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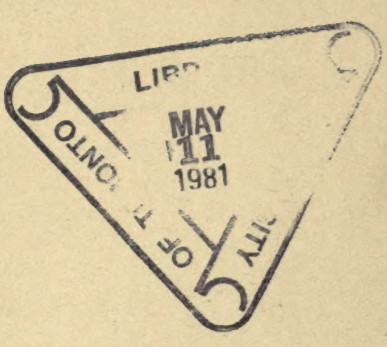

VERDUN DAYS IN PARIS

BY

MARJORIE GRANT

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TO

E. P.

Paris 1914 and 1916

AUTHOR'S NOTE

ALL the names in this book are fictitious.

M. G.

CONTENTS

I

MY CANTEEN REFUGE

7 Rue Gît-le-Cœur,
Paris, 28*th February* 1916 (St. Romain).

La Cantine Refuge is its official title, and means that it is a refuge for the homeless who have had to flee before the Huns, as well as a canteen for poilus on leave. After five days so full of work that I have not had time to write so much as one complaining note to friend or relation, I speak of it as my canteen, and think of it as my refuge. I am doing real work, hard work. In the honest tiredness of the body the mind finds peace.

I suppose every woman, almost, when the men went marching away, heard a call to be up and doing. Many, I am sure, answering, had my experience of trying, trying, and winning only to discontent. The work offering was too easy, came too much under the suspicion of being futile. I

knitted in Canada, knitted with the grimness of one of the Dread Sisters, and was not content. My good-natured friends wanted to know if I aimed at a post on the General Staff as ' my fitting war-work.' I closed my ears to their gibes, and came to London.

There even the demand for knitters was slack, the whole British Army having been knitted for the moment into a cocoon of stuffiness. My friend Veronica, helping at a hospital on the Riviera, promised work. I rushed off to St. Bleu, and less than a fortnight after was bidding Veronica farewell, half abashed, half defiant.

' To nurse, it seems, I am not able, to flirt I am ashamed.' So I summed up to her my disqualifications for what the Riviera offered in the way of war-work, and I returned to Paris.

The dark days of the Verdun attack came over Paris, and I raged foolishly, ' Why do we not rush in to help ? ' and saw in my dreams the little French shepherd dog, that had been rushed and tumbled in the dust once by the German wolf, had marvellously recovered and, with our British aid, brought the beast to bay, now savagely rushed again. I saw

the beast groping at its throat, getting nearer and nearer each moment.

I was in a fever of impatience and nerves to find something real to do, when the blessed Refuge came ; yes, actually came.

Was it Our Lady of Loretto who used to scatter about Italy, miraculously and in a night, beautiful little churches in poor villages which had not the means to build ? In that way, I think, my Canteen Refuge came into being. There are official records to show that it existed long before. But I know that it appeared suddenly on February 23rd, late in the afternoon.

It is in the Latin Quarter and quite close to where I live, and you walk straight in on the street level. I passed it that afternoon and walked back to pass it again, and thought how cheerful and human it looked, with children as well as soldiers going in and out. I passed it many times, lacking courage to go in out of the desolate evening. Then I was, as it were, caught by the wind in the rain-washed darkness, and driven against the very door.

Chatter of voices, clatter of dishes,—sounds seeming to travel along the rays of light that streamed

through the carelessly shuttered windows,—were heartening in the unfriendly night. I opened the door on impulse, and walked into the gaiety and warmth. The white-washed walls were bright with posters, and the windows with green plants. Three long tables divided into panels a mass of vivid colour, poilus in horizon blue, Spahis in their beautiful Algerian scarlet cloaks, Belgians in crumpled khaki, a dragoon or two in magnificently tailed and glittering helmets, all eating and chattering heartily. Behind a counter at one end of the room stout French ladies heaped plates from vast copper pans of food, and light-footed *serveuses* in white dresses and flowing navy-blue veils, took these up—four and five plates at a time—and dealt them round with swiftness and precision.

In an inner room, a step or two below the level of the first, a dozen or more children and some women with infants in their arms, were having their share of the feast. The sedate little girls with pig-tails—one industriously reading a book propped on her knee under the table—and the boys in their black blouses, were in the highest spirits over their *purée* of lentils and their tin mugs

of beer and water. Their sudden and delicious laughter soared above the grown-up voices. I knew at once that I belonged. The Directrice, an agreeable and preoccupied little lady in brown furs, with the quicksilver movement and the colouring of a squirrel, was pointed out to me, and she listened with friendly attention while I explained how glad I should be if I could be of any use. She accepted me at once.

'A Canadian? But how charming. The French feel so closely allied to Canada—so sympathetic. You must meet M. le Directeur, my husband. His cousin is married to a French-Canadian, and has adopted the country absolutely.'

M. le Directeur was as cordial as his wife, and I could see that my services would be really welcome. I was not asked to produce any certificates or passports, or cards of identification, or *permis de séjour*. Before, war-work in France had always seemed to be either strangled in formalities, or casual in the extreme. Now I was taken on trust, and there was plain and simple but real work immediately at hand.

My Canteen Refuge is quite a big and compre-

hensive charity. It is not only for soldiers and orphan and refugee children, but for the poor of the Quarter as well. My canteen—the first of many—was founded a few days after France declared war, when some ladies took care of a little group of destitute women and children, feeding and lodging them in one room. Next day the same ladies collected a few francs with which to buy necessities to make their protégés a little more comfortable, and found that the number of families left terrified and helpless by the great emergency of war, was increasing the size of their original group moment by moment. But they were not dismayed. They turned no one away.

'Wait, my friend, we will find a place for you,' they assured each anxious mother. 'Be tranquil.'

Those were days of incessant work, and personal fear and suspense did not for an instant delay its progress. The resource and devotion of the women who founded the canteen-hostel, who fed and lodged the poor and cared for the sick, and prepared food and comforts for the men going off to fight, do not seem so remarkable now, only

because the same intelligent energy is being displayed by the women all over France. But those first days must have been heroic.

My canteen was at first somewhere up near the Odéon. Then it moved to its present quarters, for more space the Directrice said—for me to find it, I know.

We have three dining-rooms, one for soldiers, one for children, and one for the poor of the Quarter, refugees, and casuals who come in for odd meals. This last room is known as the Salle Napoléon, and holds sixty people, not counting small children in arms. We have two services of meals always, and sometimes three. The Salle Napoléon has its own separate entrance, and an 'out-department' where people may come and buy milk and food if they prefer to carry their meal away. The patrons of the Salle Napoléon pay four sous apiece for meal-tickets. In cases where they cannot afford even this sum, M. le Directeur presents them with a whole book of *bons*, which feeds them free for a month.

There are a number of war orphans living permanently at the canteen, and many children,

refugees from the invaded villages pass through our hands. Some of the women employed at the canteen, whose husbands are at the Front, have their families living with them. One who works in the laundry has four little children here. Her three grown-up sons and her husband are with the Colours. This has the curious effect of making her intensely hostile to the soldiers, and she can't be trusted to wait on them or cook for them, and finds many rough epithets if they come her way. I expect it is one form of war-tension.

The children's dormitories are up at the top of the house, and those for the soldiers are behind the dining-rooms. There are two of these soldiers' dormitories with clean and comfortable cubicles for each man. For the soldier everything is free of course, and we have fifty or more poilus every night. Their leave is generally for six days, except in cases of convalescence, when it may extend over several weeks. Those who are *réformés*—discharged temporarily or permanently—and without work, sometimes stay a long time too, and make themselves useful in the kitchen and pantry. But one of the most valuable of the canteen's

activities is an employment bureau, which makes every effort to secure work for those in need of it.

The first night of my work we had twenty-five refugee children from Rheims at dinner on their way to orphanages in the Midi. They were happy with the sweet unconcern of childhood, and one little thing in gales of laughter was almost rolling off her bench at the wild joy of her own humour as she described how she had escaped from the Boches in a balloon.

A small boy proudly pointed out his four younger sisters and a baby brother to me. 'We are five, but no father and mother now,' he said; 'I have to take care of the children.' The parents and another child were killed escaping from the city, and these babies found their way to safety under the wing of a neighbour.

Shrieks of joy when the children saw a big basket of chestnuts.

'Mais, qui est sage ?'

'Moi—moi—moi !'—all shouting and holding up their hands.

I went home late but happy, the last of the

washing-up and putting-away done, and with orders to report again in the morning.

The next day I learned something of the routine. Only two meals are served, *déjeuner* at eleven, and dinner at six o'clock. The helpers are of two kinds : *distributrices*, the more dignified and elderly women, usually married, who serve out the food, and *serveuses* who set and wait on the tables. We work one week in the Salle Napoléon, which is not at all popular with some of the assistants, who dearly love the soldiers and prefer working for them every day, and the next week among the poilus and the children.

The *serveuses* do the marketing. Every morning at six o'clock two of them go down to les Halles and persuade the fishmongers and butchers and others, to give them supplies for the canteen. These people are truly generous, which is plain denial of the tradition that they are all millionaires. Everything is given to us except the bread and the milk. We are in Paris, so naturally the prettiest *serveuse* is usually the most successful beggar, and comes home with a bunch of flowers for herself added to her war-levy.

We wear big white aprons and long, floating navy-blue veils, and look like a sort of religious order that works more than it prays. But the Frenchwoman's every little action is a prayer for her country, if not for some one near and dear.

The *distributrices* never vary, and there are two in each room. The same shift always works together. The distributing ladies stand behind an oilcloth-covered counter ladling out bowls of soup from an immense cauldron, and endless helpings of haricot, and stew, and *purée*, and salad, from vast copper pans, till their arms must ache. Their devotion never falters even if their tempers do occasionally. The French girls are generally very pleasant to work with; sometimes perhaps they seem inclined a little to resent strangers sharing their privileges; at least I think so. Last night a very sick-looking little discharged soldier was showing me some darts which he had picked up at Nancy, wicked-looking steel things thrown from a German aeroplane. He offered them shyly to me, but suddenly Élise—an occasional helper on my shift—swooped down upon them and took them out of his hand.

'But how interesting—M. le Directeur must have

them for our museum,' she said, and carried them off!

I had a moment's silly inclination to be vexed, and then remembered that it is her land, her men-folk — her aeroplane darts if she wanted them.

The Directeur and Directrice are the most amiable and hardworking people in the place, entirely devoted and unselfish, and full of tact, which is nowhere so much needed as in volunteer work of this kind. They make rough places smooth, and soothe agitated nerves and tempers, with admirable patience.

This afternoon, with the assistance of Jacqueline (another of the *serveuses* on my shift) I successfully marshalled nine refugee orphans to the Jardin des Plantes, where we had a wildly exciting time. We started at two o'clock, Jacqueline and I wearing our official blue veils with red crosses, as a badge of authority, and controlling our little flock from the back, except when we had to dart forward and snatch an infant from sudden death at street corners. Simonet, Charles, and Guy, bare-legged, cloaked, muffled, and hand-in-hand, went first. They are

all extremely tiny. Then came two boys of eight in blue *bérets*, and two little girls a size larger, and at the end, very superior indeed with silver earrings and bead necklaces, two extremely dignified young people, having each eleven years, Irène and Julia.

We stopped at the first cake stall inside the Gardens, *déjeuner* having been at eleven, and filled up the little refugees' insides with gingerbread and chocolate and fizzy drinks till the languor of temporary repletion set in. Then every child chose a gas balloon, flying the particular flag of the Allies that he admired most, even the dignified ladies of eleven falling into the spirit of it and tearing headlong down the alleys in a glorious race.

At intervals we visited such of the animals as we could get near, but there was no chance of seeing the very popular beasts and reptiles like the monkeys or snakes, the holiday crowd was so dense round their houses. Simonet clung to my finger, shudderingly certain that each and every animal from the zebra to the wild boar desired no better treat than to gobble up a small refugee orphan with a gas balloon tied to his button-hole.

The afternoon was long and strenuous, and we had to refresh the refugees at several more cake stalls before it was time to take the tram back to the canteen. Just as it came in sight two of our frequently-counted flock were missing, but the others instantly detected them across the street.

'Oh—Oh—Oh, *les sales gosses!*' they shrieked in chorus, hopping about and gesticulating. 'Come back, come back. We are about to miss the tram. The mesdemoiselles are very angry!'

At dinner the four surviving balloons were tied by their strings to the handles of the tin mugs, and waved so hilariously at me that all the beer was spilt. Three of the infants, who had ardently promised to be *sages comme des images*, looked a little guilty, but Simonet was unperturbed. With a smile of shining gratitude, waving an empty mug toward me, he remarked, 'I am content with mademoiselle.'

It is a splendidly masculine way of escaping blame for his wrongdoing. I came home immediately after the meal, back to my rooms, grubby, tired, but like my little friend Simonet, content.

A most awful thing happened here a week ago. The people who keep this hotel are a set of heavy *sournois* Alsatians, father, mother and daughter. The father is an old man who had had two paralytic strokes shortly before the war. This winter he has been so much better, that the mother and daughter decided as a war-economy to make him do the cooking. He was once upon a time, it seems, a *chef*. So the poor old man has been doing the cooking for three months, and the other day he quietly took another stroke over his stew-pans, and died in an hour. I am out so much that I fortunately missed most of the horrible excitement, but the funeral ceremonies went on for days, and on the last day the entrance was hung in black cloth and all the usual dismal trappings, and the coffin stood just inside in the *jardin d'hiver*, a chilly waiting-room beneath a skylight with little of a garden about it. There are seven grades of funeral in Paris, and old Sournois père, killed by an excess of thrift, was buried with Grade I. honours, regardless of expense. It reminded me of the poor old friend of Cousin Pons.

It has all been most melancholy. Now the widow

and daughter sit about hidden in crape, like horrible monuments of Grade I. grief. They betake themselves out to Père-la-Chaise every day to pray, and the collection of enduring tin and yellow bead wreaths on the grave must be considerable.

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The news from Verdun is better, or else it seems better seen through the eyes of an honest fatigue. General Pétain has taken over the command there, and the Paris newspapers sound more satisfied and hopeful. One hears less often now, 'What are the English doing?' I take this as a good sign. I am sure we are doing something close to Verdun. Gossip hints at a great British move shortly.

Snow has been falling steadily for the past three days, and the fighting is desperate. Rumour has a way of flashing a vignette into the mind as vivid as the swift picture that one's eye catches in looking out from a flying train. . . . A chance word or two in the street to-day brought such a living picture to me that it is as if I had seen for myself the armies fighting in the snow—the grim sight in the faint and bitter dawn, of the wounded left out in No-Man's Land, frozen to death in grotesque,

creeping postures as if crawling forward to an attack; a picture of the French dragging planks to pile above the corpses in order to get a foothold; the German dead standing in upright ranks, too closely formed to fall.

II

SIMONET AND OTHER CANTEEN BABIES

6th March (Ste. Colette).

THAT first night when I broke into the Canteen Refuge, the stage was held by a small boy standing on a bench next the wall. He was clutching a bowl of soup between grimy red hands, and was on the point, evidently, of lifting up his voice. He might have been six years old, a bullet-headed little peasant in a belted pinafore, with bare, rough red knees, and hard red cheeks, and eyes as black as his thatch of hair. Nobody had taken any notice of his regular and urgent calls for 'Simonne.' It was time to act. Came then a roar that roused every poilu, and with the roar the infant hurled his bowl of soup on the floor, and cast himself desolate into the pool.

'Toujours Simonet!' the soldiers said tranquilly, and laughed. A robust young woman appeared from the kitchen and jerked Simonet to

his feet with a rough hand, soundly smacking him. 'Upstairs then, and to bed, *méchant*,' she cried angrily, 'Wilt thou never have done?'

Simonet's howls were ear-piercing, and he butted his head like a savage little bull into her apron and kicked. Then they ceased with alarming suddenness, and he lifted a face shining adoringly through tears and dirt.

'It is that I love you, Simonne,' he said caressingly; 'I cannot eat my soup without you. You know it well. Now put me to bed.'

A shake was his reply. He was thrust into a place at the table with affectionate violence, and provided with more soup. He ate it with composure.

I caught a last glimpse of him that night, toiling with the other canteen babies up the long, dark, outside staircase that led to the dormitories. Simonet clung tightly to Simonne's finger, and in his glance I fancied there was a gleam of triumph.

Simonet was lord of the canteen by right of imperious character, and as doyen among the refugee children. His mother had fled with him from one of the invaded villages in the earliest

days of the war. She had not survived the birth of a child following on great hardship and terror, nor had the baby lived, and Simonet's father was of course fighting. So the canteen adopted him. His real name was quite long and impressive, beginning with Charles-Frédéric, but his attachment to the young woman who took charge of the children led to his being called in the diminutive of her name, and Simonne became the godmother and foster-mother of Simonet, her torment and her conqueror.

Life was an extreme of joy or an abyss of woe to Simonet, and howls betokened either state. He knew no reticences, no shades of expression. His personal habits left much to be desired, he was graceless, troublesome, infinitely exasperating. But, bare-legged, bullet-headed little peasant, primitive and imperious, he had the gift of all gifts, the magic of personality that makes people give you everything you want, and believe that they like doing it. You resented his charm. When you had a mind to scold and shame an ill-mannered brat, it was disconcerting to find a grimy paw thrust into your hand, and to hear a voice of honeyed gentleness

proclaim, 'I am content with mademoiselle.' It turned the tables in a way ill for discipline. But you accepted it with an odd elation that conquered the resentment.

The spoiling of Simonet was absurdly thorough. Even the Directrice and the High Authorities fell under his spell. He was frequently punished, but more frequently rewarded, for virtues that he had not, and made no effort to possess. Simonne managed him best, but while he would rub himself against her, caressing as a little animal, he had not the slightest desire to obey her.

The children slept at the top of the house. They had pleasant, clean dormitories, and seemed so close to the clock tower of the church, that the bells almost rang into the rooms—the same bells that rang into the dreams of another waif in Paris, the *Petit Chose*. But they did not disturb the slumber of the refugee babies, lying three heads to a pillow, happy and safe. One night when the other small boys were already asleep, I went into the dormitory and found Simonet fully dressed, with a bandaged throat and heavy eyes, playing at Simonne's feet as she sat darning by the window.

'But why is he not in bed?'

Simonne—tranquil and French—replied, 'Because he is ill and in the infirmary. One does not desire the others to catch his sore throat—perhaps a sickness coming. But he is lonely in the infirmary the poor little one, so I keep him here with me.'

Simonet fondled her dress with a fevered hand, and turned pathetic eyes to me.

'Without Simonne I am lonely,' he said.

Of all the treats provided for the canteen children by the ladies, Simonet preferred a visit to the Jardin des Plantes. Cinema, circus, or cakes, were waved aside when a choice was given, although it is true that frequent visits to the cake-stall at the gate formed part of the joy of the Garden.

He would swagger along in his brief blue capote, valiant in his defiance of the wildest of wild beasts. But once within sight of a homesick bear or two, prudence would counsel him to sidle against the skirt of Mademoiselle the Blue-Veil-in-Charge, and sing rather smaller. He was convinced that an infant refugee would be an acceptable addition to any hungry animal's meal.

'A leopard is always ravenous,' he would suggest

fearfully; 'he could so easily eat a little boy, capote and all.'

Simonet would disclose various surprising fragments of natural history, and he was persuaded that if you call a peacock endearingly by the name of Léon, he will spread out his tail and parade proud and pleased before you. So he knelt on the path in front of the wire fence, and tried his utmost to charm the sulky fowl which dragged its tail ungraciously on the ground and refused to be magnificent. Simonet was fain to rub the gravel sorrowfully off his smarting knees and demand, 'But why won't he show his tail when I call him what he likes so much?'

His favourite game was to race headlong down the garden paths, a toy balloon floating from his button-hole, pursued by the Blue-Veil-in-Charge. 'I am an aviator chased by a Zeppelin,' he would explain. 'Naturally I can't be caught. Presently I turn and shoot. *Plus de Zeppelin!*'

His method of 'shooting' was to turn suddenly and snatch at his pursuer's hand and perhaps kiss it. Then he would say with the irresistible warm note in his voice, 'I am content with mademoiselle!'

Consternation in the canteen when suddenly an uncle from Brittany appeared and laid claim to Simonet, whom he called Charles-Frédéric. He was a genuine and good uncle, a sea-captain just back on his ship from the ends of the earth, which was sufficient reason why he had not looked for his nephew before. Now he proposed to take him home and adopt him to be brought up with his own family, until such times as the child's father might return from the war. Simonet's departure was looked upon as in the nature of a calamity by all but himself. Simonne wept all day, and at the last moment Simonet struggled impatiently from her embrace, and quite forgot to say good-bye to his companions or the canteen ladies.

'It is agreeable to have an uncle,' he announced, 'I am glad to go to Nantes. I shall be a sailor like my uncle, who calls me by my own name, Charles-Frédéric. And we are going to drive to the station in a taxi-auto!'

'Never again shall I love a child,' wept Simonne. 'All are ungrateful and wring the heart. Never could I care for another as for this one who cares nothing for me. Not my own child could be so

dear. Always he is first, the ungrateful little one. He forgets, but I remember—always—always Simonet!'

Simonet was smiling as they drove off, and no doubt he had slipped a hand warmly into his uncle's, and was assuring him of his content.

. . . . . .

This winter and spring have certainly been extraordinary as regards weather. The first two weeks of January were as mild as late April, and all the fruit trees flowered. Twelfth-Night was a day as beautiful as a cameo, and it lives in my mind. In the afternoon I went down to the *Annexe aux Quinze-Vingts* to visit a blind soldier, Jacqueline's godson. The *Annexe* is one of the very old convents of Paris, low, picturesque buildings enclosing a garden that in January was full of elusive, provocative spring smells. The sky was vivid blue with scattered breaths of white cloud, the air as soft as milk. The borders showed sharp green spears where the bulbs were pushing up, and the black twigs of the peach-trees were crowded with bright, deep pink buds. And here the blind soldiers were learning to walk, some leaning on

the arms of nurses, some guided by their god-mothers.

Le Jour des Rois—and here were the broken toys of kings.

. . . . . .

But since then rain, cold, sleet, snow and soaking yellow fog have kept off zeppelins, and produced a variety of minor ills in the form of coughs and colds. The country people have an unvarying explanation of the succession of dark and wet days. The old custom of firing off a cannon in order to 'make rain' is well known to the French farmers in certain parts of the country, and they assert that the constant and heavy artillery fire of these Verdun days is having this effect on the once famous clear blue skies of the City of Light. The depression is not visible on the faces of the people. They have braced themselves to meet the inevitable shocks of war, and there is no uncertainty in their bearing.

With the passing days, with more detailed knowledge of what is taking place, with the story of destruction and loss, even with the filling-up of some of the hospital wards with the wounded heroes, a certain degree of cheerfulness is again

apparent in the people one sees in the streets. There is even a sort of grim humour displayed over the fate of the troops of Brandenburghers surrounded in the fortress of Douaumont. But there is never a trace of anything less than complete faith in France, and in the ultimate victory of the Allies.

The children who come to us at the canteen are strong and sturdy-looking, and for the most part very pretty. Now and again you see one who looks worn and timid, and sometimes they are easily startled, and shrink if they are spoken to. But they have generally recovered from hunger and hardship in a marvellous way, and they have all the merciful callousness of childhood.

Germaine, Gabrielle and Julie, three little sisters, ten, eight, six, all with corn-coloured pig-tails, and sky-blue eyes and bright, pink cheeks, escaped from Pont-à-Mousson, are examples. They are perfectly charming, and as happy as the day is long. Father and two brothers ' tués au combat de Champagne ' they tell you cheerfully ; Mother dead when a new baby was born—a very common story.

One of the women employed in the kitchen has an infant in arms, who answers such questions as,

What does the cannon say? Who killed papa? What made the big fire *chez nous*? The answer to this last question is '*Les obus.*'

Mme. Robert, the *distributrice* with the small red eyes and the heavy black wig, and a perpetual odour of strong peppermint, engaged me in chatter in the *vestiaire* at the canteen to-night. I told her that I hoped to work there for a long time and to go home in a few months—submarines permitting. She assured me seriously that I need have no fear of any kind. That I must think only of my friends and my home, and give no thought to danger. 'La destinée est écrite au berceau,' she said. 'Si l'heure n'est pas sonnée on vivra. On ne peut pas mourir avant que l'heure sonne.'

'Have no fear, mademoiselle, of torpedoes,' she went on. 'I have no fear whatever of zeppelins. I live near the roof, but when the warning is sounded do I descend to the cave? I do not. Can one run from death if one is doomed? Never! Regard me the men in the trenches. A tall man—single, young, without ties—a soldier as big as mademoiselle—in full view of a German sniper escapes unhurt, and a father of a family crouching hidden

in his dug-out is killed. Is that not destiny? Je veux vous remonter le moral, mademoiselle, comme je l'ai voulu faire aux blessés quand j'étais infirmière.'

She laughed and offered me one of her strong peppermints. But she cheered me up none the less, strange old dyed and painted fatalist. There is a touch of splendour in her matter-of-course logical courage, which is the special courage of the French of to-day, I think. I wonder often where the tradition of the French as a people of *élan* only came from. Their concentration and tenacity and relentless logic are amazing—I find them, besides, all fatalists of the first water.

The work was hard to-night, which only means that the women were not particularly pleasant to work with. Sometimes they are not. They secured the interesting tables for themselves, and stood about and gossiped when the dirty plates and covers had to be carried into the pantry and the tables wiped (with unspeakably filthy rags), and set again for the second service. Then they became galvanised into activity, and they plied the soldiers with food. Some of the girls are invariably pleasant and do their share of the work generously, but

others are quite willing to shirk what is disagreeable and to thrust extra work on to any one who will do it.

On the whole the women in Paris seem to me to resent foreign aid just a little, and to look upon the English volunteers somewhat as intruders. I am always meeting hard-working nurses and others who are coming round to this conclusion, as far as untrained work is concerned. We are not really needed here now. Self-contained units, trained nurses, yes, and always, others hardly.

