

NATURE'S MARVELS ON A BATTLEFIELD

Shell-Torn Earth Hides Its
Gaping Wounds Under Man-
tle of Flowers and Wild
Vegetation.

The valley of the Ancre, which was so hideous last year when the trickle of the stream ran from one half-stagnant pool to another through a brown waste of shell-kneaded earth, is now all waving rushes dotted with meadowsweet and hemp, agrimony and purple loosestrife. In Aveluy Wood the riven tree-stumps stand out against a background of acres of red rosebay. And so it is all over the battlefields of a year ago.

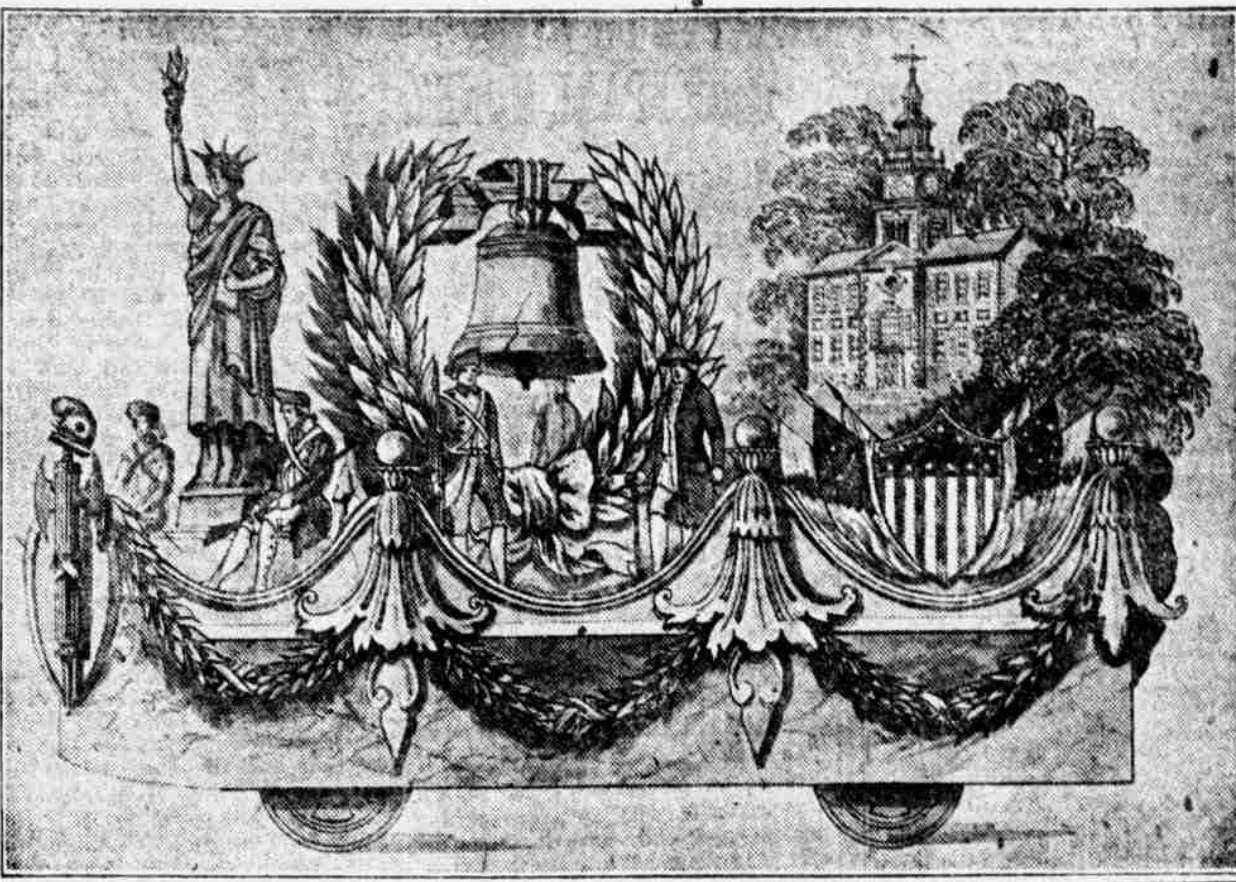
It is an old legend that roses never blow so red as over a hero's grave. I think it must be true of poppies. Norfolk Poppyland itself can show no braver fields of scarlet than these year-old battlefields, and though it may be only fancy it seems that the sheets of color are richer and more unbroken where the fighting was fiercest. Nowhere does the ground flame quite so brilliantly as around the Butte de Warlencourt, on the dreadful expanse above the Bazentin towards High Wood, and on the face of the Thiépval slope, where the Ulstermen passed on July 1. In these places the ground is all poppies for rods together. Elsewhere the scarlet is half veiled in the mist of flowering grasses, and mixed with them are a profusion of other blossoms, yellow ragwort, hawkweed, sow thistles, and ladies' bedstraw, mauve scabious and purple vetch and knapweed, tall campanulas, blue chicory, and vipers' bugloss and cornflower, and nearer to the ground pale field convolvulus and pimpernel, with, everywhere, white yarrow and camomile.

