


SMALL THINGS

MARGARET DELAND





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SMALL THINGS

By **Ellen Douglas Deland**

Clyde Corners

The Waring Girls

Cyntra

Country Cousins

The Fortunes of Phoebe

The Girls of Dudley School

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SMALL THINGS

BY

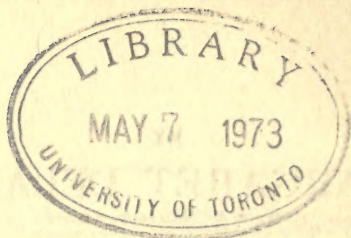
MARGARET DELAND

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"THE AWAKENING OF HELENA RICHIE,"
"DR. LAVENDAR'S PEOPLE," ETC.



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TO
LORIN DELAND
Lover and Servant
of his Fellows

MAY 12TH, 1919.

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I

FACING FRANCE

(1917)

THE day we set our faces toward France the sky was as gray as our steamer, which was nosing the slimy pier, and swaying slightly to the flop and slobber of the black water in the slip. It was a big boat, and the water seemed very far below the deck railing on which we were leaning to watch what was going on—the crowd on the dock, the stewards coming down the gang-plank bent double under the weight of cabin baggage, the donkey engine in the steerage, braying and scolding and lifting the mail sacks to drop them into the cavern of the hold.

It was the usual scene of departure for Europe—yet it was, somehow, strangely unusual.

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As it happened, I had always left my native land in sunshine—but the unusualness, now, was not in the chill December weather, not in the sweeping drizzle of mist, and the occasional snowflakes that sauntered down to rest for a crystalline moment on one's coat sleeve. It was not in the dimness of the dock sheds where the sizzling uncertainty of arc lamps made the shadows among the rafters seem as vast as Night itself. The sheds are always mysterious—with darkling streets and lanes winding between towering piles of freight. These things did not cause the sense of unusualness in the brooding grayness of the winter afternoon. It seemed to me, watching from the upper deck, that the difference was that we were all of us, under the clamor and interest of our departure, wordlessly aware that that freight, that all those bales and boxes and crates, were marked with some red sign: a Red Cross or a Red Triangle.

And there was another thing which brought the difference home to us—the silence of the crowd on the dock. On those gay summer days, back in the unbelievable years of Peace, that crowd on the dock used to laugh and chatter, and wave college colors,

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and yell all sorts of friendly, merry, impertinent farewells; now, it was intent and quiet; some handkerchiefs were waved, and many small American flags; and there were little spurts of cheerfulness, but the striking thing about this crowd was its silence. And I thought some of the faces looked a little gray; then I realized that the gray faces were not those which were coming on board the gray ship. They were the faces of the people who were going to stay at home. The faces which came down the gangplank had a brightness which was all their own—eyes laughed, lips smiled!—the rain and the dusk and the sinister color of the ship never dimmed their brightness. I think this was because they were most of them young.

The two girls beside me—my two girls who were going to France to work in one of the canteens of the Y. M. C. A. as representatives of the American Authors' Fund for the Relief of Wounded Soldiers of the Allied Nations—these two canteen workers are also young (just under and just over thirty), but they have not the startling youthfulness of some of the boys and girls who came so gayly from the good-by kisses of those men and women on the dock

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who were pressing silently against the great cable that stretched in front of the gang-plank. But I saw this same uplifted brightness in my girls' faces, too. One of them—the big one—Edith, who has the honest, sherry-colored eyes of a St. Bernard, scowled a little:

“It will be ten days before we can get on the job,” she fretted. (She had been straining at the bit for a month to be on that job!) “Why in thunder doesn't this boat get a move on!”

The other, the little one, Sylvia—who weighs as much as ninety-five pounds, and has the courage of a tiger and the heart of a dove—said under her breath, “Gracious Peter! I *hope* I'll make good.” And neither of them said a word, or apparently had a thought, of a fat gray water-rat which might be waiting for them far out on the rainy sea. But I am sure that the quiet people watching us from the pier thought of the Rat—and of many other things of the same nature, for there were plainly fathers and mothers among them. . . . I saw some pocket handkerchiefs waved,—then pressed hard against lips which were, I am sure, trembling. A moment before the gang-plank was hauled in, an

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elderly man ran half way down its slippery slope, looked up with yearning eyes at the passengers crowding against the deck rail, waved his hat and ran back again. He called out something when he was on the dock, but the tearing roar of the whistle crashed over our heads and his voice was swallowed up in the volume of sound. . . .

Then slowly the gray ship began to move—away from the pier, out through the scum of broken boxes and orange skins and straw bottle covers, out into the river, into the bay, past the guarding Liberty, out into the ocean and the night, toward the new incredible Europe, which we, astonished, inconvenienced, shocked Americans hardly believe in, even yet! And the sign and symbol of that unbelievable world is the furtive, lurking gray Rat—a thing so incompatible with Civilization's idea of playing the game of War, that of course civilized nations are as bewildered by its presence as one ball team would be if another ball team ignored the rules. . . .

As the whistle ceased and the strip of water widened between us and the dock, my two girls looked at each other and drew a great breath of relief.

At last!

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There had been nearly two months of uncertainty. The American Authors' Fund was going to send over two women to work in the Y. M. C. A. Canteen Service—but would these two girls be the women? When that was decided, and they had learned just what "canteen work" meant—a shed or room, "somewhere in France" where, during a ten- or even twelve-hour day, they should receive tired or discouraged or homesick American soldiers, sell them hot chocolate and sandwiches and cigarettes, play games with them, give them books and papers, in fact, "make things pleasant,"—when this laborious prospect had been understood and joyously accepted as an opportunity to do their little part for their country—then had come days of fear that they might, as one of them said, "Get hung up on our passports," for these important documents were unaccountably delayed. "Why doesn't Washington *get busy?*" Edith said, with displeasure; "I should think, by this time, the Government would be able to attend to things." When the passports at last appeared, there had been hours of panic because it seemed impossible to get through the crowding details of the

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last morning on shore. "We'll never reach the dock in time!" some one said.

"I bet we'll be left yet," Edith agreed, "or our baggage won't get on board, which will be just as bad—no chocolate and cigarettes for our canteen!"

"We shall not be left," said the Littlest, whitely; "not if I have to hire six taxis to get us down to the ship."

"How can three persons ride in six taxis?" I pondered, "unless we were Solomon's babies!"

But now, at last, with only one taxi, and with the chocolate and cigarettes for our soldier boys, and our own modest baggage—here we were, being swallowed up in the mist, and watching the retreating city suddenly blossoming with a million stars as the great buildings along the shore lighted up in the early dusk. Behind us, on the wet deck, was the tramp of feet, boys and girls—more boys than girls, for we were taking over many marines—and all of them eager and unafraid. Youth—Youth! So happy and so unconscious of its own significance on this gray ship! It made me think of those young men and maidens, laughing and dancing and making love as their ship started on its voyage to the Island

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of Crete where the Minotaur awaited them. These American boys and girls were all ready to laugh and dance and make love, too. . . . And the Minotaur was waiting.

It was the presence of the girls that especially startled me. Indeed, of all the amazing things that have come bubbling and seething to the surface of life during these last three and a half years, there has been nothing more amazing to me than this exodus of American girls! Has such a thing ever happened in the world before: A passionate desire on the part of the women of one people to go to the help of the men of another people? Would any other nation, I wonder, if we were at war, send its girls across the ocean to serve us?

Of course, the divine and terrifying ferment, the *yeast*, which is stirring in our girls, and driving them into the high adventure of Altruism, is stirring all women everywhere; but I am inclined to think that this special expression of it, which has started a little army of girls over to France, could not have happened anywhere but in the United States, where fathers and mothers have so very little to say as to the behavior of their daughters. They may stand on

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the dock and squeeze the wet ball of a handkerchief against quivering lips, and they may run half way down the gang-plank and let the raw December wind rumple the hair around their thin temples—but they cannot hold their girls back from the gray sea, where heaven only knows what may meet them!

Yet through the parental bewilderment which is one of the hallmarks of the twentieth century, there is one thing of which we must all be sure, namely, that these young creatures (who in the matter of altruism are teaching their grandmothers how to suck eggs), these girls are generally moved by an honest impulse of service. Granted that the accusation of the grandmothers is true, and that they go over to France for the love of adventure, and because of the lure of the uniform, or the desire to stand up beside the boys and say, "Here! Look at me; I'm just as good a soldier in my way as you are in yours!" ("When the war is over," said one of them, "the men will be *ashamed* not to give us the ballot!") Grant all these things, and the fact that none of them want to stay at home and help their mothers wash dishes; yet the deepest thing, and the truest thing, is this impulse to serve. And it will be just as well for

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some of us critical folk to remember who it was who said, some two thousand years ago: "I am among you as he that serveth."

So here they were now, a lot of pretty creatures, Salvation Army lassies, Y. M. C. A. workers, Red Cross girls. Excited, eager, not thinking very much (of course not! Youth would not be Youth if it thought!), not thinking very deeply of those gray-faced people on the dock. They were panting to "get on the job," whatever it might be,—which, I suppose, was why they began, the moment they were on board, to speak maternally, with innocent boldness, to any masculine thing that wore a uniform.

As the mist thickened into rain the girls began to disappear, but the soldier boys lingered, leaning on the railing and straining their eyes toward New York where the million pin-points of light were airily outlining the unseen buildings on the Battery. Behind every pin-point was some human brain, some human heart, between which and the chaos of German intention, these lounging, shy lads of ours were going to place their own lives. They were not saying anything like that; I doubt if they ever thought of it! Yet the fact remains that is what they are

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doing—they are holding themselves ready to die for us. I wonder are we critical people, who stay at home, quite worth dying for? I am sure I am not. . . .

Happily the boys do not dream of asking questions like that,—it might be awkward for us if they did. There was a question, however, which some of them did ask: “Gee, there’s a lot o’ girls on board.”

“Say, what are girls doing in this mix-up?”

“Dey will hold de han’ and smoo’ de brow,” said a French reservist, with a grin.

“I’ll give them two hands,” said his Yankee hearer, and he grinned, too. They were leaning against the deck rail, a lot of them; boys in the dark blue of the navy, with V-necked flannel shirts, and trousers very tight around the hips and very floppy about the ankles, and boys in khaki, very smart and trig, and with well-strapped puttees. They looked bored and shy, and as they watched New York fading into gray space they talked in undertones:

“That’s some town.”

“The lights suttinly is handsome,” came a soft Southern voice.

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"I bet Paree can't beat that!"

Silence. Then a sigh. "Paree? Little old N'York's good enough for me."

Then some one said again, "Lots of girls round?" and after that conversation flagged, but there were furtive glances up and down the wet deck . . . Later, when they thronged into the saloon for dinner, the reason why the girls had vanished was apparent: *Uniforms!* Red Crosses! Red Triangles! Khaki coats and skirts—strange little caps! Military shoulders—martial steps. It was all so charming and so funny and so profoundly moving. It was the child's love of "dressing up," it was the race instinct of uniformity, and it was the sign and symbol of that diviner impulse of Service! No wonder, with that purpose in their minds, that they forgot the Gray Rat.

Overnight, the grayness of the weather melted into sunshine and mild airs. There was a steady keel, and the decks dried off, so that for the next few days the panorama of youth went on before rows of somnolent steamer chairs from which, however, an occasional eye was lifted to watch the girls

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taking the soldiers under maternal wings, and the amusing meekness with which the boys accepted all the good advice offered to them. Behold one girl (she looked eighteen, but she must have been in the twenties, or else her father and mother really *are* crazy!), she had annexed two youngsters who knew, each of them, just one French word, "*Oui*," so she offered to give them French lessons. Round and round the deck they went, the three of them, the boys' rollicking bass following her clear treble:

"Now repeat, all together:

Parlez vous (stamp!)

Parlez vous (stamp!)

Parlez vous (stamp!)

Français! (stamp! stamp!)"

As an interrogation, the phrase would not seem to have, on French soil, great usefulness, but the spirit of the teacher and the earnestness of the pupils were beyond doubt. Am I making fun of our girls? Nothing is further from my mind! They are just as sincere as any of the older, graver women who also tried to make friends with the lads (who were quite obviously bored by them); I am not critical or distrustful; I am only deeply puzzled by their presence

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here on the gray ship; for, after all, *there is so much work to be done at home.* . . .

What are they going over to France to do? Some are stenographers for the civil branches of relief work, and I am told they are very greatly needed; some are volunteer aids, who (if they can stand the strain) will be of great assistance to the overworked, nerve-weary trained nurses in the hospitals; some are regular nurses; some are to make surgical dressings (which I should think the French girls could do quite as well with the advantage of being able to earn some money by it); some are to do canteen work for our own men. Of the value of this canteen work there cannot be any doubt, and I am told (this for the comfort of some worrying American parents) it does not involve anything more dangerous than a few hardships, which may be very good for girls whose knowledge of "hardship" has only come through occasional dips into settlement work,—dips taken from homes where hardship is unknown, much as one takes a cold bath in a warm bathroom.

Some of the canteen workers are men; if they are young men, they will encounter certain hardships of their own that the girls know nothing about. I

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mean the "cold shoulder" of the soldiers. That is obvious, even here on board ship. Boys who are going into the trenches are already resenting the fact that fellows of their own ages are "doing *this* sort of thing." It's all well enough for girls to be flying around making sandwiches and "holding de han' and smooding de brow,"—but *men!*

"Well, Charlie's got an easy job, ain't he?" a marine said; and the occupant of the next steamer chair couldn't help hearing the sneer in his voice and noticing the grin with which he looked at a young man swaggering (just a little), along the deck, very obviously conscious of his Red Cross uniform. "They wear our togs, but I notice they mean to keep their feet dry," the sailor said.

One young fellow who was coming over to do relief work heard the taunt, and his jaw set. "I suppose that's how it looks," he said. After a while he growled out, "I was turned down because I have a rotten bad heart, but they can't keep me out of relief work, thank the Lord! The Y. M. C. A has given me a berth."

I am very certain of the devotion of some of the men thus criticized by the soldiers. They are far

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from being "slackers." I think, for some of them, it has taken more courage to face canteen service with its implication of safety, than it would to face the German fire in the trenches. I am told that Colonel Roosevelt said not long ago something to the effect that no able-bodied man who could be in the trenches, had any right to be in any branch of civil relief; and one fine young fellow who is held back by physical disability said with a groan, "Gosh, he's dead right!" I say this because the criticism of the soldiers and civilians ought to be tempered with the knowledge that often the Y. M. C. A. secretaries are in the canteens only because the War Office will not let them be in the trenches. But to disarm the critic, to add to the worker's influence, I do wish these young men workers could wear some distinctive uniform which would confess at once their desire and their inability to be on the fighting line!

As the mild days came and went, we sailed over serene seas and learned a good deal about each other. We middle-aged folk discovered that Youth had some very noble ideas of its own, which knowledge made us a little envious or, possibly, a little ashamed. And some of the young people admitted

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to each other that some of the frumps were not half bad, after all! Perhaps they even learned from the frumps a few useful things as to French manners and customs. . . . One night at dinner a California boy sitting beside me put out an eager hand toward a tall bottle in the rack in the middle of the table: "Please, ma'am, will you hand me," he began; then paused: "What *is* it?" he asked timidly. When he was told that it was the *vin rouge* of every French dinner table—that thin red wine that Americans think so sour and queer—his face fell. "Oh," he said, "I thought it was catsup." Poor youngster! he will find no "catsup" in France. Another candid, clear-eyed lad looked at me solemnly, and said: "Well, I seen a queer sight to-day. I never seen the beat of it: I seen a lady smokin' a cigarette!"

When told he would probably see many ladies smoking cigarettes before he saw America again—"Say, not, not *nice* ladies?" . . . "Perfectly nice." When he heard that, he was dumb with astonishment. After a long time, he said, with a sort of effort to stand up with his ideals, "Well, maybe you're right, but *I* call it a funny sight."

If he sees "ladies" doing nothing worse than smok-

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ing cigarettes he may be thankful, or we may be for him! But it makes me wince to think of a simple youngster like this, whose ideas of right and wrong turn on matters of taste, such as cigarette smoking for women. One is dismayed at the shock it will be to him to encounter in a new country, a new code, not only of taste, but of morals. A thoughtful Y. M. C. A. worker shook his head over it; some one had asked him how our boys could be protected from the temptations which will inevitably meet them, and he hesitated a minute before answering, then he said: "There is only one certain way, and unfortunately I don't know just how to do it: put the clock back to the time when they were six years old and let them learn the beauty and dignity and terror of physiology, *from their mothers' lips*. If one of our boys doesn't stand up against temptation in France or anywhere else—*cherchez la Mère!*—some mother has not stood up to her duty."

I wish all the mothers of six-year-old boys in America would ponder these words.

As that placid week slipped by, a spirit of placidity seemed to possess the ship; but there came a morning when a flurry of interest stirred the sleepy

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steamer chairs. "Getting near the danger zone," people said to each other, smiling. "Gracious, how exciting!" a pretty girl said joyously.

"Now, you keep a sharp lookout for anything that pops up out of the water and looks like a stovepipe," her companion told her.

"Water's kind o' cold; what?" a soldier said.

"Naw! Come on in, water's fine!" came a sailor's retort.

Then some one told a "true story" of a recent crossing. "My cousin—well, my wife's cousin; she was fixing her hair in her cabin—putting in a million hairpins, the way the ladies do. Had a mirror up, *so*, you know; had her back to the porthole. Well, if you believe me—"

"I don't," some one jeered candidly.

"I tell you, it's *true!* She is a cousin of my wife's. Well, she was looking into the glass and, bless my soul, if there didn't pop up, right in the mirror, the periscope of a sub!"

"What are you giving us?"

"It's true. You can ask my wife. She told her herself. She's her first cousin. Well, the thing was

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so close, it couldn't fire, and my cousin's ship was so close *it* couldn't fire, so—”

“So, there was nothing doing?”

“Oh, well, you needn't believe it if you don't want to,” said the story-teller, and walked off with much dignity.

You might suppose, you people at home, that the experience of my wife's first cousin would have brought a little gravity into the eyes that began to watch the gray waves for anything that looked like a stovepipe. But there was no trace of apprehension. The joking and guying did not apparently hold the dimmest consciousness of the need for anxiety. But if there was no consciousness of it on the promenade deck, there was on the bridge, where the captain stayed, day and night, for sixty hours. On the first day in the “danger zone” passengers were requested (by a notice outside the saloon) to be on deck at three o'clock that afternoon, *in their life preservers*, to take their assigned places near the various boats.

We were to drill, so that we should know what to do “*en cas de l'abandonnement du navire.*” And on the following day there was another notice on the

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Bulletin Board: For the next two nights passengers were "avisés" not to remove their clothing when retiring for the night.

"Well, I've heard of going to bed with your boots on," somebody chuckled, "but I never expected to do it."

When we obeyed the first order "at three o'clock in the afternoon" we were really a funny sight: Children encased in life preservers from knee to chin, fat ladies squeezed into the cork jackets, so that their arms stuck out like the wings on roast chickens, thin gentlemen, winding the surplus boards about their spare waists. "For the Lord's sake," cried a slender elderly man, "can't somebody take a reef in this contraption?" Two very forehanded, serious persons had brought with them, to combat the Rat, a queer sort of inflated non-sinkable costume. They waddled up on deck and took their places beside the boat which was to be theirs "*en cas de l'abandonnement du navire.*"

"The Walrus and the Carpenter," somebody whispered in my ear and then chortled maliciously when the purser said courteously that no such suits could be worn if certain undesired circumstances

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arose, because they would take up as much room in the lifeboat as two persons.

“Tow ’em behind,” the mocking voice suggested.

There was much excited calling for cameras, much posing and grouping: “Now, snap me! oh, won’t Mother have a fit when she sees this?”

“Mother” has probably had many fits during these days while she has been calculating just when her girl or boy would reach the danger zone. Now, in the zone, the boy and girl, muffled in life preservers, are laughing loudly and taking each other’s pictures to send home to her. And their laughter is the tribute which they toss to the Rat!

I don’t know what twinges of uneasiness may have been felt in the cabins when going to bed with boots on, but as far as one could see on deck and in the saloon, nobody felt the slightest apprehension. I have wondered very much about this apparent cessation of fear, I mean fear as a deterrent of individual action. The people who are not doing anything may be afraid; those fathers and mothers on the dock—who are being taught how to suck eggs;—they certainly know what fear is—especially during the days that the gray ship is in the pathway of the

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Rat—but the people who are on the ship, who are going to get “on the job,” and may meet the Rat, who will—some of them—certainly meet in one way or another, the hideous mind that created the Rat—*these* people are not afraid! I have not seen, in the men and women who are doing something, (something which may very easily mean death), one single trace of fear.

I asked an eminent psychologist, Dr. Morton Prince, why fear seems to have so entirely disappeared among people who are actively connected with the war, and he gave the following explanation (I cannot quote his exact words, but they were to this effect):

“No single human mind can experience two emotions at the same time; it cannot be both angry *and* afraid. If you are frightfully angry, you feel no fear; if you are horribly afraid, you feel no anger. At the present moment, the whole world is intensely angry, and is expressing anger by action; therefore it cannot express, or even experience fear. . . .”

The boys and girls bundled up in life preservers, taking snapshots of each other while waiting for a periscope to ‘pop up,’ did not know, probably, that

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they were "angry" at the mad spirit which has turned the world upside down, and set a torch to the edifice of civilization. Yet, perhaps Dr. Prince is right, and it is their unconscious share in the anger of a justly incensed world, which is bearing them on wings of iron and fire across the Atlantic, over to France, to express that anger in work, and so lose all sense of fear.

The gayety that day on deck when the Wairus and the Carpenter and all the rest of us rehearsed our parts for the possible catastrophe, reminded me of a scene in a delightful old novel which I commend to anybody who has the leisure to read novels, nowadays—"Citoyenne Jacqueline." (Alas, I have forgotten the author's name; I think it was Tyler, but authors are so easily forgotten!) It is a story of the French Revolution: in the prison of the Abbaye, where the *aristocrates* calmly awaited death, the young ladies and gentlemen amused themselves by getting up a play, of which the great act was the beheading of the heroine. Chairs formed the guillotine, and the leading lady dressed her hair *à la mort*; the executioner, a marquis, conducted her to the knife, with a realistic brutality upon which Simon

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himself could not have improved! This play was liable to interruption by the voice of the jailer reading the list of names for the scaffold the next day just as our hilarious masquerade in life-preservers was liable to the interruption of a torpedo. There are more than a hundred years between those young French *aristocrates* and our American girls and boys, but the spirit of high and laughing contempt of death belongs to great moments, and knows no age! . . .

Well! After all the preparations and the scoffing—the gray Rat never poked his evil snout above the water.

“What a bore; all this fuss and no sub,” somebody complained. The disappointment in her face was ridiculously sincere, but I wondered how her mother would feel about it? . . . So we came, safely, smoothly, through soft autumnal airs into Harbor. Never mind what harbor! If I mentioned it, I could not mention very pleasant things connected with it. The first pleasant thing, was that we passed, on the way to the landing stage, a camp of German prisoners,—which gave us great satisfaction! And the second pleasant thing, was a camp of American soldiers.

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How these last cheered when they saw us! And how we cheered back again and waved handkerchiefs and little flags, and yelled greetings, in reply to repeated cries from the shore of "What do you know?"

The French reservist looked puzzled. "Why," said he, "do they ask what we *know*? We have been ten days at sea, and know nothing."

And so it was, that at last, leaving the Rat behind us, and "knowing" indeed very little, we clambered down a gang-plank pitched at a frightful angle, and found ourselves in France. So far, except for the consciousness of the Rat, and our shrouded port-holes at night, we had seen, of course, no sign of war; but that night on shore the sign was given us: We sat down to our first meal, and by every plate was a slice of hard, slightly sour, coarse, dark bread. When we took it into our hands and broke it, I think we felt it was sacramental. France was saying to us: "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for the world."

And so, for a silent moment, we did indeed feed on the broken body of France, by faith, and with thanksgiving for the opportunity that had come to us to serve Her.

II

DRY-EYED, HEARTBROKEN, LAUGHING

SO we took our first communion with the Saints and Sufferers—yet, when we left the nameless Port the next morning, and began the long, slow journey to Paris—we did not encounter any French people labeled with these high titles. Indeed we saw very little sign of war—unless it was the women and old, old men working in the fields, or the girls, thin, tired, raucous-voiced, who were acting as conductors on the train, or whom we could see, at the railroad stations, pushing baggage trucks, and pulling and hauling boxes and bales out of freight cars. Soldiers in blue uniforms lounged about, some smoking, others looking enviously at those fortunate enough to have cigarettes; they talked, and laughed, and scolded—and seemed to be just as commonplace as we were ourselves. I think, after our exalted moment of eating that black bread on French soil, this was a little shock; I don't know just what we expect-

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ed—thrills, I suppose. It takes time to learn that the "commonplace" can be the most thrilling thing in the world. And courage and patience and endurance have become a commonplace in France! But we didn't know that, when we started on our long, dirty, tiring journey to Paris. It is astonishing how many things we didn't know! But to know that you don't know is said to be a step on the road to knowledge. We took several such steps in the next few weeks. I cannot see now, at the end of December, that I am appreciably nearer the goal, but I can at least vouch for the sobering effect of each successive step. And if all the people at home who read the front page of the daily paper, and feel that they know pretty well what is going on here, not only as to the war but as to thought and feeling, would just come to France, there would be quite a procession of Americans taking these uncomfortable and educating steps!

For one thing, they would be startled to realize as they walked together on this hard road, that the war, to us, inconvenienced but cheerful people in America, had been, up to 1918, still more or less of a Show. Except for the few who had sons or brothers or sweethearts in the Cast, we were inter-

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ested (but not painfully interested) spectators. Of course we were sufficiently impressed by the emotional appeals of the Production, to hustle about on committees and urge other people to give money to Relief Funds. And some of us even, when we went out to dinner parties, took our knitting along—grim, gray socks or sweaters in satin knitting bags which cost as much as two or three sweaters! On such occasions there were apt to be gay warnings from hostesses: "You are only going to have a 'war dinner' you know!" And then we would find ourselves working our way through five or six courses. I don't know how it is now, but up to 1918, even the sugar scarcity was still, except to poor people, rather a joke—uncomfortable, of course; annoying, even; but something to talk about:

"My dear, imagine, literally *no* sugar in the house! Did you ever know anything so absurd? You should hear my boys growl at having no sugar on their cereal at breakfast!"

This was before we left home. . . . Now, in this dark, cold rainy Paris, as I look back from my bleak, up-hill road toward knowledge, on those pleasantly excited days, it seems to me that in our relation to

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the war we were, all of us, very much aware of ourselves. We were entirely sincere, but we were self-conscious. The war was not *real*. That comes home to one when one sees Reality over here—where there are no dinner parties at which gorgeous satin bags can present the dramatic contrast of gray sweaters and clicking needles lying on silken laps. One faces Reality at every French table at which one sits down—without any merry warning to expect only “war food”! For there is no other sort of food, for any one, anywhere. As for scarcity in this or that, it is no longer “interesting” as a topic of conversation—it is sobering. Looking back at the United States from this silent untalkative Reality, it seems as if during these three years, American knowledge of what war means had been Academic. The difference is the difference between studying the laws of electricity and being struck by lightning. France has been struck by lightning. Even our few weeks in Paris have shown us that! War has scarred and gashed the French people as a bolt from a black cloud plows and tears down through the heart of a tree. As a result, the relation of the individual to the great catastrophe is devoid of self-consciousness; it

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is just plain, undramatic misery—and courage. It is deprivation, apprehension, destroying grief—and silent endurance. And it is *all* war dinners—and the knitting is to keep one's own children warm. Satin bags are not needed for that! In other words, everybody is in the Cast of the Terrible Show—nobody is a Spectator. Agony is not Academic.

“You people at home,” said an American who has lived here for many years, “don't take the war seriously.” Which is only another way of saying that it is not real to us. “It will be real to you,” said a bent and bowed old French woman, “*when your casualty lists begin to come in.*”

Her words were like a rough hand suddenly squeezing one's heart; they left her hearers, we three easy-going Americans, dumb. There is really nothing to say to such a remark. Her eyes, fathomless black eyes, seemed to see beyond us, and rest on her own Reality: two sons, dead, somewhere in France. It was then that I took another step on the road to knowledge, and began to feel that, in spite of the kindness of their welcome to us, some of the French people have a faintly amused contempt for us. Without any casualty lists, and carrying our knitting

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bags (I speak metaphorically!) out to six-course dinners, we must seem to them, (staggering along under the burden of their own reality!) like well-meaning children; sometimes, in our cocksureness as to what America is going to do, like impudent children. And yet—and yet! The child is the father of the man; the knitting in the gay bag means our little eager readiness to help—and it *has* helped! Many a French soldier has been glad of a gray sweater that was made on a silken lap. So don't let us stop knitting, only, while we knit, let us understand that the world is on fire. . . .

Speaking of our understanding, there is one thing that the French have not understood in us—and which, when we get over here and are confronted by Reality—we ourselves don't quite understand: I mean America's luxury at home. Of course the French know that we have made money out of the war and, so far as I can see, they do not, being practical people, begrudge it to us. But how queerly (they reflect) we have spent it! Our ways of spending it have made them distrust a little, first, our common sense, and next, deep down in their hearts, our sympathy for them.

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“It cuts us to the quick,” said a Frenchman to me; “you call it ‘quick’?—those figures in your journals last fall, of the increase in your automobile business; I don’t mean your trucks and camions, but your cars of pleasure, your limousines, your—your ‘tin Lizzees.’”

On the unthriftiness of our expenditure of money he did not enlarge. I know he had his opinion of us. When it comes to thriftiness the French people are like ants, and we, taking no care for the morrow of the world’s conflagration, buying our “cars of pleasure,” seem to them like grasshoppers. It was the other side of our extravagance; it was, to put it plainly, our selfishness that impressed him.

“What!” thus his thought seemed to run, “the Americans spend this enormous sum on mere comfort, mere convenience, mere enjoyment?—while we, putting our bodies between them and German invasion, go hungry and cold!”

Of course he did not say this. It was unnecessary to say it—we felt it! And feeling it, we realized that the French are aware that (at any rate up to 1918) we cheerful people in America did not “take the war seriously.” But they also are quite certain that

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when we see our bank accounts crumbling under the assault of taxation and high prices, and when our hearts break under the blows of those awful "lists," we *will* take it seriously! Until this happens I suppose it is impossible for us to be anything but Academic.

"And that," said Edith gravely, after nearly thirteen hours on her feet in the canteen of the American Authors' Service, "is the reason, I suppose, that we didn't really get busy long ago and help France."

This is the second unpleasant step we take over here on the rough road toward knowing something about the war, namely, the realization that, as a people, we took a long time to "get busy."

"We bought Liberty bonds," some one protested mildly.

The other two members of the A. A. S. laughed sardonically. "Yes, and got a darned good interest on the investment! You don't call that 'doing' anything, do you?"

"At any rate," said little Sylvia, washing, washing, washing mountains of cups and saucers, "nothing that we have done has cost us anything."

A calm remark like that is particularly unpleasant,

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because it throws such a revealing light on what we have considered our generosity; and the first thing we know, after meditating on it (a little crossly) and thinking how conceited Youth is—"It was not so when *we* were young!"—we are obliged to admit that we have "given" very little to the cause of Civilization against Chaos. Oh, yes, I know: *I* also went to fairs for Belgian children and bought things which perhaps I did not want. ("Well, they will do for Christmas presents next year.") *I*, also, attended lectures, and received instruction (unless *I* was too sleepy to listen), and was gratified to think that the price of my ticket went to the French wounded. *I*, and you, and a lot of other women we could mention, with no self-sacrifice but some self-satisfaction, got up bridge parties, and sent the result to Italian hospitals. And above all, did we not buy Liberty bonds, and feel patriotic—and prudent? But always, as the little dishwasher pointed out, we received an equivalent for what we called "giving!" The truth is, instead of "giving," we have, most of us, merely "purchased";—fancy things at fairs, knowledge at lectures, amusement at bridge parties. As for investment in Liberty bonds being evidence

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of our generosity, that is too absurd to speak of! The purchase of a Liberty bond is nothing but shrewd common sense, with patriotism thrown in. No! we have *not* "got busy" on this matter of giving. Somebody said (was it Mr. Hoover? I have forgotten; but whoever it was he spoke a true and noble word): "We must give, until it hurts." We must give without looking for an equivalent. Until we do that, we have not given at all—we have only bartered!

Steps like these on the road to knowledge jolt the poor American so badly that before he has taken half a dozen of them, his very soul is black and blue. But, all the same, he finds a certain satisfaction in knowing that in all this pain of the world he is not going scot free . . . and there is so very much pain over here!

I find myself wondering what pain is going to do to the younger people of France? Especially to the girls, who, when the war broke out, were just married, and were settling down in their little apartments, and having their babies, saving their money, planning for chic hats, and theater parties—just as our newly-married girls are doing at home now.

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The thing that startles me about these French girls is not so much that many—oh, so very many of them—wear mourning, but that they seem curiously old. Youth has gone out of the faces of the young; in its stead has come a strange, high patience, which gives the impression of *holding on*. I have seen that patience in the eyes of a man undergoing a surgical operation without ether. "I have got to go through with this," his eyes say. And he goes through with it.

"Gosh!" said one of my girls, "the French women are up against it!"

"It makes you think of that verse in the Bible," the dishwasher ruminated, "about when you've done every darned thing you can, just to stand up to it." I didn't myself recall any verse which used just such words, but I knew what she meant. "The French women," she went on, "are *standing!* And I suppose," she added, shifting from one tired little foot to the other, "there must be times when it would seem to them a lot easier to—to sit down. And let things go."

"They'll never 'sit down,' they are dead game sports!" said Edith; and then she reminded us of a

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story of an old woman—you may meet her any day, her sabots clicking along in the shadow of the crumbling houses that, in the narrow streets about old St. Severin, seem to lean toward each other to whisper and gossip about days two hundred years or so ago. She will have a netted bag in her wrinkled, vigorous, dirty hand, this old woman, and it will be stuffed with her marketing—a carrot or two, a clove of garlic, a head of escarole, three potatoes, a shank of bone—the result of which will be *pot au feu*, thick with bits of bread, that would make an American cook, of ideals, green with envy! She is probably on her way to the shop of the Infant Jesus—whose front is painted a bright blue—*un petit boutique bleu très joli*, where are sold eggs of a freshness, and *les fromages* and *le bon lait*. There is a picture inside the shop of the Infant Jesus in a barn yard, where some very fat pigs, and oxen with spreading horns, and many little brown hens are crowding about Him. Our old woman, bright-eyed, sad, smiling, coming to the shop of the Infant Jesus to buy a *petit suisse*, will make you very sure that there is no question in *her* mind of “sitting down.” No idea of anything but victory over the

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dirty Germans—whom, however, she did not hate; only, as Madame must know, they must be *écrasé*.

“Yes, there must be victory,” says she, “even if I must give birth to other sons to fight for France!”

“*She* won’t sit down!” said Edith, summing it up.

The comments of the two canteen workers about the women of France, were not, perhaps, literary, but they were exact,—the French women are *standing*! But they are growing old under the strain—for really there is nothing much harder than standing. . . .

Take it that you have had your own little flat—most people live in flats in Paris—and, suddenly, you have to *déménagé*,—pack up, and go back to live with *maman*, or your husband’s *maman*, which may be still more difficult (and not too pleasant for *maman-in-law*, either!). But hundreds, thousands of young married women in France have done just this. They have not enjoyed it, but they have done it. And so far as I can see they have made very little fuss about it; they have *stood*! A shrug, a frown, very likely some tears—why not? Wouldn’t our girls shed a few? I think I can hear now a nice girl in a nice little stucco bungalow in the suburbs of

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Boston: "It's perfectly beastly to have to go home to live, but of course I'm up against it; we can't afford to keep this house up for just the baby and me; I think our Government is perfectly horrid to let married men enlist! But Tom simply will go—and—and I wish I was *dead!*"

I quoted my dear American girl to a thoughtful French woman, and she looked puzzled. "I heard nothing approaching grumbling in French households in 1914," she said. "There were a few tears, and an ominous silence. The long-expected sacrifice that every French wife knows she may have to make (for every French youth has had his training for just such a possibility and every French woman knew what must happen when the possibility came); the long expected sacrifice was accepted with resignation."

I don't know that the little French wife said herself that she was "up against it"—"*Je suis au bout de mon rouleau*" would be her slang, I suppose; but certainly her Pierre or Guillaume or Jacques went off, and small *ménages* everywhere doubled up or merged, or ceased entirely. And now after nearly

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four years, we find that youth has gone out of the faces of the girls.

One of them said something to me the other day which showed that, so far as she was concerned, something else had gone with it, a certain kind of egotism. She is an exquisite young creature—a madonna of tenderness to her children and with a heart that is at the front with her young husband; there is a certain flowerlike quality in her that held my eyes and rested my soul—and with it a high intellectuality that was very compelling. She was, however, about as unlike the average American girl of her class as an embroidery frame is unlike a pile driver. She had been speaking (because I had asked her to; otherwise it would not have occurred to her to volunteer any information about conditions in France as they had affected her and changed her entire mode of living); she had been telling me of certain things which it had been necessary to do and to give up, and I think I must have winced, for I knew what such renunciations mean to youth. She opened her lovely eyes at me, and gave a little shrug:

“*Eh, bien!*” said she, “the individual does not count any more.”