To-night finishing up I felt alien and unwanted and a little tired. But I see the Parisian's point of view. Her exclusive devotion is given to her own country, her own men. She could not endure to go afield to do her war-work, and an element of wonder remains in her admiration of the women who do go afield. The way of the insistent patriot is bound to be unpleasant sometimes. But I could not help dreaming of Lake Osmunda—somewhere in Quebec—and the woods with the squirrels scolding in the gold-green leaves, and 'lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore.' It is always summer in my dreams of the wilderness where I

want to be. I feel as if life in Paris were like living in a hardware shop, where they sell nothing but knives and razors—of course of the newest, sharpest, most shining variety of steel—and I long, like Walt Whitman, for cows and green grass, and something placid and self-contained and without speech.

But a boy in the canteen to-night paid me what I felt to be a graceful compliment when he thanked me for waiting on him, and added earnestly, ' Plum-pudding, oh, very well indeed ! '

I was gratified.

III

REFUGEES AND THE RIVIERA

7 Rue Gît-le-Cœur,
9th March (Ste. Françoise).

I have just come from feeding refugees in the Salle Napoléon. Refugees with fleas — and apaches with red shirts, and horrid, bandaged legs, and wild eyes gleaming through their long front locks of hair; and frozen-looking children with their toes coming out of their boots; and grumbling women.

Whatever they get displeases some of the women. They want rice when macaroni is served, and cabbage when it 's potatoes, and peas instead of beans, and they unitedly and heartily hate lentils. But I am getting not to mind their complaints now, and in the end they usually eat what is put before them and ask for more. I am tempted to think that often refugees are refugees because they deserve to be—wasters and malcontents. The men as a rule are patient and grateful, and so little

disposed to find fault that if there is a choice of food they leave it entirely to you. 'Comme vous voulez, mademoiselle!' And sometimes you do get a sudden smile from a woman or girl that is very warming, and they try to help you with the next service by piling up the bowls and plates when they have finished, and this makes you feel humble and undeserving. The poilus share the general hatred of lentils and almost invariably leave them on their plates, but whereas the soldiers are polite, the poor and unemployed tell you freely what they think of you for offering them such food.

I do think that lentils are unpleasant little things. But it is curious to see how wasteful these people who have nothing will be with good food, any food, and not only the despised bean. They will spoil second helpings that they have asked for, by messing up soup and vegetables and dregs of beer together, or deliberately pouring water over it. The food given them at the canteen is always good and plentiful, and usually appetising. To-night some of the *distributrices* were laughing and saying that with the price of coal and food steadily mounting, they too felt inclined to pay four sous

for a meal, and to present themselves and their families at the refugees' table.

Many varieties of human beings turn up in the Salle Napoléon, and the men are only alike in one particular, that they are all too old or too disabled to fight. The women are generally of the working-classes, but occasionally a refined and delicate-looking girl of a superior social class will slip in thankfully for a meal.

We have had a Polish lady of distinguished family and education, taking her lunch and dinner regularly as the guest of one of the *distributrices*. She had lost her position in a girls' school at the outbreak of war, and had then supported herself by massaging private patients. These clients had gradually given up the luxury that had been before the war a feature of daily life, and the Polish lady was found literally starving in her garret, and was rescued by her canteen friend. Now she has a position in a hospital to massage the soldiers and gets her living in and a tiny salary, so she is safe.

At the corner of one of my tables I have a most impressive-looking guest every night. He is an

elderly man, very tall, with long hair and a flowing tie, and he wears a black cloak and sweeps off a large, velvet hat to bow profoundly to the room when he enters. He has the most magnificent manner and deportment, exactly like a French Turveydrop, and I am embarrassed by his compliments when I pour out his mug of beer. He describes himself as an 'Instituteur du Gouvernement,' fallen upon evil days, and he is most unexacting and grateful.

Beside him sits a flaming young person of high temper and flashing black eyes, who wears a Spanish lace scarf over her head, and provides her own *couvert*, knife, fork and spoon of solid silver. Her pride must have had a fall of some sort, to bring her to these four-sous meals, but she holds her head up defiantly and will speak to no one. Next to her sits a laundress with a precocious and tiny infant about a year old, which she feeds with apple-core and beer and cheese in spite of horrified protest and the most tactful interference. Last night as a concession to the fussiness of the ladies, the poor child was given milk through a piece of common rubber-tubing out of a bottle that smelt of petrol,

and the mother threw me a smile of triumph as I passed.

This is by far the most interesting war-work that I have ever done. I like it even when I am rushed off my feet, and in spite of the difficulties that arise. There are only two other English helpers, one a girl who comes in the mornings, and an elderly artist called Mrs. Vernon-Baker, who appears at fitful intervals during the week, generally rather late for dinner. She is quite a well-known and reliable painter of Notre-Dame, and the Panthéon and the various bridges, and always exhibits at the Salon, and sells very well, which is more uncommon. She is well-off, and has a charming studio and flat in the Boulevard Raspail. She is imposingly massive and grey-haired, and seems to alarm the soldiers a little when she places food before them with an air of splendid condescension.

The French ladies talk and talk just endlessly, among themselves, no matter how busy we are, or how many people are waiting to be fed. They keep a whole table of patient men waiting while they stand in groups waving empty plates at each

other, and chattering like a Bandarlog in a Brazilian forest. With the very young it is always giggling confidences about their *filleuls*, and their letters. The older girls invariably discuss clothes—somebody's trousseau, and the modes, or occasionally a ' delicious ' theatre or concert. Among the older women there is seldom any other subject than the personal aspect of the war, the losses of their friends and families, the details of a son's illness or wounds, a courageous philosophy of hope.

The work is hard because it is done in a foreign language as it were—not merely a foreign speech—and requires constant mental adjustment, but it is satisfying. I can look back now with more humour on my experiences when, at my friend Veronica's summons, I rushed down to the Riviera last December to take up ' urgent work ' at a hospital. I remember Veronica meeting me at St. Bleu Station radiant and full of spirits, babbling of princesses and *infirmières*, and French counts and Serbian officers in a wild medley, and my great dismay when the one fact that did emerge in her conversation was that there was no definite job waiting for me, as I had imagined. She was in a Russian private hospital,

having been admitted without formalities of any kind, through her personal friendship with the princess who directed it, but there was too little to do, even for those who belonged to it at the moment, and no place for any more volunteers. However, as every second building was a hotel turned hospital, there seemed plenty of scope for the willing worker. So I went out to find my place in the Riviera shade.

There really appeared to be something to do, but endless difficulties seemed to be set in the way of doing it. I saw half a dozen hospitals or more, and looking hastily about, imagined that I observed many small details in their running that required exactly the sort of attention I could give, only my services were not desired. But as I had come so many thousands of miles to work, I was not content to be idle.

So I became a member of the *Alliance des Dames Françaises*, and was thus authorised at eight o'clock one morning to begin to give aid to some hundred poilus at the *Hôpital-Hôtel des Palmiers et des Roses*. It was also the hotel of the mandarin orange, of the flowering cactus, and of the pepper-tree, and was

quite beautiful to look at, with its blue shutters and deep yellow walls, in soft chalky colours.

The formalities I went through and the trouble I had in order to become thus a benefactress to the French Republic almost exhausted my enthusiasm for service. From Veronica's letters I had imagined that all I had to do was to find my way to St. Bleu from Paris, wash my face, brush my hair, put on my uniform, and set to work at once as a Florence Nightingale, graciously warding off rapturous expressions of gratitude and appreciation from the Red Cross officials, the supposedly worn-out nurses, the house-doctors, and the wounded soldiers themselves. Or anyway I thought there might be sweeping and bedmaking and possibly scrubbing to do ; and trays to carry and messages to run, and that I should be allowed to undertake such humble tasks in order to save some one more valuable for more important work. I could gladly do all these. Veronica, owing to falling among friends, did something of the kind herself, but things were entirely otherwise as far as I was concerned. I had to thrust my services upon any one who would condescend to accept them. I was

determined to minister to *somebody* after coming so far.

I began to realise the missionary's common difficulty at 'getting in touch' with the heathen. For a week I had been seeing hospitals up and down the Riviera, all one-time hotels, all huge, and all without exception practically empty. They seemed unitedly to look upon all voluntary aid with cold suspicion and dislike, though of course most of the nurses who consider themselves trained now were nothing more than volunteers little more than a year ago, and had learnt their business by practical experience, just as I might do, if encouraged or required.

The truth seemed to be that there were at that time three times too many hospitals, and most of the nurses admitted it. If instead of having so many half-empty and ill-run places, they would close most of them, and concentrate their resources, they would achieve more. But every colonel and general's wife, and sister, and aunt insists upon having her own particular field of action, and every woman wants to organise and lead and be a *directrice*, or at least an *infirmière-major*. Hotels then, naturally, must be found for them, and hotels

are a sort of mushroom spawn that spring up in the sun.

However, I had now my papers that showed me to be part of the *Secours National*, and Veronica's princess gave me a letter of introduction to Mademoiselle St. Germain, the Infirmière-Major of the Hôpital des Roses. She received me agreeably, although I interrupted a sort of little salon that she was holding in a charming room filled with flowers, and presented me to the *Administrateur* of the hospital. He was a bald man, rapid in speech and manner and very polite, and he informed me that besides having my passport at once *viséd* by the British Consul, I must obtain a special certificate from him, stating that I was a desirable British subject. This must be forwarded to the Ministre de la Guerre at Paris, together with a copy of my *permis de séjour*, which I must get from the police, together with a letter from himself.

So I began going to see the British Consul, and in less than four days I had found the moment when he visited his office, had told him the amended version, for Consuls only, of my life, and had paid him a little sum of two francs eighty for pressing a

rubber stamp against my passport, and seven francs more for a half sheet of note paper with the consular crest, on which the pro-consul stated in neat writing that he had found my credentials in good order, and that I was *bien sujette anglaise.*

Armed with these proofs of identity, and several photographs of myself besides, I then began going to see the police. The Hôtel de Ville, the Prefecture, and the Préfet de Police are so important in every French town, that it is a constant wonder that they should be so difficult to find. In the course of two days I had cleverly found them all, and even ascertained at what hour some responsible official would *not* be at *déjeuner.* As soon as I found him, he urged me as a matter of life and death to lose no further time in seeing the Commissaire de Police of the 4th Arrondissement. I succeeded presently in finding him too. There seemed to be a murder going on inside the office of the *commissaire,* judging from the pandemonium that reigned, and the amount of excitable running to and fro, and loudly banging doors, but apparently it was only ordinary municipal business, and when it quite suddenly came to an end by the *commissaire* himself pushing

half a dozen clients violently into the street with threats of arresting them all, I was ushered into the inner room.

My *commissaire* was as revolting as all the others that I have ever had occasion to see. He sat in a dismal room with hermetically sealed windows, with his feet on a cold stone floor, writing with a needle on tissue paper. And of course his ink was thick as gruel, and his blotting paper would not blot. He shrieked at me with wild gesticulations, and asked if Canada were a town in America, or a British possession? How was it he had never heard of Ottawa, he demanded? He refused to give me any hope of being allowed to continue to live in France. My passport was forged—I gathered—the *visés* already on it from London, Dieppe, Paris and the Consul here, were worthless. The *commissaire* leaned back and stared at me, as if giving me a moment's reprieve before summoning jailers with manacles to convey me to a dungeon. He knew nothing whatever of any Government in Ottawa, he said. Then he suddenly plunged forward, produced a pair of scissors and a gum pot, snipped away at my photograph, stuck it

to my official form, filled that out with no further words, and handed me my *permis de séjour*.

I had begun to feel that I was guilty of unspeakable crimes, and could hardly believe that I was free as I clutched the *permis* and fled out into the street.

After that there remained only the Red Cross lady to whom I offered ten francs in exchange for a small book which informs those interested that I am a member of the Croix Rouge Française, Association des Dames de France. Allora! as Françoise, our Italian *femme de chambre*, used to say.

I walked in the dusk by the sea to recover from all the foregoing bothers. I hated the promenade by day. It is a garish, artificial place, and I disliked the dazzling whiteness and the glare. But after dark, when I had it to myself, I loved the soft crash of the sea against the steep grey beaches, and the breaking line of white foam, and the moon rising on a world all dim silver and far off points of light. . . .

Veronica and I had charming rooms at war-prices in a little hotel just round the corner from

the sea-front,—a bed-room each, a big sitting-room, and an actual bathroom to ourselves. There was no hot water in the taps, but that was a minor consideration compared to the glory of having a real bath.

I went every day to the Riviera Hospital, but I never acquired the feeling of being invaluable. One 'busy' day may be described. I arrived at eight o'clock, and stood about with literally nothing to do until ten. Then I was invited to sit down in a pleasant little room with our *infirmière-major*, Madame Marie, and four little *infirmières* who had just strolled in and put on their blouses, and to mend a tablecloth while they got out their fillet-lace frames, and studied intricate designs spread out on the table and pinned on the walls. The windows were of course tight shut; the French have inexorably decided that *plein air* is desirable and pleasant, and fresh air dangerous if not deadly.

We sewed. It was very chastening for me, but good for my French if nothing else. Those women's hands were so deft and graceful, and mine are unutterably clumsy.

However, I sat in intense silence and pushed my needle about until I broke it.

'J'ai brisé l'aiguille,' I explained heavily.

'Ah! mademoiselle a cassé son aiguille,' they instantly responded. 'But that is nothing,'—and with a hasty glance at my work,—'Let mademoiselle repose herself a little.'

As there seemed to be no more needles, I reposed on a straight chair, and watched them do swift and beautiful things with their thread, and wished ardently that I had French hands instead of a pure heart. The *infirmières* showed some disposition to be friendly, but were much engrossed in their patterns and gossip. Two of them were young and pretty, with red crosses scattered freely about their caps and aprons, and A.D.F. in letters two inches high on their arms as well. One called Andrée was a fluffy little person, with a sweet colour and fair curls brushed over the band of her cap, in which she also wore the novel hospital decoration of a little sheaf of the Allied flags.

At a quarter to eleven I prepared and carried in two hot footbaths, one for a nice Russian boy with a flat head, and hair growing down close to his

amused little eyes, and the other to a great tall Frenchman who had just won the Croix de Guerre in Serbia. They had to steep themselves for half an hour, so I was again idle. Andrée then invited me to go and watch her massage a patient, and gave me quite a lecture on the growing importance of massage for the wounded, and the value of learning it, so that I supposed her to be a professional. We went into a room where six men were sitting beside their beds reading. One of them—Andrée's patient—got up on his bed and removed his shoe and sock. Andrée sat down beside him and shook a little boric powder over his ankle and then rubbed it in a very light and pretty manner, much as if she were stroking a canary, for about three or four minutes. Then she said amiably, 'Alors ça va mieux,' and got up. After that work was over for the day, and we all took off our caps and aprons and put them in a dreadful little *vestiaire*, which held an assortment of strange articles, and went home.

I wonder if many missionaries feel as dismayed as I did? It was all so trivial and silly. There was nothing real whatever to do. All the men

were well enough to make their own beds, and there were even servants to dust and sweep and cook, and set and serve the meals. I longed to make soup, or wash or iron, or dust the rooms thoroughly, or work in the dispensary or use my energies in some rational way, but I couldn't. Once I found my way down to a room where the *lingère* was sitting among untidy heaps of mending, rolling bandages, ten at a time, on a rickety machine that was not even fastened to the table. They were rolled about as loosely as you would do it over your arm. She discouraged me when I offered to help her. I was excessively superfluous.

I had to laugh a trifle bitterly, when I thought of my beautiful farewell presents, my silver pencils for taking notes of cases, my well-assorted chatelaine with the surgical scissors, and the clinical thermometer and all the other fascinating playthings with which I couldn't play.

Veronica was working in a beautiful villa on the sea-front, lately in the possession of German nobility, and sequestrated by the Government when war broke out. It was a private hospital for officers only, run by an Allied Committee of Russians,

Poles and Rumanians. The *infirmières* did everything but the cooking, so that at least Veronica had some housework to occupy her time. She had not, however, at that time any invalids who required much attention, but she had to play Bridge a good deal in the afternoons. Once she did mention having to scrape boracic powder off the floor with the ten of diamonds.

The Hospital of Palm Trees and Roses was very picturesque. It contained every imaginable and unimaginable variety of uniform, and every age and height and hue of soldier from an infantile boy-scout—' le Bwa Skoo,'—who smoked cigarettes incessantly all day, and ran any messages that were required, to an immense Senegalais as black as night, and as magnificent as a statue. He was really quite beautiful, even with a bandaged head and an arm in a sling. The place was full of animation, but the *blessés* were always much more gay and cheerful than the men upstairs who were recovering from fever and sickness. These were worn-looking and out of spirits, and very silent.

For me the atmosphere was depressing, I could do so little, and I heard very little optimistic about

the war, and nothing at all that was warm or admiring about the English. Veronica and I were both told repeatedly and quite seriously that but for an insatiable desire for five o'clock tea the British Army might have got on much faster with the war. There seemed to be a serious and widespread belief that a boiling kettle and a pot of jam were more important to the Tommies—and certainly to their officers—than many slain Boches.

All the Riviera hospitals seemed to be full of intrigue; there was for the time being so little real work to do. I got thoroughly sick of it all. I conscientiously objected, and fled to Paris in search of work and found my Refuge.

Yes, refugees, even with fleas, please me better than the Riviera.

IV

ROMANCE OF A GODMOTHER

7 Rue Gît-le-Cœur,
21*st March* 1916 (St. Benoît).

This evening I am in a festival mood. I have seen in two days two processions—which I love as much as any child—and a letter lying on my table when I came in from the canteen brings me news of a romance that drives even the canteen out of my head for a time.

As for the spectacles, Paris got out its trumpets and drums yesterday to welcome General Cadorna, and I was charmed to see his seamed and serious face; this I did quite by accident, not having read the daily category of roguery and woe that usually misinforms you of these coming events.

To-day towards four o'clock I found myself in a dense crowd in the Rue de la Paix near the Continental Hotel, and heard that Prince Alexander

of Serbia was within. Marine Fusiliers and a fine array of *agents* were waiting for him. I decided at first to go on my way. Only having struggled through the mob to the Tuileries side, I found the air of festivity and cheerfulness there irresistible, and accordingly changed my mind.

Every one seemed perfectly delighted to have a sight to see and a 'Paris occasion,' again, and it was the most vivid and alert crowd. The hospital end of the Crillon had nurses and patients filling up each window, and one little *infirmière* with a bright orange jersey over her white dress made a very striking note of colour. The creatures and colours on the wall of the Tuileries Garden were brilliantly picturesque, poilus in every degree of shabbiness and every variety of patchwork uniform, cheerful and philosophic *blessés* with crutches and slings, *bonnes* with flying ribbons, not unwilling to dally with the heroes, and three charming little sisters dressed alike in white, with conspicuous, bright green *bérets* on their heads, and crowds of the usual Paris loiterers.

The young green of the trees seemed festive, and

in the Place de la Concorde the sparkling fountains were beautiful in the sunlight. Three journalists in the middle of the road with immense cameras were taking privileged photographs. The journalists were not beautiful like the fountains. Presently the crowd began to shout rhythmically 'Au balcon! Alexandre! Au balcon!' but it only produced the Serbian Prime Minister. He stepped out on to the balcony looking very dignified and patriarchal and bowed, and waved either a table-napkin or an expensive-sized handkerchief. He was warmly cheered. Very soon afterwards Prince Alexander appeared in his motor, driving towards the Élysée, and the friendly murmurous French expressions of satisfaction almost turned into real cheers.

The prince is a nice-looking, dark young man with glasses. He might be a professor of Oriental languages. His manner was interested and friendly, and the people warmly approved of him.

. . . . . .

As for the romance—my cousin Clara Milburn is actually going to marry a poilu, her godson-of-war. She has long been threatening—if that is

a fair word to use—to do so. To-night's business-like letter from her makes the announcement definitely.

'DEAR JENNIFER,—I have decided to marry Paul almost at once. I wonder if you could spare the time to come shopping with me one afternoon? I should like to go on Tuesday at twelve o'clock, because between twelve and two the shops are not at all crowded, and I might manage to obtain all the things that I require within that time. I have decided to get a trousseau after all, and I feel that, as you must know more about these things than I do, your advice would be of the greatest practical assistance to me. I shall be so grateful if you will let me know that you will come with me. I thought I should go to the Galeries Lafayette and just get everything there. I have made out a short list. It is to be a serviceable and economical war trousseau of course, all circumstances considered. I thought I should get :—

One coat and skirt (navy-blue serge),
One cloth dress (blue, probably navy),
One inexpensive silk dress (navy-blue),
Two petticoats (navy-blue, one silk),

Four blouses (or do you think that extravagant ?
Three linen. One silk, navy-blue),
Two hats (both blue),
A motor coat (for the taxi),
Two pairs of boots,
One pair of shoes,
One pair of slippers.

' Handkerchiefs, stockings, gloves and underwear, I shall get in London. I much prefer ' underwear ' to lingerie. After all there can be no change in the fashion of one's white garments, and I am so fond of good English eyelet embroidery that washes well and remains firm whether starch is used or not, that I think I shall get six of each in that. Emma discovered such an excellent and reliable place for these things in a little street off the Tottenham Court Road. We all go there. They really never wear out. Please forgive me for taking up your time, but it will be a real help to me if you can come. Paul is doing so well taxi-driving, and it does not seem to hurt his health. Still, the little rest in England and our marriage and honeymoon will do him good. He is quite wonderful, and becomes more so to me each day, as I am privileged to help

in the expansion and growth of a very fine and susceptible mind. I feel no anxiety as to my family's interest and approval.—Affectionately,

'CLARA.

'*P.S.*—Would you not consider that navy-blue was the most practical colour to get in this particular set of circumstances? And I thought a ***heavy*** coat, because I expect to drive a good deal with Paul between fares. Would you advise me to wait and get a Burberry? I should like to hear from you by *pneumatique*. C. M.'

It is all very wonderful, and, as an instance of the way in which British and French paths are merging these war days, very interesting.

The Milburns are English relations with whom I have to spend at least a week-end when I am in England. I always go away from them saying fiercely and thankfully to myself, 'I am not English, I am Canadian.' I feel frozen, depressed, beaten, when I am with them. Uncle James writes scientific books on the Passivity of Motion, or some such thing, and Aunt Alice is always on public platforms educating the masses in child-welfare, and temper-

ance, and economy and what she calls home handicraft.

The five girls, Emma, Gertrude, Annie, Clara and Lucy, have all had their noses sharpened on a university grindstone, and are exactly alike,—pale skins, dull-blue eyes, flat chests and wispy, fair hair. They wear Panama hats in winter, and the most awful shoes, and their clothes should all be taken away from them and burnt for the public good. They have all got careers, and they despise me because I can't ever remember the difference between Somerville and Newnham, and don't belong to university people, and am not a suffragist or a Fabian, or anything at all. Like all people of that special type of intellect they glory in what they consider 'good conversation.' I have often heard Uncle James on a Sunday say to Aunt Alice, 'Let us propose ourselves for tea at the X.'s my dear, and if the conversation be good let us remain to supper.'

They launch out heavily even at breakfast on Chinese Architecture, or mediæval socialism, or Esquimaux politics. They have the same effect on everything that sulphur has on silver.

Thank Heaven they were not all at home the

last time I was in England, as Lucy had gone 'on the land,' and Clara was a V.A.D. in France, and Annie was making munitions. Emma and Gertrude were alone able to devote themselves to me, and I wasn't very grateful for their efforts. They showed me pictures that they said were 'exciting,' but they remained as flat and woe-begone as possible, standing before them in their Panama hats, and making dreary intelligent remarks about colour and arrangement, hopelessly trying to educate me. At a moment's notice they went off into perfectly unintelligible jargon to each other, looking positively wrung-out with boredom, but I really do believe that they believe they like it. Emma said quite unpleasantly to me, 'Really, Jennifer, your *cui bono* attitude of mind is very disintegrating.' So I perhaps do them *some* good ?

As they don't expect any intellect or efficiency in the lower classes, they don't get either in their cooks. The food is quite plentiful, but takes on the family's entire lack of charm. Uncle James notices it, I think, but as he is overborne by the mass of female intelligence which refuses to recognise discomfort, he does not dare to utter any

comment. He really is so unlovable, and I do so hate to watch him eat, that I am glad he does not get any more food. He stands on the hearth-rug after dinner absorbing most of the heat of the tiny fire, and monologues his family and any odd relatives who happen to be present on the news of the day. He is broad and short, quite nice looking down to his knees, and somehow vulgar below that. That is where vulgarity seems to show in a man. He thinks that he is talking pleasantly and informingly, and his daughters gaze at him in a collapsed and depressed sort of way, quite evidently unable to think of anything they would like better to do. He really lectures in a heavy, semi-humorous, academic style, and I am secretly revolted, far from being educated. Well, that 's the house Clara came out of, and now she is marrying into a Paris taxi-cab.

I looked up Clara as soon as I got to Paris in December, having got her address from my Aunt Alice in a characteristic letter.

'My dear Jennifer,—Many thanks for the calendar sent to your uncle and me. We appre-

ciate your thought. I hope that you duly received the Pliny *Year Book*? We thought the old black lettering on the yellow paper particularly charming, and sent them to all our friends. It was one of Emma's discoveries in a little Soho book-shop. Quite delightful we all thought. I hope that you are finding a satisfactory and useful outlet for your energies. I was sorry to hear that you had given the South of France such a very short trial, but doubtless you were the best judge of your own movements, and I trust that what you have found to do in Paris will justify the long and expensive journey, and the waste of time that preceded it. Of course you realise by this time that one's value to the community bears no immediate relation to the interest one derives from one's occupation. I am writing to give you Clara's address, as she too has taken up work in Paris after a most interesting experience—quite unique and delightful—with her university unit—V.A.D.—up near the invaded territory. She found that she had got all that she could extract of interest from that, and decided upon putting her trained abilities into a slightly different channel. Her address is Mme. Drage,

Cercle Littéraire et Industriel, 4 bis Rue Vernet IX^{ième}. Mme. Drage is a very old friend of ours, and a highly educated woman. Clara might introduce you, and perhaps get you into her house, which is a delightful blend of private French home, club, and the best sort of *pension*. It would be excellent for your French. Clara, as you know, is an admirable French scholar, and she is enjoying it enormously. The society is particularly pleasant in the Rue Vernet. In any case I have now put you in touch with your cousin, which will be nice for you both.—Affectionately, ALICE MILBURN.'

