

Chapter 1 : A Visit to Three Fronts by Arthur Conan Doyle

LibriVox recording of A Visit to Three Fronts: June by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Read in English by Mike Pelton; Dave Gillespie; Ben Adams In the course of May , the Italian authorities expressed a desire that some independent observer from Great Britain should visit their lines and report his impressions.

I[edit] It is not an easy matter to write from the front. An instructive story is still told of how a certain well-meaning traveller recorded his satisfaction with the appearance of the big guns at the retiring and peaceful village of Jamais, and how three days later, by an interesting coincidence, the village of Jamais passed suddenly off the map and dematerialised into brickdust and splinters. I have been with soldiers on the warpath before, but never have I had a day so crammed with experiences and impressions as yesterday. Some of them at least I can faintly convey to the reader, and if they ever reach the eye of that gentleman at the Haupt-Quartier they will give him little joy. For the crowning impression of all is the enormous imperturbable confidence of the Army and its extraordinary efficiency in organisation, administration, material, and personnel. I met in one day a sample of many types, an Army commander, a corps commander, two divisional commanders, staff officers of many grades, and, above all, I met repeatedly the two very great men whom Britain has produced, the private soldier and the regimental officer. Everywhere and on every face one read the same spirit of cheerful bravery. Even the half-mad cranks whose absurd consciences prevent them from barring the way to the devil seemed to me to be turning into men under the prevailing influence. I saw a batch of them, neurotic and largely be-spectacled, but working with a will by the roadside. They will volunteer for the trenches yet. There is no foolish bravado, no under-rating of a dour opponent, but there is a quick, alert, confident attention to the job in hand which is an inspiration to the observer. These brave lads are guarding Britain in the present. See to it that Britain guards them in the future! We have a bad record in this matter. It must be changed. They are the wards of the nation, both officers and men. Socialism has never had an attraction for me, but I should be a Socialist to-morrow if I thought that to ease a tax on wealth these men should ever suffer for the time or health that they gave to the public cause. It may be hit. Up to then you might have been driving through the black country in the Walsall district with the population of Aldershot let loose upon its dingy roads. Here and there it comes to the surface again where there is dead ground. At one such point an old church stands, with an unexploded shell sticking out of the wall. A century hence folk will journey to see that shell. Then on again through an endless cutting. It is slippery clay below. I have no nails in my boots, an iron pot on my head, and the sun above me. I will remember that walk. Ten telephone wires run down the side. Here and there large thistles and other plants grow from the clay walls, so immobile have been our lines. Occasionally there are patches of untidiness. There is a racket of guns before us and behind, especially behind, but danger seems remote with all these Bairnfather groups of cheerful Tommies at work around us. I pass one group of grimy, tattered boys. A glance at their shoulders shows me that they are of a public school battalion. We are all in your debt. They had the fresh, brown faces of boy cricketers. But their comrades were men of a different type, with hard, strong, rugged features, and the eyes of men who have seen strange sights. These are veterans, men of Mons, and their young pals of the public schools have something to live up to. But now our interminable and tropical walk is lightened by the sight of a British aeroplane sailing overhead. Numerous shrapnel bursts are all round it, but she floats on serenely, a thing of delicate beauty against the blue background. Now another passes--and yet another. All morning we saw them circling and swooping, and never a sign of a Boche. They tell me it is nearly always so--that we hold the air, and that the Boche intruder, save at early morning, is a rare bird. A visit to the line would reassure Mr. Had the whole war been fought by the Germans as their airmen have conducted it I do not speak of course of the Zeppelin murderers , a peace would eventually have been more easily arranged. And now we are there--in what is surely the most wonderful spot in the world, the front firing trench, the outer breakwater which holds back the German tide. How strange that this monstrous oscillation of giant forces, setting in from east to west, should find their equilibrium here across this particular meadow of Flanders. There is some rusty wire before me, then a field sloping slightly upwards with knee-deep grass, then rusty wire again, and a red line of broken earth.

