

BOULOGNE (BONONIA), YPRES.

IN MEMORIAM.

Boulogne has a history, both ancient and modern, of great interest and one which has been so closely related to the history of our own country, that, English people—even those not particularly interested in history—could scarcely fail to find it attractive. Its attractions are many, but it is not the purpose of the writer to speak of them in detail. Bononia, the ancient name, from Bologna in Italy—the birthplace of Gaius Julius Pedius—one of Julius Cæsar's Generals whom he left there in charge of troops while he went to the conquest of England. This man began to make its ancient history. All down the ages, from time to time, Boulogne has suffered invasion from a variety of enemies, including the English under Henry VIII, in 1544. Retaliation followed two and a half centuries later. The attempted invasion of England by Napoleon with his *Grande Armée*, grouped around Boulogne, was reversed into the great triumph of Trafalgar.

If there are any Dickensians among nurses (we have a Dickens Society in St. Pancras), they will be interested to learn that that classic novelist was much attracted by Boulogne, and passed the summers of 1853-4-6 there, and the following works were partly written there:—*Hard Times*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit* and *Household Words*. Boulogne is the threshold of the Continent, it is also the birthplace of the *Entente Cordiale*, and the strongest appeal that Boulogne can make now to the English race of our generation is, surely, that it became the centre of invasion by the soldiers of our Empire during the Great War, when that Confederacy became a great historical reality. Boulogne-sur-Mer (to give it the correct name) then became England in France, when the movements of our Empire troops during hostilities amounted to little less than nine millions! Who would not feel inspired with reverence for the soil of a country where heroic men had passed to and fro—the whole, the sick and the dying—in such mighty hosts. Many people went to see the battlefields soon after the War. Then the scars and wounds of this beautiful world were open and bleeding, but now. Time, the great healer, has healed them all, and during a short holiday in Boulogne in September of this year, I made an excursion which was at once interesting and inspiring.

One more interesting fact concerning Boulogne before I pass on to another historic town. It was the birthplace of Godefroy de Bouillon in 1060, and not Brabant, as has been incorrectly stated. He led—as we know—the first Crusade, and modestly refused to be crowned King of Jerusalem.

Ypres.

What a crowd of emotions, what memories that word stirs up! It was a whole day excursion—we started soon after 9 a.m. and returned shortly before 9 p.m.

Poperinghe, one of the towns en route, presented a very normal appearance, in spite of the fact that it was the first town within the range of the German long-range guns, we were told; some houses had been a little battered, as shown by patches of new brickwork on some of them, but that was all to mark the world tragedy.

This town has earned its renown, to many of us, by having been the birthplace of that excellent and world-wide organisation known as Toc H. Ypres was the first stop. "Rome was not built in a day," but Ypres has been, speaking metaphorically! My amazement was great, when I was told that this large flourishing town was Ypres; which had been completely destroyed by the Germans. Not a house left! The beautiful Cathedral and the famous Cloth Hall, both dating from the 13th Century, wiped off the face of the earth! The ruins of the latter are seen in a few broken columns—somewhat reminiscent of the

Forum at Rome—and a portion of a wall; these stark memorials will remain, the Hall will not be rebuilt. A new Cathedral stands in the place of the one destroyed, it was opened and dedicated last year, the tower above is in process of completion. An entirely new town is neither attractive nor inspiring, but that which went to the making of it—the courage, indomitable will and great industry of the Belgians in making a new town on the ruins of the old in such a short time—fills one with admiration.

The same characteristics led them to victory. After lunch at the "Skindles Hotel," we went to the Menin Gate, just outside the City on the Ypres Canal, erected to the memory of ten thousand British dead who have no known grave. Those ten thousand names are inscribed on the interior walls of that noble Archway, also on the outside walls, right and left, from which lead flights of steps to well laid-out grounds, being part of the Memorial. The Archway is surmounted by a stone figure of the British lion, and just below hang the British and Belgian flags. It was indeed awe-inspiring. Every night at the Menin Gate, at nine o'clock, Belgian buglers sound the "Last Post." We visited the Cathedral. It is new, it has no history and yet history is enshrined in every stone. We were then taken to the actual battlefields; just a beautiful countryside now, fresh foliage and vegetation has overgrown the cruel scars, thank God. Nothing to be seen, but names, many of them re-named by our men:—"Hill 60," the centre of such fierce fighting, "Hell-fire Corner," Sanctuary Wood, Hooge, "Clapham Junction," "Stirling Castle," "Inverness Copse," "Shrapnel Corner," "Paschendaele," "Polcapelle," etc. The thing that interested me more than anything was the Tyne Cot Cemetery. I have seen several of the British cemeteries; they are all equally beautiful as the "Gardens of God." They are all kept in perfect order by the loving care of the ex-service men employed as gardeners there.

There is the perfect symmetry of the head-stones, upon each of which is engraved a central cross, and above, the name and the regimental badge. It would seem that there is a purpose in choosing scarlet roses as the predominant colour in these beautiful flower gardens as a lovely contrast against the white headstones. The greatest care is bestowed upon these flower beds, equally with the smooth green lawns.

All the cemeteries seem to be equally beautiful, varying only in size, but the Tyne Cot is something more—it is the *Empire Memorial Cemetery*. It is vast in extent, containing about eleven or twelve thousand bodies; it contains three central Memorials (they all have one, a huge stone cross), the central cross is mounted on thirteen steps above the ground (the ground slopes upward) and at the summit of the slope an immense crescent-shaped stone wall stands. At each end of the crescent a small tower, surmounted by a dome, and above the dome the figure of an Angel pointing downwards towards the graves. The wall is engraved with innumerable names of the missing, in like manner to the Menin Gate. The beauty and inspiration of this exquisite Memorial completely baffles adequate description. One feels the better for having seen it. We passed through Ypres a second time on our return journey, likewise Cassel, where we visited the Memorial to Marshal Foch—a very fine equestrian statue, so lifelike—rider and horse might have been on the battlefield, the former reviewing his troops before the final victory and the horse obviously scenting battle!

In respect of the Tyne Cot Cemetery, I must not forget to mention this:—Many of the stones contained these pathetic words: "A British soldier of the War, known unto God."

So ended one of the days of my life, in which I had lived.

BEATRICE KENT.

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