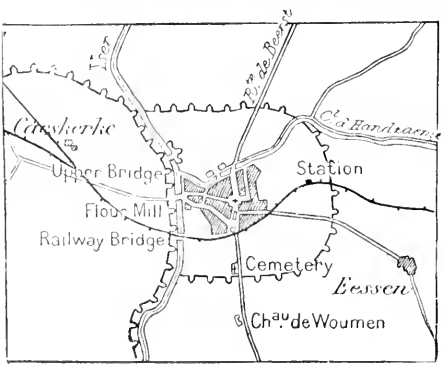
Dixmude. The Hotel-de-Ville, before the war.

The left-hand road leads to the bridge over the Handzaeme Canal, one of the most picturesque parts of Dixmude. Close by, to the left of the road, stood the Béguinage, comprising some twenty houses grouped around a small chapel, and a fine garden. The place is now overrun with weeds.

The Defence and Capture of Dixmude.

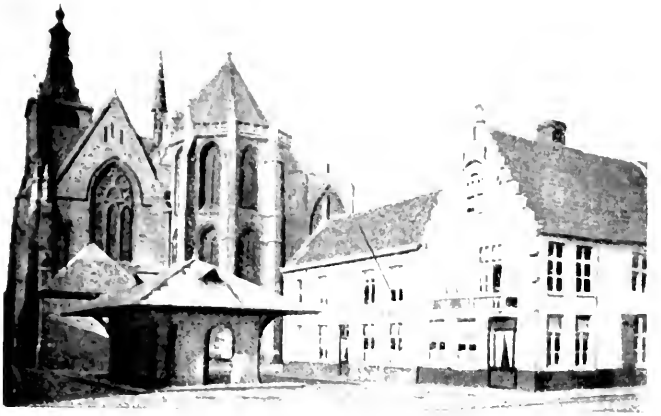
Dixmude was the scene of most desperate fighting from October 15 to November 10, 1914. The French Naval Brigade– 6,000 men commanded by Admiral Ronarc'h with a brigade of the Belgian 3rd Division under General Meiser, and a few battalions of Senegalese troops, held out heroically for a month against enemy forces six times more numerous and supported by masses of heavy artillery.

On October 16, along the roads encumbered with refugees from the region of Thourout, the Marines, in their retreat from Melle to Ghent, reached Dixmude in the pouring rain, accompanied by the Belgian batteries under Major Pontus. Under enemy pressure the advanced positions of the town were abandoned.



At that time, the river formed the only line of defence against the enemy thrust, there being no trenches, shelters, or wire entanglements.

In spite of great fatigue, due to the forced marches, the Marines and Infantry, with the help of some



THE CHEVET OF THE CHURCH BEFORE THE WAR. (*Photo E. Thill.*).

companies of Belgian Engineers, organised defences in the vast plain. Trenches were made round the town, 1 km. beyond its outskirts, whilst the bridges, footways and dikes of the Yser Canal were fortified at the same time.

The defences of the bridgehead of Dixmude were divided into two sectors, separated by the Caeskerke Road.

Having no aeroplanes or heavy artillery, the 6,000 French Marines, with 5,000 Belgians of the Meiser Brigade—11th Regiment (Col. Leermans) and 12th regiment (Col. Jacques) were attacked by three German Army Corps.

After an unsuccessful feint attack on October 16-17, the Germans, having meanwhile received reinforcements and siege artillery from Antwerp, renewed their assault with increasing violence.

On the 20th, at 11 a.m., the first big shell fell in the town. In conformity with the Burgomaster's orders, the civilians left the town, except the Carmelite Nuns and a few other persons, who were forced to leave a few days later.

A STREET IN DIXMUDE, [illegible]

The Yser at Dixmude, before the war. (*Photo Nels*).

The first shells fell on the church, which was burnt. Fires broke out everywhere and soon destroyed the town. The troops stoically awaited the attack, which came simultaneously from the north, east and south.

The assaulting columns were in massed formation, sixteen lines deep. They were literally mown down, and after a desperate struggle their scattered remnants were thrown back on their starting positions.

The attack continued on the following days, without appreciable enemy gain. Whenever, by force of numbers, they penetrated the defences, reserve sections of Marines drove them back at the bayonet's point.

Dixmude was none-the less in imminent danger. German troops crossed the Yser at Tervaete, and slipped along the left bank of the river with the intention of turning the position. In the thick of the battle and in spite of the incessant frontal attacks, Admiral Ronarc'h dispatched two battalions to the threatened point. Although the men were "half-dead with the cold and lack of sleep", a front was improvised between the Yser Canal and the embankment of the Nieuport-Dixmude railway. The manœuvre was a difficult one, but by prodigies of heroism the new line stood firm and became fixed.

Admiral Ronarc'h.