There is not a sign of movement, but sharp eyes are always watching us, even as these crouching soldiers around me are watching them. There are dead Germans in the grass before us. You need not see them to know that they are there. A wounded soldier sits in a corner nursing his leg. Here and there men pop out like rabbits from dug-outs and mine-shafts. Others sit on the fire-step or lean smoking against the clay wall. Who would dream to look at their bold, careless faces that this is a front line, and that at any moment it is possible that a grey wave may submerge them? With all their careless bearing I notice that every man has his gas helmet and his rifle within easy reach. A mile of front trenches and then we are on our way back down that weary walk. Then I am whisked off upon a ten mile drive. There is a pause for lunch at Corps Headquarters, and after it we are taken to a medal presentation in a market square. Generals Munro, Haking and Landon, famous fighting soldiers all three, are the British representatives. Munro with a ruddy face, and brain above all bulldog below; Haking, pale, distinguished, intellectual; Landon a pleasant, genial country squire. An elderly French General stands beside them. British infantry keep the ground. In front are about fifty Frenchmen in civil dress of every grade of life, workmen and gentlemen, in a double rank. They are all so wounded that they are back in civil life, but to-day they are to have some solace for their wounds. They lean heavily on sticks, their bodies are twisted and maimed, but their faces are shining with pride and joy. The French General draws his sword and addresses them. Then the medals are pinned on. One poor lad is terribly wounded and needs two sticks. A little girl runs out with some flowers. He leans forward and tries to kiss her, but the crutches slip and he nearly falls upon her. It was a pitiful but beautiful little scene. Now the British candidates march up one by one for their medals, hale, hearty men, brown and fit. Even the French wounded smiled at his quaint appearance, as they did at another Briton who had acquired the chewing-gum habit, and came up for his medal as if he had been called suddenly in the middle of his dinner, which he was still endeavouring to bolt. Then came the end, with the National Anthem. The British regiment formed fours and went past. To me that was the most impressive sight of any. Much they had endured, but a great spirit shone from their faces. I confess that as I looked at those brave English lads, and thought of what we owe to them and to their like who have passed on, I felt more emotional than befits a Briton in foreign parts. It was to an artillery observation post that we were bound, and once again my description must be bounded by discretion. Suffice it, that in an hour I found myself, together with a razor-keen young artillery observer and an excellent old sportsman of a Russian prince, jammed into a very small space, and staring through a slit at the German lines. In front of us lay a vast plain, scarred and slashed, with bare places at intervals, such as you see where gravel pits break a green common. Not a sign of life or movement, save some wheeling crows. And yet down there, within a mile or so, is the population of a city. Far away a single train is puffing at the back of the German lines. We are here on a definite errand. Away to the right, nearly three miles off, is a small red house, dim to the eye but clear in the glasses, which is suspected as a German post. It is to go up this afternoon. The gun is some distance away, but I hear the telephone directions. An enormous spout of smoke rises ten seconds later from near the house. I wonder how the folk in the house are feeling as the shells creep ever nearer. A flash of fire on the house, a huge pillar of dust and smoke--then it settles, and an unbroken field is there. The German post has gone up. It gets clearer with every month that it is she, and only she, who can lead us to the Rhine. She can and she will if the factories of Britain can beat those of the Hun. See to it, you working men and women of Britain. Work now if you rest for ever after, for the fate of Europe and of all that is dear to us is in your hands. She is fond of strange lodgings, too, in which she prefers safety to dignity. But that is a dangerous subject. At night we take a car and drive north, and ever north, until at a late hour we halt and climb a hill in the darkness. Below is a wonderful sight.

Chapter 2 : A Visit to Three Fronts

A Visit to Three Fronts June (The World At War) and millions of other books are available for Amazon Kindle. Learn more Enter your mobile number or email address below and we'll send you a link to download the free Kindle App.

