

# The Year of Chivalry

Edmund Candler

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THE YEAR OF CHIVALRY

Author of

“ The Unveiling of Lhasa, ”

“ The Mantle of the East, ”

“ The General Plan, ”

etc., etc.

# THE YEAR OF CHIVALRY

By  
EDMUND CANDLER

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TO  
MAJOR WALLACE DUNLOP, "POMPEY,"  
IN MEMORY OF MANY CAMP FIRES.

## NOTE

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## THE CARAVANSERAI

### I

**I**N the smoking-room of the — at Boulogne you will meet at some time or other nearly every one who has gone to the war. The hotel is a permanent barracks for the Army Service Corps, Red Cross and naval transport men, and staff officers at the base ; it is frequented sometimes by convalescents from the hospitals before they return to the front ; and it is right in the track of the ebb and flow of the ninety-six-hours-leave men.

There are few countries, few kinds of sport, few modern campaigns which are not familiar to at least somebody in this caravanserai. Men who go to Cyprus for moufflon, shoot ibex in Persia, and markhor in Baltistan are not likely to miss the biggest show in history in spite of gout or indigestion or grey hair.

Many of them are “ dug-outs ” who are playing the game “ for love.” They have given their leisure, and sometimes their motor-cars, and are grateful for any appointed task however tedious or depressing it may be. They censor letters, answer Red Cross inquiries, carry wounded from the front, and put themselves and their cars at the daily call of hospitals. Some become chauffeurs to staff officers, and thus by coming

within range of an occasional "coal-box" satisfy the general craving not to be left out. It adds to one's self-respect to have been under shell-fire, however jumpy one may have felt at the time.

There are young men, too, doing the same sort of thing who on account of bad eyesight or other reasons cannot play a more exciting part. There are City men and professional men who have left their business to take care of itself. And there are the restless spirits who are soldiers in war time only, who threw up the Army after South Africa and have come back from their ranch or farm or plantation. They generally manage to rejoin their old regiments.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Some of the men who frequent the smoking-room have been wounded and have not yet been passed as medically fit for the front. They are put on to "base details," courts-martial, and the like; and some of them are mortally afraid that they may be called home to train Kitchener's Army. There is one boy who you would swear was not seventeen, a mere infant, with the dint of a shrapnel splinter in his head.

Sipping his cognac by the door is another youngster just going up to headquarters to fill in the gaps. He is not quite sure what he is going to be attached to, but he is pleased with himself and his new accoutrements, and one almost envies him his "swank." If he comes back he will be purged of the too pervasive "ego." In the meanwhile assurance is comforting. He surveys the dug-outs with bland interest.

"Who is that funny old bird masquerading as a colonel?" he asks.

The "funny old bird" who stands in the doorway

wrapped up in a coat which hides his decorations once commanded a crack rifle regiment.

One wonders if the boy will live to make history in the same way. The dug-outs, with all their rich and varied experience, are probably wishing they had been born into the same decade as he—an iron age, perhaps, but a touchstone for strength, spirit, and endurance.

\* \* \* \* \*

My neighbour on the left, a retired major in the Blues, is telling me about Don Carlos.

“I sent my orderly on with our horses to Tarbes. We crossed the Pyrenees by—I forget the name of the pass. I remember my guide pointing to a corner of the rock where he had shot a Republican. The man came loping round on a mule; his chest almost touched the barrel of our friend’s rifle.”

“He never had a chance, did he? I mean Don Carlos.”

“Not the ghost of a chance.”

“How did you get into the show?”

“Oh, I was on leave.”

There is a great unwritten book in the campaigns of British officers on leave.

Two or three French officers stroll in. There is a movement to give them seats. Every one is anxious to show them friendliness and regard, but there is very little fraternizing among the Allies. The shyness of approach seems to have increased on both sides during the war. Most of the Englishmen in the hotel have a little French, but no one has the courage to turn to his neighbour in a room crowded with his com-

patriots and say: "Que pensez-vous de la guerre?" or "La guerre traîne en longueur, n'est-ce pas?"

On the other hand one often sees in French hotels now that exaggerated and almost embarrassing politeness of the untravelled Englishman who has still a notion at the back of his head that the Frenchman's ideas of ceremony resemble those of the Chinese mandarin.

I try to get the ex-guardsman to tell me more about Don Carlos or the Egyptian campaign of '82—he wears the blue and white ribbon—but he is away in Rome describing a run in the Campagna.

"The country is spoilt now by cultivation. If your horse leaves a hoof mark anywhere they make you pay through the nose."

Presently the conversation is punctuated by the painfully laborious accents of an Englishman's French. A subaltern, feeling that somebody must say something to maintain the semblance of an *entente*, has decided that he is the man, and on the strength of a single college vacation in Brittany not so very long ago has pushed himself bravely into the breach.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Esquavoos avez remarqué la coutume Anglaise de——"

One wondered if it were chivalry or conceit. An awful stillness fills the room. The much-beribboned general bends over to catch the boy's accents as if he were listening to an Ambassador. A providential waiter with a tray of clattering cups and glasses intervenes.

"Poisonous coffee!" a young A.S.C. man remarks, pushing away his cup. "Let's try the M—— to-morrow. They do things better there."

An ironic staff major turns on the youth and says :  
“ Alleviate the hardships of campaigning, eh ! ”  
and orders a whisky-and-soda for himself.

A man comes in with a double row of ribbons.

“ Who is that ? ” I ask a captain in the Indian Army on my right.

“ A Gippy, I should say by his medals.”

My friend spoke a little enviously of the Egyptian Army. The North-West Frontier medal on his own breast did not cover a third of the expanse, but it represented more active service. There is an economy of decorations in India, where one medal is awarded for different expeditions within the same area. He had fought in one campaign which was called a blockade and no medal was given for it at all.

We were talking about carrying the guns through the snow over the Shandur Pass into Chitral when we heard :

“ Napoleon a dit . . . Wellington a dit . . . ”

The impenitent boy was launched again. Certainly it was conceit. One blushes to think of the subalterns the war has produced who have never known the discipline of a mess. Most of them will learn in a harder school. That bandaged infant in the corner who has been in a bayonet charge, dodged mortar-fire, and lived for weeks in the trenches, is already modest.

## II

Often there are as many naval uniforms in the room as military. Many of these are “ dug-outs.” One is wondering why they are not more tanned by

wind and weather when one looks up and sees a man standing by the door who has a naval uniform but not a naval face. One notices something unfamiliar about his cap and that he is wearing black gaiters; but the unmistakable *cachet* of the man is in the eye.

He stands by the door talking to a naval transport man.

“Dropped down to within five hundred feet . . . forty bullet marks on the plane. . . . No, I didn’t bother about their anti-aircraft guns; they couldn’t do much at that height; might as well shoot snipe with a rifle.”

“Flight-Lieutenant——,” somebody whispers. “The man who led the raid at——”

One catches something about fog and lights and a bomb with a propeller and a safety catch, and bolts shearing; and one would give a great deal to hear more, for the man and his high adventures are as remote from common life as the Archangel Gabriel. One wishes profanely he would stay and have a drink; but already he has vanished. It is too much to expect that one so initiated should lounge on a settee gossiping with groundlings. Wherever he goes things happen. The man is a flail; he carries destruction.

Two boys are visible in the courtyard outside, earth-coloured from wind and rain in the trenches. Their motor broke down and they have missed the afternoon boat. But there are compensations. One hears them in the bureau:

“Ern bagn, si voo play. Ah, oui, madame! Man-tenong, tout de suite.”

It is always a bath they hunger for.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three Indians stroll in. To the uninitiated they add one new element to the heterogeneous crowd. In reality they represent widely diverse races. One is the son of a Sikh ruling chief; another of a Hindu Rajah; the third of a Mahommedan Nawab—peoples as separated by faith, lineage and tradition as Russians, Dutch and Portuguese, but brought into harmony by an English education. It is odd that ruling families of the three great Indian communities should be represented in the caravanserai. Their comradeship here is an implicit comment on the intrigues of Kultur. The Sikh was educated at the Collège de Normandie, near Rouen, and is now at Christ Church. He speaks French as well as any Englishman in Boulogne. The Hindu was at Harrow and Clifton, and the Mahommedan at an Indian chiefs' college and Downing. All three have been gazetted at the India Office as interpreters and are waiting for orders to join their units.

An Indian Civil Service man just in from the front crosses over and talks to them. He too has interpreted. He lent a hand one night at hasty digging when officers were short. An Indian Imperial Service cavalry regiment had to dig themselves in. They were new at the game, and the civilian supervised thirty yards of trench work and taught them the mysteries of traverse, loophole and parapet. The very junior subaltern who told me this was immensely delighted at having put a "heaven-born" on to jemadars' work in drenching rain until three o'clock in the morning.

"He asked me if he could help and worked like a good 'un and kept them at it. It was a good bit of

trench, and he seemed quite bucked to get the job.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Behind us a “dug-out” is talking of Boulogne in the 'seventies. He was at school at——, which, like most of the other good old schools and the old English colony, has long passed away. He tells how he and two other English boys locked and barred all the gates of the Haute Ville and how the *préfet de police* raged and stormed and how they were all within an ace of being deported.

Among the blue and khaki uniforms there is a sprinkling of civilian grey and black. Mufti in Boulogne must be a Nessus shirt to the sensitive. A young, able-bodied, non-combatant with the least combative potentialities will feel very uneasy in this crowd. There is a journalist in the corner who told me he felt like a burglar.

“Been to the trenches?” I asked. “Good Heavens, no! It is bad enough not being able to do anything to help. I'd rather be knocked on the head than get in the way.”

He had left a part of his foot on another frost-bitten frontier. The man was a “caster,” as they say in the cavalry. Another civilian bird of passage, asked the same question, said:

“Shure. I am going to circulate round that way.”

His idea was that two or three Bavarian helmets “picked up first ha-and” in the trenches would look well in the hall at Smithstown, Pennsylvania.

Then there was a mysterious specialist who had come to write a report on some abstruse and complex question of engineering. He did not confide his views to me, but I gathered that they were advanced, if not

revolutionary, for I heard him repeat with grave emphasis two or three times :

“ That is what I’ve told them. They can take it, OR—they can darn well leave it.”

As he said “ They can take it ” he lifted his right hand impressively, paused at the “ or,” and brought it down with a dramatic flourish at the alternative.

One felt absolutely sure that they would “ darn well leave it.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Other civilians who pass in and out have come over to visit sick friends. They introduce a more fluent element into the place. In a small room the other side of the door are ladies—mothers, sisters, wives. Some have come on the same errand ; others to work ; others to ask about the missing. This is the saddest part of the war. They feel that the nearer they get the more they are likely to find out, and the hotel is only two hours by motor from the trenches.

There is a philanthropist who has come out to arrange a home for the dogs of the invaded countries who have attached themselves to British soldiers and are prevented from accompanying their new masters home on leave. He probably stands for the most exclusively British phase of the British spirit manifest in the room.

Another man to whom one’s sympathies go out is trying to awaken the authorities to the necessity of the protection of trees. Nearly every farm in Flanders and the north of France has its little orchard, and if horses are tethered to the trunks they ring the bark and the trees die. It is hard to teach an

army in the field the elements of arboriculture. The billets are always changing ; what one spares another destroys ; and officers repeat that horses should be tethered in orchards as a protection against aeroplanes. Many orchards are doomed ; it is part of the wastage of war. No doubt the Base Commandant spares for trees and dogs the tribute of a sigh. In the meanwhile the army itself has to be fed and nursed and supplied with all the machinery of destruction.

It occurred to me, as one by one soldiers, sailors, and civilians got up and slipped quietly out of the room without saying good night, that nobody had said anything about the war. One seldom does now. It would be too much like discussing the weather in the Red Sea.

## THE COURAGE OF WILLIAM MOBBS

### I

THE war dragged on, but with all his dreams it had not occurred to Mobbs that he could be in it. It was not that he lacked imagination; he had more than most minor poets, yet he could not conceive of himself in the firing line. The War Office advertisements moved him, but not with emulation. He was fascinated by the poster of the recruit standing foursquare on his mound, his crimson bayonet fixed for further execution. The man's bloodshot eye called up the wildest images. Still, it never entered his head that he was cut out by nature for the part, or that his King and country stood in genuine need of the hairdresser's assistants of Putney, or of himself, William Mobbs, in particular.

And seeing Mobbs, a tall, thin young man with soft white hands and glasses and a complexion like faded foolscap, one might well endorse his diffidence. A young man who had never taken any exercise beyond a Sunday walk in Kew Gardens or Epping Forest. The only weapon familiar to him was a razor. When he drew blood it was on the chin of a customer owing to some fit of abstracted reverie, or through timidity under the unsympathetic eye of Mr. Banks, his em-

ployer. Then the red trickle unnerved him ; his only weapon became less steady in his hand.

For Mobbs was a dreamer. If his physical vagaries were confined he travelled far on the wings of imagination. He read poetry mainly and affected the epic vein in prose and verse. His permanent library was fined down to Pope's Homer, Scott, The Faery Queen, Ossian, The Seven Seas, and shilling reprints of voyages. Modern fiction did not hold him. He had seldom glanced at a newspaper until the war, and then it took six weeks of posters and headlines to wake him to the fact that battles transcending the sagas had become the every day facts of life, that an epic was on foot that dwarfed Troy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Soon the ripple of the war reached him in Putney. A subaltern came into the shop with a bullet in his heel. Then a sergeant with his arm in a sling. This was not a bullet wound but a bayonet thrust. "I got mine in his throat," he said, "and gave him a twist." This set Mobbs thinking. Steel is more epic than lead. The sergeant brought things home to him and materialized his dreams. In his abstraction he inflicted another wound, which the man of war received good-naturedly. "Here, young feller, keep your blade for the sossidges—if it's blood you're after." Mobbs followed him to the street door. "Will they take men with glasses?" he asked. "Shure. Why not? You go along straight. I have six of them in my company."

Then a young Belgian airman came in, a mere boy, who had been dropping steel arrows on Termonde and Liège. His escort, a fresh-blossoming English

girl with the most palpable hero-worship glancing in her eyes, was part of his reward.

Mobbs thought of her the next day in Kew Gardens. He spent all his Sundays there now. It was an old haunt of his before the war, full of suggestion, the complement of his fireside voyages. In the palm house he would break virgin jungle with Stanley; the orchids carried him far away to the Amazon, where he steered his canoe among the scaly backs of alligators; the oranges made him think of Samarcand. He used to read the labels on the trees, and he would see the stone-pines on the Mediterranean coast, the cedar on Lebanon, the willow weeping over the Babylonian plain.

\* \* \* \* \*

William Mobbs was not contentedly a hairdresser's assistant; he had too much spirit to endure the bonds without recompense. Mixed up with his dreams there was a very definite ambition. He was saving money to rent a barber's shop in a P. and O. liner. In this way he would see the East. One day, perhaps, he would descend from his boat on a palm-fringed island to embark no more; to some dark host he would become an avatar. Musing in the Rhododendron Walk he would hum "Ship me somewhere east of Suez," or he would murmur darkly in Tulip-tree Avenue:

The wildest dreams of Kew are the facts of Khatmandu,  
And the crimes of Clapham chaste at Martaban.

Now all these dreams were broken, the picture dissolved. The subaltern and the sergeant and the Belgian airman and his young woman with the violet

eyes had translated them. Every adventure of the spirit outside the radius of war was a backing away from reality ; and there was more poetry in the new realism than in the old romance ; wilder dreams in Lille and Arras than in Khatmandu ; grimmer tragedy, more stark and primitive crime in Louvain than in Martaban.

Mobbs had slept ill under the weight of responsibility. It had been slowly borne in on him that his King and country needed him, William Mobbs, after all. He was just broad enough in the chest and his glasses did not matter. He had an inward conviction that he would never be able to shoot or to stick a man with a bayonet. A motor-horn made him jump ; it taxed his nerves to put a match to a gas stove. But his body was the weaker partner ; his mind was quite capable of carrying it along.

\* \* \* \* \*

He thought it all out as he stood before Chokusimon, the gateway of the Imperial messengers, on the mound among the cedars staring at Choryo's dragon and the heavenly dogs. He would come in with the weight of numbers. The subaltern had told him about the thin line. There had been one rifle to a front of five yards, when every man who could hold a gun and pull a trigger would have helped. And then in the attack he could have come on with the others ; his carcase could stop a bullet as well as a better man's. Like most nervous, highly strung, sensitive youths, Mobbs was as brave as a lion. One half of his brain suspected this, while the other half was afraid that he would run away.

At the very moment of resolution he fell into one

of his incurable fits of dreaming. Germany had become a huge devouring dragon, and it would take a thousand men to every scale of the beast to slay it. William Mobbs found for himself a new value; he was worth to England the thousandth part of the scale of a dragon. The calculation was too much for his humility; he was uplifted. Anyone passing might have taken him for a young Japanese devoting himself at the temple.

In the story on the panel the disciple Choryo had plunged into the troubled waters to save his master Kosekko's shoe, and the dragon, touched by the young man's faithfulness to his purpose, had come to his aid. The kindly beast had rendered Mobbs a like service.

There are two kinds of men—those who have been under the enemy's fire and those who have not. And there is a third, or between, state—those who have volunteered to go. Thanks to the sergeant and the subaltern and the Belgian airman and his girl and to Choryo's dragon, and not a little to his own imagination, William Mobbs is now one of these. As he descended the mound he felt a great pity for the men in mufti streaming out of the palm-house—potential dragon-slayers, not yet initiate.

## II

In the first phase of his training with the Wessex the poetic leanings of William Mobbs were unsatisfied. The drill-master spelt prose. He was brought into closer touch with Mother Earth, but it was the mud of Aldershot. He lay prone in it on field days, and

it oozed through his shirt and putties and was damping to the spirit. He was weak in the arm, and he could not hold his rifle in the firing position forty seconds at a stretch. Route marches, bayonet exercise, and night alarms exhausted him, yet he never fell out. As he lay on a cold bank waiting for a night attack his imagination ran riot. The rattle with its realistic imitation of musketry was more terrifying than the real thing, but he listened to the consciousness that told him he was brave as a lion, or could appear so under trial, and he resolutely quelled all doubts. He thought of Dimmer, Drummer Bent, and Private O'Leary, and he knew that he would have his teeth torn out one by one for the glory that haloed them to rest on his head a single minute. He had heard, and he could believe it, that rifle fire was child's play to the dentist's chair and his forceps a more unnerving weapon than the bayonet.

At first when he heard that the war might be over in six months he was inwardly relieved that he was to escape the ordeal. Afterwards he became more martial. He wished to prove himself. He was sensitive to the War Office posters; they were a challenge. It did not concern him that in any physical impact with his spindle legs and delicate arms he was likely to be overborne.

Landed on French soil as an avenger, the atmosphere helped him. The troop train was cheered as it left the quay, and half through the night, packed closely in the dark carriages, his regiment was singing. The train did not take him to the front as he expected. There were more delays, and he was two weeks in a tent by the sea, where an illimitable beet field fringed

the heather. He never quite got hold of the name of the place, but he imagined the Germans very near. He could picture them in the gorse ; the enemy seemed more possible and less formidable on this soil.

Then he was billeted in an old town within sound of the guns, and he saw a Montmartre omnibus-load of Senegalis disgorged in the street, black as ebony. He himself had become something of a hero. Little boys came up and touched his accoutrements as he gazed into the shop windows ; a girl gave him an early daffodil. He went into a church, and was ushered to a front seat. They were singing the *salut*. He was carried away by the tremendous earnestness of it all. He bowed the knee and came out humanized, with an increased liking and respect for the French.

\* \* \* \*

The first visible missile of hate came out of the air. He was going into his billet when he heard shouts and hurrying feet and an explosion quite close, like a punctured motor tyre. He ran out, and found everything confusion. It was market day. An old woman rushed past him into the house, dropping everything she had. Another threw down her bundles and crawled under her rickety, ramshackle stall. He saw her scared face peeping out, unbonneted, from among her cabbages and flowers, and he knew that he was watching something humorous, though he had lost the faculty of being amused. He was not sure for a few seconds if it was an air raid or if the town was being shelled. He hoped he was being shelled ; it was more in the nature of a baptism. In the meantime the bunches of violets, mimosa and daffodils which the market woman had upset gave

him a clear vision of Kew, and he found himself wondering whether the willow leaves were budding yet by the lake, whether the fruit trees were in blossom. He saw the man on the *beffroi* hoist a flag; some one was blowing a bugle in the street. Two horses had taken fright, and started off running into the curbstones with their carts and colliding with each other; an odd phase of apprehension was the closing of shutters everywhere. He was wondering at his detachment when another explosion made him jump so violently that his cap fell off. He picked it up ashamed. There were men and women by his side who had not budged. They were staring up at the sky, fascinated, as the angry, buzzing Taube sailed over. The bomb had fallen in the corner of the market place and killed an old lady, mixing up her legs and arms with her basket of onions among other *débris* in a three-foot pit in the pavement. She was the first victim of the war William Mobbs had seen.

At last he had entered the zone of destruction. He felt a kind of joy that he had not been more afraid. The smell of the fumes were still in his nostrils when he entered a barber's shop and demanded a shave, hair cut and shampoo. The frightened staff stood at the door; he wished them to admire his coolness. Even on ordinary days it was a proud occasion to walk into a *coiffeur's* in his uniform, though only a private's, to submit his chin to the blade of a man of peace, to receive his civilities as a matter of course, and to tip him when he went away. He saw himself after the war in the chair of his employer, Mr. Banks, of Putney. He wondered if he dared tip "the boss."

Mobbs had only enlisted for service till the end of

the war, but in this new access of military ardour he thought of making arms a profession. He had reason to be elated. His friend Barker had bolted into the house and hid in the cellar all the time—the superior Barker who had confided to him that he did not think much of the corps, that they were no class, and that when he enlisted he had not meant to get mixed up with “Tom, Dick and ’Arry.” Barker, the estate agent’s clerk, had crouched in his funk-hole while he, Mobbs, had looked on with a gentlemanly curiosity. In a day or two the battalion would be moved up in support. Shells were no worse than bombs, he argued, but he must remember not to jump. Jumping and ducking were “dam silly.” You were just as likely to jump into a bullet as out of the way of it. Besides, it did not look well. Bobbing about was a recruit’s game. A fellow had to take his chance, and if a shell hit him he would know no more about it.

Under the Allied barber’s hand William Mobbs fell into contented dreams. In no other century, in no other generation, could a young barber-poet take his life in his hands and pass in a day from the security of Kew to these wild adventures. He had seen panic unmoved. In his vision he slew dragons, he scaled the crags to the high tablelands amid ineffectual fire. Then the mimosa and the ebon-black Senegalis opened out the avenue to the tropics, to Khatmandu and Martaban—to that enchanted coast where the crimes of Clapham and the dreams of Kew were transcended. He thought of the hairdresser’s shop in the P. and O. boat which a friend had shown him one Sunday at Tilbury. That way lay the road to the East. Perhaps after the war—— But the

coiffeur was untucking his sheet; he was shorn, trimmed and perfumed—it was an end to dreaming. Mobbs gave him a penny.

Outside in the street he met Barker. This youth of doubtful courage accosted him, affecting indifference.

“Have you heard the news?” he said. “We are off to railhead to-night. Entrain at eight. It is in orders.”

### III

There was a rumour that they were to attack at dawn. At two in the morning Mobbs was look-out man; it was the chilliest vigil he had kept. In spite of the cold he sweated. Coming by the communication trench as the stray bullets whistled over, he had discovered himself, or imagined that he had, and shuddered at the revelation. This was the real William Mobbs. At the first proof he was unnerved; his chivalrous vapourings dissolved, leaving him a starveling husk of manhood. He had been glad it was dark, and that the others could not see him wince.

He remembered a kindly old sergeant he had met in the train going to Shoeburyness. The veteran had gauged Mobbs in two minutes' talk. He had discussed fear in an easy, natural way which was balm to the lad's self-respect. “Waiting is hell,” he had said. “At first you think it is you they're after, but that's a mistake. You are one in thousands, remember, and they are lucky if they hit one in twenty. And remember, when you get the funks on board, all your mates are the same, but they don't let on. It's

waiting that makes you feel heavy in the stomach and light and cold in the feet, but when you're in it you don't care. You'd bayonet the devil for tuppence."

They were alone in the carriage.

Mobbs admitted misgivings as to the sticking-point of his valour, but the sergeant reassured him.

"Forget yourself, my lad, when you feel the funks. Let yourself go, then you won't worry. You can do a good deal when you've made up your mind you're wiped out, and you'll find it's the safest way too. It's not so easy for them to wipe you out as it seems. You'll do all right. I can see you've got the spirit. It's fear you're afraid of—nothing else."

Mobbs remembered that the sergeant had repeated two or three times, as if through some poignant reminiscence—"But waiting is hell."

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Waiting for dawn he pursued self-forgetfulness with the application of an Indian yogi, but the ego was paramount. It floated through the mists of his apprehension like a naked, lonely hulk on a grey sea.

Dawn came, and they waited for the word to be passed along the line, but instead of the attack the enemy began shelling them. At first the siege-gun shells went over—a terrifying sound like a hidden train coming into a station in the "Tube." The captain of the company came along, giving them work to do to keep them busy. Philosophy was demoralizing; anything was better than taking thought. He spoke to Mobbs, observing his pale face. "It's all right when you can hear them—means they're gone over—harmless—mere noise." His comfort was terse

because of the din. As he spoke a shell fell short with an earth-shaking crash, bursting in the parapet and burying five men the other side of the traverse. They were dug out half suffocated, shaken, but alive.

The siege guns had found the range and were flattening the walls of the trench ; the shrapnel burst round them, flashes of yellow light. The state of mind of William Mobbs was like nothing that can be conceived. His eyes and mouth were full of earth. In place of thought he was conscious only of sensation, quickened and dulled in turn. His captain put him on to digging. For some minutes the line of trench where he was at work was exposed to machine-gun fire from the flank, and the men lay flat, scratching up the loose earth with their hands and scattering it behind them like terriers until they had made themselves a hollow. The bullets passed over with a sickening rhythm ; Mobbs felt the wind of them on his neck and spine. His neighbour, who had heaved himself into a loop with desperate digging, was hit ; his arm and knees supported his body in an arc, so that the men by his side could see the daylight under him. A subaltern crawled up and laid out the corpse reverently level with earth ; the man's posture, like a stricken caterpillar in pain, was too disheartening. Soon they were deep enough for spade work. No one else was hit. Farther down the line another shell crater had filled and bridged the trench. Mobbs sweating—this time with the toil of his hands—watched them with singular detachment digging themselves in. At nine o'clock the bombardment ceased suddenly, and for no apparent reason. They prepared for the attack which must inevitably follow ; they

waited hours, it seemed; the lull was interminable, but nothing happened.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

For some obscure reason the enemy were leaving them alone. An occasional rifle bullet spattered against a loop-hole from their trenches three hundred yards away. Then our own artillery came into play.

“We’re giving ’em ’ell,” a corporal said. “That means we are going to attack just as it’s getting dark. You see if it don’t.”

At sunset hot tea and rum were warming to the spirit. Mobbs felt that he had a grip on himself. He was a very different Mobbs from the poltroon who had sweated and shivered in the night.

It was true; the corporal was right. They were advancing. Not at a double, as on the road at Aldershot, but at a slow, laborious walk, floundering in a boggy field, a chunk of mud on each foot as big as a coal-box. The Royal——s on the left on slightly drier ground were forging ahead; they had breath to sing and swear and shout. It became a race to keep up with them, to keep the line straight. When the Royals threw themselves down the Wessex struggled on a few seconds longer and so made up the ground. This was his realization of the advance by quick brilliant rushes under fire.

After the first spurt he found himself lying by the side of Barker. There was a certain comfort in being near a man who, he suspected, was more frightened than himself. When they rose for another lap Barker lay still. Mobbs prodded him; he lay so naturally in such an easy pose he might have been feigning sleep. Mobbs pulled at his sleeve angrily; the man’s

head rolled to one side, his cap fell off, one eye and half his face were gone.

In the next lap fear left him. The gross and earthy part of him fell away. A bullet in his shoulder was like an angry tap with a cane. He wondered why it did not hurt ; the wound only gave him confidence.

\* \* \* \* \*

Would they halt again? They were spent, but it would be suicide ; the trench was too near and there was no vestige of dead ground. Mobbs saw the parapet in a haze like the red line he had struggled towards in the quarter-mile in the Y.M.C.A. sports at Putney. He believed that he would reach it, he could see no farther, fate had narrowed down to that. The line was thinning round him ; he thought he was almost alone ; another bullet grazed his sleeve as he gathered himself to leap. His rifle was knocked out of his hands. He lay in the mud at the bottom of the trench under a German heel.

When he came to, the enemy were binding his wounds. They gave him water and he fell asleep again.

The next morning, when he was half conscious, they put him out of the trench like a sandbag in the line of fire. The Wessex were attacking again. He was hit in the calf by his own men. They recaptured the trench and Mobbs.

The name of William Mobbs is not in the honours list. He was not mentioned in despatches. He found that the courage he had dreamed of as an almost unattainable goal went without comment in the Army as a matter of course. He had taken part in an everyday affair. In every brigade there are at least three

thousand men as handy in action as Mobbs, though few so genuinely brave. For he had a monster to slay in himself. It is part of the compensating order of things that Providence supplies for these encounters a keener spear. The timid, visionary dragon-slayer is seldom shamed. The prestige of the Wessex will be the brighter for the spirit of William Mobbs.

## WITH THE SIKH IN FLANDERS

I WAS passing through the Place ——, at ——, when I ran into the tail-end of a weather-worn company of Indians filing into the railway station. I asked the last of them, a strapping young sowar, what the regiment was. It was a Sikh squadron of ——'s Horse, but the horses were not in evidence.

“Where are you going?” I asked.

“I do not know.”

“Where are you coming from?”

“I do not know.”

Then I asked for Rissaldar Sundar Singh of the regiment, the famous polo player, who ten years ago had been the best Indian No. 1, perhaps the best No. 1 in the Punjab.

“Sahib,” he said, “you know him? He is my father. I am Sampuran Singh. He is very sad not to be in this war.”

I told the young man that I had been to his village, Ramgarh, and drunk milk with his father in his house. The Rissaldar had invited us to come and shoot black buck. I remembered riding with him in the evening and how he carried a rifle, and dropped his reins when we started a ravine-deer and shot it. He even fired at a hare from his pony.

I took Sampuran Singh into the buffet and gave

him a poisonous-looking red temperance drink. He removed the soaked cowl with which he had covered his turban and showed me with a proud smile two bullet-holes in the peak.

“Don’t lose that,” I said; “you will be a great Bahadur in the village.”

“Sahib, there is little *izzat*<sup>1</sup> in it,” he said. “All our clothes are rent like this. After a time the lice enter them and we throw them away.”

I remembered hearing his father, fine soldier and horseman as he was, curse his ill-fortune that he had never been in a campaign.

“The Rissaldar Sahib will be pleased to have the cape,” I said. “Have you news from him?”

Sampuran Singh disinterred a roll of wet pulp from his pocket and held it towards me.

“He complains that I do not write,” he said, “but I have written twice and there is an unfinished letter.”

He unfolded his father’s script and slowly intoned it. “Praise be to the Guru. Your father Sundar Singh here writes a word to his dear son Sampuran Singh. It is meet for a young man to be in the battle and on this account I am not taking thought. I am well and happy, and I pray to the Guru for your welfare and happiness. When you receive this letter answer it and relate to me the full conditions of the war. It is said that Gurdit Singh and Fateh Singh have gone with their company to the — Sikhs. Is this true? Take no thought for your life in the battle, for it is right to fight for the King, and great glory will come to Hindustan and the Sikhs and fame to the regiment. Here everything is well. There is good rain for the

<sup>1</sup> Honour.

sowing. Write me quickly a letter saying who is alive and who is dead. Salute the Rissaldar in the name of the Guru and Sardar Singh and Thamman Singh. Yourself be strong, that the name of the *pultan* may increase. Your brother, Piyara Singh, is living in the house as is his right, and the money you have left with Mool Chand I have taken back. I will write all about the land. All is well here. The servant, Jati, fell asleep in the *machan* and the pigs broke into the melon field, doing great damage. The nilghai also have done great damage. Many thousands of *begars* of land beside the canal are being prepared for the Sepoys on their return. I will speak a word in the ear of the Commissioner Sahib concerning the allotment. . . . .”

There followed a complaint that the boy had not written. I explained that it took two months to write and get an answer, and he showed me his unfinished letter. “I was writing it in a godown,” he said, “when the boom-golies came.”

“Praise to the true Guru,” he wrote. “This letter is written to the Father Sahib, Rissaldar Sunda Singh, by his son Sampuran Singh, sowar, ——’s Horse. I am well and happy and pray to the Guru for your welfare and happiness. I have received your letter and my heart is made glad. Take no thought of me. A great battle has been fought. By the mercy of the Guru my life is saved. . . .”

So far he had written when the shells struck the barn. I offered to finish the letter, but feared the Rissaldar Sahib would not be able to read my script.

“Write in Angrezi<sup>1</sup> Sahib,” Sampuran Singh

<sup>1</sup> English.

suggested, "the schoolmaster will render the matter in Gurmukhi, or, maybe, Chanda Singh, who is at the Model School, is now sufficiently advanced."

So I wrote the Rissaldar Sahib a letter in English, such a letter as Sikh fathers do not usually receive from their sons. The Sepoy's communications are all of a piece, void of reflection, concerned only with ultimate things; and the formulæ are unalterable. A patient lying in a hospital will write:—"All is well here. I am very well and happy. Take no thought. The bullet is in the centre of my stomach. The doctor cannot get it out." But in talk the Sepoy is sometimes less laconic; give him a text for his comment and he may become communicative. While waiting for the "terrain" I discovered Sampuran Singh's opinions on all things, not without much cross-examination, and wrote them down for the old Rissaldar's benefit, posted them, and added my greetings.

"This is a good war. Here we are near the sea and the Germans are extended to the east almost as far as Hindustan; but against them the English and other nations are drawn up in increasing numbers, so that they cannot now move further into the lands they covet."

"Sahib, what more is there to write?"

"Tell him what you told me of the tree and the great battle."

"The boombs first broke down the mud walls in front, destroying many; the trenches were rendered nearly flat. Sardul Singh was killed by the wind of one without being hit. Then the Germans came in great numbers and we slew them. One or two fell into the trench. Outside they were lying one on the

top of the other so high that we could not see for the corpses. At night they came again, filling the sky with lightnings—a kind of magic the secret of which they possess. Again we slew all. They have too many machines, and these are too cunningly contrived. Otherwise they are not equal to the Sikhs. They are slow with the bayonet and move heavily. Often they have no fear.

“ I was for a long time outside a village named Festu-Shah, where there is always much fighting, and there is a tree on which hang pieces of the soldiers of different nations all blown into the air by boombs and mines. Sahib, what are the names of the five nations ? ” I inserted them. “ You may see Indians’ turbans hanging there and different kinds of caps and boots.

“ I sent Kour Jan by the post a money order for fifteen rupees. Six weeks have passed and I have had no word. You will please inquire. I fear she may be in a narrow place. Stroke the head of my dear Suntri for me.