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She said it very simply. She was as matter of fact as if she had said, "It is raining. I must carry an umbrella." And yet, of course, her words summed up the *cost* of this whole struggle between materialism and idealism.

Very much the same mental attitude was expressed in a tiny letter that came to me from three little people—oh, very little people, eleven, nine, and seven,—whose father had been killed, and who had no possible expectation of anything pleasant happening at Christmas. The two energetic members of the American Authors' Service entered into a perfect orgy of Christmas-giving—finding recipients for their gifts through the municipality, which gave the names of a number of very poor women whose husbands were either dead or hopelessly crippled. On Christmas Eve, in the sleet and cold, and through the significant darkness of the streets of old Paris, these two girls went, with their arms full of packages, feeling their way along narrow, unlighted halls and toiling over staircases that wound up and up to chilly garrets. Knocking at one door they found a woman sewing as fast as she could by the light of a small lamp—sewing black fasteners on black guimpes.

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Her startled look at the sight of the two Americans, who stammered out something about Noël, and left their packages, and fled, made the two girls laugh all the way down the endless flights of stairs to the dark street. But a day or two afterward came a letter, written by one of the three children who lived in that garret. The thin ruled sheet of paper was decorated with three flags—French, American, English—drawn by a child's hand in colored crayons. Then in round, laborious writing:

CHÈRE MADAME: Mon père est mort sur le champ d'honneur, et ma chère maman a mis votre cadeau *magnifique* dans nos souliers dans la cheminée. Madame, cest superbe!

Superb? Poor little chickens! only cakes of soap (soap is terribly expensive here;) candles, yarn (this last brought over from America, for it, too, is costly in France), needles and thread, and oh, a very, *very* little candy—“*superbe!*” But, as the little letter went on to say, even more than the “magnificence” of the present was its unexpectedness. “We had not thought *we* could have a *cadeau de Noël.*” In other words, we were not thinking of ourselves. It was the same note struck by the young Intellectuelle.

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Of course Americans, at home, have not reached any such impersonal attitude, and it is going to be very hard for us to reach it, because, as we all know, with us, the individual does count—so very much! I am sure we are going to reach it, when our Reality faces us—for some of us over here, sharing French Realities, are already strangely impersonal. I found an American girl who has been driving an ambulance in Serbia, as certain that “the individual doesn’t count” as any French woman I have met.

“Oh, yes,” she said, her eyes narrowing with memory, “yes, we always used to run out and stand gaping up, when the aëroplanes came along and bombed us. It was awfully pretty,—the sky is so blue in Serbia. Well, you’d see one of ’em coming along, oh,—high, high up, you know; then you’d see a white puff, just as pretty! coming down like a little cloud. Well, it would be a bomb,” she ended laconically.

“But what would you do? Run? Hide? Get some kind of a shelter?”

“Hide?” she repeated, puzzled. “Why, no; what would be the use? You never could tell where the damned thing was going to hit.”

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“But it might hit *you*?”

“Why, yes, I suppose it might,” she said; and frowned thoughtfully. “Funny! You don’t think of that, somehow. It doesn’t seem to matter.”

There it is again! *You* don’t matter! What is in the air over here that isn’t in the air at home? “*We*” matter very much in America.

And that is why, I suppose, to some of our girls, the war is first of all this horrid business of having to go and live with Tom’s mother, now that he has enlisted or has been drafted. (I can’t help sympathizing just a little with Tom’s mother!) Of course, there have been sad enough moments, very tragically sad moments of worrying about Tom, and hoping that the war would be over before it was time for him to leave the safety of the training camp, and go to France. Which reminds me: Once upon a time,—oh, ages ago, we can hardly remember the time, it seems so far off, looking back on it now through the smoke of these four years of the great conflagration;—but once upon a time, just after war was declared in 1914, there was a French mother whose two sons were engaged in a business of great importance to the Government. The question arose and was considered

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by the Minister of War, whether these two young men should remain at home, attending to the business, or go to the front. They wanted to go, and their mother plead with the Minister that they might go,—"That is," she qualified, "if they may be placed under fire. Otherwise I prefer that they should remain in the factory." Here it is again! This mother is simply the child who expected the shoes to be empty in the chimney corner on Christmas Eve, and the young matron, and the ambulance driver, all raised to the *n*th power.

For to know that *you* don't count, when it comes to the safety of your own sons is the supreme indifference to the individual!

Yet I am told there are still women in America who grumble over our wheatless days.

I wish those grumbling women—they are generally plump and getting a little beyond middle age—could come over here. (For a few hours only. They mustn't stay long. France has no room to spare, no food, no light, no heat to give away; and no desire for what she calls "*les bouches inutiles*." So, unless they are prepared to give an equivalent in hard labor, they had better stay at home). I

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would like to have these plump egotists, who "count" so poignantly to themselves, come for just half a day to see how the average French woman is meeting the personal part of the war; I mean the jeopardizing of her most precious possessions.

Here is a little story that reveals it. It comes from one of our own boys, lounging against the counter in the Authors' Service Canteen. (I wish you could see that little Y. M. C. A. canteen! A small, roughly-finished room in the U. S. A. Barracks; so dark that electric lights must burn all day; a kitchen, about six by eight feet, which was once a bathroom, the tub serving now as a sink, in which we wash endless cups and saucers. Into this little place—gay with turkey-red curtains, and comfortable chairs, and nice little tables for dominoes and cards and checkers, and with a Victrola that resounds all day long—come our soldiers to buy cocoa and cigarettes and *chewing gum!* In all our hopes of service, we three Y. M. C. A. workers had never had a vision of selling chewing gum! But I have become so expert in handing out "three gums" that I can attend to business, and still listen to the lad leaning on my little counter:

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“Say, what’s chewing gum in French?”

I confess, with shame, that I don’t know. The boy sighs; “I’ve no use,” he says, “for these here foreign languages.”

“Why do you want to know?”

“’Cause I wanted to tell a French lady how to use it, and I didn’t know what they called it in their lingo. . . . Well; I suppose I’ll have to—to show her . . . I think a good deal of these ladies over here. I was in the railroad station where the Poilus come in on leave just from the trenches—that muddy that you can hardly see their eyes! And wounded, too, a lot of ’em. And they go back to the trenches from there, too—to Mons or Verdun or any other old hell. Well, I was watching a lot going back, and all of their women seemed to be on hand to say good-by to them. You’d ought to have seen ’em! Talking and laughing to beat the band; and holding the kids up to the car windows so that their daddies could see ’em. Why, they was like a flock of sparrows; jabbering and screaming at each other, and kissing their hands! . . . Then the train pulled out, and what do you know? Well, I’ll be damned if every one of them women didn’t *bust right out crying!* Can you

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beat it? Chattering away in their confounded language, one minute, and laughing, and holding up their kids. And the next minute busting out crying! "I don't understand their lingo," said the boy thoughtfully, "but, by heck, these French dames is some women!"

Which made me think of a remark made by my brother, who was an officer in our Civil War, apropos of "some women."

"Before a fight," said he, "Peggy O'Dowd is worth all the weeping wives and mothers in the world."

The vision of those women, waiting to bust out crying, moved me to hunt up a copy of "Vanity Fair" in the Y. M. C. A. Library, and read again that chapter of the night before Waterloo:

"It is my belief, Peggy, my dear," said the major, "that there'll be such a ball danced in a day or two as some of 'em has never heard the chune of! Call me at half-past one, Peggy dear, and see me things is ready. Maybe I'll not come back to breakfast, Mrs. O'D."

With which words, signifying his opinion that the regiment would march the next morning, the major fell asleep. Mrs. O'Dowd, arrayed in curl papers and a camisole, felt that her duty was to act, and not to sleep. "Time enough for that," she said, "when Mick's gone." So she packed his traveling things, brushed his cloak, his cap, and other warlike habiliments, and set them in

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order for him, stowed away in the pockets light refreshments, and a wicker-covered flask, or pocket pistol. . . . Then she woke up her major, and had as comfortable a cup of coffee for him as any made that morning in Brussels. . . . They drank their coffee together while the bugles were sounding and the drums were beating. . . . The consequence was that the major appeared in parade trim, fresh, and alert, his rosy countenance giving cheerfulness and courage to the whole corps.

This was the kind of girl Micky O'Dowd left behind him! She was the girl that helped England win that terrible field. And she is the girl who was on the platform of the Gare d' l'Est.

Which reminds me of another railroad station, in New Hampshire; it was on the first day of mobilization in the summer of 1917. Looking down upon the platform from the window of the car, one saw kisses, tears, embraces, agonized farewells, sobs. One saw boys boarding the train, a little pale, with upper lips inclined to quiver. And where were they to be the next morning, those fine, honest, slightly nervous lads of ours? At a training camp about a hundred miles away, to which fathers and mothers could motor to see them, and from which they could come home on Sundays for dinner. . . . "Oh," some one said, "for Mrs. O'Dowd and her curl papers!"

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For my part, I am perfectly certain that somewhere in the offing we have plenty of Peggys, only they did not appear in those first moments of the war. When the time arrives that it becomes a Reality at home, when it ceases to be merely an inconvenience and a worry, we shall get out of the satin bag stage, we shall begin to take, not ourselves, but the world, seriously. I am perfectly certain that when that real moment comes American women will be just as splendid as those dry-eyed, heart-broken, laughing French women! We won't fail our men! But to meet that moment as it should be met, we must, it seems to me, know, as the young French wife knew, and the elderly French mother knew, and even the French *gosses* knew, that "the individual doesn't count!"

That the French men know this, goes without saying. It is they who show the women how to be brave! I know a poor fellow who wears on his breast the *croix de guerre* and the *médaille militaire*. He is so crippled that all he can do is to run a shaky elevator in this dismal old hotel. A week ago there came a dark morning;—but nothing much was said about the darkness, except by Americans. One of

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these Americans bubbled over to the man in the lift. (I am careful now to say "lift" since hearing the instructions of an English elevator man. Said he: "Madam, I can lift you down or lift you up; but I cannot elevate you down." So now, meekly, I say *lift*.) The startled and alarmed American said to the cripple, "Oh, monsieur, are the Allies to be defeated, after all? Will the Germans win?" The man stared at her with widening eyes: "Hoo! Hoo! What? Germany win? *Non! Mon Dieu! Non!* not in *my* lifetime shall Germany beat us." He paused, drew himself up, and added: "Madame, no! Sooner than have that, I"—he struck his breast with a hand that had only two fingers, and rolled a ferocious eye at his questioner—"sooner than have that, *I* will return to the trenches."

And with such determination on the part of Frenchmen as the "elevate-you-down" man displayed, it is fair to just refer to what our own boys mean to do in the way of beating the Germans.

The Y. M. C. A., as everybody knows, has opened, all over France, small (sometimes large!) cheerful places, which they call "Canteens" or "Post Exchanges." One of them is in a big hotel here in

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Paris—the whole hotel having been taken over by the Association as a club for our soldiers. The American Authors' Service has been to two or three "parties" there. One was the Christmas Eve celebration, when a crowd of our lads made uproarious merriment, and then quieted down and listened to a little talk from a friendly elderly man as to the meaning of Christmas, especially just now,—“when we men are away from home. Because, for all of us, there is (or will be) in our lives the Mother and the Baby—and we've got to go back to them unashamed.” It was a very straight and simple talk, but, as one man said, shyly, “It had pep.” After the talk, they all—six or seven hundred men—roared out Christmas carols.

How they sang! Then somebody said, “Does anybody want to go to midnight mass?” It was in response to that that four boys and one-third of the American Authors' Service, and an extra Y. M. C. A. worker in her blue uniform and with the scarlet triangle on her blue hat, went out into the snowy rain, through streets as dark as medieval Paris, and, groping a little, sometimes, or throwing on a flashlight for a second, found their way to St. Roche.

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(Of this little group, the two women were Episcopalians, two of the men Catholics, one man a Baptist, the other a Methodist,—and all worshipers of the Child.)

“I come from Texas,” one lad said. “My name’s Stevenson.”

“I’m fr’m N’York,” said another.

I think there was a Kentucky man, too, and an Irish boy from Lowell, Massachusetts—and all as truly American as if they had just stepped off the *Mayflower*. They went into the great shadowy church, jeweled with candle-flames that flickered a little and blew sidewise, sending wavering gleams of light back and forth through the haze of incense. The choir sang “Adeste Fideles,” and the boys’ bass joined in heartily, though they didn’t know the Latin words, then they all knelt, Protestant and Catholic, women and soldiers, Christians, all! and followers—oh, strange, strange sarcasm—of the Prince of Peace!

There were crowds of people there, Edith told me afterward: “Very old people; and *so* many women in black, and lots of little children who looked awfully underfed; and men in civilian clothes; and

DRY-EYED, HEARTBROKEN, LAUGHING

poilus—some of them in such faded uniforms, and all muddy, just in from the trenches; and men in smart, clean, blue uniforms going out to the trenches—perhaps *they* were making their last communion. And there were British Tommies, and their brass buttons glittered in the candlelight; and some of our own men, in khaki. There was a great crowd waiting to go up for the sacrament,—“for all the world,” said Edith, “like a Bread line! . . . And it *was* a Bread line,” she ended, with sudden gravity.

Then, out again the six Americans went into the silent darkness of the street, humming Christmas carols under their breath, and talking of home—Texas, New York, Massachusetts—*America!* Think what it means to a lot of homesick American boys to have this sort of honest, friendly “good time” possible!

But what I started out to say was that it isn't only the cripple in the elevator who means to beat the Germans, our boys propose to have a hand in it, too. At one of their parties—this particular canteen has a “party” twice a week—the soldiers get up plays and do all sorts of stunts, and laugh until their sides ache. (Incidentally, it may be well

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for us to remember that if we at home don't help the Y. M. C. A. to do this sort of thing, the men, being men, will, out of the mere tedium of barracks life, seek amusement anywhere, and if they find it in undesirable places, it will be largely our fault because we didn't back up the Y. M. C. A.!) At one of these uproarious "boy" parties, one big fellow sprang up on the little extemporized stage at the end of the hall, and working his arms and legs like the spokes of a wheel, gave vent to *his* rag-time intention in regard to Germany:

"One pair of socks was his only load
When he struck fer town by the old dirt road;
He went right down to the public square
An' fell in line with th' soldiers there.
The sergeant put him in a uniform,
His gal knit mitts fer to keep him warm;
They drilled him hard, and they drilled him long
And then he sang his farewell song:
'Good-by, Ma! Good-by, Pa! Good-by, Mule, with
your old hee-haw.
I don't know what this war's about,
But you bet, by Gosh! that I'll find out.
*And O, my sweetheart, don't you fear,
I'll bring you a King for a souvenir;
I'll get you a King an' a Kaiser, too,
And that's about all one feller can do!*"

III

THEIR GREAT MOMENTS

I SUPPOSE a great moment raises most of the people who experience it, to its own level; and that is why they do not always recognize its greatness—or their own.

Such a Moment has come to the whole world. In Europe the Peoples of all nations are rising—rising—rising—on the crest of its awful Wave! But they scarcely know the heights to which they have been lifted—scarcely recognize their own courage, and endurance, and sacrifice. They are all displaying greatness—the mad Germans as well as the Allies, for it is Humanity that replies to opportunity, not Nationality. But the thing that seems so strange (until you analyze it, and then you see that it could not be otherwise) is that here in France, there is no self-consciousness in the answer of the individual. Heroism, for instance, does not apparently know that it is heroic. . . .

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"Eet was *nozzing*," said Germaine; "anybody was to do eet! Me, I 'appen to be dar. Eet was *nozzing*."

Germaine is so pretty that she makes one think of a pink hawthorn tree in May. She smiled as she made her protest, but she looked a little, just a little, impatient, for the fact was that a day or two before, Germaine had become engaged to a Belgian officer, and love-making was far more interesting to her than the small matter about which I had asked a question; namely, the way in which a young creature who looks like a blossoming hawthorn, risked her life to save three hundred English soldiers from capture or death. . . .

She was sixteen years old when she did it—three years ago—and time, and falling in love, have perhaps blurred her perspective as to her own heroism. But at any rate she said, blushing, "It is nothing!"

Germaine's name is not known in connection with what she did, "because," she said, "for what should I say my name to ze soldiers? Anybody would have did eet!"

Germaine's "nozzing" made me think of something that happened many years ago in America. There

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was a certain fierce and arrogant old man who ruled his family, especially his elderly spinster daughters, with a rod of iron. When it came time for him to die, his impatience at finding that he must take orders from other people, from his doctors and nurses, and even from his two timid daughters, was almost unbearable.

As he lay dying, one of the elderly ladies murmured something to her sister which he did not hear. He roused himself: "What did you say?"

"Nothing, Father, nothing," the old daughter replied soothingly.

Then the old man, rolling a bullying eye at her, gathered up all his strength.

"What," he demanded, in an angry whisper, "*what words did you use to say nothing?*"

I hope I did not look like a bully when I urged Germaine to tell her story, but at least I begged to know the details of "Nozzing."

So far as I could draw them from her they were as follows: (She had just received a letter from her officer, and was holding it in her hand as she talked; now and then she would steal a look at it, catch a word or two—and entirely forget my presence!)

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She lived in the suburbs of a little town in northern France; she showed me a picture of the gray stone house set back from the street behind guarding linden trees (even the walls are not standing, now). Across the courtyard was (as is customary in France, where a man stays as close to his work as he can) the glass factory of Monsieur, Germaine's father. On the August day when Germaine took her young life in her hands the furnaces were cold; the flare of the fires for the blow pipes was no longer flickering on the walls; the noise and bustle of work were silenced, for all the *ouvriers* were gone to the war. And Germaine's father, though beyond military age, had gone, too, speeding away in his automobile, to offer his civil services to the Government. "*Naturellement!*" said Madame, Germaine's mother.

So it happened that on this hazy evening the family in the old gray house consisted only of Madame, with her three-weeks-old baby, and two little brothers, and Germaine. "The men servants was all depart," said Germaine; "eet was joost an old, old woman—*et moi.*"

But though the house was silent, everybody in it

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was thrilling and tingling with excitement, for all day long, over the countryside, rumors had been running hither and thither! Rumors that contradicted—asserted—warned! There had been waves of panic, pauses of hope, then surges of confidence! “Down there,” far down the poplar-lined road, *were the Germans!* Were they advancing? Were they stationary? Were they retreating? No one knew, —every one had an opinion. One can think how Germaine quaked. “If only *mon père* had been at home,” she told me; “he would have known what to do. Me—I knew not, and *ma mère*”—her face twitched as she remembered *ma mère*. As the afternoon dimmed and darkened towards evening, Mme. B., lying beside her baby, fell asleep, exhausted by the strain of the day; and Germaine, alone, save for the old woman, was saying to herself, her little heart thumping in her side, “*Ma famille! ma mère, et le petit enfant! Les garçons!* What is to become of us, if the Boches come?” and over and over, “oh—if my father was only here!”

The haze had thickened into fog, and it was quite dark, when, at eight o'clock, she heard the sound of marching feet and rolling wheels. . . .

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Like any other young creature of sixteen, she rushed to the door to look out into the street and see what was happening. . . . Down the road, looming gigantic in the mist, came rumbling along a vast procession of camions, great khaki-covered vans, "*pour le ravitaillement*;" and beside the vans marched men in brown uniforms. She said she held her breath, until she saw the color of the uniforms, then—"les Anglais!" said she, and breathed freely.

"*Mais*," said Germaine, "these English, they march toward the German lines! Is there, then, to be a battle?"

Even as she asked herself the question it was answered by an officer, who stepped out from beside his men and, saluting, asked if she could speak English.

"*A var 'leetle*," was the reply. He made a gesture of relief. He had, he said, asked many people questions as to the roads, but no one could speak English. "My company got separated from the battalion," he said, "and now we are lost!"

"And in what directions do you desire to go, Monsieur?" said Germaine.

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“Noyon, Mademoiselle.”

“*Mon Dieu!*” cried Germaine, “you will be lost, indeed! You march, Monsieur, to the arms of the Germans. You go in exactly wrong direction!”

The officer said something under his breath. “*Eet is down der dey are!*” cried Germaine, pointing into the mist. The young man wheeled, and threw up his hand;—instantly, from all along the line of camions stretching back into the brown fog, came the clash of brakes,—then the pound and throb of waiting engines. The officer turned back to Germaine, standing bareheaded in the rain. “Which way,” he began, anxiously,—but she interrupted him: “*Eet is var far to where you desire to conduct your troops; there are many turnings in the road, and many crossroads.*” She paused, and thought hard. “Den,” Germaine told me, “I remembered myself of my father’s map! I say to dat officer, ‘Monsieur! before de war, *mon père* was of many automobiles; he was of motoring. You comprehend?’”

“Perfectly.”

“I run to get dose map!” said Germaine. “I bring dem to you.”

But the Englishman put a detaining hand on her

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arm. "Mademoiselle," he said, "I must tell you—it is my duty to tell you—that you need not answer any of my questions unless you wish to. For if the Germans come and find that you have given me information, you will be shot, Mademoiselle; and perhaps your family, also."

Germaine, telling me, gave a little shrug: "I say to him, 'dat is not a t'ing to be considaire.' Den I say, 'Monsieur! I will give you dose map; but I will come wis you, and show you, for de roads is of a confusion.' An I say: 'turn your men aroun!' An he turn dem aroun."

As she told me, I saw the rainy night,—the great vans backing and slipping and turning in the mud; I heard the raucous screech of gears, the rumble of the wheels, the quick words of command—and I saw little Germaine, round-eyed and eager, showing the road.

It was then a little after eight o'clock. Until three the next morning, company after company came out of the fog, on their way to the "arms of the Germans"; and as each group of camions came lumbering up, Germaine was waiting there in the rainy darkness to meet them. Officer after officer pored over "dose map" with her; then, running lightly along be-

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side the marching men, she went with them to the cross-roads, stopping sometimes to turn her flashlight on the maps and trace with her small excited finger the roads that must be followed, giving each, slowly and carefully, its French name—which was the despair of English ears. “You go ’ere. You turn dare,” Germaine would say. Then she would fly back again to her own house to meet the next convoy, and march with it into the fog. . . . One man after another remonstrated—both soldiers and officers:

“Say, kid, this is a dangerous business!”

“Mademoiselle, we can find our way! The risk is too great for you—if those damned Boches hear what you have done—Go back! Go back! Tell no one you have helped us!”

“Dey say to me, dose man, ‘Leetle French girl, I lof you!’” Germaine told me, gayly, tucking her Belgian captain’s letter into her belt. “And dey kees de han’ to me; dey blow de kees to me!”

She showed me how they did it, putting her finger tips to her pretty lips. “Dey ask me my name, dose soldats, but I say: ‘*Non; mon père*, he would have did eet if he was ’ere. He is not ’ere. Me, I do eet.”

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It was three o'clock in the morning when the last camion rumbled by, and Germaine, soaking wet, and chilled to her little bones, let herself quietly into the house and crept like a mouse past her sleeping mother's door. When she got into her bed she was so tired that she slept instantly, and it must have seemed to her only a minute, though it was seven o'clock, when the "old woman" came, shaking and trembling, to her bedside, to clutch at her shoulder and say, "*Levez-vous! Levez-vous! Les Boches arrivent!*"

Instantly Germaine was on her feet, rubbing her eyes and trying to realize what it meant.

"*Flight!*"

Her mother must be wakened, and helped to dress; the baby and the other two children must be made ready; the house closed. . . . "I runned!" said Germaine. "I runned up and down, everywhere, everywhere! I went wis some little t'ings, ze ring, ze joolery, ze *papiers de mon père*—I runned wis dem to de factory, and I buried dem, down, down, under one of de furnace, in de ashe."

Then back again she ran, to the house, to marshal the small, scared group. Before eight o'clock they had begun that dreadful flight—*le petit enfant*, and

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the mother, and the little scared brothers, hurrying, hurrying, hurrying along the poplar-shaded road, with hundreds of other refugees! Mme. B. added a word here: In that terrible haste of departure, she had only time to fill her baby's bottle with milk; just one bottle of milk for the next three days! When it was gone, all she could do was to rinse the bottle at a wayside spring and give the cold, souring, milky water to the tiny baby. Said she—"I carried it in my bosom, Madame, to warm it."

Somehow or other, this sixteen-year-old Germaine got her family—the almost fainting mother, the baby, sucking the empty bottle, the little boys and the old, old woman, safely to Paris. I don't know how she did it!—walking—walking—walking; a lift once or twice in some furiously driven car, then slow, hours on a packed train. But here she is now, under the roof of Mlle. Guilhou, who receives so many ladies driven from the war zone—here she is, earning her five francs a day (this child who, at sixteen, had no more idea of self-support than has the sixteen-year-old daughter of any rich man in America to-day). She is earning her living, riding on a bicyclette, purchased by her savings out of the 5 fr, instead of in

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the "motor of *mon père*"—writing her little love letters, and never thinking of the night in the fog, and the three hundred English soldiers marching to the arms of the Germans, or the possibility that those same Germans might, before another nightfall, stand her against the stone wall of her father's factory, and tear her young breast to pieces with a volley of bullets. Her engagement is the only thing Germaine thinks of. . . . And there is something very significant, by the way, in that engagement. Neither of the young people have any money at all; the Belgian officer's property has melted like snow in the sun. Five years ago, prudent French fathers and mothers would have held up horrified hands at such an engagement, but not so now! Germaine's father, looking at the two babes-in-the-wood, laughed and shrugged, "*Eh bien, c'est la guerre!* You have no fortune, *mon Capitaine?* Well, my Germaine has no dot; but you are of a goodness, and I love you," said the big, smiling, ruined father; "so you may have my little girl. After the war all will be well," he said simply.

It does not seem to us in America a very extraordinary thing to let these penniless youngsters get

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married. It happens all the time at home, that young people of very unassured incomes set up their household gods, and many of us older people are thankful that *we* married with nothing in particular to live on, and got rich, or "near rich," *together!* But in France, before the war, parents, if not lovers, were prudent (too prudent, generous Americans think). Now they are heroic. But the curious and interesting thing is that they *don't know that they are heroic!* Heroism has become a commonplace—so high has the Great Moment lifted human nature!

The French are taking all sorts of risks—of their lives, their comfort, their treasures of beauty and love; and if they ever stop to think what they are doing, they say, like Germaine's father, "*Eh bien, c'est la guerre.*"

There are a great many different kinds of heroism over here, and they are all marked by this lack of self-consciousness. The heroism of endurance is all in the day's work; the heroism of courage which doesn't know that it is courageous—like Germaine's, "*that is not a thing to be considairé,*" is taken for granted. The heroism of self-sacrifice is a matter of

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course. The commonplaceness of these things is in the air; they shine even in American faces once in a while: I came the other day upon a story of American sacrifice which was expressed in six very commonplace words: "*There was nothing else to do.*"

The man who spoke these words was so far from recognizing anything heroic in his deed that he probably looked on it as a sin!

He is an elderly, taciturn, melancholy sort of man. Somebody who saw him told me that he was a "wild-eyed fanatic." The fact is, he carries about in the pocket of his soul a little spiritual tape measure with which he tests his own righteousness and that of other people. Perhaps his melancholy is because very few people quite come up to the standard of this tape measure of his, the name of which is—*cigarette smoking*.

According to the belief of this man, a belief which he holds with all his honest, anxious heart, the smoking of a cigarette may imperil a man's salvation. He himself would no more smoke than he would blaspheme! Now, one may share his belief, or not; that is not the point. He may be right or he may be wrong, he may be ridiculous or he may be noble; on

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these points there can be many opinions. As to his sincerity there can be only one opinion.

The work of this man was at the front; he had found a shelter in a crumbling tower, all that was left of an old château. His little canteen was on the second floor; below him, in the cellar, was a Poste de Secours, to which wounded men came on their way back from the field to have their wounds dressed, and after that to gain what comfort they could in the way of food, and something to drink,—and cigarettes.

One night, a great agonizing company of men poured into and out of this Poste. Some walked or hobbled; some leaned on a comrade's shoulder; some were on stretchers. All night long there was the rumble of ambulances, the jar and shock of the abrupt stop, the clash of gears, the hurried lifting and carrying of broken bodies. There were shivering cries from those ambulances, and sometimes moans, and there was a drip of red on the cobblestones and across the threshold and down the steps into the cellar.

Almost the first thing for which these suffering men gasped out a request, was a cigarette. One

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poor fellow whose head was bandaged so that only a corner of his quivering mouth and one anguished eye could be seen, looked up in wordless supplication.

“Want a cigarette?” the Y. M. C. A. man said gently. And the one eye blinked, “Yes!” When it was lighted and put into the corner of the white mouth, “his eye smiled,” the worker said.

I think he reconciled it to his conscience, this giving of the “accursed thing,” because the men were suffering, and he gave cigarettes as he might have injected morphine had the doctor ordered it for them. Happily there were plenty of cigarettes on hand; but alas, there were very few matches! As this tired Y. M. C. A. man stood there in the darkness—in the midst of that slowly moving stream of pain, putting cigarettes between strained lips, he suddenly realized what was going to happen when the matches gave out: the wounded would be left without this one comfort!—And he faced his alternative: should he be righteous, or should they be comfortable?

“There is nothing else to do,” he said. And so he offered himself—his soul and body, in holy, living, (and perhaps entirely unreasonable) sacrifice, to

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those suffering men! He lighted (with one of the last matches) a cigarette, and put it between his own lips; then, from it and dozens of others, for he kept one burning all that night, he lighted, hour after hour, cigarettes for the wounded men. What that may have meant in physical discomfort to a man who had never smoked, I don't know. It is the poignancy of his spiritual pain that goes to my heart. For pure heroism, I have found nothing more splendid than this sacrifice of personal conviction. But to him, just as to Germaine, "it was nozzing."

Perhaps this man's God is more gentle and more generous than he conceives Him to be; perhaps, having a sense of humor, He may even smile at His good child's idea that He could be displeas'd that a man should smoke a cigarette. But he will not smile at the violation of a deeply held conviction to give comfort to men in pain! "He saved others, Himself He could not save."

I don't think the Y. M. C. A. man, in his humility, would have put it this way to himself. He was just sad and matter of course about it, and I don't think he would see any hope for the world in the fact that

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he *was* matter of course! Yet if you come to think of it, may not this misery of War (and we are all of us miserable in one way or another!) be just making divine things the commonplaces of everyday living? May it not make God a matter of course? Perhaps this worker, who saw "nothing else to do" when it came to doing what he thought was wrong, *to save others*, perhaps he would be shocked at the suggestion that our Heavenly Father can be as intimate to our lives, as ordinary, as inevitable—as commonplace!—as the sunrise. But there was a wideness in the mercy of the wild-eyed worker, like the wideness of Everlasting Mercy itself!

A friend of mine told me he saw this same mercy shine one day in the eyes of a very small person who was carrying a very large hat box. She looked half fed, as indeed, I suppose she was, for with meat anywhere from one dollar and twenty-five cents to two dollars a pound, and no butter, and almost no sugar, and not quite enough bread, how are mothers to keep flesh on the bones of growing girls who work in millinery shops? She came trudging along, this *petite*, lugging the box with some other feminine creature's new hat in it; but she paused under the

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shadow of the Arc du Carrousel. . . . Here was collected a crowd of boys, gazing, open-mouthed, at a soldier whose face . . . was a thing of horror!—and of curiosity, too, I suppose. None of the boys said anything particularly cruel; they just stared at that poor dreadful face. There must have been a morbid fascination about it, for all the passers-by glanced at it—and then turned away with shuddering disgust. The boys, however, frankly brutal, paused and whistled between their teeth and said, “La! la!” They made, my French friend told me, “*quolibets*”—which I suppose means, as we Yankees say, “poking fun”; they said “*quelle trogne! quel pif! Bon jour, Cyrano!*”

The milliner's girl saw the face, too,—and heard the boys. I wonder what went on in her little mind? I don't know! What I do know is that she stuck her tongue out at the boys, and hissed at them “*cochons!*” Then she went up to the *poilu*—and now behold the subtlety of the little creature: She showed him no pity whatever! She rested her big box on the corner of the bench on which he sat, and assumed an air of great fatigue: “*Comme il fait chaud!*” said she. “*Si vous voulez être un chic type,*

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vous m'aideriez." To get him away from his tormentors, she asked a favor! The man got on his feet with a bound; perhaps he had been cursing under his breath, perhaps he had been wondering if the water of the Seine would be very cold?—or if a pistol would be the easier way out of it? Be that as it may, appealed to as "a gay fellow," he jumped up, and the little girl, giving him her big box to carry, tucked her small skinny hand in his, and they walked off together into the hot sunshine, leaving the staring, gloating boys (who probably meant no unkindness, but who were just French boys,—and French boys are even less imaginative, when it comes to pain, than American boys); leaving them, my friend told me, *ébaubis!*

I don't suppose there was any heroism here; the child was of the sort we call "gutter snipe" at home, and probably loved being impudent to the boys; but there was in her little gutter soul, the heavenly beauty of Pity—and Pity lifted her into an act of help and tenderness, which was "nozzing."

If it were not for all these upspringing divine-nesses, blossoming in the War, how could we bear it? But there are so many of them, that the first thing

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we know we find that the only thing we *can't* bear is our own cowardice, or our own conceit, or our own lack of kindness.

For that is another commonplace: everybody is so kind!

Which makes me think of something one of our boys said to me the other day. The American Authors' Service was waiting on the platform of a railroad station, and this youngster came up, and almost embraced one of us, because, he said, he heard her speaking American. "Gee," he said, "I said to myself, 'there's an honest-to-God American girl! She looks good to me; and her talk sounds good, too.'"

Another Y. M. C. A. worker standing beside us, agreed that "American" sounded good: "I tried to find out where I was the other day, and I stopped a man, and asked him in my very best French how to get to Notre Dame. He listened to me, and when I got done, he said, 'Old Top, I don't understand a damned thing you say, but I'd help you if I could.' I just about fell over myself with joy at hearing good United States!" said the worker, chuckling. "I said to him: 'My boy, your manners

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are not all they might be, but your sentiments are fine'!"

We all laughed, and the soldier boy said, thoughtfully, "Manners? Yes. I've noticed that. Say, we can teach these French something in the way of hustle; we can give 'em points on their two-penny tin elevators, and their confounded snail-gallop telephone service, and their chain-lightning post-office methods, where you stand three quarters of an hour to buy a two-cent stamp; but, gosh, when it comes to being polite, they beat us to it every time. And their eyes are so kind! They'll jew you out of your eye-teeth," he said candidly, "but the next minute they'll walk a mile to show you where to find a shop you're looking for. Yes, they're kind!"

Of course, when one tells stories of French heroism or courage or kindness, one does not mean to imply that the French people are not human. They are! *Very!* And our soldier boy's remarks about "eye-teeth" will be ruefully agreed to by many Americans in France. But the lack of pocketbook generosity, which has always been characteristic of the French, is the negative vice which springs from their positive virtue of thrift. They are not

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at all open-handed about money, but their "eyes are kind."

The other day a little French woman who traveled with me through the scorching heat on a train packed as I never imagined anything but a sardine box could be packed—showed me this quality of unconscious kindness. We had to ride in what had been a cattle car. I judge, from reasons upon which it is not necessary to enlarge, that it had been used for carrying pigs. That day, beside human creatures, the two ends of the car were piled with great crates of cauliflowers. The French woman, seeing me looking, I suppose, a little dazed, and perhaps rather white, beckoned to me, and managed somehow to pull me up, to perch beside her on one of these crates. "*C'est la guerre!*" said the little woman. It appeared that she had been out in the country to spend Sunday, and now she was coming back to Paris with bags and bundles, and bunches of lilies of the valley which she had picked in the forest of Rambouillet, where they grew like a white carpet under the beech trees. Balancing precariously on the cauliflowers, she and I fell to talking about the war, and what had caused it, and what would be

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the result of it. She began by telling me the reason why she was able to "speak American" so well: "When I was young," said she, "there was a *beau garçon* who desired that I should marry him, and accompany him to Northern America. He instructed me in your way of conversing." Here she paused, sighed, and shrugged: "*Mais, non!* it was not to be. Instead, I married very well. And as for my lover—— *Eh, bien*, that is over, madame, quite over." As she was at least fifty, I thought it probably was over;—but I, too, sighed sentimentally. "My husband is *très bon*," she said, cheerfully; "he is old, and of a deafness, but very good to me. The war," she said, "has not taken him from me, owing to his age. *Mais, Madame*, many husbands have been taken. *Beaucoup du gens sont très malheureux*. It is that these Germans are mad to so destroy the world. They are quite mad, Madame. And they are of a cruelty!"

Then she told me some of their cruelties as we sat there in the crowded, lurching, steaming car, with our heads brushing the cobwebbed rafters. Listening to her stories, and looking at the people about me standing, hour after hour, packed together in

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the swaying, abominably smelling car, I wondered to myself: "Can the world ever recover from 'these Germans'?"

At first, like everybody else in America, I had refused to believe stories such as these told me by my little friend on the cauliflowers; I refused to believe that things which have happened, could happen. I was like a certain young monk of whom a French friend told me. . . .

He left his monastery, this monk, to go to the front, but before he went he wrote a letter of great tenderness and beauty to the Father Superior, saying how impossible it seemed to him to have any personal animosity toward Germans whom duty might oblige him to kill. He said he had no anger, no hate toward them, blinded, as he believed them to be, by their own Government of hideous materialism. He said that he carried with him in his heart a prayer for these misguided people and that he thought of them with gentleness.

