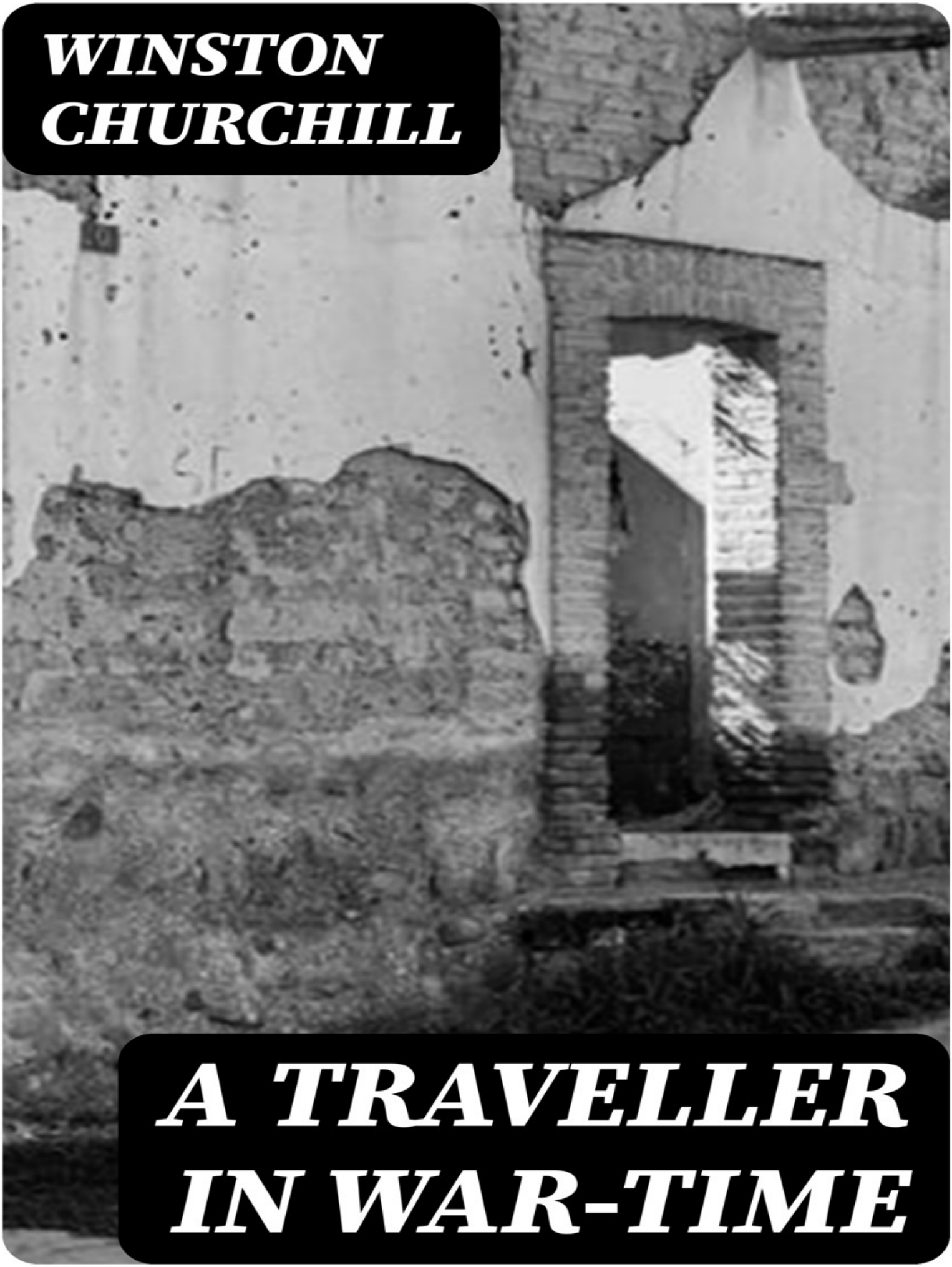
WINSTON CHURCHILL
A TRAVELLER IN WAR-TIME