“ The memsahibs of this country do not cover the face, not only the old, but the young women. They have strange customs, but they intend no evil. They do not fear the boombs. Two were tending cattle behind our lines where the boombs were bursting. Broun Sahib sent me to remove them from this peril. They not understanding, I pointed my ‘ ruffle ’ as one who shoots, crying ‘ boom-boom ’ and shaking my head. At length they crying ‘ Merci, merci ’ (*merci-merci-kerke*), fled. In the cities they give us flowers and little flags, and offer us tobacco, not understanding the law of the Khalsa <sup>1</sup>—Sahib, what more ‘ is there to write ? ”

<sup>1</sup> Sikh community.

“ The Rissaldar asked you to write of the country and the soil.”

“ You ask me of the country and the soil. This is a good country. It is very dark. No day or night passes without rain, and the sun does not appear, but is hidden always behind a cloud.”

“ Tell him about the snow and the horses,” I suggested.

“ The snow, instead of lying on the hills, comes down under our very feet and then it becomes water. They do not employ cattle with the plough in this country, but horses. These are of a commanding height and have tufts of hair on their feet. I cannot speak of the crops, as it is not the season.

“ The Padshah came to see the Indians all the way over the black water. He spoke with all, regardless of rank. It was not my fate to see the King, being in the trenches. I am told that though chosen by the All-Powerful to be seated on the Throne, he does not hold himself distantly from the poorest. On the Sahib's burra-din<sup>1</sup> he sent every Sepoy in the Army a gift. In Jai Singh's regiment all the English officer Sahibs, save two, are dead or wounded. They wear turbans as we, but they ever run a little ahead. A lieutenant has become a major ; but every German that crosses our path is slain. Nathu Singh, Kishem Singh, Kanwar Singh of the village are dead. All is well here. I am well and happy and I pray to the Guru——.”

“ Don't you want to write more about Festu-Shah ? ”

“ No, Sahib. Ask him if he received my letter and if the land is redeemed.”

<sup>1</sup> Christmas Day.

A civil train was drawn up on the opposite side of the platform to the troop train, and "the uncovered mem-sahibs" regarded the Sikh squadron of ——'s Horse with looks of amused admiration. The last words Sampuran Singh said to me as I left the platform were:—"Tell the Rissaldar Sahib to send his letter without stamps. It will then surely reach me."

The "terain" took him to railhead and he is now among the "boom-golies" again, probably quite unimpressed. I should like to hear the epic of "Festu-Shah" related at Ramgarh. No doubt the Battle of the Seven Nations will be dismissed in as many phrases.

## TRUCES

THERE were one or two brief and spontaneous renewals of the Christmas truce of 1914 for some weeks following; but the authorities on both sides set their faces sternly against any relaxation of the fibre of war.

The overtures were mainly from the other side. In analysing the motives that prompted them one must be on one's guard against too much idealism. There was, of course, a very natural desire for a little comfort and ease after strain. If it had not been for the common veto there is no doubt that these truces would have become more frequent during the weeks that were spent in the mud of Flanders before the nature of the ground permitted us to come to serious grips again.

The damage done by rifle fire on our front for those last few weeks, if we except sniping, had not been great, and where little is doing and progress is almost out of the question on account of the mud there must be a general inclination to have one's feet out of ice or water, avoid cramp and improve the circulation.

It was not the suspension of hostilities that was remarkable so much as the spirit in which the truce was observed and the complete absence of rancour, the "sporting" attitude of both sides—to use a word obnoxious to the Germans through the supposed levity of its associations. In places the truce was confined

to the trenches, the artillery being outside the area of good will. But "gun practice" was naturally avoided where the short distance between the positions added to the danger of shelling our own men in the neutral zone.

In one area snipers, English and German, were outside the pact. This led to a temporary misunderstanding. One of our men fired at a sniper in a tree. Whereupon the Germans, thinking that we had broken the truce, opened fire from the trenches. We replied. There were one or two casualties, but somehow the situation cleared itself, explanations were exchanged, and the truce was resumed.

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An English officer, unwisely perhaps and for want of something to say, complained to a German companion in misery of the boredom and discomfort of life in the trenches, and said what a pity it was that such good fellows should be shooting one another for no particular point.

The German agreed.

"Yes," he said, "but it is odd that you should complain. It is all the fault of your Government."

"Our fault!"

"You began it."

The "lie courteous" passed into the "lie circumstantial," and in the end the two had to be separated by their friends. So the great drama was played out in miniature.

But in the main there was peace and understanding. Instead of "Schweinhund" and the hysterical chanting of the Hymn of Hate it was "A happy Christmas to you, Englishmen"; and it was more than the spirit

of Noël that prompted the fraternizing between the lines. It was the fellow-feeling that is bred in a man in any struggle that taxes his best resources—the feeling expressed in a really genuine pugilist's handshake.

This humane trafficking with the enemy is no new thing in war. An old Army chaplain tells a story in "L'Orme du Mail" of the French lines at St. Privat, where "a great devil of a sapper" brought him a sack of potatoes every day from the enemies' lines. They were given him by a soldier in a German picket. The two were neighbours on the frontier. They embraced and spoke of parents and friends, and the German said, "You can take as many potatoes as you need." "This simple incident," said L'Abbé Lalande, "made me realize more than any reasoning how unjust and cruel war is."

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Long before Christmas there were little impromptu truces in parts of the German and French lines, not merely for burying the dead or the mutual need of water, but out of ennui and the desire for a little temporary diversion.

"Camarade Boche!" a French corporal would cry with friendly irony. "I want to get out, will you shoot?"

"Come out, Kamarade Français, I will not shoot. Leave your rifle in the trench."

And they would both shuffle out and exchange cheerful badinage.

"You have heard the news? London has fallen. The English Fleet is sunk. Our right wing is walking into Paris."

And the Boche would point to the authoritative newspaper.

“The Russians are in Berlin. Your Kaiser has got a stroke. It was time.”

Soon the air would become too charged for safety and they would pop down again.”

Here is a story of the British lines. In the trenches the other day opposite one of our Rifle Battalions, near Ypres, a certain Fritz was very much in request. The first morning after they had taken up their position our men heard voices calling him all along the line: “Fritz!” “Fritz!” “Fritz!” And there was some curiosity to see what this redoubtable Fritz was like. Presently a big head commanding a very portly presence—portly even as Fritzs go—lifted itself out of the end of the trench, and was carried at a speed quite incommensurate with the supporting bulk to the adjoining trench. A few bullets greeted this extraordinary apparition, but he escaped intact. In the afternoon equally insistent voices called Fritz back, and again he ran the gauntlet successfully. The next morning only one man fired at him. After that they simply drew a bead on him and laughed. They laughed so much that it is doubtful if they could have hit him if they tried. Exactly who Fritz was nobody ever discovered. Owing to his figure and the fact that he was in such constant demand, he was believed to be the cook. When the battalion was relieved, the word was passed to the new-comers, “Don’t shoot *at* Fritz.”

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A pacifist would argue that the Christmas truce and other such promptings are the assertion of individual reason against the great collective unreason of the

State. A more obvious reflection is that the men who are in the real thing doing the work do not hate one another. Venom is a civilian vice, and it would clear the air for venomous civilians if they could be made to fight with sticks and gloves. The actual waging of war—not the ravaging of cities and villages—would seem to have a humanising effect. Any chaplain at the front or Red Cross nurse will tell one this. It is even conceivable that five months of campaigning may have developed the germs of a soul in the spoilers of Louvain.

There is an old lady in Tooting who says: “ I think that something ought to be done. The Kaiser is not in his right mind. I feel sure that he ought to be examined.”

Possibly before Europe is drained of a generation of her best blood the people of Germany will take thought and “ examine ” the Kaiser, and discover the great hallucination.

## THE SAPPER'S WAR

THE siege, not of cities but of countries, continues on a two-fifty-mile front from the Yser to the Argonne. Ten departments of France are invaded. But France is calm, and she has reason. There is nothing in the world so demoralizing as the sense of impotent aggression, and the Boches have been knocking their heads against a wall for weeks. The whole line is one fortress.

The cavalry have gone into the trenches like moles and their horses are eating their heads off picketed in a sufficiently extended line far in the rear. Their time will come. In the meanwhile the sapper emerges and takes the place that was his when the British Army last fought and swore in Flanders.

The sapper is too much preoccupied to swear much now unless he is left at the railway base to run trains. This is perhaps the most unwelcome variety of work that can fall to an engineer in war time, especially when the railway is in a foreign country and civil trains cross the lines of communication. The Railway Traffic Superintendent is the most preoccupied of officers, but he is not too much preoccupied to swear. The complications are enough to tie a man in knots, and a mistake may mean no bread, or stale bread, to a division at the front. When he finds horses destined for three

different rail-heads in the same truck his language is worthy of the traditions of Flanders. Orders to report himself at Headquarters for work at the front come as a most welcome release.

This new phase of the war is the sapper's own particular "show." Spades are trumps; it is a *guerre taupinière*. His is the kind of fighting that calls for a peculiar quality of nerve. He is not given trenches to hold under heavy fire. He is seldom called up to take a position. He carries a rifle, but he rarely uses it. His weapons of attack are bombs and hand-grenades and mortars. He sleeps in the day, when he has time, and is at work all night. It is half-blind, stealthy work in the dark, almost feline, generally over the ground between the enemy's trenches and our own. It requires the least common kind of courage. As the months pass the spade-work is becoming less. It fell heavily on the sappers at first. But the infantry make their own trenches and know how to dig themselves in. They have not moved much lately. Even the cavalry have become adept. The art of loopholes and parapets is well understood. The steel head-shield, such as the French have been using, is a great resource.

Mines have not played such an important part in this mole-work as might have been supposed. We have heard the enemy mining and we have tried it ourselves, but one strikes water in this country between seven and eight feet down. The enemy's sapping is mostly approach work. We sap out to meet them, but the deep shaft undermining a position is rarely possible with the water so near the surface.

There have been the shallow trench mines of which

one has heard a great deal, but that ruse is nearly played out. One does not occupy an empty trench now, one jumps it. "A month ago we lifted them," an engineer told me. "It was not a proper trench we had been holding, but a low natural ditch with a small bank to it. It was rather a salient point, and we were glad to clear out. We left it mined, and in the evening the enemy came in. We made them jump." The Indian Army have played the same trick.

Every night there are wire entanglements to be put up which have been broken during the day. However stealthily the sapper sets to work it will only be a few seconds before he draws the enemy's fire. Word has been passed to the look-outs in the trenches to expect him, but he does not always get the benefit of the doubt. It is jumpy work for the sentries too.

Then there are buildings to destroy. The enemy will have occupied some house from which they can snipe our trenches, having sandbagged the windows on the second floor. They are too near to make it safe to shell the building. So the work of destruction falls to the sappers. This is another night job. If it is a cottage three or four charges will generally suffice, which means only one expedition. But the country is islanded with farmhouses with enclosed courtyards like Arab caravanserais. These are a more difficult matter. After the first explosion one has to return again and lay more charges. The enemy are thoroughly on the alert. If there is a flashlight it will be turned on, and the proportion of casualties will be heavy.

All this is part of the night's work. But the sapper is doing a great deal just now that is not being talked

about—the kind of old-fashioned fighting in which a man does good work if he can suppress his nervous system and embody the physical virtues of a terrier and a ferret.

For instance, during a day of desperate fighting, three Indian regiments and one British had been shelled out of their trenches by mortars, and in the darkness had recovered them—or it was believed that they had recovered them. Nobody was quite sure. A sapper was sent to find out.

He found the Indians in their trench ; in the *mêlée* the three regiments had become mixed. There had been a great deal of bayonet work. It was a long trench, and he knew every inch of it. He found it thinly held. Towards the far end the dead alone were in possession ; he had to step over them. There was an unnatural stillness, and the smell of unburied corpses from a neighbouring field poisoned the air. He came to an empty space between two traverses ; beyond this he heard men whispering, but could not distinguish whether it was German or Hindustani. At a low pitch of the voice the two intonations are strangely alike. As he stooped and listened, a bomb struck the earth at his feet and he was thrown to the ground. He thought he was blinded. A fragment had struck his eyebrow, another his chest ; he had wounds in his neck and ribs. But he rolled over and crawled back through the dead bodies again to his men. He directed the attack lying on his side till he was carried away. The last Germans were driven out of the trench afterwards by bombs and hand grenades.

“ It’s jumpy work,” I suggested.

“ Yes, but one keeps reminding oneself that the

enemy are just as frightened as we—more frightened perhaps, as the Indian is an unknown quantity. One night when we had blown up their saphead I found an officer quaking with terror, all in a heap. He thought the Pathans would cut him up alive into small bits.”

Nerve in the trenches under shrapnel or in the attack is, to some degree, collective. Every one who is in with you helps. The weakest is sustained by that strong fountain of courage, regimental prestige. He soon finds himself shaken down into familiar and neighbourly relations with death. He may even become used to siege-gun fire, though it is not an acquired taste. But in these lonely night-reconnaissances one has to find the stimulus in oneself. Darkness, isolation, uncertainty, suspense—all the ordinary concomitants of fear. It needs a strong spirit to quell these.

“ You must feel a bit jumpy,” I said to the sapper.

“ Oh no. It’s all right when you are wide awake and don’t start too tired. Of course when one is wakened up in the small hours before one has the grip of things, one has not always got the stomach for it—not right off.”

# THE HOSPITAL SHIP

## I

THE hospital fleet at Boulogne comprises the first ships of its kind, if we except the *Gwalior* and *Carthage*, which were equipped for the China War. The vessels used for South Africa were transports only, and the wounded did not embark on them until they were more or less convalescent.

These ships are easily distinguishable by the broad green band on a white surface, with the Red Cross fore and aft; sailing with light ballast, they stand high out of the water.

They are models of finish and have been provided with every new accessory, from rocking beds fixed to the floor which swing with the motion of the vessel to an X-ray installation and the most specialized details of modern surgery in the operating room.

From the moment he reaches the quay, the patient is made to feel that the most careful machinery is being put in movement for his comfort. As soon as the Red Cross motor-car arrives, the bed he has travelled in is laid gently on a stretcher, swung up to the deck by a smooth running crane, placed in the lift and lowered down into the ward. The "lying down" patient need not stir from the stretcher on which he receives first aid until he is lifted on to his bed on the

ship. And to soften the ordeal of the somewhat formidable ascent by crane, provision has been made for a stretcher wide enough to carry two. To the Indian this is very important. He likes to have a *bhai-band*, brother or comrade—a co-religionist, for choice—by his side in a tight place, and more especially when he is sick. A convoy of wounded arrived before I left the ship and I saw two great Sikhs make the ascent to the deck. One who had a slight bullet wound in the finger held the other's hand.

The patient finds himself in a roomy ward, spotlessly clean, well-lighted and ventilated. It is probably more palatial than any room he has seen before, and for the first time he knows the comfort of a spring cot. The cabins have been gutted on both decks, so that the ward stretches the whole breadth of the ship. By his bed he finds a table, a spittoon, and a life-belt. Everything is ship-shape, or *tik-tak*, to use the Indian's expressive word. Each ward is a unit in itself, both in establishment and equipment, so that there is no confusion or bustling about between one deck and another. Each ward has its own electric sterilizer, and there is a constant supply of sterilized dressings ready packed. Everything is prepared, even the electric punkahs which suggest that the vessel may be used for transport to India at the end of the war.

The arrival of a convoy of wounded is the occasion for a kind of 5 o'clock tea. Special sweetmeats are distributed of which all Indians are fond, *halwa* made up with *atta*, and different forms of *metaie* prepared by the Hindu Mohammedan cooks for their own communities. There are depôts in France now of Indian

spices brought over from the bazaars of Bombay—some of those essential ingredients of native dishes which have no equivalent in Europe.

The most remarkable thing about the ship is the meticulous care which has been taken to respect caste observances. Fore and aft there are two kitchens, one Hindu and one Mohammedan, the Hindu on the port side, the Mohammedan on the starboard. From the moment foodstuff or cooking or eating utensils are bought they are kept apart in separate stores duly labelled. The kitchen ranges have been specially prepared in accordance with expert Indian advice; the right kind of urn for the tea, the necessary *chapattie* girdle for cooking flat cakes, the brass pestle and mortar for pounding curry powder. There is no margin for mistake. When the Hindu cook, who is generally a Brahmin—a caste whose touch cannot defile—has prepared his dish he brings it into the ward himself and doles it out to his co-religionists with his own hands. Needless to say, the same precautions with regard to meat are observed as at the railhead. The Mohammedan butcher kills by the *halal*, or throat-cutting stroke, and the Sikhs by the *jatka*, or stroke at the back of the neck. In the slaughter-house this morning a goat's head fell to a blow of a Sikh officer's sword.

The washhouse and lavatory are designed with the same care, for the Hindu is as fastidious in his ablutions as in his diet. The Indians are perhaps the cleanest people, but they must wash in their own way. On the starboard side is the Mohammedan tap, on the port the Hindu, with notice boards attached in Urdu and Hindu as in all the railway stations in India,

lest there should be any mistake. There are ordinary English baths, but these are regarded with suspicion by the Indians, who squat on the floor as in their own country, a bowl in the hand and a tap playing on the small of the back at a foot and a half from the ground. The sanitary requisites are an exact replica of those which obtain in the East. It was the perfection of these more than anything else which moved a venerable Khan Bahadur who visited the hospital last week to say in admiration, "All India should see this."

We were shown over the Mohammedan cookhouse, which exhaled the comfortable smell of *dhal* and rice, and peered into the Hindu kitchen, the door of which would be profaned by infidel feet and the food polluted. The lower deck, also gutted of all accessories, is set apart for the subordinate staff. Here is the laundry and the Indian *dhobie*, or washerman, who is denied the familiar stone on which he beats his linen in Hindustan. This is perhaps the only failure in the way of concession to the immemorial usages of the East.

The hold is converted into a series of store rooms for medicinal and ward necessities, cooking utensils, and the like. There is a plentiful supply of warm clothing, sweaters, scarfs, overcoats, Cardigan jackets, shirts, underclothing, and pyjamas, contributed by the Indian Soldiers' Fund, the Red Cross, and the St. John Ambulance, in addition to Government supplies. These are thickly-knitted, of a fine quality of wool. They will, of course, be the personal property of any Indian who finds himself in the ship. The choice of a fancy waistcoat and a woollen overcoat in the warm clothing department will persuade the Indian that he is well cared for. But it is the provision that has

been made for the continuance of his daily rites and observances exactly as in the East that will most win his gratitude. He deserves every comfort we can give him.

The staff of the Hospital Ship is drawn from officers of the Indian Medical Service. It is always most important that Indians serving in our army overseas should be in direct contact with men who understand their needs. The officers of the "————— —————" have made the sepoy literally at home. There is nothing wanting in the ship that the orthodox Hindu could miss unless it be the holy water of the Ganges.

## II

One would not have recognized the tired, war-worn crew who came in yesterday in a hail of pelting sleet. Most of them were sitting up in their beds chatting and laughing; pears, apples, cigarettes, chocolate, and war pictures were strewn on the table by their side. A hot scrub-down and the oiling and massage of the head, which the Indian loves, had altered the colour of life for them. A Mussulman from the Khyber whom I had seen lifted in the day before on the shoulders of two orderlies, his face pitted with the débris thrown up by a shell, was lying back peacefully smoking a cigarette.

It is not always easy to get the sepoy to talk, but to-day I found him communicative. Ease after strain, and the unfamiliar warmth and brightness and comfort all round had loosened his tongue. I found the Dogras and Gurkhas together. They had come from the same part of the field.

“How were you hit?” I asked one.

“By a *pataka*, Sahib.”

“A cracker!” At first I did not understand. A *pataka* is the cracker which is thrown about the streets when the religious processions pass in the bazaar.

“A boomb,” he explained.

It slowly dawned on me that the man thus lightly dismissed a “Jack Johnson” or a “Black Maria.” “The war is not like the war in old times,” he added regretfully.

Some of the wounded had not seen the Germans. Those who had did not speak respectfully of them. One man who had come to grips with a fat Prussian complained that he could not get the fingers of both hands round his opponent’s throat. “They are not bony men,” he added. But this would mean less resistance to the *kukri*. While he was struggling and rolling on the ground he was shot point blank through the lung and the bullet had come out through his shoulder.

I noticed on his table a dainty little enamelled puff-powder box with a mirror on the lid; a faint perfume still clung to it.

“Where did you get this?” I asked.

“A memsahib gave it me,” he said proudly, “in the street.”

It was the spontaneous gift of a French lady in Arras—presented in the spirit in which favours were thrown to knights by ladies in old times. The man’s cheery, confident face might well have attracted her in a crowd.

Another man told me how his company and another

were enfiladed by machine-gun fire in the trenches and lost all their British officers. A havildar got the men together and led them back in the dark to the lines behind. They had been badly pounded and felt a little lost and uncertain where they would find themselves. By a piece of good fortune they hit on the trenches of the Seaforths. The Highlanders and Gurkhas are old comrades in arms. The Seaforths in particular have a tradition of good fellowship with these Nepalese hill men which dates back to Mutiny days; they have fought side by side in many a North-West Frontier campaign. In India one often hears picturesque incidents of the *entente*. The Gurkhas were delighted to find themselves among their old friends.

There was a story in the ward of a wounded havildar who fell into the hands of a Good Samaritan. The German officer spoke to him in Hindustani, asking him the number of his regiment and where he came from. He bound up his wounds, gave him a drink, and brought him a bundle of straw to support his head. This will be remembered on the credit side of our German account.

The Gurkha as a rule is direct and matter-of-fact, more interested in physical than abstract affairs, as when he complains of the thickness of the German's neck. But a more Dumasesque type is met with sometimes among the Sikhs and Mohammedans. I asked a Pathan how many of the enemy he had killed.

"A great many," he said, "one cannot count."

"But about how many?"

After a little consideration he replied, in his own

expressive *argot*, "So many bullets, so many dead."

The Sikh often has the Homeric touch. An orderly exclaiming at the devastation of a village near Haze-brouck asked his British officer—

"Sahib, is it a true word that the German Padishah wishes to make the same ruin in Hindustan?"

"Perfectly true."

"Then, if he comes to India, it will be over the dead bodies of us all."

A simple and genuine speech, very characteristic. It reminds one of the story of the sepoy who asked the embarkation officer at Bombay how many were coming back.

"Ten thousand, Sahib?"

"I cannot say."

"A hundred?"

"I think I can promise you that."

"It is good. They will be enough to carry word to our homes that we have died fighting honourably."

In the native officers' ward there were two patients. One of a distant Portuguese origin; we will call him De Souza. He came out as hospital assistant to a battery. The other a Sikh Jemadar, of the Bombay Sappers and Miners. The Jemadar spoke Urdu and Gurmukhi; the hospital assistant English, Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, and Burmese. They had no common language, and could only communicate through the official interpreter, an Englishman.

De Souza, a delicate cultured youth, who was laid up with a slight attack of pneumonia, gave me a vivid picture of life in the trenches. The German trenches were not 200 yards from his own, and he lay awake at night listening to their accordions and concertinas

He seemed rather to like the music. One morning they hoisted up a huge placard on a pole with the inscription in large letters :

*Holy War.*  
*Indians fight on our Side.*  
*Woe to the British.*

It at once became a target.

If it ever entered one's head that the Indians had drifted into this war lightly and were now depressed by their hardships and losses, half an hour among these sepoys would dispel the idea at once. Where there is discouragement or discontent it must find expression, directly or indirectly, especially among the sick. But there is the same story of cheerful patience and endurance everywhere. Our cause is theirs ; they are proud to be fighting for us ; and they do not count the cost. I have had it at first hand from sepoys of all castes and creeds, and I have not met an Indian Medical Service man or a regimental officer who does not tell me the same thing.

## FRANCE WITHOUT A SMILE

THE taciturnity of the Englishman is a myth that one might have thought would die hard in France. Nevertheless it is dead, and the obsequies have not everywhere commanded our Ally's sympathy and respect. The tradition of French levity is also dead, but the manner of its passing can only command reverence.

For an Englishman to carry golf clubs through the streets of Boulogne needs a deal of courage or little penetration. If he is wearing a uniform and bears the marks of hard weather much may be conceded. A visible bandage, a scrap of white lint appearing under a Balaclava cap, will perhaps disarm criticism. But, even so, the spirit of the officer who carries his clubs to Wimereux in war-time will not be easily intelligible to the French. Wimereux is only two hours by motor from the trenches, and the officer must know that serious work is going on there involving grave issues for mankind. He himself has apparently lent a hand in it, yet he is not put off his game.

A fellow-countryman meeting the English golfer would probably smile at the man's impermeability to environment, and, observing the lint, wonder if he were quite "strong enough yet on his pegs" for a game. He might admire the man's capacity for diversion.

“ Anyhow, he has earned it,” he would say, “ and it is better to keep fit than to sit moping in the hospital or hotel.’

Certainly the Englishman owes much to his power of detachment. It is a kind of safety valve and protection against strain. But the instinct for survival in it is obscure to one not born of the soil.

The French attitude is perhaps more intelligible to us than ours is to them. They have definitely banned gaiety. Those who do not fight keep vigil, and any temporary unbuckling of the armour of resolution is discouraged as a weakening of the fortress. On the first day of the war an Englishwoman in Dinard was made to feel her want of sensibility when she asked an attendant at the Casino if play would continue just the same. Diversion is not good form. Interests outside the war are not conceivable. If they exist there is no one to serve them. All the museums of France were closed at once, all the châteaux on the Loire. Where there is a place of amusement open now there is some patriotic or charitable motive behind it. The Venus of *La Vie Parisienne* has become a Bellona.

The whole face of France seemed to change in a day and took on one set expression, which it has preserved since. The country was inspired with one mind. The individual life was forgotten. The spirit of France became as the spirit of Joffre and was no doubt inspired by him. The face of the general is itself an inspiration. One reads in it the qualities celebrated in the President’s discourse of November 27 when he presented the military medal—the cool and deliberate wisdom which is never taken unawares, the strength

of spirit which nothing daunts, the serenity of which the example spreads everywhere confidence and hope.

English readers of French newspapers at the outbreak of the war were struck by their insistence on the national tranquillity and sangfroid, and they soon came to realize that this was no mere figure of speech. Nearly five months later M. Viviani declared in the Chamber that the war had brought out virtues which the French people were not supposed to possess—endurance, patience, and stoicism. The claim was received as the plainest statement of fact.

But it would be as great a mistake to imagine that the spirit of France had undergone a radical change as it would be to think that the English had in this war quitted an inherent taciturnity. France has not changed; only contact with ultimate things has laid bare the bedrock of national character.

Joffre's laconic despatches, the quiet exodus to Bordeaux, the equally quiet bearing of the people of Paris when the German advance was turned at the Marne, Gallieni's terse proclamation, the sacrifice of individual and regimental glory in the grand, collective anonymity of the nation, the suspension of political intrigue, the united front of resoluteness, the universal banning of self, of comfort, of pleasure and ease so long as the struggle wears—all this springs from qualities which go to make the indestructible spirit of France.

"France is a person," Michelet said; "England an Empire; Germany a country or race." And he had faith in the predominance of France, as it was the country of all others in which the national personality approached most nearly to the character of individual

personality. Germany had not then become the embodiment of the virtues to which "Kultur" lays claim.

If France is a person she is for that reason more difficult to understand. To the Englishman she has always possessed a personality more complex, paradoxical, and subtly individualized than that of any other nation. Perhaps in the thoroughness with which she throws herself into the essential part, even to the last minutiae of costume, lies the secret of her resilience.

The word has gone out for patience, endurance, stoicism, and grim resolution. These are the qualities that can see her through, and these she has called up. If we did not recognize her in the part at first, it was because she has never in our times had exactly the same part to play. Our ideas of French psychology are still borrowed from the Revolution, when patience was the last virtue that could have stood her in good stead.

The convalescent subaltern of horse with his golf clubs; the young British officer billeted in Rouen who danced a tango in the hotel shocked the people of the city, as the hideous seriousness of the "Carmagnole" would have shocked our ancestors a hundred and twenty years ago. No doubt they are forgiven; and it is perhaps realized that this power of detachment makes for staying power and does not preclude the high sacrifice that a more conscious idealism demands. Comradeship in arms will prove this, if it has not already proved it.

One feels, perhaps, that if the myth of the phlegmatic Englishman might have been allowed to die more decorously, the legend of the mercurial levity of France

could not have been more honourably interred. We see mirrored in France again—

The shape of glad array,  
The nervous hands, the front of steel,  
The clarion tongue, the proud, bold face.

No doubt France will discover beneath the carelessness of young England a hidden and indomitable spirit. Both nations have proved in dark hours that their springs of life are indestructible.

## THE ENGLISH IN BOULOGNE

THE windmills of Boulogne and the poplars of Picardy are always a cheering sight after a long absence from France. Landing in the country for the first time since war was declared one thanks God that we are fighting the same fight as the folk who have made these ancient landmarks memories to conjure with.

The Englishman is welcome everywhere in France now, but one does not expect to surprise the same look of conscious sympathy in Boulogne as elsewhere. Our presence is too familiar. Franco-English relations date back to the legendary thousands who had to reside here because they persisted in not leading trumps, and further back still, by suggestion, to the days commemorated by the Colonne de la Grande Armée, which is altogether too high and dominating for the Boulonnais to forget. Between those days and these we had a camp here during the Crimea ; but the new alliance strikes deeper roots.

The aged porter who carried my baggage from the boat told me that nearly all the hotels were full. "The rooms are all taken," he said, adding apologetically, "by your compatriots," as if it were necessary to gloss over the least hint of inhospitality. French staff officers will do anything for "our friends the

English." In the Cathedral a khaki uniform is conducted to a front seat.

Boulogne is almost entirely English. The Casino and nearly all the hotels facing the front have been converted into hospitals. The Hotel de Paris has been given over to the Red Cross. Other hotels inside the city have become to all intents and purposes English barracks overflowing with the men who work the machinery of supply, transport, ambulance, and hospitals. Most of the cafés and lodging-houses have orderlies and chauffeurs billeted in them. The streets are packed with men in khaki and nurses, English and Canadian, French refugees from Lille, Armentières, and Arras, Indian orderlies, and Post Office babus. Mud-coloured London omnibuses filled with soldiers from the front descend the Grande Rue and the Rue de Faidherbe.

One cannot move without meeting Red Cross motors; there must be a thousand of them in and out of the city.

Industries of course suffer by the war, and the fishermen lose by the restriction of the area open to them, and by not being allowed to move at night, but the shops and hotels are making up for a lost season. Tobacconists, chemists, cafés, grocers, stationers, newspaper-vendors, are doing a good trade. A toy shop derives an income from a continued sale of the crown and anchor game which is much in demand in the trenches. At four o'clock Caveng's, the tea shop at the corner of the Rue Victor Hugo, is a hive of nurses and soldiers.

In the Haute Ville all is peaceful. Once climb the Grande Rue and pass through the Porte des Dunes

and you are in a different atmosphere. Motors cross the Place Godefroi de Bouillon to the Etat-Major's Office for their *laisser-passer*; high up on the belfroi one can see the guard searching the sky for hostile aircraft; otherwise there is no ripple here of the war. That quiet old hostelry, the Hotel de Bourgoyne, frequented, according to local tradition, by Thackeray, attracts its usual clientele, mostly officers of the Territorial Force. The ramparts are not so crowded as one might expect. The English are too busy for a constitutional; the citizens do not promenade much in winter. One meets a nurse with a bandaged patient, a maid with children, an abstracted-looking priest. A perambulator by a green seat recalls the most historic picture of the old city—Doyle's illustration in the second volume of *The Newcomes*, where Pendennis finds the old colonel sitting on what might be this identical chair peering out over that wide landscape in which as a child one looked vainly for the sea. The great wireless installation has since come into the picture.

It was here that Lady Burton met her husband. She has immortalized the encounter in her life—the most romantic story of devotion and love at first sight that will be found in biography. Even Smollett on his cantankerous journey spoke of the ramparts as a delightful walk. The place is full of English memories, which do not relieve the impression of its emptiness. The tennis courts beneath the bastions look singularly naked now. One cannot imagine anyone playing there even in summer. A perennial frost seems to have destroyed the sap in things, and there is no place for anything less purposeful than steel or oil or coal.

Notre-Dame within the ramparts will probably be a target for the first bomb of raiding airmen. It is not beautiful with its front of a bank and dismal interior, and one could well have spared the whole of it for a fragment of the mutilated façade of Notre Dame de Rheims. Still, one grows fond of it; it has become part of the old place; and one even sees a certain beauty in the dome viewed from a distance between the elms against the evening sky. The crypt is closed, as is the museum, in obedience to the instinct that has closed everything since the first day of war. Our neighbours feel that curiosity is indelicate in wartime. No interest outside the war—æsthetic, literary or academical—can live; nor would any be tolerated. Music is banned, and a light tune, perhaps any tune at all, heard in the street would bring an angry protest, perhaps broken windows.

What one most envies France is the system that ensures the total absorption of her manhood as a matter of course in the one issue at stake. The first thing one notices on landing in the country is the absence of recruiting advertisements. Instead of warnings almost amounting to threats and cajoleries prepared with every device of vulgar rhetoric we have the simple mobilization order. It is difficult for refugees in England now who read our posters to reconcile them with what they know of the national spirit. One has to explain to them that there is nothing wrong with the heart of the country; but only the system.

One does not see a French Regular in Boulogne who is not wounded. The Territorial units are much in evidence, and in the new generation there are the

Boy Scouts, "Bwa-Skoo" is the Parisian pronunciation. They run errands, hold your horse, chop wood, and get into mischief if left without anything to do. One of them started a motor-lorry the other day and charged into the wall of a garage. I know another whose love of adventure takes him every day to an Indian hospital ship where a convalescent Gurkha orderly hangs about the deck. The boy sits and gazes at the Gurkha and the Gurkha grins at the boy. The boy brings him fruit. Sometimes the Gurkha takes his kukri out of its black sheath, and lets the "Bwa-Skoo" feel the edge. At the end of the hundred years' peace, if it is to be, the "Bwa-Skoo's grandson will tell how his ancestor used to fraternize with a fierce Indian on the quay. Possibly the kukri will be the most intimate legend of the war in the family.

Outside the Porte des Degrés is a monument, *Le Souvenir Français*, erected in honour of the Boulonnais who have died on the battlefield. The names are inscribed of all who have fallen since the Crimea on fields as widely scattered as Senegal and Tonkin. Fresh wreaths have been placed there by the veterans of 1870-71. But there is no margin on the plinth for those who have given their lives for France in this war; and it is difficult to conceive how the present sacrifice can be rendered in marble, in Boulogne or elsewhere, in due perspective with any monument of the past.

## WINTER DAYS IN PICARDY

THEY are not going to lose the harvest in Picardy, though they are ploughing within sound of the guns. One sees the teams silhouetted against the skyline at dusk, and they toil on until it is so dark that one can only distinguish the white horses. The illimitable horizons, the absence of hedges, the long furrows leave the stranger with an idea that the cultivation of the land is on too large a scale for the resources at hand.

The small town where we stayed last night increased my pessimism. It was market day; the courtyard of the inn was full of carts and gigs; tables were laid in the large dining-room for at least fifty; but my friend and I and a solitary French Territorial officer were the only guests. The *patronne* explained that the farmers would not spend money because of the war. No, they were not poor, she said; it was thrift. On the day of the *revision* a hundred had dined at her inn.