He intended to do his duty when the charge was made;—but if he killed a German it would be with the same impersonality with which he would cut down a poisonous plant.

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It was after this letter that he went into action; and a little later there came another letter to the Father Superior. It was the wail of a mind terrified at discovering its own possibilities. He said that his company had come upon a little village—a tiny village of sunshine and plane trees and yellow stucco houses with thatched roofs—those roofs of France which are as intimate and friendly as the good brown earth itself, colored as they are by time and creeping lichens, and so old, some of them, that wall-flowers grow upon them, and tufts of grass! But in this village the old roofs had been burned, and most of the yellow walls had crumbled into dust and mortar, and the chimneys had fallen in; instead of little homes there was only a medley of plaster and splintered beams. For the Germans had passed that way. . . . As the French soldiers came down the poplar lined road, the village, lying basking in the sunshine, seemed strangely silent; no children ran out to see them, no woman called a friendly greeting, no dogs barked at them; then they saw the reason of the quiet.

On the ground in front of the houses, were dead old men, dead women, dead children, these last

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thrown with gashed throats across their mothers' breasts. All along the street, in the gardens, and the little *écuries*, were dead animals—dead cows, dead cats, dead dogs, even dead hens. Throats had been cut, necks wrung; poor furred and feathered bodies had been stabbed and gashed. Death—death. And a cloud of flies buzzing in the sunshine. Then, suddenly, in the midst of Death, they saw Life!—Out from behind a stable there came, leaping and capering, kicking up its heels among the dead, a little colt,—long-legged, shaggy, surprised-eyed. . . .

The monk said that this sight of the colt, capering back and forth in the sunshine, filled him with a sudden storm of rage, for which he could find no outlet except in a determination that he, too, would kill, and kill, and kill!

“I know how he felt,” I said soberly. I knew it again as I listened to my kind, middle-aged French woman telling me her stories, and giving me one of her bunches of lilies of the valley, and trying to keep my lurching crate of cauliflowers steady. She said, very simply, “Madame, the Germans are mad. I will tell you what they did to my brother-in-law.” . . .

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I will not repeat what they did; it justified her comment: "*Oui*, they are *fous*. It is necessary that they be '*écrasé*.'"

"It seems to be a difficult thing to do," I said.

But she lifted her head. "*Non! non! non!*" she cried gaily, "not now that *les Américains* are here. They will help us—a little. Being *brave gens*, and having legs of a bigness, they will assist us. The war will end *rapidement!*" Then she added, calmly: "If the Germans win, me, I will not continue to live in the world."

"I shall not want to," I said.

Yet, in spite of American legs (and good straight backs, and shining white teeth, and clear, honest, mischievous eyes—for our men really *are* a splendidly fine lot), in spite of our soldiers, and the French woman's confidence, most people feel that it is not going to be easy to end the war *rapidement*. That it will end in an Allied victory no one doubts for a moment; only, knowing the Mind we are fighting, most people are facing a long pull. It is our knowledge of the significance of the German mentality, that makes us so sure of winning. We know that we *must* win, or—nobody cares to finish that sentence!

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The fact is, we have come to believe, as the young monk had to believe, and my little friend in the cattle car believed, and as I have been forced to believe, that we are not fighting with beings who are, in our sense of the word, quite human. They are—or they represent—the Forces of Disintegration,—the Powers of Darkness! We believe that what has been done in France, will be done in Massachusetts, unless “*les Américains*” render “rapid” assistance in Flanders. New York kittens and hens and babies will have *their* throats cut, unless the enemy of civilization is crushed here and now! So of course we are going to win! But most people over here admit, calmly, that it will not be an easy business to crush him. We Americans have got to suffer, too. But I believe, as my little woman believed, bless her heart! that now that we are turning our hand to it—the efficient, kindly, eager American hand!—it will be done with greater “rapidity”;—and in doing it we shall have our part in making common those Great Things—courage, heroism, kindness, sacrifice.

So, in spite of those dead babies, and *grandpères*, and mothers, and hens, I hold tight to my belief that

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"what is excellent, as God lives, is permanent"
And in this poor, terrified, foolish world, *divine commonplaces are supremely excellent!* The Y. M. C. A. anti-cigarette fiend proves their permanence; and Germaine's heroism, forgotten in her pretty, silly, charming love-making; and my little French woman giving me her lilies of the valley, and, when we got back to Paris, hunting and hunting to find a taxi for me, though she was in a great hurry to get home to her old husband, who is of a deafness.

The world shakes with this unhuman war, but human kindness and human heroism are as unshakable and as pervasive as Light! . . .

I want to tell just one other story of the unconsciously heroic; this is of a hospital. . . . I found a French soldier lying very white and still in his bed; his head was almost covered with bandages, but his hands—long, delicate, pale hands, moved nervously on the counterpane. The lady who was with me spoke to him in French, and when he heard that I had come from America his voice was suddenly interested: "The American soldiers were brave," he said, "very brave!" My friend told him (for nothing is

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too small to interest a man who lies all day long, week after week, alone in the dark, with nothing to think of but five children who must be supported when he gets out of the hospital—*how*, God knows!)—she told him that I had written books. “Ah?” he said eagerly; and then very shyly, “I, also, have written a poem.”

“May I see your poem, Monsieur?” I said. The excitement of talking to us made him breathe quickly; he fumbled in a little wooden box beside him and brought out a piece of flimsy paper on which were some typewritten verses.

“My nurse was so *gentile* as to print it for me,” he said.

I read the verses, and looked at the white smiling face.

“Monsieur,” I said, “I will send it home to America. We Americans love brave men.”

Then he laughed: “*Ce ne fait rien!*”

(I can't help saying here that those five children still need care,—and I know my *poilu* Poet's address.)

This is a rough translation of his verse:

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The "Other" Light

Therefore—severed from the world—and with closed lids
I shall never see again what I used so to love!
The cherished faces—so far away henceforth!
The divine play of light on things! . . .

It will always be as if I were asleep;
O clear visions of sun! of evenings, rose tinted . . .
Monuments—forests, flowers just blooming,
Only a memory of you will remain! . . .
 But . . .

If I lose suddenly this sweetness of living,
Of seeing works of art, of reading a beautiful book;
It is, nevertheless, not the time or the place to weep,
For I carry in my heart the firm hope
Of seeing one day, at last! shadows and suffering flee away
Before the Luminous Eternity of God.

RENÉ DUPUIS.

Val de Grace Hôpital.

IV

BEADS—PARIS—JANUARY, 1918

OVER here in Paris, I thread my perplexities like many colored beads upon a string.

Perhaps, sometime, the pattern of a clear opinion may work itself out. At present my colors are only other people's opinions; and as I put a crimson bead on the string, or a black one, and then some crystal beads—many, many of these; and every now and then a gold bead—many of these, too; I say to myself over and over: "*I don't know; I don't understand. I wonder . . .*"

And so I thread my perplexities.

One of them is the meaning of the sense of unreality which many of us Americans feel. "Nothing seems real," we say to one another, with bewildered looks. Back of this sense of unrealness is an inarticulate *something* which seems like anger. Yet it is not exactly anger, for anger at least implies the outraged sense of justice, which is deeply righteous. This

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emotion (whatever it is!) does not wait for any rational process, and cannot by any stretch of self-approval be called "righteous." It rises, with a sudden murderous flare of rage, in quiet, reasonable minds; then sinks down, apparently gone. But it has not gone. It lifts again the next day, perhaps at the sight of a blind man clinging to his wife's hand as he stumbles up the steps of the Madeleine. Of course this fury must be rooted in the sense of justice; but it has blossomed into a rank growth that hides the justice from which it springs; and is so remote from our placid experience that it has the quality of a preposterous dream. When I see it, or feel it, I slip a crimson bead on my string.

Beside it, in the still unseen design, I put the sinister consciousness in everybody about me of *waiting*. For what? No one knows. Some say for an Allied victory. Some say the same words, but add a question, "*Then what?*" Others—only a very few—say they wait for an Allied defeat; these whisper their confidence that out of defeat will come the real victory—the birth of the Spirit! The Allies (so these people say) need rebirth as much as the

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Germans. On all sides is this inchoate expectancy. . . . And as I think about it I slip a black bead on my string.

Yet perhaps this is a mistake; perhaps the sense of waiting for something undefined ought, as those whisperers say, to be symbolized by the color of Hope? It may be that some minds really are hearing, as they say they hear, very far off, very faintly, from across blood-stained years ahead of us, a Voice, saying:

“Wait, I say, on the Lord.”

Those who hear that Voice in the unspoken expectancy are waiting with good courage; they are willing to tread if they must, even the hard road of defeat, because they are confident that they will meet Him at its end!

But for most of us the sense of waiting takes the color of Fear, and the black beads grow into the pattern. . . . With them come the crystal beads. As I look at these, shining among the rest, I wonder whether—there are so many of them!—any far-off interest of tears can possibly repay the nations—all the nations!—for their present pain? Some say it will. “*Vivre pour tout cela,*” said a man whose son

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has died for France, "*mourir pour tout cela. . . ça en vaut la peine.*" So men have always said—for themselves; but tears are not too much to pay for the precious knowledge that a man may say it, with passion, of something infinitely dearer than himself—an only son—*mort au champ d'honneur!* Yet marching with the triumph of the Spirit, is the grief of the world. A grief which questions and questions. . . . Surely never before have so many broken hearts stormed together the door of Death, saying: "Where? Where?"

Now, here is a curious thing: In this new, unreal rage that has fallen upon us, some of us say we do not know ourselves; but through Grief, many French people say, we shall come to know God! And so they answer that word "where?" with His name: with Him—wherever that may be! They believe—these people who have wept—that Grief will destroy a materialism which, crying its impudent self-sufficiency into the face of God, has taken away immortality and given in its place, machinery. If this be true, we shall all share the high knowledge, for it seems as if there were more crystal beads than all the rest put together.

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No, it is the golden ones that outnumber the others! Perhaps, after all, there will be no pattern—nothing but a golden string that will hold heaven and earth together. . . .

These are my perplexities, which are jumbled in my mind like beads in a child's box: Why are we angry with this curious kind of anger? Why do we fear something that has no name? Is Grief beating the dark door open, so that a glimmer of Light may shine out upon us? Is courage to be trusted to make the race gentler? . . .

Sometimes I ask Gaston what pattern he thinks my beads will make. Gaston's height indicates that he is eleven, but his little white, pinched, wicked-eyed face suggests that he is at least fifteen. When he happens to think of it, he comes in from the street to answer the bell of the *ascenseur* and carry me up to my floor in this dingy old hotel.

"*Troisième*, Gaston."

"*Oui*. Did Madame observe the newspaper this morning?"

"What about it, Gaston?"

He takes his hand from the wheel of the anti-

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quoted mechanism by which the elevator jiggles up and down, and we stop abruptly between floors. Then he fumbles in some tiny pocket of his little blue jacket, brass-buttoned to his sharp white chin, and produces a crumpled newspaper—a single flimsy sheet whose smudged head-lines shout the Caillaux indictment—

“*Traître!*” cries Gaston, shrilly.

“What will be done with him?” I asked, adding, mildly, that I should be glad to ascend.

Gaston, grinning, draws his forefinger back and forth across his throat; then he spins his wheel about and we leap with upsetting rapidity to my floor.

Gaston is obligingly ready to cut anybody’s throat at any time. He makes his vicious little gesture when various people are named, especially the German Emperor. And everybody who sees him do it nods approval. Here it is you see,—that uprush of rage! We are, (all of us non-combatants), accepting killing as a commonplace; just as in our dreams we accept as commonplaces, the most impossible happenings of joy or horror; and the ages of evolution which have named them “right” or

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“wrong” are as though they had never been. This may be because murder is now so general in the world. Or is it only that the “natural man” in us has been masquerading as the “spiritual man” by hiding himself under splendid words—courage, patriotism, justice—and now he rises up and glares at us through these fine words, with his blood-red eyes? At any rate, fury is *here*, and most of us are shaken by the surge of it—except the blind man groping and stumbling up the steps of the Madeleine. He, apparently, feels no rage. One soldier said, thoughtfully, “The longer I fight the Germans the better I like them.”

But we who cannot fight, and whose eyes are not blind, sometimes see red. I realized this in one of the air raids, and I said to myself, like the old woman in Mother Goose: “Can this be I, as I suppose it be. . . .”

It was nearly midnight when the sirens screamed suddenly from all quarters of the sky at once. It was a screech that ripped the air as if the scroll of the heavens was being rent; and instantly all the lights went out and we were in pitchy darkness, except as the surprised moon peered in between our

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curtains. There was a gasp of astonishment; then people who were in bed jumped out, fumbled about for more or less clothing, and rushed to windows or out into the street. From my third floor I could see Gaston on the pavement below, dancing up and down like a midge, and shrieking with joy at the rattling crash of the air-guns, or the terrible detonations of exploding bombs. A group of American girls leaned appallingly far out of their window and craned their young necks to stare up at the stars of man's ingenuity moving about among the stars of God's serenity and law. They were darting—these stars—zigzagging, soaring up to grapple with one another against the face of the moon; and some of them were dropping death down on our heads. As "efficiency" duplicated the French signal lights on German machines, we did not know which were the stars of murder and which were the stars of defense—only God's stars were candid. And all the while the pretty young Americans (why *do* their fathers and mothers let them come over here?) watched the battle with exactly the same happy excitement that I have seen on their faces at a football game; they were all ready to turn down their pink thumbs for

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a German aviator, only—"Which *are* the Germans?" one of them said, distractedly.

A moving star suddenly seemed to stagger . . . then swooped, then fell, straight—straight—straight down, with horribly increasing velocity. We knew that in that flaming star were men keyed to furious living, panting, screaming orders to each other, sweating, tearing at levers, knowing they were plunging from abysmal heights to smash like eggs on some slate roof. As that agonizing star fell, the eager young faces were smiling fiercely, and I could hear panting ejaculations:

"Oh! Oh! *Oh!* Look! See him? *See* him! Oh, I *hope* he's a German!"

And so before their eyes two men dropped to death.

Of course this sort of excitement is as old as human nature. But the difference between this rejoicing and the football and arena joy which is without danger to the observer, is that these women—and Gaston dancing on the pavement—were themselves menaced with instant death. Only a block or so away two persons were blown to pieces. Yet there was not a quiver of alarm!

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After it was all over some one said, with a sort of gasp, a curious thing: "I don't, somehow, believe it." She paused, and caught her breath with a scared look: "*I don't know who I am,*" she said, in a whisper.

Of course the monstrous thing was not real to her; the whole business of war cannot, for the moment, be real to any of us Americans because frightfulness is outside of our experience and our minds do not know how to believe it. As for this especial unreality of the raid, never before has the sky betrayed us; so how could those falling bombs be anything else but the substance of a dream?

I suppose the indifference to danger was because anger as well as love casts out fear; and down below the unreality there was in all of us a very real and righteous anger that the Germans should make the heavens their accomplice. But as for this other kind of anger, which made the woman who had said, in a whisper, "*I don't know who I am,*" add, smiling fiercely, over clenched teeth, "*I hope he was a German!*"—that scares me. It is a slipping down into the primitive. When I climb out of it I am smirched by the slime of hate. Gaston, and the pretty girls,

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and certain dull, elderly folk, all were seething with the fury of combat, and grinning with a lust for killing that made us strangers to ourselves. I heard a calm, fat, gentle, and rather unusually reasonable person say: "I'd like to squeeze his [a German's] throat, in my hands, and feel the blood spurt between my fingers, and see his eyes pop out on to his cheeks!" This is not an expression of justice; it is a desire to commit murder.

I have found this smiling ferocity in many people. Sometimes it is respectable and practical—"No trade ever again with the Boche!" In other words, death by economic strangulation! But how then,—some one asks, puzzled,—can they pay the indemnities we shall exact? (for of course we have no doubt that we shall finally exact indemnities!) Oftener our ferocity is an open and unashamed vindictiveness which would like to feel the blood spurt. As non-combatants have no chance to sink their fingers into howling throats, they find it a satisfaction to make Gaston's gesture in their minds.

Which makes me wonder, while I thread my beads in so many shades of crimson—Gaston's scarlet, the girls' blush-rose and pink, my own dull red—

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whether our fury is perhaps *not* ours, but just a ripple creeping into the pools and inlets of our minds from the tide of rage which at certain moments rises—*must* rise!—in the minds of the men in the trenches who, without the assistance of personal animosity, must do this wet, dirty, bad-smelling business of killing? They could not do it unless they were swept on by the surge of an impersonal animosity which does not wait upon reason. Once they have done what they have to do, this motor rage ebbs. But it does not ebb from the little pools on the shore which it has filled—Gaston's mind, and mine, and many, many other minds, which have no outlet of action; *they* lie harsh and brackish, long after the tide has swept back into the deep. It is the menace to the future of this inactive fury of non-combatants which frightens me, because it may poison the springs of an idealism which we had hoped would make democracy safe for the world. . . .

Of course the rage may be more than a ripple of the impersonal fury of the trenches; it may be, for all we know, the spume and froth from the lift and heave of a reasoning World-anger which is reproaching humanity for continuing to endure "the foolish

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business of kings and queens"—a business which has brought the world to its present pass. Some people think Gaston is going to illustrate this World-anger and teach us to be done with our folly. These are the people who say they are "waiting" for victory, but who add the uneasy question, "*Then* what? The end of the war, will be the beginning of—God knows what!" these people say.

I asked Gaston about this sense of expectancy, in which he himself, although he does not know it, has a place. But he evaded an explanation. I pulled him in from the street, where he had been buying a *petit Suisse* for private consumption in a little niche under the stairs where, when not on the pavement, he curls up like a brass-buttoned rat and sleeps.

"Gaston, I have waited five minutes for the elevator!"

"The *ascenseur* is out of order."

"Gaston, I admire and envy your powers of imagination."

Gaston moved the car up a foot, dropped it six inches then let it shoot up another foot; here we paused while he experimented with the wheel.

"Madame, the dirty Boches return to-night."

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"Who says so?"

"*Tout le monde.*"

"And what will you do, Gaston—go down to the cellar?"

"*Moi?*" shrieked Gaston. "*La cave? Non! Madame a peur?*"

I said I hoped not, I really thought not; but "wasn't anybody afraid?"

"No *French* people," Gaston said, politely. (The hotel was full of Americans.) After that he became absorbed in the Noah's Ark elevator and confined his remarks to, "*Oh, la-la!*" He did, however, while we hung between the second and third floors, throw me a kind word:

"Did Madame observe the decorations of the new *concierge?*"

"Indeed I did, Gaston!"

"*La Croix de Guerre et la Médaille Militaire!*"

"And when will you receive the *Médaille Militaire?*"

"Madame, my age is such that *je ne la porte pas à présent*. When my age is *en règle* peace will be here."

"When will that be?"

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"*Oh, la-la!* Very soon."

"Who says so, Gaston?"

"*Tout le monde.*"

"Oh, Gaston, you have taken me to the fifth floor!"

Gaston looked patient and lifted his little shoulders to his ears. "Madame was conversing."

So Gaston "waits" for peace. And it is to come soon. It is not only Gaston's world which says so; other and quite different worlds declare it, too. But their certainty is not quite so certain as Gaston's "*La-la.*"

I asked a *concierge's* wife about it—a woman, heavy-eyed, dressed in black, sitting alone in her chilly little den at the entrance of an hotel. It was dark and rainy, and all Paris was cold, and the mud in the streets that used to be so clean, but are now so filthy, made one think of the mud in the trenches. I spoke of the war and the hope of an early peace—with victory, of course. She agreed, listlessly. Oh yes, peace must come, of course.

"Soon?"

She hoped it would be soon. She was very listless.

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"Madame," I said, "I rejoice that the American soldiers are here at last."

Then she lifted her somber eyes and looked at me, yet it seemed as if she looked through me, beyond me, at something I could not see.

"Madame," she said, with patient but quite terrible dignity—"Madame, the American soldiers come too late."

The significance of this left me dumb. For what kind of a peace is *she* "waiting"?

I quoted the *concierge's* wife to a man who knows more of the real state of things over here than this poor woman (or Gaston) could possibly know, and, of course, far more than any bewildered American whose especial fear is of generalizing from insufficient data and who only knows that everybody seems to be waiting . . . waiting . . . waiting. He laughed and shrugged with amused disgust.

"Oh, you Americans have not come 'too late.' You may still help us—if you ever really get in. But have no fear, Madame, have no fear! Whether you get in or not, *we* shall never give up while there are any of us left!" Then, even while I was slipping a golden bead on my thread, he added, his voice

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dropping almost to a whisper, "*but there are very few of us left.*"

So he, too, is "waiting" for a peace which he does not define. But some people skirt the edge of a definition. A laconic word or two in the compartment of a train that was dragging itself, hours late, into Paris, was fairly definite. Two elderly French officers in faded blue uniforms were talking together. Their faces were worn and lined, and one man had white hair. Apparently they did not notice the American sitting opposite them, trying to forget French indifference to ventilation by reading a novel. At any rate, they made no effort not to be overheard.

"*Eh bien,*" said one of them, heavily, "*nous sommes finis. Même avec les plus grandes victoires, nous sommes finis.*"

The peace hinted at in these words, (a peace which will follow, of course, an Allied victory;) is one which civilization is not willing to face. Yet some people think France is facing it. They say that the falling birth-rate has for several years been an anxiety, but that the talk about it now, apropos of a million and a half dead young men, is confes-

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sion. "While there are any of us left"—we shall not be "finished." But, "There are very few of us left."

In the United States we have heard, with horrified disgust, that Germany, facing some such possibility for herself, has—with her customary efficiency—begun to educate her people as to the probable necessity of polygamy. France has not been credited with any such foresight. But it would seem that she has it; and in its train may come extraordinary ethical changes (and for these, too, *tout le monde* "waits"). If Germany officially approves the Torgas pamphlet on the plurality of wives, "secondary marriages"—France, unofficially, but without public or legal disapproval, may read *Mère sans Être Épouse*—a study of existing conditions, written with dignity and solemnity. It is addressed to the "*jeunes filles et jeunes veuves de France*," and advocates—what the title indicates. According to this book, France "*ne peut éviter l'abîme qu'en choisissant entre la maternité des célibataires et la polygamie*"—to which last the author is sure the Frenchwoman will never agree. So, while the nation waits for "victory," some people face the fact that victory may bring France to the edge of an "abyss."

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The essence of war is the substitution of one set of ideals for another; it offers certain spiritual gains—courage, self-sacrifice, loyalty; against those gains thoughtful persons must set the spiritual losses; one dares not enumerate them! But is one of these losses to be the throwing over, with a *coup de main*, sex ethics which, imperfect as they are, have taken us so long, so very long, to build up? If this is a possibility hidden in the unspoken expectancy, surely the color of Fear has its place in the vaguely growing pattern. At any rate, it seems as if many of these brave people, these people of supreme courage, are *afraid*. They are afraid, not because they are cowardly, but because they are intelligent. Their wisdom shows them two things to be afraid of—first, that an inconclusive Peace, leaving Germany defeated and triumphant, may follow the Allied victory; and next, the thing which may follow the Peace.

What will come afterward?

As to the present moment, the French look facts in the face. To begin with, many of them feel, so they say, that the war now is as much a state of mind as it is a military situation. Also, they are recognizing several obvious things of which the peo-

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ple in America seem quite unconscious; first, that the French are tired; next, that the English are tired—and hungry; third, that America (not the soldiers, but the nation) which has come into the war, “so late,” is neither tired nor hungry; it is something much worse—it is not serious. America is stepping out into the cataclysm with a sunshade and a smiling face. The French do not resent the smiling—they smiled themselves with complete self-confidence when they started in. They do not resent the sunshade—they, too, know the parasitic plague of politicians who bind the hands of War Departments with miles of red tape; they do not even resent the mentality that makes it possible for an American soldier to say, “These here French ’aint taught *me* nothin’!” It is not these things they fear in us. It is, I think, our fundamental lack of seriousness. Nobody in America is venturing to say that the bright lexicon of Youth *does* contain such a word as failure. The French people are not so—young. When they see us here—with our government’s sunshades and smiles—they are kind to us, extraordinarily kind to us! And they are really glad to see us, because they think we may be helpful if we “ever get into the war.”

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But their lexicon is apparently more complete than ours, so they smile to themselves, now and then, as one smiles at well-meaning and conceited children.

Some of them say, a little impatiently, that the Americans do not know how big it all is, or how far-reaching in its outcome. "But we know! The war after the war—that's what we are considering," one man said. "The present situation," said some one else, "is, speaking militarily, as far beyond the declaration of war in 1914, as the declaration of war was beyond that pistol-shot in the street in Sarajevo. It is beyond the question of a struggle between the Central Powers and the Allies; it has become a cosmic question. Civilization and Chaos are at grips." But this is a French point of view. The Americans who have just arrived do not share it. They seem to be under the impression that it is all the local issue of throttling Fritz—a thing which they mean to do P.D.Q.! "Oh, the simplicity of us!" said an American long resident in France. "We are provincial in the death struggle!" And he went on to say that the World—not just the Allied Nations, and poor, mad Germany, who happens to be the bad child who took the candle

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into the powder-magazine—the whole World is shaking!

Well, the French people know it, if we don't; and what their knowledge may do in creating a "state of mind" needs no comment. The two worn and haggard officers in the train put it into words: "*Même avec les plus grandes victoires. . .*"

You will not wonder that I mark the expectancy in the air by a black bead?

The wife of the *concierge* calls that bead the fear of defeat; the brilliant Frenchman would name it, if he were willing to name it, the fear of conquest; the two officers know it is fear of national extinction.

But there are others who call it Hope, and not Fear at all. This handful of dreamers have opened their windows toward the east. Their "state of mind" bids them look beyond the deepening darkness toward a dawn. They are certain of the dawn, ultimately; but they will not deny the terrors of the dark. During the hours before daybreak may come—God knows what! one and another of them say. But whatever comes, it will be part of a process which will bring about a readjustment of the social order. It is probable, they say, that Gaston,

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with his hideous little gesture, will have a hand in it. This is their hope: first the Day of Judgment for Germany; then, a new Heaven and a new Earth; Chaos dragged from the throat of Civilization; our code of morals saved from the assault of an efficiency which would reinforce itself by polygamy; the Idealism of Jesus preserved for our children's children! All this through Gaston's surgery. He accomplished, they say, a good deal in 1789. "But that which is coming," said a Frenchman, smiling, "will be for thoroughness, to 1789, as a picnic of Sunday, as you call it." Another of the Intellectuals put it in a way which would, I think, have appealed to Gaston:

"It will come," said he, "the new world! But first will come the world revolution. It has already begun in Russia. After the Peace, Germany will explode, then England, then France, and then you people!—with your imitation Democracy."

"*'Imitation'?*" I protested, in dismay.

He shrugged. "Can you call it anything else, considering the way you treat your negroes? The way in which Labor dictates to Capital, and Capital kicks Labor in the face? The way your rich people buy

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immunity from Law, and your poor people despise Law because it can be bought? Yes, Madame, 'imitation' describes your democracy fairly well. However, the revolution may save a remnant of the America which Washington and Lincoln created."

"And during the saving," said an editor, joyously, "it will be *casser des gueules!*"

It is fair, in this connection, and also cheerful, to quote the comment of an American on that reference to the breaking of snouts—and his slang is just as forcible as that of the French editor:

"If anybody said that sort of thing to *me*," said this youngster, grinning, "I should reply, gently but firmly: 'To hell wid yez!' There ain't going to be no revolution in *ours*. Why, what have we got to revolute about? We're a free people. No, sir! We'll lick these damn Germans out of their boots, and then, so far as the Allies go, everything will be lovely, and the goose hang high!" I fancy most of us at home share this opinion, and a great many French people share it, too.

The possibility the American denied was put in still another way by a French gentleman, whose serene face, furrowed with suffering, shines with a

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confidence that is willing to suffer still more—for with him experience has worked Hope.

“Madame,” said he, “I had in my country place two horses of an unfriendliness. They *mordaient*; they nippéd, as you would say; they *hennissaient*. And two dogs that loved me. They were both my friends, but to each other they were of a ferocity terrible. I had also a gaz'l. . . .”

“Gaz'l?” I said, doubtfully.

“Madame! Gaz'l. You are acquainted with the gaz'l in your wonderful country of Southern America?”

Some one behind me murmured, “gazelle,” and I said, hastily: “Oh, yes certainly. Pray proceed, Monsieur.”

“*Eh bien, mes chevaux* snorted and *mordaient*; my dogs fought and tore each other; but all, all united in attacking my gaz'l.”

I sympathized.

“My gaz'l was, you understand, of a smell. It was a wild beast, and so was of a smell, *ma pauvre gaz'l!*”

I again pitied the wild beast.

“Madame, it was winter. *Je faisais des. répara-*

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tions to my stable wherein these animals lived. It became upon a cold day—*froid extrême*—necessary to lift the roof of my *écurie*. I said to my *garde*, ‘*Les animaux* go to perish!’ He said, ‘*Non, Monsieur*, they are very warm.’ I said: ‘*C’est impossible!* What have you done with them?’ He replied, ‘They are all in one stall.’ I said: ‘My God! They will destroy one another. The horses will kick each other to death, the dogs will tear each other to pieces—and *ma pauvre gaz’l!*’ ‘Monsieur,’ my *garde* said, ‘*venez avec moi voir les animaux?*’ I accompanied him to the stall. Madame! The cold extreme, the frost of a degree, was such, my horses, my dogs, my *gaz’l* were all togezzzer in the stall! Ver’ close, ver’ close; *serrés*—huddled, you would say in your language, so expressive. Yes, close togezzzer, because they had been uncomfortable, apart! Cold, apart! They, to be comfortable, to be warm, was togezzzer. Madame, *Democracy was born!*”

“Must we be uncomfortable to learn the meaning of the word?” I said.

“Comfort has not taught you its meaning, in America,” he said, smiling a little cynically. “You think you are a democracy? Dear Madame! it is

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in America an empty word. Many of you are comfortable. Many, many of you are uncomfortable. Not so is the true democracy."

"So, we must all suffer together?" I pondered. . . .

Before this belief that the Kingdom of Heaven may be brought about by pressure from the outside, how was one to say that when the roof was put back on the barn *les animaux* would probably again squeal and nip and tear, and the smell of the gaz'l be as pronounced as ever?

It is hardly necessary to say that the immense majority of people do not believe in this possibility of a revolution. They are waiting for victory—complete, complacent, vindictive victory! With no Gaston anywhere in it—except, indeed, as he has been privileged to help in bringing it about, by dying for his country. This comfortable certainty is held by people who have never felt the cold of the lifted roof, and to whom, consequently, huddling is quite unthinkable. They belong in the class with a gentle and very kindly woman in America who said to me some two or three years ago:

"I am tired to death of all this talk about work-

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ing-people. They *never* wash, and there's a great deal too much done for them, anyhow. All these tiresome girls' clubs! I say, let working-girls stay home with their mothers in the evenings, instead of running around to girls' clubs!"

This is almost as far removed from the hope of "huddling" as a scene I remember in my childhood—a big, rocking, family carriage; two fat, strong horses, pulling over a terribly muddy Maryland road. I sat inside with a very majestic and rigid old lady with gray side curls, who never leaned back upon the ancient cushions. We were going, I think, to Hagerstown, to call on some other majestic old lady. As the coach pulled and tugged and I tumbled about like a very small pea in a peck measure, we passed a group of school children, who drew aside to escape the splashing mud from the fetlocks of the fat horses. They didn't escape very much of it, and I can see now their looks of dismay at spotted aprons; but the old lady did not notice the aprons. She frowned—and said:

"Fy! fy! What are we coming to? Not one of them bowed to us! When I was young, children in their station, respected their betters. Where, *where*

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shall we end?" she demanded, darkly. She, too, had never huddled.

I remember pondering, as we sank into the muddy ruts, and tugged out to balance on precarious wheels before plunging down again: "Why should the children bow to her? She didn't bow to them."

There is one more hope that a very, very few people feel; it is even more like Fear than the hope of the owner of the gaz'l. I heard it expressed by a little group of Americans, who thought, so some of them said, that the only certain way of ushering in the Kingdom of God was to refrain from ever putting the roof on the stable. "Let us all grow our own hair if we want to be warm!" said one of these vaguely speculating folk.

In other words, let us return to the beginnings of things. This will be easy, because, the speaker said, we are seeing the end of a civilization which created the box-stall and is therefore responsible for the differentiation of comfort. "But it must be the whole hog," she went on; "there is no half-way house on the road to regeneration. Gaston won't accomplish it."

This girl, her eyebrows gathering into a frown,

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seemed to be trying to talk out her perplexities. Some one had said that Nationalism was responsible for the idea that population should be valued by quantity, not quality; naturally, such a standard may not only contemplate polygamy, it may demand it. "Nationalism is the seed of war," this person said. "*Dulce et decorum* is death for an ideal, but not for a geographical boundary. Christ died for the People, not for Nations. We must learn to think of ourselves, not as French or American or German, but just as we are born—poor, little, naked *humans!* When we do that the foolishness of war will end."

But the Girl went further than that: "An Allied victory will just strengthen Nationalism," she said, "and, of course, there is going to be an Allied victory! *Must* be, you know. I don't doubt it for a moment! We've simply got to win—only—sometimes I—I wonder . . ."

"I wonder most all of the time," I confessed.

"Isn't it possible," she said, slowly, "that if we just prop up Nationalism, we shall prop up for a little while longer this rotten thing that you call civilization? Is it worth while to do that? Civilization is rotten; you can't deny it."

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"I'm not denying it."

"It is the expression of a debauched commercialism that has been squeezing the life out of—well, your friend Gaston's body and soul. Look at his nasty, wicked little body! Apparently he has no Soul. Your civilization, which is pure materialism, has done it."

"I do wish you wouldn't call it mine," one of her hearers said.

"It *is* yours! You batten on it. You grind Gaston's bones to make your bread—"

"Oh, come now!"

"I mean you draw your dividends," she said to the company at large; and some one protested, meekly:

"Not very many, now, or very large ones."

"That's not from any excess of virtue on your part," she said, sweetly. "I bet you, none of you ever objected to a melon yet. Well," she went on, frowning. "I know I am all balled up and going off on side-tracks, but what I'm trying to say is, that an Allied victory will only keep the civilization of materialism going a little while longer. I think M. Blank is right, and after our victory, will come

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a period when we shall 'huddle.' Then we shan't even huddle, for there will come a moment when the gaz'l will suddenly take the whole box-stall; and *I* shan't blame him! Civilization has created him, and it is he who has suffered the most from a war which he did not desire, and did not make, but only fought. When he gets the stall he will die in it, because it isn't Nature— Or turn into a horse, and then we'll have the whole business to do over again!"

Some one said here, that her ideas on evolution would interest Darwin, but she did not notice the flippant interruption.

"Isn't it possible," she said, "that, to get straightened out, to *live*, in fact, we've got, *all* of us, to get out into the open? Haven't we got to grow our own hair to keep warm? Yes, we must go farther than Gaston's revolution which every one is whispering about; *that* will only be a piece of court-plaster on an ulcer. We will go the whole hog."

This was too preposterous!

"You mean, a return to the primeval slime? Thank you! I prefer the box-stall even if the gaz'l is of a smell."

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“I don’t think your preferences will be consulted. But it does seem”—her face fell into painful lines of sincerity—“it really does seem that the sooner the smash of the whole damned thing comes the better. It isn’t any easier to pull a tooth by degrees.”

(I may say that this thoughtful woman is a doctor, so her illustrations are natural enough.)

“So that’s why,” she ended, quietly, “that sometimes, I—I *think* I believe, that it will be better for Germany to win the war.”

There was an outcry at this, “Germany is the apotheosis of materialism!”

“I know. It would be casting out devils by Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils. But a German victory would ice the toboggan and get us down to the bottom more quickly.”

A ribald voice suggested that “ice” wouldn’t last long in the place to which she seemed bent on sending us. But the girl was in too painful earnest to retort.

“You bet,” she said, “we’ll drag Germany over the precipice with us. And, once at the bottom, we shall all begin to climb up again. But we must touch

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bed-rock first. Bolshevism will wash us all down on to it."

Everybody laughed, and, of course, nobody took her seriously; yet this, stripped of slang, is a thing for which, here and there, a very few people are "waiting." They are saying, carefully, with weighed words, something that confesses what this extravagant statement means.

"Not even Gaston's surgery can better conditions that ought not to exist," they say. "We are at the end of our epoch. We must begin all over again."

Of course, very few go as far as this. Very few can see any hope in anarchy. Very few have faith to believe that to save life it may be necessary to lose it. Gaston—who symbolizes a more or less orderly revolution,—is the boundary set by most of the dreamers. Those who do go farther believe, as this girl put it, that an Allied victory will be only a temporary uplifting; that even Gaston would be but a palliative; and that it is better, not only for France, but for Western civilization, to get to the bottom as quickly as possible.

"Don't prolong the agony by defeating Germany," one of them said. But whether victory comes, bring-

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ing a Peace such as we knew before 1914—complacent, selfish, materialistic! or whether we are to know defeat, Gaston, they say, will have his say. Under his star there will be, perforce, some huddling; and dogs and horses and gaz'l will be quite sure that they are going to live happily for evermore. . . . But after that, the dark. And after *that*, the dawn!

It is a Hope. Very far off, perhaps, but a Hope. The hope of the upward curve of the spiral after it has dipped into the primeval. Back again, these people say, to the beginnings of things, must go our miserable little civilization. Back to some bath of realities, to wash us clean of an unreality which has mistaken geographical boundaries for spiritual values, and mechanics for God. Then, up—up—up—towards the singing heights!

