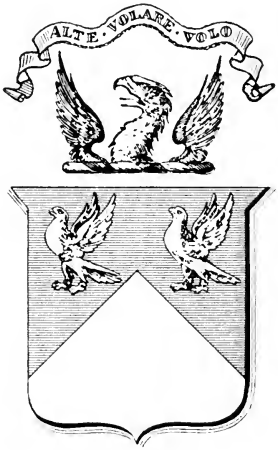

WORKSHOPS OF DESTRUCTION

WORKSHOPS OF DESTRUCTION

BY

HAROLD BEGBIE

LONDON: GEORGE NEWNES, LTD.
SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, W.C.

HENRY MORSE STEPHENS

To ———

Of all my friends I know not one
In tone, in form, in hue,
So quite unlike a frothing Hun,
My brilliant friend, as you.

And there you sit by Britain's sword,
And lend to dreadful strife
A mind that from its youth adored
The lovely things of life.

But all our chiefs I saw in France,
Great servants of the King,
Had something of your gentle glance,
And just your modest ring.

Then let us hope Strength does not need
To last thro' storm and stress,
The tantrums of a child, the creed
Of Hate and Frightfulness.

I love to think, as with the tides
Down old Whitehall I pass,
No eagle on your desk presides,
But flowers in a glass.

CONTENTS

"What would happen . . . if the moral effort of humanity should turn in its tracks at the moment of attaining its goal, and if some diabolical contrivance should cause it to produce the mechanisation of spirit instead of the spiritualisation of matter? There was a people predestined to try the experiment . . . .

". . . the moral forces, which were to submit to the forces of matter by their side, suddenly revealed themselves as creators of material force. A simple idea, the heroic conception which a small people had formed of its honour, enabled it to make head against a powerful empire. At the cry of outraged justice we saw, moreover, in a nation which till then had trusted in its fleet, one million, two millions of soldiers suddenly rise from the earth. A yet greater miracle: in a nation thought to be mortally divided against itself all became brothers in the space of a day. From that moment the issue of the conflict was not open to doubt. On the one side there was force spread out on the surface; on the other there was force in the depths. On one side, mechanism, the manufactured article which cannot repair its own injuries; on the other, life, the power of creation which makes and re-makes itself at every instant."

HENRI BERGSON.

WORKSHOPS OF DESTRUCTION

CHAPTER I

The Task Ahead: An Introduction

You will have noticed in all the recent utterances of the Kaiser, his statesmen, and his emissaries, and in all the propaganda articles of the chief newspapers of the German Empire—with the honourable exception of Herr Harden's journal—that this war is declared to be a war *forced upon Germany*.

Now, this is not merely a ridiculous point of view; it is the abandonment by the Kaiser and by the entire German nation of any title to respect which they might have presented at the bar of history.

Consider how formidable and perhaps how eternal a figure the German Kaiser might have been in the eyes of posterity. For he would most certainly have fascinated the ages and absorbed the attention of historians had he but frankly proclaimed from the very outset of the war that manifest fact which unimportant German professors have proclaimed, in sadly transi-

tory works, for the last fifteen or twenty years. But instead of bestriding the world in the robe of Alexander or Napoleon, this little German Kaiser sidles his way into the attention of mankind clothed in the contemptible garments of a Pecksniff or a Chadband. "The Day" comes, but not the Man. Instead of truth, he has chosen hypocrisy. Instead of bringing down his foot, he has turned up his eyes. The mailed fist, hammering on the iron gates of destiny, unclenches to disclose a thimble and a pea. He does not thunder; he snivels.

We could find a defence for the German War Lord, and at least a philosophical justification for the inhuman brutalities of the German armies, if from the very outset of the war the actual and staring truth had been unequivocally proclaimed from Berlin. For is it not a magnificent ambition to desire the conquest of the world, and a magnificent faith to believe oneself capable of that conquest? The truth of Germany strikes me as one of the finest things in history; it is the lie of Germany which makes her despicable and odious. The truth of Germany is Germany's faith in her character, Germany's faith in her strength, Germany's faith in her power to conquer the world, and in her ability to exercise overlordship. But this truly superb truth of Germany is hidden up and covered

over as a guilty and a shameful thing by the little Kaiser, while he hastily springs to his feet and whines to the world the lie which will be his everlasting disgrace and the main cause of his eternal ridicule.

Let us look for a moment at the fair truth of Germany, since it will help us more than anything else to prepare ourselves for the future conduct of this terrific war and to face its consequences.

The German believes in despotism. He despises the idea of democracy. But his scheme of government is in many particulars more Socialistic than the Governments of democratic countries. Everything is done by an aristocratic despotism to increase the physical and intellectual efficiency of the German democracy. Government looks after that democracy with a grandmotherly care, a stockbreeding anxiety, and a scientific persistency of purpose. It may be said that the whole system of German government aims at the greatest efficiency of the greatest number of its citizens. It is so entirely different from our system of *laissez-faire,* of individualism, and wasteful brawling between political parties, of which we are so proud, that only a few people in England perceive the Socialistic character and tremendous efficiency of German despotism.

With their contempt for the accidental and make-

shift character of democratic systems, the Germans naturally nourish a supreme faith in their own aristocratic system; and they have many and very tangible proofs of its exceeding virtue. They see that a mighty democracy can be organised, drilled, and disciplined into a state of perfect efficiency, both for war and industry; and they see that this democracy can likewise be organised, drilled, and disciplined into such a condition of absolute loyalty, contentment, and patriotism that it will fight to the death, singing songs of the Fatherland, to hold its own against the enmity of a world in arms. They have degraded discipline till it breeds docility. What more natural, then, than the desire for empire and the passion for conquest? Surrounded by nations whose various forms of government it heartily despises, keeping itself hard and vigorous, subduing in all things the individual will to the safety of the commonwealth, and growing with amazing rapidity in material prosperity—what more natural than the policy to strike down its threatening enemies one by one, and set up in the centre of Europe a benevolent despotism which it honestly believes would advantage the whole world?

This is the truth, and at least it is magnificent. Do not let us be led into the fog of delusion by the easy garrulity of those who mock the German for

his bombastic utterance and dub him mad for his ambition. The German offends all people of good breeding and saddens all people conscious of the spiritual life; but as an animal, as a man who relies on brain-cunning and arm's strength, he is as fine a creature as the world has seen. Try to be rid of prejudices in your mind; try to forget his dreadful manners, his distressing deportment, his complete failure to make himself a gentleman; and endeavour to see him as animal man, as a creature using his brain, as a mortal set on mortal efficiency, as a being to whom the science of life, rather than the beauty and graces of life, is, not a passion, but a definite objective: see him thus, and you must admit that this modern German is one of the mightiest figures that has yet appeared on the world's stage.

His megalomania is justified by his virtues. He alone of all the peoples on earth has so organised a highly intelligent democracy that it has become not only the efficient but the willing weapon of aristocratic despotism. And but for the accidents of diplomacy, I can see no reason for doubting the feasibility of the German dream. If England had remained neutral, France would certainly have fallen before the German sword. Belgium and Holland, obviously, must have submitted to the War Lord. And after

Russia, England. There is really no reason for accusing the German of madness. His supreme mistake was the mistake of his diplomacy. With England neutral, Germany might have come very near to world-mastery in fifty years.

This ambition, although it shocks our sense of humanity, is at any rate a great and a magnificent ambition. Napoleon had sunk into insignificance before the Kaiser if the Kaiser had possessed the courage of his purpose and had announced with all the moral fervour of which he is capable his determination to conquer the world for the good of the world. No more formidable figure could have been imagined in the pages of history. Men would have spoken of him for ever as the ancient Greeks spoke of their gods. The whole world, even did it continue to bow the knee before Christ, would for ever have raised eyes of admiration to this colossal Emperor.

But behold the destructive power of a lie! Instead of a figure at once magnificent and terrible, at once majestic and awful, we can scarcely prevent ourselves from laughter, and laughter of the most bitter and contemptuous kind, as we contemplate this Colossus shrunk and diminished to the wriggling exiguousness of a cheat, a liar, and a hypocrite. By his attempt to hoodwink the world, the German Kaiser has covered

himself with everlasting obloquy. For ever after, so long as the world lasts, men will look upon him with amusement and disdain, seeing him as the minnow that would blow the horn of Triton, the frog that would puff itself to the proportions of the ox, the Tappertit who would wear the sovran mantle of Jove. Moreover, it will be impossible for any historian of consequence, any historian of European reputation, to defend this gamin strutting on the stilts of Alexander against a definite charge of lying and hypocrisy. What a fate for an Emperor! What an end to world-conquest! The documents are already on the table, and the documents that come from Berlin to maintain the German cause are marked with the emendations, evasions, and suppressions of the practised cheat and the shameless forger. William II., standing for the great German nation, is proved by the overwhelming and authentic facts of the case to be, first, a small man and no hero, and, second, to be a charlatan—and a shabby charlatan at that. One wonders if he never shudders at the thought of his place in history.

It is this failure of the Kaiser to realise his destiny which betrays to us the chink in Germany's shining armour. In spite of his thoroughness, in everything he attempts the German is *almost but not quite*. Germany falls into ruin because the tricks of the bag-

man have corrupted the original ferocity of the Hun. The German wants to be frightful, and has all the capacity to be frightful; but in a corner of his Berseker conscience there hides a sneaking fear of what his victims will say about him. He sets out to conquer the world, but ends in grotesque effort to diddle the world. He is almost a fury, but becomes before he has finished a worm writhing on a hook. At one moment he holds mankind at gaze by his incomparable valour and reckless brutality; at the next, he stirs the disgust of men by his unctuous hypocrisy. If he could have lived up to the spirit of that ferocious phrase of his about hacking a way through Belgium, how tremendous for the world might have been the consequences, how immortal his greatness throughout the ages; but what can men say of him when at the very moment which sees him checked in this heroic process of hacking through, he begins at once to whine a lie, to falsify documents, and to froth at the mouth with hymns of hate? You cannot be both Nero and Uriah Heep. You cannot hunt with the Hun and squat with the Quietist. But the German thinks he can do anything. He is convinced that he can be in two minds. He would be an eagle but he must be also a peacock.

Where lies the chief fallacy in the German soul?

It is Egoism developed beyond the reach both of self-criticism and ridicule. One sees it, I think, clear, vulgar, and horribly offensive, in the Kaiser's baffling piety. He is quite unable to perceive the incongruity of his attempt to follow Christ on a gun-carriage. When a man rather loudly calls himself a disciple of Christ and proclaims himself in the same breath a War Lord, when the whole life of this praying and preaching man is devoted with a staggering immodesty to shaking his mailed fist in the face of other nations and to the perfecting of the most terrible machinery of destruction the world has ever known, and when he does not see that this character and work of his life is not merely incongruous with and inappropriate to the religion of Christ, but absolutely its most satanic and iniquitous antithesis, must we not conclude that there is that in his brain which does not go with perfect sanity? The Kaiser is mad, but only mad with an intense egoism beyond the reach of humour. And thus it is with the entire German people. They are simple, virtuous, and gentle in their homes; but never was Jew more contemptuous of other peoples than the Germans of other nations. They speak of their Kultur, but announce themselves as Huns to the rest of mankind. And they cannot see that this horrible attitude towards other nations is

destructive of their own homekeeping virtues. They do not realise that Culture is universal and that they are merely a part of the human race. They worship no Infinite and Everlasting God, but follow a tribal deity whose massacres of other nations are the main dogmas of their faith and the sole reason of their worship. They are parochial, petty, provincial, and narrow. They are excellent, but excellent in a suburban villa. In a word, their patriotism is their prison. Possessed of virtues which should endear them to all the world, these people have grown to be the most loathed and despised of the nations. "It is not this or that particular point," Professor Eucken himself has said, "that has put us at discord with our opponents; but our whole national and political entity has become an offence to them." And it has become an offence to other nations because of the intolerable affront of German Egoism. Glory has come to these strange people, but it has failed to ennoble them. They have made themselves a great Power, but no nation wishes to be their friend, and no people will trust their word. They are amiable only to themselves because they love only themselves. They are hated by all because they hate all. And they remain provincial even with an empire which threatens the world because they are self-satisfied.

"It will always be the same," a German officer said to a British officer; "you will always be fools, and we shall never be gentlemen."

Let us be certain of this, that before so vast, tremendous, and close-welded a Power as the German Empire topples to its ruin, the world must endure even more suffering than has yet agonised the heart of existence. If at the last Germany has just that sufficiency of truth left in her to tear off the mask of assaulted innocence, if she turns upon her assailants in the fury of the knowledge of a burked and frustrated ambition, let us be sure that she will fight and plot and conspire with all the violence of madness and all the venomous cunning of vindictive spite, to bring down with her in this ruinous fall the whole temple of civilisation.

CHAPTER II

The British Way

Out of sound of the great guns the wheels of the machinery of war are turning smoothly, silently, relentlessly, day and night, week after week, month after month, without ceasing and without violence.

Very perfect is this mechanism of death—so perfect, indeed, that one loses all sense of its purpose. It is only by an effort, and in solitude, that one realises the awful meaning of those grinding wheels. As one stands beside the workers, who are cheerful and proud of their manifest efficiency, the smooth whirr of the wheels ministers to national pride, purring of the British gift for management, the British way of doing things. Only when one is alone does it flash into the mind that all this perfection of organisation is directed to the work of destruction—that it signifies the mowing down of beautiful forests, the trampling into mud of gentle pastures, the smashing of villages

and towns, the wounding and killing of human bodies, the crushing of love, the widowing of women, the spear of anguish in the hearts of children, the arrest of life.

