

WAR COMES TO THE



In A Bar

"You would not know there is a war," said a bar-keep who spent August of 1914 at home in his London. But he seemed to suggest that he and all his customers were drinking their cool beer because it would have been foolish to do anything else, even if they did know very well indeed that there was a war on. "What," they seemed to ask, "is the use of getting excited about this?"

"It's terrible," said a waitress, sprightly like, in between rounds of pleasant back-chat with a familiar customer. And, to someone else: "I don't know what we'll do if there's a sugar shortage."

"We can drink beer."

"But they need sugar for beer too, don't they?"

And the mistress of the cafe, doing her accounts in a quiet morning hour: "This cash never will balance."

Digging Up Streets

No matter which way we walk to work, there is always one particular City Council employee pulling up a paving stone. We thought he might confine his observations to a statement that streets had been torn up and laid down again in spite of all the wars of man's busy invention. But he said nothing so illuminating. "Me?" he queried. "I'd like to ——— that ———." And if

WE wanted to know what the man in the street thought about all this war business. So we went out the day after war was declared and asked him. "What," we said, "does war mean to you?" And he looked down at his boots, up to the sky, round at his fellows, and he said: "War is just bloody."

But we could not let him off as easily as that. We asked him a few more questions, and we found that, somehow, someone has run across his ideas of right and wrong. He does not quite know what he personally should do about it. He is not sure what he will be asked to do about it. Meanwhile he goes about his affairs trying to hide the shocking realisation that the clash of nations has really turned him inside out.

readers can't fill in the blanks we can at least add that his comment was pointed.

The Housemaid

The housemaid was making beds with her usual abandon. We could not be quite certain that the sheets were laid with quite the same precision, or that the quilt had been folded on quite the same carefully intricate pattern. For Jane (not her real name, of course), had George on her mind. She was quite excited about George. Evidently George was afraid his battery commander would forget George's address. So Jane was worried too. "Look," she said. "I've got a letter to post for him." A little later she fluttered off with it. And the rest, dear curious listeners, is a military secret; for by now they will have remembered the address, and it's hard to say just what Jane thinks about that. The linen was not changed next day. But laundries are so unreliable.

What the Refugee Said

The alien, the refugee; what did he think about it all? He told us in his queer English that Germany was still his country. That he remembered Germany's hills and forests, her Rhenish wines and Bavarian beers, as well as any exiled New Zealander would remember New Zealand's lakes and tumbling rivers — the wheat growing golden in Canterbury fields, or the grass growing green for lazy cows. But he said slowly and deliberately, like a man making up his mind to commit suicide, that he no longer loved his own people, that he thoroughly approved of the war, and that his toast to England's victory was no empty gesture of expediency. Somehow we knew that he cared nothing for

any judgment upon him or his words. He had no hope before him. Nothing but tragedy behind him. He nourished a great hatred.

Business Man Bothered

The business man spent a long time saying nothing. We sympathised with him. He had a very unsatisfactory look in his eye. He tried to talk about diplomatic history and missed badly. Started what looked like being a tale of woe and checked himself unhappily. In the end we decided to let him down lightly. Now, we suppose, he is still sitting at his desk in hopeless perplexity.

A Man In Blue

We caught John, our policeman friend, properly on the hop. "John," we said: "What does war mean to you?" John looked very uncomfortable, as any policeman would who had not been asked this question before. "Well," he said, playing for time. "I dunno."

And then: "It's a pretty rotten business."

"We think it's grand," we said, hopefully. But John refused to be drawn. So we said: "John, your collar's rumpled," although we knew that a policeman's collar is so made that it simply cannot be rumpled.

Said John: "It's this damn war, you know."

Albert the Caretaker

We met the caretaker scrubbing the stairs of the old home at lunch time. "Albert," we commanded; "pay attention." Albert did. "What do you think of all this war business?"

Albert was of one mind.

"Why the ———," he said, "do you