“We will find God,” the crystal beads declare. Not in our time, perhaps; perhaps not even in the time of our children; but sometime. “The processes of God are years and centuries.”

And as I write, the guns are trained on Paris. . . .

V

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WE had had our marching orders for "Somewhere," but the morning before we left Paris, I said (it being our first "day out" after about five weeks of uninterrupted dish-washing and cocoa-making), "let's go and see the tomb of the High Priest of War," or words to that effect. It seemed fitting for us, who are just tagging along behind the army, to do this, because, except for Napoleon, we probably wouldn't be tagging. It was he who put the match to some invisible fuse which, smoldering through the years—breaking out once in a while in a brief sputter of flames, really blazing in 1870, showing sparks at Agadir, finally, in 1914, reaching the powder magazine—seems now to be blowing up the whole world. But the curious thing is, that with all the unpleasantness of being blown up (and it is very unpleasant!), we queer, inconvenienced human creatures continue to worship at

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the shrine of the man who is so largely responsible for the explosion!

It was Sunday, and all the world was "*endi-manché*"—dressed in its best clothes, which, if one does not look at them too closely, seem about as fine as ever. Certainly as *chic* as ever, even though many, many frocks are black, and almost all are worn, and of distressingly shoddy material. Yes, the clothes were very *chic!*—except the faded blue uniforms, and for some of us these dirty, faded, blue coats had a *chic*-ness all of their own. I know they moved me more than the smart, clean khaki of our own boys, who were very much in evidence that Sunday afternoon, strolling along the boulevards in the pale February sunshine, all going apparently in the direction of the Tomb. And why not? The High Priest, on the pages of history had put the worship of his god into their hearts as well as into the hearts of the men in blue; so, naturally, on their few days' pause in Paris before going to the front, they thronged to his shrine. . . .

But so far as worship went, I noticed a difference in the faces of the worshipers; those of the Frenchmen were dull; those of the Americans were very

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eager, alert, full of preposterous American fun, and of a joyous curiosity about everything, especially about the things in the Cour d'Honneur—that great open space round whose four sides the Hotel des Invalides is built.

These *Things* catch the eye as soon as one enters the Court: guns—guns—guns. (I don't know enough to give their proper names; they all look equally evil and ingenious to me.) And with the captured guns were wrecked German aëroplanes, torpedoes, gun carriages—the wheels hub-deep with mud from enslaved Belgium; French Red Cross ambulances, their covers torn by German bullets which had sought the dying to ensure their death. The great Court was full of these things, and among them our men lounged about, laughing and joking and staring, their gay, keen eyes full of reverence for the god whose sacramental vessels were here collected. (I wondered if our lads ever thought of the Wine those vessels are holding to-day to the lips of Humanity!)

Among these trophies moved also the French people—little bearded men in blue, accompanied by wives and mothers and children (these

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last rather pallid—there is *enough* bread over here, but somehow it does not feed us; “it doesn’t stick to your ribs,” little Sylvia said). The women, “*endi-manché*,” and the peaked, shrill children—the little boys’ legs between the knickers and short stockings, purple with cold—hung upon the arms or clung to the hands of the tired, shabby soldiers, who led them about to see the machine guns and all the other sacred vessels. There was much feminine chatter, much high-pitched nervous laughter, that mingled with rollicking American voices; but through it all, the French soldiers, patient and kindly, leading their women about to see the sights, were singularly silent. They were detached, to a degree that was a little startling. At first, I thought it was only that my eyes had happened to rest upon one or another particularly tired husband or lover, but as, looking down from the gallery that runs around four sides of the Court, I watched the good-humored, jostling crowd that was moving among the captured cannon and planes, I saw that practically all the men in blue had this air of remoteness. They were doing their part here, just as they had done their part in the trenches. There, they had been ready to give

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their lives for their women and children; here, they were giving their poor little moments of rest on leave to something which did not seem to interest them, but which did interest these same women and children. I could hear the incessant feminine questioning:

“Qu'est-ce que c'est que ceci?”

“Pourquoi cela est-il cassé?”

“Comment y a-t-il de la boue la-dessus?”

The blue soldiers' replies were given with a curiously bored look. I could see that even the men who were by themselves, and wandered aimlessly about, or those accompanied by girls—girls with deadly white powdered faces and very red lips, (poor, tragic, bad little butterflies!)—all had this same absent expression. Perhaps when they looked at the great, stretching, flower-garlanded, flag-decked wings of the aëroplane on which their own hero, Guynemer, sailed to a triumphant death, dragging with him into Eternity I don't know how many German aviators, their eyes did brighten into some kind of attention; but most of the time they were uninterested.

It was very puzzling.

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As we went into the palace itself, I thought very much about the quality of indifference in the French soldiers' faces, and wondered if I was only imagining it—one finds one's imagination running rather crazily over here. So I watched them when we reached the balcony from which one looks down into the shrine itself, the crypt, in the center of which is the tomb—covered, now, as it happens, by sandbags. There is a sinister significance in those sandbags. The crypt lies directly under the great dome of the Invalides, and a bomb from a German plane, falling on that dome, would strike the French heart with a terrible effectiveness. So we could not see the tomb itself, but only the piled sandbags and the guarding caryatids supporting the balcony, each symbolizing a great victory, their worshiping marble eyes watching always the sarcophagus which holds the little heap of glorious dust—his worshipers call it "glorious." A constant crowd hung over the balustrade of the gallery, and I could see those uninterested faces of the French soldiers; sometimes a powdered cheek brushed a blue shoulder, and a high-pitched "*O, la! la!*" expressed disappointment at the concealing sandbags. Our boys

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were there, too, staring down into the crypt, their careless eyes seeing everything, and understanding almost nothing.

We went into the chapel for a moment, where the queer writhing pillars, like enormous black marble corkscrews, stand on each side of the altar, which is flooded with the blue light from the dome, and surrounded by much tawdry and theatrical magnificence, all of which would have delighted the little great vulgarian down in the crypt. It is an ironic thing, this chapel of the Prince of Peace, here, close beside the bones of Napoleon! I did not notice that the French soldiers displayed before this altar either piety or reverence; which pleased me, for the conjunction of ideas made the painful question of the success of the Christian Church at this particular moment in the history of the world, rise again in my mind. Many people are asking this question just now. A little fat innkeeper answered it thus: "Madame," said he, "is of an intelligence? She is aware that France is not a religious nation?" I disclaimed any special intelligence, but said I had heard as much. "The church," said he, "pouf! it is nothing! I say to my children when they came out of the

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trenches (I call them all my children), ‘Mes enfants,’ I say, ‘what of religion?’ And they say to me ‘Pouf!’ But, Madame! by this war, our men have come to believe in God,—and disbelieve in man. No more—*no more* will they have a man who calls himself a Priest, stand between them and God!” He looked at me with suddenly luminous eyes: “There is no necessity. The French people know God, and need not to be introduced to Him.” Perhaps that knowledge may sometime destroy the worship of Napoleon’s god. . . .

By and by, we strayed into the Museum, where the relics of the first Emperor are kept—the cocked hat, the little camp bed, its faded green canopy dropping into tatters under the weight of more than a hundred years; even his war horse, *stuffed*, poor Visier!—the hair worn from his old nose by the pattings of thousands of passing hands; and the woolly white dog (who was with him, I think, at St. Helena), also stuffed, and quite the noblest and most human thing among all these dusty, decaying memorials of “glory.” But here, as in the *Cour*,—it was only the American man and the French woman who displayed interest. The French soldiers

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seemed to be patiently bored. Sometimes they yawned, and two or three strolled back to the gallery overlooking the Court, and leaning on the stone balustrade stared absently up at the soft blue sky, which had little wisps of white clouds drawn like veils across its tender depths.

“What on earth!” I said to myself, “is the matter with the French men?”

We speculated about it as we walked home in the fading afternoon light—across Pont Alexandre III that spans the brown current of the Seine, through the Place de la Concorde, past the Obélisque that marks the spot where Marie Antoinette and the Autocratic Idea in France died together on the scaffold. The streets were full of people cheerful and chattering, or vaguely silent; there were many American soldiers among them, swaggering along, quite comfortable in hearing from each other, only their own language—which made me think of something that was said in our canteen: “Some of us can talk their lingo to the Frenchies; I learned it in our high school—but *they can't understand it!* Can you beat it? You talk their own lingo to 'em, and they don't get on to it!”

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“The French people is slow,” a boy said, oracularly.

“Well, I’ve no use for these here foreign languages,” another soldier said impatiently. “They’d ought to learn ’em in their schools to speak so as you could understand ’em.”

Compared to the blue-coated men, our lads seemed so interested and eager, and so satisfied with everything!—their own lingo and even the war—“*We’ll* settle this hash for ’em!”

There was nothing remote about the American soldiers!

When we reached the Madeleine, which lifted its serene façade of time-blackened, rain-washed marble against the violet dusk, I was so puzzled that I said to myself, “I’ll go and ask somebody who knows, what the very obvious ‘remoteness’ in the French soldier means.”

So that was how it came about that I found myself at a charming and hospitable French fireside which was endlessly patient with my French (which was doubtless of the high-school type) and very enlightening to my bewildered American mind.

“Why are they so uninterested? Do I imagine

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it, or are they really——” I paused to find a word.

“—*not here?*” my hostess finished for me. “Yes, you are right, Madame, they are not here. There are other reasons, too; their life in the trenches is of a dullness—it is to bore. You would say ‘bore’? But for many, very many, it is something else. And that is why they are—away. They are with . . . things we do not see. Things they do not speak of.”

Her voice dropped on those last words and she was silent for a minute. “It would not make us—their wives and mothers and sweethearts—happier if they told us what they see—always, always—in the back of their minds. When they come home on leave—these men who are of a temperament—they endeavor to forget it. They go to see the sights, oh yes! They rush to the cinemas—you have seen them?”

Yes, I had seen them standing in the rain, crowds of them, waiting for the doors to open, always with their women pressing close to them.

“They go to laugh. They want to laugh,” she said. “But some of them laugh—with *du bout des lèvres.*” She paused, and stared into the fire.

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“If they could only *talk*,” she said; “talk of what they have seen! Then they could forget. But no. They spare us. They will not save themselves that way—our men!” Her gray head lifted, proudly. “Only once has my son let me see what was in his heart; by accident, Madame; hardly six words . . .”

Perhaps she saw in my eyes the question I could not ask, for she went on, very simply, and with a directness that was poignant. (I think people are more direct now than they used to be. Life is too terrible for the old futilities of words—mere “polite noises,” as H. G. Wells calls the conventionalities of conversation, don’t count for much when cannon are booming.)

“Once, yes, my boy revealed to me—something. Me! His mother! Who would have taken into my own bosom all his pain! He was taking his men from —— to ——, but he, himself, was able to make the *détour* of a moment to stop here, in Paris, to kiss me. Then he proceeded with his men. Madame, I wish you could have seen him. He was of a joyousness! And so well! Robust, young—” Her eyes shone as she tried to tell me of the overflowing manliness and vigor of the boy who paused in his

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hurrying march to the trenches, to kiss his mother. "Young, and of a beauty!"

"Madame will please observe the date? It was the fifteenth of December. I was even then planning for him a *cadeau de Noël*. It was quite simple to get it through to him, for he was not in the firing line. Oh—just a pudding of plums, and bonbons, and—what you would send your boy! He is truly a boy," she said, with a little shrug that made the diamonds on her thin old hands twinkle in the firelight. (I am pretty sure that it was hospitality to a chilly American that had lighted a fire on the too-often-cold hearth.) "He wrote to me, Madame, on the evening of Christmas a letter most gay. You will observe the date: December 25th. Oh, yes, a letter *très amusante*—of how he and his friends feasted on the pudding of plums, and many things that a boy likes; ah, boys are greedy!" she scolded lovingly, her face all maternal satisfaction in the childishness of her man in the trench. "So I was at ease about my son. He was making his duty, but he was not on the firing line. So I was at ease, Madame. On New Year's Day—that is our great Day in France, greater than Christmas—I made a little fête; oh,

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not really a fête, as before the War; just my two daughters and the parents of my son-in-law, who is also at the front. But I had a fowl, and a pudding of plums, so I say 'fête.' Just before we were to proceed to the dining-room the bell sounded—I myself opened the door. A strange man stood there. I did not know this man. He was mud, mud to here"—she laid her hand across her breast—"his face was of a whiteness—his cheeks were gone—his cheeks were melted away! His eyes—his terrible eyes! I did not know this man. He was my son. . . . He entered and looked about him. He said, 'You are *en fête*.' I said, 'No! Only our relations.' My son would not speak. He was silent. He came into the *salle-à-manger* and sat with us at table, silent. He did not even wash! My boy,—whose first movement when he had returned on leave was always to the bathtub! Madame, he sat there in his mud without speech. He forgot his mother," she ended simply; and did not speak for a little while. . . .

"Before he left me he said—*something*—hardly six words! But when he got back to the trenches—he wrote and asked me to forgive him for his silence.

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He said 'I found you *en fête*.' (Madame, it was, I assure you, only the fowl and the pudding.) 'I did not speak, Maman,' he said; 'I was unjust. Forgive me.' He then explained to me, Madame, that when he wrote to me on Christmas night of their feast, he was then *en train* to go to the firing line, but he would not tell me, *naturellement!*" (Again there was the proud shrug, and the twinkle of diamonds.) "But between that night and the night when he came back to me, and I did not know him, he had been in the trench four days and four nights, without food. Yes, his cheeks had melted away! He and his company could not withdraw from the trench, because of the German barrage. They could not advance—for No Man's Land lay before them. And in No Man's Land, under their eyes, all those four days and nights, he saw . . ."

She was silent, and I knew she was seeing what those dear, dazed, boyish eyes had looked at for ninety-six hours. Then she said, in a whisper, "and he heard . . ."

Again she could not speak. By and by in a low voice, she went on. "That is why the Poilus are 'absent.' Constantly they see and hear—what never

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should be seen or heard on earth! They may go to the cinemas—where it is to laugh; but do you think captured machine guns could interest them? My boy said to me, because of things he saw in his mind, ‘Maman, I could not look at you, *en fête*.’ Oh, Madame, you will know it was not really a *fête*? Just the *poulet*. . . .”

After a while I poked my way back through the dark streets (there had been an air raid a night or two before, and all Paris walked in darkness). I felt my way along, lighted by glimmers from the feeble lamps of occasional passing taxis, and I said to myself that there are many varieties of courage in this magnificent bad old world of ours, and one of them is the courage that will take wife and child and sweetheart to see those instruments of dull horror which have their own significance for eyes which have stared into No Man’s Land, and seen things which the women cannot see, and must not be made to understand. So the boy who loved candy and plum pudding and made the detour to “kiss Maman,” held his tongue as to what was going to happen after the Christmas feast, and so kept that mother, in Paris, “at ease.” And he was able (the *he* is generic

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this time) to take his sweetheart to see the guns and aëroplanes and answer patiently her crowding questions. The trophies did not interest him—but they did not shock him by any sharp contrast with his life. He was used to them. But the little fête was a shock. And so he “sat down in his mud; he washed not; he did not eat; he did not speak.” *He was not there.*

And yet we go on—we strange human creatures! admiring Napoleon, the supreme expression of this terrible Irrationality called War, which so blasts the eyes of some of our young men that they are bored by the merely pleasant things of life. I suppose some day the Race will regard the symbols of the worship of War with astonished and pitying amusement. It will keep them in museums as it does now—but not as signs of “glory,” only as curiosities which illustrate the childhood of mankind, just as to-day the rusty racks and thumbscrews in museums illustrate our childishness, and illustrate, too, how far, far removed from Christ was a Christianity which fancied religion could be achieved by force!

But, of course, to hasten the age of reason—the time when “war” shall be a curiosity of history, this particular irrationality in which we are now en-

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gaged, which a wicked and childish Germany has thrust upon the world, must be gone through with, must be fought out by the (comparatively) adult nations. They must tie the crazy hands which have set fire to things. Crazy hands, which are maliciously mischievous, and which do *this* sort of thing: (I quote from a report issued by the British Government of "The Transport of British Prisoners of War to Germany." It contains the statements and depositions of forty-eight officers and seventy-seven non-commissioned officers and men, who, wounded, fell into the hands of the enemy.)

"At Liège," says Captain Hargreaves, "I tried to get the German Red Cross officials to give our wounded men water—they refused. . . . I saw some nurses bring water in cans up to our men, show it to them, and then pour it on the platform." And again: "German officers allowed troops to strike a convoy of wounded with sabers and bayonets, and to kick their crutches from under the arms of cripples." And here is another: "Sometimes when food was given it was in most loathsome manner; thus, one small jug of soup was allowed to a whole carriage of wounded, and this soup was useless, as it was put

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into the jug used for urinating." These things read like pathological reports of degenerate children! . . .

So we are here in France, we Americans in khaki, to do our somewhat belated part in stopping this particular degeneration, and then to relegate War to the Records of History, which will tell such stories as these I have quoted as illustrations of the arrested development of a nation.

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We are not all of us in khaki. Some of us wear blue, and have red crosses or triangles on our sleeves and hats—but petticoats are part of this uniform. The Yankee boys, most of them, salute the Y. M. C. A. petticoats, and the wearers acknowledge it by a nod and smile. I wish you could see these girls playing at Militarism—it is really very charming! But I have to admit that military discipline breaks down once in a while when it interferes with personal preferences, as for instance: "*I hate* all this rowing about punctuality!" a girl says. "What does it matter if I am five minutes late at the canteen?"

Some of us were talking about the impatience of the average American woman with anything like discipline, and one extremely military woman broke

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in, frowning, "The trouble is there are too many of us over here!"

"You have it in your power to lessen the number by one," some one remarked sweetly—it was the sweetness of that translucent confection called at home a lemon drop.

But another worker shook her head, "There are not enough of us over here!" she said.

The fact is, both of these statements are as true as they are contradictory. "Send us some more women workers!" cries one relief organization or another.

"For God's sake, keep these girls at home!" cries a distracted official. He clutched his gray hair as he spoke—but the gesture was too sincere to be funny.

The explanation of the contradiction is simple enough. Of course there are always, everywhere, too many inefficient people: "Keep them at home!" the relief committees implore us.

"No," says America. "*We* don't want them."

Of course there are not at any time, anywhere, enough efficient people:

"Send us some, for heaven's sake, send us some!" say the Y. M. C. A. and the Red Cross.

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“No,” says America. “We need them at home, —never more than now.”

So America keeps all she can of the best (fortunately she can't keep all), and lets the second or third best slip through the sieve of the War Office's requirements in the way of passports. As a result, there are among the hard-working, level-headed, inexpressibly useful relief workers, a number of lazy, frivolous, unconscientious persons, who eat the scanty bread of France and render no equivalent in labor for her soldiers or for the soldiers of her allies.

“I wish I could charter the *Lusitania* and ship 'em all back to the port she came from,” an observer said. There was a shocked protest; but the statement was not withdrawn.

“You know perfectly well that these women are not wanted in heaven or on earth!”

“But do draw the line at the waters under the earth,” I plead,—not too earnestly, for I know the kind of person who roused the protest.

Yet one ought not to joke about it; the situation over here is too grave for joking, and, besides, the joke seems to ignore the other side—the side of efficiency and unselfishness. When I think of some of

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the workers, both men and women, whom I have been privileged to meet, workers whose devotion, self-sacrifice, and consecration are obvious to everybody, I am filled with admiration and humility.

“I take off my hat to these girls!” a civilian said, with positive emotion.

In one of the canteens I heard an equally sincere tribute to a Y. M. C. A. man (he is too delicate to be in the trenches). This “secretary” had danced with the boys and played checkers, and sung, “Hail, Hail, the Gang’s All Here!” until he was pale with fatigue. It was then that one of the Regulars, drinking cocoa at my counter, noticed him, and punched the man in front of him in the ribs:

“Say,” he said, “d’ye see that little red-haired feller over there? Name’s Jerry. Well, look a-here, *that feller is a great feller.*”

And here is a tribute to some of the older women. It came from a boy, fresh-faced, clear-eyed, just from Indiana and ready for any kind of monkey-shines, bless his heart! “These ladies,” he said—and suddenly his young lip quivered—“why, sometimes I—I feel just like putting my arms around ’em and hugging ’em like I would my mother.”

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I quote these things only to show that though I understand the feelings of the gentleman who wanted to charter the *Lusitania*, I know, also, that if we could charter another vessel to duplicate some of the men and women who are here already, poor, exhausted France would be glad to share her black bread with them, and thousands of American soldiers would be ready to "hug 'em like they would their mothers," or, if they were too young for that, show them snapshots of their "girls" at home; or, if they were of their own sex, slap them on the small of the back, and say, "Hello, old top!"

There are men and women in the Y. M. C. A. and the Red Cross, whose nobility fill one with hope for this poor crazy world; they are expressing in their lives the only thing that can save civilization: the idealism of Jesus,—which is not always the thing that calls itself Christianity. Sometimes I think Christ would not recognize that as His own. Yes; there are splendid workers here. . . . *But there are others:*

There are arrogant, small-minded men who squabble about creeds; men who can see the religion of Jesus at a prayer meeting, but cannot see it in a

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dance or a football game, men who ought themselves to be in the trenches. And there are flirtatious, inconsequent, selfish girls, who lap up the excitement of the world as kittens lap cream, girls who ought to be at home doing immediate and homely duties. To illustrate, I think I will tell some stories (only about the women; I will leave the criticism of the men who ought to be put on the *Lusitania*, to one of their own sex):

My first story is of something that happened in Paris. A schedule of hours for duty was made out by the head of a department in one of the relief organizations (not the Y. M. C. A.). I happen to know that it was made with painstaking consideration and an effort to spare the women as much of the inevitable fatigue of the work (*which they had volunteered to do!*) as possible. The schedules were handed out—and received in grim silence. For a day or two the gloom was very deep. Then at last, some one spoke up:

“We don’t like these hours. We prefer others. These you have assigned to us are the best for sight-seeing and shopping.”

Sight-seeing! *Now!* While France is holding out

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trembling hands to us! "Sight-seeing?" said an ambulance driver. "I'd cure them of that sort of thing by showing them a 'sight' or two!"

"What, for instance?" I said.

"Well," she said, "I just happened to think of the shelling of some old people; oh, so old, so poor, so trembling! We went to pick them up and carry them out of the danger zone; and—and they *shook* so with fright. One old woman of ninety-six tried to climb into my ambulance. . . . If those sight-seers could see a sight like *that*, I bet they'd lose their interest in cathedrals and things!"

Here is another story: "You are working on surgical dressings, aren't you?" a girl was asked. "No, I signed up for that, because it was the only way I could get over. But I don't like that kind of thing, it isn't interesting. I'm going to the front. I'm just crazy to be on the firing line!"

And again: Miss A. is to relieve Miss B. in a canteen at two P. M. She arrives at four. . . . "Oh, I'm awfully sorry. I didn't mean to be late, but I had such lots to do!" And still another: Miss C. is to go on duty in a canteen at two, for the afternoon. That means she is to make ten or twelve gallons of cocoa,

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wash cups and saucers, sell cigarettes or soap or chewing gum or what not—to one or two hundred men. It is rapid, exhausting, pleasant, valuable work, but there is not a minute's pause in it. At six, Miss D. arrives to relieve Miss C., and go on duty herself until 11:30. She finds the sink piled high with unwashed cups and saucers, the big cocoa container absolutely empty, the men sitting about grimly, unfed and unserved. She also finds the "worker" writing letters at one of the canteen tables.

"Ah!" she says, looking up cheerfully, "I've had *such* a nice afternoon, writing home!"

Now what is the matter with the sight-seers, and Miss A. and Miss C.? They all came over to France to help. They really *wanted* to help. What is the trouble with them? Isn't it this? They are behaving as they have behaved at home, namely: *exactly as they please*.

Their idea of being military goes no further than the soldier's salute; it does not include obedience and self-elimination. Of course there may be, in some of these "undesirables," some fundamental flaw of character; but I think that, generally speaking, this lamentable behavior comes only from a lack of under-

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standing of the situation over here. They have not taken in the terrible gravity of what has happened, is happening, and will happen. Instead of this realization they feel the excitement of a new experience, and the chance to be important.

Anxious, hard-worked people over here have been saying, "How *can* we keep such women away from France?" They are the *bouches inutiles*,—they are not wanted. But, curiously enough, they seem particularly anxious to come! How can they be kept in America? (Where no one particularly hankers for their society, but where at least they have a right to be—they have no right to be in France!) An age limit has been suggested; but that will not sieve them out. Neither efficiency nor consecration is decided by years. I have seen just as many rather ailing, foolish women in the fifties who want excitement and mean to write letters home to their clubs about war work, as lazy girls in the twenties who pant for "the Front." And, also, I have seen girls hardly twenty years old, filled with a passion of unselfish service which puts us older women to shame.

As far as efficiency goes, one method has occurred to me: Why do not the relief organizations here

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refuse to accept any woman who has not been tried out at home in the same kind of work—and for a sufficient length of time to prove her quality? There is plenty of work in America in which workers can be considered as “probationers.” For efficiency, this would be a pretty good test, but efficiency is not enough. The *spirit* of the worker must be questioned.

First of all, let the woman, middle-aged or young, who wants to come over here, face the fact that her *personality* will be of no consequence to anybody except as she is useful. Then let her understand that usefulness means unremitting drudgery, exactness as to detail, prompt obedience, and no remarks about her own likes and dislikes! (That, for an American girl, “is some stunt,” said Edith.) *She must be willing to be unimportant, in her own eyes.* She must not be like the second-rate actresses who complain that they “can’t see themselves in the part;” she must see herself in any part! She must be prepared to be tired, and to be bored—which is much worse than being tired!). She must stand at attention to do office work, or kitchen work, or stupid work, or dangerous work. In fact these requirements of the Spirit are only the old requirements of Life—life at

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home or at school or in the office or shop or hospital. Let the girl who wants to come over here ask herself how she has met Life where she is? If she has not been able to see the Heavenly Vision in washing dishes and helping her mother, she will not be apt to see it in what she may be told to do here. Let her think this over very carefully: If the organization under whose orders she wants to work puts her to the uninteresting drudgery of making a card catalogue, she must not say, as one girl did, "How perfectly beastly! I might as well be in America! I didn't come over here to do that sort of stunt. I want to go to the Front."

"You'll want to do what you are told, or clear out!" the hard-pressed official thought, but did not say. Which was a pity, for candor might have helped this young woman, who was not really mean, only unimaginative and, consequently, selfish. This is the kind of girl to whom France and the American army says, "*Don't come!*"

But if a girl can say, soberly and without self-conceit, "Yes, I can forget myself; I can be glad to be only a cog in the wheel"—then the Living Creature

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who is the center of all the wheels of this terrible and solemn time, will use the cog, and will justify its little existence!

To the woman who can so 'consecrate herself, her soul and body, *and hold her tongue as to her own preferences*, France and the relief organizations say "Come!" And I know certain strained and anxious men and women who will add, "and God bless you."

So this is why it is that those contradictory statements about the workers over here are both true; there *are* too many of us, and there *are* too few of us!

This paper is an appeal to the Few—in America. It is to say to the Right Kind—Come! Come! Come!

And may my country forgive me for picking her pocket of what she needs so much herself! I would not do it if I did not know that the need of France is greater than the need of America. Besides, America can keep the wrong kind—and *reform them*.

VI

THINGS WE THOUGHT WERE BIG

ISN'T it queer," said Edith, "how things waltz around? It's an everlasting 'swing your partner'! Things you thought were big, are so little you can't see 'em!"

Which makes me think of a story:

Winter before last, one of the acute questions in France was fuel,—and in a certain delightful apartment in Paris an American baby was sick with pneumonia. There was no coal for the little household, literally *none*—and no begging or borrowing (or stealing) could secure any—and the chill of Paris in winter can only be appreciated by people who have felt it! In Paris, when it is no lower than thirty-two, the cold penetrates to your bones. Think of that, and then think of this baby, its little head bending sideways like a flower fading on its stalk, and its tiny hands hot with fever; and then think of the fireless fireplace. . . . Well, for one long, ter-

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rible day the father split and chopped up the dining-room chairs, to keep a blaze (which meant a baby's life) chuckling and dancing on the hearth. The little thing got well, but the agony of those hours left its traces on the mother's face. Yet once upon a time this young mother had been rather fond of those dining-room chairs. . . .

"Gracious Peter!" said Sylvia, listening, her eyes as big as saucers, to this tale. "To think that there ever was a time when I *fussed* about things!"

I don't know anybody who fusses less than the speaker; but she expressed the astonishment which, when we hear stories like this, we all begin to feel about our past—for we are, we Americans in France, people with a "Past!" In that Past, there were certain things that seemed to us important. For instance, a good night's sleep; or whether we were treated with proper respect; or the bad manners of the modern girl. In this new Present, of smoke, and terror, and hatred, and the Shadow of Death, those "important" things are so completely blotted from our horizon that we can hardly believe that we ever gave them a thought! Now, if a shutter bangs in a high wind and keeps us awake, instead of "fussing"

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we think of quiet, pleasant folk (the kind of people we are ourselves;) flung suddenly, neck and crop, out of their own houses to sleep as best they may under hedges or by roadsides. If a street car conductor isn't as polite as he might be, instead of resenting it, we think of a group of French prisoners, obliged to walk in front of their captors and, to the accompaniment of roars of German laughter, "kicked from behind," each step of the way. If our daughters don't behave as we did when we were their age, we think of girls, just as sweet and silly and pretty as our girls, put into cattle cars and taken off to work for the Germans on war-devastated fields (or to wish that they might have been given such work—or death!). Yes, we have to admit, that there was a time in America when intelligent women were troubled if a new dress wrinkled between the shoulders, or if there was not enough butter in the mashed potatoes! . . . Over here, where there are very few new dresses and practically no butter for the potatoes, we don't like to remember that time.

The fact is, so far have we traveled from those little days of "fussing," that we have reached, many

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of us, a foothill of the Delectable Mountains, the name of which is Shame.

In other words, little things and big things have "waltzed round," and we have developed a sense of proportion which is bringing with it a knowledge of *Values*. I don't mean of *cost*; I judge from letters from my native land that most Americans have of late acquired a pretty practical knowledge of the *cost* of a good many things! But whether we have been instructed as to their *Values*, I have not been told.

Instruction came to me in a certain little town in southern France.

Girdled by the white serenities of the Alps, its stucco houses with blue shutters bask sleepily in the silence of streets through which come, sometimes, ox-teams, bringing loads of wood to be burned in fireplaces so constructed that most of the heat goes up the chimney. Once in a while, a Red Cross ambulance (with a girl driver) comes honking along; or a United States band marches by tooting and banging, escorting boys in khaki—here on their precious leave of eight days—up to the Y. M. C. A. Relief Post. When this martial sound wakes the somno-

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lence of the streets all the little girls in clacking wooden shoes, and all the little boys, barelegged and black-aproned, run out to see "*les Americains.*" But most of the time the place is silent. I sat down on a bench in the sunshine and looked at three French soldiers who were also enjoying the March warmth; (one had crutches beside him, the head of one was wrapped in swathes of white linen—I could not see his eyes; the third was sunken and bent, as if he tried not to pull on some unseen, slowly healing wound). As I sat there in the sun, and watched the silent men opposite me, I fell to thinking how patient they were; and that made me think of the patience of the French people and how little complaint there is among them—over things about which we "fuss" at home; and I said to myself that, in more than fifty blessed years of peace, we have, as a nation, so educated ourselves in comfort, that complaints about discomfort are quite the ordinary thing with us.

"We kick," said Edith.

But the things at which the French people *don't* kick! . . . The absence of bathtubs, for instance.

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"They don't mind if they haven't a bathtub with hot and cold running water!"

"That's because they are not as clean a people as we are."

"Perhaps," some one suggested darkly, "we are *too* clean?"

"No," said the brutally candid member of the A. A. S., "we are just too darned particular; that's the trouble with us! We don't like to get along without things. You'd think, to hear us talk about plumbing, at home, that cleanliness *was* godliness, whereas it's only next door."

"Oh, well, *we* wouldn't talk plumbing either, with an earthquake going on," some one defended America.

But some one else, who knew France well, long before the earthquake, denied the inference that it was the war which had created this indifference to plumbing. "It has always been so. They don't mind inconvenience. Except in regard to food, the French are not nearly as particular as we are; and they do without luxuries in a way that would terrify the American of average means."

One sees this "doing without" on all sides. There is a little street here, paved with egg-shaped cob-

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blestones (placed with the small end up!—you can imagine how comfortable that is for high heels!) where I came upon two women washing clothes in the bowl of a fountain set in an old, old wall. From the time-worn stone mouths of two lions came jets of water, one sparkling clear and cold, the other steaming hot—“*De l'eau naturelle, Madame,*” one of the women said, looking up from the scouring and pounding of her linen, and drawing a puckery wet finger across her sweating forehead. I stood and watched them for a few minutes—little robust women, wringing out their linen with arms that would have done credit to a blacksmith. “How *can* they endure the inconvenience of bringing their washing out of their own houses?” I said to myself. “And think of carting that great basket of wet clothes (and there is nothing heavier than wet linen!) back to a clothes-line, or a green hillside, a quarter of a mile away!”

At home, running water and stationary tubs would have been, in a town of this size, as much a matter of course to a laundress as soap and water. Yet I am compelled to add that very few of us, doing our washing in our own way, are as

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powerful, clear-skinned, calm-eyed, as these elderly *blanchisseuses* (they couldn't have been much under seventy) scrubbing and pounding their linen in the old Roman basin on that silent, sunny, sleepy street.

But these are working women, and so perhaps they are used to hardships. How about women who don't toil with their bodies?

A French friend told me, when I expressed a little surprise at being obliged to sit up all night on a railroad train because the few *couchettes* there were, had all been taken, that in France the woman in what is called 'comfortable circumstances' *expects* to sit up all night, instead of paying for the luxury of a *courette*! Children here run about in January, their bare legs purple with cold above their short stockings. Such things are taken for granted.

Consider the things which many of us take for granted: furnace heat, telephone service, a light over the bed for late reading, a warm room in which to dress in winter, a cool breeze from an electric fan in summer, running water on every floor, hot baths (no matter if there is an earthquake!). These things, which are matters of course to many Americans, are considered over here extreme, unusual, and

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entirely unnecessary luxuries. Well enough for the foolish and idle rich,—such folks depend upon luxuries! But for people like you and me—just ordinary, intelligent, good citizens—luxuries have been non-existent. This “doing without” is connected, no doubt, with French penuriousness, which is the outgrowth of their thrift—(one of our boys called it ‘cussed meanness’); but as a result of the physical hardship which thrift has engendered, the French people, now that the earthquake has come, are enduring hardships in a way which makes Americans ask themselves a certain question:

Is it possible that there is some connection between national discomfort and national character?

If we say there is, we must believe that the French nation, which just now is standing, not only for its own life, but for civilization, has been helped to stand, because it has been educated to endure. It has not weakened its moral or physical fiber by “fussing” over the relatively unimportant. When we recognize that we can, perhaps, see a hope in our own gradually increasing discomfort at home; I shouldn’t wonder if we would even (remembering France) come to accept discomforts—privations—

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sacrifices—with real enthusiasm! A recognition of what privation can accomplish in developing character, may be the gift of which suffering Europe is sending to America.

I don't mean that to recognize the value of privation, we must forswear our bathtubs, or deliberately sit up all night in sleeping cars, or do without telephones; of course such self-sacrifice would not only be artificial, but absurd. I only mean that we may acquire an idea of their value in relation to life. And we won't "fuss" if we can't have them! Judging from the way things look now, we Americans will "join the dance" of renunciation, not because we want to, but because we have to; and as a result, living will be simpler. And apart from the material changes which the war will bring about, spiritual changes are inevitable. No man or woman whose heart now is with some soldier in France, can,—at any rate immediately—drop back when he returns (or does not return) into the old pettiness of complaint at personal inconveniences.

A French girl brought home to me this lesson of values in a story she told me. She was such a pretty girl! She said what she had to say in a very matter-

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of-fact way; "preaching" was the last thing she thought of. All the same it was a sermon. . . .

It appears that she and her husband were at their place in the country when the war broke out and the call for mobilization came.

"It was a so-small place, Madame," she said, "and every one knew *mon mari* must go. And when I went to market that morning, many spoke kindly to me. Me,—I did not think he would ever come back. . . . I did not say so, yet every one seemed to know; and so they spoke kindly to me. And in the market was an old woman; she, too, knew my Gustave was to depart. And she gave me my *légumes*. Then she put her hand on my shoulder—she was but a poor old countrywoman, and of an ignorance, no doubt. I am told that in Northern America no one is ignorant?" (I gasped, but let the statement pass.) "In France, many of us are *sans éducation*; but she was of great wisdom, *cette vieille femme*, though without reading. She said to me: '*Mon enfant! ton mari part? Souviens-toi: You will not cry until he has gone. Then, you may weep.*' So, Madame," she ended simply, "I waited to weep." She told me of Gustave's departure: "I went to the *gare de départ*

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with him, and I put on my best clothes. My hat of white silk—my new best hat, I put on; a thing I would not do for a so-dusty railroad station! I put it on, Madame, because I did not expect to see him again. So I put on my *chapeau de soie blanche*, because, I said, ‘The last time he sees me I will be pretty.’”