This morning we thought we would descend on one of the neighbouring farms to buy some honey and find out for ourselves. It was one of those old castellated granges in the valley of the Authie. A poplar avenue leads up to the moat and one enters by a massive stone gateway with ar-

morial bearings over the groove for the portcullis and a pepper-box tower on one side. Entering one encounters the three smells familiar to troops who forage in Picardy. First the earthed beet and pulp in the field outside; then the homely midden in the courtyard, with the *colombier* plumb in the centre round which the pigs and chickens increase under the windows of the farm; then the sour milk smell of the interior. Magpies, mistletoe, poplars, lichen, elms will be the features that will recur most often in one's memories of the country. And now every tree in the valley is black with rooks. The farmers say that these too are *évacués*, scared by the guns, like the French partridges of the Revolution. A double row of hives in the garden promised success in the ostensible object of our errand, and our minds were soon set at rest about the land. The harvest is all right so far as a harvest can be assured in the spring. There was some anxiety at first. The railways were all taken up with the mobilization. This affected the autumn cattle sales and the farmers found they could not get rid of their beet. Labour was short, and they dared not lay in a large stock for fear of invasion. The value of the crop fell in consequence and a good deal of it was wasted. The more prudent banked up their roots carefully until there was a demand. The whole of last year's harvest was gathered without outside labour. Old men and women worked in the fields far into the night. They were three weeks late with the crop, but they got it all in.

This year they have the *évacués*, who, here at any rate, have saved the situation. There were four in the château farm and seven across the valley. Thus

the invaded departments have contributed towards the regularization of labour. The stream of *évacués* has percolated into the heart of France, restoring the system. Many were shipped South. The Maubeugeois embarked at Boulogne for the Charente early in August. Large numbers from Lille embarked at Gravelines. How far this migration has neutralized the dislocation of labour in other departments of France would be an interesting question. Government has passed an order allowing cultivators in the Territorial Army to return to their farms for the sowing. This does not apply to the zone of hostilities, but here the land is all under cultivation. A large proportion of wheat has been sown; prices are good; railway freights normal; and the farmers are doing well. If they do not dine at the inn on market day it is more through prudence than necessity. The French instinct is to give expression to things, to mark any new phase through which they are passing by a corresponding change in their way of living. Our English habit is to avoid so long as we can any admission of pressure brought to bear on us, physical or otherwise. Hence our unfortunate catchword "Business as usual."

The stream from the north and the east contained many who were *réfugiés* in the ultimate sense of the word and had already found their haven in Government almshouses. The Chartreuse Notre Dame-des-Prés at Neuville, for instance, sheltered, in addition to its ordinary *pensionnaires*, refugees from the Hôtel Dieu of Arras and many of the poor of Maubeuge. A picturesque group these, sunning themselves in the peaceful garden of the monastery—faces which suffering

has not hardened, though the struggle of life has left its dint. The friendliness and courtesy of these old folk, who seem so contented in their new refuge, hardens one's heart more than anything against the Boches. On a still morning one can hear the guns from the Chartreuse, but they no longer carry any menace to this asylum. The peacefulness of the place is impenetrable.

On Friday we were at Montreuil when the Mass was held at St. Saulve for the repose of the souls of the soldiers who had fallen on the field of honour. The British officers in the town had cards of invitation issued by the Société Française de Secours aux Blessés Militaires. All honour was done to "the brave Allies" in the seats reserved for them, in the address of Monsieur l'Aumonier, and in the decoration of the catafalque, under which the Tricolour rested, with the British flag. Possibly French and English flags were blended in St. Saulve during the Crimean War; for an earlier precedent one must go back to the alliance with the Dukes of Burgoyne.

It was an impressive service. The names of the fallen of Montreuil and the arrondissement were read out amidst the sobs of the relatives. Wounded French soldiers left their beds in the hospital to attend, many on crutches, others supported. The Tricolour with its streamer of crêpe was borne back through the streets to the citadel by the veterans of 1870. Among the crowd that thronged the church were many with the observant air of men in an unfamiliar part. There is no doubt that the war has awakened a dormant religious feeling in whole classes who have been widely separated from the Church.

The priests insist very strictly on the outward expression of the consciousness of the national struggle. In the porch of a neighbouring church the vicar has posted a notice in which young women are warned not to enter the *maison de Dieu* save in a *robe montante et fermée*.

“*Au moment si grave où nous sommes quand le sang Français coule, les dames et les jeunes filles Chrétiennes ne doivent pas porter que de toilettes modistes et sévères.*” The notice seems hardly necessary amidst the almost oppressive sombreness in which the women of France move. It is one more expression of the uncompromising side of the French spirit during the war due probably to the pastor's apprehensive watchfulness, his desire to point the way, rather than to any vagaries of the flock.

Among the British contingent who attended the service at St. Saulve were two Indians. One wondered how the incense, the candles, the vestments, the ritual, impressed them. The Oriental has become a familiar figure in France now; he does not attract the same attention as he did a few months ago. Still a certain class retain that incurably romantic attitude towards the East which lends such picturesqueness to the narratives of French travellers.

I was making a call on a French family the other day with a British officer in an Indian regiment when my friend's orderly was announced, and our hostess would insist that he should deliver his message in the room. A very ordinary and somewhat untidy Punjabi Mussulman presented himself and stood to attention. The lady of the house admired his inscrutable solemnity, his dark and intelligent eyes, the dignity of his salute,

his immobility "as of an idol." She spoke of him as my friend's *esclave*, and then as a *mage*. She was struck with his pensiveness, was convinced that in solitude he would deliver himself to "the meditations mysterious." He had the beard majestic, the turban of the Thousand and One Nights.

The attitude of the peasant in these parts to the Boches is one of quiet confidence. As he ploughs he listens to the bark of their guns, but he no longer fears their bite. I met a motley crew of labourers with packs on their shoulders trudging heavily down the street. Many of them were too old for territorials. They were the *garde du chemin de fer* to be posted at crossings and railway stations down the line. I asked one of them, a grey-whiskered veteran, where they were going and he said quite gravely without a smile—

"*Nous allons foutre sur le gueule de Guillaume.*"

The Boche is an incubus to be lifted in the spring.

## THE INDIANS IN MONTREUIL

THERE must be something homely and familiar to an Indian in entering an ancient walled city by a gate. Among the convoy that swung through the archway into Montreuil last night in the dusk there must have been Rajputs thinking of Chitore, Dogras of Haripur, Jammu of Kangra, and Pathans of Peshawar. The old town lies as snugly in its ramparts as any city in the East.

This morning, clear, fresh, and sunny after a slight frost with a pleasant nip in the air, recalls a February morning in the Punjab. That thin white distant shaft, the Phare of Etaples, faintly distinguishable in the haze, might well be a minaret. One looks down from the ramparts over wide horizons unbroken by enclosures, and is reminded of the sweeping country about Campbellopur ; only the undulations are smoother and there are no nullahs or rocks. North of the Indus in the patches that can be cultivated the young green of the wheat will be showing, with here and there a mustard field flung over the brown soil like a bright yellow scarf. Here in Europe everything is soft ; there hard, both to the touch and the eye. This thick matted turf contrasted with those niggard blades of grass is the measure of the difference, and as spring approaches the measure increases. The Anglo-Indian

returned to the West loves to thrust his stick into the turf of a lawn and feel the soft resistance of fibre and root. There the ferrule strikes rock or grit or some equally ungrateful soil to which stalks cling like alien parasites.

In the Church of Saint Saulve I found an *autel de Noël* which had been left over Candlemas. The dark green walls of the grotto resembled lichened rock; the straw was spotlessly clean, like bright-coloured butter; the Sacred Babe was white as an egg; the ass and the cow had that perfect air of gentle inquisitiveness which is required. The whole *tableau* was inspired with the spirit of Noël, and I could not help thinking of those hard, bright *taziahs* which the Moslems carry through the bazar in the *Mohurrun*, and seeing in the contrast a reflection of the religious sentiment which is born of the hardness or the kindness of earth.

The high twigs of the poplars in the valley of the Canche have already a yellowish tinge; leaf buds are showing on the ashes under the ramparts; soon the Indians will be feeling in their bones the unfamiliar sense of spring. In the hospital I found that they had come out like lizards into the sun, and were sitting peacefully on the benches in the barrack square. The more convalescent were in khaki, others in their blue dressing gowns. A bugle blew for drill, and they formed companies. It was odd to see a group of bandaged warriors in caps and hoods and dressing gowns of every conceivable colour—gifts to the wounded—stand to attention and form fours. Three smart Indian officers of a Gurkha regiment, detached from this motley herd, were taking an aristocratic constitu-

tional, cane in hand, round the yard. Another group in a shed were strapping up their kit; they were off to the front again, passed medically fit.

After drill the fittest joined a group of English ambulance men in a desultory game of football. A high kick lodged the ball at the top of one of those lime trees cut and trained candelabra-wise after the manner of Picardy, and I wondered who would "shin up" and get it down. A Pathan and a Gurkha tried to shake the trunk and then stood back and gazed at the ball in a resigned way as if hope would do it. Tree climbing does not come into the Indian's drill unless he is of the arboreal caste who extract toddy from the palm. It was a "Tommy" whose resource served the situation. He "shinned up" the trunk with an easy grip which would have defeated a flag-staff or a telegraph pole.

One cannot help moralizing when one sees the English and the Indians in Montreuil and finds the shutters of the old town scribbled over by French schoolboys with *vivats* for them both—"hourah for Indian," "hourah for English." One remembers how in the fourteenth century the people of the countryside by reason of the English "*se nourrissaient de bêtes immondes*" and one wonders how many English Sovereigns have knelt in prayer in the Church of St. Saulve and when last an English soldier set foot in these cobbled streets on duty for his King. The local historian told me that the funeral car of King Henry V. passed through Montreuil with great pomp, drawn by four horses and accompanied by princes of the blood-royal, halting before the Church of Notre Dame, where the King was given absolution.

In the afternoon a squad of convalescents went sight-seeing personally conducted by a N.C.O. It was market day, and they mixed oddly with the drab-suited peasants in the Place. Neither Indian nor peasant seemed particularly interested in the other. One notices a certain phlegm in Picardy after Orleans and Marseilles. The tented stalls must have reminded them of the awnings in the bazars. They bought oranges and pipes and walnuts and were given honest change. They stared at the pink and white pigs in the pig market and up at the Virgin in the niche beneath the window of my hotel.

It was in this old hostelry, with its double gallery of undulating passages looking out over the vine-roofed courtyard, that Lawrence Sterne stayed a hundred and fifty years ago. It was here that he engaged the immortal La Fleur. Outside in the street he doled out his last sous to the beggars. A league down the road his valet was thrown by the *bidet* which would not pass the dead ass. It was at Nampont twelve kilometres from here that he met the owner of the beast mourning that he could no longer share his crust with the creature he loved. "Shame on the world," moralized Sterne. "Did we love each other as that poor soul but loved his ass—t'would be something." And this classic embodiment of all tender and sensible virtues was a German. There is a text for further moralizing in that. What large draughts "the poor Indian" would have drawn from the fount of his pity it is not easy to conceive.

Montreuil can have changed very little since Sterne passed through. The elms on the ramparts may have grown a little taller, the beautiful old Church of Saint

Saulve a little greyer, the roofs and mansardes a little browner or yellower, but the compactness of the little town within its ramparts has left no room for new streets or buildings, and it has been spared the garish thoroughfares—the Rue de la République and the like—which deform so many of the beautiful old cities of France.

## THE INDIANS AT HARDELOT

**H**ARDELOT has become for the moment to all appearances an Indian cantonment. In other towns of France the sepoy's khaki turban blends oddly with the mixed headgear of the pavement; in HardeLOT the Indian convalescent and the Indian Medical Service staff have the sea-front to themselves.

There is a certain irony in the occupation by the Indians of this bijou seaside resort. *Coquet* and *pimpant* like a new model with the paint still on it. The place is the creation of a *société* who are artists in the exploitation of pleasure. Architects have been moulding its features into the expression of a personality. It is still in the making, but the genius of the place has been docile. It has an air of calculated seductiveness. It is a place to lounge and flirt and bask and bathe in, untouched by any of the realities of life. The villas have grown out of the sands like an exhalation. They are artistic, built after a somewhat elaborate Dutch pattern, with great variety of design and a quieter colouring than is usual in resorts of the kind.

Entering the town by its one road of access, one finds the streets empty. The caretakers must be lurking somewhere for the spruce villas look singularly clean, but the first sign of life is the blue

dressing gown of the convalescent sepoy. One sees it on the *digue*, on the sands, and on the fringe of the pine woods. As one nears the hotel one meets the first group among the scattered villas. A Gurkha is peering into the unresponsive windows of "Aurore," a Pathan is inspecting a stuffed heron in the hall of "Crépuscule." The very names of the houses, pious, frivolous and sentimental, add to the incongruity of the scene. Some of them have affected an Oriental nomenclature with a quite inadequate prevision of the *milieu* in which they stand. The poetry of 1910 halts behind the prose of 1915; imagination has been eclipsed by fact.

The Indians have occupied the Hôtel Harelot, the shrine and citadel of this cult of pleasure. The convalescents are in the annexes; the sick in the main building, the walls of which are hung with the company's maps of the forest and lakes and plans of the sites to be sold. The dining-room and restaurant have been converted into the principal wards, the ladies' *salon* into the operating theatre, the smoking-room into the X-rays room. In the bureau you will find the Commandant; in the "Direction" the Babus.

The kitchens downstairs still remain kitchens, but instead of the incense of *bouillon de veau* there ascends the familiar fumes of *dhâl-bât* and *ghi*. The coffee-grinder grinds the ingredients of curry powder. The range, its surface scraped of black lead, lends itself to the deft manipulation of the *chapatti*. As we enter the Brahmin cook is turning the flat cakes and the store Babu is admiring their lightness. In the washhouse the dhobie, after the manner of the East,

still beats his linen on a board, pending the arrival of the mangle ; and in the same "godown" irons it with an electric iron attached by a switch to the main current.

In the wards Hira Singh and Ram Lal and Tegh Bahadur enjoy the particular view of the ocean which has been prepared for the tired Parisien by the guardian spirit of the place. From their beds they look out on the white and yellow sands and the blue sea, and watch the steamers trailing their smoke on the horizon. As we pass through the principal ward a packet of illustrated papers arrives, and hands are stretched out as the Commandant with a jolly word for everybody moves from bed to bed. The arrival of the *Tazwir-ka-Khargiz*<sup>1</sup> is an event of the week.

Hardelet will be a pleasant place for a sick man in the spring. The unaccustomed warmth of the sun and the blueness of the sea and sky had put the ward in content with the climate. "You will be able to bathe soon," I suggested to a hospital orderly ; "you will like that."

The Commandant turned to a Gurkha and pointed to the sea—*samandra* is the Hindustani word, picturesque and sounding as the Greek. "You can bathe as soon as you like," he said ; "but I can't warm the sea for you, you know."

The Gurkhas laughed like spoilt children at this implication of unfamiliar cosseting. The Babu said, "No doubt, after all, the Government would warm the sea if it were possible." The Sircar, he said, were very kind and took very much trouble. Only he feared the resources of science were "impotential."

<sup>1</sup> Picture paper.

At my request the Babu submitted his views about the war and hostilities in general. He thought that white races should not fight one another. War should only be carried on between civilized troops and savages where the strength is all on one side and the weaker party can yield after a little honourable resistance and "subsequently ameliorate his condition." But the state of war between two Great Powers was a very dreadful thing; it was also "impoleetical," for where both are adepts in destruction neither can secure any advantage.

The Babu was an imperfect student of Mill; his common sense was better than his ethics.

Hardelot is a happy spot for the convalescent: it combines the charm of the pine forest and the sea. In the woods I came across a Garhwali who was trying to snare rabbits. After that it seemed quite natural to meet a file of natives—of Picardy—winding slowly up a sandbank with heavy bundles of firewood on their backs, women and children, stooping under the load. Some with bare feet, like Himalayan coolies poised against the wind on the slope. I passed half a dozen before it occurred to me that I was in France.

Then I saw a great stone cross like that raised to John Nicholson in the *ghat* beyond Rawal Pindi. I wondered who could have preceded the Indians here; what human drama could have been played in these dunes where the mushroom watering-place had sprouted out of the sand. It was all jungle, as the sepoy would say, undulating pine forest bayed with amphitheatres of white sand swept up by the wind like the drifts in the desert, burying young trees to their top branches. There were marshy depressions

where the moss was a greeny gold, more gold than green; the kind of place where one might flush a snipe or a woodcock, where the white trunks of the birch end in a brush the colour of osiers in spring.

The date on the cross, 596, visible at three hundred yards, made me sit down and think. It was the last place in the world where one would expect a monument; a battle here could only have been fought against an invasion from the sea. I approached and read. Squatting against the plinth I found the ubiquitous blue dressing-gown.

“An Englishman who loves France” had erected the monument in the memory of Saint Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, who embarked from this coast in the year 596 for the evangelization of England.

“Sahib,” the blue dressing-gown asked, “What is this *yaiad-garh*?”

“It is to the great *nabi*,” I said, “who made us all Christians.”

Perhaps, if the word goes round, some Indian will do *puja*<sup>1</sup> here, and if there is any efficacy in prayer the avatar should be a tower of strength where the resources of science are “impotential.”

<sup>1</sup> Worship.

## HIS FIRST TRENCH

THE struggle drags on, and for many of us it has been, and will be, impossible to lend any physical aid.

In the mornings, with our feet on the fender, we read the news from the front. "The Allies have made sensible progress at ——" "The enemy's position has been taken at ——" But what of the cost? We wake up sometimes in the night and think of our friends in the trenches. A kind of shame fills us. We remind ourselves that but for some defect of eye or limb, or that if we had not been born a decade too soon, we too should be in the firing line playing our part with them.

Perhaps. But it can never be proved. And it is something of a boast for a man, who has not been tried, that he is able to live up to the traditions of the British Army. Especially boastful now, when all that the tradition is demanding of our men is not realized in England and is not realizable.

It was a very thin line that held the German Army back from Calais. It is no secret now that the enemy's heavy guns outranged and outnumbered ours, and for days we could give them little or no adequate reply. The men who played their part in this inferno knew that they were holding the gate against the Hun.

If the line had broken anywhere the inundation would have swept through.

The orders sent to the trenches were to "Hold on at all costs," and the company commander thanked God that the appalling uncertainty was over. It made everything simple. He had only to hang on. His company might be wiped out, but it would have served its purpose and held the enemy back. The wounded and dying could have no reproach for him. It is not an easy alternative that for a young officer—either to yield ground, which is perhaps essential, or to sacrifice eighty per cent. of his men.

A shell struck the front wall of the trench and buried five men. They cried out, "We are buried alive." The subaltern's face was pitted by the débris, but he crawled to the men, whose nerves were shattered for a moment by the explosion, and spoke to them like a father. A young giant cried and laughed and swore and then pushed his head over the parapet again. He was look-out man of his platoon.

Eight days on end in the trenches. Shrapnel fire from dawn till night. After a few rounds the enemy would find the range. Machine-gun fire enfilading them; men sniping them from among the trees in a wood. The great shells from the siege guns tear the earth up all round, great yawning graves, sixteen feet broad. The subaltern takes out his watch. Twenty-four shells in a minute. He reckons that there are eight howitzers and four siege guns playing on his trench alone. They fall with a nerve-racking concussion. The men stoop and squat in the filth and mud; they are cramped and cold. The days drag on; they can do nothing.

Luckily they are dug deep in. They had time in the night for that after their long march, though they were dead beat and wanted to lie down in a two-foot trench. They said they could do no more.

"We're done in, sir."

The subaltern was a boy just commissioned to fill in the gaps. It was his first trench.

"We are three feet down now, sir. The captain never had them deeper."

But he kept them at it. He lent them a hand. It needs a "touch" to make tired men dig when they are falling asleep over their spades.

Then at three, before they had slept, there was a night attack. It was the usual thing, the enemy crawling up to the barbed-wire entanglements, which had been broken by shell-fire during the day. The night is dark and misty. Suddenly the machine-gun opens fire. Three hundred rounds. Then a lull, just time enough to fall asleep. Then it is turned on again like a hose slowly sweeping the trench. The observation man is hit. He and one man who is sniped are the only casualties during the night. The enemy's tactics are to murder sleep, to exhaust and unnerve the men who are holding the trenches, to wear down the resistance of the thin line before their masses are poured in to the attack.

But it was the lot of this company to attack. After sitting still under shell-fire for eight days in the same trench they were relieved for billeting in a village. Behind the trench they passed one of the batteries that had been brought up to hold the enemy's fire, broken and out of action, and the gunners lying dead behind the guns. They had fought to a standstill.

They moved out at ten at night, but at five in the morning they are standing to arms. Orders had come for them to attack a strong position of the enemy at day-break. They advanced crawling on their stomachs or making little rushes of five yards at a time under a withering fire of rifles, machine-guns, and shrapnel. There was little or no dead ground. At two o'clock the subaltern found himself with what remained of his company, eighteen strong. The regiments on each side had retired, but he had received no orders. He sent a man back, but he did not return. At twilight he mustered his men at the edge of a wood. They were moved on to entrench in another spot. Rations and a dollop of rum put new strength into them. They had had no time to think about food all day. They were digging most of the night. In the morning they were shelled out of their new position. They retired and advanced and retired again. At night the shattered brigade rallied and came on once more and reoccupied the trenches, driving the Germans out at the point of the bayonet.

But the subaltern was not in this. He had a bullet through his cheek and the fragment of a shrapnel in his left arm. As he lay in the trench waiting for night and the stretcher-bearers—men of his own regimental band—he thought of death for the first time. One of his men had described the action as "hell," thinking of the presence of the dead by his side all day, or worse, of comrades mutilated and in pain. It was a hell worth dying in, or having lived through.

When England emerges from her trial it will be a grand thing to remember that one was among the "happy few."

The subaltern is back in the trenches. He has seen the heedless crowds in the Strand. Officers who have been in the firing line for months are passing backwards and forwards now on ninety-six hours' leave. They see the kinema-booth disgorge its crowd; they read the racing and football news in the papers, and pray for an invasion on the east coast. One man in the Indian Army, who had not seen Europe for eight years, had five hours at home. "I don't think I could stick it again," he said, "even if I get leave."

The line is closer now; the supports deeper; the artillery reinforced; the men refreshed by good food and sleep. But the wave will spend itself again and we shall want every man who can hold a rifle to stand in the breach.

Every man who is training in England now to fill in the gap is playing his part in his own degree. When the war is over he will feel happy in his mind. But what of the young man who is keen of sight and sound of limb, who is bound by no ties and who yet stands by; the man who is of too dull and stockish a mind to be awakened; "the gentleman in England now abed"? Perhaps only when he reads in the History of the War the bald uncensored facts will he realize that he was needed, that when his country was bleeding he did not come to her aid.

## THE NORFOLK HOUSEWIFE

THE Norfolk labourer is not easily carried off his feet. He can take a blow impassively and stomach a succession of reverses without losing his head. There was no excited rush to the colours in the first week of August. The response was gradual. The men came forward thoughtfully in batches as it slowly sank into their minds that England was in a tight place. It is not easy to persuade men of this soil that their island is in peril, but, once persuaded, they afford the strongest material of defence. In whatever direction the English character may evolve they will stand for the type of the original stock with all its virtues and limitations, dogged, unimaginative, and tenacious.

“Do they realize the war down in Norfolk?” some one asked me. I do not think they do. Does anyone realize it in Cumberland, Manchester, Cornwall, or Kent? Their very powerlessness to realize is part of their strength. These folk have made their sacrifice with an easy confidence. Things may not be going well, but “them Jairmans” are “furriners” after all, and so cannot do much.

The lads may have to dig their heels in deeper, stiffen their backs more, but there has never been any

notion of the possibility of giving ground. In the villages they speak of the war as people speak of an epidemic that must run its course like other epidemics. The Germans are a pest, like the flies of Egypt, and no doubt equally evanescent.

The women bear the infliction with a kind of mild impatience, though the ravage has called away the best of their men. The wife of a Norfolk labourer is a soothing person to talk to in days of national stress. Yesterday I was in Thrutton Parva, a village I had known twenty years ago, and found the place outwardly unchanged by the most lamentable year in the history of the world.

Old Mrs. Pegler, of the inn, told me that the war was causing "quite a disturbance. . . . Folk here are allers talking about it." She had heard that a lot of people had been killed and that it was going to be "a very terrubul thing." All the young men from the village had gone.

I called on Mrs. Jay, of the Green. She had a son enlisted, and disapproved of the enemy's conduct of the campaign.

"I don't hold with them Jairmans coming over in their flying machines and interferin' with folk," she said. "Of course we've got to kill 'em all," she added. "They're a raare na-asty people."

Everyone was agreed upon the necessity of extermination. This was mere policy, as in the case of a wasps' nest over the church door or rats in a barn. And to their implicit faith the need presupposed the means. They spoke of the apostles of Kultur without resentment, as of some irrational nuisance that must be removed. The Berlin professors would have been per-

plexed at the absence of rancour. The Norfolk spirit is an attitude outside their psychology.

The Kaiser alone has impressed their imagination. They seem to have visualized him. In Thrutton Parva he is as real as the devil.

I spoke of him to the sexton who was digging a grave. "He's no man, he's a devil," he said. "I should like to get 'im into this here hool with my spade on the top of him. He wouldn't git out, I lay you, didd or alive."

In a cottage on the Green I found a spirited old lady of seventy-five. I tried her with the same bait.

"The brute, the ra-ascal!" she said. "I'd like to punch him and I should dew if I could git hold of the r-rugue. If my son was alive he would be the first to fly at him.

"Wot our pore soldiers are sufferin' over there!" she went on. "If I were younger I'd goo out and help the pore things. I couldn't dew much valable, but I'd lift them up after the battle when they haven't got no mothers to narse them. I'd dew the dairtiest wark. Them Jairmans wouldn't scare me."

Then she told me of a weaker vessel, Mrs. Ebbs, next door. "She's scared of them acepolines," she said. "One come over here last month and made a ra-are noise. 'What are we to do,' she sez, 'if they come down next time?' 'Hev your clothes ready to slip on,' I sez, 'and all your money by.' She gits five shillings from the parish. I can't help mocking the old dear. 'They've got the caart ready to take us all to the mid lands,' I sez, 'when the Jairmans come.'"

"An acepoline did come down by Thrutton Magna Church last week, but that belonged to the Alleys.

I ran arter it. I wasn't scared, but I had to give over. I heven't got the breath. I didn't get no farther than Bulmer's pightle. What amazin' things we dew see in modern times to be sure. That shoo we are not so far away from the battle here."

Far away. I thought of the refugees in the valley of the Canche, in the monastery of Notre-Dame du Pré ; women who had seen ghosts. Thrutton Parva lies in just such a valley among the same alders and poplars and willows with their pink roots in the stream, and the marshy dykes fringed with the foxy-coloured osier brush, only everything is a month earlier there and the villages are grey instead of red, and Thrutton Parva has not been touched by the war.

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In contrast with the rally of the labouring classes and the sons of tradesmen in the towns and villages, there is a general feeling that many farmers' sons who might go are hanging back. "They all seem to think," a parson told me, "that it is somebody else's job." A young man whose father farms a few acres was speaking of the Indians. "It was a good move bringing them over," he said. "We don't want no more Garmans. We've got to do them in." It never occurred to this young man that it was up to him, even more than the Indians, to lend a hand, and to "do them in" himself. If asked why he has not enlisted he says he has to mind the land. Labour is short, and there is something to be said for his point of view.

In nearly every district in the eastern counties the agricultural labourer has come forward. There are local exceptions, of course, in Norfolk as elsewhere. Thrutton Parva has sent every available man ;

Thrutton Magna has mustered only twenty. Spirit and tradition vary with the soil, as primroses and Lent lilies. In some villages the awakening influences are weaker, in others the young men are too dull and stockish to understand. No meetings, no placards, no bands or singing of "God Save the King" or "Rule, Britannia" can move them. To all appeals they have the same answer: "I'll goo when they fetch me," or "If they want me, let 'em come arter me."

The shirker does not lead an easy life in Norfolk. A shepherd's wife in the Waveney Valley told me there were two lads in her parish who had not joined.

"I am always going on at 'em," she said. "All the folk here mock at 'em. One's a great, big, strapping boy in the farm over there. He is over six foot and good for ten Jairmans."

"Isn't he ashamed?" I asked. "What excuse has he?"

"He sez he's got the pig to mind. The other sez he ain't got the nairve."

I encountered this youth, and drew from him some of his political convictions. He had seen it said in the paper that the war would not last after June. Also he had just read on a poster outside the shop that we had sunk a German submarine.

"There's another gone," he said. "We'll soon finish them now. We've got to wipe them Jairmans off the face of the airth."

I drew him with the Kaiser.

"He's a bad 'un! Summun orte to take his hidd off."

"Why don't you try?" I suggested. "Lend a hand, anyway."

“Wot, oi! I ain’t got the nairve.”

This, it appears, is the man’s permanent formula. He meets all taunts with it. As a physiological fact, it is incontrovertible.

It is to be hoped that a lad with such an impenetrable cuticle will ply his horny hands to good purpose on the farm.

In the keeper’s lodge I found a tall, fair, Saxon-looking girl who had five brothers at the front. She told me how the eldest had held up three “Huns” in a mill and taken them prisoners. She used the word “Hun” quite naturally, with no hint of contempt or bitterness. On the table there were a bright Prussian helmet and a button from a Bavarian coat.

Two cottages within a hundred yards have sent nine men. Nearly every house has its relic, a helmet or a button, photographs of sons, husbands, and brothers in uniform, and Princess Mary’s Christmas gift, the brass cigarette box and the portrait with the greetings seasonably framed in holly. One woman showed me a French Prayer Book bound in leather, given her son by a dying *piou-piou*; another a bit of shrapnel torn from her boy’s side. In one cottage the son was home on three days’ leave, and had gone out to gather his mother primroses and moss.

“The Jairmans can’t stop them a-growin’,” she said. She was a woman of imagination, and realized the appalling malevolence of the Hun.

These Norfolk housewives come of an indomitable breed.

Bearing in mind that the country is not invaded, that all physical menace is remote, and that there is no obligatory service, one must admit there is as fine a

spirit in Thrutton Parva as in Picardy or Lorraine.

What would they do if the "Jairmans" did come? One wonders. It is not easy to conceive of this country disturbed, even by a raid. After the wave had passed I can imagine one gossip calling to another across the road:

"Hev you seen what a mess they've made of old Garge Borett's ba-arn? I've heard say the old man had both his legs blown off—koind of explosion like. The old lady hid in a holl till they'd gone by. They're ra-are na-asty people, them Jairmans. Good thing we tarned them off. We don't want no more of the likes of them coming round where they have no business, interferin' with folk."

## THE SUBALTERN'S VIGIL

THE subaltern lay in bed listening to the heavy grinding of the dray wheels on the cobbled stones. When he dozed off he was still conscious of them. The wagons passed in a harsh, unceasing current all night. Sleep only meant that the sound became a vague oppression which did not need translating into thought. No orchestra could symbolize better the incubus of war.

The subaltern was very tired. Six weeks before a bullet had made a clean hole in his chest and he had lain in the same ward listening to the drays. He had gone back to the trenches. This time a shrapnel splinter had grazed his scalp, and his head ached a good deal and he could not sleep. He had forgotten the grinding of the wheels. Now it had become a burden again.

His neighbour in the next bed talked in his sleep, calling to some one he wished to stay by him. In the daytime he seldom spoke. The man was a gunner. A shell had burst near him, and his eyes were bandaged. When the nurse brought him his basin or his cup of tea he would say in a far-away voice, "you are too kind." No one knew his thoughts. No one was quite sure if he knew that he would never see.

The subaltern lay awake trying to think of happy things. He walked down Jermyn Street to his club.

He thought of a peak he had meant to climb in the Tyrol, of a horse he had meant to buy, a certain face, a certain voice. But the zest had gone out of everything. He could not conjure up the ghost of happiness.

Whenever he opened his eyes he saw the yellow face of the clock of the Hôtel de Ville on which the shadow of the minute-hand seemed always on the half-hour. The night dragged on as slowly as the carts which were carrying food to the front to keep men alive to kill other men.

And the men who were to be destroyed were not so very different from the men who were being sent out to destroy them. They too felt the cold and liked good warming drink, and loved women and children.

His thoughts wandered to St. Nazaire. He had entrained there straight from Marseilles when he arrived from India. There was a most wonderful snipe bog near the camp. He had walked round it with his colonel one Sunday afternoon, flushing birds at every step. They rose with that ironic "gluk"—like a boot pulled out of mud—which moves the heart of a shikari as nothing else can. He had raised his stick to his shoulder instinctively every time. Both swore to come back to the swamp directly it was all over. Meanwhile there was "the show"—the great game the boy had always dreamed of. When it became realizable he forgot the snipe. He had lived golden moments, and leaden too, mostly waiting under fire and inactive and cold. Yet he had often thought of the bog as he lay in the trenches. He had seen the colonel killed before his eyes.

Somehow the hope of shooting snipe at St. Nazaire

had become remote, and, what was worse, he did not very much care. He was chilled by his own apathy.

"Damn the Kaiser," he said half aloud. "He has spoilt everything!"

The man in the next bed moved uneasily in his sheets and said, "Don't go."

As he lay awake he thought of all the other things that the Kaiser had killed—among them happiness in nearly every home in the world, in the desolate huts of peasants in the Siberian pine forests, the mountain chalets of Dauphiné and Savoy, the cottages of fisher-folk on the East coast, the mud hovels on the Euphrates, Park Lane mansions, and Bedouin' tents. In his tired inventory he forgot the scrapheap that had been Belgium. The pictures he called up had no end and became blurred in his mind, but in nearly every one there was a child crying.

He had had a letter from a small sister. Her Christmas had been spoilt. The aunt she was living with was wearing black and had been crying all the time, and she could not do anything to help.

Everywhere a human solitude—people necessary to other folk as life itself torn from them unnecessarily, many lost and buried in heaps in unknown graves—half one's friends dead.

Morbid! Perhaps. But in the small hours, when our vitality is low, our sense of proportion—especially if we are sick—is seldom true. If the grey and dismal values of three in the morning held at noon there would be an end of all aspirations won through strife. That incessant grinding of the wheels would cease.

On the other side of the frontier convoys were bringing in food to keep men alive to kill those others

for whom the creaking drays under the subaltern's window were pouring in supplies. To a sick mind there seemed no point in it, and no end.

And this was only one of the many thousands of arteries which were feeding the armed manhood of Europe. Asia and Africa were embroiled. Not a home from Vladivostock to Cape Clear in which the germs of Kultur had not killed happiness or kindness. Everywhere the same rumbling and creaking and grinding of wheels, the rattling of trucks and couplings, disturbed the night. Under the Indian stars the crazy whine of bullock carts. Long files of earth-coloured camels and asses in Egypt and Mesopotamia carried the provender of war. It was no great tragedy that the boy dwelt on, but the multitudinous little things that collectively darkened the world—fleeting glimpses of happiness so quickly brushed away, youth all over the world just old enough to think it wrong to be happy, middle age just young enough to feel lost and futile because they can lend no physical aid.

A week before he had lain in a wood all day. The sun came out and the sweet smell of wet oak leaves drying, the foxy-brown of the under-growth, the violet haze in the high twigs of the birches brought home to him other woods in which the same scents lingered and the same lights played. He had felt very martial when he entered it in the morning. But the long hours had passed by and he had not seen anything all day but blackbirds and magpies and little bushy-tailed squirrels vibrating with life who sat up peeling their chestnuts within a stone's throw of his rifle. Before evening a most degenerate longing for peace had entered his soul and he had had

no wish to pull a trigger against any living thing. When it was still dark in the room with the drawn blinds he heard the cry from the street, "Maquereau ! Maquereau !" that strange fish call with the high note—something between the cry of a cat and a cock.