But Clara did not ask me to call. Instead she made an appointment with me at the Louvre for a particular morning. It was very windy and rainy, and we were blown round the little garden behind Gambetta's statue almost into each other's arms. She was looking as white and wispy as ever, and she had a French soldier with her. 'Mon filleul de guerre,' she explained, introducing him as well as she could in the wind. 'M. Paul Chenal of the Foreign Legion. He is *réformé* for three months. Je lui montre les gloires du Louvre.'

Her godson was looking thoroughly chilled and discouraged, and did not seem to be much enjoying the glories of the Louvre architecture as pointed out by Clara. We could not even go inside as everything is locked up tight. At least he might have been dry if the galleries had been open. I told her that I had her address and would go and see her, and as I struggled on I heard her voice in the wind screaming Catherine de Médicis and Napoleon III. and Le Roi Soleil. I felt then that there was something to be said against godmothers-of-war, that it was wicked to let Clara be one, when she could not know *anything* about cinemas or circuses or cafés or cigarettes.

Later, slipping into the Luxembourg one day to see the few rooms that are open, I chanced upon Clara again with her poilu. His education seemed to be progressing favourably. They were seated side by side on a bench gazing at *Le Baiser*. At least Clara was leaning forward with her chin supported by her large grey chamois gloves, staring at it as if she were mesmerised, and M. Paul Chenal was stolidly eating a slab of plain chocolate, and looking in a rather puzzled way from the statue

to his godmother. Her education was getting on too, I gathered, now that she had begun to see the comfort of chocolate as applied to art. I spoke to them for a minute, and then went into the inner room to see what was left to see. The rooms are all rearranged since two years ago, and a great many pictures have been put away for safe-keeping until after the war. So have most of the Rodins. When I returned Clara was still sitting on the bench, but her godson had finished his chocolate and had got up to examine *Le Baiser* more closely by walking round it.

'Ça,' he said to me, 'Ce n'est pas pris sur le vif!'

I felt it would be amusing if her godson educated Clara. But still I had no suspicion of a romance.

The next meeting was in a tea-shop and was quite accidental. I was greatly surprised to see Clara walk in with her godson and sit down at the next table. I noted that her education had certainly made strides. M. Paul Chenal was dressed in a suit of English tweeds that Clara had probably begged for him. He showed as really a very good-looking man, and like all the French soldiers he had excellent manners. Clara got scarlet when

she saw me, and then I knew she was taking more than a godmotherly interest in her ex-poilu. He still seemed to be regarding her as a supernatural guardian, but she really looked almost human. She had stopped doing her hair like a Madonna without a looking-glass, and had been to a hair-dresser, who had waved and netted her. She had a tiny little French hat, put on at a strictly English and Milburn angle of course, but still she was mysteriously improved. Her boots and gloves and umbrella were still distinctly British.

'I am teaching Paul English,' she informed me. 'He is getting on so nicely.'

'How-do-you-do—Yes. I-am-very-well,' Paul said in such a painstaking way that I could hear all the intellectual effort that Clara had put into it, and I laughed. Paul seemed to find this very friendly and he laughed himself, and we struck up a lively conversation. I wondered what Aunt Alice would think. But I reflected that possibly it was still only intellectual interest on Clara's part, and if it were more, I could not help feeling that anything in the world would be better than living like fish in a sterilised aquarium, as all the

Milburns do. They are not alive to any sort of real emotion or worth-while activity.

Clara's godson was learning to be a chauffeur, that I found out. The next stage of the affair was indicated to me in a letter from Clara.

'DEAR JENNIFER,—I am so sorry that you should have come all the way up to the Rue Vernet yesterday for nothing. As a matter of fact I left Mme. Drage's *pension* some time ago, as I did not find it very convenient for my work. Please do not mention this, however, if you should be writing to the family. I still use that address for letters. I am very much interested in helping Paul Chenal. He is so unusually well worth while, a most unusual person, with great force of character. He has had a most *unusual* career. He is now definitely discharged from the army, as the severe conditions in the Légion Étrangère have ruined his active career, and besides he has been wounded twice. He is doing admirably as a chauffeur. It is very fine of him to be willing to learn a trade, as he is not at all an uneducated man. Indeed, he is writing a book, and it is my privilege to be able to help him.

I wanted him to call it *Une Vie*, but as Guy de Maupassant has already taken that title, we have decided on *My Life*, instead. I think it will make quite as great a sensation as *Marie-Claire*. Do you think it would be better to call it by his name,—*Paul Chenal*, or *Paul-Aimé*—his other name? I should like to talk it over with you, as you have writing friends. May I come in one evening? I 'll just find my way up to your room. Then I can give you my address. Paul will call for me and take me home in his taxi. If you think a book entitled *Paul-Aimé* would sell better, we should decide on that name. It is important to consider the business side of things after all, I know. How the war has shaken up the world and altered one's former standards, has it not? A less conventional world will be much pleasanter to live in. One was in error in considering the intellectual life of first importance, one fears.—Your affectionate cousin,

'CLARA.'

That was alarmingly unacademic! Clara had clearly revolted from the family tradition that a sort of cold chicken broth should flow in your veins,

and that love is a mating of intellect, education, and social equality. I was thrilled by her daring, and touched to find her so human that she was almost ungrammatical.

She came to see me two nights after. I had come in wet and chilly and tired and commanded a hot bath, to be told that the heating apparatus was out of gear, and that no baths could be had for one week. So I compromised with a hot-water bottle and the eiderdown, and a brew of tea, and was curled up on the bed enjoying myself with a pile of French illustrated papers destined for a godson in the trenches, when some one knocked at the door. If I was annoyed !

' I am so sorry, but I 'm invisible,' I called out.

' Oh, but you won't mind me,' said a familiar voice, that sounded a little more agitated than the level, well-bred tones usual to the Milburn females. ' It 's Clara. I very much want to see you.' So I had to get up, as Clara had never been in my room before, and politely open the door, and wash a teacup for her in my basin.

She was very wet indeed, as if she had walked a long way in the rain, and to my gratification

I saw that she had French boots on, really good boots which made her feet look absurdly small.

'Clara,' I said, 'what has the war done to your feet? Is it your idea of economy to wear such boots through mud and rain and darkness? I thought you had had a university education as well as English parents. This is far away from all your moral and intellectual traditions. Do you take sugar in your tea? I do hope that you will say no, as there isn't any.'

'No,' said Clara. She was panting from the stairs—five flights, and longer than any other stairs in the world—and she could not have blushed any redder than wind and exercise had made her already. She simply had to rest, so I lay and looked at her and found her mysteriously glowing. She was rather wispy about the hair again owing to the rain, but she was certainly acquiring distinctly French touches about her clothes,—cuffs and collar, and hat as well as boots. And she seemed excited and almost vivid.

'You 've come to tell me about your godson,' I said.

She actually jumped.

'Paul-Aimé,' she said, laughing a little nervously. 'Do you like his name? Paul-Aimé.'

She has a pretty French accent.

'I wonder what it means,' I said. 'You tell me, Clara.'

She looked at me uncertainly. Then she said nervously, 'Jennifer, let me ask you something—very—very—intimate. Are you engaged, or in love,—or anything?'

I said, 'Clara, I really don't know. But not all with the same man, anyhow.'

'Oh, you won't tell me,' she said. 'But I know you have been. I mean, you've had men in love with you. I never have. I never wanted to. I thought they'd be like father. I never knew it was like this. I never thought I would mind myself. But I do, I am—I am going to marry Paul Chenal.'

What is it that makes women kiss each other when they get engaged? I am the slave of all these conventions, so I rolled off the bed in a sort of eiderdown cocoon and kissed Clara, who was half crying. She had told me what I suspected.

But a shock went through me all the same. Of course girls do marry chauffeurs, they do it all the time in Williamson novels and the Hearst papers —but the girls never sound like Clara Milburn. And Paul-Aimé is a *réformé* from the Foreign Legion into the bargain, and what on earth does any one know about him? I had never imagined that any of my awful set of Milburn cousins could possibly come alive, or marry anything less than an aged professor of archæology, but this was being human beyond calculation.

Clara looked decidedly human, and I felt that even if she suffered for it, it would be much better for her, and that a live poilu in her family will be a more exciting subject for discussion at breakfast than the comparative ethics of the Punic Wars. The Milburns never make violent assertions, or prejudiced personal comment, but I doubt if they will maintain the balanced abstraction of their conversation when Clara announces that she is marrying into the Foreign Legion.

She suddenly began to tell me about Paul in a torrent of phrases, less carefully turned than the family breakfast table could have borne.

'He is most unusual, Jennifer, and even if he were not, it would be all the same to me. I don't love him for his mind alone, though he has a very uncommon one. And I do know something about him, because I've seen him every day for three months, and I can live on what he makes as a chauffeur, even if they stop giving me an allowance. Or any way, I can teach, or lecture or write. But I believe that his book will be a great success and then he can write others. Oh, it is so absorbing, helping him to self-expression. And that was really why I moved away from Mme. Drage's—because they talked, and I couldn't bear it. He is *not* a common man. And if the family disapprove, I won't care. I have never in my life known what it was to matter to any one before. And Paul has no one, and he needs me. We shall live here in Paris till the war is over, and then perhaps go to some small town in the Midi. Paul isn't strong, and a warm climate may be necessary for him.'

'Are you sure that you want to marry him?' I said. 'If you are, I don't see that what any one else thinks matters.'

'Yes, I am sure,' she said. 'I believe in him. I trust him.'

'Has he any people?' I said.

'It 's all in his book,' Clara cried incoherently. 'He has been an orphan since he was ten. He never wanted to be married before.'

'Does he want to be married?' I asked.

Clara turned red again, but she was valiant. 'He never thought of it, he never thought of me,' she said. 'As a matter of fact, it doesn't matter to him. I mean *I* do, but not—— And for a little while I thought it didn't matter either. I nearly—I almost—— But—— We are to be married here next week.'

We had a long talk, and in the end I persuaded Clara to tell Aunt Alice, and to promise that she would go home to be married. It would be simpler to take Paul over to England and introduce him properly, as she was sincerely proud of him. And some one would have to converse with him about the responsibility he was undertaking. I wondered if Uncle James would do it in *his* French, or Aunt Alice in hers, or if they would approach him simultaneously, one on each side

Uncle James in measured accents : ' Mais avay vous considéré comment vous allez vivre en cas de maladie ? Pouvez-vous supporter notre enfant ? Avay-vous sauvé quelque chose ? '

Aunt Alice ; ' Nous pouvons compter sur votre dévouement pour notre fille toujours, M. Chenal, ne pouvons-nous pas ? '

Clara was really quite sweet, and there is no doubt that she is in love with her poilu. She left me his book, neatly typed, to look over. She made me slip into some clothes, and descend five flights of stairs to speak to Paul-Aimé too. He came for her in his taxi at ten o'clock.

I shook my new cousin-to-be by the hand, and neither of us said much.

' Elle est bonne pour moi,' was all he found to say to me, but he seems to be good to her too, and there was a warm look in his eyes when he tucked the rug round her.

' Tu n'es pas fatiguée, ma petite Claire ? ' I heard him murmuring anxiously.

I crawled up my five flights of stairs reflecting on war-romance and war-psychology. In bed I read *Paul-Aimé ; Sa vie*, and, alas, could not believe

that it was not a perfectly ordinary book. The direct narrative of his life as a little boy on a farm, and afterwards as an apprentice in a button-hook and screw factory was quite good; then he went to sea, and after that he did his military service, and later on he became a pedlar in Italy and Spain, and finally found himself in Algiers just before the war, and joined the Légion Étrangère. He had done plenty of things, and he described one or two amorous adventures in the confessional style proper to such narratives, but somehow or other I had the feeling all through that the whole production was more a response to Clara's prompting than natural artistic selection and expression. And Clara had remembered *Marie-Claire*, and kept him on the same lines.

Later on he got to *ma marraine*, and she made him give his opinion of the pictures and books and sculpture that they had seen together, and that was all Clara, and nothing of Paul-Aimé. But even her stilted opinions and pallid enthusiasms were touched with a faint warmth now that had not existed in London when she had explained to me the rapture of inspiration and nourishment that

she received from the canvases of Augustus John and Mr. Roger Fry. Clara was bedded out in a formal garden, but the sun was making her flower quite nicely.

Paul's dedication was, 'To my little Claire, who taught me the language of love.' Rather more like the *Family Herald* than the Milburn family.

I heard no more for a couple of days. But now the wedding is certain. What could be more certain than Clara's letter? Even if the canteen suffers, I shall assuredly go on that navy-blue shopping expedition. France and England are learning from one another.

A POSTSCRIPT

I must finish the story of Clara's romance in a postscript. On the third of April she wrote to me from London.

'My dear Jennifer,—I want to thank you so much for coming to help me pack and for seeing me off. It was really too good of you in the middle of your busy days. And the navy-blue umbrella is simply

charming, but very extravagant of you. I have never heard of any one buying an umbrella in the Rue de la Paix. Thank you so much for it. Paul thinks you are '*très gentille,*' and you have been the greatest help to me. You were right to advise me to come to London, as the family, I realise, would have been hurt otherwise. They are finding it—as I expected—a little difficult to get used to the thought of my marriage, but they are much interested in Paul's unusual gifts, and in his book, which is already in the hands of a publisher, although not yet finally accepted. We are to be married in a few days, by registrar, as it is simpler to arrange. I shall let you know as soon as I am back in Paris, which will be almost at once, as Paul must return to his work. I hope that you will, some day, be as happy as I am.—Your affectionate

'CLARA.'

'Paul is so silent he won't speak to Father and Mother.'

After the wedding Aunt Alice wrote :

'MY DEAR JENNIFER,—Clara asked me to send you a line to let you know that she was married

yesterday. Any children are to be Protestant of course. We think Paul a most unusual type of son-in-law, and a very interesting person in himself. His gift of languages is quite extraordinary, and should be turned to good account. With Clara's help I have no doubt that this will be the case. The book which he has written is really quite remarkable. We are encouraging him to suppress the dedication, which is to English ears perhaps a little redundant. The marriage was at first something of a disappointment to your Uncle and me. Clara is so very brilliant, and there is no position which she could not fill to advantage. I confess that I have often pictured her as the wife of a peer. But the very unusualness of this union may develop her gifts to their fullest extent. Paul seems to us to have exceptional reserves of strength, and his forceful silence is most striking. The story of his life, so simply told, is moving, and will unquestionably find a wide and appreciative public. His career has been most unusual, and we think him a man of great depth of character. Clara seems very happy, and your Uncle and I are convinced that intellectually Paul, although untrained, is of good

fibre, and will develop satisfactorily. I trust that we shall see you in London before long. There is always a room at your disposal. I am just off for a little tour in the North, to speak to the colliers' wives on the need of including fresh fruit juice in infants' diet. Gertrude and Emma were at Clara's wedding in uniform, and your Uncle and I felt it to be very typically a war-wedding. A French soldier of the Legion, and ex-canteen worker and V.A.D., Gertrude in a gardener's holland smock —she is getting four shillings a day at Kew, and works thirteen hours, as daylight saving has made it necessary to water an hour later,—and Emma in the exceedingly neat uniform of the 'National' bus lady-conductors, made a most striking group.— I am, yours affectionately,

'ALICE MILBURN.'

Clara and Paul-Aimé came to see me a few weeks after their return to Paris, looking thoroughly contented with each other. They had taken a tiny little *appartement* in the Rue des Ciseaux, and Clara would not even have a *bonne à tout faire* because she was so proud of her little ménage

and loved doing her own work. It doesn't sound as if it could possibly turn out a happy marriage, but in spite of everything, Clara's devastating education and the uncertainty of Paul's history and habits, I have a feeling that it will. He is now talking English quite easily and seems to prefer it, although Clara's French is real French and very good—not like her family's.

'The mother of my Claire is not sympathetic to me,' Paul mentioned quite simply. 'She is not *spirituelle*, she is of a coldness. Monsieur is *savant*, but he too is not sympathetic. I do not talk with them. I hold silence.'

'I wasn't proud of you,' Clara said reprovingly; 'to be so silent was dreadful. I wanted them all to know you, to see you as you are, and you would not let them have even a glimpse.'

'The family of Claire is terribly instructed,' Paul informed me undisturbed. 'People of intellectual pursuits, but not at all people of the world. I am not instructed. To them I am a *bête curieuse*, not a man. I held silence. They are not sympathetic.'

'You met the sisters of Claire, as well, did you not?' I said. I could not resist it.

'Yes,' Paul said seriously, 'But we did not speak. Oh, *là là*, what women! They do not resemble my Claire!'

'And the book?' I said.

'The book will be out in another month,' Clara said. 'It 's being published here in French first, and I am preparing an English edition. I 'm going to make Paul do it before his English gets too good. Then it will have all the charm of quaint language and expression as well as its original interest. Something like Yoshio Markino, you know.'

Paul looked rather doubtful over this.

'Once to make a book is enough,' he said wisely.

'People like it,' Clara said. 'And it sells.' Clara is evidently going to make a good thing out of Paul-Aimé's history if she possibly can. If she succeeds in making her soldier of the Legion as popular as Marie-Claire and the Japanese painter combined, he will be able to give up taxi-driving and take to literature. I don't know where she learnt to be so mercenary.

Her Paul is big and dark, with rather a look of power about him, but only his natural French grace and his foreignness save Clara a thousand daily difficulties, I should think. He is evidently considerate and really devoted, and she is convinced that he is a genius, and is prepared accordingly to call everything that surprises her mere eccentricity.

She sent him out to his taxi and stayed a minute to throw her arms round my neck.

'I 've no business to be so happy in war-time,' she said. 'Or so safe—because Paul can't go back to the Front ever. It 's a one-man war for most of us, isn't it, Jennifer? And here I am happy and safe, and I know it 's wrong, but I love it. I 've never liked the things I 've pretended to like. I hate books, and lectures and reading, and writing *really*. Now, I 'll just do my housework and look after Paul. And whatever happens—*whatever* happens, I 'll have these halcyon days to remember and live on. I am happy, Jennifer.'

Halcyon is one of the Milburn family's exclusive adjectives, misused one might think. They look at you, pallid and wispy and emotionless, and declare that they have had recent halcyon moments

on an exhaustive walking-tour, or sleeping all night at Stonehenge, or doing research work of some sort, or preparing lantern-slides of early Christian art. You never believe it.

But this time, as used by Clara, it seemed to have some meaning.

V

MY GODSON-OF-WAR

7 Rue Gît-le-Cœur,
30*th March* (Mi-Carême).

'It seems very odd for an English girl to have a grown-up godchild—and a soldier—French!' wrote my elderly Aunt Virginia severely. 'It 's all very well to be kind to the soldiers—knitting, and even cigarettes. I hope we all are. But a godson is a religious relation, almost. And you said a French soldier?'

'Well, at least I know something of his religious views, and they are sound enough,' I replied in more or less pertinent exculpation.

And indeed Jean, my *filleul-de-guerre*, was an old friend of the far-off days before the Boche had let loose on Europe the final convulsion of a madness which showed first under Frederic, and foamed and raged on to the 'philosophy' which denied man's faith and woman's decency, as well as Heaven's right.

I heard first in those old days of Jean's simple religion through his interest in a new picture that had appeared in my room. 'Satan without doubt, regarding the world,' he said, pausing in his swift dusting to give it a moment's close attention. Fauns and satyrs were not part of M. Jean's world, and the shaggy creature with hoofs, playing on a pipe in a twilit forest, was for him no woodland god, but the Father of Evil.

'I have no fear of Satan,' M. Jean added unexpectedly. 'I am not sufficiently important for him, and I do my duty.' He went on stirring up the dust with his usual violence, a careful violence too deft to break or displace anything, and I reflected that there was perhaps a sound enough theology in this simple faith that feared not the Devil with duty done.

M. Jean's visits were gleams in a tedious and solitary recovery from a touch of fever. It is not prudent to be ill *au cinquième* in a little Latin Quarter hotel, when you have few friends in Paris. Jean bringing in the 'little breakfast' and letters, Jean dusting and chatting and retailing the gossip of the *Jeanne d'Arc*, Jean always gay and amused

with life, helped me to fear less the blue imps which are the children of Satan. His day was filled with toil such as only the *garçon* of a little French hotel knows. He fetched and carried, made beds and swept rooms, and ran up and down six flights of stairs a hundred times a day, and all to the tune of the Patronne's voice, harsh, impatient, abusive. But with all his duties, I am convinced that whilst I was ill he contrived to come to see me more often than was strictly necessary to pass on the news of the day.

The Patronne he treated lightly as an evil incident of existence, and not destructive of his invincible joy in life itself.

'The universe is large,' M. Jean used to say, flourishing his duster grandly. 'And the Patronne is a speck. Paris takes no notice of her, and I take no more notice than I must.' Jean was essentially *boulevardier*, and he was convinced that life, as he lived it in Paris, was infinitely freer and larger than life on his father's farm in Picardy.

'It is the capital of the world,' he would say with enthusiasm. 'Naturally I wished to leave the

country. I wished also to see good boxing and fencing.'

These sports were the passion of Jean's leisure moments. He was small and pale and had a look of extreme fatigue, but his energy and good spirits were unfailing, and his vitality showed too in his amused comment on the ways and doings of the little hotel. He often spoke of his life on the farm, and his father and mother and brothers and sisters, and tears would come into his eyes when he told me of the small Charlotte aged two years and ' fat as a little hen,' whose intelligence was a marvel, and whose first word was Jean's name. In time I got to know them all. His mother washed a shirt and a pair of socks for M. Jean once a fortnight, and when he sent the to-be-washed ones home, he always put a toy or a *bouchée* of chocolate into the parcel for the baby to remember him by. I learnt about Jean's friends, and in particular of the two with whom he fenced oftenest — ' Monsieur Louis ' and Jacquot Bernard. M. Louis was a cavalry officer. ' He is a gentleman, but my friend,' Jean said with pride.

Jacquot, the son of the people on the next farm,

and a Swiss, was *mon copain*. He could fence and shoot almost as well as Jean, and was the same age, twenty-one years.

'At books he beats me,' M. Jean confessed. 'He studies to give one a headache.' He told me more guardedly of his admiration for Berthe, a young woman in a *pension* across the courtyard, who shook dusters from the windows *au sixième* and exchanged sparkling glances, and (to Jean's mind) charming repartee with him in the intervals of their hard-working days. He let me know that on the day that he was free—once in four Sundays—Berthe accompanied him in his search for diversion, and he described what they had seen on the Boulevards, and what at the cinema, and the supper they had eaten in the Place de la République. Jean dreamed of a ménage with Berthe when they could afford it.

Altogether I got to know Jean and his scheme of life—not blameless, but human and dutiful enough—very well. It was a blow to me to hear that he was leaving the hotel. By that time I was better, and had been at Moret for a few days with a painting friend. I arrived back at dusk, and

found Jean seated on a corded box on the pavement at the hotel door.

'Your health is then better, Mademoiselle,' he said politely. 'I am glad.' And then he explained. 'The Patronne becomes unendurable. Oh, *là là*, what a woman! So I am leaving. I go to a hotel in the Boulevard Picpus where I shall see more of the world at least.'

Later I heard an horrific tale of the events of the evening before—of bells unanswered, letters and hot water missing, of vain search for Jean. Then from the broom-and-pail cupboard had issued sounds of hilarity that reached the Patronne's ears, and to her ferocious threats Jean had replied recklessly, 'It is my *jour de fête*. The cupboard is locked on this side, madame, and we burn your electric light. It is my *jour de fête*, and Berthe and I take a little supper together.'

But of this Jean told me nothing. We shook hands and wished each other luck and good health. Then he shouldered his box and tramped away in the dusk, looking just a little forlorn. And I climbed five flights feeling forlorn too.

. . . . . .

Now with Verdun in its second month I have found Jean again. He came into the canteen the other day, with half a dozen other poilus direct from the trenches, burdened, muddy, drooping, and too tired almost to eat. As I put bowls of soup before them, my hand was joyfully seized. 'It is Mademoiselle of the *Jeanne d'Arc!*'

It was undoubtedly M. Jean, in a too-large uniform that had once been horizon-blue but was now so patched and faded and muddy that little of the original colour remained; and a tin helmet pushed well back. He seemed smaller than I remembered him, and whiter and more exhausted at the moment even than in the days of the Patronne, but his smile and voice were full of the same unconquerable interest in life, and his blue eyes were still gay.

This was his first leave after fifteen months of war, and that night he was too fatigued to talk. I gave him money for a hot bath, which the canteen could not provide, and his childlike delight in coming across a familiar face in Paris unexpectedly, was no greater than the pleasure it gave me to find Jean again. I had vivid recollections of his willing-

ness, his cheerful chatter, and his friendliness when I was ill. So, of course, I became his godmother. I should have done so even if, like some of the astuter poilus, he had already acquired half a dozen *marraines*. But he had no one. He had never received a letter or a parcel of any kind since he had been in the trenches.

He was *envahi*. His people living under German rule—if indeed they still lived—could send no word to tell him how they fared. He had seen them all early in that fateful first August of war. His regiment had marched through his own village, and there, playing in the road in front of the house was the little Charlotte. ' She was soon in my arms, I tell you, the fat little hen,' M. Jean said. ' And all the regiment wanted to kiss her.'

His father was too old to fight, his brothers too young. ' And now they are invaded. And when I think what may have happened,' Jean said clenching his fists, ' I can kill—oh, I can kill ! '

I asked about Monsieur Louis, and Jean's face lighted up with enthusiasm. He was, it seemed, orderly to M. Louis, who had now become *mon lieutenant*, and his devotion was whole-hearted.