On the 21th, a bombardment of unprecedented intensity was opened on the town and its defences, including the station of Caeskerke, where the Admiral's headquarters were situated, but the defenders held their ground unflinchingly under the terrible deluge of flying splinters. Towards evening, the enemy made a tremendous effort against the bridgehead of Dixmude. Eleven assaults in the north and north-east

The Yser at Dixmude, after the war. (*See opposite*).

sector, and fifteen assaults in the south-east sector were successively repulsed. The German dead accumulated in heaps, right up to the Allies' trenches. The struggle continued hand-to-hand until midnight, in pitch darkness, the men floundering blindly in the mud.

Exhausted by their tremendous efforts the enemy gave way. Dixmude was still inviolate, but on the morrow, as soon as the morning mists had risen, the bombardment began again along the whole line. Little by little the town fell into ruins.

On the night of the 25th, a company of German infantry managed to slip into the town. About a hundred of them crossed the bridge-road and in close formation made a dash for Caeskerke, with life and drum at their head. That the men were drugged, explains their foolhardy exploit. A few prisoners, including several Belgian doctors, Commandant Jeanniot and some marines were captured. Held up soon afterwards, the Germans attempted to get back to their lines, shooting most of their prisoners at dawn. The doctors and a quarter-master alone were spared, being eventually delivered by a section of French Marines.

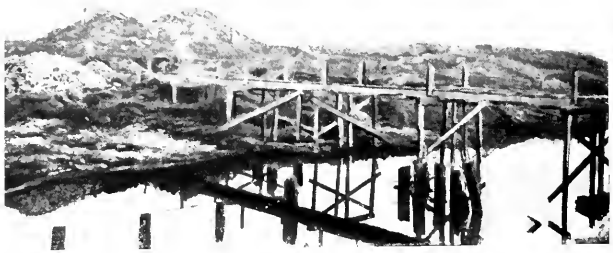
The troops under Colonel Jacques, exhausted by the struggle, were relieved by two battalions of Senegalese and a battalion of the Belgian 1st Line Regiment.

Keeping up their daily bombardment, the enemy now directed their main effort between Nieuport and Dixmude. However, they were held by the inundations which soon spread southwards. Moreover, the ceaseless rain had transformed the ground into a veritable sea of mud, which gradually invaded the trenches. Shivering with cold and fever, and up to their knees in slime, the Marines still stood firm.

The Capture of Dixmude.

On November 10 the Germans, infuriated by their repeated checks, attacked again with overwhelming forces. Part of the defences in the southern sector, between the railway and the Lessen road, held by Belgian infantry, gave way beneath the shock, bringing about the fall of

THE MINOTERIE. *(Flour Mill.)*.



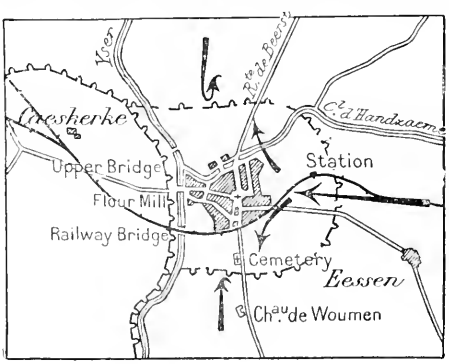
the sectors on either side, held by the Senegalese troops. The line was pierced in the centre. The enemy swarmed through the breach, crossing the Handzaeme Canal to the north, while to the south, in the direction of the cemetery, they attacked the companies of Marines who continued to resist desperately. The Germans entered the town, the fight continuing from street to street and house to house, with countless surprises and ambuscades. Unarmed prisoners were made to march in front of the assailants, who proceeded to attack the positions on the Yser. Amongst them was Naval-Lieutenant Sérieyx, who, wounded in the arm, had just fought with his men to the last cartridge.

On being ordered by the German Commandant to indicate the fordable places in the river, one of which was only some fifty yards away, the French officer, to gain time, made a complicated sketch of the position, placing himself and his men the while in front of the Germans. Becoming impatient, the German ordered the Frenchmen to call on the defenders of the canal to surrender.

"But how can you expect them to surrender", was the calm rejoinder, "seeing that there are ten thousand of them". In reality, they numbered about two hundred.

At this point, heavy rifle fire to the north drew the attention of the enemy elsewhere, seeing which, the wounded officer, exhorting his men to follow him, jumped into the river and swam over to the other side.

When night fell, the bridges and flour-mill—a powerful blockhouse in reinforced concrete—were blown up, the whole of the Franco-Belgian troops having meanwhile been withdrawn behind the embankment of the Yser Canal, which they held under gun-fire. The Germans sought to organise the ruins of the unfortunate town, whose destruction was now being completed by the Allies' artillery.



The inundations reached Dixmude, forming an impassable barrier for the enemy.

On November 26, 1914, the French Naval Brigade, which later further distinguished itself on other fields

Admiral Ronarc'h saluting the Flag of the French Marines.

of battle, and whose flag was eventually decorated with the *Légion d'honneur (fourragère)*, was mentioned in the Army Orders, in the following terms :

Gave proofs of the greatest energy and devotion in the defence of a most important strategic position.