The man in the next bed was awake. The subaltern knew it by his stillness. He had not said, "Don't go ! Don't go !" for an hour.

A nurse came into the room, drew the curtains and threw up the blinds. In the flood of light the spectre faded. The smell of fresh, hot tea warmed him physically. Some chrysanthemums in a vase and a newspaper on the table by his bed in which he had seen his name in despatches and the dear old regiment praised by the commander-in-chief changed the colour of life.

"Have you had a good night ?"

"Oh, yes, thank you ! A bit of a head, but it has gone now."

He remembered that he had ninety-six hours' leave and the doctor had said he might go in a day or two. London held great fascination ; he had not seen England for five years. He had promised to take that small sister to the "Zoo" and to try to make the llama spit. Then the trenches again. It was a good life. As a double-company commander with his fine Pathans he would make a hole in the enemy's front. Happiness lay on that road—for himself and all the world. It was a grand time for young men—an age for giant-slayers.

Then he thought of St. Nazaire. Things seemed possible again. When it was all over he would come back and have a go at the snipe.

## THE DRABI

THE best-fed Army in history owes the super-excellence of its canteen to the motor-lorries which feed the trenches on nearly the whole line of the front from the sea to Nancy. But there are combinations of the elements which defeat the last word of scientific transport. And that is where the Indian mule cart comes in.

I was surprised to see three of them swinging down the road the other day, the mules leaning against each other as pack mules will do when trained to the yoke. The little convoy pulled up outside the courtyard of an abattoir in an old town in France where it had been raining in torrents for days until earth and water had produced a third element which resembled neither. The red-peaked *kula* protruding from the khaki turban of the drabi proclaimed a Punjabi Mussulman. Little else was distinguishable in the mist and rain, which enveloped everything in a dismal pall. The inert bundle of misery unrolled itself and, seeing a Sahib by the gate, saluted.

“Bad climate,” I suggested.

“Yes, Sahib, very bad climate.”

“Bad country?”

But the man's instinctive sense of conciliation was proof against dampness, moral or physical.

“No, Sahib. The Sircar's country is everywhere

very good." The glint of a smile crept over the dull whites of his eyes.

To the drabi there are only two kinds of white people. The Sircar or British Raj and the enemy. The enemy is known to him only by the ponderous and erratic nature of his missiles, for the mule cart corps belongs to the first line of transport.

"Where is your home?" I asked.

"Amritsar, Sahib."

I wondered whether he were inwardly comparing the two countries. Here, everything drenched and colourless; there, brightness and colour and clean shadows. Here, the little stone church of a similar drabness to its envelope of mist; there, the reflection of the Golden Temple sleeping in the tank all day. The minarets of his Mosque and the crenellated city walls would be etched now against a blue sky. I looked at his mules. They did not seem at all *dépaysés*.

"How do they stand the damp?" I asked. "Much sickness?"

"No, Sahib. Only one has been sick. None have died except those destroyed by the bo-ombs."

I wondered what the carts were doing at ——. They were of the first line; a first line transport carries the food into the very mouth of the Army. Being the last link in the line of communications it is naturally the most vulnerable. Other links are out of range of the enemy's guns and immune, in this phase of the operations, at least, from attack except by aircraft. The drabi explained that they had been detailed for forage work.

As he lifted the curricula bar from the yoke one of the mules stepped on his foot, and he called it a name

that reflected equally on his own morals and those of the animal's near relations. He did not address the beast in the tone an Englishman would use, but spoke to it with brotherly reproach. Just then an officer of the Indian Army Supply and Transport Corps rode up, and I got him to talk, as I knew I could if I praised the mules and carts enough. He enlarged on the virtues of the most adaptable, adjustable, and indestructible vehicles that had ever been used in a campaign, and of the most hardy, ascetic, and providentially accommodating beast that had ever drawn or carried the munitions of war. These light transport carts are wonderful. They cut through the mud like a harrow over thin soil. The centre of the road is left to the lorries. "They would be bogged where we go," the S. and T. man said proudly. "They are built for swamps and boulder-strewn mountain streams. If the whole show turns over you can right it at once. If you get stuck in a shell hole you can cut the mules loose, use them as pack transport, and man-handle the carts. Then we have got component parts. We can stick on a wheel in a minute, and we don't get left like that menagerie of drays, furnishing vans, brewers' carts, and farmers' tumbrils, which collapse in the fairway and seem to have no extra parts at all— — unadaptable things, some of them, like a lot of rotten curios. And, of course, you know you can take our carts to pieces and pack them; you can get"—I think he said fourteen—"of them into a truck. And if you . . ."

Then he enlarged on his beasts. Nothing ever hurts a mule short of a bullet or shell. Physical impact, heat or cold, or drought, or damp, it is all

the same. They are a little fastidious about drink, but they deserve one indulgence, and a wise Staff officer will give them a place up stream for watering above the cavalry. For hardiness nothing can touch them. They are as fit in Tibet as in the Sudan, as composed in a blizzard on the Nathu-la as in a sand-storm at Wadi Halfa. And I knew that every word he said was true. I had sat a transport cart through the torrents of Jammu and had lost a mule over a precipice in a mountain pass beyond the Himalayas. It lay half buried in the snow all night with the thermometer below zero. In the morning it was dragged up by ropes and began complacently grazing.

"And look at them now in this slush!" They certainly showed no sign of distress or even of depression.

"And the drabis? Do they grouse?"

"Not a bit. They are splendid. They have no nerves, no more nerves than the mules. You ought to have seen Muhammad Alim come back from Neuve Chapelle. When Hell began the order had gone round, 'All into your dug-outs,' and the bombardier of his cart had buried himself obediently in the nearest funkhole. He stuck it out there all day. The next morning he rolled up at the Brigade Column and reported his cart as lost. Nothing could have lived in that fire, so it was struck off.

But Drabi Muhammad Alim had not heard the order. He sat through the whole of the bombardment in his cart. After two days not having found his destination he returned. "Sahib," he said, "I have lost the way." When asked what the fire was like he said that there had been a wind when the

boom-golies passed, which reminded him of the monsoon when the *tufân* catches the pine trees in Dagshai.

It occurred to me that the Asiatic driver assimilated the peculiar virtues of his beast. The man with a camel or bullock or mule is less excitable, more of a fatalist than the man who goes on foot alone. The mule and the drabi would rattle along under shell fire as imperturbably as they run the gauntlet of falling rocks on the Kashmir road in the monsoon.

When his neighbour is hit by his side, the *dravie* buries himself more deeply into his wrappings. He does not want to pick up a rifle and kill somebody for shooting his "pall" as a Tommy would, but says, "My brother is dead. I too shall soon die." And he simply goes on prepared for the end, neither depressed at its imminence, nor unduly exalted if it be postponed. He is a worthy associate of those wonderful carts and mules.

In the evening I passed the abattoir again and looked over the gate. Inside there was a batch of camp followers, who had come in from fatigue duty. I saw the men huddling over their fires in groups in that humped attitude of contented discomfort which only the Indian can assume. Their families in the far villages of the Punjab and the United Provinces would be squatting by their braziers in just the same way at this hour. Perhaps the drabi would be thinking of them—if thought stirred within his brain—and of the golden slant light of the sun on the *shisham* and the orange siris pods and the pungent incense that rises in the evening from the dried cow dung fire a product, alas, which France with all its resources, so rich, varied, and inexhaustible, cannot provide.

## THE MAHABHARATA OF THE WEST

I FOUND the Indian Hospital at the Collège des Jesuites transformed. Roads had been made in the quagmire between the blackened ruins, walls demolished, flower borders laid along the paths, and thousands of bulbs, crocuses, daffodils, narcissus, had been planted to gladden the spring. In this work the convalescents had lent a hand. A recreation ground with a pavilion was being prepared for them in the summer. It is to be hoped that before June the Indians will have reason to appreciate the climate of France, which they compare now with the monsoon in an Indian hill station.

Inside the new sheds and the habitable part of the building—the greater part of it was burnt down when the Jesuits left—one finds the same reformation. Thresh, laundry, X-rays and electric light installation, fire-escape, bathrooms are all spick and span with the paint on them and ship-shape.

In the great theatre, now a ward, with its gallery hung with the flags of the seven Allies, I wandered among the beds looking for men of the —th Infantry, one of the hardest-hit Indian regiments in the war. They would be able to tell me how a certain officer—not one of them, though I had reason to believe that he was near them at the time—had fallen in the

trenches. The doctor led me to the bed of Zorawar Singh, a *naik* of the regiment. He was considered one of the most intelligent men in the ward and more likely than others to give me a clear account. He had lost one arm.

“It is of no account, Sahib,” he said in response to my expression of sympathy, “we are soldiers. We are ready always to give an arm or a leg of life for the Sircar. It is our calling.”

The Indian always says the correct and proper thing. Until one knows him one suspects these formulæ as the trail of the Moral Reader. In reality they are quite genuine, and spontaneous. He delivers a platitude as impressively as if it were an epigram. It is the Sahib’s decadence that fears the commonplace.

I ask him about Fleming Sahib—I do not give the officer’s real name. Zorawar Singh had seen him fall when the enemy reached the trench. “*Marte, marte, murgya,*” he said. “He died beating, beating.” He sat up in bed and waved his one arm. “And his hand was red,” he added. That was all he could tell me; but it was enough. It was like a village bard describing the death of Rustum.

Then he told me about Wariam Singh and his battalion who would not surrender. He was on leave when the regiment was mobilized and the news reached him in his village. It was a very hot night. They were sitting by the well, and when Wariam Singh heard that the —th Infantry were going to *Wilayat* to fight for the Sircar against a different kind of white man, he said that, come what might, he would never surrender. He made a vow then and there, and, contrary to all regimental discipline, held by it.

I can picture the scene, the stencilled shadows of the *kikar* in the moonlight, the smell of baked flour and dying embers, the almost motionless group in a ring like birds on the edge of a tank, and in the background the screen of tall sugar-cane behind the dry thorn hedge. The village *Kahne-wallah* (recounter of tales) would be half-chanting, half-intoning, with little tremulous grace notes the ballad about "Wa-ar-button Sahib," or Jân Nikalsain, when the *lumbardar* from the next village would appear by the well and portentously deliver the message.

The scene may have flickered before the eyes of Wariam Singh, lying stricken beside his machine-gun, just as the cherry blossom of Kent is said to appear to the Kentish soldier. The two English officers in his trench had fallen; the Germans had taken the trenches to the left and the right, and they were enfiladed up to the moment when the final frontal wave broke in. The order came to retire, but Wariam Singh said, "I cannot retire, I have sworn," and he stood by his machine-gun.

"If he had retired no doubt he would have been slain. Remaining he was slain, but he slew many," was Zorawar Singh's comment.

Afterwards the trench was taken back and the body of Wariam Singh was found under the gun. The corpses of the Germans lay all round "like stones in a river bed."

But even so the enemy did not command Zorawar Singh's respect.

"They are children in battle," he said. "At thirty-five yards they lifted their rifles to fire, then all at once the earth became empty of them. Others came,

and again all the earth became empty. They understand nothing.”

An officer told me that many of these brave men had felt the clutch of panic the first day they were in the trenches. They had stared placidly at the great caverns made in the ground behind them by the shells. Then a Taube came buzzing over and dropped a green-smoke puff directly above their heads like some hideous dragon belching fire. It was the first aircraft they had seen.

I asked Zorawar Singh to tell me his impressions of France. It is a clean country, he said, and the people are kind. All along the railway he had seen cities, and one city joined another, so that you could not tell where one began and the other ended, and it seemed all like one street ; and the land was everywhere cultivated and rich. He had been surprised to see dogs drawing carts and turning churns, and he noticed that there were no buffaloes or camels and no dung in the country. The chickens were very dear—instead of fourpence one paid six times this sum ; but, on the other hand, the people of the country were very honest and had only one price. He knew the words for “ chicken ” and “ thank you ” and “ trenches ” and “ salaam.” The France-wallah Sahib<sup>1</sup> had taught him these. As to the war, it was not like any ordinary war, but more like the Mahabharat, in which the gods came down and fought with men.

Zorawar Singh will carry away kind memories of France, the kindest of all countries to men from strange lands. Especially will he remember an old

<sup>1</sup> Interpreter.

lady in a farm who used to sit knitting in the evening teaching him to count, and how her granddaughter, a small child whose hair was almost white, was allowed to sit on his knee.

# SOLITUDE AND THE WAR

## I

### SPRING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

SPRING in the valley was in its friendliest mood of promise, but up on the pass there was nothing to tell that it was not autumn until one woke up in the night and heard a snipe drumming in the bog across the road, or in the early morning the soft, rippling whistle of the curlew.

I had covered sixty miles of high moorland without seeing a flower until I came upon some patches of purple saxifrage on a sun-steeped buttress of Crib Goch. And there was hardly a sign of life. Sheep and lambs, but no shepherds. Not a living soul in three days' tramp, and only one on the fourth. And one could count the birds. A raven on a crag watching a sickly lamb; he flew over the combe with a sharp, dog-like bark as I turned the corner of the gully. A pair of twites flirting among the slates of a sheepfold; two wheatears singing to each other; a sandpiper on a stone, vibrating with the emotions of the season; a few meadow-pipits, that soared and dived into the heather; and a ring-ousel, which alighted on a dead mountain ash in the cleft of a rock. The bird cannot have been solitary; its frightened whistle, the signal of alarm,

like the pipe of a marmot on an Alpine pass, betrayed the neighbourhood of a mate and a nest. And then, at dusk, a flight of herring-gulls passed high overhead from the sea with their weird, harsh clangour.

On the fourth day I met a man. He wore a scarlet uniform. I saw his bayonet glitter in the sun. He headed me from the floor of the valley up into the snow and cloud on a splintered ridge of Crib Goch.

Never since these ancient hills heaved themselves out of the flat has the race of man been so embroiled ; yet I had been thinking when I met the sentry that they were more remote from the ebb and flow of the war than many ranges of Asia and Europe. Down in the farms perhaps a shepherd lad had gone here and there, and over that third ridge on the horizon a few men from the quarries. I thought of the Vosges, the Ardennes, the French Alps, Jura, and Pyrenees. The Carpathians, Urals, Caucasus, Himalaya, would be sending their steady flow, and the roads over all the passes groaning with the munitions of war. But these moors are barren, houseless, treeless, detached from the life struggle. The shepherds who follow the cairns that mark the sheep tracks are protected from disquieting thoughts at night by our guarded coasts and the system of a voluntary Army. The hills they live in must have been more shaken by the campaigns of the first Edward, himself an apostle of frightfulness, than by this world-earthquake of the Hun.

I asked the sentry who was wearing out the scarlet coat if there were any news. He had seen a newspaper, he said, the day before, but he had had no time to read it. He believed there had been a battle somewhere in the north of France. His own small rood of

Cymric soil was safe in his keeping, and he was disturbed by no doubts as to the staunchness of his mates to hold their ground, wherever that might be, overseas.

The sentry guarded the approach to the pipes that fed a certain power house. He was one of a squad. Every now and then, as the veil of clouds drifted apart, I could look down from my perch in the crags on one of the most desolate outposts in the kingdom. The wind whipped the surface of the tarn and threw the spray against the corrugated iron resthouse with the violence of an Atlantic gale. A year or two ago a strong man was blown bodily off the causeway into the lake and drowned. These men had been here since the beginning of the war. They hated it at first. Nothing but stones baked in the fire could keep their feet warm. They used to follow their officer longingly with their eyes as he turned his back on the lonely post after an inspection, bound for his warm inn. Now the place has grown on them and they want to stay.

In escaping from the valley I passed under the live wires from the power house which carry their 20,000 volts. Every pole, besides being defended by downward curling spikes, has a warning notice of danger in English and Welsh. *Beryglus*, the Cymric word, is the same adjective perhaps (*periculosus*) that the Romans applied to these mountains when the early Britons carried their copper over the pass.

The birds of the air being short of stature in these islands can settle on the live wire as a rule without hurt, but two birds on adjacent wires may be betrayed into contact by anger or endearment, and then all is lost. The sentry had a story of a mother-crow who perched on the

top wire, and her nestling on the wire beneath. It was a worm that brought about their fall. If the mother bird had dropped the worm and the young bird had caught it all would have been well. Instead, she bent over tenderly, and the worm passed from beak to beak, and the 20,000-volt current passed through the worm from the old bird to the young, and in an infinitesimal fraction of a second roasted and shrivelled them, mother and child, beak and claw, to an ash. The sentry who told me the story of the electrocuted crow must have been a bard. There was something elegiac in the soft, melancholy intonation of the man. I could see that the pathos of the tale loomed larger in his mind than the more distant tragedy of Flanders.

It would have been natural for him to visualize that bloody rout. He belonged to these hills where the bards hear strange voices in the silence which is broken to profane ears only by the call of the chough or the raven and the murmuring of the rills.

Spring came while I was still on the ridge, and the sentry was still wading in the soft, deep green and golden moss. In an hour the sun flooded the red screes and the snow and the glittering quartz-seamed precipices and the lakes, and I saw the shadow of the last cloud sweep reluctantly over the combe. I stayed on my rock-row until all the low hills crouched like monsters with ribs and fins, and a golden light suffused the dun heather. Ever since the sky has been clear and the days warm. Under the rock the young shoots of the bracken are uncoiling the brown tissue of their sheath. Everything whose nature it is to bleat or sprout or sing has felt the invitation.

At the small junction where the railway sends a feeder

into the mountains I encountered a batch of Territorials. They were speaking a shibboleth which, if they could have been transplanted to our Eastern shores, would have carried confusion in their wake. Among the unintelligible flood of gutturals proper names detached themselves like islands—Dardanelles, Dixmude, Neuve Chapelle. I heard the words "Hill No. 60" five times in as many minutes, and I knew that the ripple of the war had reached these old Cymric hills.

## II

## SPRING IN THE VALLEY

There is little in the neighbourhood of the old stone inn on the pass to tell of the coming of spring. The three trees in the garden, a beech, a birch, and an ash, have hardly put out a leaf-bud. The autumn tints on the moors remain; only they are a little duller. The dead flowers of the heather dried up to an ashen grey, the rusty-coloured, chopped stalks of the whortleberry, the bronze and copper bracken have the same shades as in December. One may look in vain under the most sheltered rock for a green shoot.

In the small copse down in the valley nearly a thousand feet beneath the inn, primroses, violets, and celandines are in flower, and the dainty white wood-sorrel, the most fragile blossom of the year. The round leaves of the pennywort are thrusting out of the chinks in the rock among the skeletons of last year's bells. The black buds of the mountain-ash quiver in the sunlight against the white twigs like clusters of

bees. Hawthorn, hazel, and elder mingle their various shades of green ; and all along the banks of the stream are blended the white and gold of blackthorn and gorse.

In the copse we are not yet out of the mountains. The winds from the sea blow through this valley like a funnel. The grass slopes above lead up to bluffs and screes haunted by the buzzard and the falcon. A pair of peregrines have their nest somewhere in that splintered curtain of rock. The white lambs which have not yet harmonized, like the ewes, with the colour of the hills are watched by eagle eyes from the precipice. It is not until we have left the lake behind and the young larch plantation that we have passed through the gap of the hills into the plain. Here spring is further advanced ; the road is overarched with the tender green of the maple and lime ; but the bank of celandine and dog's mercury by the copse has a gloss and sheen that are not repeated during the year.

The thick larch wood thrown across the valley like a vivid scarf of green draws one away from the road. The beauty of the plantation is all from without ; and it is the more welcome as the larch is the only conifer that adds freshness to the spring. Inside, the wood is dark. It shelters no birds or flowers, but the fringe of it offers a pleasant, shady look-out. Through its dark screen one may watch the light on the gorse ; the sunshine is intensified on the small tortoiseshell's wing ; a whinchat on a stone in the field seems to be bathing in the warm light ; its bright fawn-coloured breast quivers with a luxurious agitation. A squirrel sits up on its haunches and regards me with a beady eye. A stoat slips out of the wall carrying a shrew-mouse in its teeth ; it leaps from rock to rock

across the stream as lightly as a shadow and disappears with its quarry. The live things that come into the wood make no sound ; Nature pursues her plan undisturbed.

Spring is late in Flanders, they say. It is difficult to believe that it will come at all. The birds of the soil have long ago joined the *évacués* ; the migrants who came in from the south have turned away bewildered and made their home elsewhere. The fruit trees are scored and whittled with shot, fragments of human flesh and bones have been thrown up into them. Many of the trees that have escaped have been ringed by tethered horses, and if they blossom this spring it will be for the last time. Here and there a celandine or violet may wear through the term of its natural life on the brink of a crater ; a few primroses may poke their heads above the mire ; but the earth is broken by hoof and wheel and mine and shell, and Nature is given over to man's ravage.

There is a field in Flanders like the one outside the larch wood in which hundreds have fallen and much labour has been spent in digging graves. In one corner a shell had buried its own dead, saving " A " Company an hour's spade work. Only the work was not complete. A German hand stuck out grotesquely through the clay, looking so pathetically limp and lifeless that every Tommy shook it as he went by. Many had a ready quip with no unkindness in it for the man beneath the soil. One stuck flowers between his fingers. After that he was left alone.

The men who fight in Flanders that we may enjoy an English spring make a joke of grimness. They dare not allow themselves to lament too much what

man has made of man. They die for the dear soil of England—to keep it pure. Without their sacrifice the cherry trees and the bracken and the primroses and the starwort would become as foul weeds. Spring would bring with it nothing but ugliness and shame.

\* \* \* \* \*

I left the larch wood and followed the road past the lake into a flat country. A hornbeam with its dainty brown tassels and drooping boughs seemed the most beautiful thing in the valley until I came upon a solitary wild cherry tree in a wood, its blossoms heavy and white as snow, against a background of green holly.

But I had forgotten the wallflower. I found the first bloom of it on the old garden wall of an inn. It is the best thing in May. Its homely, modest, sweet dignity gives it a character apart from other flowers. To every one the smell of the blossom is redolent of some particular place, generally a home—a cottage garden, or perhaps an old castle or crumbling cathedral walls. The Englishman in parched lands thinking of spring remembers the lovely brown dappled velvety flower that throws its warm fragrance across the road. To Frenchmen and Belgians in England now it will bring sad thoughts of the Rue St. Augustine or the Rue des Carmes. Perhaps amid the ruins of churches, the débris of stones, it still lifts an unobtrusive head and sweetens the tainted air.

## AFTER NEUVE CHAPELLE

THE Indians are coming in from Neuve Chapelle. Nearly a thousand have arrived here in the last few days who have taken part in this great fight, and the convoys still pour in. It would be difficult to piece together from their narratives a connected account of the action. The sepoy is not as a rule expansive. For all I could learn from Man Singh or Ram Lal, Neuve Chapelle might have been an affair of outposts or a scrum in the ward. The most inarticulate north country pitmen would have been more communicative. "We fought and I was wounded. We slew many. They ran before us," is the usual story. Nevertheless they are quietly elated.

Then one comes across a man who wants to talk and is glad of an audience; with such imagination often runs riot. A man told me of a sepoy in his regiment who carried a British officer on his back all the way from the spot where he had fallen in front of the German trenches to Headquarters, and was made a subadar on the spot.

"Did you kill many yourself?" I asked, knowing my man.

"As many times as I drew the trigger, one of the enemy fell."

"Did you bayonet many?"

“ Sahib, I went on bayoneting them until my officer told me to stop.”

This roused the man by my side, who gave me a more connected account of Neuve Chapelle than any of the others. He was a Punjabi Mussulman.

“ We bombarded them from six in the morning until two,” he told me. “ Then we advanced at a double. There was a line of support and a third line behind that ; in the advance the first two lines became mingled. Great numbers of the enemy were already slain. They lay everywhere like stones.”

“ Like stones ” is a favourite simile. The picture in the sepoy’s mind is the boulder-strewn ravine of the Indian plains in the dry season.

“ By six o’clock we were in their trenches. As we approached they threw down their rifles and clasped their hands, crying ‘ Ram ! Ram ! ’ whereupon the skirted soldiers<sup>1</sup> took them and marched them off to Headquarters. In a few days the Indian sepoys will have taken all the other trenches, and the war will be at an end.”

Many of the Indian wounded who fell during the week regard Neuve Chapelle as the beginning of the end, and think of the “ German-lôg ” as still running, pursued to their farthest frontiers by all the chivalry of the East.

“ Why did they cry ‘ Ram ! Ram ! ’ ” I asked, “ to you, a Mussulman ? ”

Ram, Ram<sup>2</sup> is a salutation which Hindus use among themselves. It has become a formula of propitiation employed by beggars on the roadside ; a convict will

<sup>1</sup> Highlanders.

<sup>2</sup> Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu.

mutter it on the way to the gallows. The Teutons, it seems, with their usual thoroughness, had memorized the phrase as part of their stock-in-trade—an alternative for the “Brisoner of war” with which the yielding Boche appeases Jock, Pat or Tommy.

“Sahib. They do not know,” the sepoy said. “They employ the word to Mussulman and Hindu alike. With them it signifies ‘Do not kill.’”

To the Indian mind in many cases it is the Indian brigades alone that are waging this war. The French, Belgian and the other details of the British Expeditionary Force are no doubt playing their part; but it is the Indian Contingent—British regiments, of course, included—which has held the gate so far against the Hun, and which is to be the veritable hammer of the enemy when the wedge is driven in.

Trophies of victory are not wanting. On the table of a little Gurkha, a Gurung from Eastern Nepal, there is a bottle of aspirin picked up in the German trenches, a shoulder strap of the 15th Regiment, and an excellent warm pair of fur-lined gloves. And there is another trophy—a shrapnel splinter the size of a pea which had completely shattered his elbow. “Two men standing by my side were blown to pieces,” he said.

In another cot a sepoy, wounded in the buttocks, is anxious to explain that he was hit by a shell bursting over and behind him and that he was not running away. He is a typical Dogra—a keen, intelligent face, bright eyes, clean-cut features, thick gold earrings, and short cropped hair with the little tuft or *bodi*, which all Hindus wear, hanging from his crown. His home is in Jammu, and the great banqueting hall where he lies in the pavilion, with the massive chan-

deliers suspended from the ceiling, must have reminded him of his maharajah's Durbar hall on the banks of the Tawi, where the road passes through the foothills into Kashmir.

The poor fellow will need a large loin-cloth to cover the track of the shrapnel if he is to escape chaff when next he performs the prescribed ablutions in his village tank. "My regiment took 300 prisoners," the Dogra said, "and the boom-golies destroyed thousands."

To-day for the first time I heard an Indian say that our artillery is superior to the Germans'. There is significance in this. Crouching in their trenches all these months, they have never been able to realize that we are subjecting the enemy to the same cannonade. Until now they have always said that we are better in the attack, but that the Boches have the command in all the apparatus of war.

The terrific bombardment which broke up the German lines at Neuve Chapelle has enlightened them as nothing but the visible operation of these resources could do. The same group with whom I was talking, who now admit the superiority of our artillery, believe the British air service inferior to the enemy's because they have feelingly experienced the accuracy of their range-finding, and I could see that my argument that our own machines were at least equally effective did not really convince them.

With the Indian optimism and pessimism are equally infectious. The presence of this fresh detachment of wounded from Neuve Chapelle, men who have come in fresh-blooded from a victorious force, has inspired new spirit in the wards. After weeks of apathy and depression there is a more genial spirit

everywhere; it is all the difference between winter and spring. To-day a large party of convalescents went off to the New Forest—or, as they thought, to the front. They were given a tremendous send-off. Such shouting and cheering and shaking of hands with doctors and orderlies and comrades-in-arms had not been seen since the inauguration of the hospital.

The beds of the convalescents are wanted now for the new-comers—these men who are carriers of the contagion of optimism. They had been in the area of Neuve Chapelle since October, facing that apparently impregnable village. The position of their firing trenches had not changed since then; the men had not been in action since December 20, and it did them good to see the Germans run, to be let loose to play havoc on them after that terrible bombardment of the 10th, and to listen to their suppliant “Ram! Ram!”

To my “May your wounds soon be eased” the Dogra of Jammu answered, “Salaam, sahib. May they be healed so that I may return to fight against the sahib’s enemies. Soon the German-lôg will be utterly destroyed.”

## “RATTING”

“THEY ‘ratted,’ didn’t they? Did a bolt? Somebody told me they let you in.”

The subaltern looked at his host sadly.

“The 140th? You mean they left their trenches. Well, that’s hardly accurate. As a matter of fact there were no trenches—not at the end. I was only about two hundred yards off and saw what happened.”

The comfortable arm-chair critic settled himself more comfortably in his arm-chair and cut a new section in the cherry cake. There seemed every probability of a good story. The young Highlander with his arm in a sling had been through that unholy prelude to Christmas on the 19th and 20th of December. I wondered that my host, an unimaginative civilian, could regard his brown knees without shame.

“It was those infernal minenwerfers” the youth said. “There are minenwerfers and minenwerfers. These throw a 225 lb. shell at 350 yards. They bring the mortar up to their trench in sections and put it together—or to a spot behind the trenches. They dig them in deep and you can’t spot them. It’s a soft-spoken machine—very little sound—no flash. Then they enfiladed us.”

“Enfiladed you! How on earth did you manage to let them enfilade a line of trenches with a howitzer?”

Don't drink that tea ; it's cold. I'll have some more made.”

Our host, besides being a connoisseur, a horse-breeder, a hunter of big game, and an artist, gave one to understand that he was also a student of strategy. He was just over military age ; otherwise the country might have benefited by his resources.

“ You don't know La Quinque Rue—‘ Kangaroo,’ as Jock calls it—or ‘ Hell Fire Corner.’

“ It is straightened out now, but in the third week of December there was a very big kink in it. At one point the German trenches were fifty yards from ours ; at another three hundred. They could get their mortar quite close up and drop shells on us in the orchard three hundred and fifty yards down the line, and our guns, of course, couldn't touch it.

“ The 140th Rifles were holding the salient that day, and, as luck would have it, two double companies were relieving each other, when the mortar let hell loose on them. I saw sixteen shells fall in twenty-five minutes in an area of a quarter of an acre. You can see the shell coming through the air, a wibbly-wobbly thing like a huge bottle. When it falls you've got about three seconds to clear. It carries a time fuse—a percussion fuse wouldn't do, as the muzzle velocity is so low you cannot be sure if it will fall butt-end or nose-end forwards. Sometimes it comes along in a drunken way sideways.

“ You can guess what it was like in the orchard. I could feel the ground quake two hundred yards away. Each shell leaves a ten-foot crater with a diameter of anything up to twenty feet. When you see it coming you have five seconds to clear, or you would have if

there were anywhere to clear to—but there wasn't. We were particularly heavily traversed in the orchard, as they had been hand-bombing us for weeks, and we were well roofed in with doors and beams. All this came down on the poor devils and buried them alive. They had no bolt holes. The *minenwerfer* makes a clean job of it ; executioner, undertaker, grave-digger in one. The trenches were filled in and flattened out every twenty yards or so and all communications cut. You couldn't get to one side and you had a poor chance if you put your head up.

“ ‘Ten Waterloos in a week,’ somebody said, and he might have added, ‘half a dozen Pompeiis between three and four.’ Only the human débris that was not buried was thrown upward.

“ At three o'clock the trees in the orchard of La *Quinque Rue* were bare ; at four they bore strange fruit—a man's drawers with a foot hanging on, sand-bags, blankets, forage caps, turbans, charred hands beckoning, shreds of wire.

“ There was one entire corpse in the fork of an apple tree.”

The bones of the man had been so pounded and “ splintered in his clothes that the sharp white points stuck out through his skin and khaki.”

The boy broke off and stared into the logs. On the lawn outside a cock pheasant pecked the grass ; one could hear them calling in the wood. The evening glow fell across the park lighting up the squadrons of daffodils in the open spaces between the trees. I looked up into a naked oak, clothing it in my imagination with that human embroidery. Everywhere was peace—comfort that amounted almost to an offence.

A servant came in to take away the tea. Our host rose uneasily and laid a new log on the fire. “ It must have been hell,” he said.

“ The Terai Rifles are such gallant little fellows,” the subaltern went on ; “ *pucca* Highlanders. I served with them on the North-West Frontier. They are not quick-witted, but you won’t find a friendlier crowd east of Suez. They are as jolly as crickets and love a joke or a scrap, and they’ll stand up to almost anything.

“ They finger cold steel lovingly, but here the God of Wrath and all the elements entered in. Or, as the Pathan put it in his Biblical phrase, ‘ The floor of the earth rose up and the roof of heaven descended upon our heads.’ It was the worst three-quarters of an hour I’ve seen. Our bombardment of Neuve Chapelle must have been something like it—only on a more extended front.”

I was almost sorry for our host, the wind had gone so completely out of his conceit. These were the men he had disparaged. I learnt my lesson vicariously as the subaltern with seeming unconsciousness rubbed it in. It is never good to talk of a regiment “ rattooing ” unless one has been there oneself and held the ground they have lost. Even then it is unwise.

“ The poor devils had a rotten time,” the boy continued. “ I don’t think one has any right to grouse because they gave ground. They were literally blown out of it. They lost all their officers. The next morning the little strip of lost ground was mined. I was near enough to be blown out of my trench into a dug-out behind. My new stable-companion was so startled he nearly bayoneted me.

“ Remember, they had no cover to dig themselves in again. Besides you can't dig through a mess of barbed wire, sandbags, bones, beams, clothes and broken doors. It was the kind of mess you see on a butcher's block when the man has been cutting up meat with a chopper. Even if they had dug themselves in for a time the soil was too broken up for the walls of the trench to stand.

“ No. It is not fair to say they 'ratted.' About forty got away. The others are in the trench now; they stuck their ground all right. I don't envy anyone who has to dig a sap through it. What would you have done? ”

The arm-chair critic had no ready reply.

## THE COMMISSION

### I

IT was nice seeing people about again—ordinary people peacefully preoccupied. A bevy of girls scurrying to an island in Piccadilly was the only thing that reminded Sergeant-Major Roland of taking cover. The rows of windows all down a street in Mayfair, with tulips in pots and neat lace curtains, fascinated him. He had not seen England for ten years, he had to shake himself out of his abstraction to remember what it was that made things look strange. It was only that everything was so clean; there was no débris; the roads were not broken up by shell craters; none of the windows were shattered.

One of the people Roland had seen that morning was the King, who had pinned the Military Cross on his coat and talked to him like one of his own officers, asking him questions about the night of the action for which he had been commended, the hand-grenades he carried, and how he had broken through the German barbed wire entanglements. It was one adventure among many. He had “put his head into it” as he would say, ten times a week, living at grips with death—he and the others. It might have been any of them, but this counter-attack at night was a

determining effort. He led it, and it had turned the scale. He had picked up one of their bombs and thrown it back and cleared a traverse with it, and worked down the trench with his grenades, scattering death as coolly as if he had been sowing a furrow. It meant fifty yards of Belgian soil redeemed along a hundred yards front. Half the battalion had been wiped out; ten of his officers had fallen.

There had been a brief paragraph about it in all the morning papers, in the column which told what each man had done who was summoned that day to the King. A dozen cameras snap-shotted him as he left the Palace. A reporter jumped between him and a taxi with a note-book.