Wonderful Change.

No yard of all this ground but last year was plowed up by shells and beaten and ploughed again, so that much of the soil which now lies on the surface must have been thrown up from two or three feet below and then it was churned and churned again. Yet the grass and the flowers are as in any rich meadow at home and grow taller and more luxuriantly. There are no villages, no landmarks beyond the occasional patches of sparse tree-stumps which once were woods, but only the wide waving expanse, where there are no human beings, as if it were the heart of some new continent which man had just discovered. All larger things were destroyed and swept away by war, and only the little things like plant seeds and insects' eggs were able to survive.

Rarely outside of the tropics have I seen more butterflies than flutter over these wastes today, whites and tortoiseshells and peacocks and skippers and little crablike moths. The kingly swallowtails are here, too, but so far I have chanced this summer to see only one and that was not among the

"Liberty," in Ak-Sar-Ben Parade



flowers, but on the bare white summit of the Butte de Warlencourt when the king was there. The royal butterfly sailed round and round the little party and, as if recognizing kinship, more than once made as if to settle on the king while he stood looking at the graves of the gallant Durhams.

There are places where crops flourish, patches of an acre or more being covered with oats or barley or wheat, mixed with "weeds" certainly, but hardly less close and even than if they had been truly sown. One patch of barley (one almost inclines to call it a "field") which I saw was especially fine; but all three are growing strongly between Longueval and Ginchy, where it seems impossible that they could have been sown last year. More likely, they survive from three summers ago and, self seeded, they have held their own well against the wild things which riot around and among them. In one place I found a solitary potato plant, going strong, sprung presumably from some potato strayed from a German field kitchen.

Next to poppies the most abundant flower is camomile, and it alone seems to have been able to spring up and grow on the roads and beaten paths to and from the lines, so that, looking over the country, amid the deep green and waving colors, you can often trace the course of an old path where it runs like a pure white ribbon amid the sea of green and waving colors.

Trees Wiped Out.

The woods remain desolate beyond imagination, even though in most of them grass and flowers have sprung up to cover the ground and shoots have risen from the old roots. Above ground level hardly a tree has put out any new life, but the shattered trunks still stand bare and blackened. Nature finds a use, however, even for the shell scars on the wood, for sparrows

have built their nests this year at the points where the trees have splintered so that untidy wisps of straw and stuff stick out from the jagged crowns. In Leuze wood, a pair of crows have nested. Perhaps they thought that later in the year the tree would put forth leaves as usual; but as it is the nest stands absurdly a landmark for long distances round, as exposed as if it were on the top of a flagstaff or bare ship's mast. Near Clery, amid the waste, a single post some three feet high, stood up, and on the top of it I saw a mother warbler feeding a young cuckoo three times her own size.

Strangest Thing of All.

But the strangest thing of all is nature's haste to hide the ravages of war seems to me the shell holes. As one wades through the deep herbage the lesser shell holes merely make the walking very difficult and uneven, for one's feet blunder among the shell holes, which are concealed by the growth, and trip over strands of barbed wire and unexploded shells and other things which are scattered everywhere out of sight. Many of the larger holes, however, still remain half filled with water. Around the edges of the water white butterflies, which are thirsty creatures, crowd to drink, and when you disturb them they rise in clouds until the air is full of them, like a snowstorm. In the water, itself, little whirligig beetles dance mazy dances on the surface, and water boatmen swim about and water scorpions and other things just as in any village pond at home. I have spoken before of frogs in the new shell holes on the V ridge. But here on the dry slopes of the Albert ridge, on the high ground, how has all this teeming life come into the shell holes of last summer?—London Times Letter.

Land Bank Expects Twenty Millions in Loans by January 1

Loans asked for from the Federal Land bank of Omaha during September totaled \$4,000,000 greater than in any previous month, according to Secretary Frank G. Odell of that institution. The business of the bank is increasing at the rate of \$1,000,000 a week. It is expected that the loans of the bank will reach the \$20,000,000 mark by January.

Recently twenty loans were approved in one day and a total of \$87,600 was paid out.

"We ought to quadruple that, or more, in payments of loans," Mr. Odell said, "but we are having difficulty in getting applicants to straighten up their abstracts and otherwise conform to regulations."

The Eighth district, over which the Omaha bank has jurisdiction, comprising Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota and Wyoming, has 433 farm loan associations, or a little more than one-tenth of all the associations in the twelve districts of the United States. There are about 4,000 associations in the country.