She was so pretty as she told me this, so white and work-worn and quite lovely, with her little girl leaning against her knee—and, when she thought I was not looking, putting shy arms about her mother’s neck. (It is almost four years since the day that the white silk hat was worn to the so-dusty railroad station, and the husband and father has seen his Treasures many times, and he is still well and serving France; but I don’t believe he has seen her weep yet. And I am pretty sure he hasn’t seen any new white silk hats either!)

It was the end of her little brave story, however, that set me thinking about the relative values of things. She told me of the breaking up of the small household after he had gone. . . . I could guess how she did it; how, as she packed and sorted and folded her pretty dresses—and put twists of tissue paper

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around the white silk hat in the big hat box,—she was saying to herself over and over: “He was alive day before yesterday, but is he alive now?” And again: “If anything had happened since I got his letter on Thursday, I should have heard by to-day; and no notice has come to me!” I could imagine how, in all the confusion and hurry, she would stop, and give a shrinking glance down the street, for fear that “notice” was coming. Then stop again, to kiss her baby, and try to make its milky lips bubble baby-talk about “Papa!” Or, perhaps, even leave the open trunks, to run across the street to the church to buy a candle for the altar of St. Joseph, before which she would fall on her knees and pray: “*Keep him safe to-day!*”

“*Oui, Madame,*” she said, her little fingers twisting together until the knuckles were white, “*Je me souviens, how we had togezzer, mon mari et moi, acheté toutes les meubles—foorniteur, you would say in American? Ah, my anglais is var’ bad.*”

I assured her that it was better than my French; and the fact that her eyes were full of tears made no difference in her pretty, protesting French politeness: “*Non, non, Madame’s French is of a qual-*

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ity!" (It is—she was quite right!) Her eyes smiled as she spoke of the furniture "he" and she had bought together,—with all sorts of droll and happy economies, of course! All of us Americans who have been fortunate enough to marry on nothing very much a year, and been poor, and less poor, and then, perhaps, after a good long time, "comfortably off," *together*, will know how much happiness slowly acquired furniture, stands for.

"We bought *nos meubles* togezzer. We had to save mooch to buy them. And I was most happy, Madame, wiz my leetle t'ings. I t'ought ver' mooch of my t'ings. I loffed ze *chaise*, ze *table*. Does Madame understand? *Eh bien!* Now, of zem I t'ink nozzing! I t'ink of him, of his life. *Will he come back to me?* Oh, Madame, what matter ze chair, ze table? Just his life!"

In France, now, all the women's hearts are saying: "His life! His life!" Let the chair and the table go (chop them up for firewood!) They are of no consequence! Just "his" life, that is all the women want. I wonder if they remember days of "fuss" about ze chair and ze table? Even about the white silk hat? Instead, I think, they say to themselves

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that Life is more than meat and the body than raiment, and that more than Life (which is Love), and more than the body (which is physical well-being), is the idealism which makes men and women willing to lose both for Righteousness' sake! Of course, we have all known that the things of the spirit are priceless, when individually we have—as our slangy young people say—“come up against it.” I remember hearing a woman whose heart was squeezed dry with fear because her husband was ill, say: “Oh, what does it matter if my front door steps are *not* painted!” But she had to “come up against it,” before she acquired this knowledge. Over here everybody is up “against it,” and nobody thinks of door steps. But we Americans, in our placid living, in which revealing moments of fear have been personal experiences, have not as a country eliminated the front steps. I doubt if anybody on our side of the Atlantic realizes what it means to have the entire people, of an entire nation, *fear* the same thing, at the same time, and all the time! To have, practically, everybody realize the unimportance of the unpainted steps. To have them see how the big things and the little things have changed their places in the

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“waltz.” And with that, to see how glorious the “little” things are. . . . I am going to tell you of two very little glorious things.

The first is the story of an elderly Y. M. C. A. worker (I shall not ask his permission to tell the story because I know he would not give it). This “little” thing happened at the Front—I suppose I must not say where. He was the only Y. M. C. A. man with a certain Division, the work of which was done entirely at night; during the day the men rested as best they could in what was left of a little village, or in their dugouts. I say “as best they could,” because they were under terrible and continuous shell-fire. Somebody who happened to count the explosions, reports that two thousand eight hundred shells fell within their lines in one hour and a quarter; six had struck the Y. M. C. A. hut. This worker, and some soldiers, had taken shelter in the cellar of the ruined building. Toward evening the shelling ceased, and Mr. Taylor thought he would make some chocolate for the bored and nerve-wracked men huddling there with him in the cellar. So he crept out into the blessed evening stillness; he had to get the milk—which had been left in one of the dug-

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outs—and then start his fire; this he could do by picking up splinters from what had once been the rafters of little houses. The fire burning, Mr. Taylor went into the deserted dugout for milk.

He did not know it, but a gas bomb had exploded at the entrance and the place was full of deadly fumes which, as he entered, seized him by the throat and flung him down, gasping and choking and smothering. For a few minutes he lay there, then, as consciousness returned, slowly, painfully, with dreadful struggles for breath, he got that jug of milk, and crawled back a little distance. I wonder if I had better tell of the next half-hour? The prolonged vomiting, which results from this particular expression of German hideousness, the vomiting of blood. . . . No! I won't go into that. Mr. Taylor, himself, treated it as a very little thing. I will only say that he "pulled himself together," which is his casual way of expressing a magnificent endurance of pain—pulled himself together, got on his feet, collected some more splinters, rebuilt his fire,—and from eight that night until four the next morning when they carried him off on a stretcher that Y. M. C. A. man did his

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“damnedest” (as a Y. M. C. A. expression, this gives me peculiar pleasure) in making his boys comfortable.

Now comes the “little” thing which is really so big: There was one of our men who had been standing, I am afraid to say how long, in a trench up to his knees in mud; the noise, the strain, the dirt, the smell, the spiritual misery, had been just a little too much for him. The balance of a rather highly strung mind dipped the wrong way. He decided that he would not return to the firing line—“I had my revolver with me,” he said afterwards, significantly. But when the hour for his return sounded, the revolver was not used! Why? Because the “little” thing had happened. This kind, brave, elderly gentleman had seen the strain in the young eyes, and had taken the boy and washed him,—lots of good hot water and soap! Then clean clothes (Mr. Taylor’s own extra clothes!). Then chocolate and cigarettes. And through it all, friendly “jollying.” And back the soldier boy went, “as steady as a clock!”

“It was the washing that did it,” somebody said.

I think the cup of hot chocolate helped; when

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you come to think of it, the "cup of cold water" is a little thing, too. Incidentally, I can't help saying that I don't see how the American people, knowing things like this, can refrain from getting up early in the morning and "doing *their* damndest" to help the Y. M. C. A.!

My second story of a great little thing was told to me in Paris. There is a street there which creeps along in the shadow of St. Pierre du Gros Caillou. There are many small huddling shops in this street. Outside their doors, blackbirds whistle in wicker cages, and on the narrow pavements are women with netted bags, bargaining anxiously for vegetables. A blank wall breaks a row of these little shops, a wall with a door in it, a furtive weather-stained door with hinges crumbling into rust. You don't notice this door until it swings open, and you step down—into a garden! An old, old garden, mossy and green and still. There is a rustle of birds' wings in the ivy which covers the trunk of one of the great trees, and year after year, in untended friendliness, lilies and irises grow wherever they please. Enclosing the garden, on four sides, are tall dilapidated houses. Nestling against the back

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of one of them is a "so-little *maison*," in which for two years wise, gentle hands have cared for the unimportant miseries of the war. Here come, to be comforted (not by gifts but by work), small, timid people. Old women, little children, delicate girls, whom the roar of the storm has dazed and deafened.

Just little lives, torn from niches of peaceful labor and hurled into a din of fears and griefs, dashed from their contents into hunger and cold. These little lives do not speak;—who, in the uproar would hear them if they did? So, but for this green garden, and the pitying souls who walk in it—not only in the cool of the day, but all day—and who offer in the "*petite maison*" the dole of sewing, these unimportant lives would have ceased altogether. In an upper room of the little house is a sad-eyed refugee from Arras. She had been a most successful dressmaker. She had made her living and a comfortable fortune besides, and had retired from business. Then suddenly she was pulled from her house as one might drag a dog from his kennel, and turned out into the world, without money, without a shelter, and without a business. Somehow or other, with all sorts of privations and terrors, she man-

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aged to reach Paris, and once there, found refuge in the house in the garden. It is she, acting as forewoman under the direction of Mlle. Guilhou who founded the work, who gives out sewing to this group of pitiful people. Sewing, which not only keeps their bodies alive but keeps their minds steady in the crash of their world of toil—their cheerful world of whistling blackbirds, and little girls in clicking wooden shoes, and bare-legged little boys in black aprons. . . . How would Adam and Eve have felt, if the flaming sword had been sheathed and they could have stepped back into Paradise? So, I think, must this haggard refugee from Arras feel, in the Petit Ouvroir du Gros Caillou; and the old women, and the children, and the sickly girls (tuberculosis is raging among them) who sit by the windows in the sunshine, stitching, stitching, to earn their few francs a day! Sometimes lift their heads to look out at the lilies and irises and stay their needles, while they listen to the stir of birds' wings in the ivy. And the forewoman, teaching them to do very beautiful embroidery (there still are people who, for Mercy's sake, will buy costly embroidery), the refugee from Arras, touches the silks and satins with

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an artist's appreciative fingers and thanks the Bon Dieu and Mlle. Guilhou for safety and sanity. "It's up to people at home to keep the Pebble rolling," an American said.

You see it is nothing but a tiny, modest, heavenly "Helping"; a very "little" thing. The hearts which do it (two are American, one is French) need no red tape to bind them to their task. It was in this small house that I heard a story of the Spirit, which discerns *Values*. Mrs. Henry Conkling, one of the two Americans told it to me . . .

There was a certain old woman—husband dead long ago; daughter dead, war-stunned and crushed; son dead, war-devoured—who was going steadily, patiently, without complaint, down-hill.

"She'll die," said the doctor briefly.

"*Naturellement!* she has nothing for which to live," said the understanding French heart, which used to come every day to the weary bedside in the little so-dark room on the sixth floor. "Nothing to live for"; of course she would die.

"Is there anything you would like to have?" the American asked anxiously.

"*Oh, oui, ma bonne dame, mais c'est impossible.*"

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"Perhaps it isn't. Tell me what it is?"

"*Non, non, c'est impossible!*"

"But tell me: perhaps I can get it for you?" She was thinking—this unscientific person!—of some delicacy, some luxury, and with the same divine extravagance which broke the alabaster box instead of doing something efficient and practical, she meant to produce that luxury for the dying woman, *somehow!* ("Just a little pleasantness before she died, you know," she excused herself.)

"What is it, *ma vielle amie*? Tell me," she urged.

"It is, my good lady, to go to *la cimetière*."

"*What!*"

"*Oui*. To see before I die the graves of *mes enfants*, and to say there a prayer."

The American got her breath and remonstrated gently: "But you are sick in bed! You have not the strength to walk down-stairs. And the weather is so bad now, so cold and damp! To go out to the cemetery would be too much for you." In her own mind she was saying, "Poor dear, you will, indeed, go to the cemetery very soon." But the old woman feebly insisted: Oh, yes, she was *able* to go, but it was, of course, impossible. She turned

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her gray head wearily, from side to side, and said again patiently, "*Oh, oui; c'est impossible.*"

Of course it was, for the cemetery was in the war zone; and it was all wrong, too, according to organized charity, which probably must recognize value in terms of cost; for just think of the expense of hiring a taxi for the long trip out to the suburbs of Paris! But, wrong or not, after infinite difficulties in getting a permit from the War Office, it was done! On a cold, slushy All Saints' Day, surrounded by hot water bottles, the trip was taken. The failing steps were guided to the two graves, for which the American had provided some flowers; then the two women knelt together in the snow, and one of them said her own prayer for the Soul of France. When the old mother, still on her knees, had arranged the flowers all over again—for the boy must have a rose, and the girl must have a lily—she got on to her shaking feet. Then some one happened to say,—the taxi driver I think it was,—*La bas*, those crosses mark the graves of our brave allies, some English soldiers." At which the old Frenchwoman raised her head and her eyes shone:

"I go to pray at those graves!"

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Behold her then, her skirts soaking wet, her poor shoes sodden with snow (rubbers are one of the luxuries that even well-to-do French people don't "fuss" about); supported by the kind taxi driver on one side, and the American who knows values and doesn't think of costs, on the other, toiling and tottering across the snow to those lonely graves, "to pray there!"

The postscript to this story is either humorous or mystical as you may happen to look at it. The failing, patiently dying old mother, supplied with something happy to think of—the achievement of that act of parental piety—recovered! She lived two years, stayed and comforted all the while by those gentle hands which have built up "The Little Work of the Big Pebble." I wonder whether that "Pebble"—that "Rock" upon which the Church was to be built—is not just this simple business of being kind? "Feed my lambs" sounds like it. So, at any rate, this hungry soul was fed with the things of the Spirit. . . . There was another "little" thing that happened here. This, too, is the story of an elderly, forlorn woman. One day—a dark, snowy day—a certain American girl who has been working among

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the very poor in Paris, met this old woman, shivering along the street. She was over seventy; she was sick, and cold, and frightened; "for," she said, "*qu'est-ce que je peux faire?* I have no coal, and to stand in the line, at the dealer's, with my pail, and wait my turn, it is to die." So she was tottering off, back to her freezing niche, "to die" without any coal. Then happened one of the things that probably can't happen in large organized relief work. This girl of ours took the pail from the shaking old hands, and went to the coal dealer's, and stood in the line, stood in the rain and snow of the dark winter afternoon; stood, and stood, and finally got her pail filled. Then back she went, across the boulevard (taxis don't flock in this part of Paris) down into the Quarter, through the twisting, narrow streets, up countless stairs, to the garret, and the old, cold woman, who had come back, patiently, to die. "And," said Mlle. Guilhou, "when Mme. B. saw 'er, se taut se wass an an-gel!"

I seem to have gone very far away from my soldiers sitting in the March sunshine; but I am coming back to them, or rather to what they and "*ze chaise and ze table,*" and the soap and water and hot

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chocolate, and the Little Work of the Big Pebble, stand for: *the recognition of values*. The French nation—soldiers and young housekeepers and old mothers—knowing Values, has *endured*.

Are we going to endure?

I haven't the slightest doubt of it! Only, looking back now from France, at American comfort and character, it does not seem to me as if we have quite wakened up yet to the full meaning of that word "endurance." We have risen to the world demand upon us splendidly. (I think we can afford, privately, just between ourselves, to say that to each other; because we know it isn't just the boasting of which our allies with cynical good nature accuse us.) We are not boasting, we are stating facts, we really *are* meeting the situation! But all the same, compared to the French, we were, when we went into the war, *soft*, and therefore we have got to think out carefully all to which that word "*endurance*" commits us. It commits us, first, to a knowledge of values, to the ability to discriminate between the unimportant and the important. . . . It will make us admit that, as a people, we have had no education in discomfort. To be sure, we are getting it now,—

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but compared to France, in mighty easy lessons!

As we learn our lessons, I think we are going to say, humbly, that we have been spoiled. Then we shall ask ourselves how we can most quickly recover from that spoiling. Of course, every individual will make a personal answer; but we shall agree that, collectively, we Americans have got to eliminate fuss about inconveniences. It might help us to do this, if we said over to ourselves every day: "We are face to face with the most extraordinary opportunity that has ever confronted a nation—the opportunity to save the world."

Does this sound like more American brag? It is not; I could almost find it in my heart to wish that it were! But I beg you to believe that it is not. It is the terrible truth. Let us face it. Here it is, March, 1918: Germany has got her second wind; England, France, Italy (for Russia is out of it) are winded. Unless America comes with ships, with food, with men, with ammunition, with sacrifice of the superfluous, with endured hardship, with spiritual suffering, with solemn readiness to give up whatever is most precious to us, unless we can do this, all that is worth living for will be lost. We shall

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be a conquered people. Can Americans bear that word?

We shall have to bear it, unless we realize that if we do not save others, we cannot save ourselves. Realize that unless we stand shoulder to shoulder with England and France, America will be an enslaved nation. A *subject* people! Freedom will perish from the earth. Civilization will go under.

America must save the world!

VII

"MARCHING GAYLY"

IT was raining, and the mud on a road torn and plowed by the constant passage of camions seemed to have no bottom. The shabby little Y. M. C. A. auto which was carrying some workers from one canteen to another, sank sometimes almost hub-deep into the ruts. The mist hung low over the meadows, and the Marne ran brim-full between its lush green banks—full to over-flowing, for in places the poplar trees stood waist deep in rushing brown water. Here and there, staked off in the deep grass of these wide, wonderful meadows, were little weather-stained racks—four poles caught together by thin strips of wood, or by slender branches to which the dead leaves were still clinging. At the head of each of these frail cradles was a cross—sometimes with a cap fastened to it and a small faded flag; sometimes, nailed to its extended arms, just a bit of board on which was written a name, or perhaps only a number.

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The shaky little enclosures looked in the mist like spiders' webs; but the graves themselves were jeweled with buttercups and pink-edged daisies and blue-fringed hyacinths—for so does nature forgive man's folly and hide it under her green mantle. It is almost four years ago now since that wonderful day on the Marne, when the Germans—no one but themselves know why!—suddenly crumpled up, rolled back, and fled, when they might, as far as the military situation was concerned, have marched right straight on to Paris!

“Why didn't they?” I pondered. “What happened?”

A very lovely French woman, looking at me with mystical blue eyes, answered:

“God, Madame.”

God happened!

Four springs have come since that happening, and now the fields of the Marne are all green and gracious again and the low-lying graves are thick with self-sown flowers.

The Americans in the little shabby auto jolting and lurching through the mud, the rain driving into their faces, felt the wonder of nature's mercy and

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the slightness of man's folly, compared to the flood of years; and as they spoke of it, suddenly the car came to a full stop. A company of American soldiers came plodding along the road on their way to the cemetery; an American to be buried—an American who had given his life for France! Of course his fellow-Americans in the car got out and plodded along, too, behind the soldiers through the mud.

They stood there, in the pouring rain, while our boy was lowered into that wet grave and the last salute was fired over his body and taps were sounded. Then they went back to get into the muddy auto with its rusty wheel guards and cracked windshield; it was then that something “happened.” . . . The dark gates of this whole horrible business of War opened, and, for an instant they saw a vision of its meaning. Toiling through the mud on his way to the cemetery which they had just left, was a French boy about ten years old. He was bearing on his back and across his shoulders a great wooden cross. It was some six feet long, and the little lad was bending and swaying, staggering even, under its weight. He was, he said, carrying it to the cemetery to put it on the grave of the American, buried there

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in the rain—the American who had died for France! . . . So also did Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, carry a cross for One who gave His life for the whole world! . . . The symbolism of the little burdened French boy was the gleam of ineffable light upon the darkness in which we all walk to-day! It is worth while—it is surely worth while for the United States to carry the Cross—worth while for us to add the graves of our sons and lovers to those little cradling enclosures of sticks and branches in the green meadows of France. . . .

Our boys walk in these occasional processions, gravely; but not, I think, with depression. Indeed, it is very wonderful and stirring to me to see the undepressed way in which American soldiers take the seriousness of the whole situation.

“I don’t fool myself,” one man said. “This is no ‘Come, Fido, good Fido!’ business. Maybe I won’t ever see America again. But this job has got to be done, and I’m damned glad to be here to help do it. It’s a lot better than being all fed up with comfort at home.” Which is just a shy boy’s way of saying what a great, serene philosopher has said:

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'Tis man's perdition to be safe
When for the Truth he ought to die!

When a soldier “is damned glad to be here,” surely, again, “God happens!”

I have always been fairly appreciative of my native land, I think, though not quite blind to her faults; but now, as she reveals herself to me in these men—physically, mentally, and spiritually—I confess I cannot see many faults! They are an extraordinarily fine set. Big, well-set-up, clear-skinned youngsters! Such broad shoulders, such good teeth, which a tendency to wide grins very freely reveal! Such obstinate chins and such frank, gay eyes, which hold in their honest depths a very marked and serious intelligence. Compared with the soldiers of our allies, I am compelled, with all my admiration for the poilus and the Tommies, to say that many of our men look like a lot of college graduates! And their *talk!*—in spite of the slang, much of which is a dead language to me—their talk bears out the intelligence in their faces. They know what they are doing, and why they are doing it, and how it must be done. What they are doing is to smash a snake's head; why they are doing it is to make the world a decent place for

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the kids to live in; and the way they are doing it is by feeling their own unity; feeling, not that they are Texans, or New Yorkers, or Georgians—those geographical facts are merely incidental. They feel that they are *Americans!*

And here, for us personally, is another gleam of light: this war ought to make our Nation a unit. In the past she has been, because of our open gates, a polyglot. We shall be a People, when, in doing our part to smash the snake's head, we have "made the world a safe place for the kids to live in." Our men know this in the most extraordinarily intelligent way; and they look forward even further than to our own unity—they have a vision of an allied unity. "Rotten thing, this speaking different languages. After the scrimmage, we'll all talk the same lingo. English for mine."

"Gosh, how can I tell how many of these cart wheels make a franc? Well, when we get through skinning Germany, the Allies must fix up a currency of their own. Fool business to have so many different currencies. The French have some sense,—like us,—with their decimals; but English money is the limit!" "Why don't they have decent plumbing

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in their towns? This war is a nickel-plated sunbeam compared with French sanitation and plumbing. You bet we'll teach France something when we get through teaching Germany her A B C's. But all the parts will have to be standardized; there's going to be a lot of standardization before we all settle down again." . . . Some of them go further than a common language and currency, and the standardization of plumbing; further even than commercial unity—they want a spiritual unity of the whole world.

“We can't have the devilish idiocy of war in the world. Of course, now we're in it we can only stop it by going on with it and winning it. But the idea of a lot of silly-billy kings and queens and emperors dragging us Americans over here to settle their hash! I've got a wife in Los Angeles, and our baby's four months old—and *me*, here! No, sir! You bet the nations over here have got to put crowns in the junk heap (we'll knock off Germany's tile, to start with); and get down to business, and make themselves a lot of States! Just like us. A *world* United States,” one man said thoughtfully.

Talk like this one hears every day when handing

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chocolate over the counter, or trying to be quite firm in refusing to sell more than one package of Fatimas to a man. It takes fortitude to be firm with them—these wheedling, droll, determined men of ours! And for my part I'd rather be court-martialed than try and work off Bull Durham on a boy who wants Fatimas. Sylvia is made of sterner stuff; she has to stand on a stool behind the counter to get on a level with the mocking, coaxing eyes, but she says firmly, "No! Quite impossible. The Y. M. C. A. only lets me sell one package to a man. Very sorry." So she hands out the one package, and the boy meekly departs; a minute later another boy comes along and asks for Fatimas. "I believe that man with his arm in a sling sent you in?" Sylvia says doubtfully. "Oh, no, ma'am, not Johnny; smoking's bad for a busted arm, you know," he protests, grinning. And this small, law-abiding, soft-hearted Sylvia gives the Fatimas to the new-comer, and says in a delighted whisper to me, "Johnny sent this one in! I knew he would!"

"You do beat the devil," the messenger says admiringly. And he goes off to give the first man his unallowed package. (Sylvia says this isn't fair to

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the boys; “they *never* do that—except once in a while.” She insists that I take back my calumny.)

But the mischievousness of our boys is built up on a foundation of almost terrible earnestness. You feel this steely earnestness, this unrelenting and intelligent purpose, in all their talk—for whether the talk is educated or uneducated, it is, practically *always*, intelligent. And in its shy, clumsy, slangy way it is often very subtly religious. . . . It very rarely refers to creeds or churches, but it sometimes refers to God—and that is why they are so merry: inarticulately they know their purpose is holy, so it doesn't need talking about! And for the rest, God has a sense of humor. More than once, listening to them, I have thought of Chesterton's

The men of the East may watch the skies,
And the times and seasons mark,
But those that are signed with the cross of Christ
Go gayly into the dark!

So don't let us scold them for their roughness or their lack of religious expression, or their smoking (I fear a lot of old ladies at home are doing that!), or their foolish and sometimes evil skylarking; for with it all they are marching into the darkness, so

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that gentleness and friendliness, as well as the austerer virtues may not perish from the earth. Of course they *will* perish from the earth, if Germany wins this war. Could gentleness and decency persist if the world should be dominated by a people who are capable of doing something the Germans did, not long ago, in northern France? (I may say that this story is vouched for by the Abbé Dimnet, a man whose name carries weight in England and America, as well as in France. He told me the story himself—it came to him, from a soldier, who saw the whole happening):

A French company came upon a lonely house by a country road; I know just the kind of house—gray with years, its thatched roof, mossy-green and lichen-stained, pulled down over its small windows, and with carnations and pansies and wallflowers pressing their velvet faces close against its crumbling old foundations. There was a vegetable garden behind it, surrounded by the customary jealous wall—one of those French enclosures that seem to shut the family in, and the world out. The French soldiers, coming suddenly upon this lonely house, were able to capture two Germans who were standing in its little door-

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way. As they took the men's weapons and made them prisoners, they heard a faint moaning from behind the wall; the officer stepped back into the garden and found lying on the ground a woman with one breast hacked off.

“Did *they* do it?” the captain said between clenched teeth. She nodded: “*Oui, oui.*”

The officer went back to the prisoners: there was only the delay of standing the first one against the wall—and he was shot.

“The other!” said the captain.

But this man, cringing with terror, had an inspiration of self-defense. “No! No! It was not fair to shoot him! There were franc-tireurs in the house—let M. le Capitaine see for himself! We had the right to protect ourselves against franc-tireurs!” he said, ashen with fear. The officer paused, grimly, long enough to substantiate the charge—plainly an after-thought, for the dead man on the ground had offered no such excuse. He signalled to his firing squad to wait, and went into the house.

He found there a seven-year-old child, and a gun.

I do not know whether the mother had tried to use the gun—perhaps she had tried, though it seems un-

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likely. Or perhaps the seven-year-old child had tried to use it. If so, the laws of war would have permitted the punishment of death; but only the laws of hell would have justified the reprisal of cutting off the mother's breast!

This is not one of those occasional acts of brutishness common to all armies, of all nations. It is only one of hundreds and thousands of brutish acts, certainly committed by German soldiers, probably condoned; possibly ordered, by German officers. That is why our men say soberly, "Germany has to be smashed—for the sake of the kids!"

Yes, the world has got to be made safe for the next generation. . . . God must "happen!"

"For suttently," said a soft Virginia voice, "the Germans *are* the limit." And because they recognize that fact American men go gayly into the dark! Which reminds me of a story, told in a canteen very near the front:

We were in a Y. M. C. A. hut, sitting on narrow little benches beside oilcloth-covered tables; the soldiers were smoking, and writing letters, and playing cards; and at the back of the hut the most terrible music machine you ever heard was grinding out

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“Beautiful Lady.” “Let’s tell stories,” somebody suggested, and everybody was obliged to take their turn,—which was very terrifying to the American Author’s Service.

“I won’t!” said Edith and the Small Person. But they both did, and very good stories they told, too. Then a man in uniform got up—and told this story: “There were once three men who put up a watch as a prize to the man who should tell the biggest lie. The first man told his lie, and it was a darned good lie. Then the second man came along, and believe *me!* he worked off some lie! Say, it was a masterpiece. He thought he’d got the watch, sure. Then the third man got up, and he said, ‘*Once upon a time, there was a German gentleman—*’ ‘*Stop!*’ all the others yelled. ‘You get the watch!’”

The American soldier may put his detestation of German degeneracy into yarns like this, but knowledge of the depth of that degeneracy is the thing that pushes him on in his hilarious, inflexible, righteous purpose to “save the world!” Of course America is only doing what France and England and Italy have done; but it is a great thing to know that our men, who are not here for material gain, but who have

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come, first to defend America from the invasion which would follow a German victory in Europe, and next from pure idealism—it is a great thing to know that our soldiers see, in the uniting of the Allies to crush the Abominable Thing, the Dawn of the Federation of the World! It doesn't matter how they express it; they may tell the few people who still believe in German Kultur, to "take the watch"; or they may only say that the allied victory will rid the nations of centimes and six-pences and lire. "We'll call 'em *all* dimes!" they say, and wink broadly at their own boastfulness; or they may declare that plumbing and electric fixtures and auto parts will have an international standardization. But in their brave young hearts, in their practical young heads, they know it means the "world standardization" of decency and mercy and honor.

"No more 'scraps of paper' when we get through wiping the floor up with Germany. God knows, she's made it dirty enough!"

Then they told us, this particular group of men, some stories of Germany's "dirtiness," that I won't repeat. The moaning woman behind the gray stone wall of the vegetable garden is all I can bear.

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Perhaps people at home wonder why such stories are told, anyhow. They are terrible and painful, so why repeat them? For a very simple reason: To the people in America the European war is not and cannot be quite real. You have not felt the house shake under the concussion of exploding bombs; you have not seen the Grand Central Station in New York filled with old crying men and women, and with little scared, sobbing, hungry children, covered with the dirt of days and nights of unwashed travel; you have not seen dovelike nuns, mad, because German soldiers stripped them naked and made them wait on their mess table; you have not heard of an American boy dead in the trenches because his tongue had been cut out. And not having seen these things, how can you realize what it means to be invaded by Germany? Fortunately, our boys have realized it, and that is why they are ready to march “into the dark.”

While I am talking about our soldiers, I must tell you how keenly and drolly they are “sizing up” our Allies.

They have their own opinions of the French people! “They’re all right,” our men say, “but, gee,

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ain't they queer? Slow! Can you beat it? They take about an hour to do a thing we'd do in a minute!"

I heard two stories of what our men call "slowness." One was told me by an officer, the other by a private. The officer and I sat in a compartment in a railroad train, and wondered if four of our Allies who shared it with us, could possibly be induced to open a window; (I may add that they could not!) I cannot remember just what particular "slowness" had aroused my compatriot, but, after making sure that ours was a dead language to the other travelers, he said, "They're all tied up in double bow knots of red tape. *I don't know how they ever get things done! That's the wonder of their war (for it's *their* war, when all is said);—in spite of their slowness, and what we call inefficiency, they *arrive*. By God!" he said, with sudden passion, "how they *do* arrive! The splendor of them, the wonder of them!" Then he told his story: there had been a very heavy snow storm; (this was in the south of France, where any snow is a rare thing, and snow to this extent, unprecedented; so, as there were no facilities for removing it from the railroad tracks, transportation*

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was seriously blocked. Before morning broke upon the freight yard of the camp, everything was at a standstill,—switches choked, tracks piled with drifts, and trains *pour le ravitaillement*, held up far away from platforms and store houses. And the snow was still falling! The American General stationed there went to the French General to see what was to be done. The French officer said that as soon as it was dawn, he was ready to put a hundred men to work on clearing the tracks.

“But it will take,” he said, “the entire day.”

The American offered (I don't know anything about military etiquette, so I may be putting this all wrong!—it is only the fact, not the procedure, which I am trying to report); the American General offered his own men to do the work, and the French General agreed. At seven o'clock in the morning sixty Americans sprang at the job, and by ten A. M., the yards were entirely cleared, and traffic began again! . . . “Yet,” as my young officer told me, “they *do* arrive!”

The private's story showed the same puzzle in his mind. After all, though smartness is a mighty fine thing, “these here foreigners do saw wood! We,”

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said he, "were trying out one of our big guns. There was one of their generals there,—visiting our old Top; they was both out to see the show. And the French general, he says to our general, 'After she's fired, it takes about thirty-five minutes to get her ready for the next one,' he says, 'so let's you and me go out and get a drink between shoots.' (Well, of course, in their language I suppose they put it different. But the feller that heard it can speak their jaw, and he said that was the substance of it.) 'Come on,' says the French general, 'and it'll be on me.' But our general, he says, 'Keep your shirt on,' he says; 'I wouldn't have time to get a high ball down!' And he was right, for what do you know? She *fired*—and gee, we was on to her, cleanin' her up and gettin' her ready, quicker 'an you could spit! There she was,—askin' for more, right off. Well, ma'am, that French general, he says to our general, 'Monsur, you've got the goods! You've one on us. I hand it to you,' he says, bowin'. Well, he was a sport, that little man. I liked his looks. 'Course, he's slow, compared to any of our generals; but look here: *he's got the goods*. That's what I say about the French.

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They ain't in our class, of course, for get there; but they *do* get there. Now, what do you make of that?"

But if the American soldier "sizes up" our allies, with rather ruthless frankness, he also sizes himself up.

Somebody had the brilliant idea of trying to find out what his ethical code over here really is. Not what his creed is; as to belief, some American soldiers would consider a question about that an impertinence, and others would think it a stupidity; some, no doubt, would say, "Well, my folks are Presbyterians, or Catholics, or Baptists—guess you can put me down in their class." And some would say they hadn't any creed, and some would say, "Go chase yourself!" The evangelist who tried to get at the ethics of our men, asked just one laconic and penetrating question:

What do you think are the four worst things a soldier can do?"

The answers which were expected probably occur to us all. If women had been asked the question, how glibly most of us would have replied:

Unchastity
Intemperance

Profanity
Cruelty

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Two of these things are sins of the body. But our boys, "marching gayly," know in their clear and often creedless young minds that the body is not the most important thing; they know (but most of them couldn't put it into words to save their necks!) that it is the spirit which counts. So this is the list they made up of the *worst* things:

Cowardice
Selfishness

Stinginess
Big-head

It seems to me that, just as the "standardization" of plumbers' supplies is one of the steps towards the divine ideal of World Unity—so these simple words mean something divine, too, for they stand for spiritual virtues. To a great extent they include the bodily virtues, also. I suppose a really "unselfish" person will not be unchaste; intemperance is rooted in cowardice; and of course the stingy person is cruel; profanity, silly and offensive as it is, is also a form of big-head. But just see the directness of these slangy men of ours. The opposite of what is worst, is what is best: To be brave! To be kind! To be generous! To be humble! So "God happens," for these are the "best" things. In them is the Religion

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of Jesus, cleared of the swaddling-clothes of creeds, a Religion which rejoices as a strong man to run a race!

I tell this little incident because some timid and loving souls at home have confused creeds with conduct, conventions with righteousness, and things of the Spirit with stupidities of the body.

It has come to my knowledge that there are good people in America who are really *unhappy* because our boys smoke! If I had seen this in the funny column of a French newspaper, I should have supposed it was a joke. But it isn't a joke; it is a pathetic and unhumorous fact that there are still American men and women who find time in this rocking, reeling world to remonstrate with a man who is putting his life between them and Hell—about smoking! “Let me look at your fingers,” said one elderly American lady to a soldier. The boy, puzzled, spread out his big paw wonderingly. When she saw the yellow stain on the rough forefinger she sighed and shook her head, and told him he was “very naughty.” I don't know how the man kept his face straight, but he did; and he kept his temper, too, which is more than I can say for myself! No, our American soldiers are not

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angels; neither, I have noticed, are the people who stay at home and do the heavy looking-on and the criticizing. They are just plain, well-meaning men who know what is decent, and who believe that to "save the world for the kids" a soldier must be brave, and generous, and forget himself, and not be a "damned fool;" which is another way of saying, "no big-head in mine!" With this belief (you can call it a creed if you want to, though it is not the property of any one church) they march gayly, roughly, divinely, "into the dark!"

"Well—look at the poilus! I guess we're not the only pebbles on the beach!" somebody said.

True enough, we are not. And we cannot "look" at the men in blue too often or too reverently—for they have taught us many things in the way of courage, unselfishness, kindness, and simplicity of mind. One of the poilus the other day, with legs cut off at the hips, "marched" very gayly, in a child's little express wagon, turning the wheels with his hands, right across the Champs Élysées, threading his way through a stream of vehicles, asking nobody's favor or pity.

I have only seen their gayety dull, their courage

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flag, when the matter of their families' suffering comes home to them. I saw one such “flagging” in the hospital yesterday; this man had lost his sight and was sitting, leaning forward, his hands on his cane, his forehead on his hands; he was swaying back and forth. As I passed him I heard him say: “*Ma femme! Ma femme!*” He was in the “dark,” poor man, for all the rest of his life. . . .

But the French have faced “darkness” deeper than blindness, “darkness” into which “gayety” cannot enter, as it can into mere Death! Here is a “dark” story told me by Mme. Loyson, whose house, at 110 rue du Bac, Paris, is a home for any homeless, wounded, convalescent poilu she may happen to find. In this quiet, friendly, hospitable (not hospital) home of hers was a young French soldier who one day suddenly broke out into violent and terrible abuse of the Germans. He was a good-natured, light-hearted boy, who up to this time had displayed no particular resentment at the Boches; certainly no resentment at the personal injury he had received from their hands. “Wound? *Eh, bien!* that is of no importance. You give, you take. Me—I handed it back,” he said, grinning. So this outburst of rage

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was startling, Mme. Loyson said, and its intensity almost shocking. . . . It appears that something had been said about girls—perhaps about the pretty creatures coming and going along rue du Bac.

“I have cousins of their age,” he said.

It was then that his pale face grew darkly red. “We were brought up together,” he said; “but I don’t want to see them again, Madame, *ever!* *Non, non!* I could not bear it to see them again.”

“But why not?” she said.

“Because, Madame,—” He paused and looked away from her. “Our town was taken, as you know. The families of my uncles did not fly, as they should have done. They remained. Madame! *Les made-moiselles*, my cousins—are to be mothers. Their babies will have German fathers. No! My cousins, *si fraiches, si jolies!* . . . I cannot endure it—for them—that I should see them.”