Less real even than this is the muddied soldier with his rifle at his shoulder, his finger on the trigger, his feet in slush, the wind cutting at his face, the snow beating on his eyes, the roar of the guns crashing over his head. He, the poor actual combatant, seems a person of no real importance in this tremendous conflict. One does not merely think little about him; one forgets him. It is here in these British workshops of destruction, here in these French ports, along these French rivers, and on these French roads now swarming with the British, it is here one feels that the real war is being waged, that the real and ultimate issue is moving to decision. So wonderful is this mechanism of destruction, and so vast the area over which it has now spread itself, that one is almost immediately conscious on landing in France of a quite new and wholly unrealised aspect of war. Fighting is a small thing, so it seems, in comparison with the management of the fighters.

It is said over and over again that this is a war of attrition. It is not said sufficiently often that it is a war of business, a war which will be won by good

management. In England I used to read the newspapers for news from the trenches; I used to discuss with the military expert questions of strategy; never once did I attempt to visualise the business side of war, never once did it definitely occur to me that this business side of war is of decisive importance. And now, in France, I scarcely glance at the various *communiqués*. I meet men fresh from the trenches and ask them hardly a question. All my attention is absorbed by these workshops—these places in France where the British managers of war have planted themselves and where the wheels of destruction are revolving night and day with a precision, a silence, and a monotony which almost stun the mind.

To realise this side of war you must first of all possess yourself of the fact that the tiny place in the fighting line now occupied by the British troops is a place also exceeding tiny in relation to the parts of France in which the British managers of war have pitched their camp. This is to say that without even once hearing the rattle of rifles or the thunder of artillery you may motor for days and days through France and see so many Britons on the roads and in the towns and villages that you might be pardoned for thinking yourself still in the British Isles. We occupy so thoroughly and so efficiently this enormous

area of France that some not very imaginative Germans, it is said, are attempting to create suspicion and jealousy in the minds of the French as touching our ultimate purpose.

"You will never get rid of these English," said a German to a Frenchman; "they will stick to your ports, they will hold your towns, they will refuse to go when the war is over; you will see!" To which the acute Frenchman made answer, "But I thought you were going to win?"

It is the thoroughness of our occupation which has made this accusation possible; and it is our thoroughness in this respect which seems to me the surest sign of our victory. Until I came to France and saw what the British have done and are still doing at each base and along all the lines of communication, I had never formed in my mind a clear notion of our main national characteristic. I have travelled through India, and have admired the British way of governing that vast Empire to the best advantage of its various peoples; I have travelled through Canada, and have seen how the British way of doing things makes for liberty and progress; but until I saw here in France how, out of nothing and in the flight of a few weeks, the British have set up a most perfect machinery of war, and are now, without undue

stress and certainly without the smallest apprehension of the final result, preparing for the mightiest advance of British troops known to our history, I really had no clear notion of what I call our main national characteristic—the genius for good management, the genius for doing things of enormous magnitude without fuss, without boastfulness, without any serious mistake.

Let me tell you before I proceed to describe what I have seen of this management of war how the wheels of destruction run side by side with the wheels of mercy and salvation. At a certain British base, where I called upon the Brigadier-General in command, when our conversation was at an end, he opened a door, passed through a room where his typist was tapping the keys of a typewriter, and entered another room where another typist was also hard at work, and where an officer was speaking through the telephone. This officer, to whom the General presented me, was a Colonel of the Royal Army Medical Corps, the officer in local command of the health of the troops, the hospitals, the convalescent camps, and all the medical side of the war. As we talked together the sound of the two typewriters clashed against each other—the one carrying the General's orders, the other the orders of the

Colonel; and the two men facing each other, smiling and talking as companions in arms, were men engaged in tasks absolutely opposed to each other, the one seeking how he might perfect the work of destruction, the other how he might perfect the work of mercy and salvation. Next door to each other, then, these two men work at their posts. The one is sending men as swiftly as possible to the fighting line; the other bringing wounded men back as gently as possible to the hospitals. The one is busy seeing that every man who arrives from England is perfectly equipped with the weapons of destruction; the other that every man who comes down from the fighting line is relieved of pain and made whole as swiftly as science and human care can accomplish. All day the typewriters of these two men are clacking next door to each other.

And then, side by side with the immense machinery, there are very small but very wonderful little engines of kindness humming a music all their own. One meets here and there ladies who work night and day to provide arriving and departing troops with coffee and food, societies like the Young Men's Christian Association and the Salvation Army, who labour to ease the hardships of our soldiers in various ways, and then there are the chaplains working always

with heroic devotion; so that while the mind is tremendously impressed by War Office organisation, it is continually conscious of refreshment and relief in encounters with people inspired by feelings of the purest humanity.

But I really do not know whether these self-sacrificing workers and the officers of the R.A.M.C. are one whit more humane in their natures than the British soldiers wholly engaged in the work of destruction. I said something to an officer about wars in the future. He exclaimed immediately: "Do you think, after this, that anyone will ever take a war on again?"—and his face expressed the liveliest horror. They say to you, "It's a beastly business, but we've got to go through with it." The other day a doctor fell in with a British soldier whose blood was maddened by what he had seen of German treatment of our wounded men. "Do you know what I mean to do," he demanded, "when I come across one of their wounded? I mean to put my boot in his ugly face." The doctor replied: "No, you won't; it's not in your nature. I'll tell you what you will do—you'll give him a drink out of your water-bottle." To which the soldier, after a pause in which he searched the doctor's face, made grumbling and regretful answer: "Well, maybe I shall."

And it is most necessary to remember that the heads of the British Army working so triumphantly at the back of the trenches are very certain that their work of destruction is consecrated by the spirit of freedom, justice, and righteousness. They are cheerful and gallant-hearted, not because they love war, but because they are destroying the enemy of peace. I have not met one man in authority who spoke of this war with the language of bluster and the swagger of a swashbuckler. For the most part they are men of silence and reserve, quiet men, modest, thoughtful, and gentle-mannered. I have been struck again and again by the gentleness of these men who are organising a wholesale destruction of life with an efficiency that at once thrills and appals. And when one talks to them, one finds that they are convinced of the justice of their cause, that they are out to destroy, only to preserve what is infinitely precious to them: that the German to the British officer is everything dreadful, everything offensive, everything inimical and perilous. The cheerfulness which characterises their work comes from this conviction in their minds, and they labour with real enthusiasm, absolutely rejoicing in their toil, because to beat Germany is to defeat the enemy of the human race.

Therefore, in all I have to say, and in particular

concerning the eternal contrast between the work of the soldier and the work of the surgeon, let it be always borne in mind that the soldier is really and definitely inspired by the glorious idea of justice. I have never heard one of them speak of German atrocities; I have never heard one of them question the right of the German to make war in any way which he thinks may get him the victory; but quietly and with an unexpressed delight, not often saying a word on the subject, they give one the feeling that their work is a joy to them because it has right and justice on its side.

This spirit of cheerfulness manifests itself everywhere, but not in the manner of which we heard so much at the beginning of the war. You do not now see a British soldier minus buttons and badges; no cries of "Vive l'Angleterre!" ring through the streets of cities; in certain places you might think that our presence in France was almost resented. A French lady, not unnaturally annoyed by the rather noisy behaviour of some British soldiers on the quays at Boulogne, said to them somewhat sharply, "You seem to think that this town belongs to you." "No, ma'am, we don't think that," replied a man of the Army Service Corps; "but what we do think is this —that if it wasn't for us it wouldn't belong to you."

It is worth while noticing this slight and occasional difference of opinion between some French people and ourselves. There is not, of course, the least danger in the matter, but it is something to be acknowledged and dealt with in a spirit of friendly candour.

Now, it is the very perfection of our organisation which has occasioned this trouble. You have only to reflect for a moment to realise that the handling of vast numbers of men in a foreign country, if it is thoroughly done, must of necessity prove a formidable obstacle to the commercial and domestic life of that country. We occupy ports, and the shipping of our ally is thrown out of gear. We demand so many trains a day, and the railway traffic of our ally is seriously interrupted. We need buildings, we need land; and, although we pay handsomely for these things, still the general life of our neighbours is at least inconvenienced by these constant and growing demands. Then there are minor troubles. Young officers not yet inspired by the traditions of the British Army are apt, quite unintentionally, to offend people by their manners; or the numerous unpaid workers attached to the Army, swarming into teashops and taking possession of those places, are somewhat of an irritation to French ladies who enter with their parcels

and find no place where they can sit. Some of these French people say that we are making war too luxuriously, that if we did not feed our soldiers so absurdly well we should not need so many docks, so many trains, so many workers to look after them; and they argue that if their trade is not fostered and developed, for which docks and railways are essential, their ability to pay for the war will be seriously crippled.

Against this perfectly rational and entirely fair criticism of a few individual French people we must set the British point of view. The British authorities say that the numbers of men which they can place in the field must be governed by the dock and railway facilities which the French can place at their disposal; that having their own way of conducting a war, which, if a lavish way, is at any rate a masterfully efficient way, they cannot make it in another way which does not seem to them likely to be so efficient. They regret the inconvenience caused to French trade, they do their very utmost to restrict that inconvenience to a minimum; but the chief thought in their minds is, and must be, how best to help drive the Germans out of France, how soonest to make an end of this horrible war which has interrupted not only French trade, but the trade of the whole world.

In the chapters which follow the reader will make acquaintance with the marvellous efficiency of British organisation, and will therefore readily understand how occasionally inconvenient our presence in France must be to the French commercial classes. We must all sympathise with France in this difficulty, and all do our very best to smooth away the rough edges of the inconvenience. At the same time France will honour and respect us the more if we continue to wage war in our own deadly way, and to insist on those facilities which are necessary to its prosecution. That our soldiers have handled this part of their business so ably, so thoughtfully, and so diplomatically is one of the feathers they are entitled to wear in their caps, is one admirable achievement to their credit.

It is more difficult to make war in the country of an ally than in the country of an enemy.

CHAPTER III

At the Base

FRANCE, who has made such great sacrifices in this war, looks on with astonishment as the British pile up on French soil their preparations for an absolute victory.

Imagine to yourself what it must mean to France, whose four or five million soldiers are drawn from every class, whose ordnance workers are toiling night and day for the same wage as the soldiers, to wit, a halfpenny a day, whose trade is almost at a standstill, whose loss in the flower of her manhood is already incalculable—that young manhood so full of beautiful promise, which was devoted to sport, fair living, and the simple pleasures of a clean domestic life—imagine to yourself what it must mean to this romantic, heroic, and self-sacrificing France, not only to watch our prodigal preparations for war, but to hear that the rich workmen of Great Britain threaten to strike for an extra farthing an hour.

We cannot, of course, change our way of doing things to ease the feelings of the French, but it is truly of the highest importance that we should recognise the magnificent spirit of France, and seek by every means in our power to share her sorrows, and, so far as we can, to shoulder her burdens. In this book, which attempts to describe the British way of doing things, I shall not be able to repress the enthusiasm which the preparations of our War Office have created in my mind; and I must be honest and say that the British way of doing things seems to me, on the whole, better than the French way of doing things; but I beg the reader to carry in his mind the thought which is now never absent from my own, that in comparison with the tremendous sacrifices of our faithful and heroic friends the French, our sacrifices, great and terrible as they are, must appear in the eyes of a just man as the branch to the bough or as the little finger to the whole hand. We are both fighting, remember, the one for the other. But for us Germany would have driven her sword into the very heart of France; and but for the French, Germany would now be threatening our whole commerce from the coasts of France. We are not fighting for the French more than the French are fighting for us. It is for us as great a matter that Germany should be driven out of

France as it is for France that Germany should be hurled out of Belgium. Never should an Englishman think for a single moment that he has made sacrifices for France. It is only a geographical accident that has made France the field of battle, and it is this accident which causes her such inexpressible anguish and sets us free—we, who are Germany's chief enemy —to pursue our normal life.

This said, let me endeavour to bring before the reader's eye, if only in blurred outline, something of the marvels of our British workshops of destruction here in France.

To begin with, the most notable characteristic of our work is the air of permanency which marks it so decisively that a crazy German might almost be pardoned for hinting that we intend to remain in the country. There is nothing in this work which is makeshift or sloven. Take, for example, the docks. Our ships enter the ports of France, make fast alongside the quays, and by the aid of derrick and crane discharge with extraordinary quickness the cargoes brought from England. These various goods are loaded into motor lorries, trucks, Indian mule carts, and are trundled away, some direct to the front and some to sheds in the docks. In one case, at a certain port I motored through a French hangar which was

three-quarters of a mile long, and it was piled from floor to ceiling with provisions for our troops. But the accommodation of these French docks is not sufficient for the British War Office. The food and clothing of our soldiers must be preserved from the risks of the open air, not a trenching tool or a bundle of forage must be left on the quayside under a tarpaulin; and so we are building in every direction storing sheds of corrugated iron—large, solid and lasting sheds which are the admiration of the French.

You will get some idea of the immense work which is being carried on behind the firing line when you learn that something like two thousand tons of goods are sent every day from the base depots to the front. This enormous weight of goods comes almost entirely from England, for we are not buying in France even so perishable a necessity as milk. Vast stores, then, are brought from England and loaded into sheds at the base depots. All day by motor-lorry and railway trucks supplies for the troops are sent out from these base depots to stores as near as possible to the firing line. And just as reserves are accumulated in the docks, so reserves are accumulated near the front, since an accident to the railways might cut off the fighting soldiers' supplies. On one occasion there was

a delay on the railways of thirty-six hours, but not only did the soldier at the front get all his food and ammunition, but he did not even have to draw on the reserves I have mentioned; regimental stores were sufficient for his need. Everything goes by clockwork. There is not room for an accident.

Work such as this calls for a very considerable body of workers, and accommodation has to be found for the workers as well as for the stores. The Army has been equal to this task. I have seen few things more cunning and adventurous than the trick by which a huge bare shed in one of the docks has been converted into a model lodging-house. With a few battens this masterly trick has been accomplished. You enter the shed and look down a long central aisle, battened on either side almost to the girders of the roof, giving the effect of pens in a poultry show. Through openings in these battens you enter large cubicles, with bunks one above the other like the berths in a ship's cabin. Over this, by a pent-house method, reached by a staircase of battens, is a balcony off which the whole plan below is repeated. This one shed on the docks, by the method thus employed, is made to house most comfortably over a thousand workers; and from end to end, and from

floor to ceiling, it is kept most rigorously fresh and clean. A detail of Army thoroughness is the grenade at every few paces for the extinguishing of fire. And the whole of it is to be coated first with an insect-proof solution, and after with a fire-proof paint.