How to Kill a Club.
Don't come; if you come, come late.
Kick if you are not appointed on a committee, and if you are appointed, never attend a committee meeting.
Don't have anything to say when called upon.
If you do attend a meeting find fault with the proceedings and work done by other members.
Never bring a friend who you think might join the club.
Don't do anything more than you can possibly help to further the club's interests; refuse to use any talents you have, believing you are the power plant of the whole universe and that the whole club would be dark if you quit.—St. Louis City Punch.

The National Security Fire Insurance Company

Sound, Solid and Conservative

Is strictly a Nebraska institution. Its capital stock is owned by Nebraskans. Its funds are invested in Nebraska securities and its affairs are managed by officers and directors well and favorably known in Nebraska business and banking circles.

**This Company Writes
a General Fire,
Lightning and Tornado
and Automobile Business**

And has ample facilities for handling all desirable insurance business submitted to them.

If you are a true Nebraskan you should see that at least a portion of your insurance is placed in The National Security Fire Insurance Company.

The Insurance Examiners Say

"The Company appears to have been fortunate in a low loss liability. This is accounted for by its conservative and sound performance in re-insuring all of its risks above a certain safe maximum amount during this, the Company's early period of experience and establishment. The loss claims are promptly settled on completion of proof and with apparent satisfaction to insured."

"The Company has a very complete system for the record and calculation of the unearned premiums. The Company's calculation for this item is correct."

"All the records of the Company are neatly and accurately kept. The secretary is to be commended for the many reforms instituted in the Company's bookkeeping methods."

"The Company has enjoyed a very substantial growth. Its operative affairs are well and very economically managed. The salaries allowed the officers are barely remunerative. Its continuance of clean and sound methods, since organization, will insure its greater and successful growth, inspire confidence with the insurance public and offer an adequate return to its stockholders on the money invested."

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B. R. BAYS, Examiner.
H. N. SPRAGUE, Examiner.

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HOME OFFICE—1406 FARNAM STREET.

ASSETS

Real Estate Mortgages	-	\$194,650.00
Municipal Bonds	-	48,300.00
Municipal Warrants	-	6,740.00
Cash in Banks and Office	-	155,428.99
Uncollected Premiums	-	8,971.41
Interest Accrued	-	7,179.02
Bills Receivable	-	21,151.46
Furniture and Fixtures	-	2,817.59
		\$445,238.99

LIABILITIES

Capital Stock	-	\$250,000.00
Reserve for Re-Insurance	-	27,509.59
Surplus	-	167,729.40
		\$445,238.99

Statement July 1, 1917

The Merchants National Bank of Omaha

Northeast Corner 13th and Farnam Sts.

ESTABLISHED IN 1882.

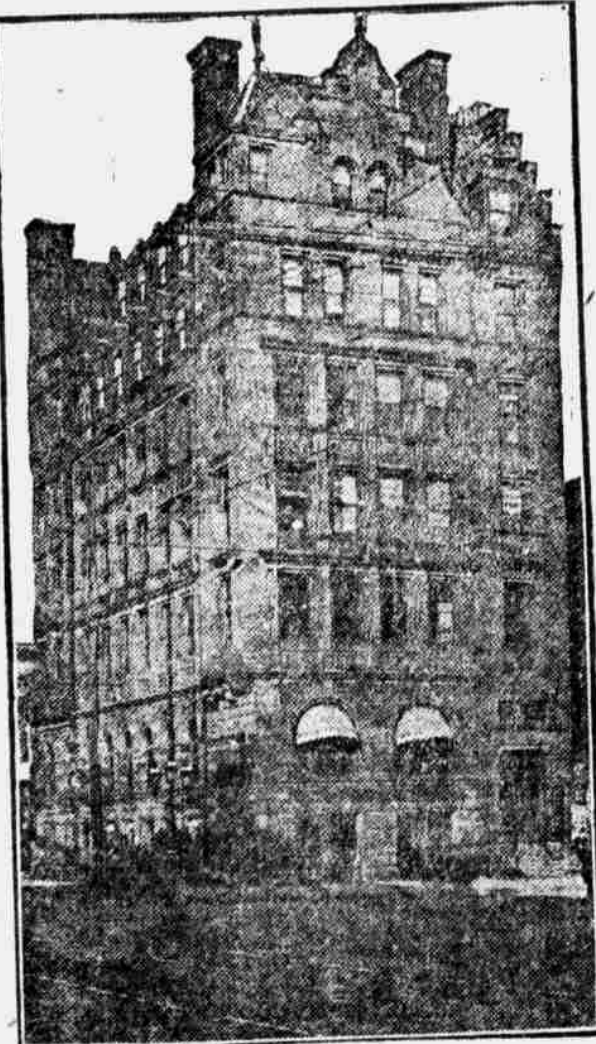
CAPITAL STOCK, \$1,000,000.00
UNDIVIDED PROFITS, \$347,000.00

UNITED STATES DEPOSITORY

SURPLUS, \$250,000.00
DUE DEPOSITORS, \$11,862,000.00

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