There is another story of this same unwillingness to “see them.” . . . There came to Mme. Loyson’s house a silent, elderly man with gentle, tragic, hopeless eyes. I have seen his picture: it was a face of delicacy and suffering. But whatever the suffering was he kept it to himself. He used to sit out in the

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little garden behind the house in the sun, very silent and listless, not even reading or trying to do the fancy-work of one kind or another which Mme. Loyson has devised for restless, idle hands. Once he said laconically that he had “been a weaver in a factory in Rheims.”

Was he married?

“*Oui.*”

“And have you children?”

“*Non! Non! Mon Dieu, non!*”

His agitation was so marked that his friendly interlocutor knew she had touched a hidden wound. As she watched him, day after day, she saw that the wound was not healing. He sat brooding, brooding, brooding, his head hanging on his breast, his lips dumb.

“Shall I not see if I can bring Madame, your wife, to Paris to stay with you here?” Mme. Loyson urged gently.

His eyes brightened; but a minute afterward he shook his head. “*Ma femme est très simple*—she reads not, she writes not. How could she get to Paris? And—there is no money *chez moi*, for traveling.”

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Of course Mme. Loyson put her hand in her pocket! This elderly husband and wife should be together. "I'll send for her," she said cheerfully. "I'll get her for you!" This is the sort of *human* thing that the great organizations, busy with feeding all Poland, or arranging leave areas for the United States Army, really can't stop to attend to! But little un-red-taped, gentle helpings can. (By the way, we people at home might help in this particular Helping, for some of our own men will probably find their way to that friendly fireside. That's why I have mentioned Mme. Loyson's address.) The old weaving woman was brought to Paris to see the gradually failing husband, and with her coming he ceased to fail and began to get well. But before she came, he spoke: "*Ma femme*—is a hopefulness. She has always hope. Me—I have no hope. I desire not to have any hope. It would be far worse than death for me, Madame."

"Hope of what, Monsieur?" his hearer asked—puzzled by the words and the look in his face. Then he told her why he was afraid of hope.

He had a daughter—"ma petite fille," he called her, though she was eighteen. There had been a son,

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but he had died just before the war; so all they had left, he and his wife, was the girl, “*très jolie, très douce!* Of an intelligence, Madame.”

Mme. Loyson was silent.

“I had left them in Rheims—my wife and my little girl. I was with my company. . . . It was in the morning. My wife said to my little girl, ‘Run, *petite*, to the *pâtisserie* and bring us a loaf of bread.’ She gave *la petite* fifty centimes. *Ma fille*, she went. She ran, so gay! to the baker’s. Madame! Never—never, from that morning, have we seen her. She returned not. My wife waited for bread for *déjeuner*; she looked from the windows, she was of an impatience. She looked, but she saw not *ma fille*. She became of an anxiety. She hastened herself to the baker’s. *Ma fille* was not there! My wife was of a distraction. She searched—she searched! She ran—she asked. And it came *midi*—and some one said to her, ‘I saw Mademomoiselle—*en train* to go with some German soldiers; they were pulling her—they were carrying her.’ . . . They took her, Madame, my little girl, to the trenches. Never have I seen her, never has her mother seen her, since that morning when she went to buy bread for *déjeuner*.

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Ma femme ceases not to hope that she will return. *She* cares not how *la petite* come back. She desires only that she comes. *La mère* hopes, always. *Madame, je me suis trompé*: I do hope. I hope she is dead."

VIII

"WE'LL STAMP THE BEAST OUT"

THERE are all sorts of thoughts about the war in the minds of Americans in France, but there is one very clear thought, from which all the others spring. In it is rooted the *Purpose* that has taken the United States Army across the ocean. One of our soldiers summed up this basic thought to me the other day, in the Y. M. C. A. canteen at Aix-les-Bains. He was on one side of the counter and I was on the other; he was young, and I was old; he was smiling, and I—was not; he was entirely and instinctively confident in the outcome of the war, and so was I.

He said, briefly: "It's damned silly."

"What is silly?" I asked him.

"Not the fighting," he explained, grinning; "that's bully! I lap it up. Can't get enough of it! I mean the getting into such a mess in the first place. Why didn't we knock Germany's head off forty years ago,

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when she began to lay pipe for this sort of thing?"

"I suppose we trusted her," I excused the Allies.

He nodded; "Yes, we did. We were polite to a snake. We were a lot of Sunday-school children!—too confoundedly decent. That's why I say 'damned silly.' This whole business was unnecessary. I," he said, "have a wife and baby in America; and I was making a good living. Yet here I am, over in France! Of course there is nothing for it, *now*, but to stamp the beast out of existence—and we are going to do it. Our army is in the scrimmage to put Germany wise, and we'll stay here until she's licked out of her boots—believe *me!* It's only a question of sticking it out," he said joyously; "and you can bet on the United States for that. But when I think of Nelly and the Kid, and my real estate business in California (which has gone to pot), I say it's damned silly. But, gee, *I'm glad I'm here!*"

Damned silly. . . .

Not the fighting, but the necessity for fighting. As for the fighting, when there is a conflagration the work of the firemen is anything but silly! But who started the conflagration? What cow kicked over the lamp, and set the world on fire? Was it

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the German Emperor? If so, Europe was “silly,” because she permitted such an emperor to exist. Was it Militarism which gave the kick? Then Civilization was “silly,” because it fostered Militarism. Did comfortably stabled Nationalism upset the lamp of Patriotism? In that case Humanity was “silly.”

Our fighting men, who are helping to put the fire out, are asking themselves these questions, and choosing one or another of these causes as their “cow.” But regarded as “causes” of the effect, there isn’t much to choose between as to their foolishness. So, as my young man said, the war was inherently unnecessary—

But . . . “We’re going to stick it out.” And . . . “Gee, I’m glad I’m here!”

There is the whole situation: the Thought, and the Action springing from the thought, and the Joy of the action!

We human creatures make a leap forward when we recognize the humiliating irrationality which brought us to this pass. We Americans made a still greater leap forward when we determined to do our part in “putting Germany wise.” But the greatest gain for all of us—French, English, Italians,

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Americans—is when we can declare that we are grateful for the chance to die! Only by these three steps—which the Californian had so blithely taken—can humanity reach a height where the “silliness” of which Germany is the surpreme embodiment, shall be forever destroyed.

Of my soldier's choice of adjectives there cannot be two opinions; the elderly, anxious woman and the young, confident man were one as to the “damnable-ness” of the present state of things. . . . We agreed that it was due to the failure—up to July, 1914—of the civilized world to recognize the significance of the German mentality; we had been polite to a snake. We agreed, also, he and I, in the certainty that American soldiers would “stick it out;” and also in being profoundly glad that the United States is in the “scrimmage.”

But it seems to me, as I listen to French and English and American opinions about the World Fire, that my soldier's realization of its original “unnecessariness” is growing, in the minds of all fighting men—and what that realization may mean when applied to Democracy, is full of hope for the allied nations. Some say this saving recognition is growing in Ger-

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many, too. But as to that, I am ignorant. In spite of all the rumors of Germany’s discontents, I have not heard so far—this is May, 1918—anything which justifies this hope. Apparently the German people love their chains. They seem to be the willing slaves of their monstrous and unhumorous William. So, for the present, we had better not count on Germany to recognize the wickedness or the “silliness” of what she has done. The stir and yeast of democratic Idealism may be going on in Germany, but it isn’t obvious to us. Yet just in proportion as the Allies feel it, and recognize the irrationality of war, per se, do they look forward to a time of reconstruction—socially, politically and morally—which will put an end to war.

When I see the Idealism of our soldiers, and their self-sacrifice and courage and determination, and think of what is going to happen to us during that time of reconstruction—in suffering and in joy, and in the understanding of Democracy—I can hardly wait to hear the thundering tread of the Allied Victory, which is hurring toward us!

As for the price of defeating Germany, my charming Californian and a million other American soldiers

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are perfectly willing to pay it. They say—sometimes with slang, sometimes with white lips and angry eyes, often—*oftenest*, I think—with laughter: “I’m glad to be here!”

“I’m having the time of my life,” they say, over and over. Once in a while a man adds laconically, “Maybe I’ll never see America again.” There is no affectation in such assertions, and no pose of heroism. They state a commonplace: “Maybe” . . . Some of the young men who said “maybe” to me in March will “certainly” never see America again. They were killed in the March offensive. I find myself wondering if the “Nellies” in America will accept the “certainty” as nobly as the husbands and fathers accepted the “maybe.” If so, then our women will indeed finish the work which was given their men to do!

I feel very sure of the quality of America’s acceptance, because of the self-sacrifice and devotion which I know there is in the United States. But I notice, also, in Americans in America (not in Americans in France) a sort of *excitement*. It seems to be the excitement of the “bleachers,” if I may use an illustration, not the businesslike calmness of the

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diamond. In France, there are no bleachers; everybody is in the field. If the people at home are ever really caught in the Horror—if *our* houses are shattered by bombs, *our* girls raped, *our* old men and babies and mothers murdered, I don't think we shall be excited. I think from Maine to California we shall say, individually, just what my soldier said: “We'll stamp the Beast out.” But first we must recognize, as our soldiers have recognized, the kind of thing we are fighting. When we do that, we shall be as ready to pay the price as was the Californian.

Our men are by way of naming the Thing, “Beast;” but I don't think the word bears analysis. Beasts are not vile, in the sense of being abnormal, though they may be dangerous. As I have learned more of the German mentality as expressed by Germany's methods of making war, I have come to feel something strangely terrifying in the abnormality of its viciousness.

“The Powers of Darkness!” some one said to me, when Paris was shaking and rocking under bombardment, and babies were being blown to pieces in their cradles. The phrase stands in my mind as omi-

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nously explanatory of my soldier's "gladness," and of his sober, unexcited certainty, that Germany will be smashed. Perhaps I can make this feeling about the "unhumanness" of the Boche mind clearer if I tell a little story. I tell it not because of its newness—for many such stories have been told—but because of its significance in this especial connection. I wish I could give my authority for it, but I have been requested not to. I may say, however, that the authority is beyond question.

A company of soldiers, following hard on the track of some retreating Germans saw, nailed to a stable door by a single spike, a cat. The poor creature, clawing, writhing, yowling, spun round and round on the torturing nail. One of the men saw it, and swearing with rage and disgust broke from the ranks, ran to the door, jerked the spike from the poor little body,—and was instantly blown up by the bomb on the other side of the door—a bomb to which the impaled cat had been attached. The importance of this incident is not, of course, in the bomb, or even in the poor, agonizing little animal, because War is inherently cruel and ingenious. The ingenuity and cruelty in this particular expression of

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“frightfulness” was only a little more perfect than ordinary. The real and sinister significance of the story lies in the fact that the Germans had recognized and counted upon a *moral impulse*—and used that impulse as an instrument of destruction. . . . The Powers of Darkness!

Ever since Samuel Butler, in “Erewhon,” crystalized his misgivings about machinery, there have been people, here and there, who have felt, vaguely, that mechanical perfection was a menace to the Race as well as a hope. Perhaps because there cannot be a hope without a menace; one implies the other. At any rate, once in a while a few people said to each other, “Is it possible, that instead of raising wheels and cogs to the level of man, we are lowering man to the level of wheels and cogs? Can mechanical perfection go too far?” Then came the War, and immediately many people said, “It *has* gone too far—in Germany.” Certainly the Cat, and several other happenings in Flanders, declare that German genius, *using the creative impulse as an instrument of destruction, and selling it for a price*,—has become the Prostitute of the world. Germany, like

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any other harlot, has sinned against the Holy Ghost.

I have heard many stories of cruelty, some of which I have been obliged to believe; but I have heard nothing which inspired me with such terror as this story of the clawing, screeching kitten, and a man's *pity*, pulling the trigger to blow out his own brains. Pity!—the crown of our hard-won struggle up from the slime from which we all have sprung—a slime into which these highly intelligent, cat-torturing people are returning! Apropos of the cat story, I heard the following conversation between two Americans. One said: "Machinery has created a materialistic civilization. Germany is only a little more materialistic than the rest of us. We are all tarred with the same stick."

"Yes," the other agreed, "but our salvation lies in the fact that Germany is the object lesson of the world. She has been going down to her own particular Hell for four years, but every step of the way she has been calling back to us, 'except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!' And I believe we are going to sit up and take notice," he ended, cheerfully. I believe so, too. I am sure that these cruel, ingenious

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people cannot involve us in their own destruction—unless, in fighting the devil with “fire”—for there must be reprisals—we allow our own idealism to be consumed.

But in what pure energies of the soul the Allies are wrapping themselves, to escape being scorched by the poisonous flames! So, because we have been warned by that “except ye repent,” I am not afraid for America. Nationally speaking, the Idealism which has carried us to Europe will save us from our own mechanical perfection . . . it is better than any gas mask that was ever invented!

I have told the story of the cat, only to explain why the American soldier is having “the time of his life!” Such joyousness of purpose, without the hope of gain, shows that he is safe in his armor of Idealism.

This Idealism has formulated itself in a sort of creed, which, stripped of the slang in which it is often concealed, our men are continually reciting: “I believe in this War, by which the American is helping to save the world; I believe that Nelly and the Kid will suffer under the terror of it, but will die rather than fail fathers and husbands; I believe

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in the noly Spirit which prompts the soldier to save the little, agonizing kitten—and in the communion and fellowship of the allied nations, who will make Liberty everlasting.”

This is what Americans believe, over here in France, and we have not one instant's doubt that this black moment of the present will brighten into an immortal dawn in which these “Powers of Darkness,” who use divine instincts as implements of death, will slink away to their own perpetual night.

But there is so much to do before the Day—*our* der Tag!—breaks, and the German shadow flees away! So much for our army in France to do; and just as much, perhaps more, for people at home to do. So far as we can judge over here, America is rising splendidly to her opportunities of sacrifice. How could she fail to rise, with the example of France before her—the example of the unexcited, plodding *commonplaces* of four years of dying to save the world for the French Nelly and her baby? . . . Our American Nelly (and the real-estate business which has supported her) has only just now arrived at a poignant understanding of what it means to lose life, so that Life may be saved.

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And only since they have been on French soil have American soldiers awakened to the knowledge of how literally France and England and Belgium have put their bodies between us and weapons so deadly as Pity turned against itself. Now that our men have awakened to this, they are absolutely certain that the Spirit which animates the Allies must win, or humanness must die.

To see this certainty in the faces of fighting men is soul-shaking. And I have seen it in so many of these hard, lean, tanned American faces! Sometimes, when I have looked into the eyes of our soldiers—merry, impudent, honest eyes!—I have felt I was seeing the resurrection of our whole nation from her complacency of comfort and peace. For, contrasted with that divine fury which leaps forward to pull the crucified kitten from the door, our old, careless, contented materialism is seen to be a couch on which our Idealism had been drowsing into sleep. It has been very roughly jolted from that couch, and as a result men are “falling over themselves,” as one boy said to me, in their eagerness to reach the Mad Mind that fastened the fuse to the dying kitten. These men of ours are rushing with

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all the banners of the Dawn against the Powers of Darkness!

With our soldiers, and leaping along beside them, is another army—the great civilian army of service. In other words, that very impulse which the German used to make the decent human creature pull out the spike (and be blown to atoms), that impulse of life-saving is marching with our soldiers' terrible and necessary impulse of life-extermination. The Relief Organizations in France are simply organized Pity, lifting itself up to combat the Powers of Darkness, which would be glad to use its driving and holding force to destroy it.

No one who looks on at this movement of the Spirit can possibly doubt the outcome of the War (I am not speaking militarily; as I have said, *that*, in the shape of an Allied Victory, goes without saying); I mean the spiritual outcome, which some war-hating people have questioned. The spiritual result, which will make us in love with Death, whether our rendezvous with him is in the trenches in France or in desolate homes in America—that spiritual outcome, built upon the dead bodies and the living souls of our men, is so certain that we do not stop to

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question it, any more than we stop to wonder if to-morrow’s sun will rise. But we shall not delay the inevitable Dawn by telling ourselves the truth about the Dark, or facing the cost of our undertaking.

So let us admit, first, that we battle not merely against flesh and blood—flesh and blood are the smallest part of it! Nor against principalities and powers—autocracy all over the world is toppling into the ruin the Germans have invited for their own Government. We battle against the moral ruin of the Race. Against the assassination of God. We fight to save, not just the little home in California, but the home idea of the entire world. And the cost to us will be very great. We must cast into our War Chest our whole living. The comfort we cast in is a small matter; the individualism we must resign is smaller still; the money is of no consequence whatever. It is Life which we must give, and Love which is dearer than life; yes, everything must be given, except our sacred honor, which, indeed, is the War Chest itself! . . .

Sometimes, as I read the month-old American papers over here, I feel a little frightened, for

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though they state, what we all know, the preciousness of our Victory — the value of a saved world — they don't say much about all these things which make up the price. I wonder why not? I wonder if any one thinks that we Americans are *afraid* to hear the price stated? If anybody thinks that of us, let him look at our men over here! *Then* he will have no misgivings. He will know that we are rich enough to hear the price named, and not blench.

The French and English nations—not merely their soldiers, but their women and children—have heard the price without wincing, and are in no uncertainty as to their spiritual solvency.

Nor is there any uncertainty as to ours!

Listen to an American soldier's expression of readiness to pay the "price" of a saved world: "The people at home are up to their knees in this war. They've got to be up to their chins, or we won't win it. The Germans are not men, they are—" He paused, and looked at me with strange eyes. "I don't know what they are. We are fighting—Something; I haven't any name for it. It is—Hell, I think. And, by God, if it takes every mother's son of us, *we're coming out on top.*"

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Here it is, you see—“The Powers of Darkness!” But the Allies will come out on top of Hell. No one who has lived among the French people can doubt that *they* recognize “Hell.” They know what they are fighting; they have realized the unhumanity and the abnormality which the Germans have let loose upon the world. I do not mean merely that statesmen and politicians know this, or even that French soldiers know it; I mean that the plain people, like ourselves, are entirely aware of the sinister mystery of it. The innkeeper knows that this war is not human; the dressmaker knows it; the taxi-driver, the blanchisseuse. To talk with these people about the German mind is to realize its abnormality. The man who ran the elevator in my hotel; the woman who mended my trunk strap; the pretty girl who had fled from the war zone and fallen in love with a Belgian officer as soon as she reached Paris—they all had a perfectly clear understanding that Decency is fighting Indecency; Love is fighting Lust; Day is fighting Night. And that is why they face the cost of Victory so calmly. Sometimes, however, they ask, “Does the United States understand this, too?”

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“If you knew in America what we are fighting,” an elderly Frenchman said, “you’d be ready to pay every cent you possess, and every drop of blood you have, to smash it—and *call it cheap at the price.*”

Many, many French people have said the same thing to me. “The Germans are mad; they must be “*écrasé*,” they have said; “do you Americans realize that?” Then they would add some story to justify the “*écrasé*,” which made the cost of the crushing seem indeed “cheap” at any price! As, for instance, the following (which I am told is authentic; I cannot vouch for it, but people who know much more than I do, say it is true). It illustrates Germany’s attitude toward monogamy—that bulwark of Occidental civilization:

Translation of a document found on a German prisoner by an English Corporal and by him given to an English Y. M. C. A. Secretary:

COMMITTEE FOR THE INCREASE OF POPULATION
Notice No. 2875.

SIR:

On account of all the able-bodied men having been called to the colors, it remains the duty of all those left behind, for the sake of the Fatherland, to interest themselves in the happiness of the married women and maidens by doubling or even trebling the number of births.

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Your name has been given us as a capable man, and you are herewith requested to take on this office of honor and do your duty in right German style. It must be pointed out that your wife or fiancé, will not be able to claim a divorce; it is, in fact, to be hoped that the women will bear this discomfort heroically for the sake of the war.

You will be given the district of Should you not feel capable of coping with the situation, you will be given three days in which to name some one in your place.

On the other hand, if you are prepared to take on a second district as well, you will become a “Deckoffizier” and receive a pension.

An exhibition of women and maidens, as well as a collection of photographs, is to be found at our office.

You are requested to bring this letter with you.

Your good work should commence immediately and it is to your interest to submit to us a full report of results after nine months.

22-3-16

Comment on such a document is unnecessary. But one point should be emphasized: If an uncrushed Germany thinks of marriage in terms of national efficiency, the danger to the world would be that other nations, from self-preservation or perhaps from mere imitation, would explode into the same consuming flames of sensuality. So, naturally, “if it takes every mother’s son of us,” we are coming out on top. Perhaps Germany’s degraded idea of Love,

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has been the torch which has touched off Russian gunpowder; at any rate, I read this morning in a Lyons paper, an extract from a Russian paper; here is the translation of four sections of this appalling document:

1. From the age of 18 years, every young girl is declared to be national property.

2. Every young girl who has reached the age of 18 years is required, under penalty of severe punishment, to register at the bureau of free love, at the Commissariat of Public Assistance.

3. Every registered young girl has the right to choose a concubine husband from among the citizens of from 19 to 50 years. The man's consent to this choice is not obligatory. The wife of the husband chosen by the young girl has no right to formulate any protest against this choice.

4. A permanent list of men to be chosen will be kept at the same bureau of free love. The men will also have the right to choose a companion from among the young girls who have reached the age of 18 years.¹

To save the world from this sort of thing, to check a conflagration which would consume Love—can any “price” be too high?

Chesterton tells another story (which seems to be very well vouched for) to still further justify the price—but even to hear of it leaves a scar on the

¹ See footnote at end of chapter.

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mind. A girl’s naked body, he says—a little, slim, fourteen- or fifteen-year-old body—was slung up on a beef hook outside a butcher’s shop, and left to rot in the sun because no man could take it down and escape a bullet in his own head or breast. There was another story, told by a soldier in a Y. M. C. A. canteen, from which the mind recoils, as the body recoils at the lick of a flame. Some one,—an American woman,—had said that the whole matter of reprisals was terrible to her. “I can’t bear it,” she said, wincing; “I can’t *bear* it!—that the Allies should be like the Germans! We know that they do horrible things; but for us to retaliate, by doing the same sort of things, would be to bring the same sort of destruction upon ourselves!” A group of soldiers, French and American, had been listening to her, and they discussed the matter with some interest (and extraordinary spiritual insight, she told me). One young man was silent. He listened to what she said, but his face darkened and his lip drooped. A little later, when she was alone, he came up to her.

“That was a fine talk you gave us, Madame,” he

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said; "but, me—all that I'm living for is to torture a German to death."

"Oh, don't say that!" she implored him.

He shrugged a little contemptuously. "*Vous n' comprenez pas.*"

"But—but—" she protested; "you must not be like—*them!*"

"I *must* be," he said; "I—" He hesitated, then told his story. He had a friend. "We went to school together," he said; "we'd been friends since we were born. *Eh Bien*; I found him just alive in the trench. So I shot him."

"What!" she said, faintly.

"Yes. I killed him. They had cut out his tongue, and they had taken a splinter of wood, and pinned it on his arm. So I shot him."

My friend was speechless. For my part, when she told me the story, I refused to believe it. That seemed to me the easiest way out of it—just to say, "It isn't true!" But afterward, in speaking of the incident to an American who has made a very extensive investigation of many alleged atrocities, I found I could not reasonably say, "It is not true."

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“The man may have been ‘stringing us,’” I said hopefully.

But this gentleman shook his head. “The probabilities are that he told you the truth. Even if he didn’t, even if this particular incident isn’t his own experience, he stated facts. I have known many instances of the torn out tongue. The pinning it to the man’s arm, I have never happened to see or hear of; but my own seeing and hearing is a detail. The Mind which conceives the thing, and many others of a nature of which I cannot speak to you,—that Mind, *does exist*. And until it is known and accepted as a factor in this war, we shall not be able to ‘get in up to our chins,’ because we sha’n’t really understand what we are fighting.”

Our American soldiers “understand.” “I know what Germany stands for,” one lad said to me, “and by God, she’s got to be smashed!”

There is no price too high to pay for that smashing, and we are ready to pay it. That is what the Californian, talking to me across my counter, thought; and that was why he said, so quietly, “It’s damned silly—but I’m glad to be here.”

We are all glad. Our soldiers in France, and

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the civilians at home. . . . The cup of sacrifice and suffering is being held out to us—the cup of trembling, the cup of tears, and of blood! “Drink ye all of it!” Civilization says to us. And we put out eager hands toward that sacramental draft; we take the Cup—and give thanks!

LA FOLIE RUSSE.

¹ See page 230 for note reference. J'ai sous les yeux extrait du journal *Isvestia*. Le journal *Isvestia*, comme vous le savez peut-être, est l'organe des Soviets. Or, une certaine citoyenne Ferodowa y expose un projet sur la socialisation des femmes. Les socialisation des femmes? Eh! oui. Il s'agit de mettre les femmes en commun. Et ne vous hâtez pas de dire que Mme. Ferodowa est folle, et que son projet ne sera jamais adopté. Je vous répondrais de déjà il est appliqué dans les districts de Kowalinsk, de Kolgino, de Louga et de Saratof.

Ce projet a huit articles. Passons sur les quatre premiers, qui déclarent “inviolable” toute jeune fille âgés de moins de dix-huit ans, et prononcent des peines sévères contre qui l'outragerait.

Mais je copie les quatre articles suivants:

1. A partir de l'âge de 18 ans, toute jeune fille est déclarée propriété nationale;

2. Toute jeune fille ayant atteint l'âge de 18 ans est tenue, sous peine de punition sévère, à se faire enregister au bureau de l'amour libre, au commissariat de l'Assistance publique;

3. Toute jeune fille enregistrée a le droit de se choisir un mari concubina parmi les citoyens de 19 à 50 ans. Le consentement de l'homme à ce choix l'est pas obligatoire. L'épouse du mari sur lequel tombe le choix d'une jeune fille, n'a le droit de formuler aucune protestation contre ce choix;

4. Une liste permanente des hommes à choisir est constituée auprès du même bureau de l'amour libre. Les hommes auront également le droit de se choisir une compagne parmi les jeunes filles ayant atteint l'âge de 18 ans.

Ainsi, toutes les jeunes filles russes seront inscrites sur une liste, où les hommes feront leur choix. De même les hommes

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seront inscrits et les jeunes filles jeteront leur dévolu sur eux. Qu'ils, soient mariés ou non, cela n'a pas d'importance. L'épouse ne devra élever aucune protestation. La citoyenne Ferodowa a résolu d'installer de la Sibérie à l'Oural et d'Arkhangel à Odessa, une vaste chiennerie. Liberté, pudeur, vieilles rengaines, inutiles accessoires de l'odieux régime isariste. Et, lisant ces divagations dans le journal des Soviets, je pense aux imprecations qui montaient vers Raspoutine. Je songe aussi que le Revolution russe parut à beaucoup d'entre nous une aurore.

IX

THE FELLOWSHIP OF TEARS

SO many, many prayers just now in France! An American overheard one of them the other day, and repeated it to me. It went up to God on the Feast of Corpus Christi, from an old, old church, fragrant with incense, and shadowy and cool, and with sunshine sifting through the stained glass windows, and falling in red and blue and violet pools on the time-worn stone slabs of the floor. The great altar blazed with candles; and from the choir the high, clear treble of the boys floated upon the melodious bass of the chanting priest, like white lilies on dark waters. Before a shrine of the Blessed Virgin, a young, rosy-faced woman in a white cap had lighted her single candle; she held in her arms a little baby—oh, a very little baby, perhaps three weeks old; its tiny face was still faintly crinkled, like a pink poppy which has just opened from its calyx, and its small hands were doubled into vaguely

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wobbling fists. The mother, holding it very close to her breast, her cheek against the downy head, her eyes beseeching the maternal Figure behind the candle, whispered (indifferent to the praying world around her), "My little one, pray for thy papa, that he may return to thee; pray! Pray *hard*, my small one! Pray for all the papas of all the little babies, that they may return. Oh my little one, pray! Pray *hard*!"

The candle flickered and guttered in the draft; the baby's round eyes regarded the dim arches melting far above its head into the vast darkness of the roof. Its aimless, flower-like hands stretched out to the plaster figure in the blue, gold-starred mantle. The American, listening, prayed hard, too, that the papa might return. I suppose all the people in the church were praying for some "return." I wish I might know that the prayer of the mother in the white cap, with her rosy cheek against the baby's hair, will be answered. . . . Yet I am sure that, though the answer may not come just as she wishes, it will come, to all the praying mothers and wives in France—but perhaps in a way which only the older women will recognize as being an answer at all! It

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may be only in the consciousness of being all together in anxiety and grief. The consciousness of the fellowship of sorrow! . . . It was an old woman, a peasant woman, who lives near a brown, lazy canal, who showed me this wonderful and tender truth about sorrow. She made me understand that it is easier to bear pain if others are bearing it too. And that explained to me how they keep on living, these broken, suffering women, who have given to France all that is really worth living for—the Living Love! One of them, by the way, the other day, on an operating table in a Paris hospital, mentioned what she had given. She was an elderly woman, who had been terribly injured by a shell from the Great Gun which so impartially knocks the heads off public monuments, and smashes houses, and kills women and children saying their prayers in church on Good Friday. This old woman, shattered and nearly dead, was carried to the hospital to have her leg amputated. The President of the Republic, visiting the *blessés*, paused for a friendly moment at the operating table where the poor old soul was waiting for her ether. I don't know what he said to her, but this is what she said to him: "*Un de mes fils a été*

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tué; le second est amputé. Je vais l'être moi aussi; et j'aurai payé mon tribut à la patrie!" Which might be put into English: One of my sons has been killed; another has had an amputation, which I, also, am to have; but I will have paid my tribute to France!

The old lady by the canal had paid her tribute, too, and was just as proud and grief stricken as the dying woman on the table; but she had had that strange, high answer to prayer which has come to so many broken hearts in France—the knowledge that shared suffering may be shared peace. . . .

It was very hot in Vitry-le-François, where we had to wait hours for the train that was to take us to Paris,—there is nothing much hotter than a railroad station, where the tracks stretch out over a flat land quivering with heat!

“Let’s hunt,” some one suggested, “for a cooler spot.”

“We might try the equator,” some one else said, gloomily.

This was not encouraging; but we loaded up with our bags and hold-alls, and trudged off to hunt for the cooler place. It was noon, and except when an

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ox team came plodding slowly along the dusty road, the silent, sunny street showed no sight of life; the whole town seemed to have shut itself in behind its blue *volets*. But we did manage to find a little dark shop, three steps down from the blazing pavement, where our bread cards secured for us some chunks of black bread, and a box of sardines, and a tin of so-called *comfiture*,—heaven knows what it was made of! Carrots and sawdust, I think; the only sweetness about it was the label, which contained the word *Sucre*. Then, with our food in our hands, we sallied forth to look, as Sylvia said, “for coolth.” And we walked, and we walked, and we walked. And it got hotter, and hotter, and hotter.

“Just think,” said that wretch Sylvia, “of a land where there is such a thing as *soda water*!”

“Is it heaven?” said the other girl.

“That will do for a name, but I call it America, because they are the same thing,” said the lover of *soda water*.

Then, just as we were about to give up, and go back to the roasting railroad station, we saw in the distance, between the trunks of the poplar trees, the gleam of water. A canal!

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“Now aren’t you glad I made you come?” demanded Edith. And we admitted that what was left of us, after melting away for half an hour, was glad.

We sat down on the green bank of the canal in the flickering shade of bordering poplars, digging our heels into the grass to keep from sliding down into the brown, slow current below us; when we got a little cooler, we broke off bits of our dry bread, borrowed Edith’s jackknife to spread them with cheese and *confiture*, and wished we had something cold to drink. “But if you say ‘soda water’ again,” Sylvia was warned, “you will immediately be thrown into the canal.”

“How about trying that house behind us? They must have a well?” some one said.

“Full of typhoid bugs,” the Small Person objected, professionally.

“For what did I pay out good money to Doctor Townsend for typhoid inoculation before I left home, if I can’t drink their water?” Edith retorted. And went off to “borrow a drink.” So that is how we got acquainted with the old woman who lived in the house, and who had come to know one of the deep things of life, a thing hidden from the wisdom

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of Peace, but revealed, I am beginning to think, by the foolishness of War.

"She asks us to come and see her," Edith said, returning with a pitcher of the "typhoid bug" water. "I told her we were Americans, and she said the Americans were *brave gens*."

"*You* are brave, to drink that water," Sylvia said with great displeasure.

We did not accept the invitation at once; we sat there on the grassy bank watching a canal boat pushing its blunt, black nose through the water-weeds, and the dragonflies zigzagging back and forth across the slow, shimmering current. Suddenly, above our heads, a greater dragonfly came—one that darted and circled and dived through the blue heights of the May sky, then lost itself in a dome of glistening white clouds—but this dragonfly made a strange whirring noise. We looked up at it, and wondered if the man on its back could look down and see us, sitting on the bank, eating bread and cheese.

"The old lady is a corker," said Edith. "When she gave me the pitcher of water she told me about her son—killed, you know. And she insists that we must come up to her 'salon, to repose ourselves'."

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“Her ‘salon’? The whole house is about as big as a soap box!”

It was indeed a tiny place—very old, and rather crumbling about its foundations, with a red tiled roof that had mellowed with the years into bronze and olive green, and blackened here and there with creeping lichens. But summer rioted to its very door in perfume and color, for it was cuddled down into its flower garden—roses and wall flowers and carnations. Later, we walked among them with their owner, compared their American and French names, and then went into the “salon,” which was almost filled by an enormous bedstead, on which, puffing nearly to the ceiling, was an enormous feather bed. A marble-topped washstand held our old lady’s dinner, which she invited us to share, with a politeness which was incapable of the vulgarity of an apology for its frugality; we declined—I hope as politely—on the ground that we had just had our bread and cheese—“and her nice cold-water Bugs!” said Sylvia under her breath (in English). There were only two chairs in the salon, on which, by virtue of our years, the hostess and I sat, but the rest of the American Authors’ Service had to stand up.

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The old woman looked about, her bright black eyes twinkling with smiles; it was like seeing a winter apple smile! Then she waved a hospitable hand. Said she: "It is of a smallness!"

"Which makes housekeeping easier," said I.

"*Beaucoup! Beaucoup!*" said she. Then she told us of herself; she lived here, quite alone. The Germans had come in 1914, and immediately *tout le monde*—then she said something which seemed to mean "took to its heels." She, however, had not taken to her heels; instead, she hid in the cellar, and when the enemy found her, she spoke only German to them, "so they let her alone, being"—here she shrugged expressively—"that she was an old woman." Yes; she lived quite alone, and worked in her garden, and dug, and planted, and prayed for France. That was all she could do now, dig and pray. For her son (her only son, and she was a widow), her son—here the twinkling smile fell from her face and you saw the ravages of grief which it had hidden; her *fiis unique*—*sa seule joie*—she paused; then pointed speechlessly to a mirror on the wall. We looked, and saw a blue soldier cap hanging on one corner of it. "*Mon fiis,*" she said.

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"*Vive la France, Madame!*" said I.

"*Oui! Oui!*" she said, her chin shaking pitifully. Then, somehow, she steadied it, lifted her old head, and smiled again, the rosy winter apple smile. "*Vive l'Amérique!*" she said, and wiped her eyes. Then, very quietly, she spoke those words of the spirit that showed me how prayers for only sons, and 'single joys,' and young fathers at the front, can be answered: "There is not, Madame, a house in France where there is not one dead; therefore—" She made a gesture of dismissing the subject: "Did Madame observe my carnations?" she said.

Quite gently she shut her grief away from us. She was able to bear it, because after all, every one was grieving; "there is not a house in France." . . . That was why she could go on living, taking care of her carnations, and offering the sweet hospitality of her "salon" to wayfarers eating bread and cheese on the grassy bank of the brown canal. . . .

Her exquisite courtesy and humanness made me think, as all of us Americans over here have been thinking, of the way in which the French people combine graciousness with kindness. We are kind, too, in our way, at home; but we have not the gift of

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expressing it as these people do. We lack "graciousness," I suppose. At any rate, the *graciousness* of the French is making an impression on some of our soldiers, and who knows but that we may achieve it, to some extent, nationally, when we get through stamping out the ungraciousness of the Germans? For thoughtful people must see that the German "no-manners"—a deficiency recognized with more or less good-natured annoyance by all civilized peoples for certainly the last fifty years—this lack of graciousness constitutes a sort of sign-post, marking the down-hill road along which they have traveled in their own social and domestic life, a road which has now brought them and the world to the unspeakable "mannerlessness" of their war. Which reminds me of something I saw last week in a London newspaper in regard to German reputation on these lines. It was just the laconic report of a police court. . . . It stated that Louis Sternberg, a leather merchant, had brought an action for libel and slander against Thomas Wren, boot-polish manufacturer, Wren having alleged that Sternberg (who was a Russian) *was a German!*

"After hearing the case, Mr. Justice Lush said:

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'What viler insult could be made against a man than to deliberately call him a German?' He therefore awarded £250 damages to the Russian." And I recall here the revealing remark of a German, a member of a Commission which, before the war, was traveling in America: "Yes," he said, "we found your railroad cars very comfortable;—except the sleeping cars. Our wives don't like to climb into the upper berths."