To stand on the quayside, with a great company of British and Indian soldiers, watching the ships discharge their cargoes—all of them unloaded almost entirely by British labour—is to realise more than any table of figures can express the really tremendous business of conducting a modern war on British lines. You see, for example, endless carcasses of animals sewn up in cloth swinging from the ends of cranes and rattling down on the cobbles of the docks; farther along, the cranes are loading the quays with tins of biscuits, cases of groceries, boxes of grapes for the hospitals, and cases of brandy and rum; farther along still you see high in the air, dangling from the end of a crane, and looking absurdly small, a motor lorry or a motor-car; and farther along still there are cases of rifles, ammunition, the parts of heavy guns, saddlery, and uniforms. The British and the Indian soldiers, the last with wrappings over their turbans and bits of cloth like soiled towels round their necks, assist an army of dock labourers to clear away all

these various things from the quays, and bear them off to the sheds. And as you make a tour of these sheds, filled with every conceivable kind of provision, all in brand-new boxes of white deal, and all arranged with the most perfect precision and neatness, you are tempted to wonder whether this war is not a Titanic festivity, a picnic of luxury, abundance, and superfluity. But you come presently to a shed filled from end to end with many of these same luxurious things broken up, smashed, muddied, and infectious—these same things brought back from the trenches and accumulated here as part of the Army's scheme, part of the British way of doing things.

It is not easy to describe the sadness of this particular shed. Its atmosphere has something of the depression of a cheap lodging-house, but the silence of it is like no other silence that I know—a silence at once dead and living, dead with the sense of the end of things and living with the sense of eternal mourning. You walk warily, for the poor tattered khaki piled up in enormous heaps is not merely covered with mud and slush from the trenches, but it has not yet been passed through the process of purification. Imagine the effect made by this silent shed of ruin and decay when I tell you that it is 150 yards long and 50 yards wide, and when you consider that it is

crowded in every part, and stacked high up almost to the roof with such things, each in their separate heaps, as blankets, stirrup-irons, bayonets, web-beltings, haversacks, boots, trousers, tunics, head-gear, saddles, bits, horse-shoes, bridles, and trenching tools—all of them marked with the signs of ruin. In a heap of dank tunics I saw a broken piece of Army biscuit, crumbling at one corner, spotted with mud at another.

All this vast rubbish-heap is in charge of a few men who pick the things over and decide what can be repaired and what must be sold or destroyed. There is little waste, and many of the things now piled in confusion will emerge from the process of repair almost as good as new. The first impression made by this storehouse of ruin is one of quite irreparable disaster, but on close examination one discovers that many of the things gathered together under this sombre roof witness more to the carelessness of the British soldier than to the ravages of war. All the same, one is glad to be out of that shed, breathing once more the fresh air of the sea.

I was taken to a workshop where the engines of our aeroplanes are repaired. It was Sunday, and the young officer in charge, a fresh-faced boy, explained

to me that the men were just then knocking off work to make ready for church parade. He left me for a few moments in charge of a sergeant-major. This sergeant-major, in pointing out a propeller which had been sent down from the front for repair, said to me: "If one of the blades is the least bit out of the true, it causes what we call propeller flutter, and spoils everything."

It occurred to me that this whole war, with its devastation, agony, and everlasting loss to the human race, might be described as one vast propeller flutter, shaking the earth, loosening the foundations of society, and spoiling everything, just because, and only because, the science of life is out of the true. To go through the workshops of destruction, to see the beauty and orderliness of the organisation, to discuss the business of war with ardent and cheerful British officers, to hear the smooth-spinning wheels purring their music of an absolute efficiency—this is to be carried away by admiration and enthusiasm; but to go into the repairing sheds, to look upon the *débris* of the army, and to visit the hospitals, this is to hate war and to realise with a most acute sharpness of perception that of all things urgent and necessary to human life truth is the most urgent and the most necessary.

This war, as I think can be shown later on, is likely to bring more problems and confusions to humanity than most people have yet contemplated. And it will certainly come again, smiting death and ruin on every side, unless the democracies of the world make up their minds to have done with all false doctrines and fond delusions, fixing their eyes upon truth, and determining themselves to order the affairs of this earth in accordance with right reason and the Will of God. But until I come to that halt in my travels, let me leave in the mind of the reader the sense of admiration for the work of the British War Office, which, working here in a foreign country, has so organised the business of destruction that from all the ports which they occupy on the French coast right up to the snow-bound and water-logged trenches, where our soldiers endure with a sublime cheerfulness the hardships and horror of modern war, not one momentary hitch, not one even temporary dislocation occurs in the smooth working of supplies.

These generals and colonels and majors and captains whom one encounters all over France, in spite of the scarlet bands round their caps and the ribbons on their breasts, are not so much fighting men as business men—and business men of remarkable

ability. In Whitehall, no doubt, sit the two or three directing minds of this tremendous organisation, but how insoluble would be the difficulties of those two or three but for the devotion and ability of soldiers on the quays of France and all along the wind-torn, rain-drenched lines of our communications.

CHAPTER IV

Making Ourselves at Home

NOTHING that I have seen, after motoring all through the considerable section of France which serves as the base of the British Army, suggests the early accounts which we read in our newspapers of Thomas Atkins's popularity with the French.

The day has certainly gone by when our troops marched minus buttons and badges through a living avenue of glad faces, the welkin ringing with shouts of "Vive l'Angleterre!" the hands of hospitality extended on either side with wine and fruit and flowers. Mr. Atkins has so successfully established himself as Monsieur Atkins that no Frenchman now would dream of feeling even curious about him. One sees him in the towns and villages where our camps are pitched, wandering about as forlorn as any French foot-soldier, a cigarette leaning downwards from loose lips, an expression of settled boredom on his face, a

rather distressing carelessness in the matter of his general appearance. The fact is that among the Normans with whom he chiefly lives there are shrewd people who cannot resist the temptation to make a few sous of extra profit out of the British legions. Thomas Atkins, having discovered that he has been charged more than the usual price for the articles he buys from shopkeeper and camp hawker, is in a mood of some disgust with life. The rest of France, when you tell them of this matter, exclaim angrily, "Ah, those Normans—they are terrible!" and Thomas Atkins, learning to be as sharp as those who prey upon him, dismisses these people in one swooping and inclusive judgment which lends itself neither to print nor to translation. He is not making friends with his immediate neighbours; that at least is certain. And the rest of France, which loves Thomas Atkins, does not blame him.

Strangely enough, this separation extends, but only from the cause of a different language, to the French Army. I have seen very little evidence of our alliance, of our *entente cordiale,* in the case of French and British soldiers; indeed, the officers and the men of both armies appear to be as separate from each other as the coasts of the two countries. One enters the lounge of an hotel, and finds British officers sitting

together and French officers sitting together; they pass each other, except in places like Paris, without greeting or salute. They glance at each other for a moment as they come in or go out, and there the matter ends; one sees nothing of friendship, not even of acquaintance.

I suppose the two peoples are now so accustomed to each other that curiosity is no longer possible, while real interest is frustrated by the inconvenience of a different language. But one could wish that there was a greater effort on both sides to improve acquaintance, and a more sustained endeavour to maintain the pleasant courtesies which ought to exist between two amiable nations allied in arms.

But Thomas Atkins, spreading himself over France, is a strange and notable figure. The good-natured French will forgive him, I am sure, for thinking that his way of doing things is much better than theirs, although this fixed idea of his inspires him with an almost gigantesque disdain for everything French. If you will believe it, he has taken to "showing off" before the French, putting such back into his British work that it is a perfect wonder to behold what he has achieved. Dumped down on a Slough of Despond, perched high up above a French city, and swept on every side by tempest, snow, hail, and rain, it has

not sufficed Thomas Atkins merely to pitch a tent and light a pipe, it has not sufficed him to do just what his officers tell him and nothing more; no, he has looked about him, and, to show these Frenchmen what he is made of, has raised in these desolate places monuments to his British nature—monuments of order, homeliness, comfort, and even beauty.

All the camps I have seen express this spirit, and are marked also by that appearance of permanence which characterises, as I have already remarked, the work of our soldiers in the docks. You will find in every camp excellently made roads, where, only a few weeks ago, was nothing but mud; and these roads, edged in many cases by white flints, are very often planted on either side with hedges, and shrubs, and trees. Enter one of these enormous camps, which you might justly expect to be the most desolate dwelling on the face of the earth, and you find that tents and huts are lighted by electricity, that water has been laid on, that shower-baths are erected, that recreation rooms are bright with pictures and decorations, that excellent kitchens are preparing meals fit for an alderman, that the mess huts are large and comfortable, that spaces are set apart for football and games—in short, that the whole thing is as settled as Aldershot and as orderly as Shorncliffe. Wherever

I have been, and I have seen many thousands of men in these numerous and huge camps, I have found trees, shrubs, and even flowers; in one case Thomas Atkins had converted the draining trench outside a tent into a pond, and on either side of the pond had made himself a rockery green with little plants.

One thing, perhaps, is enough to show you how thoughtfully our men have engineered these camps. It was seen in a certain case that carts and motor-lorries were tearing a road to pieces, a road which wound inconveniently from the town to the camp on the cliff-like hilltop. The British looked about them, and in a few days a funicular railway ran straight from the base of the hill to the camp on top. This single instance of thoroughness and ingenuity is only typical of the general thoroughness and ingenuity which characterise all the work of the British in France.

You may imagine some of the difficulties of these improvised camps when you remember that sanitation has to be provided not only for thousands of men but for thousands of horses as well. The manner in which these difficulties have been handled is beyond praise, and already provision is being made to guard against the least danger from flies when the summer comes. You discover as you go along that the British

Army is not merely administered by very able men but watched over most carefully by studious men of science.

To walk through these innumerable camps is to be impressed by a hundred details, but to realise the great extent of them it is necessary to motor away to some convenient distance for seeing them spread out in their entirety upon the face of the country. It is only then that you begin to comprehend the magnitude of the Army's achievement—seeing these huge British encampments as vast townships of wood and canvas, the fields about them occupied by thousands of men and horses, light railways and tram-lines serving their needs, roads lighted by electricity running through them, and hosts of men returning in all directions from their drills.

But it is not only in camp and in town that you find Thomas Atkins established in France. One day I was motoring through a blinding snowstorm fifteen miles from the last town, when a little stumpy figure in a long cloak descended from a vehicle in the distance and stood with arms extended in the road. When we pulled up we discovered that the vehicle was a motor-lorry, and that the man in the road was a British soldier. He grinned at us, and said in cheerful Cockney: "Have you got a can of petrol

you could spare us? Blest if I haven't used the last blooming drop in the tank"—and he laughed as if he had made an excellent joke. But this man was only one of many hundreds of British soldiers I have encountered in a fortnight of almost ceaseless motoring through these parts of France. You find them in villages and little towns, you find them on the roads, you see them leaning out of the carriages of passing trains, and you encounter them in desolate fields and on isolated hilltops. And as you come across them in this fashion you wonder how it is the Army contrives to keep its hold upon them all, supplying their needs, and turning their presence in France to the advantage of those invisible thousands of heroic men who are holding up the armies of Germany in trenches far away from these peaceful, happy fields, where the French peasants are ploughing and the French priest is teaching the children the religion of Galilee.

Again and again it is borne in upon the mind that the actual fighting is only a detail of War Office organisation. You find, for instance, in one town alone, and a town far away from the firing-line, 5,000 men permanently employed in the work of organisation. The British Army has its own telephone service and its own post-office. There are clerks and

servants to be looked after, as well as men with rifles. And the area covered by the British Army behind the trenches is almost a country in itself.

No wonder, then, that you meet Thomas Atkins everywhere, and that wherever you come across him he is hard at work. He has lost, I think, something of the smartness which characterises him at home; he has acquired, perhaps, something of the slouch and slackness of the French soldiers which so effectually disguise their extraordinary fighting qualities; he is no longer the close-cropped, spick-and-span, upright, and swift-walking Tommy Atkins of the London streets. Nevertheless, with his long hair, his unshaven chin, his unbuttoned tunic, and his cap at the back of his head, he is a worker of miracles, a brave man, and in the depths of his British heart a quiet, unperturbed, and considerate gentleman. Not once in all my journeyings have I seen a British private soldier in the very least intoxicated. I shall tell you in the next chapter how he behaves in hospital, and what his medical officers and great civil surgeons from England say about his moral qualities; for the present we must leave him wandering over the roads of France and making the best of winter quarters in the country of an ally whose language he has not

acquired and whose way of doing things does not inspire him with envy.

As one detail of Army organisation, let me tell you that at the headquarters of every British base in France a staff of men is required to deal with claims made by the country people against our troops. A farmer will say, for example, that the goats of an Indian regiment have so fouled a particular field that it will be impossible to sow cabbages in that region for three years; or the landlord of a house which we have converted into a hospital will claim damages for the improvements we have made in his property; and then there are innumerable assertions of injury done by British motor-cars to wagons, carts, barrows, pigs, sheep, and poultry. All these claims for compensation have to be examined at the headquarters of the Base Commandant, and it needs a sharp lawyer to deal with some of the claimants.

But all Frenchmen are not Normans, and all Normans are not avaricious; moreover Normandy, bear in mind, has not been stricken by war. From Paris to the trenches you will hear little but generous admiration expressed for the British soldier, and many acts of exquisite tenderness and beautiful sympathy are performed in secret by the people of those towns and villages towards our British dead. Marseilles,

too, loves the British soldier and has a very great respect for the Indians, whose behaviour is beyond praise. In Normandy, too, you find the Base Commandant and the local Mayor working together with the greatest amity. France, who holds eleven-twelfths of the fighting-line, and whose Army now is undoubtedly the finest Army she has ever placed in the field, knows and acknowledges the value of the British soldier. And the British soldier, when once he shakes off the tedium of camp-life, and forgets that he has been "had" by clever hawkers, becomes a worthy and a contented brother of the valorous French. If you would know the martial qualities of the French soldier, ask the British soldier who has fought by his side.