"Go in yourself, young man," Roland had said to him. "It's nothing to talk of. It's what they are all doing, but there is not enough—not nearly enough."

The smell of the tar and the wood pavement was sweet to the exile. It was ten years since he had seen a London crowd. He wanted to shake hands with everybody. There was friendliness even in his contempt. The green of the parks was very satisfying, and the tulips and the white horse-chestnut spikes. He had forgotten how all the trees came out at the same time and how one looked up through a canopy of leaves that was almost transparent. He had forgotten where Liverpool Street was. He wished his taxi would go on for hours.

Even the glum old station pleased him when he reached it. In all his early memories it had been the beginning or end of the road. One had to pass through those gates to get to Foxden and Anglewood. They had once dominated his boyish vista of the great world.

He had passed out of them the first day he had put on uniform.

He had three days in England, of which a day and part of the night would be spent in the train.

He searched for a corner seat the better to see the landmarks ; but the train was full. In his carriage the corner seat was taken by a fat young man, with soft white hands, which looked as if they had never done any work—a palpable drone and shirker. He was reading a daily paper, which had a picture of Sergeant-Major Roland in it, but he was too dull to discover the original. A stubby little man, with side whiskers, had the corner opposite. He gazed impassively in front of him like a ruminant until his leisurely roving eye lighted on Roland.

“Ye’re from the Front, maybe?” he suggested sadly.

Roland nodded.

“And how long might they be sparing ye?”

“Three days.”

“Eh, well! Three days ain’t three weeks, remember,” he said, with the air of a philosopher whose business it is to chasten expectation.

Two days in a green English home after ten years of the East. Roland had enlisted at twenty during the South African War. Then he had gone out with his regiment to India, after a short month at Anglewood—just long enough to unsettle him. He loved the old place and felt drawn to the soil. It was hard to leave, but he had ambitions.

The woods were mellowing for October ; the beeches were turning, and the maple was already golden. Three days a week he had been out in the early morning cub-hunting, when the dew lay thick on the

stubble. There were two young horses on the farm which he was just getting into hand, and the week after his transport sailed the real hunting began.

His father had been sullen and angry. With the old man the land came first. He was of solid yeoman stock, the kind of stock that does not run easily to seed. The family had held and farmed Anglewood since the days of Henry VIII. That was perhaps the secret of Roland's ambitions. The farmer cared nothing for his long yeoman ancestry. He was proud of the land, of its yield, of his breed of shorthorns, and of his family only so far as it was bound up with the efficient guardianship of Anglewood. Other traditions might rust; the suspicion of a wider vision in his son disturbed the old man.

Some hunting friendships and a tablet in the church to a Roland who fought and died in 1569 were unsettling to the boy, who had often dreamt of a commission through the ranks. Five different families of squires had succeeded one another at the Hall since the bones of this ancestor had been laid to rest under the slab in the aisle. Young Roland did not make a confidant of his father. The farmer had pleasant relations with gentlefolk of the old school, but he would have scorned any blossoming out in his son.

The boy had once modestly flowered into a hunting-stock and a gold pin; the father had sent him off from the breakfast-table to change "the damned new-fangled thing." He himself, except for his authoritative air, was not distinguishable from a labourer. His coat had the broad agricultural cut; he spoke the broad, thick accent of the country. He resembled the old pollard hornbeam by his gate—a hard, stubby,

clipped, knotted growth, shorn of its potential grace, with its roots fast in the soil.

When Roland's regiment left India he had got himself transferred to the new battalion. Three years afterwards he had landed with the Indian contingent at Marseilles. In the last week of October he was in the trenches. He had been through nearly every action at Festubert, Givenchy and Neuve Chapelle, and he had most miraculously survived. Now he had come home for two days.

Late in the afternoon the express became a slow train stopping at every station. Homely names were called out by porters in homelier accents. Baulked of a view of the land by the leaves of his neighbour's *Sporting Life* Roland stood up, threw down the window and looked out on familiar fields. There was the mill at Medlingway; they had cut the alder where he had landed the two-pound perch, the fields were still bright with marsh marigolds. He trod on the philosopher's toe in his efforts to catch a glimpse through the other window of the inn at the cross roads. The sign had gone, and there was an ugly new red villa like a blister on the brow of the hill. On the slope down to the brook was the small farm, half-composed of pig-sties. The smell or grunt of a sow had always called up the picture in far lands. Slowly the church spire of Foxden unfolded itself through the elms; Anglewood lay over the dip hidden by the larch coppice. As the train drew into the station he recognized his father's old-fashioned market gig outside. The horse was tied by a rope to the rails, munching the lilac.

The old man was on the platform, not aged a day. He gave Tom his horny hand and surveyed him

steadily. He was the first to let his eyes fall, feeling perhaps that his glance was too dangerously like approval.

“So yer bin wi’ the King this morning,” he said. “I seed it in the papers. Ah, well, lad, you haven’t done so bad.”

## II

In the evening old Roland showed Tom over the farm. They were clearing the summer fallow and putting in the root. He pointed out with pride a meadow he had reclaimed. Tom remembered it all gorse and broom and bracken.

“There’s feed for three score head of cattle,” he said, “and now we’re draining t’other slope; but we’re wonderful short of hands. We can’t git labour nowhere and the women won’t wurk. They’re all ladies now, with their pianners and separation allowances—only good for the hay. Thought I could git a few for the singling, but seems they’re too fine to soil their hands—it ain’t reckoned genteel. I tell ye, Tom, the country’s rotten. Half the lads hev gone off to the war. There’s three of ours.”

“They’ve got to go, father.”

“Terrubul affair. Terrubul, I call it. One cut down after another. I hear as it’s like mowin’. I wonder you was spared. You’ll be done with th’ Army after the war, lad?”

They were following a narrow path in the young corn. The old man flung his words over his shoulder. Tom could not see his face; his back and neck were stiff as a trunk, unyielding to age, but his voice was

mellower, more human. Tom knew that he was moved. To have him at Anglewood "minding the farm" was his dearest wish.

"I am up for a commission, father," he said. "It is as good as certain. The Colonel has asked for me. We've lost twenty-three officers in the battalion, and the new ones have all their work to learn."

Old Roland did not speak till they got to the stile. Then he turned and laid his hand on his son's shoulder.

"What ud ye get, lad?" he asked.

"It's ten shillings if commissioned from the ranks."

"And you're getting five shillings now. Don't be a fule, Tom; you'll hev to spend more'n double."

"I wouldn't stay long as a second-lieutenant, father."

"You put your money by, my lad, and don't go after living the way of gentlefolk."

And he warned Tom against extravagance in dress: "My clothes haven't cost me five pun a year these fifty years. These young officers——"

Tom smiled. His father's short black tail-coat, bowler hat and cord breeches might have been the identical rig-out in which the old man had met him after South Africa. Only that eccentric up and down collar of his, which must have been antique in the sixties, had suddenly come into fashion. It was "new-fangled."

Old Roland deplored the rise in wages and foodstuffs at the same time. He had sold his wheat early, when prices were low. Now some of the men were getting eighteen shillings a week. James Matthews, he said, was beyond work. There was a call for young blood at Anglewood. Tom was made to feel that the soil

would not respond to rheumatically joints and sinews.

When they reached the Grange they leant on the drive gate while old Roland pursued his moralizings. The broad chimney stacks of Anglewood, its curious leaded windows and unspoilt Tudor front, attracted sightseers from the neighbouring county towns. The old bridge over the moat was sketched by a dozen artists in the year.

The homely beauty of the place stirred in Tom a physical sense of longing more subtle than his father's appeal. The lawn had become a flower-meadow; the box-edge of the paths was untrimmed; the cocks cut in the yew had grown out of all shape. The garden on the moat side of the house was the only part of his land that old Roland neglected. "Run wild a bit, Tom," he explained, "but I can't spare the labour."

It must have been an accident that the wallflowers and forget-me-nots in the beds made as lovely a pattern as spring could devise. The warm scent of the border mingling with the lilac called up the concentrated homesickness of the hot weather in the Indian plains. The forest of sheep's parsley, waist-high under the limes, was putting forth the coolest of the year. Over the ferny garden wall the fruit trees lifted their masses of snow-white blossom.

It would be a difficult place to leave. Tom thought of the old crabbed philosopher in the train who had said "Three days ain't three weeks, remember." And one day was nearly spent. He had to remind himself that he and his comrades across the Channel were "putting their heads into it" to save Anglewood. English houses should be no part of the universal

scrap-heap. He had seen granges in Flanders which the Hun had visited.

But the moralizings of the old man by his side were not chivalrous or romantic.

“You get five hunderd pun into the bank, Tom,” he was saying. “Then you can call any man on God’s airth a fule.”

### III

In church the next morning every one was embarrassingly interested in him. The curate’s daughter sat in the same pew. She had large blue eyes, the colour of speedwell, which dwelt on him without shyness. There was an admiring gratitude in them too frank for personal admiration. In this small congregation Roland embodied a great deal. He stood for the Flag.

In ten years he had forgotten the part the mist and rain of the uplands can play in an English girl’s beauty. He thought of the parchment-like faces of the ladies of Multan. The softness of her chin was almost sensible. He reckoned twenty-one daffodil seasons in the moulding of it, the fragrance of twenty-one May days embalmed in the girl’s face. Her cheeks were like apple-blossom. In the fly-leaf of her prayer-book he read the name Rosalie. He thought of her as an officer’s wife, of himself as an officer. Anglewood floated into the picture.

In the high, oak-panelled pew across the chancel the dapper, grey-bearded little man was the new squire. He had bought the Hall. His was the fifth family at Foxden, the third in the last hundred years. Among the Roland tablets on the wall behind was the

one of 1569. The family had been at Anglewood in the days of the original Foxdens. They had ridden to hounds ever since there had been a pack in the county. Tom felt the old pride in his stock. His father would have been alarmed if he could have read his mental reconstruction of the Grange.

In the churchyard after the service Roland was surrounded. He recognized two or three of his contemporaries who seemed to him a little shame-faced in their black coats. They were ready with their congratulations. "I had thought of going," one of them said, "but I was wanted on the farm."

"You are wanted more out there, I can tell you," Roland said. "We haven't nearly enough."

The Squire wished to be made known to him. The little man's painful, though genuine, efforts to escape the suspicion of patronage ended in an embarrassing familiarity. He had done "his bit" for the country and vaunted it. His three sons had joined the New Army. One of them, a painfully self-conscious second-lieutenant, was at home for the week-end. He returned Roland's salute with a blushing deference.

Then Roland was introduced to Rosalie. The softness of her hand was in keeping with the gentleness of his picture. She walked down the path with him. She asked him if he had been at Neuve Chapelle, and Roland explained in his easy, modest way what might have happened there, and the accidents by which the affair was shorn of so much of its effectiveness. She wondered what his own part had been, and which was the ribbon on his breast. She wanted to thank him. The brightness in her eyes reflected much pent-up homage.

It was a perfect May day, and they spoke of the spring. Roland pointed to the horse-chestnut trees in the avenue.

“ I had forgotten what spring was like,” he said.

“ How you must have missed Anglewood. The daffodils in the orchard——”

“ I haven't seen them since I was a boy.”

“ They were glorious this year—masses of them, like a flood. Your father let me paint them. When I heard you were in the trenches, I wondered if you were thinking of them.”

Roland smiled.

‘ It does not do to think too much in the trenches,’ he said.

They parted. In spite of herself her eyes thanked the British Army in the person of Sergeant-Major Roland. Roland longed to turn and watch her out of sight. It was with an effort that he obeyed the inward command “ Eyes front.” As a reward he heard her voice calling him. She was coming back.

“ Sergeant-Major Roland,” she said, “ I wonder if you would care for the orchard picture ? You couldn't have the daffodils, so you ought to have the sketch, though I am afraid it is only a daub. May I send it to you ? ”

Roland was in luck. He told her that he would value her orchard sketch above all things, but he could not think of her sending it. “ I will come myself for it,” he said. “ May I go back with you now ? ”

Roland thanked his good star now in the ascendant, yesterday it had been the King and the Military Cross. To-day it was Rosalie, whose sympathetic presence was in itself a decoration. Somehow he had earned

half-an-hour with her alone. He had an absurd idea that she was going to say: "For valour in the field."

The suddenness of the alliance left them both a little shy. But in the studio she had her sketches to show him. All landscapes. He knew every gate and tree and wood. It was like going round the old place with her as a guide. There was the mill at Medlingway, with the yellow lichen on it, just as he remembered it, and the hounds in Buckley Gorse.

"I wish I had time to get round to Angle Lea," he said, "now that the bluebells are out. You have got that haze on the trunks at sunset perfectly."

"You like the sketch? Please keep it."

Roland laughed. "No, you've given me the orchard," he said. "Besides, I have been to Angle Lea now. You've taken me."

She was evidently disappointed. "I wish you would take it," she said.

The impulse to give would have been natural in any generous-minded girl. It was so with Rosalie. For months she had been eating her heart out because she could do so little. She had sold some pictures and sent the money to the Red Cross, but she wanted to see one man on active service made positively happy by her work.

"But you must have the one of the Mill and Bentley Gorse. You will, won't you? That was where your last meet was. Wasn't it? Ten years ago?"

Roland understood her mood, that he was for the moment the embodiment of the collective chivalry of the race. There were new relations between girls and men now, between girls and the men who fought. They were all tip-toe to give, as if a too sensitive

modesty were ungenerous, mean. They were ready to give all, every resource which they felt might help or please—sympathy, comradeship, work, aid, comfort, love, if need be. If they had beauty or charm they must throw that, too, ungrudgingly into the scale. The man would be a cad who could exploit such gratitude. Still, it would be churlish to let it go.

Roland only knew that they made each other happy and that he had one more day.

She would make another sketch of the bluebells at Angle Lea, she said ; and he asked if he might see her at work. She smiled her assent with a kind of modest eagerness. Roland's voice and eyes betrayed him. He could not disguise how much the meeting meant.

He carried off the four sketches. They were to meet in the morning at nine, in the wood. His train left Foxden in the afternoon.

Neither of them slept. All through the night Rosalie lay awake. She knew that she had made herself necessary to this man. She had no regrets. Somehow it had been inevitable. It was a kind of dedication. If he asked for her she would give herself to him wholly. She was happy. After months of standing aside, it soothed her to think of herself as a gift.

Only in the morning it dawned on her slowly, with the earliest twitterings of the birds, that she needed him. She was no gift at all. She was holding out both hands to him for happiness. Then she fell asleep, a smile on her lips.

## IV

At Angle Lea the wild hyacinths were in their full splendour. The river of blue had broken through the edge of the wood and flooded the meadow with an azure stream which was held up under the shadow of the oaks.

The scattered trees islanded the slope of the hill. The gold-foil of their young leaves hanging over the bluebells glistened in the sun.

Roland lay among the buttercups by the edge of the wood drinking it all in; the buzz of the bees, the scent of the may, the comfortable smell of the cattle, the sheen of the carpet in the wood. He had never hoped to see Anglewood again. For months he had lived only for the moment, expecting every day to join the ghosts of his companions. Few of his friends had survived. He had lost the habit of brooding over the pleasant things of the earth. This wide glimpse of Eden vouchsafed between the acts was almost cruel. He had seen in the paper at breakfast that his brigade were engaged in another desperate action at La Quinque Rue—one of those long-drawn struggles for an acre of ground. His regiment, perhaps, were in the poisoned smoke belt now. There would be more gaps, more friends gone. It was a pity that earth had become so dear to him.

It would not do if he began to count on things too much now, but Rosalie had changed everything. He looked up and saw her coming down the overgrown path in the wood, her blue skirt brushing the bluebells, her blue hat entangled a moment in the young hazel boughs. She bent to brush them aside and he

saw her face Her eyes were a lighter blue. She smiled at him in his ambush as he rose to help her through the brambles into the field.

They talked of the war first and La Quinque Rue. "You would have been there," she exclaimed, and her eyes clouded. She asked him a dozen questions and he made light of things, remembering, for her sake, only the joys and humours of the war. She put up her easel, sketched in the woods and the meadow and the islands of oak, but she never wetted her brush. They had too much to say.

They talked of Anglewood and old Roland, and he told her about the commission he expected. She smiled at his picture of the old farmer's disgust. She had had long talks with him, she said, when she was painting the daffodils in the orchard, and he had often spoken of Roland with a kind of disparaging pride. He could never quite forgive his son's desertion of the land. Evidently Rosalie had penetrated the defensive rind of the old man. She was touched by his loneliness at the farm. She promised to see him often and to write to Roland. She would paint the garden and the woods on postcards and send them to him so that he could follow the seasons, since he could not take her canvases to the Front.

"Why are you so kind?" Roland asked.

"Kind! Why, we owe you everything. Everything," she said. "Oh, I wish I could help. Why should all we women be soft and helpless, protected, standing aside while men suffer these things? I was in a hospital last week and saw a man, a mere boy, who had been through the suffocating gas."

"You take it too much to heart," Roland said.

"It's our trade. We join the Army to fight. We like it. We must take our chances as they come. . . . Besides, you help tremendously," he added. "We have you to think about. You are here when we come back."

Another hour passed. Spring had laid her benediction on them. Rosalie made no pretence of painting. They sat side by side among the buttercups. The precious minutes flew. At the most, Roland could steal another quarter of an hour.

"I haven't made it harder for you," she was saying.

"It wasn't hard, but you could make it easier, ever so much easier."

"Do I really make so much difference?"

"Look at me. Look at me—and see."

She could hear the pulse of May beating as they looked into each other's eyes. Neither spoke. They gazed smilingly at first like children, then more intensely, as if it were a game—dreamily, until everything else faded away except the reality of their two selves—their one self, as he drew her nearer and nearer. Their eyelashes touched, and then their lips.

They were so still that a cuckoo flew into the tree in the hedge and poured out its soft note for them. A butterfly settled on her hand.

"It thinks you are a flower," Roland said.

"You've mesmerized me," she panted. "How did you do it?"

Roland laughed with joy. "*I mesmerize you!*"

They searched for the secret of it with the old childish wonder.

"And yesterday I had never seen you."

“Darling, we had only one day.”

Rosalie laughed aloud and frightened the cuckoo. “You are splendid,” she said. “Please don’t apologize. How delightfully soldier-like. I feel like a Sabine woman.” And Roland felt as proud as Mars. He took her up the lane to Anglewood to his father. The old man received them with a glance of apprehensive inquiry.

“We’re engaged, father,” Roland explained.

He surveyed Rosalie with his accustomed severity, and turned to his son.

“Then, maybe, you’ll come back to the land,” he said.

Rosalie smiled at the implicit compliment to herself. Old Roland was not versed in pretty speeches, yet he had paid her unconscious tribute with his first words.

## V

Roland’s Colonel called him into the regimental headquarters hut one night as he was going back to the trenches after his turn in billets. “The commission has been put through all right,” he said. “I hear it will be gazetted to-morrow.” There was nobody in the room but the adjutant and the telephone clerk.

“I need not tell you, Roland,” he added, “how glad we all are to have you one of us. We couldn’t have a better officer—or friend.”

The Colonel stumbled a little over the “all.” There were only five officers left of the original battalion. It was the first time his Colonel had called him Roland. The words startled him, coming as they did from the

most reticent of commanding officers. His simple "Thank you, sir," was difficult of utterance.

He left the hut deep in thought, scarcely noticing the stray bullets that stripped the leaves overhead. There had been a lull for ten days all along the Front, and he expected another day of small activities—the routine which had become almost mechanical, through which he was able to preserve the happy picture of the blue-bells and the blue hat and skirt and the lane winding up to Anglewood.

Then he would think of his new relations with his officers. He had no doubts. He and they were bound by the strongest tie that exists—the regiment. The daily, hourly comradeship in strain would have drawn any chance companions together; but it was the prestige of the regiment, the sense of their tried and invincible front, the regimental name—a spell unbroken, that had tempered these links into the finest steel. Roland knew how they would greet him as if he had always been one of them, and he was sure of himself.

So he mused all night, but before dawn he had forgotten Rosalie and his commission. The fires of hell were let loose on him; the surface of the earth was churned like the sea; the wire entanglements were blown overhead like hail. Then the smoke came curling slowly towards them, enveloping everything; little snake-like coils preceding, surmounting hummocks, searching hollows, with an almost animate malice.

To Roland and his men the cloud was the visible expression of the powers of darkness—a satanic challenge. It nerved them for bloody retribution. Fifty yards from their trench it banked up and re-

coiled. Then the Royals waited the charge, calm but exulting inwardly, sure of themselves. Their machine guns were untouched. When the enemy came on in their masses it was the finest mowing Roland had seen. It is better shooting fiends in respirators than ordinary flesh and blood. There is an added satisfaction in the futility of the devil.

"It's better than rabbits," a corporal remarked as he tore the mouthpiece from a face that lolled inertly over the parapet.

The words brought back the forgotten picture of a week ago, the scurrying of the rabbits under the beech trees as he climbed the knoll with Rosalie, the tiny little ball of fur, no bigger than a mole which had tumbled into its burrow at her feet. She had stooped to touch it. There was no lady like her in the Royals.

That was the first heat. Three more waves spent themselves on the broken trenches. Then there was a lull, but Roland saw that things were not going well with the battalion on the left. The smoke had gone through them, they had fallen back.

The telephone wire was broken. Roland could see through his glasses where it had snapped. It must be joined, or they would be cut off. He called for volunteers. It was a desperate venture. A hundred yards of open ground swept by rifle fire from the trenches on the left. There was but one small depression which offered any cover—one had to crawl all the way. The first man who offered was hit twenty yards from the trench. The next reached the hollow, but was laid out as he emerged. A third did not return.

Roland would not send another man until he had tried himself. "I've got more luck than most of you,"

he said, but a bullet smashed his ankle before he had gone ten yards. In a quarter of an hour he had dragged himself to the little patch of dead ground without another wound. Here he lay and panted. He had time to think. He had dispelled the happy vision, casting over it a deliberate purposeful film. Now it came flooding back, the blue of the wild hyacinths and of Rosalie's eyes. Rosalie was soothing his pain, playing her part if only she knew it, far away at Anglewood. Roland was happy. He had given up the thought of his reward. It made things easier, and he knew she would be proud of it. No heart breaks utterly for the dead by whom England lives.

The broken wire was now but fifteen yards away. He saw there was a protective hummock behind which he could work if only he could reach it. His head swam. To regain his ebbing strength he fixed his mind intently on Rosalie and played a game, pretending like a child that she was in peril, and that if he could reach the wire she would be safe. This refreshed him like a mountain stream.

As he left the hollow he heard a groan. It was the second volunteer. The man called to him weakly. "Let me crawl aside of you. I may turn a bullet. I'm done in." He dragged himself with his hands a foot or two in pursuit. But he was spent. Roland soon outdistanced him, calling back a heartening word.

He reached the coil. As he drew in the two ends of the wire he was hit again in the side. He was fighting now against an invading numbness, but he held it back. He joined the wire, and the message went through.

He was found lying there when the supports came up,

with his pincers in his hand and a torn leaf of a notebook on which he had written : " Rosalie, you made me happy—poor Rosalie."

Rosalie was writing in the garden. A finished sketch lay beside her on the grass. " Here is June," she wrote, " you will like the irises. Next week the peonies will be in full bloom. The early roses are budding on the north wall. Your father is so kind. He comes to watch me paint every morning. He has had the garden trimmed. He has taken a man off the farm for it—a whole week's work ! I think it is because——"

She looked up and saw old Roland watching her from the gate. She picked up the sketch and waved it at him, but there was something in the way he stood which frightened her. He was so motionless—like a dead trunk. She dropped the sketch and ran towards him. When she saw the large tears rolling down his cheek her heart stopped beating. The old man did not speak. Between the sobs which she could not stifle she called up broken words of comfort.

" We are proud to have given him."

Still he did not speak. He drew from his waistcoat pocket the crumpled leaf of Roland's notebook. She read it and led him like a child into the empty house.

## MAY IN WAR TIME

TO the poets Nature in her pathetic relations with man plays on two alternate pipes. In one key the pulse of life beats in harmony with man's emotions. The sky and clouds, hills, valleys, flowers, trees, birds, and running streams form a kind of chorus in symphony with his rapture or distress.

For so to interpose a little ease  
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.

Or Nature is austere aloof. We are born and die, and suffer pain and bereavement, and then are "rolled round in Earth's diurnal course with rocks and stones and trees." We love and lose, strive and fail, but Nature is unconcerned. The sun shines; the seasons repeat themselves; the song of the thrush is as sweet; the murmur of the brook as musical; the sea breaks on the cold grey stones. These are the two immortal notes in lyric verse from Milton to Rupert Brooke. Man stands in the foreground; and the rest of God's handiwork linked to, or divorced from, him is invoked as his partner or his foil.

In these hard years the comfortable myth of a sympathetic nature, "the pathetic fallacy" as the pedants call it, must yield to the sterner theme.

The willows and the hazel copses green  
 Shall now no more be seen  
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.

It is useless to call on the "valleys low" to bring every flower that sad embroidery wears to strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies. This Earth "of the beautiful breasts" has become a universal hearse, and the flowers "mock the merry worm that wakes beneath." It is impossible to bring man and his engines sympathetically into the picture without irony. Nor can one conceive of a scene austere and forsaken enough to envisage his troubled spirit. The havoc of Flanders, perhaps—but it is his own ravage. If there, as in Wordsworth's picture, every flower enjoys the air it breathes, and the budding twigs stretch out their fans to catch the breezy air and the least motion that the birds make is a thrill of pleasure, the poet has the more reason

to lament

What man has made of man.

In May, 1915, the "pathetic fallacy" of the poets might well seem as dead as the essential humanity of civilized man. Poetry will revert to the old cry of an unresponsive nature, the consciousness of loss and change intensified by the immutability of the seasons, the indifference of herb and beast and bird and stone, the "Change in Recurrence" of Meredith's beautiful, inadequately-entitled poem.

But the blackbird hung pecking at will ;  
 The squirrel from cone hopped to cone.  
 The thrush had a snail in his bill,  
 And tap-tapped the shell hard on a stone.

The "scene of the frame" is there, the dear life of it fled.

The only difference is that the change and loss are no longer individual, but universal. The poignancy is shared by all in the remembrance of other springs when we heard with no envy "the call the blessed creatures to each other make," and our hearts kept with them their innocent festival.

Yet the may and the lilac, and the palpitating blue floor of the woodland where the wild hyacinth grows, and the tender transparent green of the young beech leaves have never seemed so beautiful as in this year of iron when the least encumbered spirits amongst us are giving up their lives and their inheritance of "the splendour in the grass" and "the glory in the flowers." The poet cannot feign that

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down  
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,  
Or they dead leaves.

It may be that spring has come with an almost unexpected radiance, like the rainbow over the waste of waters, as a sign that the Eternal wrath is appeasable, as a symbol of hope,

hope, the paramount duty that Heaven lays  
For its own honour on man's suffering heart.

It is only in prospect now that sentient nature can be interpreted as sympathetic with man; the sun-steeped bank on the downs which the purple orchid loves, and the shadow of the fruit blossom in the still waters, mirroring the calm that will be the reward of a faith put on trial. We need the faith of Meredith to follow the bright procession of the year and

to take comfort in the evolutionary necessity of waste in the sap of life, the falling into "the breast that gives the rose."

For love we Earth, then serve we all ;  
Her mystic secret then is ours ;  
We fall, or view our treasures fall,  
Unclouded, as beholds her flowers  
Earth, from a night of frosty wreck  
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,  
When lowly, with a broken neck,  
The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

Meredith, the optimist, would have sung of an Earth fairer for the sowing in Flanders and the Dardanelles ; but it is a hard discipline for those who have not sowed to reap of the fairness. And he would have sung no doubt of the happiness of those who have had the gift ready in their hands to give, and given it without turning aside or lingering among the treasures which they have redeemed ; and of the sadness of those with the empty purse, who have been rich at the wrong season, who can only stand by and say " I would have given."

The small celandine was the " herald of a mighty band " which these brave will not see. The crocus, daffodil, primrose, cowslip, wallflower, the warm blue carpet of ground-ivy, the milky way of the water-buttercup among the reeds—these things have a beauty through their sacrifice which they have not had before. The commonest flowers of the English hedgerows, the plainest green of the ash and elm, are the more precious and English for their sake. May the glades be green which their spirits haunt, and the blossoms fall on the grass like snow.

## SHAITAN'S WAR

"IT is not a man's war they make," a sepoy of the 40th Pathans said to me, "it is a devil's war."

*Shaitâni* is the expressive word they use for "devils," and "a man's war" does not quite translate the Hindustani *bahadri*, which means the kind of war which brave men wage, the kind of chivalrous contest that was fought by the heroes of the ancient epics of Hindustan when Krishna stayed the battle to put his bell over the lapwing's nest lest the unfledged brood should be trampled underfoot.

At first the sepoys regarded the Germans merely as an abstract evil, their sahibs' enemies whom it would be sport to fight. Now "frightfulness" has taken shape and inspired a disgust among the Indians quite as lively as the loathing felt by the Allies.

The Pathan had just arrived with his regiment from Ypres. They had disentrained near the zone where the poison gas was unloosed, and had been sent forward in support of the Canadians.

"We got between two machine-guns, sahib," he said. He interlocked the fingers of both hands to show in what a tight place they had been. "It was the day they used the stupefying smoke."

One of the men whom I saw had been overwhelmed by it. He had lain in the trench unconscious for four

hours and wakened up in hospital with two bayonet wounds in his thigh. He had continual pain in his head, restlessness, watery eyes, dilated pupils, but none of the horrible lung symptoms discovered in many victims. The man was still suffering, though his was only a slight case. One of the hospital orderlies who had been in a miners' ambulance corps said that it reminded him of the effects of choke-damp.

I asked him what he thought of the Germans.

"Sahib," he said, "they are very strong and cunning." The man was a Jat, one of the melancholy fatalistic type. He accepted the situation resignedly as part of the machinations of the Evil One who normally stalks the earth. One felt that a front seat in the spectacle of a universal holocaust could not make this sad-eyed man any sadder or more resigned.

A group on the lawn whom I found basking in long chairs among the hyacinths, wallflowers, and tulips showed a more genial spirit. One of them had a silver coin of unknown value. He thought it might buy him a watch. Watches are cheap in Wilayat. "What is it, sahib?" he asked, handing it to me. "Is it a rupee of the France-wullah sahibs?"

It was a German mark.

"No," I said. "It belongs to the *dushman*, the enemy. It is a German shilling."

The man threw it from him with a vivacious gesture of disgust worthy of our Allies and made a kind of spitting noise, at which all the others laughed. It fell on the grass and rolled slowly into a flower-bed and lay there, and nobody deigned to pick it up.

I was glad that these men had discovered the iniquity of the Boche.

There is a Dogra in one of the wards with a hole in his side. You could shove your fist into it. The colonel told him he hoped that in a month's time he would be mended sufficiently to go back to India in a hospital ship.

"Why should I go to India, sahib?" he said. "I shall go back to the regiment in France when I am well and kill some more of those — Germans." The adjective he used was untranslatable.

One man, who had been in the hospital in December with a slight frostbite, has returned with five wounds all from the same bullet. The ball had glanced in and out of his right cheek, passed through his gums, struck his left chin and shoulder, and grazed his forearm. He had been detailed for the New Forest, but was homesick for Brighton, and begged to be sent back.

"I am glad to be back in Bri-toun, sahib," he said. "It is the best town in Wilayat." He told me the hospital reminded him of a mosque.

Many of them want to see London. They cannot conceive of a city bigger than this. They are taken out for tours of inspection in squads or in motor-omnibuses. They have seen the wonders of the Aquarium, and the kinemas on the pier, and the Belgian Art Gallery. They admire the lions of the place, but more than anything its cleanliness and the absence of dung.

Brighton is a pleasant interlude for the sepoy; after the winter in the trenches May in these gardens must be a veritable Eden. One meets the disabled propelling themselves along the shady gravel walks in bath chairs and hand tricycles, wrapped in the manipulation of these machines as if they were playthings and

locomotion a game. There is a holiday air among the men, a consciousness of consideration. Their *izzat*<sup>1</sup> has never been higher. Everybody is very kind.

\* \* \* \* \*

Groups of them are sitting on the grass chatting and conning the illustrated papers, which they revolve so as to get a view of the picture upside down and at every angle. If you pause as you go by they will probably appeal to you for an interpretation. The names of the Allies and their uniforms are very confusing. "There are the Germans we know," I heard one of them say, "and there is also another kind of German—the Australia-wallah sahib."

Every detail of these war pictures is accepted as literal fact, and an artist with the least imaginative touch might prove an inspiration. I was asked to explain a fight between Russians and Germans in a Polish cemetery. "Who is that man down, sahib?" one asks. "A Russian." A commiserating sigh proceeds from the group. "And who is the man who is being bayoneted?" "A German." "Can't you see," another sepoy says. "Look at his helmet." There is a murmur of appreciation all round. They count the fallen on both sides, and when it totals up to the Allies' advantage they have all the gratification of an authentic victory.

The prostrate form in the cemetery whets a dormant appetite. A crutch is driven deep into the turf crushing the daisies. It is evident that they want "to have another dig" at the Boches themselves.

The sepoy is not easily frightened. He has faced

<sup>1</sup> Honour.

the most scientific machinery of destruction and he is not cowed. As a diplomatic resource frightfulness has not been a success. Instead of inspiring fear among the Indians it has awakened the most lively resentment. The Boche is not merely the sahibs' enemy now ; he is their own.

## THE OLD SCHOOL

AS I watched them swinging down the aisle out of chapel I saw the old generation repeated. There was Tubby K——, still in Etons, Pi Menzies, Mouse Simmonds, Bunny Pocock—a happy perpetuation of the old “Bunny,” with his face illumined by everything but thought. I missed his confederate “Jiffer.” That lanky, freckled youth with the glasses was the exact replica of Hayden, the mysterious nonentity who had been no good at any kind of game until he went up to Oxford and stroked the 'Varsity boat.

The original Hayden was dead in Flanders. Tubby K—— had run into a hidden machine-gun somewhere in the jungles of East Africa. Bunny Pocock had been in the casualty list, but was back with his battery in the Dardanelles. Mouse Simmonds had died of sunstroke in the Gulf.

After twenty-five years I had come back for the first time, and I saw it all as I did when a boy—not in the leaving stage, but as a boy of thirteen, thirty years ago, when I used to fall into the procession from the last pew, the godlings of the upper school preceding.

The masters sat in their stalls until the last boy had filed out. There were still many familiar faces.

I looked for the one who was most feared. It was a spectre that had haunted the dreams of old boys scattered over the earth, even as the master of the Slaughterhouse long disturbed the sleep of the author of *Pendennis*. I caught his eye and dropped mine with the habit of years. I wondered if he still compelled fear—if young soldiers dream of him now in the trenches of Flanders and are happy to wake up from that paralysing nightmare of a forgotten “prep.” I knocked at his door the next day for the first time without apprehension and found him singularly human and benign.

The voluntary gave me a feeling of the last Sunday in the term when the roof and windows had vibrated to the roar of *Nunc dimittis* or “Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing,” and we kids had played footer with our toppers in the passage of the chapel until an angry prefect had emerged out of his study and given us all “a dozen” for our pains.

I had come down to the school confident of finding the jolly, careless, amused attitude of boys with no consciousness of being engulfed or overshadowed. The high spirits were there. The war was on the horizon, but it did not seem to impinge on happiness, though every one was leaving, or had left, a term or two earlier and was going up to Sandhurst or straight into a commission through the Officers’ Training Corps. The university scholarships lapsed as a matter of course. The Army absorbed all.

