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 Cléry, 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.

“But the strangest thing of all in 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 till the air is full of them, like a snow-storm. In the water itself a luxuriant pond life has developed. 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 as if it were on the top of a flagstaff or bare ship’s mast. Near Cléry, 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.

THE LATEST SPOT TO BE DEVASTATED.

And another kind of love-music is introduced into our ears and heard! Harken to his song! Out come the nightingales and sing in the new shell-holes on the Vimy 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?"

From the remoter Balkans comes a word from active battlefields protesting against Shakespeare’s “nightingale’s complaining note.” Out there it is the nightingale’s joyful notes that a member of the Faraday Society speaks of:

“...You will have a terrific tearing and roaring noise of artillery and shot in ‘the dead of night,’ and there will be a temporary cessation of the duel, with great quietness, when, lo and behold, and hear! Harken to his song! Out come the nightingales, right about the guns, perched sometimes only a few yards from them in some bushes, in a ravine where the guns are hidden. And another kind of love-music is introduced into our ears and souls, which does us good. Think it makes you think—and beautiful thoughts come along to relieve you from the devilment of war and the men who cause it.

“You might think that another ‘go,’ and another roar, and another crack in the heavens, caused by some good few big howitzers, would frighten these nightingales away from so near the guns. But no, there they are, night after night, hanging on to their charmers, and giving, as I say, our hearts a rest from ‘iron,’ and ‘sending it over’—by their notes of beauty and joy—which, needless to say, but true, we mostly envy.

“I was down at Saloniki with some heavy-gun men on leave a few days ago, and, coming from various positions, I brought up this subject, and got from them confirmation, with admiration, of the doings and wonderful songs of these nightingales under the ‘noses of our guns.’”

AND NOW, ST. QUENTIN!

While Germany Talks of Peace, she offers to the world is the ruins of St. Quentin Cathedral. They knew that no work of architecture in Germany could compare with it, declares The New York Sun, and that in destroying it they were inflicting upon France an irreparable injury, even tho it had no military excuse. “What they apparently did not appreciate,” charitably adds the writer of this editorial, “was that the whole world shares the injury with France and will join in her resentment.” The story of the earlier retreat is repeating itself. “Watchers from the French lines before St. Quentin have seen the great cathedral of that hapless town put to the torch and reduced to ruins... The houses of the peaceful inhabitants are blown up or fired. The smoke of blazing villages rises from the surrounding plain.” That the charge of doing these things “merely with malignant purpose and without hope of military advantage” may be supported from testimony furnished by themselves, the military correspondent of the Berlin Tageblatt, who describes “with gusto” the process, is thus quoted:

“In the course of these last months great stretches of French territory have been turned by us into a dead country. It varies in width from ten to twelve or fifteen kilometers (six and a quarter to seven and a half or eight miles), and extends along the whole of our new position, presenting a terrible barrier of desolation to any enemy hardy enough to advance against our new lines. No village or farm was left standing on this glacial, no road was left passable, no railway-track or embankment was left in being. Where once were woods there are gaunt rows of stumps; the wells have been blown up; wires, cables, and pipe-lines destroyed. In front of our new positions runs, like a gigantic ribbon, an empire of death.”

The Berlin Tageblatt is also found “glowing over this destruction of the dwellings and property of helpless peasants in this burst of fine writing”:

“And the desert, a pitiful desert, leagues wide, bare of trees and undergrowth and houses! They sawed and hacked; trees fell and bushes sank; it was days and days before they had cleared the ground. In this war-zone there was to be no shelter, no cover. The enemy’s mouth must stay dry, his eyes turn in vain to the wells—they are buried in rubble. No four-walls for him to settle down into—all leveled and burned out; the villages turned into dumps of rubbish; churches and church-towers laid out in ruins athwart the roads.”

All this was done in the territory which the French armies had to cross before reaching their present position before St. Quentin. But to what avail?

“It checked them not a bit. Across the desert waste they built highways and rebuilt roads. The wells were poisoned. The armies laid water-pipes for their supply. Every farmhouse and peasant’s cot was reduced to dust. They carried their own shelter. The ‘terrible barrier of death’ was to them no barrier, only a reason why they must push forward with renewed strength and determination to hew down the vandals guilty of the barbarous destruction. Now in front of St. Quentin they see the Boches engaged in the same work preparatory to their next flight.

“‘How in the face of this continued practise of frightfulness in retreat can the world receive respectfully the dictum that ‘The honor of the armies of both sides is safe?’”