CHAPTER V

Repairs

THEY opened a door, and I saw a man lying on the operating table, orderlies and nurses at his side, the surgeon at work upon his body. He lowered a newspaper which he was reading and smiled at me. An anæsthetic injected into his spine had destroyed his capacity to feel pain.

A soldier lying in bed with a thick bandage over his head greeted me with a cheerful, almost a conceited, smile. He is a show case, and has reason to be proud of the simple fact that he is still alive. For six bullets had buried themselves in his head, and two of those bullets still remain there. Later, they showed me an X-ray photograph of the man's head. I saw the two bullets, black in the haze of the head's outline, one at the base of the skull, the other half an inch below the eye. He feels no pain.

War is horrible, devilish, and unutterably loath-

some, but I speak sober truth when I say that you see nothing of these abominations in a hospital. A military hospital is definitely one of the workshops of destruction, for it is a place where the bodies of men are repaired in order that they may go back as sharply as possible to the fighting line; but the feelings of humanity are too much for the full rigour of military necessities, and the broken bodies of men are patched up with a certain tenderness and with an absolute enthusiasm for success on the part of the repairers, whether they are ever likely to fight again or not. Thus it fortunes that a military hospital is a kind and restful place, breathing no atmosphere of war, gentle with the presence of women, and bright, hopeful stimulating with all the admirable delight of the doctors in the work of their science.

I was sitting one night in the lounge of a hotel with an eminent surgeon and an eminent bacteriologist. Both of them wore khaki, for they have given their services to the nation, but both are men of science belonging to civil life. All round us, on every side in the lounge of this hotel, were officers of the British Army, some of them elderly men, some of them boys of two-and-twenty, the place buzzing with the sound of their voices. The bacteriologist, glancing about him, said to the surgeon, "Here we are, you and

I, whose business it is to save life, in the midst of men whose business it is to destroy life." And a few minutes later the surgeon, as fine a man as you could wish to meet, was describing to us the funeral of a personal friend of his, a brave General whose life he had once saved by an operation and who had recently fallen a victim to a German bullet. He described how the mourners grouped themselves round the spade's fresh work in the earth, how the soldiers really rested on their reversed arms—for they loved the dead man—and then he said that, as the simple words of the burial service sounded like a strange music in the open air, the ripple of German musketry was a continuous obbligato, and at every 15 seconds the shattering bang of the heavy guns tore the grey air into ribbons, thundering even across the homage of the Last Post. The bacteriologist asked him: "What were you thinking of all that time?" The surgeon lifted his head and replied quickly and with restrained energy: "I was wishing all the time that my son was on my knee, that he might have seen it, that I might have told him what it meant." Then he added: "The boy is seven years old; at six weeks of age his name was put down for the Grenadier Guards; his grandfather won a V.C. He would have understood."

So you see that even these men whose business it is to save life have their enthusiasm for war. This surgeon detests war with all the passion of his idealistic nature: he abhors it as much as any rational man whose soul is absorbed in the work of peace societies; but when all that he holds to be of sovran urgency to mankind is at stake—liberty, righteous dealing, and faith in the pledged word—then he can conceive of no higher glory, no plainer duty, no deeper ecstasy than to be a fighter. "I must get back to the trenches," he said to me; and added, "Where else can a man wish to be at this time?"

If you would feel proud of your country, listen to a man like this who has looked the hideous havoc of destruction in the face, who has actually lifted with his delicate, sensitive hands, the shivering limbs and broken bodies of our soldiers, and who has given himself heart and soul to the work of the military hospitals —forsaking in England a practice probably unique in the world and a home in which he finds a supreme happiness—listen to him while he talks about our wounded men, and watch his eyes as he describes their superb courage. It is because of that superb courage, that unbreakable fortitude of our simple British soldier, that he cannot rest away from the trenches. To be there with his wonderful hands, to be there with

his unerring brain, to be there with all the strength of his wholesome body and all the devotion of his human soul, has now for him become the very breath of his nostrils. His eyes shine as he describes to you, speaking quickly and incisively, the endurance of the British soldier and his cheerful patience under pain. "There is nobody like him, nobody in the world," he says, with an emphasis that really rings with spiritual enthusiasm.

A doctor of the R.A.M.C., smoking his pipe through the wards of his hospital, his hands in his trousers' pockets, the ends of his jacket sticking out in front of him, said to me with the cheerful assurance of a very long acquaintance with soldier-men, "Tommy can bear anything, because he is a fatalist. It is his attitude towards life. It is his religion and philosophy. Whatever happens—well, it was bound to happen. No use to squeak. Grouse if you will, but don't whine. Things are what they are because they had to be just so. That's the British soldier." On every side of us, in every ward through which we passed, were men from the trenches, their sad eyes watching us as we walked along, their faces pale and thin, their heads or their limbs bandaged, in some cases their naked swollen feet exposed—for the pain of "a trench foot" cannot support a covering, how-

ever light. In one bed was a man very dreadfully yellow, whose face became contorted and whose head rolled on his pillow as we passed. I spoke about him to the doctor. "He is doing splendidly," was the answer. "Three weeks ago we thought we should lose him, but he'll get on all right." The man was suffering frightfully, but his teeth were set and no sound came from his lips.

These Army hospitals are places which inspire one with a very just admiration for the work of the R.A.M.C. I do not say, for I am not qualified to make any assertion on the subject, that the R.A.M.C. is as perfect from a doctor's point of view as it might be, or as science may yet make it in the near future; but at least one may say with confidence that as an example of organisation its work in France is probably without an equal in the world. Take, for example, the hospital to which I have just referred. It was a sugar-shed on the side of a French dock. In a few days, with the aid of carpenter and whitewasher, this sugar-shed was converted into as comfortable and complete a hospital as you could wish to find in London. There are operating theatres; a room for examination by X-rays; mess and recreation rooms for the orderlies; and wards capable of receiving many hundreds of patients. And you find flowers

in these wards, and there are scarlet blankets on the beds, scarlet screens at the doors, electric light overhead, excellent stoves, and, best of all, devoted, bright-faced nurses, willing to lay down their lives for Thomas Atkins.

In other parts of this same town you find that the Casino, hotels, and private houses have been converted into hospitals; and leaving this town you find that in the camps there are hospitals of tents or huts, all comfortable, all cheerful, and all administered by men and women who count no labour for the wounded soldier too great a call upon their strength. The great surgeon of whom I have spoken came from England with a prejudice against tents, his mind all but made up in favour of wooden huts; but he tells me that he is now converted to the view of the R.A.M.C., which is also the wounded soldier's view. And so you find these hospital tents everywhere you go—large and splendid tents opening one into another and warmed with stoves, lighted by electricity, and bright enough with the decorations which doctors, nurses, and patients contrive to place there.

This must be said in favour of the R.A.M.C.: not only have they organised their most difficult work with a quite extraordinary ability, and not only have their doctors and surgeons been successful, but they

have gratefully accepted, and with no feeling of umbrage at all, the services of those very eminent doctors and surgeons in civil life who are in France to help them. I was visiting a camp one day, and was invited to attend a lecture by Sir Almroth Wright on bacteriology, organised by Sir Berkeley Moynihan, which was to be attended by doctors of the R.A.M.C., with one of the most distinguished men of science in Paris taking part in the subsequent discussion. Think of it—a lecture on bacteriology in a British camp in France, in the midst of the most dreadful war ever known to history! And this is but one example of the cordial co-operation which exists between the civil and military. Sir Berkeley Moynihan has played the most noble and useful part in this co-operation, a service for which the whole nation can never be sufficiently grateful; and from every Army doctor I spoke to on the subject I heard nothing but expressions of appreciation for his quite magnificent work. I think there are few things more interesting in this war than the intense eagerness with which surgical science seeks to repair the hideous devastation of military science. And the fact that great surgeons of civil life have come to the aid of the R.A.M.C., whose surgeons, naturally, cannot have anything like the experience of their civil brethren, is a sign that

however long this war may last, and however terrible may be its devastation, wounded soldiers will at least find themselves succoured by the merciful hands of the highest science.

It is a curious thing, and one worth knowing, that the soldier wounded in the trenches very seldom experiences pain. There are doctors ready to give him morphia at once, but it is hardly ever necessary. He is borne on a stretcher to a first-aid post, examined and bandaged, and then transferred by ambulance to the nearest hospital. Here the examination is more careful, and if necessary an operation is performed; but as a rule the wounded man waits for full treatment until he is comfortably bedded in one of the base hospitals.

In the base hospital he lives like a prince, receives the most delicate and gentle treatment, and as soon as he is well enough goes to a convalescent camp, where he has nothing to do but get perfectly well.

How complete the contrast between trench and hospital! Not a man in the hospital will hang back when he is ordered to the front, not one of them will sham to be kept where he is; but for pity's sake do not expect them to be glad to go back. A foolish woman said to a wounded soldier: "Of course, you are longing to be back in the trenches?" To which

the man made answer, wearily turning his face to the wall, "Ask your common sense, lady." No, it is not in human nature that any man on this earth should wish to be back in the trenches; he would be an abortion of the human race, a monster of humanity who could wish to go back to that agonising inferno. But it is just because they so hate to go back, and do go back, their whole nature revolting from it, that the soldier is a man whose courage quickens the blood and thrills us with an admiration that almost rushes to the verge of worship.

Let this truth be known. Don't spread fantastic stories of a false and stagey heroism which deceive nobody. Is it not a call to every man in England that the wounded soldier, with his body repaired, his memory quick with the love and kindness of the hospital, and his whole nature clamorous for home, once more takes up his rifle, once more bids good-bye to those he loves, and once more sets off to face the German shells in Flanders?

Whether it be fatalism or whether it be a dull obedience to orders, let us do reverence to it, for the wounded man who goes back to that duty has in his heart at least something of the shadow of the courage of the Incarnation.

CHAPTER VI

The Angels

A GENERAL said to me, "I was clean against the franchise for women before the war; but if a woman was to ask me now to support that movement I should not be able to find it in my conscience to refuse. Women's work out here has been magnificent. I don't mean merely their courage and devotion; I mean their discipline, their common sense, their organisation. Take the Matron-in-Chief of the Army. She's perfectly splendid, she's wonderful, she's—she's—well, she's a soldier!"

That was his highest praise, and the lady's apotheosis. He went on to say, "If she were made Quartermaster-General, she'd work it, she'd run the whole Army; and she'd never get flustered, never make a mistake. The woman's a genius. We couldn't get on without her. And yet, if she went away, I'm pretty certain another woman would be

found to fill her place. Oh, they're wonderful. The whole thing has been an eye-opener for me. Women! —they're angels."

What most impressed me in the organisation of our British nurses was the entire absence of that picnic spirit not altogether absent from, sometimes very distressingly conspicuous in, other quarters. One of our Dominions, for instance, has sent a contingent of nurses who wear a uniform which would be agreeable enough in a revue at a music-hall—one might call it a feminine caricature of a staff-officer's home-service uniform—and it is truly a painful sight to see a body of these inappropriate ladies breathing the gaiety of their high-heeled spirits upon the smoke-laden atmosphere of a hotel lounge, surrounded by some of the officers of their own troops in attitudes which one associates with the sequestered twilights of a ball-room. French people talk about things of this kind, and I heard some very unpleasant, I hope they may have been untrue, remarks concerning a particular batch of these ladies. But I do not mention this matter to censure other people, only to emphasise the point I wish to make concerning our own people. You never see our British nurses in a situation which suggests philandering. Their uniform has nothing about it of the comic opera. They always appear to

have business on hand, serious, intellectual, and important business; and they are to be seen in great numbers going about this business in a manner which convinces one of their unquestioning allegiance to military discipline.

Their devotion to Tommy Atkins is typical of their whole spirit. While they admire him enormously, their attitude is mainly indulgent and maternal. That is to say, these bright, clever, and superior creatures regard Tommy Atkins as a child, and treat him as a child—a marvellously brave, admirable, and heroic child, but still a child. He must be an exceedingly green recruit who dares to tell one of these nurses an exaggerated story of the trenches—such a story as figures in the letters of Thomas Atkins to his less critical wife or his entirely uncritical mother.

"No sooner had we landed," wrote one Tommy from a peaceful British base, "than a German shell burst smack in the middle of us, taking the head clean off the man next to me, just as he was lighting his pipe." He was asked why he wrote such nonsense, and he replied that unless there was something spicy in his letters they wouldn't be read.

But the nurse knows the really superb side of Tommy Atkins better perhaps than anyone else con-

nected with the Army. One day I was visiting a hospital close to the sea, and entered a ward where a soldier badly wounded in the back was undergoing the painful ordeal of a dressing. It was so intensely cold that morning, so bitterly and piercingly cold, that I kept my coat on as I walked through the wards. And this soldier, who never whimpered or groaned, his forehead and cheeks drenched with sweat, said to the nurse at the end of the dressing, mopping the sweat away and breathing hard, "Ain't it just hot in here!"

But the courage of women is as great as the courage of the soldier. An Englishman was telling me about "that one frightful night" at Ypres, when German shells rained without cessation hour after hour upon the already battered town. "At last," he said, "the order was given for the French nuns to leave the wounded and retire to Poperinghe. They begged the authorities to be allowed to stay, some of them indeed refused to go; but in the end they were marched out of the hospital and shepherded to Poperinghe, about six miles away. Two of those nuns, directly they were left alone at Poperinghe, started off and tramped back through the rain and the darkness to Ypres, where the shells were still falling with the most horrible racket you can imagine."

He paused for a moment, then added, "And the men they were nursing were Germans."