I had seen in the school register that 81 per cent. of the entries of the years 1908–9 were serving. The other 19 per cent. would be Government servants, parsons, doctors, or men who could not pass the doctor.

I had not realized how quickly the senior boys were being sucked into the maelstrom. I arrived on a Saturday afternoon, when the school were playing the M.C.C., and was introduced to the head of my old house as he was taking off his pads. He was "out for a blob."

"Yes, the ball swerved a bit," he said, "but I ought to have played it—deceived in the pace. I am afraid we won't put up much of a show. They've come down pretty strong, and ours is practically a second eleven."

There was only one boy left of last year's team. The others had "gone." Some had already appeared in the casualty list. One was killed. Brown was in the Flying Corps." You knew him, of course," the head of the house went on. "A priceless fellow. He made '140 not' in this match last year. Did you see his photo in the *Sporting Dram.* last week?"

In the next quarter of an hour two more wickets fell.

"If only we had Brown and Jameson," the head of the house said, "it would have given us a bit of a stiffening."

Every one except the eleven and the unfortunates let out of "San" was in khaki. The O.T.C., or K.L.H.—Kitchener's Last Hope, is their modest title—were to drill at five. All the school belonged. One boy had a wooden leg; he was a signaller. Another had lost his left arm; he played the cornet with his right. There was no compulsion except the strongest compulsion of all—tradition.

The general, himself an old boy, was coming down to inspect on what should have been Speech Day,

only there was not going to be any Speech Day this year. Last year, when it did not matter quite so much, his verdict had been "slack on parade." No one could call the corps slack on field days or at the butts. A year or two ago they won the Public School Shield at Bisley. But ceremonial parade on half-holidays is not "cricket." Still, it has to be done, and it is all part of the great sacrifice. I saw the drill and the very ragged march past and listened to the commandant's patient irony. There are some dreadful hours to be put in before the great man comes.

The head of the house showed me my old study. The chairs and the tables were all in the same place, and there was a boy who seemed oddly familiar. "Aren't you Farrow?" I asked. He was Farrow—not my Farrow, but his son. He sat in the same corner in the same huddled attitude reading a magazine. I had been his father's fag. Old Farrow had floored me with a blow for being late for early chapel my first term. I had fallen on to the coal-scuttle and my nose had bled for half an hour. I gave young Farrow half a crown.

Farrow was reading *Flight*. Ever since Stokes had come down on the cricket field in his aeroplane out of the blue—it was the term after he left—the R.F.C. had been "the top arm" in the school.

"It is priceless," Stokes had said. "This machine is practically my own."

"How long did it take you from Aldershot?" somebody asked.

"Oh, about an hour," he said carelessly. It was eighty-six miles.

I saw Farrow pass with the stream down the aisle. I watched him as I had watched his father—a callow, unprepossessing youth. But to me at thirteen half the school were heroes. I dowered them with super-normal gifts. I remember the Prime Minister that was to be, the budding Archbishop, the first gentleman jock of his day, the captain of county cricket, the Poet Laureate, the potential Astronomer Royal, who had burnt his blind and nearly set our house on fire while gazing at the stars.

All these heroes had suffered eclipse or they had never emerged on to the high plane that was theirs by right of worth, whereas many of the obscure had been exalted. The "Prime Minister that was to be" is an unsuccessful stockbroker; the Astronomer Royal teaches in a country grammar school; but the colourless youth who used to be carried along unnoticed in this stream is one of the most valued lives of the nation. Another weakling of the early 'eighties has become a bulwark of the State. I must have often tramped out after him in the voluntary, though I never gave him a thought.

And here, perhaps, in this new living current of young England there is gathering strength—young leaders of men; dragon-slayers, statesmen of the coming generation, inspired builders of the new England, the source from which the country, spent in this long struggle, is to draw revivifying sap.

How different were those easy, happy-go-lucky, vaguely ambitious days of ours from the present, when youth works within sound of the tocsin, leaves the classroom for the field, and graduates in the trenches—going, not into the happy lists as of old

with hours of dalliance, but armed, into the pit to fight the Evil One in all his panoply of hate.

And with all its tragedy and loss and disillusionment, what an age of purgation! There can be little question that the ordeal of iron and sacrifice is tempering the spirit of young England now as in no other age. I felt that this stream of youth I was watching was the best the school had poured out in all her long history to prove "the mettle of her pastures."

## THE POWER OF A WALK

### I

**B**EFORE breakfast cheerfulness is unattainable ; no honest man in Europe, friend or alien enemy, wakes up in the mornings with a light heart. After breakfast it may be attained.

There is only one thing to be done. If it is a free day go for a walk, an all-day walk, with lunch in your haversack, strong, nailed boots, and a stout stick. Any leavening of depression is a virtue. The faith that comes of cheerfulness, or the comfort that comes of faith, is a virtue. And these are virtues that may be physically compelled. The more one labours and sweats in the sun, breasts the wind and the rain, the more purged of humours will one return.

There must be an objective, and it should not be an easy one. Our plan was to follow the stream up from Watersmeet to its source on the moor. It was one of the many rivers that go to make up that black, spidery web in the map of Dartmoor, flowing south and east in the country between Ashburton and Chagford. The first part of the walk would be through woodland, the second over the moor. Happily we made no vow, but we thought we might compass it in a day.

It was a smooth beginning. In spite of the rain

the woods were beautiful. The foxgloves came down the hill in troops to Watersmeet. Every now and then the sun came out, and one looked up through the glistening leaves into the clear washed blue.

Where one sees foxgloves one thinks of fairies. They seem so conscious of the glades, drooping, listening, waiting intently. "Folks' gloves" they were called once by the country people or "fairies' gloves." But the name implies a race of elves almost as tall as the stalks. Titania's messengers whom she bade go,

War with rear-mice for their leathern wings  
To make my small elves coats.

were of a more ethereal birth, gossamer creatures who would crouch within the bell wrapped in a coverlet which, like Milton's "Sanguine flower," is beautifully "inscribed with woe."

The gamekeeper had been cutting the undergrowth along the fishing path by the stream. For fully half a mile the foxgloves were lying in swathes, their purple heads trodden in the mire. It was profane work. There must be something hunnish in the man who can run his scythe through their proud ranks. I hope the elves will have him by the heel.

More elvish than these open glades were the dark tunnels of alder and oak. Most fairy-like the yellow toadstool and the little scarlet trumpet fungus on the rocks under the hazel cover. Among the moss-grown slabs one recognizes table or dais, for banquet or tribunal. These are the immemorial walks of "the little people"; the open spaces ringed with the conscious foxglove are their dancing green.

It is a day of sun and rain quickly alternating, but the light showers do not penetrate the forest roof. Above the stream the oaks "high overarched embower."

It is a moist valley. Every trunk has its coat of green. The under-boughs are heavy with lichen and golden and green moss and hanging ferns, and here and there where the sun breaks through wreaths of honeysuckle. The air is so damp and steamy; the trees so thickly coated with parasitic moss that one might expect to find tropical orchids here with curious fleshy leaves. It is a relief to come upon a sunny space, an island in the stream where the pink wild rose is in blossom, smelling of June, the cleanest, freshest flower that blows. Where the gorge opens out and the stream is broken into two channels these ferny islands catch the sun, and you will find gardens of columbine, foxglove, campion, valerian, great masses of osmunda.

Soon the path ended and the rocky banks became so steep that we were forced up the cliff into a lane—a Devonshire lane with a sunk bank on one side and a wall on the other. Here, too, the foxgloves are the genii of the place, standing sentinel row upon row or clambering over the wall. One measures oneself with them, heel to heel. Many of them top six feet, and every crevice in the stone which they do not occupy is invaded by the pennywort or the white stonecrop, with the purple buds and sepals.

We spent half an hour among the foxgloves crouching under a holly against the pelting rain, and I understood how the simple folk of old times, passing many a silent day in their company, would come to think of

them as neighbours. They are more like persons than any other flower. In the long midsummer twilight they would take hold of the shepherd's fancy peeping at him from over the wall, only waiting some spell, the rustle of "night's horses" in the sycamore, the passing of the moon's "dragon yoke," to cast their purple raiment and break loose.

And wherever you find the foxglove on a Devonshire wall you will find the pennywort, her obvious satellite, modelling herself on the same pattern, a spire of hanging bells all leaning one way, though not so bent over with their own weight, of the same fairy world, but drab and pale, an attendant servile band, forbidden the purple, skirt-holders in the dance of the fays. In folklore the pennywort would play Pease-blossom to the foxglove's Titania. The Greeks would have woven a myth out of them, embodying the spirit of the lane and the wall.

We gained the stream again where it comes clattering down the hill, and fought our way up through a tangle of maple and young oak, beside waterfalls, on to the common. This is the borderland between the forest and the moor—fine springy turf, good grazing for sheep. We have left the chattering jay in the valley; the wood-pigeon and the ringdove give place to the curlew and the snipe. About the stream there is the same wealth of flowers. Battalions of yellow iris flank it. There is an air of island strength in this stout-bladed plant. On the open, wind-swept down we have a hardier generation. We have left behind the delicate yellow loosestrife and all shade-loving blossoms. Soon we shall reach a soil in which the iris cannot thrive.

## II

In a real long walk with an objective there should be moments of doubt. Misgivings as to distance, time, endurance, weather, are necessary if one is to obtain that warming sense of miles overcome.

We had followed the stream up from the valley to the common, but it had not dwindled with the miles as we expected; we were comfortably tired with our scramble through the woods; the intervals of sunshine became fewer; the labouring clouds were gathering in weight, sinking heavily over the ridge of the moor that made the skyline.

As the day wore on and the stream became infinitely broken we had to admit defeat, or compromise, in the approach to our objective. It would take another day at least to follow the main channel up to its source. In the map the thin line of its course disappeared in the valley beneath Grimspound and the tin mines of Vitifer.

So we forsook the stream in its youth and made a bee line by compass for its cradle. We had seen Hamildon Tor disappear in cloud on the horizon. Hookney Tor, a lesser eminence, lay behind, and underneath it the stone circle of Grimspound, near which the stream had its mysterious birth.

We were soon trudging through the stag-moss and whortleberry, bracken and ling, pulled up every now and then by a quaking bog, where the moss was starred with the white cotton grass, purple and white orchis, purple lousewort, and patches of bell heather.

On the outskirts of the moor there are scattered sheep farms islanding the desolation. The sycamore

is the tutelary tree of these homesteads. Seen through the mist or in the sunlight over vast distances, standing out strong and compact with its promise of shelter, it must lengthen the shepherd's stride as he turns towards home. One needs some such uncompromisingly bleak and inhospitable setting as Dartmoor to conjure up the positive genius of the hearth, and the sycamore with its wide-spreading protective branches overshadowing the grey and lichened roofs, the grey stone of the farm, embodies the indwelling spirit of homeliness. It is one with the gods of the byre and the barn.

We descended to one of these farms to make sure of the way, and were met by a stubby little man with a black bowler hat and a purple face. He asked us for news of the war, but did not wait to hear the small details we could give.

"I seed it coming these twenty year," he bawled at us in a voice tuned to the moors, pitched to a note that outbrawls mountain streams. "And what was Govment doing? Nonsensing around for votes. I sez to Emma——"

He explained that though he was not in the hub of things he read the papers and could see "a deal farther than what was written down." Neither the spy peril, nor the shortage of munitions, nor the submarine menace had taken him unawares. He had foreseen everything and for twenty years his jeremiads had gone out to Emma and the heedless sycamores.

An honest but terrible man, adhesive as the Ancient Mariner. He followed us, as we receded, charged with much pent-up eloquence, denouncing all men as if every Briton were culpable but he.

Seeing it in his eye that he had marked us down for the part of the patient and acquiescent Emma, we made off, and were half way up the combe before we remembered that we had forgotten to ask the way. His voice pursued us in the wind crying after us—

“What I want to know is, ‘Where is God?’”

We had expected an altar of peace, but came near to being infected with the depression we were exorcising with such pains. We approached no other human habitation until we found the cradle of our stream.

We discovered its source, or one of its many sources, under Hookney Tor, a succession of small pools where it had bored into the peat, transparent as air, sometimes burrowing, sometimes gliding beneath the firm edges of the turf, which closed over it like a lid. It rattled under the stones of Grimspound, giving that great mystery a voice, murmuring the same tune it used to sing to the rude settlers of the camp and to the little men who lived in the stone circles and made honest war with flints.

Tired as we were we climbed Hookney Tor, and looked down on the great circle and up at Challacombe stone avenue the other side of the combe. The clouds were racing inland, and blue sky appeared in the direction of the sea. We leant on the purging wind, the clean breath of it in our throats. There is nothing like these solitudes to reconcile us with the conflict that is waging between spirit and matter. Here nothing is visible save stark nature, and the rude stones piled together by man in the dawn of life. Material things are immaterial. The hypercivilized dross of cities, the inane accretion of wealth, brandings of nature, all the fruit of “the getting and spending,”

by which we lay waste our powers, can well be spared for the universal scrapheap. It is of little worth when weighed against this naked soil of England, which we hold by virtue of the invincible spirit that is her dower.

We followed the small stream back for half a mile, where it met us again on the straight road home. The rippling water was now blue in the sun. The light forget-me-not sparkled among the water-cress. The insects had all come out of their shelter. The bees were making good lost time; a red admiral was airing himself in the meadow-sweet; the dragon flies dried their green wings over the stream.

The stream led us to a small farm, where a kettle boiled on a turf fire. Here, too, there were sycamores, and the housewife was a quiet, cheerful soul. She gave us bread to toast over the peat. The faint savour of the smoke lent it the appropriate relish. Earth is good fuel. And she was not disturbed by the price of coal. The rain had been good for the pasture; it had put gold into the pocket of the husbandman. Here, it appeared, all was well with the world. She was a contented woman. The price of sheep was high. Her weekly newspaper breathed a genial optimism.

And she told us other cheerful things. The "Emma" of the purple man was deaf, or next door to it. Perhaps that explained his insistence upon being heard. We had spared much pity for Emma, none for the unhappy man who suffered from a dropsy of talk. To him no doubt a sympathetic audience was the one essential of happiness. Yet the wise Providence, who looks all ways, had denied it.

It was dusk when we reached home. We heard

the churring of the nightjar in the oak, the almost human cry of the tawny owl. The cows loomed in the mist like huge black barges silhouetted in cotton-wool.

There is an odd satisfaction in being honestly tired. There is power in a walk ; virtue in miles overcome. The light of one's inn, as one returns, dissipates all humours. And in the egoism of our senses the process that has taken place in ourselves has a wider application. We had been wet, tired, threatened with failure ; we were dry, refreshed, warmed with victory. We had quite forgotten the compromise by which we had gained our end.

## MISERY'S BEDFELLOWS

**I**N a small auxiliary hospital in France, not far from the sea, there lay three wounded men, an Englishman, a Frenchman, and a German. The ward was so cramped that it was difficult for the nurse to move between the beds.

The Englishman's bed was next the door. He had been wounded near Ypres and left out all night in the rain. He had saved his life by lying on two dead Germans whom he had just strength enough to draw together into a kind of mattress. He had felt apologetic at first for using them as a mat, but after a while got it into his head that the men had rendered him some kind of hospitable rite. The stretcher-bearer who took him from the field twenty-four hours afterwards had a story of his thanking the corpse.

Next him was the German. He had been crushed by the débris of a falling house near La Bassée in which he had taken cover from shell fire. He was sniping a trench from an upper window when the house was hit, and he fell with part of the ceiling into the dairy underneath, where he lay pinned to the floor. The only other living thing in the building was a dog tied by a chain which he could just reach. When he unloosed the beast it went straight to the churn and, out of some disciplinary sense of reward and service,

began turning it. The German called it away and gave it some of his rations. The poor beast was half-famished. It devoured them, and then went back gratefully to the empty churn. The man soon lost consciousness.

The Frenchman on the other side was a frostbite case. He had left a boot in the mud between the enemy's trench and his own during a night attack. He had also a bullet wound in his right hand.

They were all good and sincere men. The German was in the Landwehr, a professor of Metz, a kindly man, the son of a Prussian *immigré* of 1871, a man with a very strong sense of duty and a blind devotion to the Fatherland, but a dull and unimaginative pedant with no sense of humour or proportion at all. He was a large-built, florid man, after the style which the Frenchman would have called in architecture the "Neo-Schwab."

The Frenchman, too, was a man of education. He was a civil engineer, a reservist from Nancy, a man of sensibility, subtlety, wit, and spirit, by caste and tradition destined to be a flail of the Boches.

The Englishman was just an ordinary Englishman. Like his neighbours in the ward he would go into the tightest of tight places as a matter of course, but he was quite unconscious of having a code. It was merged in habit. If any one had stripped and exhibited his idealism in its naked propriety he would have been very uncomfortable indeed.

All three had been brought into the ward at the end of the same week in December; all three had kept pace in convalescence and could now read and smoke and talk.

For a few days there was a natural stiffness in the ward, but gradually after some exchange of courtesies and inquiries the rigidity of relations thawed. The Prussian, probably the most constrained of the three, was the first to throw off constraint.

He spoke to the Englishman of England and to the Frenchman of France. There was an English lady to whom he wished the Englishman to convey his respects when he returned to London, implying that these would be received with a tender interest. And he spoke to the Frenchman of his birthplace, Nancy, complimenting him on the Place Stanislas and the architectural elegance of the old city.

The Frenchman met these approaches with ironic reserve. The Englishman threw out an occasional encouraging word. In his own circle he was something of a *raconteur*, and he did not wish to miss anything that might lend point to a good story.

The German was encouraged. He felt that he had broken the ice with commendable delicacy, and he began to enlarge on his political ideals. He did not speak openly at first of all the benefits that the Greater Germany would bring to his neighbours in the ward, but there was an implicit conviction in everything he said that the great civilizing World Power would, with the help of the War Lord and his legions, regenerate England, introduce *kultur* into her ancient universities, and inspire France with a more virile idealism.

Then, pleased with his tact and feeling that he had a sympathetic and intelligent audience, he allowed his missionary zeal to override a too nice delicacy. The centre bed became a pulpit; the habit of Metz prevailed. The Englishman wished that he had a note-

book. The French engineer felt like a small child at the *lycée*.

The next morning all pretence of peace was dissipated. The argument began with the ethics of the Christmas truce, and reverted to the origin of hostilities. Belgium, according to the Teuton, was the aggressor. Fragments of blue books, white books, yellow books, hustled from bed to bed. The carnage of the battlefield was repeated in the ward. The Englishman heard the German say that the conquerors would purge French Lorraine of its anti-Teutonic prejudice and make of Nancy another Metz. When the nurse came into the room the Frenchman was sitting up in bed waving a formidable splint, under the menace of which the German guarded himself gravely with a bandaged hand.

The nurse reported the case to the doctor ; it looked too much like war. The patients were separated and put into different wards, but they both became so miserable, and they implored so penitently and with such promises of amendment to be restored to each other's society, that the doctor relented. Each had so much to say that he was sure it must carry conviction to the other.

They say it now every day with some heat, but without physical violence. The Englishman looks on and listens and laughs, and, when appealed to, says that both are right according to their convictions, but that the German has been deceived. He thinks them both very good fellows. They have become friends in controversy, and will no doubt carry away touching mementoes of their passing *entente*.

In this little story there are, no doubt, many in-

accuracies. Some of the conversations were repeated to me by another patient, who had them from the nurse, and I cannot be quite sure how each of the men came by his wounds. I may have confused the three cases; but that is immaterial. The story is true in the only sense that matters. Bald fact is of secondary importance. The point is that this small ward was a microcosm of Europe, and one read in it the history of a hideous and unnecessary wastage.

## THE NEW COURAGE

WHO in August, 1914, foreseeing the events of the next twelve months, would have believed in the survival of happiness? Yet one of the things the war has taught us is the resiliency of the human spirit. Permanent depression is a germ against which a clear conscience and a good digestion are proof.

My friend had not been in the trenches much, he said, though part of the particular trench he had left the day before was occupied by the Germans, and it had become the normal evening's pastime to throw hand grenades at one another over the scrap of no-man's land in between. He had spent most of his time burying his pals, and now two afternoons out of his short four days were to be taken up with seeing the people of fellows in the regiment who had been killed.

Yet I doubt if he had ever been happier. It was so jolly seeing people about again, he said, as he drifted from island to island in Piccadilly Circus, with the mingled alertness and abstraction of the man who is used to taking cover. He was afraid he would have to give up the idea of going on the river, but he

hoped to be over again in four months' time, if leave were not tied up, and we would have a jolly day in Sonning. "If the Boches don't pick me off in the meantime," he might have added. We both knew it was an even chance, but it would have been the worst of bad taste to have so much as hinted at it.

I remembered—it was only a year ago—the exaggerated importance one used to attach to being alive. In old memoirs and romances one followed the hero through a succession of campaigns and hair-breadth escapes until one wished that he would lay aside his sword, feeling that he had had his fill of shocks and adventures, and that it was time he went back to the beautiful dame in the castle and spent his remaining days in the gentler pleasures of the chase. The thought of sudden death with so much of life waiting to be enjoyed seemed perverse and abnormal. Now one understands that these hesitations implied a want of perspective. Death is poignant still, but not so ugly as it was; it is a triumph more often than a checkmate. Instead of a hearse and black plumes, one sees a bright ensign, hears the beat of drums.

Everything that was normal a year ago has become abnormal, and what was abnormal has become normal. It is abnormal to go out to dinner and have a good time; it is normal to have one's appetite spoilt by the neighbourhood of the unburied bodies of one's friends. It is only a question of adapting oneself to a new plane.

The soldier's faculty for happiness is not strange, it springs from natural sources. The phenomenal thing is the civilian who has not been in the firing line and who yet, after a year of wastage, which seems

only the beginning of things, can enjoy his meals, the pleasures of exercise, intercourse with his friends, and the beauties of nature—provided, of course, that he is sure in his own mind that he would be fighting if he could or ought.

The faculty for happiness is organic. It does not imply insensibility, as one's increased capacity for receiving bad news without a proportionate fall of spirits might lead one to suppose. I heard a civilian admit, a little shamefacedly, that a depressing news summary did not leave him with "the same empty feeling in the stomach" as it did last year. "I am glad to hear you say that," a friend remarked. "I had an uncomfortable feeling that I was getting callous."

In a certain respect we are more callous than we were, but this does not imply dulled sympathies, slackened sinews, or weakened resolution. It is a protective callosity, a faculty for mental and spiritual endurance evolved through strain. We accustom ourselves to a new order of things like creatures whose eyes are adapted for evolutionary needs to lack of sunlight. Normal respiration in what have hitherto seemed abnormal conditions is made possible by the same process of acclimatization which enables us to breathe at high elevations. To have this so is worth many victories. The marvel of 1915 is not the subversal of everything which we used to think made life worth living; it is the survival of the organic optimism of man in the new conditions.

Some one has argued that as happiness and pain are relative and the reaction from one to the other proportionate, it must follow that they are evenly

balanced in all. Possibly the sum of happiness is not so greatly depreciated as one might believe. It is true that civilized man is now mainly occupied in the destruction of human life or in the preparation of the means for it. We have scrapped all our old toys, half the things we used to care for, or put them aside in a dark cupboard, and we cannot imagine taking them out again. Books have lost their savour, novels are flat; the fiction of 1914 is as remote from reality as Richardson, or Madame d'Arblay, or "The Castle of Otranto"; the highways of the year before last as unfamiliar as the underworld explored by Æneas. But we have not lost the knack of faith, or hope, or cheerfulness, or quiet enjoyment.

And it is not the weak and slothful optimism of the wilfully blind, the ostrich trick of the poltroon who dare not look in the direction whence danger comes; it is a faith born of new proofs of the unconquerable spirit of man, and it will carry us through the darker days that are yet to come.

In nearly every contact of life one meets the new courage. The father of a family beams across the breakfast table at his wife. "They think Guy will have the complete use of his right hand after all," he says. Or there will be a glow of satisfaction at the recovery of the lost line at Hooge. Yesterday's post may have brought news of the amputation of Guy's left hand, reports of further victories of von Mackensen and Hindenburg on the eastern front and no news at all of the son who was reported missing three months ago in the Dardanelles. Yet the cloud has lifted.

Or take our young friend in Piccadilly after his visits of condolence. What assurance for the future

happiness of the race may be read into his pious ejaculations!

“I had the most topping bath this morning—first for four months. By Jove, it is jolly seeing people about again!”

## THE PROFESSOR AND THE POLICEMAN

THERE were a number of people in Erpington and Little Sconning who were eager to "do their bit." The notices about aeroplanes and lights and the instructions as to how to behave in the presence of unexploded bombs gave a touch of reality to the war-cloud which, so far, had cast no shadow on the two villages.

In the case of Jarge and Constable Pike patriotism was quickened by the hope of reward. Rumour had reached Erpington of a policeman near Bungay who had earned the fifty pounds for "copping" a spy. It was a belated young lady with impossibly large feet who had been asking questions about troops in the park. The constable attracted by the feet had thrown his arms round the young woman's waist in the most professional manner and encountered a hardness in the ribs that was not of whalebone. The next morning the disguised Uhlan was shot in the summer-house of a neighbouring J.P.

"Fifty punn. That's hans'm, I call it. You don't git a war like this every day," was Constable Pike's comment.

"It's a pity we don't git no furriners these parts,"

Jarge was saying, but even as he deprecated the scarcity of potential spies in the Eastern Counties, Tobias Bugg joined the group at the corner of the "Red Lion."

"There's a rare furrin-looking ole genulman bin at the poost arfis," he said. "If you cut down Lope's Lane maybe you'll ketch him at the Staithe."

Constable Pike made down Lope's Lane after the rich spoil as fast as portliness would allow. "Fifty punn" meant a lot of things—a chicken run, a rabbit hutch, a prime sow, a new chaff-cutter. The mental inventory had assumed the proportions of a sale when he ran into the professor on the boat-house steps. He had his catechism by heart.

"Beg pordon, sir," he panted, "but where might you have slep' last night?"

The professor admitted to having slept in London. "Lunnon—ooh!" The constable's interjection implied an unfathomable knowingness. He looked at Jarge. "Lunnon!" he repeated in an aside that might be heard across the river. "That's where they all come from."

"And might I make so bold as to ask your trade?"

The "furriner" feigned innocent surprise. "I am a professor," he said meekly.

"A professor—ooh!" Pike made no direct reply, but turned again darkly to Jarge. "They doo say as how most of 'em is professors."

"And perhaps you will oblige with your name." The constable employed the ironic courtesy appropriate to the situation.

"Mare. I am Professor Mare."

It was an unlucky name. Mare or Meyer, the only

German name known in those parts, the name of "the furrin' genulman as had lived up at the House."

"And what might you be arter?" the constable asked.

The professor explained that he was an entomologist. He had come to Scanning Fen to collect moths. He was lodging with Mrs. Emms at the post office. He showed great patience under this catechism, answering abstractedly as if unconscious of the deep pit into which he was walking.

Constable Pike's dispositions were worthy of the best traditions of the force. He committed the "furriner" to Jarge. "You take him along to the fen in the boat; and doon't let go of him," he said. "I'm a-goin' to the poost arfis. You'll hev your bit."

In the village the professor had excited the interest of a touring lady on a bicycle, also anxious to do her bit. He had sent a telegram from Erpington Station to the editor of "Nature," remembering two slips in a proof: "For *monotropa* read *neottia*, for *erigeron* read *ageratum*." That was the first ring of the coil he had wound round himself. Then he had next to no luggage. Another mistake was the large geological map which it was his habit to consult in all public places. He had affected a *rucksack* and a Tyrolese hat since the early seventies, and the horn spectacles of the stone-breaker. The butterfly net which he carried appeared the most childish device to disarm suspicion.

In the boat Jarge tried to "draw" the professor about the war. But, strange to say, he took no interest in the war. He was only dimly aware that there was a war. The really scientific mind is impervious to what newspapers call events. War the professor

would define as the sporadic destruction of man by fellow-man brought about by the artificial grouping of races and the consequent error and unevenness in distribution and the necessity of readjustment. Such issues, he would argue, are transitory and incidental. The things that matter are the small primal truths which afford us data for permanent laws, more general speculations; the distribution of rare plants by the fertilization of insects, or the gradual extinction of certain species of lepidoptera through the growing scarcity of the herb upon which the caterpillar feeds. In the circumstances it was natural that the small village of Little Sconning in Norfolk, the habitat of *Nonagria brevilinea*, should loom larger in the Professor's mind than Ypres or Lemburg. The capture of *brevilinea* was certainly more vital at the moment than the fall of Przemysl.

Professor Mare, though not a strong man, was obstinate and of considerable bulk, and Jarge would have found it difficult to carry him bodily back to the boat. So at ten o'clock at night the man of science was occupied in his normal pursuits, brushing the moths from his lamp into the killing bottle and examining the lure of rum and treacle which he had spread on the dark alders.

It was nearly eleven when the supperless Jarge heard approaching rollocks. Constable Pike had become anxious. The cipher telegram had been interpreted by the dishevelled-looking young woman in divided skirts who was determined at all costs "to do her bit." It was most certainly "Jarman." She had come in the boat with the policeman and the postman and Tobias Bugg.

Jarge heard the voice of the constable across the water.

"What's Jarge doing, I wonder. Look at the furriner's lights; that's what the squire told us to look out for. He'll be arter bringing down them acepolines." It was decided upon disembarkation that it was too late to return that night and that it would be better "to clap the furriner into the ba-arn." The professor offered no resistance. He packed up his guilty paraphernalia with a submissiveness that implied knowledge of the end. Jarge and the postman and the constable and Tobias Bugg were to mount guard in turn. The female detective was found a room in the farm.

"He seems a ra-rare peaceable old bloke," Tobias Bugg ventured to Mr. Pike, as they kept watch.

"He peaceable! We'll see what the squire hev to say to him in the marning."

"He's fairly trapped, he is. You've got him clever and no mistake," Bugg emended with a desire to propitiate.

"I reckon he knows he's for the ro-ope," the constable said, and added enigmatically, "I'll hev a fine fat sow." He fell asleep while he was completing the inventory.

At eight o'clock the squire arrived and the doors of the barn were thrown open. The professor emerged, covered from his beard to his boots with chaff and cobwebs, but glad and impenitent and brandishing a small green bottle.

He was much too Teutonic-looking to deceive the squire. Moreover, that enlightened magistrate recognized the well-known features of a Fellow of the Royal Society.

“Of course, of course. Yes,” the professor said, brushing aside the magistrate’s apologies. “A very natural mistake—commendable if misguided zeal. But I’ve had the most astounding piece of good fortune. I have found a specimen of *brevilinea* in the loft—a female in good condition with eggs.”

The constable’s face fell half an inch. “Well,” he said, “if he ain’t a Jarman I don’t know no more’n the Poop of Rome.”

The odd thing is that Providence should have employed the interested patriotism of Jarge and Mr. Pike and Tobias Bugg for the furtherance of science.

## PHILOSOPHY ON THE LAND

A FARM of fifty acres in the old fen country. Rushes for grazing and poppies in the corn. And on the slope down to the river a gravelly soil exuding flint and overgrown with white campion and viper's bugloss.

As poor land as you will find in the country. Old Jordan makes as much by carting gravel as he does by his wheat. Nevertheless there is a harvest of kinds, and the reaping of it calls for strong men, as many as the fat fields across the valley. It is the most essential crop the Jordans have ever had the harvesting of ; and, as luck will have it, " Albert " is the only healthy young man of military age left in the parish.

The drain of the youth of Thrutton Parva into the services dates from before the war. A generation or two ago, when the " fen rights " existed, they were reckoned a rabbit-killing, poaching, eel-catching, fish-netting, out-at-night crew, looked upon as scamps by more settled folk, and making better soldiers in war time than in times of peace. When the land was drained and cut up into allotments and sold by the Enclosure Commissioners they did not take kindly to the plough. They took to " soldiering " or went to sea. The inherited spirit died hard. Buckle might have made a whole chapter out of Thrutton Parva

to illustrate the influence of physical environment on character

The call to arms in August made a clean sweep of the young men in the village. Albert alone stood firm and shameless. He and Adam, who will be drawing his old-age pension next year, and a consumptive youth named Borett, and Jordan himself are doing all the work of the farm. The women do not turn out, except to carry the men their dinner and "fourses." Thrutton Parva is neither old-fashioned nor new-fashioned enough for that.

At a quarter to twelve you may see them filing down the path, Albert's mother, Jordan's daughter, Borett's sister, Adam's wife, with their cans and baskets and bottles. The horses are taken out of the machine; they have cut as much as the men can bind for hours to come. Adam and Jordan have been stooping all the morning, lifting the sheaves and building up the shock. It is hard work for old bones. The consumptive youth has had an easy job on the gleaning rake.

Seeing strangers Adam doffs his hat and holds it out for "largess" with the assurance of a churchwarden with the plate. "You're the first genulmen as I've seen on the land this harvest," he says. The old custom and the good old name have survived from feudal times into the days of self-binders and gleaning-rakes—an immemorial toll upon visitors to the harvest field.

Adam and Jordan between them have five sons with the colours. Adam could not remember the names of his boys' regiments, or whether they were in England or France. He had "reared" them and they were serving. He had done his part without thinking

of it—as much as a man can do ; and the war had not cast a shadow over his peace of mind.

He had heard things were not going “ ower well.” There were “ them Dardanelles they talk of as likely to let out a lot of corn just when the price of wheat be high. Didn’t seem right.” Adam had heard of them from Jordan. Who or what they were he did not know ; but he “ hoped they’d hould their corn in a tidy bit arter the ha-arvest.” If Adam could visualize these unknown quantities as narrow straits of sea behind which corn was locked he would naturally think we were fighting to keep them shut.

Old Jordan, too, went in constant fear of “ them Dardanelles.” Some one had frightened him about them in the spring. For a month they loomed large at Thrutton Parva as a tribe of mercenary Huns who threatened to make capital out of the instability of things.

“ So far no ha-arm’s done,” he said cheerfully ; “ but we don’t want that dratted corn through—not yet.”

A true patriot with all his muddled philosophy. He has given his three strong lads, and he toils from sunrise till dusk to make the most of an ungenerous soil. The barley field by the gravel pit is a sad wilderness. A jungle of wild flowers has encroached unchecked. The land is too foul to be worth the feeding. August here is a yellow month—toad-flax, ragwort, tansy, and fleabane thrive in this thin crop with an opulence that is almost cynical. Climbing growths, like the black bindweed and field convolvulus, strangle the corn. Thistles seed before the oats are ripe. It is difficult sometimes to distinguish what has been sown.

A scarlet field of poppies running down to the river

is reflected in the stream. It makes such a blaze of colour that I came near to complimenting old Jordan on his crop, but remembered in time they were weeds to be deplored, and commiserated with him instead.

"They draw the land," he explained, "and suck the moisture out of it." I learnt that the scarlet field had an unhappy history. The rabbits had eaten half an acre of oats, and the showery weather had kept the men from reaping it until the wind came and blew the heads off the crop.

In spite of the tradition that the farmer is given to grumbling one generally finds him of a more even mind than other folk. Mr. Jordan takes the unresponsiveness of his land very philosophically; he is not easily elated or depressed. Like most Norfolk men who work on the soil he is sparing of superlatives. Understatement as a figure of speech has become with him an art. He seldom uses a positive when a negative will do.