' He is my friend more than my officer. We are of the same village.'

During Jean's days in Paris we are to have many talks. I took him yesterday to a café that he thought suitable for me, and let him choose his own meal, much to his joy, as the canteen fare offers little variety, and beer, which is all they give to drink, he considers fit for Boches but not for Frenchmen. We went on to the circus—and M. Jean greatly loved the unagile legs of the elderly ballet, and the two horses, and the spiritless dogs, and the clowns crying and laughing. I find that moving pictures bore him. ' The war is not like that,' he assured me earnestly. ' This is not a comfortable war. And our officers are not like that. A general to shake hands with a poilu ? Oh, *là là*, it is impossible ! All that friendship between the officers and the men, it does not exist. I am the lucky one to have *mon lieutenant* who is my friend—but that does not happen to two men.'

I asked him about his friend Jacquot Bernard, but he can tell me little. The entire family moved away from their farm just before war was declared. ' They were Swiss,' Jean said, ' and now people say

they were spies, but I don't believe it. I look for Jacquot everywhere, and some day I hope to find him. It will be strange if I don't.'

M. Jean is most considerate and delicate in accepting the small gifts that I am able to make him; he managed to convey information as to the illustrated papers that he prefers, and the biscuits and chocolate that go furthest. Tobacco and paper are *plus avantageux* than cigarettes. He rolls his own.

. . . . . .

It is real spring to-day. A shining warmth, a delicious softness of sky and distance, and into the grey trees and bare brown spaces in the gardens, a sudden wash of delicate new green. It is inexpressibly lovely in spite of Verdun. During an hour off I wandered through the Luxembourg, and then went up and looked at the Penseur in his immense silence and absorption. He has many things to think of in these days. Then I spent a few moments in St. Etienne, the most beautiful of little churches. Of course I put a lighted candle on Ste. Geneviève's tomb, a prayer for the safety of Paris. There were hundreds and hundreds already burning there. 'From Zeppelins—from the ap-

proach of the invading Hun, blessed Ste. Geneviève deliver our beloved Paris.' One can imagine the prayers. . . .

Even from the trenches some one writes, 'It makes a splendid sun—a superb world. One rejoices.'

POSTSCRIPT, *October* 1916.

I must here tell the end of Jean as a soldier.

His letters, when he went back to the trenches, were touching in their gratitude for very small pleasures. They were so curiously spelt, although graphic, that I had to read them aloud to myself to get the sense. Berthe, he had informed me, was now a milliner at Lyons, and he had seemed a little out of spirits when he spoke of her. He wrote: 'I wish we could clear these dirty Boche vermin out of the soil of France more rapidly. I would like to settle down in a little corner with Berthe. I would like no more war. I would like four children, and the boys I will teach to fence.'

Shortly after his return to the Front Jean became very ill with pneumonia. It was *mon lieutenant* who wrote to tell me, a charming formal letter in

the most intricate handwriting. I gathered that he was no less fond of Jean than Jean was of him.

'He is my friend rather than my servant,' he wrote. 'He is *mon petit confident*. We talk of home together. We keep up our courage.'

When Jean was able to send me post-cards himself, Lt. Louis Davray formally suggested that he too should become my godson-of-war. He desired to continue writing and receiving letters. He also was 'invaded'—besides being an orphan. He longed for letters. I could hardly refuse. So I wrote to him as a godmother, and sent him romances by Gyp and Henry de Régnier, which he asked for and found 'delicious'; and he sent me his photograph and post-cards of Rheims.

Jean described hospital life; the Sister that they hated, and the Sister that they loved, the food, the doctor, the visits of the postman, who brought always the largest bundles of papers, the greatest number of letters and parcels to him, Jean, who had so good a godmother. Jean had a faculty, charming if embarrassing, of believing himself the most fortunate and well-cared for of mortals, and in a diffident but positive manner he

conveyed the fact that he knew his friends and possessions to be the most admirable in the world. He was disappointed in his hopes of getting to Paris to convalesce in the canteen, and in a few weeks he was back in the trenches, in the mud and sleet of a miserable winter. I then heard from both my *filleuls-de-guerre* with fair regularity, and it was Jean who sent me a ring made by himself out of a piece of shell, with a fragment of blue glass from Rheims Cathedral set in it; and Lt. Davray who collected a little sheaf of trench journals written by poilus—censored with discretion by himself for my safety—and forwarded them for my amusement. Then they fell silent.

. . . . . .

It was in summer and in Val-de-Grâce, when I found Jean again. Paris was a glory of green and flowering trees, gay, beautiful, tranquil to all seeming, as I walked up past the Panthéon to the great hospital. I looked for my godson always among the new faces when I made rounds with my friend M. l'Abbé, and this Sunday afternoon we found him. A new convoy had come in the night before from the Front. They were

desperately wounded men, and for the most part too exhausted by long hours in the train to rouse themselves to any consciousness of their surroundings. The Abbé stopped to speak to two Breton women in picturesque velvet dresses and lace coifs, standing silently, with tears running down their fresh red cheeks, by the bedside of a soldier lying beyond any power of speech, and in the next bed I found my godson.

'Valenduc, Jean, 99 Infanterie, 67 Compagnie.'

That was his name and regiment on the card at the head of the bed, otherwise I should have passed by. His head and hands were bandaged, and a cage held the bedclothes off his body. He answered when I spoke, but with no recognition.

Next Sunday he knew me. He looked at me without surprise.

'Mon lieutenant is killed,' he said. 'At Verdun, which is hell. I could not save him.'

He stared at me, crying like a child. He had got the Military Cross for trying to carry his officer in, but that seemed to mean little to Jean.

'A medal more or less,' he said. 'I who already have eleven medals for *les sports*,—boxing, fencing,

shooting. But *mon lieutenant*, he was my friend. There was no one like him.'

Jean got better in spite of all probability. There was the indomitable quality in him that he shared with so many of his fellows, and when he lost his leg from the knee, he was philosophic.

'There is not much of me left,' he said, surveying his thin hands, 'But I am lucky that there is anything. Most of my friends remain at Verdun —for always.'

When he was tired or in pain he lay and cried like a child, and like a child a small thing could divert and cheer him. He took to fancy-work and displayed taste and skill, and praise greatly pleased him.

One day when he had got out to the garden in a wheeled chair, he told me—whether truly or in a spirit of romance I cannot say—of a friend I had forgotten to ask for.

'Jacquot Bernard, *marraine*,' he said, 'I killed him.'

He sat looking about the garden, green alleys and grass plots, and maimed and blinded men moving feebly in the sunlight. 'They said he was a spy, but I didn't believe it,' he said. 'And

one day he was brought into the camp with sixteen other Boche prisoners. He jumped forward and looked glad when he saw me. "Oh, Jean," he said, "you will shake hands with me?" I said "Yes, Jacquot"; and before he could touch my hand I had run my bayonet through him. I could have washed my hands in his blood,' M. Jean shouted wildly, 'I could have bathed myself in it. When I think that he lived beside us all his life, and betrayed us! When I think of the little Charlotte, —of my mother!' He added in a quieter tone, 'My colonel was very angry—till I explained.'

A few days later when I made my way through the old courtyards and across the green enclosures where nuns used to walk and meditate in cloistered peace, to the corner of the garden usually occupied by Jean's chair, I saw that he already had a visitor. She was a very *chic* young person indeed, and she was sitting as close to him as the bench would permit, with one arm round his neck, while Jean held her other hand.

Neither of them showed a trace of embarrassment at my approach, and Jean was electric with gaiety and life.

'Berthe has come to see me, *marraine*,' he said. 'All the way from Lyons. That says something! I've been showing her my fancy work, and she thinks I'll be very good at millinery; for that one leg is enough. Lucky that I did not lose a hand!'

M. Jean had never since his hospital days smiled at me with his soul as he did now, and the rather softened and subdued Mlle. Berthe suddenly kissed him with an expression that spoke well for the future.

'All the way from Lyons,' Jean repeated. 'That says much!'

VI

ADVENTURE

Being an interpolated incident having little to do with war-work.)

RUE GÎT-LE-CŒUR,
April 8th, 1916 (St. Albert).

YESTERDAY evening M. le Directeur came into the Salle Napoléon where we were doing a rushing business with a very popular dish of macaroni and potatoes, and asked me if I would come and help him to *faire la distribution* upstairs. This is a great honour, and, of course, I was delighted.

The little ceremony takes place every night in the Director's office, and consists of handing a 50-centime piece—or if he is a *père de famille* a couple of francs—to every poilu who is on leave and living at the canteen. A friend of the Director's, supposed to have made a fortune in munitions, is the giver. He is generous to the canteen in many other ways too, but this is probably the most popular and charming thing he has thought of. The soldiers

simply love it. When you have twopence-halfpenny a day—which is saved up for you while you are on leave as something to go back for—a piece of silver, however small, contains vast possibilities of pleasure. As soon as dinner is over the poilus all crowd up the little wooden stair in the greatest excitement *pour toucher*. M. le Directeur seats himself at the head of his long table and asks each man just the right sort of friendly questions, beginning with the important one as to whether he is a family man or not—which entitles him to two privileges, more money, and an invitation to *déjeuner* with a duchess who has the future of the race at heart. Somebody else writes down the man's name, or checks the names already entered in the book, and then the soldiers pass round the table 'touching' as they pass, and go out by another door.

I sat down with all the little rolls of money before me, and slipped the pieces of silver into the hands that were held out. It always interests me so much to watch the different faces and expressions of the men. Some of them are chubby and childish, some old and furrowed. Some of them are tragic

and anxious, some of them are shy, but for the most part they are gratified and cheerful and ready with a joke. Their hands vary so much, too, that I can almost tell the men's character by them alone. We seemed to have more soldiers than usual last night, and I could hardly put the money into the outstretched palms fast enough. The last hand that was held out was unusually clean and delicate, and without thinking I put a half-franc piece—all that remained of my store—into it, and then looked up to meet the highly-amused face of the Director and an expression of perfect gravity in a pair of blue eyes belonging to a strange British officer. I tried to snatch back the money, but the hand closed gently and withdrew itself, and the owner and M. le Directeur both burst out laughing.

'One of our Allies, Miss Beech, and a compatriot of your own, must have 50-centimes from us if he wants it,' Monsieur said. 'Allow me to present a British officer to a kind Canadian Miss, without whom this canteen would be desolated indeed. Colonel——?'

'Not colonel yet,' more like a pip-squeak, the

Englishman murmured for my benefit. Louder he said 'Captain Roden.'

That was all I saw of him. The voice of Mrs. Vernon-Baker—the other English helper who comes usually only on Sundays—was heard calling from the room down below.

'Andrew, are you ready? The taxi is here.'

Captain Roden shook hands and hoped we should meet again. Then he went down the ladder-like staircase, and I went into the *vestiaire* to take my blue veil off before going to the dormitories to see the infants in bed.

And now I must relate with pain an adventure that happened to me this morning as I was walking through the Tuileries.

It was a sweet morning, ineffably blue sky, and warm sun, and fat chestnut buds swinging gently like little green hammocks. The Arc de Triomphe was just veiled in dream-like haze—a real Paris day again after all the sulks and slush of this dismal winter. So I felt a tranquil joy, tempered by the realisation that the spring light was rather searching, and that my winter weeds needed minor

attentions like new buttons, if they were to turn successfully into summer garments. However I was not in acute pain over it ; even when the tripping and short-skirted Parisiennes directed a gaze of mild interest at my strictly serviceable boots, I endured it unmoved.

I stopped beside the big fountain to look at the gold-fish, which were very active after their winter torpor, and beheld approaching a British officer. Seen hastily, he looked pleasant and friendly. Having passed, he stopped on the other side of me and also nature-studied the gold-fish. I felt a sudden longing for my native speech, but presently I wandered discreetly on. He turned, came up behind, and decided—with whatever degree of accuracy—that I was not loafing and inviting him, and so struck off through the trees to the right. Then suddenly two minutes later he performed a flank movement or formed fours or something, and came up directly in front of me.

' Voulez-vous diretty-moi au Louvre ? ' he said. Execrable is not the word for his accent.

' With pleasure,' I said, and pointed out the Louvre lying in large masses all round the horizon.

'I say, I knew it was you, Miss Beech,' he said. 'But I couldn't be quite sure! you looked different last night somehow, with that blue thing on your head. But what luck to meet you again. I say, this is awfully jolly.'

I had known at once that it was Captain Roden, but a silly shyness possesses me at times, and so I had pretended I did not recognise him.

'As we are properly introduced there 's no chance of a real Paris adventure,' I said with regret. 'And this morning felt so like an adventure somehow. It 's because everything is looking so adorable after the hideous weeks we 've been through.'

'Yes,' Captain Roden said. He added, 'It 's pretty lonely here without any friends.'

'It can be,' I said. I felt that it was at that moment.

'The only person I know here is a sort of a painting cousin—Evangeline Baker—she 's something or other in your canteen, I think—and she 's gone off to the country for the week-end. You know her, don't you—she 's in your canteen? She paints pretty solid likenesses of the Eiffel Tower

and Napoleon's Tomb and all that. Some people like them.'

'Don't you like pictures?' I said. I had an idiotic longing to go on talking English however drivelling the conversation.

'Yes,' he said promptly: 'Not Evangeline's, of course, but all those early Italian things—I simply love them. Botticelli, you know, and—and all those people.'

'I don't think you can see any just now in Paris,' I said.

Captain Roden looked disappointed.

'I don't know Paris at all, I've always passed through it,' he said: 'I've got a whole day to put in—alone—this time, so I thought I'd go and have a look at the Winged Victory.'

'I am afraid you can't see her,' I said. 'She is supposed to be safely hidden in the coal-cellar for the duration of the war.'

'Too bad,' he said. 'I was counting on a look at her. I am staying at the Hôtel d'Iéna.'

'If you like to go down to the *sous-sol* in the Louvre,' I said, 'there are two small rooms of French Renaissance sculpture to be seen. Some

people prefer Marie-Adelaide, Duchesse de Savoie, to the Victory.' I felt rather like one of my very intellectual cousins saying this, but Captain Roden looked as if he wanted some information. Then I thought of Clara and her godson-of-war, and laughed. He looked a little surprised.

'I never liked the Renaissance,' he said decidedly. 'And the basement is sure to be stuffy. No, I can't go to the Louvre now.'

'What will you do?' I asked.

'I don't know,' he said rather sadly. 'I 'm all alone, and just out of hospital. As a matter of fact I shouldn't stand too much. Would you mind if I were to walk along a little way with you?'

'Not at all,' I said. 'But should you walk? Have you been wounded?'

'Oh! they like me to walk,' he said cheerfully. 'Not wounded—trench fever, rather bad.'

'I 'm just going up to the Rue de la Paix to Cook's,' I said, 'to get two hundred francs to pay for my washing.'

'What a lot of washing,' he said. 'I say, it would be awfully good of you to let me go with you as far as the door.'

'Do come,' I said, 'I rather like talking English for a change.'

'Do you live among the French?' he said.

So I gave him a sketch of my involuntary aid.

By the time we got to the Vendôme Column he had explained that he was a rising young politician, *à la* Mrs. Humphry Ward, and only a British officer, R.E. for the duration of the war—or he hoped so, with luck!—and since January a year ago. He was on his way to the Convalescent Home at Cimiez for three or four weeks.

When I had put the wash-money in my purse I found him still at the door of Cook's, and he strolled along beside me again. I said I must join the patriots who were behind hermetically sealed windows, tying up comforts for the men in the trenches.

'If your mission is to soldiers,' Captain Roden said thoughtfully, 'there is one much nearer than the trenches who needs kindness and care in the worst way. Are you only allowed to be kind in French?'

So I laughed, and said I thought that I could

take a holiday for once as it was Saturday and all. He suggested sitting in the sun in the Tuileries for half an hour, and we found two chairs with a view of the Arc de Triomphe and the Obelisk. It was the sweetest of spring days, and the sheer beauty of Paris made me happy. I was really happy. Presently he went on to wonder rather hesitatingly if we might lunch together, at a place he knew down near the Palais Royal. So I said I thought it sounded very pleasant. Then we talked about a hundred things, people and Paris and the war and books.

He was very attractive, and I am truthfully bored by my own society. At twelve o'clock we sauntered in the direction of food, and he did things with a quiet and efficient air, and related suitable extracts from his life and adventures while we ate rather agreeable French food. Then he became slightly personal and told me that I was Northern Italian in type, and had a Tuscan face. This approaches Cornelia's artistic description of me as a Primitive, which, as I take it, means that I resemble an ill-drawn Madonna with a too-long oval face, and too-small oval eyes beneath

high, croquet-hoop eyebrows. Anyhow he made himself very pleasant.

After lunch I said I must go home and write letters. He said he would come with me, and read quietly till I was ready to come out again! I said I had an unbreakable engagement to buy a hat at four o'clock. He said in that case, would I not go with him for a drive in a little *fiacre*, or else sit in the gardens until four o'clock. So . . .

We sat in the little garden behind Notre Dame, and things became personal but not boring. The children playing about were sweet, and one little thing, with a skipping-rope and two brand-new blue hair-ribbons, was enthralled by the beauty of a real *officier anglais*, and kept skipping gently in front of us with shy smiles and swift retreats if we noticed her.

Captain Roden talked happily about himself. He is very much alive to life. We exchanged a few book beliefs. He adores Meredith and Keats and the *Scarlet Letter*, and Walt Whitman.

> 'I am the poet of the body, and I am the poet of the soul.'

He was rather sweet, and not very vain. He

would have gone on talking cheerfully till train time if I had let him, but I inexorably wouldn't. I had to meet Jacqueline at a tea-shop, and I parted with my lonely soldier at the door, as *Messieurs les officiers* are not allowed to enter such places until five o'clock, for some unknown reason.

I sank utterly exhausted into a chair. I live such silent days that I am not fit for the strain of sudden hours of talk. I was unable to relieve Jacqueline's acute curiosity till I had drunk copiously of tea. Then I described a sight-seeing day with an imaginary male Milburn cousin as an explanation of my emotion. She was inquisitive, but satisfied.

He is to write from Cimiez.

The distressing feature of this adventure is that it is not more improper, more Parisian. But I always fail to be an Elinor Glyn heroine. Nor are my heroes ten feet tall, eighteen years of age, graceful and tawny as Vikings, beautiful as Greek gods, and endowed with titles, money, ancestors.

Andrew Roden has left callow youth behind. He has an experienced and amused eye. He was nice to the child with the skipping-rope, and his

hands are particularly good. I doubt if he will write. So much for an episode. I have left out most of it!

Later.

He did not make love at all.

He could not have been nicer.

Later.

I said episode, but he said 'Let us say preface.'

Later.

He will be in Paris again for a day in two weeks, when his leave is up.

But by that time, of course, he 'll have found some one else.

Anyway it was a nice day, and delicious to talk not only English but my own thoughts again. I 've been drowned in parcels and poilus and refugees and soup-tureens for so long.

Of course he won't write.

April 11th (St. Léon).

It rains and rains and rains. A. R. doesn't expect to leave Cimiez before another two weeks, but you can't ever tell exactly with military rule—

it may suddenly fling you somewhere that you least expect, at an hour's notice. But to get anywhere, he 's got to come through Paris, and as trains never match exactly—never in war-time certainly—we are pretty sure to have a little time together. I don't really know whether I want to see him or not. He seems so very sure of himself, and so very determined. Yes, of course, I do want to see him again. . . .

'CIMIEZ, *April 10th.*

'DEAR JENNIFER,—Wish I could say "My" before that—yesterday was wonderful, and you were very dear to give up your time to me. Herewith a report one of my speeches to let you know more of me—if you can be bothered. I thought of you all night. Don't forget you said you 'd answer letters. I 've lost no time,—just got here and unpacked.—Yours sincerely, ANDREW RODEN.'

'*April 11th.*

'DEAR JENNIFER,—Will I ever be let say "My"? —Cimiez is lovely, beaches, trees, flowers, colour, scents all delicious. I wish you were here. I am well already, but you did that in Paris. You took

away all that invalidish feeling. I am eager for a letter.—Yours sincerely, ANDREW RODEN.'

'*April* 13*th.*

'DEAR JENNIFER,—" My " can't get put there till you give me leave—I am impatient for a letter. I see that it 's raining again in Paris, and I wish I could lift you straight out of it and put you here among the flowers, or that I could go back there and be with you, but military law is not a bit convenient. No letter yet.—Yours,

'ANDREW RODEN.'

'*April* 14*th.*

'DEAR JENNIFER,—You don't encourage me to dare the possessive—at last a little scribble from you, and I 've read it a dozen times. You will write again at once, won't you ? I think of you constantly. The sun seems to me to shine only from Paris. I am eager for my coming day there. I may go and see you, mayn't I ?—Yours ever,

'A. R.'

'*April* 16*th.*

'DEAR JENNIFER,—I 'll explain why I love the possessive when we meet—I 've got your two dear

letters and a horribly snubby postcard—But I can't be quelled. I love every word you write. I 'll write and wire before I leave Cimiez, and then not to take a chance, I 'll go round to your hotel. I 'm not sure what day. I may have a week or so here still.—Always, A. R.'

'*April 18th.*

'DEAR JENNIFER,—I 'll stick "My" in here because I want so awfully to use it in its right place. —I 'll write and wire and come about the 21st probably. Will you be glad ? I wish every day and all day that I were in Paris. *A bientôt*, ANDREW.'

. . . . . .

7 RUE GÎT-LE-CŒUR,
22nd April (St. Opportune).

Captain Roden of Cimiez says that he has always believed in St. Opportune and revered him as his patron-saint, but I don't think he ever saw his name before I gave him a little French calendar —the day we met in the garden—with my address scribbled across it. He denies this.

'I 've known him all my life,' he said. 'I 've made heaps of altars to him—sacrifices and things. He was an awfully fine young fellow. Never lost

a chance of *any* kind, and always found out a way. He lived every single inch and loved being alive. He always used to say that his one terror was to be a frustrate ghost. By always seizing his opportunity he did a lot more good than harm. That 's the most any one can expect. He woke up people round him to come alive too. So in the end the sensible Latins who know the value of life—and saw what his example was worth—made him a saint. St. Opportune—delightful fellow.'

He said all this at lunch, looking very amused and contented. We were somewhere at St. Cloud in a little room all to ourselves upstairs.

I said, ' He sounds officious. Why should people come alive if they don't want to ? '

He said, ' Oh, but they do want to. Only sometimes they don't know how. When they do they like it surprisingly. Besides, I never said he was anybody's moral guardian. He had no morals,—I mean no conventions and timidities. He just went ahead, and took proper notice of beauty and fun and all sorts of charming things that most people wait to be formally introduced to, and approach by a book of rules. He found the world

awfully pleasant of course. And sometimes when he was enjoying just ordinary things, like a walk through a garden, or the first spring morning, he met with the most unexpected and delicious luck. Once—for instance—he stopped to look at some gold-fish in a pond, and he looked up and saw on the other side of the basin—what do you think? The Winged Victory come alive, and out of the Louvre! With a head on her shoulders too. And she isn't Greek at all. She has a Tuscan face.'

We went on talking silly nonsense.

I wasn't bored. I liked his nice voice, and his amused blue eyes.

He came at nine in the morning. I said in my letter that I 'd walk through the Tuileries at half-past ten, but A. R. explained to me afterwards that he found a short cut to my street, and couldn't possibly dawdle about in the rain for an extra hour and a half. I don't think he likes repeating effects. But I wasn't nearly ready to go out—easy as it is to be out by nine on working days, when there are only Frenchwomen to look at you—so he had to wait for me.

I found him sitting quite patiently in the awful little *jardin d'hiver*, with the big grey cat that I call Catulle Mendès purring on his knee, and the gloomy Mme. Sournois and her horrid daughter actually purring at him. They love Englishmen, especially soldiers. He was carrying on an amiable conversation with them in his awful French, expressing his enthusiasm for the Midi entirely in infinitives.

When I came down he shook hands politely, and I heard myself saying good-morning to Madame, but I suddenly felt far-off and dizzy. Then he put his hand on my arm as if he were my oldest brother and said, 'We are going for a drive.'

He had a little *fiacre* at the door, and he must have done some wonderful arranging (in infinitives) with the old *cocher*, because they usually hate long drives, specially in the rain.

He said calmly to me, 'We are going to drive to St. Cloud to lunch if you don't mind. You see, I have only five hours to talk to you in, and this seems the best way on a rainy day. We have so much to say, haven't we?'

We didn't seem to have anything to say at all at first.

Then there was a great deal. It was really a lovely drive. It was the nicest drive I have ever had in my life. It rained all the way, and the roof of the *fiacre* leaked a little, but that didn't matter, because the thoughtful Mr. Roden had brought a rug and I was well wrapped up. And we seemed to arrive almost too soon at St. Cloud, but, of course, we really took rather a long time, with one horse and slippery wet roads.

Mr. Roden says very pleasant things. And he orders lunch very nicely. I do like a man who can order food with some distinction. After lunch it cleared up, and we walked in the wet woods a little, and sat on a fallen log and talked. It smelt delicious, and the wind blew sudden rays of thin, rain-washed sunlight through the trees, and the little new green leaves were full of light. And Mr. Roden said he must hurry up and say as much as possible before it was time for him to catch his train and go back to the war.

So he said all sorts of things that no one says when they 've only met you twice. And I liked it,

and I can't help believing that he meant it. But it 's all so surprising that I don't know how much it means to me. How *can* I tell ?

But I needn't talk of war-romance, or war-psychology, or Clara any more. Andrew says, ' Jennifer, you know me now a hundred times better than if we had met and known each other five years in the ordinary way. And I 've known you always, only I hadn't the luck to find you before. But the gods will give us some good days together in spite of the war.'

I hate him to be at the war. I didn't mean to get myself into the grasp of things like this when I came over. But I wouldn't *not* be !