I suppose that one may get used to terrible things, even the most terrible, but it must certainly demand a high order of courage to face with brightness and gentleness the quite damnable havoc made in human bodies by modern weapons of destruction. As a rule, no doubt, wounds are not ugly things to see. I looked at places where a bullet or a fragment of shrapnel had pierced human flesh, and there was nothing more to see in most cases than what one may see every day among the casualties of a nursery—a few pink scratches, and a little reddish spot.

But now and then dreadful sights have to be looked upon, and dreadful wounds have to be handled. I heard of a Frenchman whose face was almost entirely blown away, and whose wife—hitherto she had adored him—was unable to support the sight of his disfigurement. She said she could not live with him, that it would drive her mad. What a tragedy, and what a starting-point for an inquiry into the nature of love! You worship a child, you say that your love is entirely spiritual, that your soul is not influenced by any physical considerations; but let that child be so ravaged and grotesqued by accident that you cannot bear to look upon it, cannot endure to be

near it, though the spirit is uninjured and remains the same, and what becomes of your love? These Army nurses look on dreadful things and remain at their posts—gentle, tender, and benignant. They endure tremendous strains. They are not only brave and obedient; they are cheerful and contented. They are—soldiers.

There are other women besides nurses working for the Army behind the firing line. I like particularly to think of those ladies who without fee or reward, and without anybody in England knowing of their toil, give themselves up entirely to clerical work in stuffy offices.

I called upon Colonel Barron in Paris, who is keeping a record and collecting statistics concerning sickness and wounds. This remarkable man, in private life a doctor in Ascot, has not only made the most complete record of sickness and wounds ever known in any war, but every day brings his amazing record right up to date. With the aid of a few singularly graphic diagrams drawn by himself, and likely to be of lasting interest to medical science, he can show you exactly what is happening to every unit in the British Army—how many cases of "trench feet," frost-bite, dysentery, respiratory diseases, and wounds, day by day.

When you have seen these pictures and mastered these figures, you are conducted to a large room where ladies are working at a table, and where a huge number of alphabetical book-files are stored on shelves round the wall. These ladies are voluntary workers, and their work is dull and it is incessant, and they sit there from morning to evening filling up cards with particulars from the front and filing these cards in the books on the shelves. It is, of course, the very absence of heroism from this work which makes it heroic.

Then you find ladies at the docks and railway stations who wait upon every ship and every train with coffee-stalls.

One of these ladies, Mrs. Sidney Pitt, likes to have flowers on her stall, and to give the soldiers their coffee in mugs which have some pretensions to beauty. But she finds that our absent-minded beggar very often goes off with her pretty mugs, and although this ingratitude distresses her—for pretty mugs are expensive and hard to come by—you never once hear her say a harsh word about Tommy Atkins.

One morning I was watching a regiment depart by a luggage-train for the front when Mrs. Pitt came along between the lines, holding up one of her mugs and asking if men in the vans had taken such a thing

away with them. "Any of these mugs in there?" she asked; and the men in the doorway of the luggage van answered, "No, ma'am." Then to the next van, "Any mugs in there?" "No, lady." Then to the next. "Any mugs in there?" To which a particularly lugubrious Tommy in the doorway made doleful answer, "We're all mugs in here, lady." Mrs. Pitt laughed so happily at this jest that I think she was almost glad of the loss which occasioned it.

The Miss Fieldings, who are doing useful work in this way, tell me that the hard toil of cutting up hunks of bread and butter for many hundreds of men never blunts the keen edge of their pleasure. It is not easy to get up in the dead of night to meet a troopship or a train, and sometimes when a rush is on, it is very nearly maddening to serve hundreds of cups of coffee, hundreds of pieces of bread and butter, and to give change for French and English money into impatient hands thrusting out from every side in the one crowded direction. Nevertheless, the joy of the work exceeds all its trials. And these ladies are not likely to forsake their post, the humble coffee-stall, till the war is over.

At the beginning of hostilities a number of rather excited ladies took possession of the best hotels at base depots and endeavoured to revive the Mount

Nelson tradition of the South African War. This unpleasant state of things is now, practically speaking, finished and done with. A few ladies who might perhaps be better employed at home, still take up rooms at hotels which real workers would be grateful for; but they are of no serious inconvenience to the Army, which ignores them, and there is certainly no atmosphere of scandal.

On the other hand, some ladies have done perfectly admirable work in the way of helping officers of the R.A.M.C. with their hospitals. I think it is Lady Algernon Gordon-Lennox who has been so loyal and generous a friend to the hospital at Boulogne in charge of Major Norrington.

When all is said, however, about these voluntary workers, one comes back with an ever-increasing admiration to the British hospital nurse, who is the good angel of Tommy Atkins, and the spirit of love breaking up and shining through the wrack of hate, murder, and destruction.

You can have no idea until you see it for yourself how the presence of these bright-faced women makes a beauty of the hospital ward, and quite transfigures all the inexpressible horror of carnage.

The little lamp lighted by Florence Nightingale is now being carried by thousands of brave delicate

hands into the darkness of suffering and death. The soul of womanhood moves like a caressing wind through the pest-house of man's brutality. One goes into a military hospital prepared to be horrified, shocked, and dreadfully shaken; but one comes out feeling that the end of our blunderings is at hand, and that the spirit of women is destined to close one era of man's history with the healing hand of restoration, and to open another with the hand which science has blest and love has sanctified.

How the heart of the wounded man yearns and cries out for the touch of a woman's hand! And what a heaven may be made of hell by a little mothering!

CHAPTER VII

Seekers

BEFORE starting for France I called upon Lord Robert Cecil at the offices of the Red Cross Society in Pall Mall. While I was waiting in his outer office an elderly man entered the room, approached one of the ladies seated at a writing-table, and said to her: "I have come to see if you can tell me anything about an officer reported as Missing. I have made many inquiries elsewhere, but can get no news of him. People tell me that perhaps you may be able to assist me; I shall be exceedingly grateful if you can."

It was a very touching thing to see this old man's calm and to listen to the restraint of his voice. One felt that in a long search for his son he had lost all quickness of emotion, and was now numb, heavy, hopeless—a man performing a sad duty rather than a father passionately anxious to find his child.

The lady asked the officer's name, initials, and regiment. She made a note of these facts, and pro-

mised to prosecute immediate inquiries. The old gentleman thanked her, and was about to withdraw, when she said: "It is just possible we may have information about him already," and, so saying, she opened a book on her table, turned to a page, and then exclaimed: "Yes, here he is, Major ——, of the ——; he has just arrived at the —— Hospital in Hampstead. Would you like me to ring them up and inquire how he is?"

Well, one could have burst into tears, or jumped up and embraced that old gentleman and laughed with a great delight in his joy. . . .

Thus, before setting foot in France, coincidence gave me a telling instance of the work now being performed by that branch of the Red Cross Society which Lord Robert Cecil brought into existence after the guns had fired and the Germans had hacked their way through the heart of Belgium.

In the early days of the war Lord Robert lost a young nephew, an officer in the Brigade of Guards, and soon after news of the death arrived he set out for France with the mother of the boy to discover his grave. He found in Paris an English clergyman who had already begun the work of seeking, a Mr. Briggs, and in conjunction with this hard-working and enthusiastic clergyman he inaugurated that

branch of the Red Cross Society which now seeks not only for the graves of our dead, but to discover the whereabouts of missing men.

Among the workers of this branch is Lord Elphinstone, who has given up the healthful and natural delights of a sportsman's existence to cultivate the difficult task of a sedentary life, sitting for long hours in a Paris office before a table littered with the most tragic letters it is possible for a man to read. It was not until I talked with Lord Elphinstone in his Paris office that the infinite and widespread misery of war came heavily home to my heart; and before I entered that office I had walked through most of our hospitals in France.

Those letters which crowd Lord Elphinstone's table, could they be published, and could they be read by the War Lord, would bring home to his soul more terribly than the shambles of a battlefield such a sense of his guilt that life henceforth would be intolerable to his conscience. For these letters, in most part the letters of women, show as nothing else can show how far, how far indeed, the heavy guns throw their shells —crashing through the roof of love, shattering the walls of home, smashing the possessions of peace into splinters, and rending, tearing, breaking the hearts of women and children.

A battlefield is only the outline of War. Fill it up

with agonising anxiety, with burning prayers, with maddening sleeplessness, with tears and sobs and groans; fill it up with the heart's capacity for utmost grief and sharpest pain; fill it up with suffering, the suffering of women and children, till the outline is as pitted with these things as a map of London is pitted with names, and then you may have some idea, some faint idea, of the range of a heavy gun and the flight of a bullet.

A General in France told me how he went to search for the body of a dead officer. I shall never forget his description. He said that he arrived some hours after nightfall at the little village church where the body was said to be, and that in the glimmering dusk of the chapel he had to pick his way between the bodies of slain men stretched upon the stone floor, walking with the greatest care to avoid treading upon them. "I saw War then," he said, "War which some men glory in; I saw it stiff and cold; I saw it white and silent; it was more terrible than a battle."

But more terrible even than this is a story told to me by Lord Elphinstone and Mr. Briggs. They set out one day from Paris to discover the grave of four young officers. Inquiries led them to a wood, and in this wood they came upon a mound, with a tree hard by bearing the pencilled inscription in German on a square from which the bark had been cut: "In this

place twenty British soldiers are buried." The two Englishmen sent for some peasants and the grave was opened. Instead of twenty bodies, they disinterred ninety-eight, and it was not until ninety-four had been removed that they came upon the bodies they sought—the last four bodies in that awful grave. And those were the bodies of young men for whom life had been beautiful and kind from childhood.

Lord Elphinstone, as many people know, is a man of iron nerve who has always sought the wild places of the earth rather than the tamed and handselled, a man, too, who has faced death dozens of times and who has seen things and endured things which tend to harden sensibility; but he told me that to this day the memory of that disinterment haunts his nerves and he would rather be rid of that memory than anything else in his soul. Nevertheless, he is far more oppressed, far more stricken, if one may use the word of so brave a man, by the letters he has to read in his Paris office than by any sight he has seen on the battlefields of France.

Lord Elphinstone and Mr. Briggs are only two of many workers, both men and women, who give their services to the Red Cross Society. Among these workers there are a few picturesque and rather florid figures, who cultivate what they believe to be a military manner, and who rush hither and thither

with a good deal of commotion as if they thought the whole fortunes of War depended upon the constant activity of the pores of their skin. Then there is a certain number of men wearing the brass button of the Red Cross Society whose particular business seems to consist in a rather extended continuity of loose ends. But these people, although here and there they exist in numbers sufficient to make a slightly troubled impression on the observer, are, in relation to the whole body of Red Cross workers, whose service is beyond praise, but as a grain of sand. Nevertheless it would be a good thing, I venture to think, if the War Office required every man employed in Red Cross work to wear the white linen band on his sleeve, so that where any great number of not very active Red Cross volunteers are congregated a stranger would be saved from the impression of a British Army inclined to loaf.

This said, one can have nothing but praise, and praise of the highest, for those splendid men and women who have given up their homes and all the benefits of British civilisation to serve the Army in its humblest needs. A man like Mr. Kennerley Rumford, for example, to whom life at home offers every conceivable blessing, is to be found driving a car through snowstorm and driving rain, content, even though occasionally homesick, to be doing at least

something for the soldier. And in all the offices of the Red Cross Society, wherever you go in France, you find ladies burdening themselves with the most dull and mechanical desk-work from morning to night, because they have heard the call from the trenches.

Manifold is the work of the Red Cross Society, and it would take a volume to tell the whole tale of it; but what branch of work, if we except the healing of surgeon and nurse, can compare with that branch, sprung from Lord Robert Cecil's reverence for death, which seeks by day and by night to relieve the wide-spread agony of men and women at home? Think for a moment what it must mean for a father, a mother, or a wife, to read that a man in whose life their own existence is so inextricably woven and inter-woven that the very beat of the heart is as the beat of their own, think what it must be for them to hear one day that this man is Missing, and to hang all the tense and vibrant anxiety of their devotion on the single thread that not yet is he reported Killed. What a thing is War, when behind the firing line, that is to say, behind all the most hideous havoc ever made by destruction, you find men and women seeking for the sake of those broken-hearted people at home to discover whether A is dead and where the poor empty body of B has been laid.

Is it not as if behind a tidal wave of flame risen from the very core of hell's furnaces there followed a squadron of the heavenly host, whose faces shine with the beauty of the grace of God? And I think this can be most truly said of those members of the Red Cross Society whose simple work keeps them prisoners in the monotonous routine of office work. I have seen such goodness and peace on the faces of these unknown women as would make an atheist at least wish, if only for a moment, to believe in the angels.

How exquisite and beautiful, too, is the compassion created by this hell's work of war in the hearts of the most humble. Do you know that in little French villages behind the firing line, the inhabitants make coffins for our dead, dig graves for them, and mark the graves with the Christian's cross, even though they are so poor and so beset by war that they have little food for themselves and their children? They ask no reward and they expect no praise; but for the workers of the Red Cross, seeking news of the Missing, their homage to our dead would perhaps never have been known.

Let us constantly think of these French people in the days ahead.

CHAPTER VIII

The Mehmandar

One of the most picturesque appointments made in this war is that of Sir Walter Lawrence, of Indian and Cashmere fame, to an office which I take to be entirely original, certainly the very first of its kind in Europe. To the whole of the Indian contingent in France Sir Walter is known as the Mehmandar, which is to say that every Indian soldier fighting for the British Empire in Europe recognises in this able and distinguished Englishman a personal representation of the King-Emperor, and sees in him the Majesty, the Power, the Authority and the Fatherhood of the Great White Emperor.