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

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PREFACE

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I am reprinting here, in response to requests, certain recent experiences in Great Britain and France. These were selected in the hope of conveying to American readers some idea of the atmosphere, of “what it is like” in these countries under the immediate shadow of the battle clouds. It was what I myself most wished to know. My idea was first to send home my impressions while they were fresh, and to refrain as far as possible from comment and judgment until I should have had time to make a fuller survey. Hence I chose as a title for these articles,—intended to be preliminary, “A Traveller in War-Time.” I tried to banish from my mind all previous impressions gained from reading. I wished to be free for the moment to accept and record the chance invitation or adventure, wherever met with, at the Front, in the streets of Paris, in Ireland, or on the London omnibus. Later on, I hoped to write a book summarizing the changing social conditions as I had found them.

Unfortunately for me, my stay was unexpectedly cut short. I was able to avail myself of but few of the many opportunities offered. With this apology, the articles are presented as they were written.

I have given the impression that at the time of my visit there was no lack of food in England, but I fear that I have not done justice to the frugality of the people, much of which was self-imposed for the purpose of helping to win the war. On very, good authority I have been given to understand that food was less abundant during the winter

just past; partly because of the effect of the severe weather on our American railroads, which had trouble in getting supplies to the coast, and partly because more and more ships were required for transporting American troops and supplies for these troops, to France. This additional curtailment was most felt by families of small income, whose earners were at the front or away on other government service. Mothers had great difficulty in getting adequate nourishment for growing children. But the British people cheerfully submitted to this further deprivation. Summer is at hand. It is to be hoped that before another winter sets in, American and British shipping will have sufficiently increased to remedy the situation.

In regard to what I have said of the British army, I was profoundly struck, as were other visitors to that front, by the health and morale of the men, by the marvel of organization accomplished in so comparatively brief a time. It was one of the many proofs of the extent to which the British nation had been socialized. When one thought of that little band of regulars sent to France in 1914, who became immortal at Mons, who shared the glory of the Marne, and in that first dreadful winter held back the German hosts from the Channel ports, the presence on the battle line of millions of disciplined and determined men seemed astonishing indeed. And this had been accomplished by a nation facing the gravest crisis in its history, under the necessity of sustaining and financing many allies and of protecting an Empire. Since my return to America a serious reverse has occurred.

After the Russian peace, the Germans attempted to overwhelm the British by hurling against them vastly superior numbers of highly trained men. It is for the military critic of the future to analyse any tactical errors that may have been made at the second battle of the Somme. Apparently there was an absence of preparation, of specific orders from high sources in the event of having to cede ground. This much can be said, that the morale of the British Army remains unimpaired; that the presence of mind and ability of the great majority of the officers who, flung on their own resources, conducted the retreat, cannot be questioned; while the accomplishment of General Carey, in stopping the gap with an improvised force of non-combatants, will go down in history. In an attempt to bring home to myself, as well as to my readers, a realization of what American participation in this war means or should mean.

A TRAVELLER IN WAR-TIME

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CHAPTER I

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Toward the end of the summer of 1917 it was very hot in New York, and hotter still aboard the transatlantic liner thrust between the piers. One glance at our cabins, at the crowded decks and dining-room, at the little writing-room above, where the ink had congealed in the ink-wells, sufficed to bring home to us that the days of luxurious sea travel, of a la carte restaurants, and Louis Seize bedrooms were gone—at least for a period. The prospect of a voyage of nearly two weeks was not enticing. The ship, to be sure, was far from being the best of those still running on a line which had gained a magic reputation of immunity from submarines; three years ago she carried only second and third class passengers! But most of us were in a hurry to get to the countries where war had already become a grim and terrible reality. In one way or another we had all enlisted.

By “we” I mean the American passengers. The first welcome discovery among the crowd wandering aimlessly and somewhat disconsolately about the decks was the cheerful face of a friend whom at first I did not recognize because of his amazing disguise in uniform. Hitherto he had been associated in my mind with dinner parties and clubs.

That life was past. He had laid up his yacht and joined the Red Cross and, henceforth, for an indeterminable period, he was to abide amidst the discomforts and dangers of the Western Front, with five days' leave every three months. The members of a group similarly attired whom I found gathered by the after-rail were likewise cheerful. Two well-known