We had to take a train back to Paris. And we went First to be alone. And in a second it was Paris. Then Andrew saw me to my hotel in a taxi. And then I drove back to the Hôtel d'Iéna with him to give us the last minutes of his time together.

He has gone to London for five days before he goes back to the lines. I almost wish my mission here were up already, but we are awfully busy at the canteen. He hopes for a leave in September

and I may be in London then. But no one can make plans in war-time.

He lives in London in a flat near the Green Park, when he isn't in some war or other.

He has never been married—like Clara's poilu—but he wants to be.

He thinks he 'd like to be when he gets leave in September.

His hands are nice. So are his eyes. So is his voice.

He is exactly like his own description of St. Opportune.

He is most disturbing—after all I 've said about Clara and other people.

Later.

I don't seem to be going to sleep much to-night. I believe I can hear the trees breathing in their sleep in the Luxembourg garden. Now it is so late it has turned into Easter Sunday, and the bells are ringing from the convents, though it is still dark. It is not fair of people to come all the way from the South of France—all the way from the war—and keep you awake all night. Captain Roden will be sailing across the Channel

now. He said he 'd write to me in the train and post the letter at Havre.

He did not behave quite like my eldest brother all day.

'TRAIN GOING TO HAVRE,

'*23rd April* 1916.

'MY JENNIFER,—I know I can't say this yet, but let me write it just once. How good it looks. Sweet of you to have a name like no person else's. I am living to-day all over again minute by minute, and I am happy. By and by I shall begin to count the days that must pass before the Fates let me see you again. I believe and hope that it will be in September. Till then I dream of a Tuscan face. You are adorable.—Yours for ever,

'ANDREW.'

(Yet another POSTSCRIPT, added in London. October 1916.)

I heard from Andrew from the Somme—

'Here it 's all shell-fire and filth and flies, but I think of you with thankfulness and hope, and wait for September. My Lady of the Winged Victory. I love you. A. R.'

In September we met again. It seemed quite natural to say Andrew after writing it so often.

But even now I can't answer all his questions—can't promise all that he asks and wants. Nor can I any more easily make up my mind to go back to Canada.

This war is very disturbing indeed.

I wonder——!

VII

HUNNUS ATROX

7 Rue Gît-le-Cœur,
1st May 1916 (St. Jacques).

We all gave each other little sprays of *muguet* to-day as a *porte-bonheur*. The tiny woodland lilies-of-the-valley are scarcely out as yet, but their green shut bells are very sweet. The work girls exchange lilies, firmly convinced that their luck in love for the next twelve months depends on observing this May Day custom. (No one must buy her own *porte-bonheur*. It has to be a gift.) It was pretty to see and hear the laughter and gaiety of the *midinettes*, when they swarmed out at lunch-time, crowding round the flower-sellers in the streets, bargaining and joking over their sweethearts. They really do believe that these fairy bells have much to do with ringing in the fairy prince.

There seems to have been a lull in the Verdun

fighting for a week or so, and we take these intervals of calm with a thankfulness that refuses to look back or forward. The Frenchwoman, in spite of her merciless logic, her fatalism, is able to live intensely in the moment. She does so in war time —in the good moments—almost as a duty, and she is strong to help others less heroic.

I am back in the soldiers' and children's side of the canteen. It is pleasanter to be among all their cheerful noise and nonsense than submerged in the sad gloom of the refugees.

There happen to be a great many Belgian soldiers this week, of a type curiously like the English— not because of their crumpled khaki worn so differently, but actually in themselves—fair, pale boys with a quiet manner. I have one table of soldiers to wait on and about a dozen children just now. The naughtiness of the little boys has certainly exceeded anything in the annals of the canteen. One of them who spilt a plate of hot lentils into a little girl's lap, and then almost dragged her pigtails off her head, offering as a natural explanation of his fiendish behaviour, ' She is my sister '—had to be sent to headquarters to be reprimanded.

The rivalry between the children as to which of them has seen the war at closest quarters, frequently leads to high words,—*sale voyou* being one of the politest expressions exchanged—and to much rolling about on the floor and pummelling. The number of members of their families killed or ruined by the Germans and their losses of property are matters of boastful pride and unabashed invention, and a higher flight of fancy than usual is greeted with jealous yells and denials.

The comedy of these inventions only heightens the tragedy of the actual, proved iniquities of war as waged by the loathly German. A chance phrase, an unemotional statement sometimes brings it close. A crack opens in the black wall that separates the war from the sheltered fields of home, and you catch a terrifying flash of the infernal fires, like the scar of lightning that tears open a stormy sky.

A vein of degenerate nastiness outcrops constantly in German cruelty. Some accounts go beyond the limit of Gallic frankness in the telling, and are simply nauseous. These I do my best to forget. The impression left on one's mind is of despair as to any decent future for the Germans, despair

that such an unredeemable race must continue to exist, that it cannot be stamped out like some vile disease. Curiously the fathers of families, the Landwehr type, seemed to be more cruel and more nasty in their cruelty than the younger soldiers. (By the way, the French seem to have come pretty generally to the conclusion that the ' young person ' does not exist in Britain, and that the British girl is born already endowed with the freedom of speech of the married.)

Practically all Germans are brutes it would seem. Instances of decent conduct I rarely heard of, though refugees did ocasionally show a grateful remembrance of some Hun soldier who had surprised them by behaving like a human being. One small boy of five who came to us, used to put his fists in his eyes and cry himself to sleep at night for ' Karl,' a Bavarian sergeant, who had been billeted for months in his mother's cottage. Karl had made such friends with the little boy, that when his own father came back he ran to the shelter of his new friend's arms in preference, and he never ceased to remember and cry for him. But such instances were few. Some of the refugees—I remember one old lady

who had had a tobacco shop in Lille, and had actually been permitted to go to Antwerp to re-stock—had the poorest opinion of the wits of the Germans, found them stupid as well as cruel. This woman would mix up in a ludicrous way instances of German brutality and German bad taste in food. A Hun 'crime,' to which she frequently recurred, was that of eating sardines with sugar. 'The *sale* Boche officer,' she would say with expressive grimace and gesture, 'would lift a sardine by its tail from the tin, dip it into the sugar bowl, and then drop it into his mouth!'

A little girl of twelve from a Belgian town came to us one night. She had five marks still on her arm where a German officer and a gentleman had burned her with his cigar, 'just in sport'—an example of the Hun unbending in his hours of ease. The child was a daughter of a café proprietor, and the Hun officer took her on his knee to play. She was frightened and showed it. Her distress evidently amused him, and he emphasised it by burning her with his cigar. Perhaps it was 'B-O-C-H-E' he meant to spell playfully.

But after all it is not this incident or that incident

which tells on the mind, so much as the general impression of Hun cruelty and nastiness one gets from living among the victims of the German invasion. I have got to hate the sound of the German tongue. The other night we had forty little boys evacuated from the Alsatian Front, nice rosy little things with yellow heads and clean collars, and round blue eyes, but speaking nothing except German. With them was a young Alsatian *surveillant*, and later on in came two magnificent dragoons with red plumes hanging down their backs, to see him. They were old friends, and they all stood and chattered in German together. It sounded hideous to me, and I wondered that the Frenchwomen could endure it, but they did not seem to mind. They always make a particular fuss over the Alsatian children, and spoil them tremendously. I am tempted to slap them when they look at me with their Saxon blue eyes, and hold out their plates demanding more bread and potatoes in German.

'Speak French, you horrible child, or do without!' I said to one, but fortunately no one understood, and as I refilled the infant's plate he trustfully

smiled his thanks, evidently sure that my strange phrase meant something affectionate.

The little incidents that bring home the war, the continual sight, sound, feel of it in Paris, sometimes become an insupportable burden, and one longs to escape. But there is no escape from the crippled soldiers in the streets, sad, sick, and lonely, or the snatches of conversation between the people in the shops and at the news *kiosques*, on the one subject in the world. The day is full of reminders, if one were inclined to forget. Somebody comes into the kitchen at the canteen and announces that Nancy is again being heavily bombarded. An impassive-looking woman washing dishes lets a plate fall, and collapses in a convulsion of crying against some sacks in the corner.

She escaped with her children and her life from a previous bombardment of Nancy, but she still has relations there, and the horror of what she has been through has not yet had time to become less than acute and haunting.

A boy of nineteen, in the funny and shapeless uniform of Belgian khaki, in reply to a question about his parentage, tells you that his mother and

his grandmother were pinned against the wall of their cottage by German bayonets and murdered.

'I 've killed some Boches since then,' he says, and his hands are trembling, though he speaks very quietly.

The girl who waits in the *crémerie* around the corner comes in late one morning, swathed in the regulation crape veil, her heavy Alsatian face bearing traces of distorting distress. She has just been having a Mass said for the repose of the soul of her brother, dead in a prisoners' camp in Germany after nine months of sickness and exile and German cruelty.

. . . . . .

I went up to my little *Bouillon* to dinner to-night, sick and sad myself rather. It 's a small place, but it has character. I am fond of my quiet corner, and of Louise the waitress, and of the two old captains and their friend the Army doctor who generally occupy the next table, but who have been absent for a week. Louise chooses all my food for me, and knows exactly what I want. It saves a lot of bother. She is young and gay and as quick as a flash, very popular with all the men. She holds the coats of the old ones, and is saucy to

the young ones, and Mme. la Patronne keeps a wary eye on her. Louise says to me, ' Mademoiselle eats like a fly. The house would be ruined if all the clients ate like Mademoiselle ! '

My two old captains and the doctor were back again to-night, all sneezing and coughing and feeling very sorry for themselves indeed. I gathered that they had been suffering from *une grippe abominable et bizarre*, and while they toyed languidly and invalidishly with poached eggs, they discussed dispassionately whether with a high fever they had each had *vomissements* or not. They were absorbed in utter melancholy, and I dined in a decidedly flylike manner, and fled precipitately from the earnest details of their treatment and its results. I suppose each of them might have been riddled with bullets without thinking it worth mentioning, but no warrior, however redoubtable, can silently endure civil illness, especially *un mal d'estomac*. I am sure that this is the secret why the record of the Hun is so depressing. It is because it gives you a *mal d'estomac*. I believe that almost I prefer the big wholesale massacres of the Turks.

And yet one did not always feel like that. I

came over from Canada this time 'Second' as a fit and proper war-economy. The liner was a Dutch one, and there were several German passengers who were not at all the most unpleasant feature of the voyage. The ship being neutral, all nationalities were carefully segregated, German, Dutch, English, and Doubtful, sitting at separate tables.

My table-companions were a gloomy, long-haired American, drinking hot water for his inevitable dyspepsia (which will take in American literature one day the honourable position occupied by gout in English novels) and an English family returning home. Other individuals, in course of time, emerged from the ruck of the passengers: a Cockney humorist who was very familiar with the stewards at table, and was constantly asking loudly if one of his lady-friends would not order a *cream de mint on him*; a vast German who sat like an island in a sea of food; a German fräulein with a figure like an hour-glass, and innumerable black sausages pinned at the back of her head, who palpably admired the Cockney joker, and perhaps thought him a duke. A malignant old woman, with a

darting, wicked eye was certainly a Hun, but most of the Germans were inoffensive enough.

At a musical evening in the dining-saloon, English and Germans and Dutch performed without prejudice, and surprisingly well. Impossible to hate a large and pig-like Hun, who looks capable only of a stentorian bellow, when he sits down at the piano and pours out in the softest of golden voices to his own charming accompaniment, song after song. Equally impossible to wish to 'strafe' a little fair-haired Hun female, singing kindergarten songs like a fascinating child, who brought back the Germany of fairy tales, of Christmas trees twinkling with wax candles and crowned by the Christ-child; of charcoal-burners living deep in the heart of the Black Forest; of the Little People in the Hartz Mountains; of the Pied Piper with his magic notes; of friendly peasants and their simple, pious ways. Where has this Germany vanished?

Even when we reached the war zone and walked the waters in fear of submarines, still hate did not take us by the hand. With the Dutch flag finely lit by electricity, floating against the dark sky, and the ship bearing her name on each side in

vast letters of fire, the thought of what these signs meant induced in me feelings only of charity to all men, and of insignificance . . .

That evening in the war zone the First Cabin came over to make music for the Germans, music that was entirely British and Canadian, from ' He is an Englishman,' to ' Oh, Canada,' ' The British Grenadiers,' and ' Tipperary.' The Teutons bore it stolidly, even ' Rule Britannia ' roared at them by lusty British voices, and followed by the pianist, a red-haired young lawyer, truculently declaring, ' And that 's no dream either ! Will any one argue the point ? ' No one would.

No, there was no hate ; not even when suddenly appeared the soft green hills of Cornwall, with sheep cropping the grass, and hidden sunlight shining from a grey sky. The Teutons looked over the side at the pleasant hedge-divided fields with piggy, greedy eyes, as if planning to plant their little sauerkraut farms there some day soon, and to turn the sheep into vast Germanic meals.

But here, with the evidence of the Huns' brutality constantly before the eyes, one must hate.

A very old Serbian refugee comes to the Salle

Napoléon every night just now. He was in some professional occupation in Belgrade, and he got somehow or other to Paris to seek work at the Serbian Legation. He is very gloomy about the prospects of his country. 'The Germans have been worse than the Turks,' he says, 'and the Bulgars worse than the Germans. Except for those few who have taken to the mountains, there will be no Serbs left in Serbia. Germans and Bulgars make war on children as well as on men and women. The Serb women will be the victims of their violence. But the blood of the assassins will not be left to defile ours. In the days of the Turkish occupation a Serbian woman giving birth to a child whose father was a Turk, strangled it as soon as it was born. It was dreadful, but it was necessary. They will do the same now. It will be half a century before it will be possible for Serbia to rise again after this war.'

In talking of the Hun atrocities, most Frenchmen and all Frenchwomen whom I meet argue that the cure for German frightfulness is to respond in kind. They profess not to understand the English idea of meeting outrages by tolerance.

'To be chivalrous in war with other men, yes, that is right. But the Boches are not men. They should be treated like vermin, *les rats gris!*' a vehement refugee from the Champagne said to me. She had lost her husband in the trenches, and her only child in an aerial bomb attack.

Criticism of the English on the reprisals issue, and on their apparent reluctance to move quickly, makes me a little tired sometimes. But I was cheered up one Sunday afternoon lately when Jacqueline and I took two friendless poilus from the canteen to Marcel's café at Suresne. Marcel's was an old haunt of mine in the days before the war, when the jade-green, sparkling ripples of the Seine made the river-boats irresistible. (There used to be days like that in Paris, days of enchanting sun and freshness.) Marcel is a type common enough in Paris, the café proprietor who looks as if his café were as much part of him as a snail-shell is of a snail,—past middle age, obese, alert only in expression, apparently never doing anything—certainly never doing anything that he cannot let drop to talk *la haute politique*—but yet running his café with a mysterious efficiency. He

can keep his eyes evidently on all the Chancellories of Europe, and on a dozen or so *garçons* at the same time.

Before the war Marcel was a resigned fatalist, a philosopher awaiting the hemlock, and resolved to die decently. 'The war,' he would say, 'the war will come, yes, when Germany is ready. France will fight, but she cannot win. The numbers will beat us. We cannot depend upon England to help. Why should we? She has her own omelettes to make. She will stand by, sympathetic, but not seeing that her own turn must come afterwards.'

I would argue with him that certainly England would help.

'No, madame, it is not so. I do not blame. Why should I? Every nation plays its own game. Germany is certainly the foe of France. But she has never yet been the foe of England. Why should we expect that England will see more clearly than we saw in 1870? France was betrayed then for ever. It is now only a question of time.'

But Marcel these Verdun months sings quite a

different song. He will not allow any one in his café to ask with a grumble, 'What are the English doing?' He is on them at once.

'How stupid such a question, such impatience!' he cries. 'The English are magnificent. Have they not come splendidly to see that this war, it is their war as well as ours? They act in the English way—slow—sure. France can never be sufficiently grateful that our friends saw so clearly. There is no doubt now about the war, *Les sales Boches* will be finely finished!' Marcel is comforting.

I have promised to go and 'make the night' once or twice a week at a big war-hospital quite near my hotel. Earlier in the winter I did this at a little hospital now closed. Last night I was on duty at the new place for the first time. All the hospitals seem to be thankful for extra workers at night, even workers who are absolutely untrained. The French girls are not always permitted by their mothers to do night duty, and the women who come in as casual helpers prefer to work by day if they can, so that there is apt to be a shortage. The

Lycée that I go to is one of the roughest of the French voluntary hospitals, with hardly a pretence at necessities, let alone comforts for the men. (A boys' school is not equipped with much that is conveniently adaptable to hospital uses, and in Paris particularly the means of sanitation are extremely old-fashioned and inadequate.)

The floor that I work on is the top one of all. I am fated to walk up innumerable stairs in the pursuit of work. The dormitories are turned into wards that hold fifty beds each. There are forty-five men in my ward and only two of us to look after them. Most of the men we have were wounded months ago, and they are over the worst of their suffering I suppose, but some of them look dreadfully ill. Several who were wounded in Champagne in October cannot possibly recover, even having fought to get well all these months. They do not require very much once they are settled for the night. There were drinks to give of course, and we carried tin cans of *tisane* round, and sometimes a man would ask to have his position shifted or a bandage eased.

I went about with Mme. Alain, who was as quick

as a little bird, and saw how she did things. She showed me where all the supplies were kept in makeshift cupboards and drawers, and presently invited me to undertake the rather gruesome job of tidying up the operating-room. I was disgusted to find myself minding, when you think what nurses see and do for hours on end. I did it any way.

Later on it grew chilly and stuffy, and it was rather hard to stay awake. The little bird-like lady produced a thermos full of hot coffee and some sandwiches, and she had a meal. I wished I had thought of that, and I made a note for future reference.

It is perhaps only silly to criticise when a country is overwhelmed by such a vast catastrophe as this war, but the entire absence of professional care or strictness in nearly all the temporary hospitals that I have seen, does seem terrible. Last night, for instance, I felt that fatalism was carried too far when I opened a dark and airless cupboard in the passage connecting the two ends of the ward, and discovered a patient in a bed in it, with a bandaged head and apparently unconscious.

'What is the matter with him?' I asked. 'Why is he in such a place?'

'He has a *méningite*,' Mme. Alain said tranquilly. 'Twice they have operated the head. He begins to be paralysed.'

'But he shouldn't be alone, he shouldn't be there,' I said. She shrugged her shoulders.

'The least light hurts him,' she said, 'and where else is he to go?'

'Can nothing be done?' I said.

'We do all we can,' Mme. Alain said. 'He may recover; one cannot say. We can do no more. He requires little.'

He lay there all night, sometimes moaning a little but never moving even his hand, and there seemed to be no way of helping him. Probably nothing could have helped him, but I felt that he must need constant and special attention, and there was no one who knew how to do anything whatever for him. Mme. Alain and the other *infirmières* are not trained nurses, and all their devotion cannot quite make up for the lack of technical knowledge and adequate hospital resources. The hospital was bitterly poor and fighting adverse circumstances

of every kind. There was neither money nor convenience. They literally did their best, and it was a best that accomplished miracles often. That same *infirmière,* not once but many times, after a night of arduous nursing in a ward filled with badly wounded men, refused to leave the ward all day, and was ready again at eight o'clock for another night of anxious toil. Once she remained for hours, when she should have been resting, by the bedside of a boy who was slipping out of human reach from discouragement and loneliness, and coaxed and heartened him and found means to wake his dying interest in life. She pulled him back by sheer will-power. After he was sent home convalescent to the farm near Avignon that he longed for, he wrote to her, and his letter began 'Ma dévouée Mme. Alain.'

Early in the morning a loud bell rang, and there was a shouting and scrambling of schoolboys from the other wing of the building across the court-yard, which is still in use as a school. The men who were well enough got out of bed and dressed and washed at the tap, and to the others, who asked for it, we brought basins—with nothing but cold

water, and a towel. There is no routine of washing the patients at all. No one opens the windows in the morning either, and I had a fight on the subject.

'But the men will catch cold—will have a fever.'

'But the men are accustomed to the trenches. They are gasping for air!'

'Cold air can be good for no one! Least of all sick men in bed.'

I finally succeeded in letting in a little fresh air before I went off duty, and I firmly believe that the men would look less grey and exhausted in the morning if the windows were kept open at night. Perhaps I shall be able to effect a reform, but I doubt it.

There is one gaunt, hollow-eyed Breton called Noron, with a black beard, who lies in a special bed literally dying by inches. His body was shattered in the Champagne fighting, and he has suffered so terribly for months that the wonder is his continuing to live from day to day. He does not suffer actual pain any more now, and lies very high on his pillows quite silent, and beyond questioning anything, or even wondering at the misery

of it all. He has no relatives to come and see him, and we can't find anything that he wants. To be strong and free in his fields again, beneath his grey Brittany skies is all—if we could do that for him.

And there is a boy of twenty-two who was dreadfully wounded but did splendidly at first. Lately he has been losing ground steadily, and they seem to think he can't recover. He is called Désiré, and is such a sweet-looking boy, and so anxious to get well again. His mother and his *fiancée* visit him every Thursday and Sunday, and he is always talking of his wedding. It is enough to make the heart ache!

VIII

VERONICA AND HER PRINCESSES

7 Rue Gît-le-Cœur,
7th May (St. Stanislas).

It is not all work and no play at the canteen. I have my idle hours, and just now I am quite dissipated because Veronica is in Paris, and we have much to say, and see, and do. We talk a great deal of my feverish fortnight of work-seeking at St. Bleu, and of her hospital among the oranges and date palms. It brings back the Riviera vividly talking it all over. After the first ten minutes I abandon all pretence of not being interested in 'the riff-raff of the Riviera.' I want to know all about every one, the princesses and *soi-disant* princesses; the counts and painters and poets; the anarchist noblemen who live disguised as humble wood-cutters somewhere above the snow-line or the sky-line of the Maritime Alps; all the scandals of the Promenade and the gossip of the environs; what

every one is wearing, what things cost, and what kind of dogs they complete their toilets with these days. Veronica tells me everything like a most amusing avalanche.

I remember, when I first went to see Veronica's hospital at St. Bleu, that I thought I had come upon a private lunatic asylum with the patients in a condition of uncontrollable outbreak, but I discovered that it was merely the amount of 'temperament' contained within its walls—that and the Riviera climate. Veronica was the only English-speaking person in the place, and excitable as her friends consider her, she seemed composed and calm beside the Russians and Serbians who were whisking up and down the stairs of the hospital, all calling out at once and looking like a highly agitated swarm of bees. Nothing was wrong, Veronica explained. The *infirmières* were merely doing their ordinary work in their ordinary manner. The noise of the flurry was amazing, but it did not penetrate the salon, where another and an equally frantic distraction involved the Princess and her committee. 'The daily quiet game of Bridge,' Veronica told me.

The patients were nearly all out, except one who was playing the piano and singing loudly, and everybody's washing, just returned from the laundry, was spread out on the stairs, while the maid responsible for its bestowal in drawers and cupboards gave her entire time and temperament to arranging flowers for the table, assisted by advice from a gentleman friend in the garden leaning in through the window.

The hospital was a beautiful villa in a garden looking on the sea, and, of course, being so far from the Front was really more of a convalescent home than anything else. No one was very ill or much in need of special care. There was no particular method in the day's work. With so much temperament there couldn't be. The volunteers attended or remained away pretty much as they felt inclined, all but Veronica, who, besides being a new broom, was an enthusiast, and did other people's work as well as her own. She made beds, and waited at table, and played Bridge, and did not bully the officers in her rooms quite as much as the other *infirmières* did. The patients themselves were so care-free that it was not at all uncommon

for some of them to vanish entirely for two or three days at a time. (One supposes to Monte Carlo.)

It would have deranged me, life in that hospital, but Veronica simply loves it ; her spirits are always high. She almost regrets her little holiday in Paris. She is popular with every one, and really it is no wonder. She is so generous and so kind that even when the Slav temperament explodes in a sort of nerve-storm, and the voices of the staff are as the voices of roused cockatoos, she remains cheerful and enthusiastic. She is vastly pretty, too, and, of course, has collected a number of ardent admirers, each one of whom she is thoroughly well aware of, and leads on with an air of hardly realising his existence. Who but Veronica would have had a tea-party and invited them all to meet each other ? The first in the running when I was at St. Bleu was a perfectly odious Pole, quite an oldish man, completely bald, peering at you from behind large glasses. I can't tell why his name was Conradi, which sounds Italian, or why Veronica liked him, but she did very much. I thought him thoroughly objectionable, and he had a real Riviera

reputation. His wife had left him for his best friend, a horrid little Frenchman whom Veronica also knew, and who continued to be his best friend. I think he called amicably upon her too! Veronica says that Conradi is brilliantly clever and full of ideas. He speaks French and she replies in something fluently foreign, if not perfectly Parisian, and the result seems to be satisfactory to both.

A dear old French soldier, a toy-like Commandant in blue and red, a very correct and ancient Russian prince, a lame French count (just a boy of twenty) with charming manners, and a convalescent Englishman, made up the rest of her admirers then. Conradi, who never appeared without an offering of some kind, on the day of the party brought a large box of sticky and rich little cakes, of which he ate a great many. This did not seem to be thought at all a surprising present by any one. The tea that day refused to pour out at all, and when I looked inside the pot I found that the tea-leaves reached to the lid. We had bought a pound and given it to the *garçon*, explaining to him that we wished the tea made strong. We mentioned

boiling water and said, ' Did he understand ? ' He said, ' Parfaitement.' How we laughed.

We had a most successful party, and Conradi took a dreadful dislike to me, so I enjoyed him. He said amusing things, but had a thoroughly nasty point of view. He talked war of course—always implying that the English were ' a little slow,' but endeavouring to be pleasant about it. The Englishman gave him a little information about what we have done, and are doing, in a polite and level voice, but his Continental mind was very conservative of wrong ideas.

Veronica has still Conradi on her list of admirers, and she is terribly afraid he has followed her to Paris. Most of the others that knew I have vanished, but there are new recruits, and life on the Riviera seems to be as fluffy as ever for convalescents, and their nurses.