It witnesses to the intelligent sympathy of our co-operation with the Indian peoples in the government of their great country that such an appointment as this should have been made in the early days of the war. It shows that we understand the heart of the Indian. All the world is aware that we understand the art of government, that we excel in the work of

managing peoples, and that with the ingenuity of our engineers and the authority of our governors we enormously increase the material prosperity of those races who are glad to live in the security and repose of the Pax Britannica. But all the world, perhaps, is not so well aware of that intimate, discerning, and sympathetic knowledge of the hearts of the people we thus work with, which has enabled us not only to keep the peace among them, not only to elevate and prosper them, but to win their individual affection.

A stranger might think that the tall and bearded Indian warrior, magnificently adorned, superbly built, and of so martial and fierce an aspect as to seem almost an incarnation of Prussian frightfulness, would need nobody but his own British officers to watch over him, nobody but the great British Field Marshal to represent for him the King-Emperor. Certainly such a stranger would be tempted to scout the idea that this incomparable warrior required someone to represent for him the humanity of the King-Emperor, someone to represent the kindness, benevolence, sympathy, tenderness, affection, and courtesy of that great monarch. But such, in truth, is the case. These Indian troops, who are destined when the sun shines and the ground hardens to fling the German armies over the Rhine, and to fling them

with a rush, a fury, and a terror-striking valour such as will haunt the Prussian soldier for the rest of his days, are in their hearts as simple as children, and like children cry out for the presence of their father and mother. The word Mehmandar stands, among other things, for the fatherhood and motherhood of the King-Emperor, and these glorious Indian troops not only see in Sir Walter Lawrence the representation of this august fatherhood and motherhood, but, like children, they cry out for his presence, and would have him at hand in the hours of their suffering and need.

So many foolish rumours have crept through England about these Indian troops, and from England, most unfortunately, have found their evil way into the Indian lines, causing infinite pain and doing incalculable harm, that it must serve a useful purpose to make public, on the very highest authority, the real truth of the matter. Which truth is this: Because of the piercing cold, the merciless rain, and the impossible condition of the land, our Indian comrades did not at the outset fight with that matchless audacity and that rejoicing verve which those who know them best expected of them. They were not only chilled to the marrow by an atrocious winter, all the manhood of them as frozen to the bone as the manhood of a European is wilted to the skin by

extremest tropical heat in a waterless desert; they were also suddenly introduced into a development of scientific warfare which tries the nerves of the hardest white man. The frightful din of the heavy guns, the invisibility of the enemy, the hideous helter-skelter havoc of a bombardment—these things puzzled, confused, and tortured the nerves of our Indian soldiers. They said frankly that this was a sahib's war. They paid tribute to the heart of the white man. "Now we know how it is you hold India!" They tried manfully to be worthy of their British officers, but they did not fight as well as we expected them to fight. There is the truth. They fought, and in some instances fought magnificently, but they were pierced with sharpest cold, they were sodden with unending rain, and, as a whole, they did not fight as those who are proud to lead them expected them to fight.

But wait. You who have listened to rumour and have passed that rumour on, reckless of the pain you struck at childlike hearts, wait till the sun rides high in a blue heaven and the bugles blow for the hurling stroke. You will discover then that the Indian troops are still in France, you will learn that every man of them is a man indeed, and you will read in your newspaper—may it be with remorse and contrition—that the swords of India are as terrible as

the lightnings of the Lord. For the Indians are as God made them, and, like tulips, cannot glow with the inmost power of their natural being till the sun burns the skin and the atmosphere beats with glittering heat. But when the sun does shine, and when the air does wink with heat, these passionate children of the East, over whose smallest need the Mehmandar now watches with the most exquisite and unwearying sympathy, will prove to their Rajahs in India and to the people of the British Isles that neither wounds nor death can strike from their blood its essential loyalty and its inherent valour.

One simple story will give you some idea of the Indian's courage. An Englishman came to a corner of a trench occupied by ten Indians during a frightful bombardment by the German heavy guns. He inquired how things went, and an Indian replied: "Sahib, there are ten of us here; five are dead and five are wounded; all is well." And even better than this, I think, is the answer of a young Indian student to the inquiry of an Englishman who found him in mufti carrying a wounded hand in a sling. "I do not care," he said, "to wear my uniform with so slight a wound, for fear people should think I am malingering." Is there not in this answer, with its absence of braggadocio, its complete freedom from the pardonable pride of a wounded man, a marvellous witness

to the kind of courage which inspires the gallant, sensitive, and dignified Indian?

I visited in France many hospitals filled with Indian soldiers, and in not one single case did I encounter complaint or cowardice. No doubt, as among the soldiers of every army in the world, a more protracted examination would have discovered a few instances of malingering; but the total impression made by these rapid inspections and supported in each case by the testimony of British doctors, was one of quite splendid endurance and most admirable patience. Sir Walter Lawrence visits these hospitals, and in the various tongues of the wounded men talks to them of their deeds, and in the name of the King-Emperor speaks to them of their villages, their wives and their children. "Ah!" he said to one man, somewhat shaken by his wound, "how happy you will be when you go back to your village, which I know very well, and sit on your charpoy (a string bed) in the shadow of a tree, while all the neighbours crowd to your side to hear the story of how you got this noble wound."

It conveys some idea of the thoroughness of our work in India, and of the immense need of a man like Sir Walter Lawrence to watch over our Indian troops in France, when it is borne in mind that in such subsidiary matters as slaughter-houses,

crematoriums, and even the supply of butter, we recognise the high importance of a most meticulous care. We have thousands of Indian troops in France, and these thousands of Indians are more separated from each other in the rites of social life than we are separated from the German diplomatist in the matter of honesty and straight-dealing. To keep them together, to keep them contented, to keep them in those bonds which are essential to their self-respect and religious convictions, is a business of the most paramount importance. And this has been so well recognised by the British Government and so skilfully ensured by Sir Walter Lawrence that from first to last there has been not one single moment of misgiving.*

The Indians are happy and contented.

Some day perhaps we may be told the full story of the Mehmandar, a man who has given his whole attention to the Indians, even while his own son is fighting gallantly with the British Army, and to whom the country owes a debt of gratitude hard to compute. For not only does Sir Walter Lawrence go in and out among the Indian camps, travelling many wearisome miles for this purpose, and not only

* An Indian of a pariah class died in France, and no caste Indian would bury him; it was left for an Anglican clergyman to perform the solemn rite of death.

does he exact a very strict obedience to orders from the British officers in charge of Indian hospitals, but both in France and England he is to the Indian troops the humanity and the encouragement of the King-Emperor, sympathising with them in their pain, cheering them to deeds of valour, and holding up to their vision in an alien country the glory of their race and the joy of their home-coming. And he is one of those great sahibs who can hold such discourse with the Indians as they respect and understand—a discourse as free from the patronising arrogance of the despot as it is free from the unction of the sentimentalist. Is it not, in the midst of the greyness and desolation of this war, which has presented to our vision throughout the winter months some such dreary picture as the Dutch artists love to paint of a long, uneventful, and melancholy road—is it not like a vivid and romantic touch of colour to know that Lawrence Sahib, in the uniform of the British Army, moves among the hosts of India, those great and reckless warriors now encamped in France, saying to each man in his own dialect, "I am your father and your mother; let us talk of your village and your children, and I will write to my friend, —— Sahib, and tell him of your deeds, that all your people may know of them"?

CHAPTER IX

The Spirit of France

If it be possible I want to bring home to the minds of those who do not yet appreciate what the French nation is enduring in this war at least something of that enormous debt which history will certainly place at the door of civilisation in the name of France.

And to begin with let me remind the reader that the French armies which first rushed to meet the invader, which first bore the shock of his ruthless onset, and which were swept away like so much chaff before a whirlwind of flame, consisted of the noblest youth which has ever freshened the life of France with hope and gladness. This beautiful youth of a glorious nation had flung off the decadence of its heredity, had broken with the destructive habits of its forefathers, and had trodden underfoot the bad traditions of an age which corrupted at least the great cities of France with the seeds of death. A new France was born in this youth. The pure air of nature was a delight to

it, health and strength of body an exultation, vigorous life a passion, and to marry and to rear many children was a destiny which held for it not only the conscious rewards of a virile patriotism, but the truest and most lasting delights of human existence. When this war set fire to the house of life, France was singing with joy, her face glowing with the light of a new dawn. A generation had come into being for whom life was definitely good and over whom the glamour of a false art and the enticements of a degenerate morality exercised neither spell nor power. The whole of France was looking forward, in the joy of this creative spirit, to a boundless future. Never, I think, in the history of nations had a people so apparently over-civilised sprung at a single bound into the fullest, gladdest, and most exuberant life.

The France, then, which is now holding up the German armies over an immense frontier, is a France which has seen the hope of life and the joy of existence slain before its very eyes. That wonderful, vigorous, and beautiful youth is swept away, only fragments of it remain, only a few of those battalions of glad boys will re-form and march once more against the invader. The children of France, such children as she had never before seen playing in her fields, are scattered or slain. She mourns, as no other country can mourn, the promise of life. Her truest

and most rightful heirs, her richest and most creative inheritors, are buried in thousands of nameless graves. And she still fights, she still faces the enemy, she still intends to drive him from her soil; and in her heart, with the grief which is unutterable, the lamentation which is inexpressible, there is a determination, a resolution, so silent, so calm, and so sacred that one could almost kneel before it, as one kneels at an altar.

It is not until an Englishman visits France and speaks with French people that he can apprehend the full calamity of this war. In England we see nothing which brings home to us the fact that war is an interruption of life; we are aware that there is a war, and we feel that there is a slight difference in the social air; but nothing we encounter reminds us that war is a thing of death, that it arrests life, that it sets a bleeding stop to the progress of human existence. In France, on the other hand, one feels that this war has laid violent hands upon life, and is veritably throttling existence. And this feeling does not arise from the sight of a paralysed commerce or from the mournful spectacle in the streets of innumerable women invisible in flowing *crêpe*; it comes from the look in the people's faces and from the tone of their voices. Here is a nation invaded by the hosts of a mighty and a remorseless enemy, a nation whose youth has been slaughtered or

maimed, a nation to whom liberty is even more than a religion—a thing as essential to spiritual life as air is to physical life—a nation which knows, really knows, that this war is a struggle to the death between despotism and freedom. To know that, as France knows it, is to be in earnest, and to be in earnest is to acquire a certain look in the face, a certain tone in the voice, such as one does not very frequently encounter among the British people. How many people in Britain definitely apprehend that this is a fight to the death between liberty and despotism?

We have our own way of manifesting earnestness, and our gallant soldiers in the fraction of the line which they hold so stubbornly and so cheerfully, display that British earnestness in a manner which commands the admiration of the French. "Are we downhearted?" cried a young soldier, on his way to the front. "No," replied an old soldier, on his way down from the front, "but you blooming soon will be." That is the difference between the Englishman in France and the Englishman at home, the difference between the cock-a-hoop earnestness of inexperience, and the dogged, dour, cynical, and bulldog earnestness of experience. The earnestness of the French is different from both of these. It is a highly intellectual, rigorously logical, and exquisitely sensitive

earnestness. The Frenchman in this war, compared with the Englishman at home, is like a man undergoing an operation without anæsthetics. He knows. He sees. He feels. He knows intellectually that this is a war for veritable existence, he perceives very clearly the immense issues involved, and he feels in every fibre of his body the infinite cost of the victory which he is determined to win.

Let us constantly remind ourselves that the French armies are holding eleven-twelfths of the line, that they enormously out-number our brave soldiers, and that to feed and maintain these vast armies, to equip hospitals, and to wage the war to a definite victory, they must look for their revenue to a commerce thrown clean out of gear, and to a nation dreadfully impoverished by death. And keeping this fact constantly in our mind let us frankly and gratefully acknowledge that France is fighting not only for herself, but for the highest and holiest causes of humanity. I confess that I am carried away by admiration when I look upon this indomitable and most brilliant nation, and see it confronting, in all the disabilities of democratic freedom, the terrible hosts of efficient despotism. France has made many of the most glorious contributions to liberty, but I think that history will pronounce her victory over German tyranny to be the greatest of all her glories.

A boy in the French ranks fell asleep one night, and his head moved till it rested on the knee of his captain. The captain remained with his knee in a cramped position till it was time for the advance. Then, very gently, he stroked the head of the private soldier, and said to him as the boy roused, "Come, my child, it is time we did something for our country, you and I." Such is the spirit of the French armies —the armies of democracy—and it is this same spirit of fraternity which pervades the French nation. I was told of a young soldier who was brought into one of the French hospitals very badly wounded, almost at the point of death. He entreated the nurse to kiss him. She said, "Come, come; we do not kiss our patients; you are too old to be kissed, my fine fellow." But the boy drew her to him and whispered, "Kiss me, kiss me for my mother," and he died happy in the thought that his mother had kissed him before the great darkness came. If you were to read the letters of the French soldiers to their mothers and sisters you would know what a quiver of agony and what a thrill of pride run and vibrate through the whole domestic life of France.

An Englishman in Paris said to me: "The most moving sight in France is Mass at a cathedral or church frequented by French troops. I was in a cathedral a few Sundays ago, crammed from end to

end with soldiers in their old but beautiful uniforms of blue and red; the priest who preached wore no surplice of any kind over his private's uniform, and in the Mass, when the priest elevated the Host, one saw that he was wearing the red trousers of a French soldier under his vestments." He paused, and then said to me, "Isn't it expressive of the French spirit in this war that no fewer than 22,000 of their priests are fighting in the ranks of the armies?"

Against this freedom-loving people, this alert, intellectual, and emotional people, come the drilled and docile millions of the Prussian War Lord, whose national existence would fall into ruin were the strong hand of tyranny lifted but for a moment. France, organised for peace and intellectual progress, is confronted by Germany, organised for war and military despotism. The French soldier cries to his nurse that she should kiss him, and that cry, if it came to the ear of the Bernhardis of Prussia, would only make them spit with contempt. But France, utterly inefficient compared with the Germans, and tenderhearted as a woman, nevertheless is inspired by the very breath of liberty, and something runs through her ranks not to be learned on a barrack-square, not to be hammered into the souls of men by a drill-sergeant; and she is now superior to the German

armies, and will presently scatter her enemies. Freedom waxes; despotism wanes.

