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MAGINOT LINE.

Four times in a hundred years France has been invaded. Averaging every twenty-five years her towns and villages have rung to the marching feet of a foreigner's army --- killing, burning and ravaging --- bringing war to the peaceful countryside. France maintains a standing army of more than half a million men. Five Million more reservists can be called to the colours fully trained --- her system of conscription for every able-bodied youth has given her one of the finest armies the world has ever known. But to-day, man-power is not enough. France has a natural wall of defence ~~xxxxxx~~ in the south-west -- the Pyrenees. This mighty range of mountains stands guard over part of her frontier --- and France has her regiments of troops specially trained in mountain fighting. The possibility of invasion by a modern army from this corner of France is slight, and the barrier which Nature has erected is reinforced by these fighting mountaineers. Every day in training they challenge fate and death --- they could do more than hold their own with any invader.

On the east lie the Alps --- another perfect barrier against the enemies of France, manned also by fighting mountaineers. To the North and West the sea offers her protection. To the North-east, the ~~country~~ <sup>unprotected</sup> countryside ~~once~~ offered an open gate to the invader, till France built her mysterious wall of steel and concrete. It was a hidden battle-line of fortresses --- the Maginet Line.

You might walk for miles above this wall of <sup>death</sup> / underground  
~~XXXX~~ ~~XXXX~~ and never know that you were not strolling on some  
 peaceful farmland --- ~~among the many fields that have been~~  
~~ruined for centuries by the sword and plow.~~ You might remember  
 perhaps, how these fields were laid waste in 1914 --- you might  
 think how futile would be their little locks and bolts if ever  
 war should come again. You might wonder what would happen if  
 the war-clouds should ~~gather~~ return upon the evening wind.  
 What would happen?

Beneath that pastureland and the fields of ripening grain  
 --- what would happen? That is the Maginot Line.

Twelve million cubic feet of earth have been dug out to  
 build this subterranean barrier. It runs for nearly six hundred  
 miles from Dunkerque to Switzerland ~~and~~ it cost sixty million  
 pounds, ~~this miracle of the age of miracles.~~ Its fourteen  
 thousand big-gun emplacements lie ~~hid~~ concealed every few  
 hundred yards. They guard against the modern tank with six-  
 inch-~~thick~~ steel pickets driven into ~~it~~ reinforced concrete.  
 By special permission we were allowed here to photograph. ~~That~~  
 Two hundred thousand troops specially trained, man the Maginot  
 Line by day and night. They are more than soldiers --- they  
 are technicians --- well-paid, skilled mechanics. They live  
 like moles and they must be prepared in emergency to remain  
 below the ground for a year. They must be highly-skilled  
~~technicians, for every thing~~  
~~technicians, for every thing~~ works by machinery. It has its own  
 electric troops-train. Ammunition travels by monorail.

It is a vast city underneath the earth --- self-supporting, entirely independent of the rest of the world for at least twelve months. Its kitchens are run on the most modern lines --- its ~~stores~~ stores held thousands of tons of frozen meat and five hundred million gallons of red wine. It has its own hospitals with its own equipment for dealing with asphyxia, though the whole line is air-conditioned.

Along its steel and concrete passages men are always passing to and fro --- men who live in a strange world that defies imagination --- an impossible forecast ~~of~~ the future.

But off duty in peace-time there is plenty of recreation. The off-duty surroundings are made as pleasant as possible. There are no rats, and only one mouse. Probably no enemy will ever dare to face the unspeakable hidden death ~~that~~ of the Maginot Line --- but if he does -----

From 200 feet below the earth those whose duty it is to man the ~~main~~ guns will come up --- through walls of earth and steel and concrete into the gun-turrets built so strong that direct hits could not shatter them. The guns can fire in all directions, yet the gunners who man them will never see outside. Their fire is controlled from hidden observation points elsewhere.

These guns are always ready, with the Pyrenees and the Alps and the sea they have made of France an island. That is the Maginot Line --- checkmate to invasion. Britain's great ally is prepared. Watch for the next issue at this theatre --- the Defence of France.