Veronica tells me of my little Princess Sonia, and takes me back to last Christmas Day at St. Bleu. It seemed a very unreal Christmas after Canadian snow; soft air and sunshine, and the sea deeply blue and very gentle against the dazzling white beaches. I went to the market in the morning, and it was particularly crowded and noisy,

and gay with brilliant masses of colour, golden sheets of oranges and lemons lying among their own flowers and leaves, piles of beautiful vegetables, and frilly green chicory, and lettuce, and flowers—and flowers! Wallflowers, blue hyacinths, narcissus, white lilac, yellow daisies, anemones, roses, and strange sweet things that I could not name. And little fir-trees, and great heaps of holly and mistletoe. I bought armsful of loveliness, and took them to the Princess Olga (who ran Veronica's hospital). She is the dearest little thing, so fat that she 's as round as a ball, and looks as if she would roll if you pushed her ever so lightly. She has clever black eyes and a small military moustache, and an alarming dignity of manner that breaks into the most infectious giggles, like a schoolgirl's, when she is off her guard and among intimate friends, and not obliged to set an example to her granddaughter, the Princess Sonia Vladimir Stevanov. Princess Olga is a real princess, not merely Riviera noblesse, and she is strictly religious, and honest and good, and leads a dignified life among divorcés, amorists and the general riff-raff of the Riviera.

Veronica disapproves of my speaking of her friends in this way. She says that I make no allowance for the Slav soul, and the Latin temperament, and that my judgment is tainted by Scotch ancestry. She firmly believes that all the oddly placed men and women on the Azure Coast are the victims of tragic circumstance, and that even Conradi would prefer to be taking home his wages to his wife on Saturday night, and leading a perfectly circumspect life, if it could be done. When I laugh at her she gets angry, and says that I am a horrible mixture of narrow-mindedness and cynicism. She certainly isn't either narrow or a cynic, and she has the sweetest belief in the most awful impostors, and gives them not only her sympathy but her money. When an anxious moment of universal responsibility seizes upon me, I am glad that the Princess Olga at least is a reliable friend for her. Veronica believes every one in the world, even the population of Continental hotels and villas, as incapable of imposture as herself.

The Princess Olga's little granddaughter Sonia was one friend that I made on the Riviera. I

really think Sonia wanted a friend, poor lamb. She was very tiny for eight years old, and I think she had the most brilliant and intelligent black eyes that I have ever seen, and certainly the widest-striped socks. She lived with her grandmother the princess, and her great-grandmother the old princess, and she herself was a little princess. It was rather like the Three Bears—the Old Princess, the Big Princess, and the Little Princess. They had been voluntary exiles from Russia for some years, and for a long time had occupied apartments in the hotel where Veronica and I had rooms.

The Big Princess, *infirmière-major* of Veronica's hospital, was usually at work there all day. 'Mon arrière-grand'mère la vieille princesse,' as Sonia called her, was a very old lady, who kept almost entirely to her own rooms and was rarely seen. The Little Princess Sonia seldom went out, being hard at work all day with three governesses, two Russian and one French. In her spare time she was required to devote herself to the amusement of the Old Princess, who was clamorously unhappy if her grandchild were long out of her sight.

Sonia was the only child in the hotel—except the

chasseur, a cherub in a sailor suit who did not run the lift because it was stopped as a war economy, and ran messages never to return the same day. Although I knew her grandmother, it seemed for a long time as if my desire to make friends with the child was to be frustrated by her constant preoccupation with lessons. Then in a moment fortunate for me one of her governesses fell ill, and Sonia had some leisure moments in her day.

I lost no time in asking her to tea. We already had a dining-room acquaintance of nods and smiles and occasional words at luncheon. Permission was granted by the Big Princess, and punctually at half-past four Sonia was formally announced by the chasseur.

Any English child, certainly any American, would have been on terms of familiarity with the only other child in the hotel—Michel, the chasseur, was less than ten years old. But not so my Little Princess. She ordered him about like a slave, speaking to him always *de haut en bas*, and ignoring him entirely if she passed him in the street.

Sonia entered and kissed me politely. She had wrapped herself closely in a large purple shawl,

and she pointed at once and dramatically to the open windows.

'They must be shut immediately,' she commanded. 'The English Mademoiselle is reckless of her health, but for myself I do not care to catch a pneumonia.' She seated herself well back in a chair that engulfed all of her but her striped socks, and added, 'I doubt very much whether my heart will support the severity of the weather. And it is melancholy, this incessant rain.'

Her bright eyes roamed about my room.

'The two sofas arranged thus, at right angles to the fireplace, give to the apartment the air of a railway-carriage,' she mentioned politely. 'I like it, I who never travel.'

I was dismayed when she refused to touch any of the cakes I had provided for our little feast. She was polite but firm. Presently, after some struggle with its hard angles, she produced a thick crust of dry bread from her pocket and began to nibble it.

'Mon arrière-grand'mère advised me to bring this,' she said. 'All night I have had fever and sickness.' I expressed my sympathy, and Sonia

informed me without embarrassment that the day before she had been to a party given by some little Russian friends, where she had overeaten. 'It is always so,' she said with resignation. 'I do not profit by experience.'

She was a weird little child, abnormally intelligent, and a thousand years old it seemed, electric with life and energy, and with an attractiveness that promised to become great fascination later on. She spoke in swift and charming French, occasionally mimicking an English word—'tea,' 'good-bye,' 'darling'—which amusement sent her into fits of laughter. She was sitting on my knee insisting on a laborious explanation in French of the pictures in an English book, when the *femme de chambre* came to announce that she was to return to her apartment as her grandmother required her.

'Tell Madame la princesse that I am hunting for my hair-ribbon,' Sonia said, instantly snatching the bow off her hair and thrusting it down the sofa back. 'I shall return when I find it. *Go*—and say so!' she ordered, stamping her foot.

Then she wound her arms round my neck and kissed me. 'I love you, love you,' she said. 'And

will you, before I go, Mademoiselle, show me the ravishing hat that you wore on Sunday ? '

We were fast friends after that. Sonia seized every opportunity to slip into my room, and insisted upon teaching me to play bézique, her solitary recreation. She had a tiny pack of exceedingly dirty pink cards, and she dealt and counted with the rapidity and precision of a confirmed gambler. She would introduce herself with caution through a crack in my door on a Sunday morning, and produce from the pocket of her best velvet frock her beloved cards.

' Ten minutes before Mass,' she would announce, dealing them swiftly. ' Time for one hand, if my dear Mademoiselle will be so obliging.' She had an uncanny aptitude for figures. Her governess would explain a new rule in arithmetic and set her some problems on it. Sonia would work at it, master it, and compose a page of brain-racking problems on her own account for the governess to solve. She never complained of her lessons, and her education was far beyond that of English children of her age.

On the rare occasions when Sonia was allowed to

go to parties or to play with other children, the results were disastrous. With children she was domineering and impatient, faults largely due to her upbringing entirely among older people, and to her highly developed mental energy. She boxed the ears of boys twice her size with considerable vigour, and that they were her guests made no difference.

At one time she took violently to religion, and prayed continually before all the ikons in turn in their apartments. Her *arrière-grand'mère* was in despair. 'Abandon these ideas, my little pigeon,' she urged, and coaxed her with sweets to play bézique again.

Once when Sonia had been naughty every day for a week the Big Princess wisely thought that she needed a little change, and sent her in the charge of a governess up to a village in the hills. The change was disguised as a punishment, and Sonia was not pleased. This was the only occasion upon which I saw the Old Princess. She refused to eat, it seemed, continually demanding the return of her great-granddaughter. Then she took to wandering about the hotel in her nightgown, innumer-

able shawls and crowned with an enormous hat covered with black feathers and with strings that tied under her chin and trailed on the floor and tripped her up. At which she swore in Russian and made such scenes that the *patron* said that something must be done about it. Accordingly Sonia came back long before the week was out, looking wicked and triumphant.

She modelled herself largely on her great-grandmother, and had picked up any number of phrases and affectations from the venerable lady, who it seems had been a great beauty and kept the imperious airs and graces of her youth. One day—of course after a party—a doctor had to be called in to prescribe for a bilious attack. Sonia, in spite of her prostration, rolled her eyes at him in a languishing manner, and thanked him so effusively for coming, that her grandmother was horrified, and when he had gone whipped her well. Sonia wept with dignity and restraint, as she always did, but the flow of indignant language from the aged princess was long in being stayed.

Sonia loved coming out with me, and on the afternoon of Christmas Eve I was permitted to

take her to see the shops. She was delighted to hear that she was to choose herself a Christmas present from me.

'My grandmother exacts that it shall be very small,' Sonia said with some reluctance, having obviously been charged with severity to convey this message to me. 'But it is not the part of a child to interfere if Mademoiselle chooses something considerable,' she added with unusual submission.

She hung over the jewellers' windows coveting a silver bracelet, but refused it firmly none the less on the ground that she was far too ugly to wear jewellery. She informed me that to be sufficiently beautiful to adorn herself with a pink coral brooch would be happiness, but that with black hair, black eyes, such a thing was out of the question. 'After all, one is Russian, not negress,' she said.

A purse, suggested by me, did not seem so much like a present as a necessity, and was in any case not interesting to a child. She also refused a book of stories that she fell upon with the devourer's instinct, her little face alight with pleasure and intelligence, because—with an inimitable wave of the hand—'Once read, a book for me is finished.'

At last in a toy-shop she suddenly fell head over heels in love with a dolls' villa in a garden. There was a real gate that opened and shut, and trees standing in grass-plots, and window-boxes full of flowers, and charming furniture in the rooms. Sonia knelt in front of it in a perfect rapture, so ravished by its contrivances that she was a real child for once, and no one could have withheld it from her.

She came home squeezing my hands, and jumping up to kiss me at intervals, and to say over and over again, 'Que je suis contente!' We had tea in my room, and she found great amusement in setting out a tiny crèche on the table; a quaint little Virgin kneeling over a waxen Infant on a straw pillow; camels, sheep, Joseph, shepherds, and kings.

Later on she curled up on my knee before the fire half asleep, holding the toy bambino in her hand.

'I could well imagine, Mademoiselle,' she said drowsily, 'the happiness to be myself a Virgin with a mignon p'tit Jésus in my arms. A real one, who would cry if I pulled his hair.'

. . . . . .

Veronica is to stay with me for a week, and I love having her. She looks splendid and too pretty for words, but she says she is tired out. She is a little tired of exile perhaps.

We talk all night nearly, and I am so accustomed to be silent that my throat aches. Yesterday I took a holiday and we did some shopping. Everything is much dearer than before the war, and there are very few novelties of any sort, but still there remains only too much to fascinate and entangle. Veronica brought lovely things in a reckless and very satisfactory manner. Certainty and speed are her characteristics in a shop, where most women dawdle and hesitate. It makes shopping rather a pleasure instead of a fatigue.

Afterwards we frivolled. We did a lovely matinée *Iphigénie en Tauride* at the Opera—where you may buy the best seats now for five francs !—and we went to low-class vaudeville, which turned out to be merely boring.

We saw Polaire, however, with her shock of hair and her thin legs, and her big mouth and her ugliness and gaucheness, and her excessive fascination. She is all angles and ugliness really, and she can't

sing or dance, and I kept wondering where her charm lay. She 's shining with intelligence and devilment, but so are many Frenchwomen on the stage. Personality again, I suppose, the spark that is *you* and no one else in the universe. Two ladies behind us, in ' the profession ' too, apparently, discussed her earnestly, evidently equally puzzled to account for her attractiveness. ' Elle est riche, la petite Polaire,' one of them said with a sigh of envy. They speculated as to her age, reaching cruel figures. But to all intents and purposes she is a Paris ' gamine ' of sixteen or so.

Conradi is in Paris and has tried to find out Veronica's address from the bank, and falling that, he left a letter there for her, begging her to meet him or let him know where she was. She didn't answer it. She was a little inclined to at first, because flirtation is almost irresistible to her, but we happened to catch a glimpse of him sitting at a table at Weber's one afternoon, and that finished her. He was merely having a drink with a lady, and Veronica ought to be Continental enough to be used to such things. She talks as if she highly approved of all irregularity, and pitied any one

who was obliged to lead an ordinary, conventional life, married to anybody definite. But in reality she holds fast to extremely reliable standards. Conradi's lady was exactly like a large wax doll, with golden hair, and blued eyelids, and black lashes, and a scarlet mouth with a cigarette in it. Veronica laughed, but she looked quite ill. Conradi was holding one of the creature's hands, and of course there was a dish of his horrid little cakes piled up between them.

'This—when he can't see me,' Veronica said. 'But probably she 's some very clever singer or actress.'

'Probably fallen upon hard times too, and Conradi from sheer kind-heartedness is giving her a meal,' I said.

'You never liked him,' Veronica said. She added pensively: 'He never liked you.'

In another woman that would be cattish, but Veronica is a darling, and it was only funny as she said it. We went economically to Smith's Tea Room, and Veronica, to show that she wasn't thinking of Conradi at all, would eat nothing but stale penny buns without butter. I gave her a talking to about her objectionable Riviera friends,

but she suddenly fixed her eyes on me and gently turned the tables.

'Jennifer Beech, my dear,' she said. 'If you don't some day soon fall in love and get human, you 'll be far more objectionable than any of my friends who fall in love too much. You 've stopped waving your hair, and you 're getting actually plain, and you have no right at all to wear a purple blouse even in a canteen. I burnt it this morning so that you never will again. What must those French girls have thought of you? You 've lived so much alone all winter, thinking your own thoughts that you 're positively dogmatic. I can't bear it. You 'd be much better sitting at Weber's with Conradi this minute. You needn't be a self-satisfied prig because you are doing extremely dull war-work, in a horrible climate, in a horrible black hotel, in a dingy room *au cinquième*. I 'm discouraged to find you like this. And spring here too, and in Paris. You aren't helping the war by wearing your hair straight and looking so dismally dowdy, and you 're probably hurting some hairdresser who needs to live by his profession until he 's called up. Do go and be made pretty! I

am sure that you are making some poor wounded poilu at your hospital feel too sick to live. It 's wrong of you. And do stop judging everybody.'

Then she laughed and said, ' Of course I only mean half of that, but I mean that half ! '

I was heart-stricken to hear what I looked like. Just the sort of thing I say about Clara ! Certainly the Voice of a friend counselleth wisdom—is that Solomon, or me ? I shall be washed and scented and waved the first chance.

I find myself constantly obliged to add post-scripts to my diary.

A Postscript

London, *Oct.* 1916.

Veronica wrote to me a week after her return to St. Bleu :—

' The family have suddenly put out their horns or is it drawn in their horns ? anyway they say that I have to go home for the summer, and if I like I can do war-work in Canada and I have cabled that I can't leave my hospital but all the same I know I 'll have to go and really there isn't much to do just now but the princess is heart-

broken and so am I and of course I shall come back in the Autumn so I have taken my passage from Bordeaux in the *Lafayette* for the end of May and I am just scribbling off this line to know if there is any chance of your coming with me, do come it 's much safer than England and anyway we might just as well be torpedoed together don't you think so ? Everybody tells me to get black silk pyjamas to be torpedoed in. My dear I see absolutely nothing of Conradi since I came back from Paris. Did I tell you that my white cloth dress is the greatest success everybody thinks it is awfully *chic* you know the Riviera fashions are simply awful so dowdy specially this year.

'I am really awfully glad to be rid of Conradi and he is looking so strange and they all say he is gambling worse than ever. He was awfully offended because I didn't answer his letter and would not let him know what day I was leaving Paris so that we could have travelled together just imagine how perfectly horrid that would have been and these trains are quite bad enough with the people that you don't know crowding against you because of course in war-time I always travel

Second in trains though I could not come Second across the ocean.

'Anyway the most awful thing you ever heard of happened and really it is a wonder that Archie isn't in jail for doing it and I was so raging and ashamed I can't tell you and never breathe a word of it if you are writing. I was in the town here the other day and Conradi joined me and asked me to go to tea with him but I said I was in a hurry and almost ran away from him across the bridge over the little river where all the women come down to wash the clothes you 'd think it would wear them out beating them between stones like that but instead they last much longer on account of the cold water, and in the middle of the bridge Conradi suddenly seized both my hands and began to make the most awful scene exactly like *La Tosca* or one of those French operas shouting and saying he loved me and that he couldn't go on like this any longer and the most dreadful things imagine if I was frightened to death! when just at that minute Archie Denison jumped off the back of a street car at the other side of the bridge and came striding over to us and in two seconds

and I don't see how ever he did it, he had lifted Conradi up and dropped him splash among the washerwomen.

'I thought he was killed or drowned of course but the bridge was really quite low and the water was deep enough to break the fall and he scrambled out somehow and all the women stopped washing and burst out laughing at him and there was a crowd collected by that time and of course all fearfully excited and I was so angry that I wouldn't wait to see what happened but just by luck I got a passing taxi and drove straight home and later on Archie turned up and told me that it was all right and that he certainly wasn't going to jail for merely teaching a swine to behave himself in public but that my fat admirer might find himself there one of these days and would I now go home at once or would he cable my people to come and get me as he wasn't going to leave me among this Continental riff-raff when he went back to England. So I said what did he mean by talking like that the idea and that he had done an awful thing and Archie said no fear he was too fat a swine for that but that he was tired of his name, and he didn't

suppose he 'd show his face about again immediately and what day would I sail so of course I said that I was not going to be ordered about by him and we had a real fight but as it happens that the family are choosing the very same time to make a fuss about my staying here any longer I am going home for a few weeks at least as I said and I wish you could come too.

' Sonia has taken to religion again and wants to go to church all the time and her *arrière-grand'-mère* hates it and is always begging her to play cards instead and saying ' These are the dreadful thoughts of age my treasure, dismiss them I implore ' but of course the more she says so the more Sonia won't and she wants a special Ikon all her own and she preaches to the other children in the hotel garden and slaps them if they aren't Russian Orthodox and makes them all cry because she says they 'll all go straight to hell and there are awful scenes.

' There are only three Serbs left in the hospital now all rather quiet men fortunately as I am tired of scenes you remember the one I called Danilo because I could not pronounce his name he bit

my arm and said he wished he was the cigarette in my mouth and tried to shoot himself in the garden, but he didn't of course.

'Write and tell me that you are coming to Canada with me in two weeks, and ever so much love Jennifer dear from—Yours, VERONICA.'

IX

THE FRENCH ; IN PARTICULAR THE FRENCH WOMEN

7 Rue Gît-le-Cœur,
10th May 1916 (St. Antonin).

The boy Désiré died yesterday at five in the afternoon. All the night before I felt sure that he was going almost from minute to minute, but he made such a fight for it and was so cheerful that Mme. Alain and the others wouldn't believe it. When I came back to the ward after some days' interval, I saw a very great change in him, and said so, but they assured me that he was as usual. He looked worn and anxious, which was not at all as usual, and he kept whispering to me, ' Je ne veux pas mourir,' every time I went to his bedside. I think he lived through the night from sheer will-power, but in the morning I begged them to send for his mother. She did not come in time. Later on they put a screen round his bed, and the poor boy held out his arms to Mme. Alain, and gasped,

'Je ne veux pas mourir!' She knelt beside his bed all afternoon, doing what she could for him, holding his hand, and telling him over and over that she would not let him die. Then he lay quiet, just gasping a little, and she lifted up his head and held him for a long time. At five o'clock he opened his eyes, and settled his head against her, as if he were going to sleep.

'Je ne veux pas mourir,' he said, and died.

And Noron the big Breton has died after months of terrible suffering.

I can't express how lovable the French soldiers are. They are nearly always gay and funny in the face of great suffering and discomfort. One boy in my ward has a joke that he never tires of, which is to clamour for a hot-water bottle, because his left foot is so cold, freezing! When the *infirmière* flies to him and feels about for his foot, he goes into fits of laughter, as his leg has been amputated at the knee.

'Not true that my left foot is cold?' he says. He thoroughly enjoys catching the unwary.

One of the nurses was dressing a bad wound yesterday. There was just a large hole where the

poor fellow's eye had been, and one of his friends standing near and watching the dressing suddenly said with perfect gravity: 'I doubt if you 'll get the sight of that eye again, Pierre.'

One of the saddest sights is to see the cripples trying to get used to the artificial limbs. Some of the legs supplied to the hospitals are very rough and makeshift, and at first cause great pain. The soldiers who have been gayest and most courageous while they were in bed become dreadfully tired and discouraged when they get up and begin to realise the difficulties that lie before them. Often they just cry hopelessly. But not for long. It occurs to some one to make a ridiculous and pertinent comment on the clumsiness of his comrade in learning to conquer a machine that is after all simpler than the bicycle, and the second attempt goes better.

To me the hospital for the blind is more terrible than any, for I have not had the courage to go with a friend of mine who helps at the Maison Blanche, the house that shelters unspeakable mutilations. There, it seems to me, you must get a concentration of all human cruelty, of man's inhumanity

to man. Katherine tells me that even in that place of horror beauty and courage, and even gaiety, shine. But I could not help there, and I could not —no one could—walk through it as a spectator. I found it terrible enough to see the blind soldiers being re-educated for a life of more or less independence.

You go down to the tranquil part of old Paris somewhere between the wide streets of Charenton and Picpus, and there, in a very ancient convent, is the *Annexe aux Quinze-Vingts*, where there are over two hundred soldiers blinded in this war. The *Quinze-Vingts*—originally founded for $15 \times 20 = 300$ people—is the great Paris hospital for the blind. It was acutely painful to see the men, though they were nearly all cheerful and talkative. But one man, older than the others, had a face of doom, and he kept putting up his hand to his head, and saying, 'Ça me fait mal aux yeux,' in an exhausted voice. He was just finishing a beautiful clothes brush with a pattern of different coloured hairs, and was the prize pupil for swiftness and fine work. The professor—also blind, as all the teachers are—sent him out into the garden to rest.

'He does not become reconciled like the others,' he said to us with such compassion in his voice, as though he were not blind himself. We saw the men making baskets and nets and chairs, learning to be cobblers, to repair motor-tyres, to fence, to type-write, to read and write in Braille. Even people who do not know Braille themselves can teach it, as they have a clever system of little metal blocks, with the Braille characters on one side and the ordinary letter on the other, which is simplicity itself.

Most smoked and laughed and sang and seemed in unaffectedly good spirits. But it is still comparatively a new condition of life, and just now they are a community equal in misfortune. One thinks of afterwards, when they are out in the forgetting world earning their living, not heroes, not soldiers, just blind men—for ever.

It was Thursday, and in the recreation room and in the garden several little godmothers-of-war were amusing their blind godsons. One girl was at the piano playing songs for her charge to sing; another was writing letters for a little fat Arab, a third was absorbed in a game of checkers. Outside

a sweet-looking girl was encouraging a big, tall boy to walk about the garden without an air of blind timidity, and laughing at him, when he kept blundering into the hedge.

I wonder who suggested the wonderful relationship of godmother and godson. It is such a splendid thing in this war. It is astonishing and touching to see so much unselfishness and devotion and responsibility among the women of all classes and ages, however busy, however hardworking, however poor. Almost each one has her godson, or a number of godsons. Even the very little girls are encouraged to save their pennies, to learn to knit and sew, to devise games—dominoes made out of old Metro tickets, for example—for their *filleuls-de-guerre*. And there is a charming ' Œuvre des Petits Souliers ' on foot, by which little French children are to be made responsible, each for a little Belgian or a little ' invaded ' boy or girl of his or her own age, and taught to take an interest in him, and share with him the good things that the little godchild would otherwise lack, until both are grown up. This will make a new and strong link in the chain of equality and fraternity. It suggests a little

the old beautiful relationship in the United States of the little Southern white children and the infant slaves born on the same day, who were given to them as foster brothers and sisters.

Another branch of the social work that children and little girls are doing in France has the charming name ' Le Sou de la Jeune Fille.' Each member of the society—and some of the *jeunes filles* have white hair—promises to contribute one sou a week, more if she can, until the end of the war, to help her little sisters in Belgium and the invaded territory of France. Again, ' La Goutte de Lait ' provides for the care of infants.

The French flapper is enjoying a freedom undreamed of before the war, and she is making the most of it. She is a pig-tailed nuisance in many hospitals, too young for serious work, too anxious for enjoyment to do much that is practical in the form of sweeping and dusting, fetching and carrying, alert for fun, gossip, giggling confidences with her own kind. She is usually under the wing of her mother, who is too busy to keep strict watch over her, and she greatly enjoys the importance of her cap and apron. In the canteen she is of

much more use, often extremely devoted and reliable, and very charming in her frank pleasure in the diversions that war has provided her with. And as a godmother she undertakes in all sincerity a responsibility well within her scope, and she discharges her duties with dignity and charm, a wholly delightful little person, high-spirited but sagacious. The friendless poilu at the Front learns to depend on her for all the comforts that ever reach him—and her sympathy when he confides his anxieties in her. This social training of the little girls of France is really very valuable. It is not likely that the *Jeune fille* will revert ever to quite so sheltered a life again as in the old days of four years ago.

In regard to war orphans, the idea of the volunteer godmother is further extended and developed, French ladies undertaking to help and supervise one or a number of children, until they reach the age of eighteen. Whenever it is possible the children are left with their mother, who is encouraged to keep the home together, as her husband would have desired, but the godmother exercises a great deal of influence over the boys and the girls, examin-

ing school reports and dealing out reprimand or reward as they are deserved. She makes her influence felt. Her visits are an incentive to industry and good-behaviour. One lady told me that she was looking after four children, and that she saw them twice in the month or oftener if possible, and that their work and play were becoming an absorbing interest to her.

The remarkable point about this arrangement is, that the Frenchwoman will really carry out her obligation, not only because of her personal sympathy and interest, but because of the deep patriotism, the intense national feeling that underlies all work here. She is helping the France of to-morrow, the actual and beloved land.

. . . . . .