In the wheat field which he was cutting the wind and rain had flattened the corn down so that the machine caught the stalk just below the ears, leaving a stubble eighteen inches high.

"The wind hev'n't made that lay too easy," was his comment.

And the same moderation of speech is provoked by more remote ills—the "Kayser" and the "Jarmans." Little Thrutton wastes no bitterness on them. "I reckon if he did anybody any gude, he'd be sorry for 't," was Jordan's summary of the instigator of the war.

The most positive expression of disapproval I heard was from Mr. Jordan's wife. A Zeppelin had dropped

a bomb within seven miles of the farm and she thought it a most scandalous thing that the Germans should make their excursions at night.

"They seem a ra-are vicious kind of people," she said. "The old Kayser, he's a bad 'un. I should like to git hould of him with my roolin pin."

No one in these farms is kept awake at night worrying about the war. They barely glance at the paper; they have little time to think. But in harvest time this work has its reward. The freshly cut wheat straw, though not so sweet as hay, has a good, satisfying, earthy smell, and after three days' sun it must carry with it the comforting sense of a Providence reasonably responsive to a full year's toil. It requires backbone and patience to coax a crop out of a soil like this, and the struggle, without adding to the delicacy of one's perceptions, brings a certain philosophic calm.

But it was not until I heard the delightfully muddled logic of Albert's mother that I realized the imperviousness of these folk to events from without. It is an existence into which no kind of mental or spiritual strain can enter.

Some one—I think it was the curate's wife—had suggested that a strong, hearty lad like her son might be better employed killing Germans. But she didn't see it.

"The ole Kayser, he begun the war," she said. "Let 'im finish it issself. I don't see no call to send Albert."

And that is the reason why this strapping young man of twenty-five is placidly and unashamedly helping Mr. Jordan to bring in his corn.

## BURIDAN

A LITTLE, timid, sandy-haired soldier with washy blue eyes and a limp—a *piou-piou* who looked much too frail for the shock of war and yet had evidently emerged from it, forlornly occupied the deserted platform at Versailles.

He had been left behind, it seemed, or had left himself behind, which was worse. His ambulance train was bound for somewhere in Brittany—it was Rennes or Fougères—where he was to convalesce obediently, but he had given it the slip. I had heard the angry official who had just strutted into the chef-de-gare's office rating him.

“ You stay on the platform here and do not budge. If you move out of the station I will have you arrested. You will follow by the next train, do you hear? There is now two hours.”

The *piou-piou* stood abjectly on the platform following the man with his eyes, his head hanging forward, the scanty bristles of his beard flattened against his chest. Then he limped to a seat. One expected him to burst into tears, and wondered what inward stimulus could have whipped such meekness into insubordination. No one could look less like a law-breaker.

I was moved to cross the line and ask if I could help. Here is his simple story. He is patron of an estaminet

in the outskirts of Versailles ; it is but four kilometres from where we stand. He has not seen his wife—it is now six months, and there is a baby he has not seen at all. He had sent a letter two days ago. He had looked for them out the window, searching vainly for a certain red shawl. Such was his faith in the benignly ordered system of things—and then descended on to the incredibly empty and abandoned platform. Cross-examined, his name was Buridan. The lady's name was Céleste, the child's Célestine. I took down the address—the Café de la Tour de Nesle, 5, Rue du Petit Coquempot, Versailles.

“ Wait, Buridan,” I said, “ I will bring you Céleste and also Célestine.”

In the Place outside there was no vestige of a cab or taxi. The two nearest hotels yielded nothing. As I ran I was haunted by the trustful eyes of Buridan—the blue of skimmed milk, and the score of red hairs that formed his beard. The fate of Empires was forgotten. It was a point of pride. Nothing in the world mattered save the capture of Céleste.

There was a sudden report like a gun ; the plan it signalled followed, quick as the recoil. The car was coming down the road at forty miles an hour ; I leapt in front of it, threw up my arms like a semaphore, and held it up.

The man's face was hopeless—vindictive almost. In my first revulsion I made a false start, assuming that the car would be at the service of the wounded *piou-piou* as a matter of course. My apologies were conventional. It was as if I were commandeering it and had the right. This was a mistake. I should have assumed the enormity of the favour to begin with, then

a pleased and grateful surprise at the first suspicion of unbending. Probably no method of approach would have succeeded.

He looked at me coldly. "*Eh, bien quoi!*" he said with a gesture of impatience, and stretched across his companion to let down the window on the other side.

I turned to the woman.

"I appeal to you, madam. He is wounded, a soldier of France. He has been in the firing line six months. He is passing now from the trenches by the very door of his house and he has not seen his own child."

She had a soft face, though with marks of strength and suffering in it, a kind of delicate hothouse beauty, and a gentle reserve. Until I spoke to her she had been listening abstractedly in a way that made me suspect she was more interested in the effect of the incident on her husband than in the misfortunes of the poor *piou-piou*.

I was mistaken. She told her chauffeur to drive to the Café de la Tour de Nesle, 5, Rue du Petit Coquempot, and invited me in a very sweet voice to take the seat by his side.

Céleste received the aristocratic lady in her sanded bar as if such visits were in the natural order of things. Célestine was audible from an inner apartment. Mme. Buridan was a handsome woman with pretty violet eyes and black hair. She wore a blue blouse *à la Chanticleer*, embroidered with gay cocks. She was an attractive, capable-looking woman, with the easy grace and assurance of her class.

Madame, the protector, took over charge; Monsieur remained in the car outside.

“ You are Madame Céleste Buridan ? Is it not so ? And this lady ? ”

Céleste presented her *belle sœur*.

“ Your husband is going to my hospital at Nantes,” Madame said. “ He sleeps at Rennes to-night. You will perhaps like to accompany him. He is especially anxious to see Célestine. . . . Yes. He is in good health, only a little fatigued and lame in one leg. He wants you now at the station. How long will suffice you to pack ? ”

Céleste could pack in ten minutes.

“ You have twenty,” Madame said. “ I see you can leave the café in good hands.” And she smiled at the sister-in-law. “ For myself I have purchases to make.” She returned to the motor. The interview had been an affair of five minutes. While Céleste packed and Madame pursued her shopping I talked with the *belle sœur*.

“ It is a pity,” I said, “ that Monsieur Buridan cannot be sipping his own cognac. But, tell me— Why do you call your café La Tour de Nesle ? ”

The *belle sœur* smiled and directed me to the prints on the wall. “ You do not know the history ? ” she said. “ It was Madame’s thought. As Monsieur is named Buridan she called his house La Tour de Nesle.”

The dim associations which had puzzled me in the motor took shape, and I remembered how Queen Marguerite de Bourgoyne and Jeanne, and Blanche Comtesse de la Marche, lured their lovers into the old tower and there had them despatched and thrown into the Seine. The grisly series of prints depicted the whole story. In one the lovers were in the embraces of the three grandes dames, the floor strewn

with the débris of swords, cloaks, bottles, plumed cockades, while the *bourreau* lurked behind the curtain with raised battle-axe. In the next scene the heavy axe is descending upon vainly suppliant hands while Marguerite with flinty looks holds a torch to the assassins. "When night fell the Seine became the tomb of the victims of Marguerite de Bourgoyne." But Buridan escaped out of the window and denounced the queen to her king. I gazed fascinated at this gay Lothario, the literary ancestor of our *piou-piou*, and more than ever admired the *esprit* of Céleste.

In the last scene Marguerite is about to be strangled with her own hair. Two executioners, each with a rope-like wisp of it in his hand, stand ready on either side to pull at the signal. The gaoler is lifting his finger——

While I was regarding these horrors Céleste entered with Célestine wrapped in the corner of her red shawl, and my thoughts turned to the other Buridan. His daughter had certainly inherited the *piou-piou's* plainness.

The engine of the car throbbed outside. Madame had returned with parcels innumerable. There remained sixteen minutes to catch the train. I handed in Céleste, that *femme d'esprit*, thinking of Buridan and the strange adjustments by which Providence complements the weak. The *belle sœur* was left in charge of La Tour de Nesle.

Just as the train was starting the red shawl and the bundles and the babe were pushed into the carriage with the *piou-piou* at Madame's instance by the same irascible official who had rated him two hours before.

Madame waved a glove at Céleste. "I will call for you and the *blessé* to-morrow at Rennes," she said. Then she turned to me and thanked me graciously for my "assistance."

## THE PATHAN

A YOUNG blade of a Pathan, with his loose, well-oiled locks hanging down with a stiff upward curl, a cloak flung over his shoulders, and his smart *kula* set at a jaunty angle in his turban, swaggered into the receiving-room, a cigarette in his mouth, and grinned at the medical officer. He had an air which made the hospital followers yield him place.

“What is the matter with you?” the doctor asked.

“I was sick outside.”

“Since when,” he said, “has it been the custom for a sepoy to speak to an officer smoking a cigarette?”

“I would take it out, sahib,” he said, smiling, “but both my arms are broken.” The doctor lifted the man’s cloak from his shoulder. A machine-gun bullet had smashed his left wrist, tearing three tendons, and penetrated his right upper arm. There was a compound fracture in each wound; and he was glad of the excuse to smoke.

He ought to have ejected the cigarette before he came into the room, but it was a touch of impudence that one could forgive. For a month he slept and smoked and smiled, in spite of an exposed nerve which made the dressing of the wound painful. At the end of it the doctor was sorry to lose him.

In one of the wards I found another Pathan sur-

rounded with all the comforts of life, a blue dressing-gown, red blankets, soft green felt slippers—the gift of the Indian Soldiers Fund—and a table strewn with cigarettes.

“The Sircar is looking after you all right,” I said to him.

“Ha, sahib,” he answered, with a smile, pointing to this throat, “Sirkar-ke gole yahan khaia”—“I have [literally “eaten”] a Sircar’s bullet here.”

I doubt if any Sikh, Gurkha, Dogra, Rajput, or Punjabi Mussulman would have been capable of this repartee. The Pathan’s humour is subtle, with a hint of irony in it; the Gurkha has an almost childlike bonhomie; he enjoys the same happy relations with his regimental officer as exist between a housemaster at one of our public schools and the big boys in his house. When the doctor comes into the ward with the cigarette rations he fixes some Gurkha with a stern eye and says:

“The Gurkhas have become as Sikhs, I hear, and no longer smoke. Therefore the others will receive a larger portion.”

This sally is greeted with much laughter, and merriment increases with repetition. One seldom hears other Indian soldiers laugh aloud.

The Pathan can vent his humour in a well-conceived practical joke. There was a company of them in some cottages near Hazebroucke at the beginning of the war. They had come up in support and were waiting their turn. The place was being heavily shelled, and one of them was seen to come out of the kitchen where they were cooking their chapatties and stroll into a beet field. He stood upright for a mo-

ment, studying the effect of shrapnel in his immediate neighbourhood, and then stooped, unobserved, as he thought, tore up a huge beet, and heaved it through the window at his friends. As they came scurrying out thinking that the roof was about their ears he doubled up with laughter.

“The Pathan is a sportsman,” a subaltern in a class-company regiment said to me. “He never saves money but spends more than he earns. He likes a bright waistcoat, and he carries it with a devil-may-care, swashbuckling air.” There was much in common between the subaltern and his havildar.

Though his code is separated by a wide gulf from the Englishman's, the Pathan has probably more in common with him than any other Asiatic. Within this code he is to be trusted absolutely. Only a few Politicals and Indian Army officers understand it, but they swear by him. He is capable of certain cold-blooded atrocities in his blood feuds, but these are part of a recognized retributive system, and it is not really difficult for us to reconcile our liking for the tribesman who has a “frightfulness” of his own with our distaste for the new phase of the German spirit. One could respect the Prussian more if he were frankly primitive. But he is disingenuous; he forfeits consideration because he is devolving while he pretends to evolve. The subaltern of the class-company regiment would say that the Pathan is a sportsman and the German is not—which, of course, is no argument. But, after all, it is not the code so much that is the touchstone of worth as the way, having once accepted it, one lives up to it and submits to its disabilities with an equal mind. The Pathan has probably too much

sense of proportion for a hymn of hate, though, as his blood enemy knows, he can be ruthless enough.

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The kind of stalking for which we take merit in war is a pastime with the Pathan in peace. Consequently he starts on a campaign with advantages. He is out to get his man ; he keeps a cool head, and never wastes his ammunition. A cartridge costs anything from fourpence to a rupee across the border. He neither understands the enemy's vain holocausts nor his futile expenditure of heavy missiles. It must be a mortal blow to his humility—if he ever had any—to have seen the Boches fall in masses in front of his thinly held trench.

And he is wonderfully hardy. The young blade who swaggered into the receiving-room was a type. That double fracture would have put the average man out of action. An Afridi who died in the hospital last week at three in the morning was smoking at one. They will smoke literally *in articulo mortis*.

But patience, hardiness, endurance are not confined to the Pathan. They are the note of all these wards. A Dogra with a bullet in his back and total paralysis below the hips was smoking a pipe. I asked him how he was, and he said, " *Accha, sahib !* "—" I am well." A Jat with pneumonia said, " *Arâm hai* "—" There is relief." Another man with a hole in the back of his head—the doctor told me the brain was exposed and that he could see it throbbing when he dressed the wound—put out his hand for a cigarette. On the table by his side there was a recently smoked pipe and some coarse French tobacco. A Gurkha had a bullet through his chin which had cut down through

the throat into the lung. He gurgled some phrase of gratitude as we passed.

A French Army doctor, going round the wards with us, asked whether it was insensibility or self-control. The Indian Medical Service man smiled. He had worked in Indian hospitals for twenty years, but he would not be led into generalizations. So we were left to form our own conclusions out of an impression, that will abide with us, of double rows of beds filled with wounded men, all of whom had the same tale, "*Arâm hai*"—"There is relief"; "*Accha, sahib*"—"I am well."

## THE WILLING "OLD BUSTER"

**M**ILLWARD'S case is all the fault of the System. The same little tragedy of the weak flesh and willing spirit is being played in other homes. Most of one's friends could point to a variant of it.

He had been ill, but a year's careful dieting had set him on his legs. He was forty-five but looked older. To all appearances he was fit. He could not be sure that he would not stand the training. He had very shrewd doubts, but he kept them under.

"You see," he explained to me, "a fellow can't take it for granted that he is no good until he has tried. And supposing——"

He sat down on a settee in the hall and panted.

"It is a bit of a pull up from the station," he explained, "and I am out of training."

Millward was a peace-loving man. His hobbies were fly-fishing and the collection of old prints. He had a taste for the poetry of Robert Bridges. He was married. His wife Eleanor was a delicate little lady of the Rossetti type, dainty and æsthetic. She looked as if she had always gone about in an electric brougham and obviated discomfort with a cheque book. She would not dissuade him by so much as a suggestion. If he enlisted, she said, she would be trained as a nurse. She did not know anything about

the suppressed ailment he was combating; she had not even heard its six-syllable scientific name.

He had a fair income from his work, but had lived beyond it. There were two daughters and a son. The son was at an expensive preparatory school. The daughters had a governess. Here personal inclinations squared with what he thought was his duty to the country. He had £900 capital. He would raise it for their education and gamble on the war only lasting two years.

In August he had applied for a commission at the War Office. Eleanor had felt sure that they would not take him. "Of course, I am not going to say anything about my 'what-do-ye-call it,'" he explained to me, and I argued with him for an hour.

"My dear fellow, you are doing an unpatriotic thing," I said, rubbing it in. "You'll crock up to a certainty. You'll be letting your C.O. in, and he won't thank you for it."

However, the dilemma of frankness or duplicity was taken out of his hands. A form was given him on which he had to declare on his word of honour that he had never suffered from any serious illness or injury "*except as stated below.*"

The catalogue he subscribed under this head was too much for the Medical Board, who very sympathetically pronounced him unfit.

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He wouldn't take a sheltered job or drug his conscience with the mere wearing of a uniform.

"There are only two things to be done," he said: "to go out and kill Germans or to carry on with one's own work as normally as may be."

But it isn't easy being normal so long as there is a troublesome little ghost of a doubt that one is not doing all one can. He "stuck it" till the morning of the poisoned gas. Then he went to a recruiting office. He was rejected.

Like many another good fellow who is an enforced civilian, he became a little testy and irritable. But he did not fuss or go about with a long face or talk about "doing his bit" or preen himself on the honorary work he was putting in for a committee. There are two kinds of men, he argued: those who have been in the firing-line and those who have not. And in his mind the question of opportunity did not affect the distinction.

I met him one night at H——, the school where we had been contemporaries. There had been a sort of speech day and we were dining with the master of our old house. Did we know anything about one Campbell, the master asked, who had entered in '65? "I have just got this form and have to certify that 'he has attained a suitable standard of education.' He was here one term."

None of us could disinter the antecedents of Campbell, but our talk naturally turned to other Hittites—as the fellows in our house used to be called. Campbell must have been a sexagenarian, and there was an ancient stockbroker to whom no recruiting officer in England "would give the glad eye." He had shaved his grey beard and joined the French Army in the Foreign Legion. It seemed that no physical bar really mattered if one meant business. Young Gregg, who had had his ankle smashed at Ypres, had joined the Flying Corps. He had got a Military Cross on

foot and a D.S.O. in the air. If one can't walk one can at least fly.

On the way to the station Millward said something about not being able to "stick it." In the morning he went to another recruiting office. This time he was accepted—on conditions. He must have an operation for varicose veins and he must come again with a set of false teeth. This meant another month of domesticity, which he was philosopher enough to enjoy with a quiet conscience.

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Eleanor had the knack of comfort. The fond little woman made much of her Quixote, and they had many little jokes about the separation allowance she would draw for herself and the children, and the luxuries she would buy with it.

Millward as a private was rather a pathetic figure, undersized, but game as a bantam cock. His movements were more spasmodic and brusque than those of the jerkiest, new-fledged sentry. And he had a look of perpetual forced alertness in his eye, the look a conscientious fish might have who, though landed, was determined to catch the trick of the new respiration.

The general inspecting the brigade was interested in the odd-looking little man. He asked him his age.

At Millward's "38, sir," jerked out with an exaggerated, hyper-military briskness, an inaudible but sympathetic titter expressed itself on the features of B Company.

"These sporting old fogies mean well," a junior subaltern was heard to say afterwards, "but they

are a bit of a nuisance. I wonder if this old buster will stick it out."

Millward did not "stick it out." Route marches and rations took their gradual toll and the flesh defeated the spirit. The peculiar complaint with the long scientific name reasserted itself, and Eleanor's training as a nurse came in usefully at home.

I asked the doctor for a truthful bulletin.

"I am afraid he will never be good for any work," he told me.

I shuddered inwardly at the thought of the sensitive pride of Millward and a future of dependence, benevolent funds, associations.

But Millward does not know anything about this. The galling thing is that his peace of mind is disturbed by something I once put into his head. He has an idea that he has not done "the patriotic thing."

"I haven't killed a German," he said. "I have cost the country——" And he began solemnly to add it all up.

## THE MANNEQUIN

A STRONG, broad-shouldered young man thrust through the crowd in the Underground into the Tube. He embraced the upper part of a milliner's *mannequin*, a wooden female bust with the last new spring bodice on it.

And he had no shame. He had not even taken the pains to wrap it up. His neat, waxed moustache, his carefully parted hair, his fatuous smirk of self-sufficiency, bespoke a sense of uninterrupted well-being. The people in the house where he rose and breakfasted, his employers, customers, the girls in the shop, evidently had not laid the lash of their scorn on him, or, if they had, he was unchastened.

He placed the dummy carefully on his knee, balanced it with his hands, and gazed upon the waxen neck complacently. Yet to the sensitive his public burden would have been a cross, an infliction more hideous than the albatross tied about the mariner's neck.

Presumably this young man lived somewhere and came into daily contact with human flesh and blood. There were men in khaki in the carriage with him and ladies in black speaking French. I guessed that they were refugees from Lille or Arras with menkind of their own, and I dare not look at them because of the shame

I felt for the young man. His neck was thick ; his arms filled his sleeves ; he could have crushed the little corporal by his side ; he could have floored two ordinary Boches with the portentous weapon in his hand.

An objectionable young Teuton of the same class would have had patriotism rubbed into him at an early age with a stick. A poor privilege, but doctored and disciplined idealism is better than none. This youth had no country ; his birthright was a matter of course ; his suburb the centre of a universe of suburbs spreading concentrically round him in a protective network, into which hostile penetration over the heads of the police and subversive to the established order of things was outside the bounds of thought.

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You may see his kind in the railway carriages every morning skimming over the picture magazines, or if it is a newspaper the young man will be absorbed in the case of the brides in the bath. A picture of the bride will please him ; a picture of the bath will please him more. In the evening you will find him waiting patiently in the queue of the pit. The war has not touched him as yet except that it has brought a little more gore into the kinemas. As for being drawn into it, the whole thing is too remote to enter his head. It is a reality no doubt, but it concerns a different species of man. When he sees the bands playing the recruits down Parliament Street to Whitehall he will look up and say, " They have got a lot to-day."

Will they ever get him ? Not until universal

military service becomes a portion of beardedness. Then he will be drilled and impressed with the mould of manhood. Probably without protestations. The man who hugs his yoke respects the law and does not kick at established facts.

Will he be worth the getting? Most certainly he will. The machine will mould him. At present he is a parasite. The abstract thing called England exists for him, not he for it. The Motherland affords him pap. To him the soil of England is like any other kind of rubble, without essential virtue; not lovely for itself or endeared by wrongs as is the soil of France, which is being redeemed day by day, inch by inch, furrow by furrow, sanctified by her best blood.

Death in the field for England is not a sacrament, not even an obligation. It is the price men have paid after certain vaguely understood calculations for the stability of the Empire. The spilling of their blood is like the oiling of the lift by which he ascends to the fitting-on room. The *mannequin* speaks glibly of heroes, but here again he is treading unfamiliar, metaphysical fields. His hero is a kind of sublimated half-back in this new and uncomfortable game of war—the rules of which he has not studied, as there are no excursion trains to the front or grand stands from which he can look on.

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Why should he fight? He has no inheritance, nothing to lose, no roots in the soil. Islanded, protected, without imagination, he does not understand that the invasion of England would be a defilement and the presence of an armed, authoritative Boche

in his shop or street the abdication of all spiritual and temporal rights.

At Victoria among the crowd that emerged into the upper world I saw a phlegmatic-looking young man in a neat knickerbocker suit with light grey spats. He carried a bag of golf-clubs and seemed to be admiring the elegant tartan braid on his stocking. Just then I heard a great roar—the roar of a British crowd when it lets itself go. It was a train of bluejackets coming in from the Crystal Palace; they were marching across London to Euston to catch their train to the north. All the world was cheering them and waving hats and sticks and umbrellas. As they passed under the hotel the maids and waitresses leant out of the windows and waved their handkerchiefs to them, and the bluejackets looked up and kissed their hands, laughing and singing and stepping out with a joyous easy swing that must have inspired the dullest spirits in the crowd. It was one of those moving, unforgettable scenes which will recur to one for months at any mention of a ship or the sea.

I looked round for the phlegmatic young man with the clubs. He was gone. I would have given a great deal to have nailed the *mannequin* to that procession and seen him pass under the laughing girls with his badge of shame. I am sure that they would have emptied their jugs on him, and that no loose crockery could have been safe in their hands. Yet the man must be capable of redemption though he does woman's work.

As a conscript no doubt he would find himself. The hardest cuticle is sensible to environment, and this war has proved that courage—collectively, at any

rate, and under the menace of death—is common to all. It is improbable that he is a coward ; cowardice presupposes imagination. An apter term for the *mannequin* is “clod.” In poetic definition “a finished and finite clod untroubled by a spark.”

## THE AIRMAN

UNTIL this war upset all values and standards the airman was the only great adventurer. He had a world to himself as new as the one the Elizabethan seamen conquered and infinitely more perilous. There had been no such career for youths since Drake and Raleigh. To come under the enemy's fire must have been a mere bagatelle to him.

The experience of the "Terrier" who a few months after he has left a solicitor's office finds himself in the first line at Ypres or Dixmude must be abnormal, but the airman's nursery is peril.

"When one takes to the air I suppose one lets things go." I talked, hoping the pilot would give me his own views. "Of course, every fighting man has his job, but you fellows do a little more than the day's work. It must be a bit of a strain."

But the airman did not see it. "In the trenches," he said, "you have got to carry on and keep your end up and keep your company together, however cold feet you may have. I have tried both, and I would rather run the gauntlet in my machine any day than squat cramped up in ice and water under shell fire."

"Aviators have no nerves," I suggested.

"Haven't we! I often get cold feet. That is what

draws one. You never enjoy anything if you are not afraid. If you had no nerves you wouldn't really enjoy a big blind fence on a strange horse before your blood is up."

"Besides, one is preoccupied," he added. "One's got one's machine to run. One hasn't time to think."

"Haven't you! I have."

The interruption came from the observer. An observer is sometimes an airman who has lost his nerve; and the more he knows about aircraft the more nervy he is. Every aviator loses his nerve in time. In some cases confidence wears away slowly; in others things happen, and it is a matter of a moment like the pricking of a bubble.

"My dear fellow," the observer continued, "I can tell you when I was trying to make out whether those mud heaps were gun-emplacements or beet stacks I felt like tossing for it and turning tail. I hate the——air."

And he explained to me that aeroplanes were fragile things put together with gum and that continued exposure to rain and damp played the devil with them, and in war time they sometimes condemned themselves with their pilot and observer before they had a chance of being condemned by an official.

"I don't like your controls," he said to the pilot.

As an airman the observer had been literally in the first flight. Before he lost his nerve he had had the instinctive "touch" which is as necessary in a high-class machine as hands on a horse. There is as much difference between a floundering old "box-kite" and an Avro biplane as between a 'bus-horse and a thoroughbred three-year-old. And it is agony for a

man like the observer to sit still and be driven by some one else.

It is not the enemy's fire the airman fears so much as his own machine—the bolts and nuts and controls put together by some unknown mechanic upon whose efficiency his life depends.

And it is not the enemy's fire that makes him feel cold inwardly so much as the fire of his own men.

"It's annoying," the pilot said; "every one looses off at us—Belgians, French, and our own people, too."

"Terriers, you mean."

"Not a bit of it—Regulars. It is in orders now that no one may fire at an aeroplane without orders from an officer, but it doesn't seem to make any difference."

"Nerves?"

"No. They think it is sporting. A fellow draws a bead on us and pops off as we go over. Can't help it, I suppose. It is irresistible, like a cock pheasant topping a covert. Still, it makes one feel a bit sick inside. One doesn't mind the Germans so much."

"I was flying quite low the other day over the road at Poperinghe when a damned fellow in a transport cart—an English officer, if you please—stands up and looses off at me! I should like to have downed him."

The observer told me how —— had been brought down in our own lines with his passenger after a daring bit of reconnaissance work. Both were killed. This led to "shop," and they talked of spirals, side-slips, air-pockets, banking, and doping in an *argot* full of infinite suggestions of new perils, risks, and adventures. They spoke of fatal accidents in a quiet, casual way as one might discuss the spills after a day's run with the

hounds. One man's elevator bent and his wings collapsed in the air ; another's petrol caught fire ; another side-slipped and dived into the ground in a fog ; another misjudged his landing. And they used the new slang—which is a kind of first-line defence among Englishmen against any possible invasion of the melodramatic—speaking of “ being done in,” “ having cold feet,” and “ getting it in the neck.”

The pilot talked of being burnt in one's machine as one might speak of being bunkered at golf. He was very young. He had clearly “ let things go,” and did not worry about survival. The observer was an older man and married. He had no illusions about the air. He had been in the cavalry. All he wanted now was a good horse under him—to change his bullet-proof seat for pigskin.

“ I hate the —— air,” he repeated. They had been up in the morning and again in the afternoon.

“ We got into the clouds behind the German lines, had to come down low because of the wind, couldn't make headway, came in for hot fire. One is a standing mark in a gale like that. We got a lot of bullets in the wings and a shell almost upset us without hitting the machine. We dived and jinked so as to put them off the range. O—— (the observer) was seasick over the edge—into the German trenches, I hope. I dare say I should have been if I had not been too busy.”

“ Of course, the seat is a protection. You have got to sit up straight or you will be hit. I must have been leaning back a bit yesterday, for I found a bullet hole in my muffler when we came in.”

It is all in the day's work, and one hears very little about it. When the aerial navy brings off one of their

splendid and daring raids the whole country rings with it, but the drudgery of this reconnaissance work over the enemy's lines, which calls for equal nerve, initiative, and endurance, passes almost unnoted. Listening to the young airman, one felt something of a worm—a veritable groundling. He had the true modesty of greatness.

Those sailings of the Elizabethan seamen into the unknown world—glimpses of the Peak of Darien—were romantic enough in their day, but the military aeronaut has discovered the refinement of adventure. The eagle on his breast is a true cognisance. That gorged vulture of the Teuton is a very different kind of fowl.

One meets faces among the airmen such as Childe Roland might have had if he had come to the Dark Tower and stayed there and blown the slug-horn in derision of his foes.

## THE EDUCATION OF LAHORI

### I

WE met by accident in a hospital in the New Forest and then by appointment in London. It was quite the oddest change of *milieu* I could have imagined.

When I first knew him he was plain Lahori and had not taken the *pahul* in the ceremony of initiation by which one enters the community of Sikhs. To find him we left our motor-car on the Trunk Road and made for a distant clump of trees, balancing ourselves as well as we could on the baked and slippery little banks that divide the illimitable wheat fields of the Punjab.

The lad had no real name then. He was referred to as Lahori because he had been born in Lahore. He was a babe in arms when his mother brought him to the village, and he had seldom left his father's fields. The little hamlet, after the manner of such hamlets, was completely self-contained. There was no need for market-going or jaunts of any kind save to the shrine of Sitla, the small-pox goddess, in a similar clump of trees about a horizon's breadth from the farm. There was nothing to encourage adventure in Piyarigarh. The Grand Trunk Road in the opposite direction was the verge of the unknown. To us,

on that sweltering April morning, the path seemed long enough.

Lahori was the only candidate for enlistment. He stood bashfully by the well until his companions thrust him forward into the centre of the group. He trembled all over like a wild creature, breathing hard, as the havildar drew the tape round his chest. He wanted to be taken, yet he felt like a hare in a trap. Tears started to his eyes. He had hardly ever seen a white man before.

“Thirty-three and a half inches, sahib,” the havildar said. His father, the owner of 120 bighas of land, explained that the boy was lean because of the scarcity. With two full meals a day he would fill out three inches in a month. The old fellow was probably right, but the sahib said that he must stand over until next year and in the meantime he must eat plenty of *ghee* and have two full meals a day. A real tear—more of excitement than anything else—trickled down Lahori’s nose, and the village followed us back to the Trunk Road as Indians will follow a white man in groups to his starting-off point.

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It was early then in the days of motor-cars and Lahori’s father had never seen one before.

“Where are the horses?” he asked.

“There are no horses,” a pert youth explained.

“Then how does it go?”

“It goes by water and oil.”

The old man turned on the knowledgable youth to cuff him, just as the internal anatomy of the machine began to groan and the wheels moved slowly forward. I shall not forget his face or the staring, open-mouthed

group. He regarded the machine with mixed pain and surprise as if it had joined in an impudent conspiracy to hoax him.

Lahori filled out and joined my friend's regiment the next year. He has now seen many cities and is a critic of men. He has travelled in De Dions and Fiats, seen the King's horses, threaded the streets of London, been to the Zoological Gardens and Buckingham Palace, and carries himself with an air. He has also visited France and Flanders, grappled with the enemy in their own trenches, and received a slight wound and the Order of Merit. He is now known as Subadar Piyara Singh.

The subadar is a searching critic of men, morals, art, and the Administration. In the National Gallery we stood before Van Dyck's "Charles I." He admired the Cavalier, but discovered faults in the impossible barb.

"It is a very good sahib," he said, "but the tattoo's head is too small."

He preferred Lord Hothfield's horse in Copley's "Siege of Gibraltar." He stood a long while before the canvas trying to unravel the confused mêlée in the boats. The knack of observation had come to him through field training; in his "recruity" days he would have looked at any picture or map upside down. The subadar regretted that there were not more battle scenes. He passed Rubens by with a dignified detachment. Flora and her nymphs were slighted. The public inspection of their ample charms was not to his taste.

Rembrandt or Van Dyck would have made a fine

<sup>1</sup> Horse's.

canvas out of Piyara Singh with his grave eyes and regular features, and his strong beard curling upwards at the chin towards the turban and framing with it a visage in which there was much simple strength and repose. There was character even in his stiff white turban, which looked as if it had been tied with one fold. The small crowd that had gathered round us were more interested in the Sikh than in the pictures.

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And Piyara Singh was imperturbably at home, unconscious of curious eyes, not outwardly impressed by the immemorial stability of houses and monuments, the discipline of the traffic, the ordered intentness of the crowd, the apparent illimitability of London. He had learnt that these streets stretched for twenty *kô*s from where we stood to every point of the compass. But it was not in his nature to show surprise. His cradle might have been the hub of the Empire instead of that byre-like mud hutch in Piyarigarh.

He asked me many shrewd questions about "the sahibs' bazaar," as he called the network of shops between Charing Cross and Portland Place, and he wondered what could be the occupation of those who lived in the great houses by Regent's Park.

"In this country," he said, "it is not always easy to distinguish a *bara* sahib from a *chota* sahib (a big man from a small). It appears that there is no distinction in dress."

"None whatever, subadar sahib."

"And where are the coolies, sahib? Who sweeps and carries water?"

The wealth of the humblest puzzled him.

We lunched at a good restaurant, and I pledged

Piyara Singh that none of his dishes should contain any insidious mixture of beef. I asked him what he would drink.

“What the sahib pleases.”

“But name something,” I urged.

His eyes wandered round the tables in a leisurely search for some nectar known to himself.

“Rum is an excellent drink, sahib,” he suggested. It had been served out to him as rations in Flanders and Chitral, dispelling damp and cold.

He looked for the warm, brown fluid in vain. The waiter’s solemn, unapologetic denial of rum in Piccadilly brought no shadow of disappointment. “It is a war drink,” I explained, and that set us off on the eternal theme and more philosophy concerning the ways of life in East and West.

## II

Piyara Singh’s ideas of government were drawn from a Native State. Where there was a *Padshah*<sup>1</sup> he argued, there must be *musahibs*,<sup>2</sup> and where there are *musahibs* there is necessarily evil. Did he not know? Part of his father’s land had been taken from him by the ruler of the State and given to a *musahib* at the instance of a dancing girl who had received gold.

In the Majestic in Piccadilly Piyara Singh, toying with his napkin, poured out a tale of intrigue and corruption of a darkness beside which the evil doings recorded in the Old Testament seemed colourless and pale. It was all very far away, but I felt that I was

<sup>1</sup> King.

<sup>2</sup> Courtiers.

lunching with a man who had hobnobbed with Naboth and Ahab. Since my visit to Piyaragarh the whole village had been sold to the protégé of a courtesan.

“Was it a money-lender,” I asked, “or a *vakil*?”<sup>1</sup>

“A *vakil*, sahib.”

I deplored the family misfortune.

“There is no beef in this dish, sahib?” he asked anxiously.

“None, subadar sahib. The black substance is prepared from the liver of a goose.”

“Of course, sahib,” he went on, “in England there is just dealing. King Jarge is a father and mother to his people. But great princes cannot always see into the hearts of small men.”

