

Secret of Death-Dealing War Autos Closely Guarded by British Officials

Armored Cars That Crossed Trenches and Spread Terror Among German Soldiers, Built in Parts in Many Factories So Foe Could Get No Inking of Their Power.

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
LONDON, Sept. 18.—British officers in London on short leave have given THE NEW YORK TIMES correspondent a description of the armored cars spoken of in General Haig's report yesterday. He called them "the superdreadnoughts of the land." The Evening Standard gives the following details:

"England's latest weapon of war is nothing more nor less than a huge land ship fully armored and capable of traveling at fair speed over the shell-battered and cratered terrain of Picardy. Designed, as they are, to traverse the most difficult country and to sweep away all obstacles in their path, they naturally are of fairly large size, with caterpillar wheels constructed to cover the widest trench or shell hole and to enable the vehicle to tackle almost any depth of mire. Their crews are protected by varying numbers of armored plates, any one of which is impervious to machine gun or rifle fire as well as shrapnel bullets, and it is asserted that only a direct hit from a gun of large calibre could put one of these monsters out of commission.

"While from a defensive point of view they are almost perfect, their offensive qualities are even superior, and when they have cleared a trench of the enemy or have forced the survivors into the shelter of their dugouts, these land ships—'tanks,' as the Tommies prefer to call them—have another little surprise in store for the beaten enemy, about which perhaps it were wise not to say more.

"Most of the great engineering works in England can claim a share in the production of these armored cars. They are built in parts at different factories in order to preserve the secret of their construction, and they are then assembled at a central factory under the supervision of experts of the armored car division."

The Evening Star suggests a picture of the effect on the nerves of the Germans, already shaken by artillery fire, when they saw these armored monsters charging over the barbed wire and rough ground of No Man's Land regardless of the rifle and machine gun fire, at the same time that British aeroplanes co-operated with the advance of the infantry from close height firing on the enemy on the ground.

"The scene," says The Evening Star, "when the huge steel monsters charged the barbed wire and vast birds flew along the German trenches, must have recalled the terrors of prehistoric man when dinosaurs and pterodactyls assailed his primitive cave dwelling."

Secret Arouses Curiosity.

The London Times says: "The reference in General Haig's communiqué to the new type of heavy armored car which has proven of considerable utility is certain to arouse curiosity among soldiers and civilians alike. In the army it had been whispered for some days past that the development of the ordinary armored cars had successfully passed the experimental stage and that they were likely to be employed during the next phase of the great offensive. Little is known of the actual construction of the new vehicles. Those who have seen them have referred to them mysteriously as 'tanks,' while the soldiers who helped to handle them named them humorously 'willis.' It is evident from the nature of the country over which any armored car would be obliged to operate—a desolate, shell-torn, roadless and trench-in-

tersected wilderness—that no vehicle mounted upon ordinary wheels could hope to surmount the innumerable obstacles to its progress. It is obvious also that to be of any practical utility the armored car must be invulnerable to rifle and machine gun fire and shell splinters. The problem was how to combine these various requirements in any automobile structure.

"General Haig's message makes it clear that the problem must have been successfully solved. Of the precise quality of their utility we are told nothing. Whether it lay in the efficiency of their armament, or in their success in crushing down such impediments to an infantry advance as barbed wire, can only be conjectured. The gratifying fact seems to be that our inventors have not hesitated boldly to tread untraveled paths and to have sought in this war of machinery to give practical shape to ideas which, had they been conceived by an imaginative novelist, would have been regarded as fantastical. When the secrecy which rightly surrounds the construction and use of this most recent addition to our fighting machines can be lifted, we may perhaps be enabled to imagine the feelings of the German infantry in their shell-battered trenches, when in the uncertain light of dawn they saw advancing upon them an array of unearthly monsters cased in steel, spitting fire and crawling laboriously, but ceaselessly, over trench, barbed wire and shell crater."