A new phase of this interminable Verdun battle seems to have begun. We hear of fierce artillery fire, and of a village or position with the ominous name of Mort Homme. The French are magnificent beyond praise. The women at the canteen are very quiet, though many of them have relatives near or at Verdun. One of the *distributrices*, a dark and sad-looking woman who always seems

preoccupied, knows that her only son is in the heart of the fighting, and she had heard nothing from him for ten days now. She seems to me to look thinner and more strained every night. But she is always in her place, very quick and capable and perfectly composed. 'I am more fortunate than some,' I heard her say. 'I have had him for twenty-six years, all mine—if anything is to happen now.'

'All mine,' meant that he had no wife. There is really a kind of ferocity hidden in the Frenchwoman's love for her son. Sometimes I think it is love carried to excess. If she can, the French mother keeps her son constantly with her, caressed and 'spoilt.' It is not good training for self-control or for discipline. The less engaging faults and tendencies of the Frenchman are perhaps due to his mother's over-carefulness.

The Frenchwoman certainly has an intense and elemental affection for her son, and she is jealous all her life of his other interests. She regards him as her exclusive possession, and she expects to rank first even when he marries. I am sure that much unhappiness is caused by the mothers of married

Frenchmen in the son's home. One sometimes meets a daughter-in-law who says so, and literature and the stage suggest it as well. She makes demands upon her son for ever, because of her generosity and self-sacrifice in 'giving him to the day,' as the birth-phrase runs in the papers. Certainly she does save and hoard for him and share his studies and his intellectual life, but all that she does is for what is the dearest part of herself. But in war she is as heroic as he. To his country she gives him up uncomplaining, content.

The real and beautiful tenderness of the older Frenchwoman over the wounded soldier, seems to me the more admirable because she is not naturally soft and gentle. She is steel and polished, but not tender-hearted. As a nurse she is too often—naturally, in the vast emergency of war—ignorant and fatalistic, but all that is best and finest in her, love of her country, of her race, resentment of a hurt done to her own people, maternal concentration, her prayers for her own son, her desire to serve France, blend into a wonderfully devoted comprehension of the sick soldier. It is worth a very great deal of scientific nursing, and

we with all our starch and antiseptics cannot surpass it.

The deep unity, the real democracy of the French people, is seen at its best and highest in the relations of *infirmière* and *blessé*. Then the Frenchwoman's maternity becomes a thing of significance and breadth unspoiled, the old ideal force and foundation of the world.

Yesterday I met a pleasant woman of comfortable rotundity on the hospital stairs, who told me that she was Mme. Rudolf *infirmière-major* of the surgical ward. She was telling me about her son, a boy of eighteen, who had been wild to go to the Front long before his class was called up. He has been in the thick of the fighting, but he is so far untouched and he is very happy. She says that to him the pleasure and adventure are everything, and that he is without any thought of her sufferings and *chimères*, on his account.

'Moi qui l'ai couvé quand il était petit'—who have wept over his baby illnesses and stayed awake all night if he coughed. I, his mother, am forgotten. Al his joy is in being now a man.'

She almost made me cry. 'Mothers fight the

battles, endure the wounds, the agony—hear as well the bullets that do not find their mark. For mothers it ends not when death has come to the beloved one. . . . and for them there is no joy, no glory, only a heart to suffer ! . . .'

The woman without children are almost as admirable, and one pities them more. There is Mme. Vincent, who surprisingly honoured me with an invitation to lunch the other day. The Parisians live on shelves, some one has said, and they assuredly do, and such crowded shelves. The amount of truck they collect round them —what they call *bibelots*—scarcely leaves room to breathe.

I climbed up the usual five flights of dark stairs and found Madame in a flat of several ' pieces,' that gave one the usual impression of cramped discomfort and ugliness. I was at once introduced to ' Zizi mon adoré, mon fils,' a funny little intelligent Chinese mongrel.

We had *déjeuner* with Zizi sitting in a high chair beside his ' mother,' with a blue bib tied round his neck, and a special plate of food. When he had finished eating, a napkin was brought and a basin

of warm water, and she wiped his whiskers tenderly, and kissed him many times.

We ate cold Italian sausage and steak, and Madame tucked a large red-bordered napkin down her neck to protect her dress. Afterwards I was shown with great pride a real bathroom, 'exactly like the English!' It was only a cold and unventilated corner cupboard without any window, and I imagine not in daily use. But I duly admired, and could honestly express my envy, being without even so much civilisation myself.

These childless Frenchwomen seem sad and silly, when, as they assure you, the matter is one of arrangement and convenience. Mme. Vincent keeps a life-sized baby doll in her bed-room, dressed in her little nephew's cast-off clothing. She loved babies but not bigger children. Her husband was a musician and detested children. (They never mind discussing the subject!) At best how it deranges one, a child. They were not too rich; her flat was small, but possibly later on it might have been easier. . . .

Her husband has been missing since July last, and was known to be badly wounded. She says he was '*Un garçon exquis*, who overwhelmed me

with love.' She does not wear mourning, but is certain of his death. She colours her hair, and dresses with care and charm, and rouges and looks pretty, and presses the wax baby-doll to her breast, and kisses Zizi on the mouth. She is very proud of her flat and of her servant.

My war-work is quite varied now—the canteen, the hospital, and the latest addition, the League of the Tricolor, a society of the most fiery patriots.

For this I go up several flights of dark, cold, tilting, excessively dark stairs, harbouring a fine flavour of ancient fish-like smells, into a set of little, ill-ventilated rooms filled with busy people. The special work of this branch of the League of the Tricolor — is to make up parcels for the men in the trenches, who have no relations or friends to supply them with comforts or necessities, and to answer their letters and find if possible godmothers for the many men who ask for them. Besides this, there are consignments of clothing and gifts to unpack, to acknowledge, to enter in the books, and put away in the cupboards. There is plenty of occupation for a paid staff of three or four as well as a number of volunteers like myself. The

parcels that go to the poilus are really excellent; underclothing and woollen things, *imperméables* if they are asked for, gaiters sometimes, razors, pocket-knives, vermin-killers, writing-paper and so on, and *douceurs* in the shape of sausage and jam and chocolate, and of course pipes and tobacco. Into every parcel we slip an excellent war map, the size of a double postcard. One side is entitled 'Les ambitions allemandes, d'après les documents allemands. Ce Que Nous Deviendrions Si Nous Étions Vaincus.' The other map shows the Rhine Frontier considerably pushed back, and is called 'Ce que Veulent les Alliés Pour la Paix de l'Europe.' It is a very valuable idea to educate the poilu in our war-aims.

Just now we have a roomful of parcels piling up, and we are working in a very leisurely fashion as nothing is being forwarded to the Front at all. Circulars are sent to the different sectors and the men fill them in, naming things that they need, and get them signed by an officer. Various questions are asked—name, age, occupation, and so on—and the answers are often unconsciously tragic or funny. The poverty of the French soldier

—who gets 2½d. a day, and a most inadequate outfit—is almost beyond credence. One man writes disclosing such utter poverty that he cannot bring himself to show his application to his officer. And he adds: 'If without this you cannot help me, will you perhaps do something for my wife and children, who are without clothing or bread enough'; and he gives the name of the *curé* of the village as a reference.

In answer to the question, 'Are you married?' another writes: 'Widower, my wife died of fear when the Germans entered our village.'

An affectionate father gives the names and ages and a short description of each of his four children. And a somewhat *naïf* little soldier replies to the question, 'Have you any children? thus: 'No, because I was sent to the Front the day I was married, and I have been kept there ever since.'

The letters that come are amusing as well as touching, and sometimes almost unintelligible, the spelling is so strictly phonetic.

We had one from a boy who explained that having no relations or friends at all except in the *terre envahie*, he thought that he would like to

tell the kind ladies who had sent him parcels that rejoiced his heart, that on his name day, St. Alexandre—which was also his twentieth birthday—he had been decorated on the field with the Military Cross and palm. We can well imagine how inspired he feels, to go on doing his duty and to die if necessary, for 'la douce France.' Another letter was from an old soldier in hospital, and evidently very seriously wounded, who sent a large blotter worked in coloured wools, with red crosses and the flag and the motto of the League of the Tricolor all mixed up in a design of his own, and begged the director to accept it with his most grateful homage.

Generally the list of wants is very modest, and nearly always begins like a chant with 'Chaussettes, chandelle, caleçon,' and ends 'quelques douceurs,' —which means chocolate and jam and cigarettes—and sometimes it says, 'imperméable si ça est possible.' There is usually a request for a pipe and tobacco, or 'quelque chose pour détruire les vermines.' One day, however, a letter came from a poilu, demanding a pair of leather boots to the knee, gaiters, an *imperméable*, shirts, socks, sweater, tobacco, chocolate, jam, a watch, and an *Imita-*

tion of Christ! He got this last, and as we were obliged to omit the boots and gaiters and watch, as beyond our means, its lesson will be the more apparent to him.

But never could be imagined more unutterable grime than that of the rooms in which we work for the poilus. I don't mention this as a hardship, but merely as an absurdity in a highly civilised community. Of course the trenches, and German prison camps, and the poorest and most heroic hospitals, must be infinitely worse, and have to be I suppose. But our walls, floors, ceilings, why should they be thick with the dust of ages, Paris street dust, dust of patriotic eloquence, human dust? Dismally discoloured curtains, stiff with dirt, hang against windows that have been obscured with a sort of rich paste for æons, and I have never heard so much as a comment of any kind from any of the workers.

One day my hopes rose considerably, because I arrived to find a huge confusion of *déménagement* going on, and was told that the League of the Tricolor proper was betaking itself, after years uncounted, to newer and brighter quarters, leaving our

branch which has to do with parcels and letters, in sole possession of these ones.

There was a great deal of business moving all their pictures and relics and documents and landmarks, including the most substantial chairs and tables and cupboards, and we were left with very scanty and broken-down furniture. However, that didn't matter, and next day I expected to find, if not the necessary army, at least *one* charwoman in possession. There was never a sign of one, never a remark upon the newly-disclosed areas of prehistoric dirt, not a single suggestion that anything might be done to make the rooms more habitable, not so much as the sign of a duster. Some people accept dirt as one accepts the colour of the sky, and notice it as little apparently. It produces neither pain nor pleasure.

The patriotic ladies are charmingly dressed, with the French touch that is all their own, but they watch their hands becoming black and rough with inexcusable dust with perfect composure and the national fatalism. Perhaps there are no charwomen in Paris !

At eleven-thirty mysterious brown-bearded

patriotic gentlemen appear from an entirely separate set of offices, and rush away to *déjeuner*. And on the stroke of mid-day, every patriotic lady pulls out a powder-puff and a miniature looking-glass, and powders her face thoroughly. Then she puts on her hat and coat with care and grace, and follows the patriotic gentlemen at a hand gallop. I wander out and find a little food anywhere, and read a paper, and sometimes shop or browse among books until two o'clock. Then we all climb the same stairs again and recommence work, which goes on for most of us till six, but I get off to the canteen earlier.

Somebody at the League told me a charming and characteristic story the other day. A respectable, middle-aged Paris lawyer, much occupied with literary matters, found himself some months after war broke out turned into an ordinary poilu, and turned as well into the muddiest and wettest trenches ever seen. At first it seemed unendurable ; then his office and his books began to recede like a dream, and his present companionship became the only reality. One of his friends was a perpetually sad little soldier, who presently confided in him, that

for more than a year now he had been away from his children and wife, whom he adored, and that he was sick for a sight of their faces. He had no pictures of them. They were poor peasants, who had never had means for such a thing as photographs, nor thought of such a thing.

As it happened, in the man's village in the Midi the lawyer had a friend of his own. He wrote to him, and gave him certain instructions. The result was that one feast day his companion got a package of photographs. And the rapture of the poor homesick poilu, when he gazed on the beloved faces of his children and his wife, was more than sufficient reward for the man of law. He had to listen all day to such exclamations as, 'How my little Lucie has grown! How fine and strong a boy is Paul getting to be—able to take care of his mother if the Boches get me. Ah! but my wife is a fine woman! And the little one, the baby, is now walking alone!' And he was not in the least bored.

X

FAREWELL TO THE CANTEEN

7 Rue Gît-le Cœur,
27th June (Ste. Basilide).

Paris is veiled in a radiant warmth, and the colour and beauty of it seem to come and meet you even in the little streets, and clasp you in a fascinated hold on the bridges and in the gardens. There is a feeling of shining and steadfast hope too, in spite of Verdun, and all that it is meaning every day and every hour to a thousand waiting hearts. There are no casualty lists printed in Paris. You can only guess at the losses, and estimate vaguely when men back from the trenches give you some vivid flashes of what the slaughter must be.

But nothing can shake the faith or the tenacity of this nation. It is as if there were in France some alive power, some mighty goddess, directing and counselling, adorable, divine. Every single Frenchman has found his way to her shrine, and felt for

himself her compelling beauty. He offers her his life as a small thing. She is the soul of the nation, splendid and terrible and immortal, and her children light their hearts at her torch, and burn away to death for her.

I am sad because I have made up my mind to go over to London for a little, and it is hard to leave Paris. There is almost nothing to do at the League of the Tricolor, where we pack parcels for the poilus in the trenches. Supplies have been falling off considerably, and so have the letters of demand, fortunately. Donations seem to come in waves, and all charities—even war charities—have their languishing moments. But luckily our cupboard shelves were not quite bare, when a fiery little captain came in yesterday to collect a sack full of comforts to take back himself to his men in the trenches. 'Mes enfants,' he called them, or 'Mes petits.' He paid us a long visit, and he talked a great deal at an immense speed and with vigour and picturesqueness and much gesticulation. He wore the little silver cross on his helmet that indicates the priest, but otherwise he might have been a musketeer, he was so keen on the fighting,—so

almost lyrical in his enthusiasm over the game of war and the splendour of the soldiers. When he came to speak of the French artillery, and of the *Soixante-Quinze* which is their idol, his voice failed with emotion, and there were tears in his eyes.

'The voice of the *Soixante-Quinze* is like no other sound on the battle field,' he said. 'Every poilu laughs with renewed courage when he hears it. That is our friend when we are in a tight place. The *Soixante-Quinze* is the wonder of the war—the marvel that will save France.'

In 1905 the Government passed a law compelling priests and ecclesiastical students into the army. There are twenty thousand priest-soldiers fighting in France, and among them are three bishops. The bishop of the Gold Coast is serving as a private, under the orders of a young *curé*. A dispensation was granted by the Pope exempting them from the censure passed upon the cleric who sheds blood. The record of the fighting priests of France is a magnificent one.

Mme. Vincent said something of this to Captain Brancart, but he cut her short.

'We have made the sacrifice of our lives,' he said.

'What difference where the field of battle lies. For myself I like active warfare. It is good to be beside my children and to share their hardships.'

He was very optimistic about the outcome of the war, and full of the warmest and most impartial admiration for all the Allies.

'What about Russia?' Mme. Vincent asked.

'Russia is progressing magnificently,' Captain Brancart said with enthusiasm.

'And Italy?'

'All goes well in Italy. The Italians are splendid,—theirs is a most difficult campaign. Admirable the Italians!'

'But the English are still a little slow?'

'Slow? The English are superb! You don't know what you say!' the little captain shouted, turning bright red with rage. 'Without the English where would we be? They are brave, generous, strong,—a superb people our friends the English.'

'You are satisfied then with all our Allies?'

'With every one. Every one is doing the utmost possible. The Allies are magnificent,' Captain Brancart assured us impartially. 'But what does

not satisfy me is the *moral* at the back. We shall win the war, yes—*pourvu que les civils tiennent!* But the levity, the indifference, the irresponsibility that I find in Paris, shocks and disgusts me. I am so discouraged, so saddened by it, that I have taken but three days out of my six days' leave, and I shall come no more until the war is ended. It is unendurable to see luxury and heartless amusement in Paris while our children struggle and die at the Front. Shameful!'

We suggested that a good many people even in Paris took the war seriously.

'I observe little sign of it,' Captain Brancart said sadly. 'You mesdames, here, I see do a good work. But the shops, the tea resorts, the theatres are crowded. And in the Bois one sees ladies driving in motors with orchids in the glasses, and their pet dogs beside them, flirting with other women's husbands—as silly, as vain as if France were not fighting for her life. But the men who come back from the war will have no use for such women. What a gulf between them and the daughters of France who bear a real part in helping to free our country from the vile Boche! In

Normandy,—ah! in Normandy the women are magnificent.' He added, perhaps unnecessarily, 'I am a Norman.'

He was delighted with the comforts that we got together for his men, and thanked us many times, promising to write for more from the trenches, and hoping to see us all again after the war, if his present feeling of strong disapproval of Paris had calmed, and he was able to return. He took his leave, heavily burdened with presents to rejoice the hearts of his children, and with many polite and warm expressions of appreciation for our trouble.

His strictures have some little foundation. Paris is not Puritan even in war-time. She is gay, smiling, completely mistress of herself, unwilling to be less than charming in spite of anxieties, of sorrows that dwell in her heart. But she is not really frivolous or indifferent, because she wears almost unchanged the outward aspect that her lovers look for and worship. That she is true to French tradition, serious under a light appearance, they are quick to know as well.

I feel that I am no longer needed at the League, there is so little to do. Mme. Vincent and Annette

are still working there occasionally. They are beautiful to behold, newly gilt and coiffed, and with their complexions very delicately done up every day. I have worked very pleasantly with them, and they are very cheerful and amiable, but I haven't got near them in the very least. I don't regret them at all, but I feel almost overcome at leaving various *kiosque* ladies who sell me papers for myself and for my poilus, and some warm friends in creameries and cake shops. And my agreeable little washwoman who has travelled to St. Malo and the Vosges, and knows that to leave home broadens the mind, and my *teinturière*, whose son, aged ten, wears curls tied up with blue ribbon and is most objectionable,—and friends in book-shops, and libraries, and little tea-shops,—and my own café.

The canteen is not so busy just now either. The refugees' room is never crowded, and we haven't had even two services this last week. Jacqueline and I have taken the children out several times lately. The last adventure in a cinema was quite disastrous, because two of the infants were either bored or naughty, and they wept unrestrainedly

and refused to be soothed, even by barley-sugar. We threatened to slap them, and then did slap them, —gently—but in vain. They demanded to be taken out to play in the garden ; they assured us with every appearance of untruth that the music and the pictures frightened them. But as the other four showed symptoms of bursting into howls if we removed them from the pictures, and we were under promise not to separate, because Jacqueline is too young to be left alone and is not permitted to drive unguarded in a taxi, nothing could be done for some time. Then we bribed the bigger ones to come out between reels, and the howlers heard what their companions thought of them—expressed with some ferocity.

I should like to stay a little longer if only to acquit myself in the mind of the Directrice of a charge of pique. Last week a bad throat kept me away from the canteen for two days, and I learned that I was supposed to be vexed. The knowledge (which was a surprise to me) came in a letter from the Directrice of the canteen, saying that she had learned with pain and vexation that I was sometimes deprived of my proper table, and

assuring me that if I would return, she herself would confide my special place to me, and let the other *serveuses* know that she counted particularly on my aid ! I gathered that there must have been a fuss of some sort, and that I was supposed to be away because I was offended. I wrote and explained that I was ill, and had only remained away for that reason. I begged to assure Mme. la Directrice that it was all one to me whether I served soldiers or refugees or children, and seized the opportunity to mention that I only wished to share the work and not to monopolise anything.

The French girls want always to wait on the poilus, which is natural, as they are by far the most pleasant and interesting, and very few of them like to be bothered with the children, and in the Salle Napoléon we are often short-handed. But even if they have more than they are able to cope with properly, they resent any assistance with the soldiers, and they can be on occasion—like the rest of us—disagreeable. It makes difficult moments. I am careful never to poach on other people's preserves—when it is 'not my work'—even if I see a poilu starving patiently to death.

But my room sometimes fills up with soldiers, and the canteen children have to wait for the second service or sit among them. The poilus love the children, and are so nice with their *p'tits frères*. Quite often you see a small boy strutting proudly about with a real casque on his head, and as much accoutrement slung round him as he can carry, and a friendly baby is an object of worship to the battered little blue warriors.

Jacqueline came in to see me the day I got up, and she brought me all the gossip. It seems that the other English assistant—Andrew's Cousin Evangeline—who comes on the express condition that she is to wait on none but soldiers, arrived early one night, and strenuously set the entire three tables for the poilus, unaided. When the soup was about to be served down strolled the little French ladies from gossiping in the *vestiaire*, and pleasantly informed Mrs. Vernon-Baker that she was superfluous, as they would occupy themselves with the soldiers. They suggested that perhaps she might make herself of use in the refugees' room. Scene !

Mrs. V.-B., who is a person of a certain age and

consequence, who does not paint solid and recognisable views of Paris, and get hung in the Salon, and bought by Americans, without having a good conceit of herself, was so much enraged that she instantly retired and put on her bonnet and shawl, preparatory to leaving for ever. Fortunately the Directeur, a man of sympathy and humour, caught her at the door, listened to her tale of wrath, and tactfully reinstalled her in a position of authority.

Then inquiry was made, and it was thought that I too must be offended. But not having the age or consequence of Mrs. Vernon-Baker, I was not. I am only too thankful to have been allowed to do anything. I don't know any English canteen that would endure the tiresome ways of a foreigner as patiently as these French people put up with us.

. . . . . .

To-day I walked over to work at the League by the Rue de Seine, which is full of little shops that I never tire of, and know window by window by heart, and across the foot-bridge opposite the Institut. It was a brisk morning, with a milky-blue sky full of sunlight, and the river was sparkling and gay again and very busy with barges

loading yellow sand, and little steamers—*bateaux-mouches*—flying under the bridges. Most of the stalls on the *quais* had opened to the hot sun, like oysters. I stopped to watch a woman kneeling in a little boat fastened to a Belgian barge, doing her washing. Her baby was in a cradle on the deck of the barge, watched by an attentive big dog with a wise, experienced eye, and the woman was singing as she washed and hung out charming bits of colour on her line.

I am so fond of other people's washings hanging freshly in the sun and air, and this was such a gay one. Our British convention of white underclothes is really sadly dull. Red and pink and orange and green and peacock-blue are much more attractive, fluttering on a line. People who 'make beauty' ought to attend to this.

I do love the old courtyard of the Louvre and the four separate and adorable glimpses of Paris that you get through the four great gateways as you stand in the exact middle. I can bear French shrieks, and even French stuffiness and dust, after idly drifting through that dreamful place.

. . . . . .

We had two refugees from Verdun at the canteen on Sunday night, a respectable middle-aged woman, and her sad-looking little boy of eight or so. She arrived in Paris, quite strange and friendless, and a young soldier met her in the street and brought her with him to us. He is *envahi* and on sick leave, and is living with us, a gentle-looking, tall, fair boy. I took him for her son at first. The Directeur arranged to take her and the child in of course. (The Directeur has no hesitations, however crowded we may be.) When the young soldier came to say good-night to her, and to tell her that he would look for her at *déjeuner* the next morning she burst out crying beyond control. The French ladies all begged her not to 'demoralise herself,' which I gather meant not to become unnerved, and the boy, who is lame, limped back across the room and bent over her, speaking in such a comforting, gentle voice that any one would have loved him.

She told us her story. Her husband is fighting in Champagne. Her little boy must go to school. Her sister and her friends are at Verdun still. She does not know Paris or a human being in it. She cried terribly and kept on saying, 'I had better

have stayed in my house with my own people, except for my little boy. I was afraid for him.'

The little boy in a grey sheep-skin coat (in June) looked tired out and profoundly sad.

One wonders, with people who have been through so many months of terror, why the point ever comes at which they can endure no more. These people have listened to the crash of battle, to screaming shells and bursting bombs throughout all the struggle that began months ago, and has scarcely known a lull. They have seen destruction on every side, and met with the agony of loss and fear in their own close circle of family and friends. They hate to leave even the wreckage of their homes. They linger past all reason in their desolated villages. Then one day fortitude deserts them completely, and it is easier to flee than to look again on the ruin of all that they have loved.

1st July (St. Thibaut).

'*La marmite est en réparation!*' This sounds a simple statement, but it occasioned considerable emotion in the Salle des Réfugiés last night.

I arrived at the canteen early to find all the

tables in my room set but lacking spoons, so I proceeded to lay them. Presently I felt a gentle tug at my skirt, and discovered that an infant refugee having fully five years, in a blue checked pinafore, with two long fair pigtails falling over a small red shawl which she wore drawn closely round her, and crossed on her chest, wished to have speech of me.

'You must not put any spoons to-night, Mademoiselle,' she declared earnestly. 'The soup pot is being repaired. There is no soup for supper to-night.'

So we sat down on a bench and conversed. My small friend went on to inform me that for dinner there was to be haricot, *purée* of potatoes, salad, and *compote* of apples. Then she smoothed her little skirt and gave me her family history. She, Adelaide-Jeanne, was from Pont-à-Mousson, and was staying for a little while at her grandmother's in Paris, 'because there is a war in our village.' Her two brothers, Edmond and Philippe, were also in Paris. Her mother had not come, and the very day they left home she had bought a new little brother. A neighbour had written to tell them, but had forgotten to mention his name. And they so desired to know! Jeanne, being only five, could

not well write and ask it, but must wait for mother to bring him. Meantime she looked after Edmond and Philippe, her grandmother being very old, and, thanks to her rheumatism, not agile ! She was very old-fashioned and wise.

When the refugees came flocking in I had to explain the absence of soup, the reason given being received with manifest disbelief. ' Soup gives great trouble, that comprehends itself,' they said amiably. ' One sees that the service goes quicker without soup.'

The haricot turned out to be of lentils too, which they all loathe, and they were so cross that even the stewed apples, which are considered a delicacy, failed to soothe them. But Adelaide-Jeanne smiled at me as she wrapped her little shawl round her shoulders before she left, and so did her old grandmother, a tottering dame wearing a white coif, of whom she was the miniature.