Support epubBooks by making a small PayPal donation purchase. Description The book is a glorious effort on the part of the author to record the impressions that he formed during his visit to the fronts of the Western Allies during World War I. The book was written in appreciation of the valiant and bold soldiers who fought for their countrymen and whose efforts were being belittled due to increasing rumors. Community Reviews Sign up or Log in to rate this book and submit a review. There are currently no other reviews for this book. Excerpt It is not an easy matter to write from the front. An instructive story is still told of how a certain well-meaning traveller recorded his satisfaction with the appearance of the big guns at the retiring and peaceful village of Jamais, and how three days later, by an interesting coincidence, the village of Jamais passed suddenly off the map and dematerialised into brickdust and splinters. I have been with soldiers on the warpath before, but never have I had a day so crammed with experiences and impressions as yesterday. Some of them at least I can faintly convey to the reader, and if they ever reach the eye of that gentleman at the Haupt-Quartier they will give him little joy. For the crowning impression of all is the enormous imperturbable confidence of the Army and its extraordinary efficiency in organisation, administration, material, and personnel. I met in one day a sample of many types, an Army commander, a corps commander, two divisional commanders, staff officers of many grades, and, above all, I met repeatedly the two very great men whom Britain has produced, the private soldier and the regimental officer. Everywhere and on every face one read the same spirit of cheerful bravery. Even the half-mad cranks whose absurd consciences prevent them from barring the way to the devil seemed to me to be turning into men under the prevailing influence. I saw a batch of them, neurotic and largely be-spectacled, but working with a will by the roadside. They will volunteer for the trenches yet. If there are pessimists among us they are not to be found among the men who are doing the work. There is no foolish bravado, no under-rating of a dour opponent, but there is a quick, alert, confident attention to the job in hand which is an inspiration to the observer. These brave lads are guarding Britain in the present. See to it that Britain guards them in the future! We have a bad record in this matter. It must be changed. They are the wards of the nation, both officers and men. Socialism has never had an attraction for me, but I should be a Socialist to-morrow if I thought that to ease a tax on wealth these men should ever suffer for the time or health that they gave to the public cause. It may be hit. Up to then you might have been driving through the black country in the Walsall district with the population of Aldershot let loose upon its dingy roads. Here and there it comes to the surface again where there is dead ground. At one such point an old church stands, with an unexploded shell sticking out of the wall. A century hence folk will journey to see that shell. Then on again through an endless cutting. It is slippery clay below. I have no nails in my boots, an iron pot on my head, and the sun above me. I will remember that walk. Ten telephone wires run down the side. Here and there large thistles and other plants grow from the clay walls, so immobile have been our lines. Occasionally there are patches of untidiness. There is a racket of guns before us and behind, especially behind, but danger seems remote with all these Bairnfather groups of cheerful Tommies at work around us. I pass one group of grimy, tattered boys. A glance at their shoulders shows me that they are of a public school battalion. We are all in your debt. They had the fresh, brown faces of boy cricketers. But their comrades were men of a different type, with hard, strong, rugged features, and the eyes of men who have seen strange sights. These are veterans, men of Mons, and their young pals of the public schools have something to live up to.

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A Visit to Three Fronts has 46 ratings and 2 reviews. Eric said: Well written propaganda intended to boost morale & support for the war on the homefront.

Chapter 4 : A Visit to Three Fronts June by Arthur Conan Doyle

The book is a glorious effort on the part of the author to record the impressions that he formed during his visit to the fronts of the Western Allies during World War I.

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In all three I found the same conditions, and in all three I found also the same pleasing fact which I had discovered at Soissons, that the fire of the French was at least five, and very often ten shots to one of the Boche.

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Impressions of the front lines in the West by Arthur Conan Doyle, famous for his Sherlock Holmes stories. 'In the course of May , the Italian authorities expressed a desire that some independent observer from Great Britain should visit their lines and report his impressions I was asked to.

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It is not an easy matter to write from the front. You know that there are several courteous but inexorable gentlemen who may have a word in the matter, and their presence 'imparts but small ease to the style.'