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For whom made J. Aitken, Allandale Road, Boronia.

Subject.....ANGELS OF MONS

A.W.M. File No. 449/9/69 Date 14th June, 1951.

AUTHORITY—

There are various "Angels of Mons" legends but no official evidence to support the stories. It appears that nothing remotely approaching proof has been offered as to any supernatural intervention during the Retreat from Mons.

Controversy has appeared in the press from time to time over the years and it would seem that still a number of people living firmly believe that the Divine intervention of an angelic host saved the British Army from being destroyed when they were fighting the desperate rearguard action against enormous masses of invaders.

Whether or not the Germans were terrified by the apparition the fact remains that the enemy forces abruptly checked their advance and recoiled in some disorder towards the right flank allowing the remnant of the British forces to continue their retreat.

Mr. Arthur Machen claims in his book "The Bowmen and other Legends of the War" that the Angels of Mons was derived from his fiction while Mr. Harold Begbie in his book "On the Side of the Angels" sets out to prove that before Mr. Machen had written his book British soldiers believed that angels had appeared to them. Mr. Begbie states that he has collected from many sources actual experiences which could only be described as supernatural.

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pp.31-33. "Here follows the verbatim statement of this dependable lance-corporal:- 'I was with my battalion in the retreat from Mons on or about August 28th (1914).

.... The weather was very hot and clear, and between eight and nine o'clock in the evening I was standing with a party of nine other men on duty, and some distance on either side there were parties of ten on guard. Immediately behind us half of my battalion was on the edge of a wood resting. An officer suddenly came up to us in a state of great anxiety and asked us if we had seen anything startling.....taking me and some others a few yards away showed us the sky. I could see quite plainly in mid-air a strange light which seemed to be quite distinctly outlined and was not a reflection of the moon, nor were there any clouds in the neighbourhood. The light became brighter and I could see quite distinctly three shapes, one in the centre having what looked like outspread wings, the other two were not so large, but were quite plainly distinct from the centre one. They appeared to have a long, flowing garment of a golden tint, and they were above the German line facing us. We stood watching them for about three-quarters of an hour. All the men with me saw them, and

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and other men came up from other groups who also told us that they had seen the same thing....'

"...It is a statement originally made in conversation!

pp.38-39. "Have you met, since you got back here, any of the men who saw the vision ?

"Only one. He's lying in Netley Hospital at the moment. He's in the Scots Guards....he described the three figures...as being midway between the earth and the sky - in mid-air: over the German lines and facing towards the British. They kept growing brighter and brighter, he said. The centre figure was much taller than the other two and had shining wings which seemed to protect the lesser figures on either side of him... You could discern there were faces, but you couldn't see what they were like...under the feet of the three figures was a bright star, and that when the figures disappeared the star remained....."

pp.66-67. "In the Observer of August 22nd, 1915, appeared the following paragraph:-

'The Rev. A.A. Boddy, Vicar of All Saints' Sunderland, who has just returned home after two months' ministerial work at the front, says he had several opportunities of investigating the story of the vision at Mons.

'The evidence, he says, though not always direct, was remarkably cumulative, and came through channels which were entitled to respect. Supernatural angel forms had, he believed, been seen. He was reminded of one of the Biblical prophecies that at the time of a great crisis on the earth - great signs shall be from Heaven.

'A lady whose name and address, he holds, while nursing in a convalescent hospital, was told by a patient that at the critical period in the retreat from Mons they saw an angel with outstretched wings, like a luminous cloud, between the advancing Germans and themselves. And at the moment the onslaught of the Germans slackened. Unable to credit the story, she was discussing later with a group of officers, when a colonel looked up and said: - Young Lady, the thing happened. You need not be incredulous. I saw it myself. -' "

"A.M.B., writing to the Church Times from Paris on July 28th, 1915, gave the following testimony from a German source:-

'...there was much discussion in Berlin because a certain regiment who had been told off to do a certain duty at a certain battle, failed to carry out their orders, and when censured they declared that they did go forward but found themselves absolutely powerless to proceed with their forces, and their horses turned sharply round and fled like the wind and nothing could stop them...'

Im Blackburn.

Librarian.