The New York Times gives this account of the Collegiate Church, usually called the Cathedral:

“The Cathedral or Church of St. Quentin is one of the finest Gothic buildings in that part of France, and was erected between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. The building has double transepts and the nave is 370 feet long and 130 feet high.”
CONSERVATION OF ARTISTIC TALENT

A RECENT STATEMENT of values puts a new light upon the question of sending our men of artistic talent to the firing-line. "If all the men of rare artistic gifts were piled up in No Man's Land in a funeral-heap, they would make a heap so small that neither Germans nor British would count their taking off as consequential." Their value for war put in this graphic manner leads the speaker, Mrs. Margaret Abbott Lewis, to declare that "artists should be drafted to live and not to die for their country. The question was dwelt upon in our issue of July 21, when a number of prominent artists themselves gave their testimony. It is not likely that they would care to be regarded as other than men when the welfare of their country is at stake, and the majority of opinion was that no discrimination should be made in their favor. The President has declared against favoritism, and according to the true principles of democracy "there must be no preference . . . no exceptions shown or made among those who will be drafted for our armies." Every able-bodied man within draft age is to serve if called, it has been announced, and "every one shall be allotted to some particular task to which he may be best suited." Writing in The Musical Observer, Mr. Gustav Saenger ventures to hope that—

"Some slight consideration may be shown to our men of genius and talent and that instead of sending them into the direct firing-lines or using them for the nerve and body-wrecking trench-work, they may assist in some capacity in which they can do the most good.

"The nervous and excitable temperament of the average artist makes it questionable whether or not he would be best fitted for the strenuous duties of actual warfare, and how he could be employed and his special abilities exploited to best advantage is already a much-discussed and debated topic. . . . There are many reasons, and good ones, too, why our artists should not carry a gun in offering to die for their country, but instead should dedicate their artistic gifts to the service of their country."

"So, after all, it is numbers—limitless numbers—which count in this war, and if a minority of our fighters can be spared for work which will be productive of much good minus the certainty of death, why not take some steps to keep them among us and prevent this wanton artistic wastage?"

"Since the start of the war Mrs. Lewis has watched what each of the belligerent countries has done with its talented people; she has noted that the first impulse of each country has been to insist that there be no 'privileged class,' and to send the artists, singers, sculptors into the firing-lines along with the others. But she has also noted, in following through the story of what happened to the countries at war, that the talented sons of each country were called back from the firing-line for 'other service.' According to her investigations, those that were not killed in the first rush of combat were put to work cheering up the men of the front lines at innumerable little theaters in the cities where troops were billeted and going into national 'intelligence' work. Men of iron nerves, as she says, make the best soldiers. The artist is so delicately and nervously organized that the very qualities that make him a great artist make him an inefficient soldier; the artist would probably go insane from nervous strain before it would wear down less acutely temperamentally.

"And what if all these arguments and considerations should prove unavailing? What about the future of our artists who will return to us—crippled beyond human help, and minus an arm, a hand, one or more fingers? Business men, as remarked by Mrs. Lewis, tho armless from shrapnel-shell, can still go on dictating letters and conducting their business; but the artist, if rendered armless in the same way, is rendered useless in all that makes him worth while to society for the rest of his life?"

Mr. Saenger, in urging that we take advantage of the experience of our Allies and save our talented people, quotes another musical writer to similar effect:

"Alfred Human, in his article in Musical America, said that

'conservation of art is not a speculative theory, not a whimsical fancy; it is a tested, practical, utilitarian movement, recognized in every country of Europe, so far as we can ascertain, and that no steps have been taken in the United States as yet except in a comparatively minor way, although it is the general understanding of the artists that the nation will take action in this direction.' Let us hope that we shall not be disappointed in this respect."

In Musical America, Mr. Boris Dunov also dwells on the example of fighting European nations, mentioning first Russia's way with him:

"I was myself in the Russian Army for nine months—the compulsory period of service—but I was granted certain and special privileges, because I was a graduate of music from the Imperial Conservatory at Petrograd.

"In Germany, the country against whom we are fighting, the concerts and the drama are considered of importance, and they are being continued synchronously with the conduct of the war. The reason for this should be obvious: while the country is at war the people at home must be kept up to pitch. And art is the best specific."

"What applies to musical Germany should apply to musical America. If Germany can maintain a huge army, and yet, at the same time, maintain her concert artists and her dramatic artists, we should be able to do so, too. To conscript our artists would be a confession of our failure—it would mean that we could not conscript sufficient men elsewhere.

"France not only considers it essential that the life artistic should continue within her own shores, but she is sending her artists abroad to spread the gospel of French art."

A SCENE OF EARLIER DESTRUCTION IN FRANCE.

From a drawing by Muirhead Bone.

The church was wrecked by explosives; but the rose-garden tried to smile though its arches are awry and the lines of box point to the formal beauty that has been destroyed.