

Architecture and Building

[Note—The Articles appearing on pages 869 to 876 are published by arrangement with the New Zealand Institute of Architects.]

German Trench Architecture

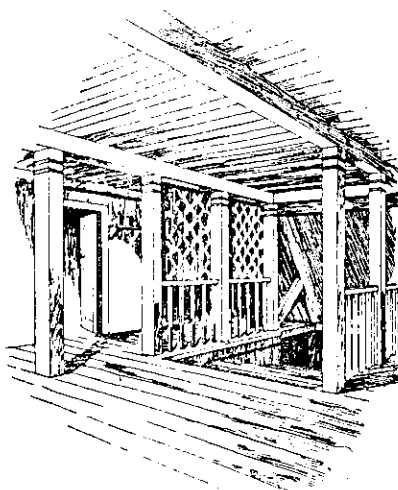
From the English "Architectural Review."

During the past month the Press Bureau has put at the disposal of the Press a most interesting article on German trench architecture, written after the "Great Advance" had revealed the remarkable underground constructions of the enemy. There is no indication as to who was the author, but from the manner of his description we may assume him to be an architect-officer with the Army in France. The article has already appeared in some of the newspapers, but it merits the widest possible publicity, and we therefore take occasion to republish it, with accompanying illustrations, not only as a matter of present interest, but also as a documentary record for future reference.

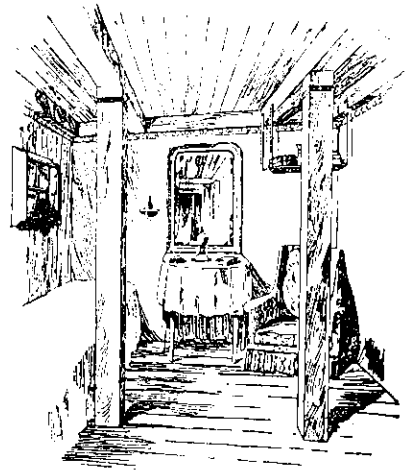
Their parapet makes more show of rough clay or chalk, even where a light layer of this covers two or more feet of reinforced concrete placed like a shrapnel helmet on the head of a dug-out or a gun emplacement. And if you now leave your first standpoint and explore the two trenches in turn, and also the support and communication trenches behind each of them, you find that the difference goes, in more than one sense, deeper still. The Allied trench looks, in every way, like the work of men who hoped and meant to move on before long; the German trench looks like the work of men who hoped, or feared, that they would be in it for years. Our trench housing has been much more of a makeshift, a sort of camping out, with some ingenious provisions for shelter and comfort, but not more than the least that would serve. Most of our dug-



Standardised Steel Door and Scraper.



Timber Staircase.



Officers' Dug-out.

Along many miles of the Western front, as it was till the end of June, you can now do what seems to trench-dwellers almost the utmost reach of impossibility—that is to say, you can stand at your ease in the middle of No man's Land and look at a German front trench on your right and a French or British front trench on your left. As soon as you do so you feel that the outward face of each wears a quite different expression. It is not merely the accident that the Allies' wire is only cut across by neat lanes or gangways at convenient intervals while the German wire lies in a trampled mess on the ground. The difference goes much further. For one thing, the Allies support their barbed wire mainly with wooden stakes; the Germans do it with iron. For another, the Allies' parapet owes much more of its strength to visible sandbags. The Germans build with sand-bags too, but not so much nor so openly.

outs are just roughly delled holes in the earth with only enough props and rafters to hold the roofs up; their floors are bare ground with a little straw on it; their doors, if they have any, are a few odd pieces of plank with a couple of other pieces nailed across; often the floor is on the trench level, to save burrowing. Lighting is done with candles, mostly bought at the canteen, and if anyone owns an arm-chair or a two-foot-high mirror, it is the jest of the platoon.

The whole German idea of trench life is different. The German front in the West is like one huge straggling village built of wood and strung out along a road 300 miles long. Of course, the houses are all underground. Still, they are houses, of one or two floors, built to certain official designs, drawn out in section and plan. The main entrance from the trench level is, sometimes at any rate, through a steel door, of a pattern apparently standardized, so