The more I hear and read of individual German behavior in this war of theirs, the more I feel that stories like these, which are told more or less in jest, are seriously accurate. And I am sure that the present behavior of the German nation is the natural and inevitable result of the rank egotism of the individual German, an egotism which has made the whole people offensive to what might be called the "refined nations." As an illustration of this (and to justify Mr. Justice Lush), I remember something that happened several years ago in Berlin. . . . It was a rainy day; the mud on either side of the stepping-stones of the street crossing was deep and black and sticky. An American lady, starting to cross the street from one side, was met by a German officer,

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who, at the same moment, had started to cross from the other side. They both paused abruptly. The officer was in his "shining armor"—his spotless white uniform glittered with braid, his saber clattered, and his varnished boots shone. The American, as it chanced, was in *her* best clothes, too. (However, that is a detail; had she been in rags the thing that happened would not have been less astounding to an observer coming from any civilized country.) They stopped midway, these two—the American woman and the German man—midway on the little bridge of cleanness which spanned the mud. There was an instant's pause; the lady looked faintly surprised: the officer in uniform looked fiercely annoyed; said he:

"I wait!"

Said she:

"I, also, wait."

He was so amazed at her answer, so startled that any mere female thing should thwart him, that involuntarily, before he realized what he was doing, he stepped down from the clean crossing into the mud. Upon which this lady swept him a magnificent bow, and left him standing there, his varnished boots

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plastered with mud, looking after her, and (she was sure!) damning her in his heart for an impudent American woman!

Now, this is a small happening. At the time it was only funny, for my friend could not take with any personal resentment an affront offered by an animal. Every one of us knows "that the well-bred man will not insult us, and *none other can.*" So the American lady only laughed. But she wouldn't have laughed if she had realized of what that mannerlessness was a prophecy. . . . One hears of a German soldier kicking a French woman in the stomach; and one realizes that the kick was inevitable. That soldier was merely the officer in the varnished boots, a little more incensed than when he stood in the mud in Berlin. I do not believe any Frenchman would have waited for a lady in her best clothes to step into the mud to let him pass; and I would stake my life upon it that no American would do such a thing to any woman—a great lady, or a poor, old, ragged beggar woman! An American man, in his senses, simply *couldn't* do such a thing. It is in this certainty that I find courage to believe that though this war, like all wars, is a thing of mud and hell

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and animalism, it cannot drag the Allies down to the depth of moral mud in which the Germans are wallowing, for we are not so low to start with—we have *some* manners! I feel this more poignantly than ever before, because it seems to me so obvious that in Germany manners have been one of the most important factors in “making the man.” The Prussian mind was *ready* to wallow in filthy cruelty, because at home, in peace, it was essentially rude. And cruelty is just the next step from rudeness.

But here somebody will probably say: “They are not all cruel! It is only the Military Government that is cruel. Think of the kindly, music-loving, Christmasy south-Germans, the sort of people to whom Mr. Britling sent that wonderful and beautiful letter; could one of *them* kick a woman in the stomach?”

If I had been asked this question four years ago, I would have said “No!” as indignantly as anybody else. I cannot say “No” now, nor can I say, as so many of us at home have been saying, that it is the German *Government* which is kicking women in the stomach, and not the German people. . . . Let me tell you something that happened only last week:

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Three German prisoners were being questioned by their American captors. One was a teacher of mathematics in his own country, and the other two were officers—so we may safely say they were of the “better class.” When the interrogation was concluded, the American officer said, evidently with kindly intention, “Do the people of Germany know that the United States has no grievance against the *people* of Germany? Do they realize that we are merely fighting the military machine, the *Government*, of Germany?”

Instantly the three Germans were on their feet.

“*Das ist eins!*”

Here were three educated and presumably responsible men *claiming* their share of the abominations!

Furthermore, it is not one part of Germany more than another which wallows in the orgies. We can no longer exclude Mr. Britling’s kind south-German folk. It has been most dismaying to find that the soldiers and officers who are doing unspeakable things, *are from all over Germany*. What does it mean? God knows! The terror, the horror, the sick nastiness of what they are doing is a pathological fact. We may trace the sickness back, symptom by symp-

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tom, to one cause or another; but one of the causes, which seems to me to account for much of the present national degeneracy, is that long-continued habit of bad manners, which especially reveals itself in the way German men regard women. They love their own women—their wives, their mothers, their daughters,—and no one can doubt their real kindness to them. But, so far as I have been able to make out, they love them and are kind to them as they might love and be kind to children, or to intellectually inferior persons. To the German male, a woman is a useful and pleasant and necessary thing; but her opinion is not to be taken seriously if it conflicts with a man's opinion. Her intellectuality, such as it is, is interesting or amusing or valuable, in its place; but its place is not in intellectual controversy with men! Not unnaturally, the men are rude—if you would call more or less kindly indifference to other people's opinions *rudeness*. And no one who has seen anything of German domestic life can doubt the indifference. It will not be a bad thing if the women in America will read, just now, a novel by Mrs. Alfred Sedgwick, called "Salt and Savor." From the point of view of literature, I could wish it

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had been written with more art. It would have been more impressive if *all* the English people had not been perfect, and *all* the Germans had not been vile. There are still degrees of goodness and badness in this crazy world, and if the book had admitted this, it would have been a truer and bigger book; but I am sure that the essential fact in it is true—namely, that the physical and mental degradation of German women is one of the roots of the spiritual degradation of German men. One reads this novel and puts two and two together, and sees how invariably they make four: . . . Woman is a pleasant animal to the man, and the man, by long indulgence in the selfishness of bad manners, is a complete egotist. There is the two and two. When the animal is obstinate, or ugly, or unpleasant, the following story is the inevitable “four.” (The story is, I may add, vouched for by careful investigation.)

Official Report of a Belgian Electrical Engineer made for the French Government:

On the 9th of September, at Weerde . . . we saw the corpses of a man and woman . . . the neighbors told us the woman had been *enciante*. She had been violated by German soldiers and had her womb cut open by them in her husband's presence. He had

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previously been bound to the banisters. They had removed the unborn child. . . . I asked the (neighbors) if any of the soldiers who did it were drunk, and they said they were not. . . . The neighbors told me it would have been her first child. . . . They did not do anything to the woman to kill her, except opening her womb and violating her. They did not kill her first.

Of course we don't know—the laconic, stunned words of this Belgian engineer give us nothing but dazing facts—we do not know just what caused this outburst of ferocity on the part of the Germans. Perhaps the husband, before he was “bound to the banisters” to watch his first baby torn from its mother, had fired upon the invaders. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that that *was* the case; even so, can the rest of the story—(and I have spared you one incredible detail) be anything but madness—the madness of men so long educated in egoism that imagination has been extinguished?

I know just how one winces, “curls up inside,” as a girl said—in reading stories like this. But the stories must be told, because, unless we Americans “curl up inside,” unless we face the fact that, if the Allies do not win, then what has happened in Belgium and northern France will happen in Mas-

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sachusetts and Virginia, happen all along the Atlantic Coast from Maine to Florida, for, *if she gets the chance*, Germany will, without question, do to us just what she has done to people in France and Belgium. When we realize our full debt to France and England and Belgium for having held Germany off until we—foolishly trustful people!—could get ready to fight—when we realize our debt to them, for protecting our unprotected coast with their own bodies, we shall proceed to pay that debt with all the compound interest of sympathy and blood and money that a generous People can give!

“Under the lee of the little wood,
I'm sitting in the sun;
What will be done in Flanders
Before the day is done?”

Under my feet the springing blades
Are green as green can be;
It's the bloody clay of Flanders
That keeps them green for me.

Above, beyond the larches
The sky is very blue;
It's the smoke of hell in Flanders
That leaves the sun for you.”

I could tell you many stories to illustrate how our allies have kept the sun in our sky by walking in darkness themselves; but the story of the officer wait-

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ing for the American woman to step into the mud, and the story of the unborn baby and the husband tied to the banisters, sum up the whole incredible diagnosis of a sick, mad-dog nation. "It's got to be *stamped out of existence!*" That is the way some of our generous, pleasant, kindly soldiers put it; mother-loving men, who wouldn't want to "stamp" anything out of existence! This reminds me of something rather funny that happened a few days ago. A company of our boys—splendid fellows! good fighters, sound *Americans*, recruited largely from that part of the Middle West settled about two generations ago by Germans—met a convoy of German prisoners slouching along through the mud on their way to the rear. At the sight of them, our men burst out into a torrent of reproach and invective—in *German!* "The prisoners," the report said, "lifted their heads in amazement when they suddenly found themselves assailed trenchantly and abusively in their mother tongue by the newcomers. The torrent swept them with contempt for their obedience to such a misconceived hound as the Kaiser, for their taking sides with the Prussian devils against all decent people the world over, and for making

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themselves the scum of the earth by their methods of fighting, so that their relatives in a free country had come four thousand miles to wipe them off the face of it."

I don't mind the "invective"—I like it! But when our lads talk about "stamping out," I do quail. It sounds too "German." I know we must fight the Devil with fire, but there is a terrible danger of getting burned ourselves—unless, indeed, we all—fighting men and non-combatants—hold tight to those things of the spirit which the Germans began to discard about fifty years ago. Of course, we must not forget the young husband tied to the banisters, but somehow, *somehow* we must remember for ourselves "whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report"—we must remember these things, and we must "think on them" for our own safety. Poor, hideous, mannerless, vicious Germany has *not* "thought on them!" We know what she has thought of—power, gain, selfishness; things that are ugly, things that are vile, things that are not of good report—she has thought of pleasure, of lust, of cruelty; and because Germany "thought on these things," the old

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mother weeds her garden alone, and the young mother stands before her candle and says, "Pray! Pray *hard*, my little one!"

You cannot imagine—or at least I could not have imagined—how we Americans over here are helped to hold on to the things of the spirit by what civilian America is doing in France. For side by side with the necessary and terrible animosity, which says, "We will stamp the Thing Germany stands for, out of existence," has sprung up something "lovely," and "pure," and of most marvelous "good report." I mean the whole great Army of Idealism. It has its various divisions, which are labelled the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Y. M. C. A., the K. of C., and many small Relief Organizations that are supported privately, but they are only divisions—the *impulse* is a unit. Truly

The Son of God goes forth to war—

to war against War! He goes forth to bring the loveliness of purity and kindness and even "manners" into the hell that Germany has let loose upon a world which perhaps needed to be taught to what its growing materialism might lead it,—namely, a mechan-

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ical civilization, devoid of spiritual reactions. As I look at what American Idealism is doing over here, I say to myself,

“SURSUM CORDA!”

Yes, it is frightful—the fear which consumes the little, anxious mother on Corpus Christi Day; a soldier, dead in the trenches with his tongue cut out; a frantic husband tied to the banisters—frightful—frightful! So frightful that we are saying to ourselves—driven back from the pleasant, respectable, materialistic Christianity of the churches, that only the Christianity of Christ, only the Idealism of Jesus, can save the world! And it will save it, for idealism can destroy materialism. . . .

A wonderful thing is happening over here, right under our eyes—and some of us little sectarian people in America don't see it even yet: *That Idea, which is to save the world, is not marching in France under any one banner of creed.* That is why we can call it the Christianity of Christ! The significance of this creedlessness is beyond words. The things of loveliness and good report are not valued by their labels, “Catholic,” or “Hebrew,” or “Protestant.” (Oh,

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creeds seem such little, little things in the thundering tramp of armies!) Except in some pathetically narrow minds, these things of good report which are to save the world have no tags of belief fastened to them. They are all of them expressions of the mind of Jesus. The creeds in which, for its safety, Christianity first wrapped the baby Idealism—necessary no doubt in the beginning—began to smother it, to kill it almost. Now, suddenly, all those swaddling clothes are burst, and Christ Himself marches with the Y. M. C. A. workers, the Red Cross men, the Salvation Army lassies, and the Young Men's Hebrew Association!

These are dark days over here. They have been dark at home. But, let us open our windows toward the East. . . . The Day breaks! The shadows flee away! *Let us lift up our hearts!*

X

“FIRST THAT WHICH IS NATURAL”

“Well, *I'm* just plain scared!” a Y. M. C. A. girl said; “let’s have some jam and Educators.”

“Educators! Where did you get Educators?” said the other Y. M. C. A. girl.

“Oh, from home,” the first girl said. She brought out the Educators and some strawberry jam, and then they both sat down on the floor to eat them, pausing once in a while—a spoonful of jam in mid-air—when the bang of the barrage was a little louder, or when there came the terrible detonation of an exploding bomb.

“Jam from home, too?”

“You bet! Do you think you could get stuff like this over here?”

Then, by the light of a candle leaning sidewise in a tumbler (for all the electric lights had been turned off), and with the consolation of a cigarette, these two girls talked over their day in the canteen,

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—interrupted from time to time by those sudden BANGS! It was a quarter to twelve. The sky was velvet black, and the stars were very faint, but there was no mist. “So,” said the Educator girl, judicially, “it’s a bully night for a raid.”

“I don’t mind raids as much as shelling,” said the other. “That scares me stiff! Give me a light, will you?”—they put their young heads together, and a glimmer leaped from one cigarette to the other—then—*Crash!* The windows shook. “Ooow!” said one of the girls, “*that* was near.”

The town in which these two workers were stationed had been shelled for several days, and the last three nights there had been air raids. Both of the girls were tired; one had come in from her canteen at 11:30—about fifteen minutes before the raid began; the other had just crawled out of bed, where she had been for two days with a temperature of 102, from pure fatigue; “No bug,” she said, calmly. She was the one who had said that she was “plain scared.”

While the raid was going on, they huddled together on the floor, ate jam and Educators, smoked, planned their work for the next day, and discussed

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the psychology of Fear. . . . "Why is being shelled nastier than being bombed?"

"Don't you think," some one said, "that it may be because a bomb from an airplane seems a *little* more accidental? It hits any place. A shell is supposed to be accurately aimed, so when it blows you up, your annoyance is more personal?"

"Well," said the owner of the can of Educators, "I'm not crazy about either of 'em."

"Makes the U. S. A. look sort of good, doesn't it?" the other girl inquired maliciously.

After that they talked about their work.

The significant thing about this scene, which might (except for the bombs) have taken place in any woman's college in America at twelve o'clock at night, was that, though "plain scared" and "scared stiff," the idea of leaving their job never occurred to either of these girls. And this, I think, sums up very accurately the work of American women in France just now.

Endurance.

There wasn't any pose of heroism in eating Educators, and jumping at the crash of a bomb. These two girls were hungry and tired; they were scared,

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and said so. And they both agreed that, in an air raid, "home looked sort of good" to them.

But they had not the slightest idea of going home.

Their conduct was not what you would call "showy"; it was just the expression of an ages-old characteristic of their sex; the quality which mothers have, and always will have. It was the Everlasting Feminine which is rooted in the most elemental instincts. . . .

Some two months ago I was asked to write a paper about Y. M. C. A. women over here. It was to be called "The Startlingly Heroic Work of Women in France." It seemed a simple enough thing to do; so, like Dr. Syntax, I began my "search for the picturesque."

I did not find it.

I found something which seems to me very much better. I found an infinite capacity for toil; I found patience, and quick understanding of other people's feelings (meaning by "people," "soldiers"). I found a ready friendliness, and extraordinary executive ability; I found good housekeeping, good cooking, and good courage. I found these things in every canteen. Of course I found the reverse of these qual-

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ities, too; I found a few indolent women who could not drudge, and who wanted excitement; a few flirtatious women, who made eyes at everything in trousers; a few bad tempered women, who would not take orders, and did not know what obedience meant. Far be it from me to deny the existence of these unpleasant ladies! But where, if you please, on this distracted terrestrial ball are such persons *not* to be found? Of course, these women ought not have been allowed to leave their own country and quarter themselves on poor France, but their presence here only reflects on the inefficiency of the Y. M. C. A. War Council in choosing its personnel,—both men and women; it does not, as some people seem to think, stigmatize the Y. M. C. A. workers as a class among the women. On the contrary, these undesirables were a very small minority; it was among the majority that I looked for instances of heroism. But just as I thought I was about to pick a fine, rosy apple of the “startlingly heroic,” I found a prosaic slice of bread and butter!—merely the old business of “enduring.”

I confess to having been, just at first, a little surprised, which was unreasonable in me, for the pro-

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saic is what Nature has arranged for women ever since the Race began to stand on its hind legs. Perhaps before that, for when the male apes banged each other on the head, the female apes probably grabbed the babies, and watched the scrap from the tree tops! In other words, when it comes to the "Unusual," men have *done* it, and women have *endured* it.

But who is going to deny that "enduring" needs any less nerve than "doing?" Not I,—for I have seen our women in France!

And as I watched them, I realized that their main value in this poor, terrified, crazy Europe is that what they are doing is rooted in the ordinary and the elemental, instead of in the unusual and the spectacular. Their work is not bucking Nature! It could only fall down if it did,—if things were turned around, and women were placed on the firing line, and men poured out chocolate behind canteen counters, the result would be very upsetting to civilization. Which is only a rather long way of saying that the overseas War Work of American women is, generally speaking, fine, but not spectacular. Our girls in France are rarely in the limelight. They are

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not Deborahs, nor Joans of Arc. Which is just as well, for if women should ever turn into the exceptional Woman, the race might cease. It is the normal women who keep us steady. And look at the “normal” things which our girls are doing over here!

They are standing, red-faced and perspiring, over the most exasperating stoves you can possibly imagine,—stoves which often “simply won’t draw!” They are making enormous quantities of chocolate, and then handing it over counters which it takes continuous efforts to keep clean,—for the men “do slop so!” They are sorting out passionately desired American mail in Y.M.C.A. post offices. They are at desks, and at typewriters, and at telephones, in the various headquarters of the Association. They are scrubbing floors, and playing games, and putting up turkey red curtains in chilly huts. They are washing stacks of dishes (how they used to hate dish-washing at home!), and peeling potatoes, and selling chewing gum, and jollying homesick soldiers. They are getting up vaudeville shows, and dancing, and singing. They are offering maternal advice upon stomach aches, and promising to write home and tell his mother just how he looks, and how much he has gained in

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weight, and that she must not worry about him, because that worries him!

Our girls, Red Cross girls, Salvation Army lassies, Y. M. C. A. workers, are doing all these things, occasionally under dangerous conditions, very frequently under conditions of great discomfort. They live in cold, damp, dirty places; they eat ill-cooked food, and sometimes not quite enough of even that! In other words, they are doing all the things that all the women of all the generations (except a few shirkers and parasites) have done all the time, since the world began! As a result, one looks on, and says:

“Thank God that woman’s part in this dreadful business of war is still *normal*.”

For man’s part is not, and cannot be. Man’s part is often—terribly often!—“spectacular,” as well as necessary and splendid. But it is not normal for men to spend their time killing other men in the awful limelight of the trenches. So I come back to what I said in the beginning: I found, in my search for the “startlingly heroic” in the Overseas work of our women, something much better than the start-

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ling; I found the ordinary, glorified by its own high purpose.

Of course there have been individual instances of the “startling”; individual instances of superb heroism on the part of women. I could tell you things done by the Salvation Army girls,—simple, honest, wonderful lassies,—I think, perhaps, the most wonderful of all our women workers; I could tell you of the heroism of the Smith Unit; of women driving ambulances under fire, of girls directing convoys of soldiers in the hell of a bombed district; splendid deeds, all of them!—but occasional. Not the deeds by which the Race lives; not that prosaic bread and butter of conduct, which feeds Humanity. The steady, regular work in American women overseas has been just the old, old race-work of endurance.

How is the following for endurance?—I went to see a Canteen rather near the front and stayed in a hotel,—well, as a French hotel can be the best on earth, so also it can be the worst! This was the worst. I have tried many hotels in my native land—traveling from Alaska to Florida, and from Kennebunkport to Santa Barbara, to say nothing of Europe,—so I may fairly claim to have seen a pretty

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good assortment of hotels, and to be qualified to express an opinion. They are, all of them, Waldorf-Astorias,—compared to this terrible place of dirt dampness and evil food. In it, all last winter, lived, worked, and enjoyed life, a Connecticut girl (her people came from Old Chester, so I feel a personal affection for her); here she lived without any way of keeping her room warm, though it was so damp that at times the water trickled down the walls; here, in the freezing darkness of winter dawns, she broke the ice in her water pitcher, and dressed; then ran, shivering, through snowy mud, to her canteen (which was at least warm, thank Heaven! The U. S. A. sees to that).

In the canteen, which is a big hut covered with tarred paper, on which the nail heads glisten in the sunshine like decorations,—in this hut she worked from eight A. M. until eleven P. M. I need not speak of the work in detail; it is pretty generally known, and it is practically the same thing in all the Y. M. C. A. posts and canteens. It is not the detail that counts, it is the endurance,—the gay, friendly, uncomplaining, *un-self-conscious* endurance, which never flagged,—and was never spectacular!

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But when you come to think of it, she was only doing the work her grandmother did (I speak generically), only doing the work of the Race Mother. She, the Race Mother, has always been sleeping any way and in any place, if circumstances made it necessary; she, too, has risen in the winter darkness, and given food to her house and a portion to her maidens; she has often given pretty poor food—though if she could cook it herself she did her best to have it good. And she has worked from that early rising until “anywhere from eight to eleven.”

So the dark-eyed, smiling, tired girl from Connecticut has been living the Race Life, for the sake of our soldier boys. And they love her, not because she is spectacular, but because she is normal! And how they do love her—hundreds of her,—for she has come from almost every state in the Union. (Which is one of the cheerful things about this dreadful moment in the world; just because our men and girls come from every state, our country is ceasing to be “states,” and is becoming a State.) She—this Y. M. C. A. worker who is helping in the work of the national amalgamation—is displaying many other kinds of endurance than the cold, dirty,

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hotel type; some of them harder, I think, than the hotel. Endurances just as fine and necessary but even less "startling" than canteen work.

I know one girl who sits in an office of the Y. M. C. A. headquarters in Paris, and pounds on a typewriter all day long. "I never had touched one of these old machines till I came over here," she told me; "of course I was crazy to go to the front; but they said they were wild for typewriters, so I just buckled down and learned how to do it. I hate it like the devil," she added, sighing; "but what was the good of fussing? It seemed to be up to me—for *somebody* had to do it. So I just said, 'Oh, damn! I guess it's my job.'" (I can imagine how that expletive, from Y. M. C. A. headquarters, will make some people at home jump!)

Just think of all the generations of women who have come head on against the realization that "somebody's got to do it!"—and, by the grace of God, have been able to add, "It's my job" (personally, I prefer to omit the expletive). Sometimes I think the girl who does this particular sort of job (there are hundreds of her, too) is even more necessary than the woman who washes dishes until

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she nearly drops, or tries to control her temper when the men secretaries are particularly stupid and trying and religiously narrow-minded! The girl who pounds out: “Your letter of the 14th instant duly received. I would say in reply that the consignment of Fatimas shipped by you on the SS. is not yet to hand,” etc., etc.—this girl may not realize that the comfort of a thousand men is being aided by her pounding fingers; she may not have the particular kind of imagination which would illuminate her task for her and show her what she is really doing; but if she is a woman of sense (and so far as I have met her over here she distinctly *is!*) she must know that the business of the whole Y. M. C. A. would stand still without her; that the girls who are doing the “spectacular,” interesting work of making doughnuts on the firing line, or scrubbing floors near the front, could not fry or scrub unless she poked up some slow transportation office to send the lard and the scrubbing brushes. She ought to know that the chief cook and bottle washer of the whole Y. M. C. A., the grave, burdened, steady executive himself, would be brought to a dead standstill if she (or her kind) preferred to be or tried to be startlingly he-

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roic. The Y. M. C. A. girls in Paris, and in the large or small headquarters all over France, who endure the drudgery of clerical work, fill one with just as great admiration, just as true reverence for duty well done, as any canteen worker stationed (as they are all crazy to be) "at the front." I do wish they could know how fine and how necessary is the old feminine quality of endurance, which makes them stick to their typewriters! But apparently most of them don't know it; most of them are rather dismal about it. They seem to be half ashamed of it: "We're in no danger," some of them say, with gloomy self-contempt—which is very funny, but perfectly sincere. They say they do nothing but "sit tight" at their desks, when they might be handing out chocolate under shell fire, or racing a motor ambulance to a Poste de Secours! So they might,—but what would happen to the Y. M. C. A. if they did only what they liked? I wish these steady, necessary girls, a few of whom smoke (never publicly, I think); and who love to make sober folk jump with their occasional "bad word"—I wish they knew that we are just as proud of the courage of their endurance of the dull

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job, as we are of the courage that meets shell fire with composure.

Apropos of that occasional and rather self-conscious “bad word,” and the childlike satisfaction of flourishing a cigarette case, as if to say, “See what a bad boy am I!”—I am struck by the fact that mentally and temperamentally there seems to be a great gulf fixed between the men and the women workers. Many of the former are dismayingly narrow-minded (they call it being religious); a few of the latter are,—well, we’ll say “wide minded”; I suppose they call it being *free*. The narrow men represent the Past—and the lost opportunities over here of the Y. M. C. A. The “wide” women represent the future—full of danger and beauty and bad taste and hope! Or you might put it that the men stand for Faith, and the women for Works. (Of course this is a generalization; the majority of the workers stand for both. But unfortunately it is the minority which can give any movement or organization a black eye). Naturally the difference in the mental processes of such men and women makes it sometimes a little hard for them to appreciate each other. I heard a man say, with a significant roll of his eye towards a group of

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petticoats: "I don't see how any human creature, man—*or woman*,—can smoke, and preserve his—*or her*—self-respect. For my part," he added, "I believe that I received my body, beautiful, from God, and I must return it to Him as beautiful as when He gave it."

He was not very beautiful, this little man, but he was *very good*, and honest, and devoted, and hard working—for religious narrowness does not interfere with work! But the effect of his remark upon that group of petticoats can be imagined. . . .

One of the women, also rolling a significant eye, said: "I don't see how any one can want to close the Canteen on Sundays, so he can attend divine service. For my part, I believe there is no diviner service than waiting on the soldiers!"

Of course these excellent workers are boring to each other; but from the soldiers' point of view, the "wide" girls do less harm to the reputation of the Y. M. C. A. than the "narrow" men, some of whom are so concerned with the mint, anise and cumin of sectarianism, that they overlook the weightier matters of service and freedom of opinion,—thereby laying the Association open to the charge of considering

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itself wiser than its Master, and holier than its Lord.

But I must go back of the normalness of the girls' service. There is another race-old loveliness in their work in France, which has impressed me very much. It was particularly in evidence in one of the large Leave Areas, where several thousand men came together for a brief rest after months of the strain of the trenches. This service started in with being exciting and stimulating and full of enthusiasm; but it merged gradually into what somebody called, wearily, “dead horse.” It was the work of entertaining the soldiers.

“It is dreadfully dull to be funny all the time,” one girl said, simply.

It was the dullness which women have endured since first there were babies in the world, or worn-out husbands, or little growing brothers and sisters.

“I *must* amuse them!” tired, bored women have been saying for—how many thousand years? It isn't spectacular to pile up blocks on a nursery floor,—nor is it to get up shows in a Hut, day in and day out, pull off “sing-songs,” or play baseball with a lot of fellows until you are tired enough to drop. It is not showy to do things like this, but it is blessedly

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useful. Consequently hundreds of our girls are in the "Entertainment" bureaus. And the gratitude of the soldiers, put into proposterous slang, or quite inarticulate, is touching to a degree.

Just here is a very interesting and significant thing about our men; in all the intimacy which is inevitable in games, "freshness" on their part is practically unknown. It is the rarest thing in the world that a man has to be snubbed. "I would rather dance with these boys than some of the men in our set at home," a charming girl told me.

There is another "endurance" which is to be seen here, as well as all the world over in offices and shops and factories and schools and homes. I mean the toil of planning other people's work, the drudgery of the executive. There is power with it, and power is, of course, interesting; but take it day after day, and it is not exciting. It is a heroism of the boy-stood-on-the-burning-deck type, but it isn't "spectacular"!

There is still another way in which our girls are doing wonderful, and not showy work; namely, *holding their tongues*. That doesn't sound like anything remarkable, but you just try it! Try working in a canteen with other girls who have nothing in com-

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mon with you but the English language, and the Purpose which has brought you all to France! Try taking orders from a “secretary” of possibly indifferent manners and probably different theological views! Try seeing your little job suddenly taken out of your hands by a soulless Paris Office, and given to somebody else, and you obliged to get a move on for another job! Do you think it would be easy to hold your tongue? “If you think so, heaven is your home,” said one girl, morosely. Certainly this nervous, wracked, irritable, fermenting world does not foster such self-control. I don’t mean to say that our girls are angels of sweet temper; they are not! They are very human, and some of them make it extremely hard for that same “soulless,” frequently blundering, but really well-meaning Paris office. But on the whole, they *do* hold their tongues, keep at their work, and endure—each other! I am inclined to think this is the hardest and the least showy thing our women are doing over there.

But it, too, is an ages-old domestic quality. Think of all the generations of women who have held their tongues in the family circle! And it doesn’t come easily; it has to be cultivated. It isn’t easy for

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human creatures, whether at home or abroad, to forget themselves, to be gentle, to be courteous, to "suffer fools gladly" (and the person who doesn't agree with us is, I have noticed, always "foolish"). No, it isn't a usual thing, such endurance; it is the Great Achievement; it is not commonplace,—it is divine.

And it is "heroic"; but just in proportion as it is true and good, it is not spectacular. . . .

So this was why I never wrote the paper upon the "*Startling Heroic Work of American Women in France!*"

XI

"THE REGAL SOUL"

I FIND myself wondering at the absence of *complaining* over here. It is so natural to complain! . . . Or it used to be.

"*Oh—how hot it is! I am almost melted.*"

"*Heavens! how I hate cold weather.*"

"*I'm so tired, I'm ready to drop,—and I've waited fifteen minutes for the trolley!*"

"*The janitor in our apartment house is simply a demon! He's never on hand when I want him. And as for the elevator! . . .*"

Well! One needn't rehearse the complaints we all used to make in those days of unbelievable ease and peace, those days of childlike certainty that all Nations meant well toward us, and we meant well toward each other—even toward demon janitors. We know those old complaints. . . . If the conditions in which they were made could only come back to us now, how lucky we should think ourselves! To

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be bothered by a slow trolley would be mental luxury for people who are bothered, now, by a slow—slow—slow ocean postal service; people whose hearts are squeezed dry with anxiety about sons and husbands whose letters don't come—and don't come—and don't come! Yes; we know those old "complainers," and very likely the French people knew them, too, before their world began to rock and reel, and janitors (or, as they call them, "concierges") were whirled out of apartment houses, whirled away down the straight white roads of France, that are torn and trampled now into quagmires; whirled over these roads to desert places which were once green fields, or into villages which used to be so cheerful, but are now only heaps of crumbling stone and powdered mortar. It is hot in those "desert places," or freezing cold; and there are no "janitors" to make the roofless houses comfortable. Where the roads are not yet shell-blasted, they are apt to be jammed with a jostling, hurrying crowd of refugees. The panting, scared rush on those packed roads is never aided by the cheerful bang and rattle of a fifteen-minutes-late trolley. The "trolleys" on French roads are fifteen months late!

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I don't know that any one who has not been in a jam of fleeing people can quite grasp the peculiar horror of it—the little individual mind comes into crashing collision with the Collective Mind, and the single wincing body is banged by the enormous impact of the aggregate Body. The crash of that impact almost annihilates personality! Some Y. M. C. A. workers learned this by a few dazed hours of being part of a fleeing crowd. The experience which taught them how individuality is blotted out under pressure of the Mass came on a day of soul-destroying haste; these women had been told to “get out”—to *run!* so to speak, for the town in which they had been working was cowering under air-raids at night, and being shaken by bombardment in the daytime.

The idea of flight, which had been suggested to them, had also, it appeared, occurred to several thousand French people. At any rate, “evacuation” was terrifyingly general, and the one railroad station was besieged. These American women sat for hours on their luggage, waiting their chance to get through the pack of people, reach the gate into the train shed, and board a suffocatingly crowded train. They saw

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the misery of it all—saw old men stumbling along with their old, crying wives; saw mothers herding frightened children; saw boys trying to take on their young shoulders the family responsibilities of fathers now at the front—the Americans saw these things, but they heard no complaints.

(I think I will have to stop here in my story of uncomplaining French endurance, to pay a little tribute to the same spirit in the Y. M. C. A. The organization—like every other organization in the world at this distracting moment, has of course made innumerable blunders—but this story of endurance ought to make the people at home forgive a good many of them.)

It was so terrible, this pushing, trampling, surging panic, in the railroad station, that one of these ladies, who had been elbowed and jostled, and almost trodden upon by this pitiful throng, for what seemed to her an endlessly long time (though I don't suppose it was more than an hour and a half), suddenly had a vision of escape! It came to her with a positive pang of relief. She had in her pocket an Open Sesame! It had been secured for her by Myron Herrick, the one-time American Ambassador, known and

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loved by the French people—“the dear Herrick,” one French woman called him. Mr. Herrick had given this lady a magic wand. It had been tried only that morning at the American Express Company, and had secured the prompt movement of certain pieces of luggage piled, with other American impedimenta, mountain-high in the baggage-room of the company. Why should it not be used now, to act as a sort of Flying Wedge through the dense crowd of French people? The Open Sesame was a letter from Ambassador Jusserand, requesting for the bearer the “courtesy of all officials in France.” The fortunate possessor of the letter knew that it would open any gate for her and she almost gasped with relief: “Oh—the letter!” she said; “we can get through on that!”

Then it was that the little Y. M. C. A. girl spoke: “Oh, no!” she protested,—“no!”

“No?” said the older woman, who was fumbling in her petticoat pocket for the letter, “‘No?’ What do you mean?”

“Oh,” said the girl passionately, “*we* can’t get in ahead of the French people!—At least,”—she corrected herself, for she was much younger than the

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bearer of the letter, and of a modesty not always to be found in youth—"at least, *I* can't, because nobody in a Y. M. C. A. uniform can have any special privileges."

The other, after the first instant of dismay, was able to say, "Oh, *of course* not! I—I hadn't realized," she tried to excuse herself. She had perhaps the excuse, of the mere animal instinct of self-preservation; she had acted on her reflexes, just as one blinks one's eye against a grain of dust. But the Y. M. C. A. girl acted on her reflexes, too—honor, and courage, and sacrifice! . . . (I hasten to say that after the first shock of knowing that she could not get through the crowd by means of the letter, and carry her self-respect with her, the older woman was truly grateful to the little Y. M. C. A. worker.)

So these tense, and perhaps trembling, women stood there, in the surging panic of the station, taking their turn, and refusing to clutch at the "special privilege" of the Ambassador's letter.

They held their breaths, I think, for they waited not only for their "turn," but for the chattering, gibbering laugh of the siren, which might at any moment sound high up among the quiet stars, or for

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the roaring crash of a bomb, falling on one of the roofs about them. There they sat until at last their “turn” came, and they were swept along in the pushing, sweating mob of évacuées, and finally reached their train. And the Ambassador’s letter remained hidden in the petticoat pocket of its owner! This will show you that the people at home have a right to be as proud of some of the American civilians as of American soldiers—for the spirit of that young Y. M. C. A. worker, who would not be saved “ahead of the French people,” is, with all its mistakes, the spirit of the Y. M. C. A.

The French women who have been coming over the roads these last weeks (without any Ambassador’s Letters to tempt them into safety) women who have been running—running—running!—never, so far as I could learn, uttered a word of what could be called “complaint.” Occasionally they stated facts. But that was all. They mentioned, laconically, that their world had come to an end. But such a remark was not in the form of a complaint. Generally it was spoken without tears; almost always with eyes staring blankly and calmly into space, and with level, unexcited voices.

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When I listened to those monotonous voices, my own eyes were blind, and I had no voice with which to speak my poor words of sympathy; I could do nothing but put my arms around these calm women, and hold them close, and think of my "complaint" of Life itself, a complaint which in these heroic presences I dared not utter. One big, gentle creature—not a refugee, but with a husband and son at the front—struck me one day, lightly on the shoulder. "*Courage, Madame! Courage!*" she reproved me, smiling with her brave, sweet eyes. Before such tearless words, how could I either speak or weep?

It was at a port "somewhere" that I saw most of these uncomplaining people. . . . They had come in hordes to Paris; there they had been "sorted out," and shipped here or there, south or west, to places of safety and of relative comfort. They had experienced (some of them for the second time) the dreadful flight from their homes—from little houses with thatched roofs which had huddled happily about old, old churches, from beautiful châteaux, from small, dark rooms tucked away behind the *boutique* or the *atelier*. But, great or small, each one of the houses

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was probably, now, just a heap of crumbling mortar and splintered beams.

The people had fled in every possible way—on railroad trains, when they could, like the Y. M. C. A. workers; occasionally in motors; oftener in carts drawn by horses, donkeys, dogs! Many, many, on foot. And by and by they had reached Paris. I saw them pouring into the Gare de l’Est, where the Red Cross had spread long tables heaped with good American food. They were haggard and dirty and too exhausted for speech. Sometimes the grime of days was channeled on their cheeks by slow-rolling tears.

I think the old husbands and old wives were most heartbreaking to me; yet those mothers!—with babies, and bottles of old and souring milk; those lads, of fourteen or fifteen, pushing perambulators, or pulling toy express wagons packed with household possessions; those growing girls, bending under enormous bundles,—one can’t choose as to heartbreak among such mournful beings!

There were people loaded with quilts tied four-square, to hold what few possessions had been snatched in the hurrying dash out of their houses—clothing and photographs, bird cages, and china vases, and

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the best curtains! You know what I mean, the sort of things we would all try to save if we were driven from our homes at, perhaps, an hour's notice; things often not materially precious ("my baby's rag doll; she died last winter"); just little, worthless, priceless things!

