

# Collier's

~November 10, 1917~

## WAR FASHIONS

THE Sam Browne belt must go. A heartless War Department has ruled that this useless but highly ornamental leather harness may not be worn over their uniforms by officers stationed here, and many a youthful heart is heavy in consequence. "It's bad enough," wails one aggrieved subaltern, "to have to wear a tunic with a standing collar instead of the soft-roll collar the English use. They might at least have left us our Sam Brownes, so that we could try to look halfway decent."

Courage, friends! It may all be a mistake. The war has changed many things, and it may have altered conceptions of military smartness as well. For from Paris, the home of *mode* and *chic*, comes a "daily fashion hint from the front" that is upsetting. It is from HENRI BARBUSSE'S great book, "Le Feu"—recently published in English as "Under Fire"—and describes the winter costumes of a squad of French territorials:

Hides, bundles of blankets, pieces of cloth, knitted hoods, woolen caps, fur caps, mufflers, wound around or worn like turbans, headgear knit and double-knit, coverings and roofings of tarred, oiled, or waterproofed capes and cowls, black, or all the colors—once—of the rainbow: all these cover the men, well-nigh obliterating their uniforms as well as covering their skins, making them look immense and cumbersome. One of them has slung over his back a square of linoleum with a huge diapered pattern of white and red, which he found in the middle of the dining room of some temporary billet: it is Pépin. . . . Here bulges Barque's chest protector, cut out of an eider-down quilt, once pink, but now bleached and mottled by dust and rain.

And our legs! . . . Just now I crept down, bent double, into our dugout, a little low cellar, smelling of damp and mold, where one stumbles over empty preserve cases and dirty bundles of rags, and where two lengthy forms sprawled asleep while in a candle-lit corner a kneeling figure rummaged in a kit bag. . . . Coming out, I saw legs framed in the rectangular entrance: horizontal, vertical, oblique, spread about, doubled up, intermingled, blocking the passage and cursed by the passers-by. They are a multifarious and multicolored aggregation—gaiters black and yellow, leggings long and short, made of leather, khaki, or other waterproof material; puttees of dark blue, light blue, black, lavender, khaki, or unbleached serge.

One begins to suspect that it took something other than Sam Brownes and soft-roll collars to fight the Marne, second Ypres, and the Somme. As one correspondent remarked, watching a regiment of poilus returning from the trenches before Verdun: "Look at that gang! They look like tramps, and their idea of marching would make VON HINDENBURG weep. The only thing they can do is fight like the devil!"