I again gave out the fifty-centime pieces with rather an ache at the thought of leaving. I love the children almost as much as I do all these French soldiers. One speaks continually of their friendly gaiety, and it probably conveys little to any one

who has not known them. But when somebody says, 'Oh, did *you* work among the French soldiers too?' and you instantly reply that you did, a sudden warmth springs up between the most unlikely people. The very thought of the poilu, philosophic and logical child, calls up a smile, a tenderness that says much.

10*th July* (Ste. Félicité).

I have taken advantage of comparatively leisurely times to see what can be seen of pictures and sculpture. Sadly little compared with the old days, but now and again one discovers a tiny and individual exhibition in some small gallery, or in some studio of the Quarter.

'La Triennale'—held only once in three years as one may guess—was the most interesting exhibition of this year, I think. It was held in the Jeu de Paume early in March, in the Tuileries, a place with the chill of polar seas. There was a new Rodin, always an event, a tiny little group called Pursuit or Desire, or something of the kind, a horizontal lady apparently swimming through the air with two horizontal males slightly in the rear, stretching out their arms to catch her. It felt to

me too small and rather confused—but probably the confusion was my own—and reminded me absurdly of a story called ' The Condensed Pirate.' I remember a Crucifixion too that was strange. The Virgin leaned her head against the Sacred Heart, which threw a greenish-gold light on her face. (Imagine her height to reach breast high on the Cross.) It was to me a dreadful and unpleasing picture, in spite of its clear pure colour and the modern perspective, but the Virgin's pallid face, like a long wet soap-bubble, was very clever. The sophisticated twentieth-century Primitive seems to be unnecessary all the same. There was a gentle and well-furnished landscape by Harpignies, and a bronze lady taking that curious interest in her toes that bronzes and scupltured stones so often feel, by Lucie Jacob, the woman sculptor who is said to be Rodin's most distinguished pupil. She looks much more like a little New England school-teacher than a Frenchwoman or an artist. She is a tiny little thing, with a brown head as smooth as a hazel-nut, and wears her hair in a tight little knot on the back of her neck. When I met her she wore a red flannel blouse, with a stiff linen collar

and a black tie, and she had on the thickest boots in the world. But intelligent hands and eyes, and such a soft voice! In Chelsea she would have had velvet slippers and a bare neck hung with bead chains, or necklaces of tropical seeds, and something composed by Liberty in green serge draped round her—and dusty hair.

There were some Forains to be seen, and a very powerful nude lady with a black velvet ribbon round her ugly throat. And there was an extremely comic 'Nativity,' though I believe it was sincere and not meant to be amusing. The Infant was sitting up in his halo shoving both fists into his eyes and bawling, while Mary slept heavily at the foot of the manger, and Joseph, palpably snoring, occupied a remote corner of the stable. The ox and the ass, extremely concerned, were awake and watching, and were incidentally big enough to dispose of the entire Holy Family in one gobble. The legend beneath the picture said, 'Weep, Little Jesus, that You have thirty-three years to live among men.'

Studio life, as it used to be in the Quarter, has practically ceased.

I was in Paris the winter before the war, when

the tango raged. It burnt in flaming orange-colour in the florists' and other shop-windows ; it bewitched finger-tips and feet. It possessed the dance-halls and skating rinks, and two men killed each other in the street for love of a boulevard lady calling herself Tangui-Tango. Paris before-the-war comes to me in tango colour and tango music, oddly mixed with the smell of chestnuts roasting in the boulevards, and the refrain of a popular 'rag' of the moment played in every café :—

'You made me love you, and I didn't want to do it,
I didn't mean to do it.'

The contrast strikes me vividly and often now in the composure and darkness of this war-Paris, tense with effort, her playthings put away, her laughter and music forgotten.

People do still live and work in studios, still paint, still study under various masters at the Académie This-and-That. But nowhere is the war more apparent than on the Left Bank.

The Canteen Refuge opens a path to all kinds of war-work. Requests for help to other organisations come in constantly. Yesterday I went to a big and dusty warehouse to stuff pillows with white

paper shavings for the *Train des blessés*. It was quite hard work stooping and stuffing and sewing, and we did it to a chorus of sneezes, it was so wonderfully dusty. Paper makes very comfortable cushions and pads for wounded limbs, and some one had sent a supply of covers of really nice soft old linen. The French girls chattered untiringly and were full of all sorts of amusing gossip about public people in Paris, dancers, and political ladies, and leading philanthropists. There is no such thing as a law of libel in France, I suppose. Certainly there can't be as applied to women, when a woman is scarcely even reprimanded for murder if she is at all pretty and the heroine of a *crime passionel*.

All gossip is the same gossip it seems to me, whether it is Paris, London, or Ottawa ; let a few ladies get together for gossip and the same facts emerge.

1. That the war is a political game.

2. That all important politicians' wives are being dressed by the Government's or the nation's enemies.

3. That everything is appalling to think of, but very nice to talk about.

Freaks still survive in Paris. Quietly walking home from the pillow warehouse, in the twilight of the Rue Vieux-Colombier, I saw before me Oswald Raimondi. He went—with a child of eight years or so—into a *pâtisserie*, and I followed, through sheer fascination. He is the brother of Raimondi the dancer, and the entire family always go about dressed in Greek garments ; and he ' makes beauty ' of some vague kind with his hands. Imagine a cross between a half-breed Indian, a very ordinary American, and a comic cupid, dressed in a short Greek robe stencilled in blue, and swathed about the lower chest in purple. Bare legs and sandals, and the right arm with a large inclusive area of shoulder, also bare. Long black hair flowing over his shoulders, cut in a fringe across his forehead, and bound with a dull blue-green fillet of ribbon. A face sallow and unshaven, and limbs not heroic. He and his family all dress like this in order to be apostles of joy and loveliness in the world. The joy that he causes is almost too acute.

Oswald Raimondi bought a variety of little cakes not calculated to add to the beauty of his complexion and then withdrew.

The child, bare-legged and sandalled, and semi-nude in a single white cloth Greek garment, was strong and handsome. I think it was a boy.

'A New York on n'est pas permis de sortir comme ça?' said the shopwoman with some interest in reply to what I told her. 'Même à Paris on regarde quand ils passent.'

It seems that a group of these beauty-makers live in or near the Rue Vieux-Colombier, and are constantly to be seen. They do not know yet that a war is in progress.

Yes, the freaks survive, and if you dawdle you find that Paris has still its bandits. One evening I must have been dawdling, for a voice accosted me in the Guichets du Louvre, in that soft, thick Parisian that is so like rich chocolate. It said, 'I am almost afraid to speak to Madame, she is so tall. She is taller than I am.'

I looked down and saw one of those fascinating creatures that I have always longed to know—and imagined had become extinct since the war—wearing a large velvet hat, long hair, a flowing tie, a wide cloak, and carrying a mysterious black portfolio.

'I adore the beautiful English,' the creature said. 'I read altogether English romances, which I also adore. I am just now in the middle of one, and Madame resembles greatly the delicious heroine of this alluring tale. Regard her, I pray you!'

He opened his portfolio and it was full of English penny papers. I was, it seems, exactly like the Lady Guinevere Vere de Talbot in *Parted, But Not For Ever*.

He was really quite entertaining, and I accepted his invitation to go for a walk. I led him far away from where I live and listened to his chatter of various celebrities, whom he described as his intimate friends, mixed in with expressions of deep admiration for my *allure*, and invitations to tell him my 'pet-name' and to dine with him, or at least to have an *apéritif*. He said he had an intense desire for sympathy and English conversation, and felt that we could meet on purely intellectual grounds. I daresay we could have, too, as I am so fond of penny romances myself, and when he said 'Dites-moi un rendez-vous,' I named a bridge and an hour to save time and vain argument.

And whether the time and the place saw the little white moth which looked as if it had been fed exclusively on absinthe from its cradle, I have no means of knowing. It rained. Do white moths go out in the rain ? I do, but I avoided the Pont Royal.

That side of Paris—the Paris which is Parisian rather than French, and of which the most artistic expression is in *La Vie Parisienne*—comes back to life again. When the Capital was moved to Bordeaux it seemed to die. *La Vie Parisienne* ceased publication for a time, and when it resumed was a very sober production indeed, with war photographs. Now it gets back to its old—piquancy, I suppose is the polite word. The British officer has discovered its nude charms, and it is having the time of its life, strengthening an old British idea that France is a land of feverish gaiety, sickly sentimentality, lax morals, endless suppers, and dancers of more than Oriental mystery.

How complete a misunderstanding of a nation inexorably logical, sternly industrious, abstemious, parsimonious, with only one real sentimental passion, that of patriotism. How they love their country

heart and soul. It is the adoration for the actual soil of France that is the marrow of the French nation. The invasion of their beloved and cherished fields is unendurable. ' Her very dust to them is dear.' I think that when we Canadians love the dust and stones of our own country, and stop harking back to our grandfathers' tradition of ' Home ' in England or Scotland or Ireland, and give up imagining that to yearn for Europe is somehow finer than to feel contented with our heritage in a cruder civilisation, that has after all the strength and freshness as well as the faults of youth, we may begin to be a real Canadian people—a nation and an arm of the Empire. But not before.

It is the ' rootedness ' of France that makes me feel so strongly that the restless desire to leave one's own country is a betraying weakness.

XI

BACK IN LONDON

10th October 1916
(St. François Borgia).

A TEMPORARY slackening of the work at the canteen coincided with a call to London from a friend who was a little acid in a hint about 'the mistaken idea that one can only help in a foreign country.' I was rather longing for English speech and English ways, and her letter hastened me to a decision to leave Paris.

'There is any amount of work here now, waiting to be done,' wrote Elizabeth. 'I can get you into my station canteen if you like, or into my office, and if you prefer to be a V.A.D. you 'll be welcomed by half a dozen hospitals.'

So I am back in London.

It must be partly the unconscious mental strain of travelling in war-time, that makes it so tiring. You aren't actually afraid of submarines, but there

is the possibility of fear somewhere in your mind. And there is always the war, and apprehension of what you may hear next—what fatalities to love and friendship, or what calamities to the world at large. To think that once upon a time I used to enjoy travel; and not so very long ago actually, though it feels like a hundred years. But no one is meant to be happy in war-time, and certainly not patriotic missionaries of sorts, who cannot manage to feel an exultant and exalting faith in themselves.

The trip across the English Channel is ordinarily, of course, not travel in a Canadian sense, though it is, curiously enough, in an English sense. Why is the great naval nation, the race which lives and is great by the sea and because of the sea, so timorous over the crossing of such a little ditch? The sight of the vast hotels at Dover in the old days, filled with the Imperial English waiting anxiously for a 'fine crossing' day, always used to make me smile and feel Canadianly superior. Of course in war-time it *is* a voyage from Paris to London, and no one is encouraged to venture upon it without the sternest of reasons. I suppose

marriage comes under that category—I wonder—because—

The day before I was to leave Paris, I moved to the Terminus Hotel at the Gare St. Lazare, and went to the station to worry about trains and 'papers.' All this sort of precaution is wise, or I thought it was. Authority has a way of finding out suddenly that a new 'document' is necessary, or that a certain train is unnecessary. Soon you will have to camp out at a station for days before if you want to make sure of a train.

A war-bride fell upon me for help at the Gare St. Lazare. She was a weeping little English girl, who had come over to marry a French aviator, and had expected to be met by him and by her own comfortable aunt living in Paris as well. Neither one nor the other turned up, and she was terrified at finding herself stranded in Paris. So she flung herself on me, concluding I was English. She didn't know Paris. She didn't know French, because her adorer it seemed knew English. Her name was Nancy Walsingham and she was twenty, and a V.A.D.; and she had met her Étienne in a hospital when she was staying with her aunt in

a Normandy town, and he was adorable, and something must have happened to him. Only a flying accident could have prevented him meeting her. Did I think he was killed? His people made brandy down at Cognac, and she was becoming a Catholic to marry him. Her aunt was perhaps run over. (This possibility she seemed to find endurable.) But if Étienne were dead, she might as well die too. But she would wait and find out in the morning. It was possible that he had not got the telegram. Or he might have mistaken the station. Where was I going for the night? Wherever I meant to go, might she come too and share my room. She was too frightened even to be alone in a room.

I took care of her, and we went to the Terminus Hotel, and she was so bewildered and weeping that I had even to fill up the particulars of her name, age and intentions, on the slips instantly thrust at her. We shared one of those French salon-bedrooms, furnished chiefly with mirrors and plush chairs, and gilt cornices and heavy hangings, but it was quite comfortable, and the beds were delicious. I fell into mine and longed for sleep,

but I had no luck. Miss Nancy Walsingham kept on all the lights while she brushed out the most wonderful long mane of shining chestnut hair that I have ever seen, and continued to pour unto my unwilling ears the story of her life, of her *fiancé's* life, of her aunt's life, of the brandy-making relations-in-law's lives down in Cognac, and to repeat her determination to end her existence if the *pilote d'aviation* had really terminated his by some too-probable accident, till she successfully murdered sleep.

Horrid little egotist, I could have wrung her neck. By and by I slept fitfully, but always aware of her anxious sniffs and tossings beside me all night.

By dawn the little wretch was interviewing *garçons* and valets in my room, and at eight o'clock she had got into touch with the aunt—who had not been run over, but had merely mistaken the date of her niece's arrival, and who turned up presently at the hotel and bore Miss Walsingham off to look for her Étienne. The child thanked me for my protection and hoped that she had not disturbed me, and regretted that I could not meet her hero

to see for myself that all she had told me about him was inadequate. Then she vanished. So do some ships pass in the night, to be remembered as a considerable nuisance.

I felt exhausted and lonely and dismal. Then came the journey by train, and customs, and passports, and fatigue. And the crossing with its submarine thrill, and customs and passports and fatigue again.

But oh, it is good to be back in England after much foreignness. Every one seems to be so tranquil and orderly and so polite. And I like the populace not to spit on the pavement, and to observe the decencies of life. It is restful to the temper. The moment will come again, of course, when I 'd give it all up for the light and life of Paris—even of sad and circumspect war-Paris—the smell and sound of it, the street cries—*faïence and porcelain, any chairs to mend, panes of glass, fish, cheese*—that have often got on my nerves till I could have screamed, and the iron-lunged *chiffonnière*, and the newspaper *kiosques*, and the women with the flower-carts, and the bridges, and the horizon-blue uniforms, and the *agents*,

and the beauty of the sky-line, and the rushing in the Métro, and the swift chatter, and the unforgettable colour of Paris, and the children in the gardens. . . . At the moment, however, grey sky and considerate English speech, and the unresentful information of the tram and bus girls are sufficient.

I spent two days at Folkestone, and saw a little of the camp, and many friends, and heard a variety of amusing gossip about patriotic endeavour, and so-called public work. It is always well to work cheerfully of course, but you can't help resenting a good deal of the silliness and insincerity of it; as for example, those ladies who, attired in a khaki travesty of a military uniform, speak of each other by their surnames, and say 'sir' to each other, allude to having 'taken a commission' and insist upon saluting and taking salutes. I think that a large number of women workers—including some of my Canadian compatriots—should be firmly removed from a world of men that is proving altogether too exciting for their mental and moral balance, and secured under lock and key—by women jailors—until the end of the war.

Evidently too, Paris stories of *infirmières* who

lose their heads over their patients can be paralleled in other hospitals than the French. The majority of women of the allied nations have faced the calamity and upheaval of war with unexampled dignity and courage, but there are a few who deserve jibes. It would shock them dreadfully to be told this, but it is regrettably true. The war to them is just an excitement, an excuse for a freer life, a general slackening of fibre. They get real and actual pleasure out of it, and the terror or pity they might have felt in a healthier day is swallowed up in sentimentality.

Folkestone with its ' leave ' boats, and its anxious wives, and its young overseas troops eagerly waiting for orders to go ' out there,' and the conscienceless preying of the natives upon the visitors, seemed a good place to get away from. I was by no means sorry to find myself in London.

Now I am staying for a few days in one of those vast cavernous Bayswater boarding-houses—which of course calls itself a private hotel—that are the refuge of all feminine derelicts. It has an atmosphere of roast mutton, and boiled greens, and gloom. It is an imitation home founded upon

struggle—struggle on the part of the proprietors to make ends meet, struggle on the part of the Derelictæ to reduce their coal extras and their washing bills in order to have something to spend on other things than mere existence. It is very chilly and sad and futile. The ladies come into the dining-room wearing sports-coats of a practical and dismally unbecoming colour, grey or violet or brown, and sometimes little fragments of fur round their necks. In an earlier day they would have draped themselves in shawls. Some of them have pets. There is a South African parrot of course, an aged Pekingese dog, a canary. Much of the conversation concerns incidents in the life of these friends. The Derelictæ take the half-penny illustrated papers, and believe every word that they read. They tell you courageously what they think of Asquith, and mention the coming smart weddings, and how the Queen was looking yesterday. They are never out for meals. . . .

Bayswater is the district for the constitutionally old. Some of the inhabitants entombed in the private hotels may still be young in years, but they were born dreary and still and colourless. They

exercise their pet dogs in Kensington Gardens, and tell you forlornly how much fresher the air is on this side of the park. They look at you with apprehension in case you may wish to argue that wits are fresher elsewhere. But it is not kind to argue with the melancholy fungi of a Bayswater private hotel—purposeless to deepen their natural gloom by a trembling suspicion that you are not quite the sort of person they are accustomed to see at Fitz-Altamont Court. In Bloomsbury, which is a frowsy part of London, but not generally dull, you may hear shrieks at midnight; in Bayswater, only snores.

London is very cold and damp and dark, and the English custom of heating only small sections of the house is hard to bear. The people all hate it themselves, and it can't be good for any one to go out with such icy feet, and so thoroughly chilled. All the same, I love to be in London again. I love the smell of it, and its blue, misty colour, which is as different from the colour of Paris as its sound is different from the sound of Paris. In Paris it is as if you were continually giving your interest and attention to special and separate

instruments in the orchestra of the city, listening for a note, a phrase. In London the volume of sound is so vast that you are content to be supported or submerged by it—as your mood may be—in its entirety.

By daylight war-London seems pretty much as usual, except that there are so many soldiers about, and so many girls in uniform who are not calling each other 'sir,' but are calling the workmen 'mate.' It is very strange and shrouded at night, with stiff greenish rays falling obliquely from the covered lights, like the pictures in *Peep of Day*. The postmen wear little lanterns slung on their chest to see their way and their letters by.

I went to the Poetry Shop expecting to find it changed, if not vanished, so many of its lovers and makers have gone to the Front—so many have laid down their lives as soldiers and sailors. But there are poets still, skimming the Milky Way, reading to each other at six o'clock at night, by the light of two tall tapers. I like it all, from the girl secretary, who always seems to be in a state of passionate protest and revolt against the people who come in demanding Cammaerts' poems and

mispronouncing his name, to the striped cat who walks by himself between the two pleasant little book-lined rooms, and the earnest young poets upstairs in the reading loft. They have such charming voices that even the bits of ugly realism and earth-bound prose that they thrust relentlessly upon you sound quite like poetry. And real poetry, of course, occurs now and then, and makes the dim street beautiful as you go home, and lifts up life in war-time to the fine plane that you feel it should belong to, when you can manage to see something of its vastness, and not just the personal pain of its silly wickedness.

All sorts of kind things are said in London about Canada, but what means more is the distinct effort that the English people make not to say, 'You Americans,' when they are speaking to Canadians. They really can't tell the difference between us, but they dimly feel that we consider that a difference exists, and they are eager to gratify our little prejudice. It is quite a hopeful sign.

It always strikes me that the English are curiously slow at distinguishing nationality. They know an Italian organ-grinder and a French *chef*, and pos-

sibly they might now recognise a German waiter. But all Latins seem alike to them, and if they saw a man wearing a pigtail and heard him speak unintelligibly, they would hesitate before venturing the opinion that he was probably not English.

I gather that the Canadian is thought an awful braggart, and no doubt he does swank a little. In many cases it is a pathetic, childish imitation of the calm superiority of the Englishman in Canada. Often it is a resentful suburbanism that will in time drop away. The Canadian soldier in England is suffering for the sins of the Canadian politician as he bitterly knows. And the maple-leaf is certainly being loudly exploited here by people who at home would not really be sure whether it grew on a creeper or on a bush. Our other national symbol of the quiet little beaver, that attends strictly to its own affairs and is both busy and shy, is not so much in evidence.

I complained of this to Andrew (I am not in London because Andrew is here; his arrival was totally unexpected) and he said, 'Oh, yes, the beaver. That is the animal with the chewing gum habit!'

I left the subject. I deny that chewing gum is a Canadian habit.

London is full of very picturesque Australians and New Zealanders, fine, powerful men, who have a way of looking as if they owned the earth. Their strong, easy stride suggests that they are accustomed to plenty of space, and they have a cool, hard eye, full of resource and sagacity. Nothing bothers them, and they are unwilling to salute anything less than a Chief-of-Staff. They seem to be a little sorry for England, but willing to give her their hard and capable patronage. They are amusing as well as splendid. They are always having their boots polished. It seems to be their one uncontrollable passion. I 've been wondering why their uniform looked so different from all others, apart from their wide hats—and I have discovered that it 's because their cuffs are buttoned in tight, like a little boy's sailor suit.

Some of the Anzacs, in spite of their independence and indifference, are just children, and awfully homesick. They are so far away, after all. I heard of one poor boy the other day, who had two months sick leave. It was not long enough to

go home to the other side of the world of course. He did not know London or any one in it, and in despair he took a directory and said to himself, 'I 'll go and live in the place that sounds prettiest.'

He alighted upon Lisson Grove! But fortune sent a kind Englishwoman to the rescue, and he is now in the real country that he was longing for, and with friends. There are ever so many clubs and canteens of course, but somehow there are always a few soldiers who won't avail themselves of any of them, and go through desolate days.

London is still excited about Zeppelin raids, and we have had a scare or two. It brings me back to the French argument that the cure for Boche brutality is reprisal. I do not know. I used to be convinced while I was listening to them, and then went back to doubt. Certainly the French contention seems to win respect by this one proof. There are still attacks from the air on defenceless towns in England. But no Zeppelin comes near Paris now. The French say, 'Because of our policy of reprisals.'

But Paris—popular Paris—never took the early Zeppelin attacks on the city very seriously. I was

in Paris on the 29th of January when the last Zeppelin raid was made.

It sounded like one motor tyre—or two—or three—or as many as seven perhaps, exploding in the street just in front of my little hotel, but something told me that it was not. I flung open my window and looked for the trouble in the sky. I seemed to hear the heartbeats of the infernal machine, and I seemed to see it scudding through the air, and—of this I am quite certain—I did see great wings of light sweeping brilliantly over the heavens in pursuit.

My window commanded a courtyard, and a good hearing of the street, which was filled with mildly interested comment. I gazed eagerly at the sky, thrilled.

'C'est embêtant,' remarked a cold and dispassionate voice.

I looked across the courtyard to a window facing mine but a story above it. Never before had any of these windows displayed a sign of life, to my knowledge, but now this one showed a light, and revealed a lady in night attire—presumably French, also gazing in the direction of the Eiffel Tower.

'Another raid?' I said excitedly. 'An aeroplane, is it not? A Zeppelin—*un tueur d'enfants!*'

'C'est embêtant,' she repeated in tones of evident displeasure.

'It is a raid, then?' I said. 'Not our own machines scouting or anything?'

I felt her cold eye upon me.

'Would our own aviators explode?' she demanded icily. 'I ask you! Regard me the light in the sky. One searches. C'est embêtant.'

'I do hope no great harm'—I began fervently.

She interrupted me, making me feel that I had interrupted her. She was very peeved. 'One at least might have one's nights. One must sleep. One had imagined the night safe. And behold the return of the Zeppelin. C'est embêtant.'

'We're rather near the sky, too,' I said, feeling helpless in the face of her passionless indignation. 'And they tell me that the cellar is the best place.'

'You,' she said coldly—and I felt her contempt—'complain, and you are only *au cinquième*. But I, who am *au sixième*, to descend to the cellar! C'est embêtant!'

She remained looking at the beautiful flashes of

light flinging from the Eiffel Tower, in what I felt to be bitter disapproval, motionless against her window. I was drawn irresistibly to look at her again, but the light behind her was dim, as it is apt to be *au sixième*, and I could only make out a silhouette that might have been both young and beautiful, and unbound hair that might have been raven or gold or possibly intermediate. I was intrigued. I liked her definite attitude against the window, her definite opinion of Teutonic frightfulness. With her there was no pretence of finding it humorous. It was—she refused to disguise her feelings—a matter of distinct annoyance.

'Perhaps,' I said, anxious to hear her speak again and to me, 'they will not return.'

I felt her slow regard cover me. The light *au cinquième* is decidedly stronger and I was in full view.

'In any case one has been disturbed to-night,' she uttered briefly. 'This infect machine—just as I was about to wash my hair! It is not convenient. And to-morrow I shall at least be compelled to look out, of the window. One takes the habit. C'est embêtant.'

'We shall then, perhaps, again look out of our

windows, all the two at the same hour!' I suggested eagerly.

She withdrew with a statuesque motion, and slowly closed her window.

'Ça—c'est embêtant,' I heard her say coldly.

But we never had to look out of the window again.

Should we British try to bomb the Huns into decency? I do not know.

. . . . . .

Yes, it is very good to be in England again, this new England that is shaping its course so resolutely and yet with such insouciance, such a good-humoured, contemptuous tolerance of the foe.

Living in France these agonising months of Verdun, I felt always tragically pitiful for the French, and sometimes uncertain as to what the end of the war would show. Now in England there is no uncertainty. These people cannot be beaten.

But perhaps when they have won they will want to give back to the Boche all the spoils of the war.

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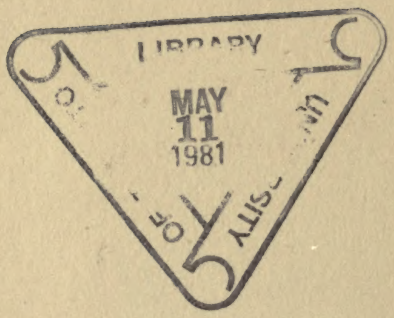
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