To the eye of the Englishman the French soldier looks slack, untidy, and not very muscular; but there is that in his heart which our noble soldiers seldom hear with quick and intelligent apprehension—the song of Liberty and the promise of Immortality. Excellent judges affirm that while the German armies of August would easily defeat the German armies of to-day, the French armies of to-day would as easily defeat the French armies of August.

There is a spirit in France which is invincible.

CHAPTER X

The Wreckage of War

"Now," said I, "we shall really see something of War."

We were approaching a town which had undergone bombardment, a town shaken to bits, I had been told, by German guns. We were in a part of France, too, where trenches rippled far across the hedgeless fields and where tangles of barbed wire were still standing before these trenches. In spite of such signs of battle, however, it was quite impossible to believe in the presence of War.

The sun was shining from a broken circle of turquoise sky, the swollen snow-white clouds surrounding this broken circle of blue, gleaming, sparkling and burning with light. A faint mist, which was like the breathing of the earth, softened the face of the fields. The leafless woods on the undulating hills, and the towers and spires of churches on the horizon, melted into this gentle haze which here was

dull like smoke and there bright, vibrant, and tender with a gleam from heaven. Peasants were driving their ploughs across the fields, the horses tugging their feet out of the mud and stumbling forward through the cold air with their flanks steaming, the breath spirting from their nostrils. Magpies flashed their black and white wings in the sun. Larks sang from the central blue. Along the barbed wire before the shallow trenches little brown birds were perched like beech leaves hanging to a winter hedge. We passed women who smiled at us, and children who waved their hands and shouted a shrill greeting, as our car flew by them at fifty miles an hour.

The goodness of the morning had got into the blood of our chauffeur, and he let himself go with an abandonment which sometimes took away our breath. On one occasion he swept round a corner and only by the breadth of an inch and the tick of a clock averted collision with a motor-wagon as huge as a furniture van. He turned his head and looked over his shoulder with a satisfied smile. "You really mustn't do that again," I said, as he boomed forward at forty miles an hour; "I saw my wife and children as plain as daylight." Once more he turned his head. "Oh it couldn't have been as bad as that," he said, in his gentle voice; "or I should have seen mine." A little later I leaned forward and shouted to him, "Don't you

think we might try thirty miles an hour for a change —just for a change?" He looked over his shoulder. "On a straight road?" he asked reproachfully; and then with a charming smile but great firmness he added, "*Impossible!*"

And when we arrived at towns where barriers and soldiers guarded the entrance, this delightful chauffeur took pleasure in keeping his car moving until the front wheel almost touched the point of the soldiers' bayonets. The fun of this operation lay in the fact that the sentries were mostly corpulent and slightly nervous middle-aged gentlemen, who wore their wives' shawls round their necks, and whose eyes started from their heads as they disputed our thundering way with bayonets that wavered with unmistakable alarm. They would rush out at sight of us holding up their rifles and gesticulating wildly. "Oh lor," our chauffeur would grumble, "here's some more of 'em," and he made a lazy sign, without slackening speed, that he saw the soldier and intended to obey. Out of the guard house would tumble two or three more of these old soldiers. The original sentry, now almost dancing with alarm, would continue to wave his rifle in the air, our chauffeur muttering contemptuously, "All right, all right, I see you." And then suddenly he would take out the clutch, with exceeding gentleness apply his brake, and approach

the now terrified sentry at ten or twelve miles an hour. To see this old soldier in the middle of the road, with eyes half out of his head, his feet backing in the dust, his bayonet lowered to pierce the tyre of the oncoming wheel, was really a spectacle that fitted in with the goodness of the beautiful day. And then we would quite stop, and show our passes, the soldiers crowding round the car; and then we would exchange the most pleasant courtesies, finally passing on our way with good wishes of a jovial character, only the middle-aged sentry with the muffler round his throat finding it difficult to smile.

In such a spirit as this, and with a heartening appetite for luncheon, we arrived at the town which had been raked by German shells. I thought to myself, We have been very happy this morning, too happy for such evil times as these: the sight of this town will sober us and purge our spirits of unsuitable joy. But almost the first thing we saw in this town was a citizen with a little stall in the middle of the street stacked with picture postcards of the bombardment. He made signs for us to stop, approached cap in hand, and over the side of the car, laughing, jesting, and persuading, exhibited the worst possible photographs he could muster of his own town's sufferings.

And then we moved on to see the actual effects of

the shelling, rather surprised that shops were open, women laughing in their doorways, children playing in the streets, and men smoking their cigars and drinking their beer in cafés with box trees at the doors.

The most curious impression made by what we saw in this town was one of superstition. It seemed that fate must have sat astride of each German shell as it shrieked its way over the roofs. For we saw a little house smashed into utter ruins while the little houses on either side of it were utterly unscathed. It was like a Passover. Why was this one house visited by awful death, and those others on either side of it untouched? Everywhere we went it was the same. We saw houses with flowers in the windows, smoke issuing from the chimneys, children sitting on the doorsteps, and dogs stretching themselves in the sunlight at their feet; and between these houses there would be the shell of a house—a crumbling wall, gaping windows, no roof, the interior a pyramidal rubbish heap of bricks and stones.

Whole quarters of this pretty town were untouched. You could motor through miles of streets and see not one tiny scar of war. But even in the humble quarter which, for some reason that no doubt commended itself to the brain of the Prussian superman, had been horribly bombarded, you saw instead of the absolute

destruction you had anticipated, partial ruin, lopsided desolation, unequal death. The complete ruin of some houses did not so much impress one as the complete immunity of so many others. If these others had borne the least signs of terrific bombardment, one would not have been so greatly impressed. But the windows were not broken, the paint on the doors was not blistered, the white-painted brick walls were not even scorched. They were as happy habitations for industrious humanity as any cottage in England. And yet next door to them you saw that shell of a house, with fire-places hanging in the air by a twisted piece of rusty iron, wall-papers with little bunches of pink flowers fluttering in strips which the wind blew to right and left, the marks where chests of drawers or washstand had stood visible on the walls, and in the pile of bricks and stone on the ground charred doors, broken rails with pegs, splinters of glass, and fragments of crockery.

I heard a story which more than anything I saw brought home to my mind the horrors of a bombardment. In a certain town of France lived an old man and his wife who had two sons. The old man's ambition was to buy the house in which he lived, so that he might hand it down to his sons. Quarter by quarter, over a number of years, he paid an instalment of the purchase money, stinting himself to make

this provision for his children. The last quarter's instalment was paid in September. The house was his. The long exercise in self-denial was finished. He could afford to live more easily and to rub his hands without much dread of to-morrow, although both his sons were fighting in the war.

Then the Germans began hacking their way through France. The French Armies, driven back, came pouring through this town, pressing on with fury, their guns thundering in their rear, the shells of the Germans pursuing them. The French Armies disappeared. The Germans came nearer, firing their great shells. One of these shells found the house of this old Frenchman and wiped it out of existence. He was discovered by some Englishmen many weeks afterwards sitting with his wife in the cellar of their shattered home, a little oil-lamp making a yellow light in the midst of this underground darkness, a loaf of bread between them so hard that knife could not cut it and fingers could not tear it. The lamp and the bread represented all they possessed in the world. The Englishmen endeavoured to comfort the old man. But he spread his hands, shook his head, and expostulated. Why should he hope? What was there to hope for? Everything was gone. Nothing remained but to wait for death. No. They would sit there, he and his wife, and wait till death came.

They did not even trouble to eat. Look at the loaf. It was like a stone.

Not only was their home broken over their head. News had reached them that the eldest son, for whom chiefly this house had been bought with so long and so devoted a self-sacrifice, was killed and buried on a battlefield. The other son still lived—so far as they knew—lived for the present; but what can an old man do at the end of his life when his house is a ruin and his eldest son is dead? So they sat in the blackness of the cellar, the old man and the old woman, with that little lamp burning in the darkness, and the loaf of stale bread between them, while the German War Lord rushed hither and thither saying that God was with him.

The sight of broken bridges and ruined houses does not really help one to realise the hideousness of War. To see a town that has suffered bombardment is like reading a list of casualties. And just as reading a list of casualties does not clutch the heart till suddenly one sees the name of a man one knows very well, so the sight of a stricken town does not affect one with grief until some such individual story as that which I have just told is related by those who have witnessed the tragedy.

One little, humble, and domestic story makes War more dreadfully abhorrent than the ruin of cathedrals

and the devastation of cities. To read that thousands of soldiers have been killed scarcely stirs the surface of feeling, but to look at the dead body of one beautiful youth pierced by bayonet or bullet is to make one's whole nature shudder with revulsion. La Mère Sauvage, in Guy de Maupassant's story, was like a mother to the four German soldiers quartered on her house, railing against those who make war, and loving these enemies as though they had been sons of her own body; but when news came that her own boy had been killed by the Prussians, she brought warm hay for the four Germans in her loft, took the ladder from the trapdoor, piled a great fire, and burned them while they slept. That is War. It is humanity committing suicide.

How preposterous, how senseless, how damnable is this thing called War! The sudden anger of a king or the dyspepsia of a minister pulls a trigger which sets humanity tearing at its own throat. And because a few men in a nation think that it should be greater than another nation, or because this statesman refuses to see the argument of that statesman, little children are butchered, maidens are deflowered, youth is hurled into death, and the grey hairs of old men and women are brought down with sorrow to the grave. War is not nation fighting nation, but humanity breaking its own heart, humanity rending

its own body, humanity tearing the God out of its own soul that it may die in madness and despair.

The dripping car of Juggernaut passes on, the bodies of slain youth are shovelled under the ground, and birds perch on the blood-stained entanglements of barbed wire, singing of Spring.

"After this War," quod she, "God send us peace."

I do not think that tourists who flock in organised parties to the battlefields of France will see anything to gratify their curiosity; I am quite sure they will see nothing to thrill them. When the Devil of War has passed over a country he leaves behind him nothing more wonderful or dramatic than you may see in your own dustbin. It is only in the hearts of men and women that the real wreckage of war is preserved terrible to the Day of Judgment.

CHAPTER XI

A Wayside Discussion

ONE evening in the lounge of a French hotel, I listened to a conversation, half playful and half serious, between two remarkable men of science, who have given their services to the British Army. Because this conversation in some measure prepares the way for the concluding note of my little book I shall endeavour to reproduce the gist of it, calling the disputants, for the sake of convenience, the Idealist and the Materialist.

The Idealist began by speaking of German atrocities, condemning those acts of savagery with the proud scorn of a moral mind. But the Materialist interrupted him, and asked: "Do you really believe those stories?"

"Why should I not believe them?"

"Because the evidence for them ought not to satisfy a rational mind. It comes either from French or Belgian sources. It is prejudiced evidence."

"But many cases have been the subject of judicial inquiry."

"Come, come! French and Belgian inquiries."

After some more fencing on this matter, the Idealist let fly and proved from German writings that atrocity is regarded as a fair weapon, and is commended to be used unsparingly when the existence of German Kultur is at stake. What further need of witnesses? Why quibble about this and that story, he demanded, when the policy of the Prussian is definitely announced as a policy of ruthless frightfulness?

"And do you think," asked the Materialist, "that a nation is not entitled to use any means whatever to defend its existence? Of course it is. How one's reason has been afflicted by the choleric indignation of English newspapers over this business of German atrocities! They write of war as if it were an academic discussion. A cathedral is knocked about, and you might think it was the end of the world. A number of civilians are shot, and, good Lord, the heavens are falling! What a fuss they made over the violation of Belgian neutrality! How preposterous that was! As if France and Germany were two professors settling a dispute by a duel. As if war were a boxing match at Olympia. Did you ever hear such nonsense?"

"Wait a moment," interrupted the Idealist. "Are you arguing that treaties are not binding?"

"Of course they aren't binding! Why, nothing is binding when a nation is fighting for its existence. Scrap of paper! Of course it was a scrap of paper. Every treaty is a scrap of paper when it comes to fighting for national existence."

"Then you are not shocked by those atrocities?"

"I see no difference in the world between the killing of civilians and the killing of soldiers. If the safety of my country depended upon it, I would kill old unarmed men, women, children—the whole civilian population. Nothing would stop me. Don't you see that any nation worthy to be called a nation is conscious of a Kultur, and that for the sake of that Kultur, either to spread it or to defend it from extirpation, a great people will arm, drill, and fight without scruple of any kind? War has nothing to do with civilisation. It is a frank return to barbarism. While war continues it is absurd and illogical to talk about the conventions of civilisation. You don't stop to consider how you are dressed when your house is on fire. As soon as the sword is drawn, everything goes. It is then solely a matter of force. A nation that complains of the way war is waged against it makes itself ridiculous. A nation at war has only one

business: to win that war, and to win it by any means in its power."

"But there is such a thing as international law, and unfortunately," said the Idealist, "we cannot alter international law to please you."

"But that is just where you are mistaken!" retorted the Materialist, with a smile.

"You think we ought to alter the world to please you?"

"Yes, if you like to put it in that way. I should prefer to say, however, that the world is moving in my direction. And I think you will have very good proof of that fact before the war is over."

"Ah! when the war is over," exclaimed the Idealist. "Won't it seem to us all as if some immense load has been lifted from the brain?"