There were small girls hugging Teddy Bears; small boys with kittens, or puppies straining on pieces of string. . . . Women in the perils of childbirth, sick persons, and young children. . . . One very old man had lost all his possessions somewhere on the road; he was so dazed and tired that he could not lift the bowl of soup I brought him to his lips; and when I guided his shaking hands, the cup clattered against his tightly shut teeth, and his frightened eyes confessed that he had lost the power to swallow his food. As his old wife saw this sudden lapsing from the strength on which for perhaps fifty years she may have learned to lean, her poor, fat face, wrinkled and unwashed, puckered into crying—and slow, meager tears dropped steadily down on the bread she was eating. A boy whose rabbit had died just as he reached Paris, but who would not let the little limp, furry body out of his tired, shaking arms,

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looked up at the old, crying grandmère with astonished eyes. Perhaps he thought she was crying about the rabbit, and was surprised at such a tribute to his own sorrow.

These are the people who are being scattered all over France, sheltered in all sorts of houses, with all sorts of people, and wondering, in a dazed way, whether they will ever see their own firesides again.

In the port where the American Authors' Service is stationed, there are many such refugees; some came in 1914, flying from that first rising of the gray tide of wild, unhuman cruelty, which cannot be dignified by the name of war. It is of some of these people I want to speak. I should not have known of them, however, if it had not been for a French lady, whom many, many American mothers have reason to love! I kissed her for those mothers and told her that after the war, when she comes over to America (which she has promised several hundred American soldiers to do), she will have to give up an entire year to taking dinner every single day with a different mother.

This is what she is doing—she is supplementing the canteen work of the Y. M. C. A. by opening her

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own house, offering her own "foyer" to our soldiers! This isn't "organized relief"—it's just "good times." A pleasant sitting-room, where there is a piano, and Madame Iryure's own pretty, well-brought-up girls to pound out roaring tunes, or practice duets with our boys. There are excited, homelike squabbles over games in this salon—just the sort of thing, you know, that happens at home. And (just as they did at home) the boys run errands for Madame, and tease Georgette, and get their buttons sewed on, and are told to be sure and take some aspirin for that cold, and to stop smoking so many cigarettes, and for pity's sake!—or the French equivalent—to remember to wipe their boots, and not track the black, sticky mud from rue de Siam on Madame's clean floors! No wonder they love her, these homesick men—literally "hundreds" of them. They give her their pictures, hanging them in a row in her salon, and labeling them,—impudent youngsters!—"Madame Iryure's Rogues' Gallery." They love her, and talk to her about their mothers, or their best girls, or their dogs; they show her the neckties they have bought; they consult her anxiously as to the things they want to buy to send home—and she has many

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times interfered, and saved American wives and mothers from dreadful imitation lace collars, or hideous “souvenir” handkerchiefs! She also writes endless letters to the United States, just to say, “I’ve seen your Tom, or Dick, or Harry—and he is *très bon, très brave, très gentil,*” etc., etc.

Yet, doing all this for our soldiers, and visiting the French hospitals, and keeping her house clean and comfortable and charmingly refined, on a noisy, dirty, wicked old street in this port, Madame Iryure is yet able to go about with gentle, healing sympathy among the refugees who have been blown here by the Great Wind that is shaking the world. I am sure I don’t know where she finds the time!

Once she let me go with her. . . .

There is a room just below the level of the street, —a very dirty street—and when the wind blows, dust and refuse come eddying down through the open doorway—for, to get a breath of air in hot weather, the door must be kept open; sometimes the wind brings a salty freshness that makes up a little for the dust. A refugee mother with three children lives in this cellar. She has put up a sort of lattice across one end of the room, and hung a quilt over

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it; so, you see, this makes two rooms (so she says), in which, more or less uncomfortably, four people may live, if they have to;—especially if three of the four are little people. But there are more than four. There are six in this “appartement”; another mother, who is only a girl, and her child.

“*Eh, bien,*” said the mother of the three; “she has no one, this girl, Marie. And she has a baby. So she had to be here with me.”

“Her husband—he is in the army?” I said.

Madame shook her head. “She has no husband. She is not married. No. She lived in my town, and when the Germans took it, four years ago, one of them, an officer, told her she was to live with him. So she lived with him. No, Madame, she was not of an immoralness. She was *très sage; très sérieuse*. But had she refused to live with him—another would have taken her, who might have been, perhaps, less *gentil* than he. He—yes; he was of a kindness. He did not ill-treat her. She had for him, even, after a while, an affection. The father of her child, Madame, you understand? I suppose it may be so. Me, I could not feel it. But she said he was not of a brutalness. He was stationed in our town; for two years

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he was there. *Eh, bien*; when the Allies began to shell us, we were told to leave; so he said to her, ‘Go!’ She had thought he had a fondness for her, being the mother of his child, and that he would send her back of the German lines, where she could wait for him. But he said ‘Go!’ So she went—with me; bringing, of course, the child. She works here in a shop. But she is delicate, and cannot earn much. So, *naturellement*, I continue to keep her with me; and I look after the child while she is at work.”

“*Naturellement*.” Think of the significance of that word! And everybody says it when they do remarkable things, beginning with Madame Iryure, who finds it “natural” to take time from her effort to make both ends meet and educate her pretty Georgette, and sew buttons on American shirts, and teach American boys how to speak French—it seems a matter of course to her to take time to come, day after day, to the cellars and attics, in what our men call “the wickedest town on earth.”

But they say “*naturellement*” about other things than kindness. . . . When I climbed up out of this particular cellar, I found a group of children playing on the sidewalk.

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"I wish I could keep them clean," the mother said, wistfully; "*mais c'est impossible!*"

They weren't so very dirty, considering, and they seemed perfectly happy, sitting on the curbstone, chattering like a lot of street sparrows. When I stopped to say "*Bon jour, ma petite,*" each one, with pretty and gracious friendliness, gave me a little, claw-like, grimy hand and said, "*Bon jour, Madame!*"—except one. He just stared at me. "*Bon jour,*" I said, amused at his fat, rosy stolidity; and again he answered by an unsmiling stare out of round, china-blue eyes. It may sound absurd to say so, but there was something about that dull, unfriendly gaze that embarrassed me. "This little boy won't speak to me," I said in an aside to Madame. I wondered what I had done to arouse his baby antagonism—the dislike of a child or a dog is curiously mortifying to an adult. "He doesn't like me!" I said, abashed, and wondering.

Madame Iryure gave a little shrug. "*Naturellement,*" said she; "*il est l'enfant de l'allemand.*"

Of course one allows for coincidence; it may be that I had unconsciously offended the little group on the curbstone; but, if so, it was only the "infant of

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the German” who would not shake hands and forgive me. The German child, who had been taken into that poor, dark cellar, and fed and cared for with the three French children,—was the only one who refused to put his dirty paw into mine,—though I noticed that he accepted (silently) the ten centimes, for which the others had overflowed with pretty and excited thanks.

“*Naturellement!*” said Madame again—this time as to the child’s willingness to accept; and speaking racially, she was certainly correct. In their purpose of gain, the Germans have always “accepted,” without thanks; now they “take,” without permission. It is just the next step, this “taking,” and it has made them the Robbers of the World.

This is only a little, unimportant story of a disagreeable child—but it is the sort of thing that is building up in our minds the startled consciousness that there is something inherently wrong with the German blood; it adds its little weight to our determination to “smash Germany”—the thing our men say, gleefully, every day of their lives. I suppose this racial defect makes all sorts of things “natural” to the German mentality—the shelling hospital

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trains, or roads crowded with refugees. . . . Here is a story about that:

We were sitting, Madame Iryure and I, with an old daughter and an old mother,—ninety-four she was, this old mother; and the daughter, a big, vigorous woman of, I fancy, sixty-five or sixty-six, watched her as if she were a baby.

“*Elle est très fatiguée,*” the daughter explained; “she is not yet rested, though it is now two years—and she was only ninety-two, then. She walked, Madame, there was no other way, for we had to flee from the Germans. So she is tired, *ma mère. Naturellement.*”

This was not a complaint, just the statement that a woman of ninety-two might, under the circumstances, be expected to be “tired.” . . . Before the flight began, for which no vehicle could be found, the old daughter telephoned to her brother-in-law in the next town: “*What* shall I do with our mother?” she demanded frantically. “Start!” he said; “walk! and I will meet you with my motor!” “His motor was of a dilapidation,” said the woman, “but it would go.” He started. “We have never seen him since, Madame. We know not—my sister,

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his wife, knows not—what happened. He was killed on the way, no doubt. They were dropping bombs on the road—of course—as it was full of people! So, as there was no car to carry her, *ma mère* walked—much. And she is, therefore, *fatiguée*.”

As the daughter told this story, the ninety-four-year-old mother, her hands folded in her lap, her eyes bleared and red-rimmed, regarded us with sphinx-like calmness. I seemed to have no words of sympathy. After all, what words can one use, to say how one sympathizes with an old woman, tottering, gasping, stumbling along a hot, blinding-white road, over which a hostile airplane soared and swooped and dropped bombs on fleeing people—on an elderly gentleman, racing along in a battered old automobile to pick up his mother-in-law and carry her back to safety? How can one sum up that sort of thing? As this story was told to me, the inadequacy of words to describe the degeneracy of the German mind, and the glorious misery of the French Soul, came over me with a dazing sense of my own futility and helplessness. . . . What is the use of even writing about it? Nobody can understand it, who hasn't felt it; and if one has felt it, one does

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not want to read about it! (However, I find myself trying to write about it, futile and inadequate as my words are!)

The old daughter talked on and on, monotonously. "Would Madame," she said, "care to visit some friends, who had also been driven from their homes?" These friends were very poor, she explained; so, naturally, she was helping them. We went, she and Madame Iryure and I, through queer, twisting, filthy streets, the sea wind making dust clouds around the corners. We found the friends, three women, and one monotonously crying baby, in a tenement of two rooms. They showed me the picture of the house from which they had run—run, to escape its bursting walls and burning roof and crashing timbers! It had been a big, comfortable building, for they had been innkeepers, and were evidently well-to-do people.

"*Mon mari,*" said the oldest of the three, "*est mort. Il est mort de chagrin et fatigue.*" His heart was not strong, she explained, "and his sorrow was such. . . ."

She looked, this quiet, uncomplaining woman, like the Sistine Madonna grown old; her dark hair, with here and there a gleaming silver thread in it, was

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parted over a serene white forehead, and her eyes, gently remote, seemed as if tear-washed into a strange, almost unearthly calmness. Very quietly she told me of their village, and of their fight, and—of her neighbor. Can I repeat, I wonder, that neighbor's story? . . . Yes; because we cannot know too precisely and explicitly just what we Americans are fighting over in France. . . .

The neighbors, it appears, were a husband and a wife; and she was young. And there were seven German soldiers . . . and they tied the husband to the bedpost . . . The hideousness of that hour in the upper room of the neighbor's house was stated with laconic, uncomplaining composure. It was not until the last detail was given that the kind, elderly face suddenly quivered into tears.

“They had broken into a shop, those Boches, and taken much jewelry; oh, not valuable things—just things of a cheapness. Imitation, Madame. And this jewelry they threw down beside her—she was unconscious then. Oh, yes; she remained unconscious until six o'clock. And they threw the jewelry beside her—as if to say, ‘*She has been paid.*’ Madame, the insult!—the insult!” . . .

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She broke down and covered her face with her hands. It was the spiritual agony which brought those tears of rage; physical suffering had been endured with composure; death had been faced with calmness. But the insult!

"It was only the body," Madame Iryure comforted her. The Madonna said, "*Oui, oui.*" But the wound to the soul! . . . Again her face twitched and she covered it with her thin hands, while the tears dropped from between her fingers. Madame Iryure put her arms about her.

"*Mon amie! Mon amie!*" she said.

There seemed to be nothing else to say. . . . Yes; we complain, or at least we used to complain, of heat and cold, and trolley cars, and janitors. But when there is a tornado, or a conflagration, or an earthquake, there is really nothing to say. France is speechless. The Wind of German Hate has swept the green fields and left graves—graves everywhere! The earth has quaked under the tramp of their armies, and treasure has been engulfed. The fire of their Lust has destroyed sheltering roofs of thousands of homes, and licked up hearths that were the symbols of family life. But after the Wind and the

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Earthquake and the Fire, there speaks in France the Still Small Voice of the Spirit, which says, “*It is only the body.*” It speaks over in America, too, for we are saying to France,—“My friend, my friend!”

It was the insult to the soul which so shook the fabric of this elderly woman’s life; an insult to her neighbor’s soul, you may say? But in France we are all neighbors! . . . I find myself wondering whether we ever can be “neighbors” to Germany again? I don’t see how it is possible in our time—or even in the time of that china-blue-eyed child of lust and shame,—the child who would not give me his little hand, clenched so tightly over the centimes! When one thinks of the German mentality, a wave of hatred rises in us, and under its bitter surge, we say a thousand bitter things. We say, some of us, “a trade boycott!” “Starve the beast into half-human decency,” we say. Then, in our calmer moments we know that that is pure childishness. It is like tying the enemy’s hands behind him, and then saying, “Put your hand in your pocket and pay us what you owe us!”

Well! it is hard to think straight in this storm of anger. Fortunately, little people like ourselves,

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—civilians doing their job in France, don't have to decide such great questions as boycotts and indemnities. We are too small, and too angry, and our vision is too limited for such momentous decisions. And we are seeing red—some of us. It is only the French calmness, and patience, and balance that keep some of us from expressions of anger which would soil our lips, and pull us down to the German level. Personally, I try to keep Madame Iryure in my mind, and to say, over and over, "It is only the body of France that has been hurt. They cannot touch her Soul!" Her Soul, which does not complain; which endures, with quietness and confidence and courage; the Soul of France, which knows that Value cannot be summed up in money; that power is not another word for Righteousness; that lust is not Love;—the Soul which knows all the things that Germany has forgotten!

One looks at France as she dashes from her eyes the blood from her wounded head—and strikes and strikes at the beast—that beast which is in all of us, but which in Germany has broken loose—and one says, exultantly:

"Nothing can compel the regal Soul!"

XII

WE DECIDE THE KAISER'S FATE

September, 1918

OVER THERE in France last spring we were so certain of the Dawn that once in a while, as we sat in the darkness of midnight, we amused ourselves by talking of what would happen when the Day should break and the German Shadow be lifted forever from the world. . . . "What is going to happen, after the Germans have been beaten?" we said to each other.

"We'll have a new world," an American officer said. And a Y. M. C. A. man added, "This little old earth will be a cleaner place to live in, after we've licked Germany out of her boots, and burned up all her medieval militaristic rubbish."

Which was another way of saying that all Humanity would be purified and saved by the cleansing fire of War. But there wasn't any doubt in our minds that Germany, who betrayed humanity to the flames,

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would herself be pretty thoroughly consumed in the conflagration. By the light of those flames, which lapped up cathedrals that were the treasures of the world, and thatched roofs which sheltered the treasures of Love—lapped up the playthings of Belgian babies, and bird cages in which blackbirds used to whistle in the sunshine—by the light of those flames we read the meaning of *Materialism*. For it is Materialism which has brought Germany to her downfall! And, naturally, the civilized peoples, anxious to banish such materialism from the earth by “licking Germany out of her boots,” are ready to see a few of their own grimy ideas licked out of existence, too! When that has been done, of course, as the Y. M. C. A. man said, the world will be a cleaner place to live in. It will be lighted, not by incendiary fires, but by the torch of an Idealism which, among other things, has sent two million of our men across the ocean to help in the licking!

So that was the way we talked, we Americans, cheering each other with the assertion that future good was to come out of all the present evil. But we generally ended, both soldiers and civilians, by saying that the man who started the Fire, the man

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who betrayed us, had "something coming to him."

What should the "something" be? To discuss his punishment in a chilly *abri* was a harmless amusement, and served to while away the dull hours between, say, 11 P.M. and 2 or 3 A.M. For that was when quite frequently some of us sat in a certain hospitable cellar on the left bank of the Seine. . . .

The air raids had hardly left us a quiet night for five weeks—and the cellar was too uncomfortable for sleep; so nothing was more natural than to consider what we would do to the Kaiser to get even with him for the loss of beauty sleep (which is supposed to come before twelve o'clock). For, while waiting for a probable raid, nobody settled down in bed before 11:45 at the earliest. It was generally somewhere between 11:15 and 11:45 that, high up in the sky, and from all quarters of the heavens at once, the horrid, squealing laugh of the siren would be heard. Instantly, as it shattered the star-lit darkness of Paris, the electric light in our apartment house went out, and we waited, yawning, to know whether the enemy had gotten through our lines. If he had, we heard in about ten minutes the sudden roar and crash of defending air guns. The sound is like

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sharp, banging thunder, pierced at intervals by tremendous, houseshaking explosions, which splintered the air with such frightful concussions, that they sometimes made our ears hurt us. When this happened, we sleepy people, who had been sitting about waiting for this tiresome interruption, would get up and say, resignedly, "Well, I suppose we must go down to the cellar?"

The first night this happened, almost as the lights went out, there came a hurrying rush of footsteps along the hall, a quick knock at my door, then Marie's white face, and wide, dark, terrified eyes:

Madame! Les Boches! Est-ce que Madame descend à la cave?"

"*Non, Marie.*"

"*Non? O Madame, descendez! Descendez!*" Even as she spoke we heard the scuttle of her flying feet, far down the hall, the *tap! tap!* at each door, and the warning cry, "*La cave! La cave!*"

A minute later came the authoritative voice of the gallant and charming Frenchwoman who was the head of the house: "The morale of the household, Madame, makes it a necessity that all shall obey the rules of the Government, to descend to the cellar,"

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she said calmly. So, of course, we said meekly that we would "descend." By the tiny spark of a flashlight, and stumbling over boots ranged outside of closed doors (our boots were still blacked, after a fashion), I felt my way through the inky darkness of the hall toward the three flights of stairs by which we were to reach the bowels of the earth. . . .

I remember that in those moments of dark silence while people were rushing downstairs, I noticed a hurrying shape in blue pajamas flitting past me, and recognized a French officer, invalided home, who was staying in our pension because he no longer had a home to which to go. His wife, a refugee from northern France, had fled to Paris and found shelter here, so he had joined her—and they were so happy to be together—ruined and exhausted, with no future except Love. I had a glimpse of his face—calm, tragic, white—bending over a little bundle he held in his arms; it was his baby, born in all the thundering alarms of the evacuation of his town. The little thing, wrapped in a hurriedly caught-up blanket, looked at me in the flash of my electric light, with eyes as calm as his. Then the darkness swallowed father and child. . . .

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The cellar of this old house wandered off into space like endless catacombs; vault opening into vault, gleaming wet walls broken by arch after arch, corridors stretching back into obscurity. In the middle of the labyrinth of passages and cellars our hostess had laid down a rug, and built up a sort of table, and provided a few seats (mostly empty boxes standing on end). A lamp burned steadily on the table, and sometimes there were even papers about for anybody wakeful enough to read. It may sound a little forced to suggest being "sleepy" in an air raid; but the truth is, you got used to the raids just as you got used to Big Bertha, after she had dropped death all around you for weeks. Once she dropped a shell in the Garden of the Tuileries two or three hundred feet behind the A. A. S.; and we all jumped, and said, "*Gra-cious!*" and then we walked on, and did a little shopping in the Rue de Rivoli. Yet "sleepiness" under bombardment was queer, I admit; it was *all* queer over there! And as queer as anything else was the matter-of-fact way people took the absolutely new experience of being in constant danger. One charming gentleman confessed to having cussed a little, because the jar of a terrific explosion,

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knocked his talcum powder off the shelf in his bathroom, when he was shaving, and his "waistcoat looked as if flour had been sprinkled all over it!" And a woman said to me, with a shrug: "Yesterday the shells came every twenty minutes; they were regular, like labor pains." (I wondered if she thought of all the glory that the travail of the world was bringing to birth!) Once, however, under this "regular" shelling, her calmness had been shaken: "I had all the children in my room," she said, "because it is of such smallness that I could keep them warm by just a little fire in the fireplace. And I was making toast, for Mimi was sick, and cried for *pain grillé*; and I buttered it—Oh, yes, I had bought a little butter, Madame, just for Mimi! And I put the toast down in front of the grate to keep warm: and then—a shell fell in the next block, and the *secousse* upset Mimi's toast into the ashes—and all that butter so expensive was lost! And Mimi wept," she ended simply. Think of being so used to being bombarded that Mimi's toast was what worried you!

On this particular night, in the cellar, when the fate of the Kaiser was discussed, the sound of the dropping bombs was muffled by the thick walls, and

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there was no buttered toast to fall into the fire, because there was no fire (and no butter, either!). I think it would have amused us to make toast while we waited until the strange, mad people up in the air got tired of their vicious play, or their ammunition gave out, or our machine guns winged them. But as we could not make toast, we just waited until, for one reason or another, the raid ended, and the *berloque* ("All clear!") sounded, and we could creep out, a little stiffly (for soap boxes are not overcomfortable), and climb upstairs again.

Until that welcome sound came, however, there was nothing to do but crouch about in overcoats and jackets, and yawn, and look at each other, each of us wondering if he or she looked as haggard as the other people did. And, as you can understand, it was natural, in this long hour and a half (or so), to amuse ourselves by saying what we thought ought to be done to the Kaiser for giving us all this trouble and sleeplessness.

What punishment will fit the crime of this individual Judas—who is the embodiment of the Judas nation? The crime itself we did not discuss, it was an old story. The whole civilized world knows it, and

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abhors it. There has been no such crime since mankind began to stand on its hind legs. The fact that the criminal, like the small boy in America, "didn't go for to do it," that even his insanely egotistical imagination could not have conceived such horrors as have been brought upon humanity—the fact that the German Emperor is, briefly (as a Frenchman said), only the poor Jackass of Time who has kicked down some of the bulwarks of Civilization—all these mitigating statements do not lessen this other fact, that he must be punished. . . .

There was a silent Englishman and a talkative Englishman in the little group that debated this question, sitting on the packing boxes and watching the lamplight gleaming on the wet walls and casting strange shadows on the vaulted ceilings. And there were three or four Americans, men and women, and a pretty girl; and the French soldier with his baby rolled up in a blanket, and his handsome red-headed wife, whose high heels were as silly as any of those worn by American girls—and they all had ideas on the subject.

After everything is said and done and suffered, and the rocking world is steady again, what are

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those of us who are left—broken and scarred as we shall be—what are we going to do to the fool who brought disaster upon us? (“And upon his own country, too, thank the Lord!” said the talkative Englishman.)

“Perhaps they’ll banish him?” one of the évacuées said.

“Banishment?” said an American. “Shucks! Banishment is too dead easy for him.”

“It is not agreeable,” said the évacuée, dryly. “I remember myself, monsieur, of two people of the town next to me, an old husband and wife exiled—banished—driven out into the fields; very old they were; yes, of great age. And they lived in the fields for days. They were without shelter; they had made coverings for themselves from clothing they found on the dead on the battleground; there was blood on the clothing—stiff, black blood; and it was of a smell very dreadful. They had no words to speak of their suffering, these *vieux*. They stood before me, in my garden; the old husband opened his lips, but no sound came; his hands were of purpleness with cold; he tied his long white beard into knots—one knot—and then a word, ‘*Madame!*’ and he untied

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the knot; '*ma femme.*' And he tied another knot. His hands bled with the cracks of the cold. '*Elle a faim,*' he said; and he untied the knot. He could speak no more. She, looking at him, wept—wept—wept; but very quietly, without sound. A few days later she died of the cold and misery of the fields. And when she was dying, he sat beside her, and tied knots in his beard, and said nothing—nothing. Banishment is of great misery, monsieur. It is not little. Not, as you say, 'Shooks.'"

"He can have St. Helena," said the silent Englishman; "it would be rather neat to send him to St. Helena."

But there was an outcry at that. What! Let the ape set foot where the lion has trod? Never!

"Not on your life," said the American. "I vote for imprisonment for life in an underground dungeon—say a cellar on the left bank of the Seine," he ended, shivering.

Then a Frenchwoman spoke, between shut teeth; "Imprisonment? *Oui! Oui!* My brother died in one of their unclean prisons, *mangé* by lice—devoured. His wounds being without care, these creatures—" I spare you her description. I wanted

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to put my hands over my ears to shut out the laconic horror of her naked words. No wonder the passion for retaliation made her feel that the man who permitted such things should also rot, also be "*mangé*," in an unclean prison!

But here a sleepy American woke up to say, drowsily: "I would have him *spanked*, publicly. Only by being made ridiculous can he be made harmless. He'll be a historical figure if we kill him, as I should enjoy doing. The next thing would be that he would get into the prayerbook as a 'blessed martyr,' like your King Charles. Imprisonment would only make him a center of unrest, a focus of conspiracy, as long as he lived. He would be a menace to the peace of the world in the deepest dungeon you could find. In fact, the deeper and dirtier it was, the more dangerous he would be, for the Allies, being civilized peoples, could not degrade themselves by imitating his cruelty. And there would be pacifists who would scream about the 'creatures,' and say they made him 'uncomfortable;' and they would send him flowers! Yes, Madame; your lovely sex does that sort of thing! Beside, somebody'd rescue him; then

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we'd have the whole business over again! Spank him, in the Place de la Concorde, and set him free."

"You're right," the other American admitted; "I guess we'll shoot him, as he shot Nurse Cavell."

But the talkative Englishman shook his head. "No; shooting is for spies who, whatever else they may be, are brave and intelligent men. This person is neither brave nor intelligent. Shooting is too good for him."

"Hang him as high as Haman!" a lady suggested.

"And give him the chance to work up rotten heroics for the benefit of spectators?" her husband said. "No; hanging is too good for him."

"Boil him in oil!" said an American, pounding the table with both fists.

"I," said the pretty American girl viciously, "I would drop a bomb on him!"

But the Y. M. C. A. man frowned. "Bomb him? Let me tell you a bombing story which a Tommy told me. He said he had been detailed to carry some papers to the commander of another company. It was Sunday, he said; a lovely day! He was to walk through an old beech wood, and across ripe wheat fields, where there were lots of scarlet poppies. The

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Boche guns were quiet, for a wonder, though there was a plane sliding round up in the air, but there was nothing doing, apparently. The sky was so blue and warm, he said, with big, still domes of shining white clouds on the horizon, that it made him think of one of those German posters we used to buy. Do you remember?"

Yes; we remembered. There actually *was* a time when we bought "Made in Germany" things! It is hard to believe there ever were such days.

"They won't come again, in our time," said the American; "no more 'Made in Germany' in ours! I—" A roar outside drowned the rest of the sentence.

"*That* was made in Germany," said the Y. M. C. A. man; and went on with the Tommy's story:

"He said that everything was perfectly still and beautiful; and right along through the yellow wheat and the poppies came a little girl in a black apron. About five, he thought she was. The prettiest thing!—brown eyes and curly hair; and she had a Teddy Bear under one arm, and she was carrying a big blue jug of milk. It slopped over a little, and she looked terribly anxious. He said she was a peach—

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but he had to laugh at the Teddy Bear squeezed under her arm, and the slopping milk. Somehow, she fitted into the blue sky and the white clouds, and the poppies in the wheat; and he was just going up to her, to carry her milk for her—he wanted to kiss her, he said; for somehow she, and the fields and the sky and everything, made him believe that God was somewhere in this hell of a world after all. (He has kids of his own.) He was chuckling to himself with happiness, and then that plane dropped a bomb right on her.”

One could hear, there in the cellar, the sharp indrawn breath of his hearers. . . .

Nobody spoke.

“He said he took the—the Teddy Bear, back to her mother.”

The pretty American, who had suggested bombing as a punishment, put her face down on her father's knee.

“Well,” said the Y. M. C. A. man, “I asked him a fool question. I said, ‘What did you do?’ He told me he just lifted his arms, and clenched his fists and looked up at the sky, and swore—and swore—and swore!—like a blue streak, for five solid minutes.

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Then he picked up . . . the Teddy Bear. As for the swearing," said the Y. M. C. A. man, "I came in on the chorus with both feet! So that's why I say, when it comes to bombing William as punishment—it isn't fitting that he should have what that French baby had."

The American girl agreed, in a very small voice "No—no."

"There are others who are also personally responsible," some one said. "There is the soldier who dropped the bomb; there is the man who manufactured the bomb; there is the officer who ordered the throwing of the bomb; there is the Government who authorized the bomb-throwing. The Emperor just pressed the button and started the dirty work."

"We ought to indict the whole German nation," said the silent Englishman.

"Just so," said the American; "and we will! The Germans will hear the indictment when they come up against a trade boycott. But as we can't, unfortunately, after indicting them, and finding them guilty, wipe them all off of the face of the earth, we have just got to punish their embodiment—the

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Emperor William. Bombs, I admit, won't do; nor hanging, nor shooting, nor boiling in oil."

"Well, then, what in thunder—" some one began; but the silent Englishman, who had only opened his lips twice during this idle talk, suddenly smiled.

"You are all proposing to satisfy our personal animosity at the head bandit, ladies and gentlemen. There is a far more important consideration: I mean the preservation of civilization. His punishment must preserve *that*. We won't preserve it either by vengeance or leniency. The sentimentality of 'Mercy' is as dangerous to civilization as would be retaliation for our own sufferings. Nor can we preserve it by trying to avenge those who have died for us. Either revenge or forbearance would jeopardize our own humanness. Hence," he said, smiling at the American girl, "although it won't do to let him go unpunished, neither will it do to torture his soul with public humiliation, though I admit that to spank him, and make him free and ridiculous, might ensure his harmlessness. Nor must we torture his flesh with vermin. Yet he and his gang must suffer. What? The legal penalty of their crimes! Nothing more. *And nothing less*. They must be indicted, tried, con-

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victed, sentenced; all with the same formality and fairness which we would extend to any other pick-pockets or assassins. . . ." He paused and fumbled in his pocket for a piece of paper.

"I saw a list of some of the crimes of the criminals," he said, "and I copied it." He stuck his monocle in his eye and read:

"*Von Hindenburg*—is alleged to have ordered that bread which had been found soaked in paraffin should be given as food to Russian prisoners."

"*Von Mackensen*—is alleged to have ordered about one thousand Rumanian children from ten to seventeen years of age to be shot, on the ground that they had conspired against him."

"*Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria*—is alleged to have caused thirty-one girls to be carried off and placed at the disposal of his officers."

"*Blegen*—is alleged to be responsible for the destruction of Dinant, and the massacre of 34 old men, 71 women, and 17 children under nine years of age."

"*Prince Eitel Frederick*—is alleged to have stolen a lady's wardrobe from a château near Liége. Stole several clocks. And so on . . .

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"These," said the Englishman, putting the list back in his pocket, "these are the crimes charged against the small fry, which they must be given the chance to disprove. The crimes charged against the head bandit we needn't rehearse—they include the murder of your brave brother, mademoiselle, and of the old woman who ate the frozen turnips, and— and of that baby with the Teddy Bear. But he, too, the head bandit, must be given the chance to disprove these charges." He paused here and laughed. (I wish the Kaiser could have heard that laugh.) "For such crimes, he shall, by due process of law, be tried, and if convicted, sentenced." He paused again. Then, in a gentle and terrible voice, he said, "And, by God! the sentence shall be executed."

By some strange impulse, as he said these words, the four men there in the cellar, suddenly, together, raised their right hands. "*Amen*," they said.

It was curious how the Englishman's words changed the whole atmosphere of the discussion; I don't mean merely that it stopped the flippancy; it did more than that—it lifted us above our personal pain and anger. The word *Law*—serene, inevitable, majestic—wiped the triviality of revenge out of

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our minds and left in its place, *Justice*. The criminals must be punished. Why? Not because the sister would have some individual German eaten—mangé—as her brother was; not because the mother, kissing the dripping Teddy Bear, would like to see German brains spattering the poppies; not because the poor husband, tying knots in his white beard, would be glad to know that the instigator of his old wife's suffering was starving on raw turnips! For no one of these personal impulses of retaliation must be Arch-Criminal and his band be sentenced, and the sentence "executed." It must be done, because, "*to fail to punish crime, when the power to do so exists, is not merely to condone it; it is to make it cease to be a crime, and become a precedent.*" If the Allies, for any reason whatever—call it politics or pacifism or what you will—if the Allies do not punish, according to law, they will blot the word Law out of human speech.

"But what," some one said, meekly, "will be the punishment? Death?"

The Englishman made a careless gesture. "Oh, as to that, I don't know. I'm not a lawyer. But whatever, in Law, is the punishment for inciting to

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crime, that will be administered to the German Emperor. I rather fancy it will be death. Whatever, in law, is the punishment for executing illegal acts ordered by another, that will be inflicted upon the men who executed Nurse Cavell and Captain Fryatt; upon the man who sank the 'Lusitania'; upon— Oh, well, I can't go through the whole list," he ended. . . .

Well, the Head Bandit and his gang haven't been punished—yet; we have still to catch our hare. But we know that we are going to catch him, and that the time of his punishment is coming nearer and nearer, and we know that no sacrifice has been too great if it wipes off the earth—not the deluded, enslaved German people, who, with their own bodies, their own unspeakable miseries of endurance, have propped up the Hohenzollern dynasty; or not even the evil Fool who is the head of the dynasty, and who set the world on fire, and is to be punished for it—but no sacrifice can be too great if it wipes out of the Human Mind the dynastic idea—Autocracy—and puts in its place our own Idea—Justice. Yes, we free people—English, French, Americans—we who sat in cellars in a rocking, magnificent Paris, and all the free people of our nations who stacked

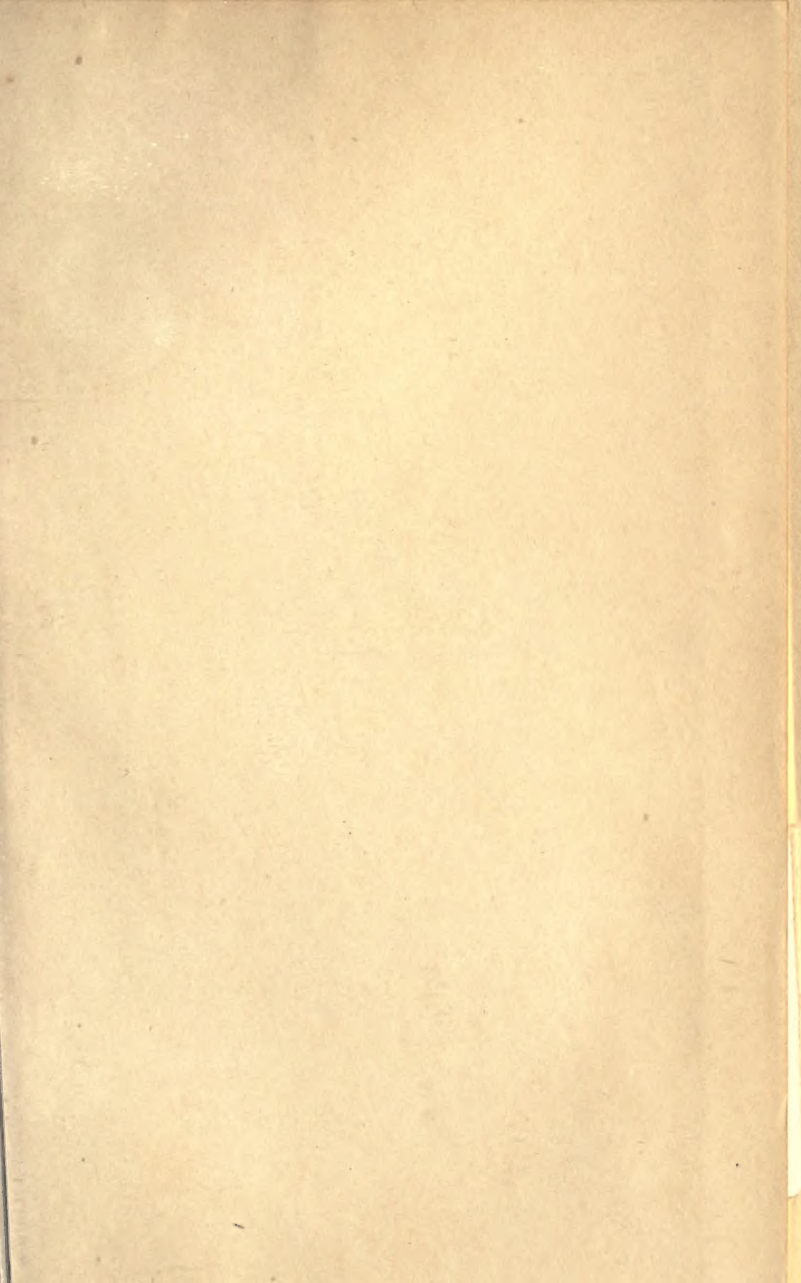
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up their Loans as breastworks for the men in the trenches, we know that there is no price too high to pay for victory! There is nothing (except honor) that we and our allies will not sacrifice to banish from the face of the earth the malign and venomous spirit which drove the old husband and wife into February fields to eat frozen turnips and cover themselves with the stained and sodden uniforms of dead soldiers, drove them out to die in banishment from the comfortable chimney corner of some wrecked and pillaged farmhouse; the spirit of cruelty which let the soldier die of his rotting, untended wounds; the spirit of Hell which spilt the baby's milk, and splashed the wheat and the poppies with her blood!

But the extermination of this evil Spirit must, for our own safety, be done by the Spirit of Eternal Righteousness—which we call Justice.

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds *without the Law*,
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget.





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