Until October 1918, the enemy's front lines followed the banks of the canal and the Death Trench, dominated by the ruins of the flour-mill situated upstream from the destroyed bridge-road. For four years, violent raids and bombardments kept this sector, successively held by French Marines, Territorials, Zouaves, and Belgian Infantry, in a perpetual state of activity.

Finally, in September 1918, during the great Liberty Offensive, the Belgian 4th Division attacked the banks of the Yser Canal, turned Dixmude from the east, and in a single rush reached the banks of the Handzaeme Canal. On September 29, Dixmude, reduced to a chaotic waste covered with shapeless masses of debris and tangled barbed wire, and cut up entirely with trenches, was retaken by the Belgians.

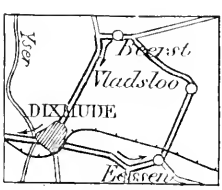
Watching a Review of the French Marines.

EESSEN CHURCH.

On January 25, 1920, in the presence of King Albert, President Poincaré conferred the French *Croix de Guerre* on Dixmude, with the following mention.

"Won undying fame in the first days of the War by heroic, never-to-be-forgotten combats. Proved herself worthy of this glory by the fortitude with which she daily supported bombardments and fires, confident that her sacrifices were helping to save the Country and the Common Cause."

From the canal, return to the Grand'Place and take the Routers Road, turning into the first by-road on the left; 3 kms. beyond the level-crossing, leave the Clereken Road leading to Houthulst Wood, on the right, and keep straight on to **Eessen** (3 1/2 *kms.*). The belfry of the ruined church was long used by the Germans as an observation-post (*Photo above*).



In front of the church, turn left and cross the railway. The road leads to **Vladsloo** (large German cemeteries). *Behind the church, turn left. On reaching the high road, turn left and enter the village of* **Beerst** (5 *kms*).

Beerst and, further north, Keyem served as advance posts in October 1914 to the Belgian 4th Division which was then defending Tervaete. Violently attacked on October 18, they were lost and retaken, being finally abandoned on the morrow. In a desperate effort to save Beerst, the French Marines captured it twice at the point of the bayonet, covering themselves with glory, but all to no purpose. Beerst was completely ruined. Many cellars, transformed by the Germans into fortified shelters, may still be seen.

On reaching the road to Dixmude, turn left, pass through Dixmude (3 1/2 *kms.*) *and leave the town by the road previously followed. Take the first road on the left to* **Loo** (1 1/2 *kms.*).

This small, ancient town is situated on the banks of the Yser canal. Its large 15th-16th century Gothic church, formerly an abbey, contains paintings and several fine tombs.

Keeping straight ahead beyond the Grand'Place, in which stands the Renaissance Hôtel-de-Ville, *the tourist will notice, immediately on the left, an* OLD GATE (WESTPOORT), a vestige of the ancient fortifications. A sycamore tree, probably some four or five centuries old, near by, is said by the inhabitants to have been used by Julius Cæsar as a picket for tethering his horse.

Loo.

1. *Westpoort Gate, and the "Julius Cæsar" Sycamore Tree;*

2. *The Grand'Place. The Hôtel-de-Ville (on the right), and the ruins of the Church.*

Return to the Grand' Place, turn to the right, and cross the Yser. **Reninghe** (5 *kms.*) (razed) *is next reached. To the right of the Square, take the street along which runs the local railway, leaving the church on the left. Before turning, the tourist will notice just beyond the church* a small château dating from 1648 (*Photo below*). *Follow the railway as far as* **Oostvleteren** (4 *kms.* 300), *where cross the Furnes road to reach* **Westvleteren,** 1 *km.* 300 *further on. Turn to the left, beyond the church of the latter village, keeping straight on to* **Poperinghe** (10 *kms.*), *via* **Eikhock.**

Reninghe.

1. *The 17th century Château;*

2. *Ruins of the Church.*

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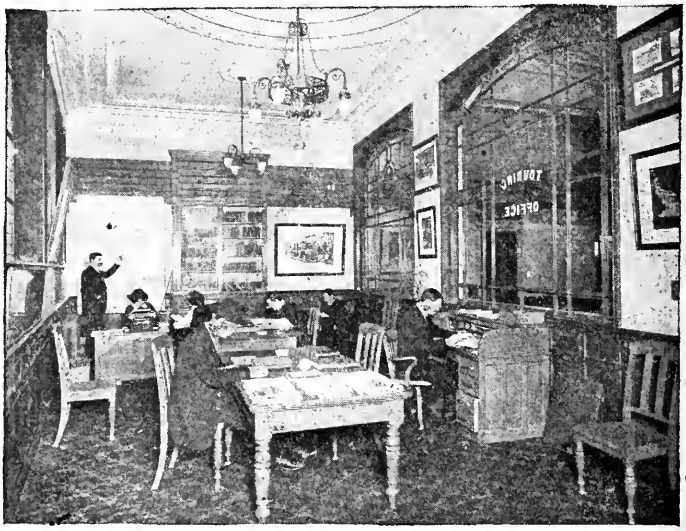

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