"Don't you see," persisted the Materialist, "that the Germans are fighting for their existence? and don't you realise that just as a man fighting for his life disregards the rules of the prize-ring, so a nation in that position will stop at nothing, nothing at all, to save its life? The thing is obvious. Nor do I condemn War. On the contrary, I believe that War is absolutely necessary to the natural order. A nation that is not prepared to fight for its essential virtue is a perishing nation. And it deserves to die. For, look about you, and see what really persists through

all the chances and changes of history. What is it that endures? Morals change, laws change, and knowledge goes forward from change to change, permeating everything. But two things endure. Two things are eternal in nature—force and character. *There* may a man pin his faith—force and character. All progress is the advance of character, and character can only advance while it has force to defend and force to propagate its virtue. Take British character, with its genius for government; that character, so valuable to civilisation, would have perished centuries ago if our forefathers had not been fighting men. Take German character, with its genius for organisation and laborious research; that character will be either paralysed or destroyed if the Allies beat the German nation to its knees and the German nation abandons the sword. A great nation must always have the sword in its hand. You will get no science, no literature, no art, no spirit of quest and adventure, from a tame people afraid to fight for its character. The most glorious nations are conquering nations. A nation cannot give anything to the world unless it rejoices in life and is conscious of life as a blessing. Force is a virtue, one of the eternal virtues, and a mighty people will always use its full force to propagate its particular Kultur."

The Idealist said, "According to your own showing,

it must always be to the high interest of other nations to break and bind the strength of any one nation whose strength threatens the whole world. This is precisely what is now happening. But it would be impossible for those other nations to break and bind Germany unless they were severally loyal to the treaties which hold them in alliance. Therefore, treaties are something more than scraps of paper. And, if you think, you will agree, I am pretty sure, that the whole delicate organisation of human existence is only possible so long as individuals and nations are bound by moral obligations. The system of credit by which most of us live is a matter of faith. But I take it that you never pay your bills! Like Sheridan, you don't believe in throwing good money after bad debts. Your argument, my dear fellow, is a throwing up of the sponge of civilisation. Your entire thesis is the thesis of barbarism. I quite agree with you that a great nation will always be ready to fight for its particular Kultur, but I see beyond the transitory convulsions of an imperfect diplomacy. I see the possibility of an alliance between all the great nations in the interests of general Kultur. This war, with all its dreadfulness, is a drawing together of the peoples. I know that there will be difficulties, grave difficulties, in arriving at a final settlement; but I have faith in the democracies of the world, and I think

a settlement will be reached which will sheathe the sword for perhaps fifty or a hundred years."

"Well, I'm relieved to know," said the Materialist, "that at least you aren't expecting the Millennium as a consequence of this war." And then, turning to me, he said: "I hope you won't praise without criticism what you have seen of the British Army in France. Praise is a dangerous thing. In fact, no man is worthy of praise. I make it a rule never to deal out praise, and—so far as is possible—I avoid it for myself! How much harm has been done at home by fulsome eulogy! We ought to be heartily ashamed of ourselves, instead of going about our business, as I am sorry to say we do, with swollen heads. Nothing is right with us. Our system of education is ridiculous. Our working-classes are conceited, selfish, and stupid. We have the most dull middle-class in the world. And our aristocracy has nowadays scarcely its manners to boast about. Who reads in England? Who cares about Culture? Who is enthusiastic about science? Why don't you say these things? You have seen the hospitals over here. Well, they're good, fairly good; but they are not what they ought to be. They ought to be better. They can be made better. For heaven's sake, don't tell people that these hospitals are excellent. What you have to do is to convince the nation, so far as you

have any influence in this respect, that the need of the hour, an urgent need, too, is intelligence. You have seen something of the heads of departments in London; you know most of our national idols: well, be honest, what do you think of them? How many of them have ever convinced you of anything that in the least approaches real capacity, real intellectual greatness? What we have to do in England is to get rid of our idols, to subdue the official class, and to put men of only first-rate ability in almost autocratic control of our national machinery. We have done well in this war, better than we could have expected; but you mustn't say so. Your business is to attack, to criticise, to awaken. But I mistrust you. I have the feeling that your tendency is to praise, to praise, perhaps, because you think it will encourage official England to do better. Believe me, this is a huge mistake. Praise is mischief. No! Criticise, criticise, criticise. Awaken people in England to the fact that out here two principles are at war—the principle of despotic efficiency and the principle of democratic makeshift. And for God's sake awaken them to the fact that Germany will stop at nothing to save her existence. Give the lie to those ridiculous stories about starving German soldiers, cowardly German soldiers, ill-clothed and indifferently armed German soldiers. The German soldiers are magnificent. In

one day, against an inferno of artillery, they charged no fewer than twenty-seven times, till the ground was knee deep in their dead. And they charged each time singing their national songs. They are superb soldiers. And they are well fed, well clothed, and well booted. Moreover, not one of them has the smallest misgivings as to the issue of the war. Do you think we can overthrow such a people as this, whose territory, after all these months, has never been profaned by an invader, if we rest satisfied with what we already have done? Believe me, there must be a moral revolution in England before we can defeat this great people. We must be rid of cant, rid of self-satisfaction, rid of journalistic high-falutin'. What we have to do, in one word, is this—We must be intelligent."

It was agreed between these two men that nothing will be the same after the war. Life will be organised with more definitive intelligence. There will be a greater exercise of power, a new seriousness will manifest itself, and democracy will abandon loose-thinking acquiescence, and a dull indifference for a determined effort to understand the conditions of existence.

The Materialist made a mock of religion, and attacked me for taking any interest in a matter which was now finished and done with. He seemed to imply

that the Kaiser had prayed God out of existence, and that the battalions of Christian Europe in slaying each other had also slain very effectually "the Lamb of God." He was almost savage in his irony over that phrase.

"Everything will be changed," he said to me. "It's no use for you to ask people to be reverent towards the Infinite. *Reverent towards the Infinite!* All that's dead and done for. The future belongs to Science. There'll be no more wasted time and wasted money in religious charity. We shan't bother *to seek the lost!* We shan't shout when a drunkard or a burglar is converted by a Hallelujah lass! All that's Victorian. We shall make men intelligent and healthy by means of science; we shall educate and train humanity; and the inefficient, the rotters, well, instead of weeping over them we shall lock 'em up and punish them. Make up your mind to these changes. The war has got to be paid for, and in that painful process of paying the human race is going to be born again."

How much did he mean of all this? In the midst of his thunder one could see the sun of his spirit still shining, and the harder he attacked the thesis of Love the more certain was the smile in the deeps of his eyes.

The Idealist said to me, "I'm quite sure you have discovered the real psychology of our friend."

And when the Idealist was out of hearing the Materialist said to me, "That's the noblest fellow now living."

POSTSCRIPT

DOSTOEVSKY wrote to a friend from Dresden in 1870 concerning the Prussian system of education and discipline as it was then manifesting itself against France[1]:—

". . . It's a fine schooling whereby children are harassed and tormented, as it were, by Attila's horde, and even worse."

This mention of Attila in Germany's last war is curious enough; but read what follows:—

"I have myself read letters from German soldiers in France to their parents (small business folk). Good God, the things they have to tell! O, how ill they are, and how hungry! But it would take too long to relate. One more observation, though, I'll give you: At first, one often heard people in the street singing the 'Wacht am Rhein'; now, one *never hears it at all.* By far the greatest excitement and pride exists among the professors, doctors, and students; the crowd are but little interested. Indeed, they are very quiet. But the professors are extraordinarily arrogant. I encounter them every evening in the public library. A very influential scholar with silver-white

[1] *Letters of Fyodor Dostoevsky* (Chatto & Windus).

hair loudly exclaimed the day before yesterday, "Paris must be bombarded!" So that's the outcome of all their learning. They may be very scholarly, but they're frightfully limited! Yet another observation: All the populace here can read and write, but every one of them is terribly unintelligent, obtuse, stubborn, and devoid of any high ideals."

Compare with the German's own view of his Kultur what Dostoevsky has to say of Russia's share in universal progress:—

"I am not quite sure that Danilevsky will dwell *with sufficient emphasis* upon what is the inmost essence, and the ultimate destiny, of the Russian nation: namely, that Russia must reveal to the world her own Russian Christ. . . . *There* lies, as I believe, the inmost essence of our vast impending contribution to civilisation, whereby we shall awaken the European peoples; there lies the inmost core of our exuberant and intense existence that is to be."

And elsewhere he gives us a glancing idea of the Russian Christ:—

"All writers, not ours alone but foreigners also, who have sought to represent Absolute Beauty, were unequal to the task, for it is an infinitely difficult one. The beautiful is the ideal; but ideals, with us as in civilised Europe, have long been wavering. There is in the world only one figure of absolute beauty: Christ. That infinitely lovely figure is, as a matter of course, an infinite marvel (the whole Gospel of St. John is full of this thought: John sees the wonder of

the Incarnation, the visible apparition of the Beautiful)."

Now compare this exquisite suggestion of a "vast impending contribution to civilisation" with the German's gospel of Blood and Iron, his ideal of a Superman and the boast of his self-satisfied Kultur. And in making this comparison, reflect that if it is England the German most hates, it is the Russian he most despises.

As an indication of the very ugly and entirely un-Christ-like spirit which animates the German people, let the reader study a document published by Lieut.-Colonel Kaden in the *Lille War Gazette,* a translation of which has recently appeared in *The Times*. Such a document, I venture to suggest, could not have been written by any Russian, Frenchman, Belgian, Serbian, Indian, or Briton. It is only a German brain that could conceive such a thing, only a German conscience that could publish it, only a German soul that could see in it nothing incongruous either with Religion or Kultur:—

FIRE.

As children many of us have played with it; some of us have seen an outbreak of fire. First a small tongue-like flame appears; it grows into a devastating fury of heat. We out here in the field have seen more than enough of it.

But there is also the fire of joy, of sacred enthusiasm: It arose from sacrificial altars, from mountain heights of Germany, and lit up the heavens at the time of solstice and whenever the home countries were in danger. This year fires of joy shall flare from the Bismarck columns throughout the length and breadth of Germany, for on April 1st, just one hundred years ago, our country's greatest son was born. Let us celebrate this event in a manner deep, far-reaching, and mighty!

Blood and Iron!

Let every German, man or woman, young or old, find in his heart a Bismarck column, a pillar of fire, now in these days of storm and stress. Let this fire, enkindled in every German breast, be a fire of joy, of holiest enthusiasm. But let it be terrible, unfettered, let it carry horror and destruction! Call it hate! Let no one come to you with "Love thine enemy!" We all have but one enemy, *England!*

How long have we wooed her almost to the point of our own self-abasement. She would none of us, so leave to her the apostles of peace, the "No War" disciples. The time has passed when we would do homage to everything English—our cousins that were!

"God punish England!"—"May He punish her!" This is the greeting that now passes when Germans meet. The fire of this righteous hate is all aglow.

You men of Germany from East and West, forced to shed your blood in the defence of your homeland through England's infamous envy and hatred of Germany's progress, feed the flame that burns in your souls. We have but one War-cry, "God punish England!" Hiss this to one another in the trenches,

in the charge; hiss as it were the sound of licking flames. Behold in every dead comrade a sacrifice forced from you by this accursed people. Take tenfold vengance for each hero's death!

You German people at home, feed this fire of hate!

You mothers, engrave this in the heart of the babe at your breast!

You thousands of teachers to whom millions of German children look up with eyes and hearts, teach Hate, unquenchable Hate! You homes of German learning, pile up the fuel on this fire! Tell the nation that this hate is not un-German, that it is not poison for our people. Write in letters of fire the name of our bitterest enemy. You guardians of the truth, feed this sacred Hate!

You German fathers, lead your children up to the high hills of our homeland, at their feet our dear country bathed in sunshine. Your women and children shall starve: bestial, devilish conception. England wills it! Surely all that is in you rises against such infamy?

Listen to the ceaseless song of the German forest, behold the fruitful fields like rolling seas, then will your love for this wondrous land find the right words, "Hate, unquenchable Hate! Germany, Germany, above all!"

Let it be inculcated in your children, and it will grow like a landslide, irresistible, from generation to generation.

You fathers, proclaim it aloud over the billowing fields, that the toiling peasant below may hear you, that the birds of the forest may fly away with the message: into the land that echoes from German

cliffs send it reverberating like the clanging of bells from tower to tower throughout the countryside: "Hate, Hate, the accursed English, Hate!"

You masters, carry the flame to your workshops: axe and hammer will fall the heavier when arms are nerved by this Hate.

You peasants, guard this flame, fan it anew in the hearts of your toilers that the hand may rest heavy on the plough that throws up the soil of our homeland.

What CARTHAGE was to ROME, ENGLAND is to GERMANY.

For ROME as for us it is a question of "to be or not to be."

May our people find a faithful mentor like Cato. His *Ceterum censeo, Carthaginem esse delendam* for us means

"GOD PUNISH ENGLAND."

You have only to read this dreadful if foolish fulmination but once to realise that the spirit of Germany (for the spirit of this proclamation is universal throughout the German Empire) is a menace to the first principles of civilisation and the highest ideals of humanity. Never before in history has mankind been so threatened. If Germany triumphed, Absolute Beauty would be a beggar on the face of the earth.

This war is an infinitely greater business than a strife between nations; it is a wrestle to the death between two moral principles which ever since the dawn of human life have contended for the soul of

Man. It is but a coarse, crude, and bloody version of that inward strife which tortures in silence and darkness the spirit of Everyman. The term Central Powers is an *alias* for Antichrist; the term Grand Alliance a synonym for Christianity. We are settling to-day with shell and bayonet, not whether the human heart, but whether human society is to be crushed under the iron wheels of Cæsarism, or still to nurse its unconquerable hope of Absolute Beauty. For although everything will be different after this war, although Religion itself will be so greatly changed that the Christian of to-morrow will be as different from the Christian of yesterday as the modern astronomer is different from the ancient astrologer, still the eternal drama of humanity will move forward from the shadows of deceit into the light of reality, the soul of individual man casting off more and more the barrack-square discipline of a logical barbarism and stretching out his arms into the liberty and light of an infinite universe. Germany, we think, will fall; but the other nations will fall with her unless they feel with all their heart and with all their mind and with all their soul that "the beautiful is the ideal."

The spirit of man is indestructible; it is only nations that are mortal.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY R. CLAY AND SONS, LTD.,
BRUNSWICK STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E., AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY R. CLAY AND SONS, LTD.,
BRUNSWICK STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E., AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.