He asked me about the King and Parliament and what he imagined were the secret influences behind the throne. From words he had heard spoken he had a suspicion that all was not well with the Administration. A dresser in his ward, a Bengali educated in this country, had been translating passages in the newspapers. Was it not true, he asked, that certain *musahibs*, who had trifled with responsibilities and played into the hands of the enemy, would be disgraced after the war? “No doubt,” he added, “they have enriched themselves.”

I had to explain that if there had been any betrayal it had been through folly and not corruption.

“But, sahib,” he objected, “fools can be replaced.”

“It is not always easy, subadar sahib.”

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I asked him his impressions of England, which I drew from him with difficulty. The things that had

<sup>1</sup> Lawyer.

struck him most on his travels were the giraffe and the cow.

“ Sahib,” he said, “ the giraffe is the finest of all things I have seen in England. It would be a beautiful beast to shoot. But, sahib, the English cow is, after all, the most marvellous of God’s productions. It gives twenty seers of milk daily, and with one cow a whole family might live.”

Piyara Singh spoke of the milch cow as the Brahmin speaks of the kama-dhuk, the legendary cow of the Vedas. The very possession of such a beast must have seemed to him a proof of merit.

I asked him if he thought the soil produced men on the same scale as the kine.

“ The people of England are honest,” he said simply.

“ And the people of France ? ”

“ The people of France are so honest that if you were to drop a gold mohur on the ground in a railway station or in any public place it would lie there and nobody would touch it, and if you went back the next morning you would find it still lying where it fell.”

“ But aren’t the people of England equally honest ? ”

Piyara Singh solemnly dissected a banana with his coffee-spoon.

“ The sahibs are honourable in all countries,” he said, “ but in France even the coolies are to be trusted. In France there is only one price. There is no difficulty in buying and selling. There are no thieves, and the doors of the houses may be left open day and night.”

“ But here, too, there is only one price,” I argued, “ and thieves are not common.”

“ True, sahib. But I hear the people of England are more easy with wrong-doers. The reason why

there is no theft in France is that the punishment is more severe in that country than in any other country in the world. Malefactors are not hanged or shot, but are nailed by their hands and feet to a wall or tree and are there left to die. I have not seen any so put to death, but as a reminder to the people human figures in wood and stone are exposed in the streets and at the corners where roads meet. These are nailed and bound to cross-pieces in the attitude of their suffering. By this example all are afraid to commit any act of dishonesty.

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“In France the Government is more *zabba-dasti*;<sup>1</sup> in England the people are more strong and the Sircar<sup>2</sup> must deal cautiously with them. In this country there are two opinions about the war—is it not so, sahib? Many of these young men—we were leaving the restaurant and he pointed out of the window into the street—do not approve of it and will not fight, and the Sircar has not the power to enforce them.”

In Trafalgar Square Piyara Singh created quite a stir. Under Lord Nelson's column the band of a Highland regiment were playing to those youths who “do not approve of the war.” The skirl of the pipes and the magnetically vitalized drum-major were enough to make any young man with a drop of generous blood in him tear off his mufti and join the colours on the spot, but I noticed that some of them turned their backs on the band and gazed at the Sikh. With his head erect and his broad breast covered with medals

<sup>1</sup> Oppressive.    <sup>2</sup> Government.

he looked more at home in this atmosphere than many of the mob.

“Colonel Broun, sahib, told me that the bands were playing to entice the young men to the war. Is it not so, sahib? It is good music and inspires a craving for honour. Youth cannot hear such music unmoved.”

I could only agree with my friend's moralizings and forbear reservations.

He walked with me down Parliament Street and I was pleased to have his company. It occurred to me that the subadar was more of a bahadur, if that were possible, in Piccadilly than in Piyaragarh.

## THE GURKHA

MOORE, who was over on three days' leave, asked me to look up Nain Singh in the Pavilion at Brighton. I knew the little man, a typical Gurkha, ingenuous, friendly, a born shikari, full of jungle lore, and cheerful as a cricket. It would be pleasant to spend an afternoon with him and show him all the sights.

In the native officers' ward Nain Singh beamed recognition. We had met in Chamba, and he had guided me to my first bear. I had gone on two marches with his sahib. I remember Nain Singh carried a huge pumpkin under his arm all day as big as his own head and mine. He had been everywhere with Moore in the Hills, from Sikhim to Suru, and had marked down many a head for the sahib: ibex, burrhel, markhor, mountain sheep. Now he has a limp which threatens to be permanent, and it is doubtful if he will ever cross the great watershed again. But his cheerfulness is unimpaired.

"Where shall we go?" I asked. "The platform over the sea, the wonder-house of the fishes, the sahibs' bazaar, or the kinema-garh to see the adventures told in pictures?"

My programme was so embarrassingly rich in alternative that it was decided to include all. Another

officer in his ward, a Sikh from Ferozepur, looked at us with envy, and I offered to take him too.

Nain Singh was at home among beasts, even among fishes, and the Aquarium threatened to take up the whole of our afternoon. He had the knack of analogy, and everything reminded him of something else. He paused before the salmon and said he had netted them in Himalayan streams. He recognized the species as the best of all fish when cooked. Nain Singh's natural history is sketchy. He was thinking, perhaps, of the mahseer, but no sepoy save a Gurkha could have been so near the mark.

The sea-wolves, he said, he had seen in the Brahmaputra, where they were called "gonsh." The eels, he remembered, were bad to touch; they stung or bit, and then one had to lie up for weeks with a feverish ague.

The Sikh from Ferozepur, moved to emulation, compared the spotted dogfish to a "weskit" <sup>1</sup> and said that the black bream swam through the water like an aeroplane.

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"A German aeroplane," Nain Singh amended. "Look at his tail!"

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The Brighton shops, "the sahibs' bazaar," had the same fascination for my observant friend. All down the street Nain Singh was peering through the plate-glass windows at the mysteries and elaborate refinements of our civilization with the wonder of a child. A coiffeur's shop held him entranced with its extraordinary exhibition of

<sup>1</sup> Waistcoat.

ladies' hair of all hues hanging from the most lifelike scalps.

We went into a toyshop. It was a veritable wonder-palace, a labyrinth of chambers in which nothing ordinary was to be seen. There was one room in which every box you opened played a tune, every chair you sat down on laboured with song. Ghoulish faces, fuzzy-wuzzies, gollywogs, totems, stared at you from the shelves. In a dark recess there was a string of cow-bells hanging from wall to wall. We set them jingling, and they brought back old memories—the smell of deodars and camp fires, where the cold breath of the glacier invades the circle round the burning pine log; alps where the humped cattle browse lazily all day long, wrenching up the gentian and columbine with the grass.

“Cow-bells, sahib,” Nain Singh exclaimed.

“You have them in Nepal?”

“Yes, sahib, and in Assam.”

The little man must have been abysmally homesick. It was eleven months since he had smelt the Himalayas or seen his own folk, and he was going back to France.

I dreaded the kinema, but fortune was with us all through. We escaped the amorous interlude in which a lady of the people became enriched to the extent of an

'Ous in the country,  
And willar up-to-daite,  
Horl for a-winkin' at the magistraite.

—and we came in for a jungle scene, with a leopard and her cubs tumbling over one another in the long grass among the bamboos. The leopard entered a

house in which there were a woman and a child, and there was much melodramatic shikar. In the end Nain Singh and the Sikh of Ferozepur tore themselves away reluctantly. Roti-khana (the evening meal) was at six, and we had only half an hour for the pier. On the pier we played with abortive penny-in-the-slot machines, tried our strength and our weight, raced horses, made dummies kick and fight. Nain Singh was much taken with a mechanical astrologer who on receipt of a penny commanded the services of a yellow duckling, which waddled solemnly to the slot with your authentic card of destiny in its bill.

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He gave me the ticket. "What does it say, sahib?" he asked.

"Your destiny is a happy one," I translated.

"Ha, sahib, that is according to the horoscope." And he beamed as if I had handed him the elixir of life.

"But," I continued, "a dark person is seeking to do you harm and will cause you serious trouble."

"That is Bhim Singh Thapa," he said, still smiling, though it cost him an effort. "Through him I lost promotion for one year."

Bhim Singh Thapa was the O.C.'s orderly, and was believed to possess the colonel's ear. His relatives and friends obtained quick promotion; his enemies did not prosper. He was a "dark person" both in the literal and figurative sense of the word. Even the British officers in the regiment regarded him with the eye of suspicion.

"However," I continued encouragingly, "the Card of Destiny says: 'Do not despair. A fair person will

be your friend, and be the means of your passing your declining years in a position of affluence.' ”

The broad face of Nain Singh became wreathed in smiles.

“ Ha, sahib,” he said ; “ that is the adjutant sahib  
\_\_\_\_\_”

“ Moore Sahib, without doubt,” I replied. “ He is exceedingly fair and his influence is far-reaching. You will be subadar-major before the end of the war.”

Nain Singh laughed aloud—a boyish, infectious laugh. An afternoon with the Gurkha makes the dullest dog feel witty.

I have a feeling that the little astrologer knew what he was about, and that in spite of the machinations of Bhim Singh Thapa, honour awaits our friend. I hope it may be the crown on the shoulder-strap. When Moore Sahib is colonel the path should be clear.

## THE SPY

ONE could not withhold one's respect. The man was a spy. He was unarmed, in mufti, the centre of a squad of bayonets, and he kept step with his guard, marching as resolutely and looking as smart and unconcerned as they. In a few minutes he would be in a forbidding-looking whitewashed room. A brief tribunal, a court hostile and severe, then his back against the wall of the barrack square—and quick execution.

It needs some pluck, this prying about docks and arsenals or in the country behind the enemy's lines in mufti or a false uniform with a fictitious passport. The average man when asked to carry a dispatch through heavy fire, to lay a fuse under a house occupied by the enemy, or to lead a frontal attack against machine-gun fire is generally afraid to argue his peculiar unfitness for the choice. But told to wander about among the enemy's pickets in disguise to try and locate his batteries and signal his discoveries by manipulating the hands of the village clock, he might well ask, like the Irishman, if he might be shot before he started.

And it is generally to so little purpose. What, for instance, could the spy hope to achieve who arrived in Boulogne in the uniform of a trooper of the 3rd Dragoons

with his belt awry, a German accent, and no knowledge of where his regiment was or what it had been doing? So marked a fraud that he fell a prey to the first Canadian policeman on the bridge.

Others are better employed. Pierre Simoneau, for instance—it was not his real name—stood at the street corner counting, and checked the number of the troops that passed. Of course, it is natural to stand at street corners and to stare at soldiers as they go by. Everybody does it. But when one has done it for ten days and has no other apparent business in the place one is apt to attract attention, and attention means some very unpleasant interviews and a marked lack of sympathy in one's environment at a moment when one most stands in need of a hand-shake or a little human kindness.

Simoneau must have been waiting for the touch on his arm, the voice in his ear asking him to step aside and answer certain questions. When at last he felt the tap on his shoulder, the thirty-two pieces of gold in his pocket, thirty Louis d'or and two English pounds sterling, cannot have been any great consolation. Simoneau, it appears, was not a patriot, but a bought man.

The informer told me that he had sometimes seen him smile as he stood at the street corner counting. The interpreter, who arrested him, did not see this smile. The man's face, keen, hard, and foxy, with bushy whiskers starting almost from the nose, and a small, red, pointed beard, did not look as if it could contain one. No doubt it was an artificial smile, summoned up to the surface from the depths. It will not do for a spy to look self-conscious, hunted, or de-

pressed. A man with a smooth, round face and a jolly grin will escape suspicion longer.

In the Sous-Préfet's office he preserved his sang-froid. He described himself as a time-expired reservist of the Marine. He had his papers of discharge; and his weather-beaten face and his clothes—the peaked cap and cape like a longshoreman's—bore him out. The interpreter, while introducing himself and his business to the Sous-Préfet, had hinted his suspicions delicately in a low voice. "Ah, yes, monsieur, I understand. A spy?" he had repeated with all the callousness of a hanging judge, as if it were one more page in a tedious file. The longshoreman threw open his coat and waistcoat, plunged his hands into his trousers pockets with expansive gestures implying that he wished to be searched and to have done with this comical blunder of officialdom.

He was searched.

A loaded revolver was found in a bulging waistcoat pocket and a German military passport allowing him to leave Lille. The evidence was already sufficiently damning.

"What are you doing here?"

"I have come to look for relations."

"What relations?"

Cross-examined, the man failed to establish any association with the neighbourhood. He was marched off to the gendarmerie, still looking unconcerned.

In his room, a garret in the Rue des Echevins, they found some pieces of unburnt cordite carefully wrapped up in his bedding. "They are *souvenirs*," he explained. Nobody could look less like a souvenir hunter than the longshoreman.

“Where did you get them?”

“I picked them up.”

The interpreter looked puzzled. The gendarme explained.

“He can tell his friends the Boches there was a battery of such and such a calibre in such and such a place.”

Each piece was the full section of a shell.

It was necessary to take the longshoreman to British Divisional Headquarters, and the interpreter turned out a guard of Sikhs, a formidable crew, rain-sodden, fierce-looking, unkempt, fresh from the trenches. Between their fixed bayonets he showed the first signs of uneasiness. They showed no respect for his white skin. Once when he stopped they prodded him, calling out “*beimân admi*,” words that he did not understand. The remoteness of his guard from all conceivable human relations, their hopeless inaccessibility seemed to cut him off entirely from the promise of life. It was like being handed to the powers of darkness.

He called out to the interpreter, saying that he was cold and asking for a cognac. Darkness was falling; they were passing the last lights of the town; the camp was seven kilometres along the road. He was allowed to go into an *estaminet*. He drank three cognacs—one after another. The interpreter paid.

Outside in the street little boys danced in pantomime, drawing the back of the thumb across the throat, crying “*Coupez la gorge*.” Others pointed sticks and mimicked the firing-squad, crying “pong-pong” and laughing merrily.

He heard a woman say “*Voilà un prisonnier!*” “*Prisonnier!*” her escort replied. “Not for long.

It is not worth the pains to fill the mouths of *ces-gens-la*."

In the darkness which rendered the presence of the guard less oppressive the spy took thought. Why had he not taken the thirty-two pieces of gold to his family? It had all been for nothing. He would die and they would not profit.

At last, blundering along a muddy drive, they reached a farm with a pennon fluttering above the door and a naked flagstaff cutting the grey light between two elms. Here the spy showed a momentary sense of relief when he was handed over by the Sikhs to a British guard.

But the end was not yet. A sapper in the staff mess recognized Simoneau. He had been D.A.D.R.T. at a railway station at the base when a man hurriedly opened the door of his office, stood there dazed for a minute with his eyes fixed on the wall, and when asked his business said that he had been told he would find a doctor there. A man had been run over by a motor-car outside the station. He apologized, saying the doctor must be on the platform on the other side, and then bolted across hurriedly. Nothing more was heard of him or of the supposed accident. Gradually it dawned on the men in the office that he had been reading the list of trains, with their destinations and the complements of troops for the different rail-heads inscribed on a slate on the wall. This man was Simoneau.

There was another count, and that is why the man was sent south to clear things up. In a certain bakery at the base a loaf of bread was issued daily for every unit at the front. The output of loaves tallied exactly

with the total strength in the firing line. A pseudo-Frenchman in the employ of the bakery had shown too keen an interest in the tally. He asked some questions which excited suspicion and then mysteriously disappeared before pay day. Whether this third count was definitely brought home to Simoneau I cannot say. In any case he could only be shot once.

After the court-martial, in the few brief moments before the execution of sentence, a student of human nature asked the man what his motives were. He answered simply,

“One owes it to one’s infants to support them.”

It appears that the man was a kind of hybrid from the frontier with no strong roots in any soil. He had lost his trade in the war. It is true he does not deserve one’s pity, yet one must respect his courage. Also one could wish—though this is not good ethics—that the thirty Louis d’or and the two pounds English sterling might find their way to “the infants,” who are perhaps untainted by hereditary sin.

## THE FRANC-TIREUR

**J**EAN BAUDIN was the last out of *Le Petit Paradis*. He had seen his mother bury the cask of cognac among the cabbages. The villagers had swallowed their last glasses of gin. No one thought of wiping his mouth or bothered to pay. Some half-empty flagons were thrown into the cart ; others were smashed over the trestles as too good for the gorge of the Schwab.

In the street they joined the long procession of wagons, wheelbarrows, donkey carts, farm gigs, perambulators, laden with household goods. Jean followed a wagon, fascinated by the variety of its contents. He made an inventory of them, which he repeated absent-mindedly as he went along, quite forgetting why he was on the road and where he was going. There was a bird-cage, a doll, a Bible, a cat, a crucifix, a mattress, a commode, chickens tied in bunches by the leg, a bed, a calf. The load became top-heavy as the wagon jumbled over the cobbles. A clumsy *armoire* which rattled on the top fell sideways and was relinquished in the street. Hidden away in his own bundle of clothes he had a very wonderful possession. The knowledge that it was there made him feel quite different from all the others. Sometimes he wanted to shout his secret out aloud. He nearly did. It

needed some self-restraint to enjoy his importance quietly.

“ Mother, where are we going ? ”

“ We are going away, out of this.”

“ But where ? ”

“ I do not know.”

Jean shook the pack further on to his shoulder and felt it anxiously with his right hand until his finger encountered something hard and protruding.

“ I will kill a Boche. I will clean one of them,” he said.

Madame Baudin put out a hand as if to stop his chatter. She plodded on mechanically, her chin hanging forward, her eyes intense and strained. Grey wisps of hair, escaped from under her cap, made her look increasingly feeble. Jean carried himself loftily. He felt that he could not impress any one without having the thing taken away from him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two days before the news had come that the Germans were in Plessix Saint-Pierre. A farmhand had stuck a fat German corporal in the buttocks with his pitchfork, and they had gutted the whole place. A woman who had left the burning village had been brought in to *Le Petit Paradis*. Jean sat in the corner of the bar and listened to the horrors. A yokel said that the mayor and the schoolmaster had been dragged out and shot against the wall of the church ; women had been pounded with the butt end of rifles ; children pitted on bayonets.

“ They will be here in an hour,” somebody said.

Jean’s shrill voice penetrated the hubbub : “ I will kill a Boche. I will clean one of them.”

But no one listened to him except the miller.

"He is right," he said. "He is a brave boy. Let us all kill a Boche. If everybody kills one they will not go far."

"Don't make any mistake," another said. "If you kill one, they will do for a hundred. Poor old Veuve Godet was bayoneted. They are devils. They rip up little girls."

So it had come. Jean had stolen out into the street quite dazed, and wandered about all night. His instinct drew him north against the human current. He had slept in a wood where he could hear the firing, and in the morning he had come upon the dying Uhlan's horse peacefully grazing.

He found the beast's master in a ditch; the blood was trickling from his mouth. He was clearly dying.

Jean approached him fearfully. At the touch of his still warm body he started back; the eyes were open, looking at him and behind him. They were soft eyes. He did not look a devil. Jean unbuckled the man's revolver and fastened it round his chest under his loose shirt. Then he started back, running all the way.

When he reached the *Petit Paradis* they were packing. Now he was on the road again and very tired.

As the procession breasted the broad back of a hill he fell out, unseen by his mother, and rested his pack against the trunk of a tree. He watched them go by. It was a pitiable crowd. But it was not pity that he felt. He was too full of the adventure of it all and a real hatred of the Boches and the sense that he might do something and was going to do it. In all the books he had read the boy-hero had always been

equal to the crisis, and this was just the drama he and his brother Jules had always pictured in their robbers' stronghold in the pollard tree—an invasion of the Boches, in which they would cover themselves with glory. Jules had died at sea of some tropical disease. There had been a certain glamour mixed with Jean's grief. He had seldom visited the pollard since. He felt sure that if Jules were with him they would both live up to their dreams.

And it seemed so simple. If everybody killed one the soil of France would be clean of them. There were six bullets in his revolver. Of course he would be killed—but then every one would know.

He thought of the reprisals they had talked about in the bar; but every one had gone. There was no one in the village or the farms.

A cold doubt came over him. Suppose he were left in a ditch like the Uhlan and nobody ever knew he had been a hero. He looked up the road. His mother and the cart must be miles away now. He would never catch them up. He remembered that there was always something like that—something noble and difficult. The hero sacrificed himself, knowing all the while that his achievement would be hidden—but then afterwards some accident revealed everything and he did not die. In his case he was sure he would die and nobody would know.

He was just starting on the road when suddenly the whole plot dawned on him. It was irresistible. The Boches would go to old Pellereau's farm, and they would have to go down the lane right under the robbers' stronghold.

He shouldered his pack and bored through the

hedges in a dream, making a bee-line over the meadows to the old hornbeam.

He climbed up a steep, sandy bank over a ditch broken up by rabbit holes. He was taller now, and it was no effort to swing himself up into the shelter. The ivy made a screen for him, and he looked down into the narrow lane. The tree hung right over the bridle-path and he could have touched the head of anybody riding underneath. He lay against a withered branch, his legs dangling in the bole, dislodging flakes of the decaying wood.

He looked out through his leafy screen. It was an almost perfect sangar. For a long time he was too excited to think. His heart beat violently; the sweat poured from his face. The day was hot, still, and peaceful. The village and the farm were deserted. The sound of the guns was still far distant. At the end of the meadow he saw two of old Pellereau's farm horses, and wondered why he had not taken them away.

Hours passed. As he struggled to change his position the nail of his boot struck something metallic. He dug his hand into the decaying powder of the old tree. The musty, dry, familiar smell brought back many memories. It was the lid of a tin chocolate-box. Jules had bought it for him on his birthday. He remembered they had played Du Guesclin, and they had quarrelled, and Jules had cried and they had made it up. It must have been six years ago. He could not persuade himself that he was not still playing.

The day wore into afternoon. The two farm horses had come across the meadow into the shade of the hedge. The sunlight fell aslant through the high

hazel branches on to their coats, dappling them all over with the dark shadows of leaves. They stood each with its neck leaning on the other's quarters, brushing each other's flanks with their tails, an unquestioning trustfulness in their eyes. The warm smell of their coats reached him in the tree. Their homely gentleness and strength made him want to live. He wondered why the dead Uhlan had looked so kind.

There was a great stillness everywhere. The hot scent of eglantine rose up from the bank. Thistledown floated over the fields borne on a light breeze. Jean could see a rabbit sitting by its burrow sensitively alert. The purple of a late sheltered foxglove glistened through the leaves. He hoped that the Boches would not come. Death and steel and hostile faces seemed more terrible but less real than they had ever seemed before. He could not believe that they would come. "If they do not come," he asked himself, "shall I come to-morrow?" He knew that he would not.

Suddenly the horses lifted their heads and seemed to be listening intently. They whinnied and ran down the field looking through the hedge. Jean could hear the faint, distant sound of hoofs. It seemed ages before he could see any movement. At last a man came cantering along the field under him; he heard another on the other side. Then he saw a dozen troopers coming slowly down the lane, looking stealthily to east and west as if expecting ambush. Jean cocked his revolver. He thought they must hear the click and his heart beating. He had an impulse to curl up in the bole and let them pass under. With a catch in his throat he stretched his hand down

through the leaves and laid the barrel almost on the shoulder of the first as he bent low to avoid the boughs. At the report man and horse fell in a heap. Jean had tasted the transports of battle. He thought of himself as already dead and almost ceased to be frightened, wondering all the time why he was not more afraid.

The troopers had stopped and were pouring a fusillade into the tree. Jean, slipping round the dead branch, had barely a finger exposed; as the bullets spattered against the wood and cut up the twigs just over his head he felt that he would be shaken down like fruit.

At first they hesitated to ride under, then two spurred their horses and galloped under, over the body of the first, and began firing from the other side. Jean shot at a third who tried to do the same thing and heard him fall. Then he was hit, but he hung on; it was only his foot. Soon the firing increased. Jean could not understand; there were many more shots, but none hit the tree. Could it be a French patrol? Hope brought with it fear. He was more frightened now he thought he might live. He felt a blow in the arm and wondered what it was. It was as if some one had come up behind and struck him. He did not know bullets felt like that. Then he fell down into the lane.

\* \* \* \* \*

The German wave is bent back far beyond Plessix St. Pierre. Jean sits at his mother's *estaminet* fondling a Bavarian helmet. He will never "march" or draw trigger again.

An English officer billeted in *Le Petit Paradis*

asked the miller who was the happy looking lame boy with the bright eyes.

“ Ah! He is a little Brave. He is no *pékin*, he! Ask him the history of the Uhlans in the lane.”

Jean has to repeat the story many times a day to all who enter the inn. He has become laconic as a despatch.

“ I killed two Boches. Ten ran away.” He has quite the Joffre touch.

## THE DRAGON KULTUR

WE have gone back to the legendary days. Material evolution has produced the dragon that is wasting Europe, belching liquid fire and poisoned gas, and breathing spiritual corruption, a monster of hypocrisy and greed, blinded by envy.

Those early weavers of myths, saga-writers, conceivers of strange gods, whose legends have come down to us, must have had stimulus for the imagination, visions of naked good and evil, but no such stuff for dreams as could envisage the beast that has come out of Potsdam.

How different were the ideals of Troy and the Hindu Mahabharata, where the gods fought on either side. Among our Indians in the field are descendants of the Kurus and Pandavas, men of the same race as the poet, who evolved the code of Arjun and that strong, merciful God, who stayed the battle to lay the bell over the lapwing's nest.

Milton, in his Pandemonium, has conceived diverse spirits of evil, but none with the parts of Kultur, that embodiment of lust and pride and hate which has ravaged Belgium and Poland and soiled the fair land of France.

It would show a lack of humour, almost Teutonic, to range ourselves in a close parallel with Milton's

elect spirits battling with the fallen host. But, eliminating the question of electness or the reverse, there are passages in *Paradise Lost* which are very apposite in this new conflict of principles. Take Satan's resolve, the authentic voice of Berlin :

Our better part remains  
To work in close design by fraud or guile  
What force effected not.

Or Moloch's demand of

The millions who stand in arms and longing wait  
The signal to ascend,

whether they will accept for their dwelling place

This dark opprobrious den of shame,  
The prison of his tyranny who reigns  
By our delay.

Moloch might be Moltke or Bernhardt demanding the place in the sun occupied by that hated and envied host, the bandit possessors of the earth.

And Berlin might find a precedent for her political missionaries in the harangue of Beelzebub :

This would surpass common revenge . . .  
. . . and our joy upraise  
In his disturbance, when his darling sons  
Hurled headlong to partake with us shall curse  
Their frail original, and faded bliss  
Faded too soon.

As for the mere material shock of battle, the world earthquake of Ypres or Neuve Chapelle, no twentieth-century poet could improve Milton's artillery :

Immediate in a flame,  
But soon obscured with smoke, all heav'n appeared  
From those deep-throated engines belch'd, whose roar  
Embowell'd with outrageous noise the air.

And all her entrails tore, disgorging foul  
 Their devilish glut, chain'd thunderbolts and hail  
 Of iron globes.

But if Milton were living now how would he symbolize the new principle of evil, in what new dragon-shape would the twentieth-century allegory or epic embody Kultur? Spenser's Blatant Beast, who might be

“followed by the tract of his outrageous spoile,”

was a primitive monster of stings and fangs and tongues, a familiar of Orcus or Hydra. Milton's fallen angels were each the impersonation of some single aspect of evil. His Kultur would be a composite picture of them all, in whose features you could trace the guile of Satan, the cruelty of Moloch, the envy of Mammon, the pride of Beelzebub, the hypocrisy of Belial, whose tongue

Dropp'd manna, and could make the worse appear  
 The better reason.

The Faerie Queene tells how

Calidore doth the Blatant Beast  
 Subdew and bynd in bands.

and afterwards how

—whether wicked fate so framed  
 Or fault of men—he broke his yron chaine,  
 And got into the world at liberty againe.

Thenceforth “more mischief and more scath he wrought.”

The Spenserian incarnation of the dragon was armed with

tongues of serpents with three-forked stings  
That spat out poyson, and gore-bloody gere,  
At all that came within his ravenings :  
And spake licentious words and hatefull things  
Of good and bad alike, of low and hie.

Here the analogy ends. Those happy, spacious days were spared the vision of the Berlin beast, the gross god Kultur, a monster hideously evolved, savage and savant, scientifiically, academically and theologically sanctioned by the universities and churches, nourished by chemical food instead of green pasture, armed in its primitive wallow with the subtlest distillations of the laboratories, its hide indurated against attack by moral callousness, its scales hardened by pride, its eyes protected by lids and films against honest vision, its intelligence drugged against spiritual hamperings of interest, yet given the instinct to discern and strike at any vulnerable part in the foe laid bare by chivalry or loyalty or faith.

The evolution of the Blatant Beast demands a new Spenser ; the vindication of Providence in the eternal conflict of soul and matter a new Milton. All periods of action and change, in which the generations are shaped anew in the mould, have called forth their own bards. In this the greatest age of spiritual adventure since Elizabeth we have no prophet.

We have had lyrics in plenty of late, but is the epic dead? We have not heard the sustained authentic battle note, the thunderous epic roll, since Milton. Surely in the darkest days of spiritual stress that earth has known, the springs of inspiration will not remain dry. Some other mind will rise to the height of this great argument. Some poet allegorist will conceive for us the image of the Unclean Beast and

sing of the slow subduing of the monster, the paring of its scales, the pricking of it to death. Another seer will rise who will assert again

Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to man.

## THE ZEPPELIN

OF all the unlikely things that might happen in the war one of the most unlikely was that Mrs. Weggs's cottage should be singled out for the visitation of Imperial wrath; another, that the engines of the "All-highest" should be despatched to "strafe England" in the person of the old pensioner who fetched her water from the pump.

Only a few months ago I assured her positively that she might lie in her bed with an easy mind.

"Doo you think they'll be comin' here?" she asked. "The policeman, he tell me they may come if I show a light. So I'll put me candle out and darken the winders. It doesn't do to take no risks. Mrs. Ibbets next door, she goo to bed at lightin' up time and gits up airlier for her wark. That come to the same if you don't lay so long."

I reassured Mrs. Weggs again. It seemed the unlikelyest thing in the world that the Huns would pick out this dingy little street in this peculiarly innocent little town. Fortunately, she sleeps in her parlour, for the landing and the room upstairs where her son had lived were exposed, with her china dogs and certain other of her household gods, in mid-air.

A 250lb. high-explosive bomb had fallen from a height of 6,000ft. in the street where she lived and made

a hole in the ground in which you could bury a horse and trap.

It was a very mean street, hardly a street at all, and pretentiously built with a studied ugliness. How pretentiously the bomb alone could show, with its revelation of flimsy lath and plaster and fallen stucco and parti-coloured brick. The bisected room in mid-air, with its bulging plaster and yellow glazed wall-paper, was the most melancholy witness of the jerry-builder's art.

The walls of the houses where they had not fallen were pitted with holes into which you could put your hand. Imagine yourself standing in the street; judging by the spread of shot there could not have been an unriddled foot of space anywhere. The iron railings had been torn and rooted up. Every pane of glass in the street was shattered. The whole scene was very much like the wreck an earthquake might leave if inspired with rational malevolence.

It was noticed that Kitchener's face on a recruiting poster at the corner was pitted with débris, which gave the strong features an added strength, the eyes a more searching prevision, and the whole message written under it a new reality. On the same square of wall a few months before had been posted the placard "Remember Scarborough"; but Scarborough had been forgotten long ago.

The raid had brought all the countryside gaping to the spot. Before ten o'clock in the morning the *Green Dragon* had sold every drop of liquor on the premises. The houses in the street were already evacuated; the ambulances had long ago taken away the human wreckage.

A young man leaning against the door of the inn was saying, " They heven't ha-af made a hole in old Mrs. Weggs's cottage ! "

Only two had been killed outright. Mrs. Weggs was not much hurt, though " whoolly shaken " ; but Elsie, the little girl in the house next Mrs. Ibbetts's, had been killed ; also Mr. Goshawk. He had been in the street. It was said that there was nothing left of him bigger than a part of his boot.

Mr. Goshawk was an old Crimean pensioner, and it had been his custom on a fine day to stand by the corner outside Mrs. Weggs's and discuss current events with passers-by. Owing to his military antecedents he was listened to with respect.

He had been there the morning I visited the old lady in May and was just setting down her pail, which he had fetched from the pump. " How do you think the war is gitting on, sir ? " he asked. " We don't seem to be going any forrader ; we seem to be going backwards sometimes. What we want do is to make a siege of them, same as Sebastopol."

I suggested they were too many.

" Ah, they doo seem to be wonnerful numerous," he said.

" My son, when he come back from Amen-tears, he tell me we've shifted a few," Mrs. Weggs interposed ; " I dare say it was Amen-tears for them."

Mrs. Weggs herself was by no means innocent of the British spirit that had brought down the Zeppelin bombs on our heads.

" Ah ! the br-rutes ! " she said of the German seamen. " Not lettin' us draw 'em from the place they've bin hiding in all along. We'd soon do for 'em if we

could git at 'em, and it's my belief they knows it and that's why they dassent come out. And them Sepolins, they're cowards too. They dassent come out in the light."

"Hangin's too good for their likes," Mr. Goshawk interposed. "If we ketch the ould Kayser we'll do best to make a ca-ast of him and show him round in a motor-car."

"Ah, the rascal! To think what our pore dear soldiers are suffering at Amen-tears!" Mrs. Weggs continued. Ever since her son's return the struggle has been localized in her mind at the place with this elegiac name. "And them Alleys, what fine fellers they be too! I can't help feelin' sorry for 'em. They've got fathers and mothers and wives and the like, same as we. I'm allers one for the news. First thing when the baker come round in the morning, whether I takes a loaf or no, I sez to him, 'What's on the boord?' 'Why, Mrs. Weggs,' he ses, 'I forgot to look.' So I goo down misself a parpose to see."

\* \* \* \* \*

And now Mrs. Weggs is news herself. The infernal drama has come to her. But for the all-wise restrictions of the Censor her honest, wrinkled face would be in the illustrated papers with the V.C.s and generals and *poilus* and moujiks and Huns, and the dismal little doomed street would be as celebrated for a day as Rheims Cathedral. She has been under fire, but her speech is none the more impressive for that. Realities have but confirmed her sentiments; her outlook is unchanged.

She told me it was like "the end of the wa-arld," only you hadn't time to know it was coming. "I was

come ower," she said. " I was that sca-ared I jes lay where I was. There wasn't a minute to do norfin or to git anywhere. And to think of them taking Elsie Borett and old Mr. Goshawk—the dairty r-rougues!"

And now, she says, she knows what it is like " ower there." She believes that 250lb. shells fall incessantly like hail day and night at " Amen-tears."

The word is more than ever like a knell on her lips, conveying sorrow and indignation that these things should be.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“ **I**F there is a Paradise in the world, sahib, it is London.”

Such is the verdict of Jagat Singh, a Sikh sowar who has enjoyed the opportunity which is being offered convalescent Indians of seeing London.

“ When we arrived at the station,” he said, “ we were taken to a motor-cart by a sahib in civilian clothes whom everybody addressed as colonel, and wherever we drove all day the whole of the traffic was stopped and we were allowed to go on so as not to waste any time, and nowhere was any money paid or passes asked for or shown.

“ Sahib, this was a great honour. In Hindustan they do not stop the carriages of big men to let little men pass.

“ And never, sahib, have I seen so many vehicles, great and small. In some places four lines of carriages passed continually, and I did not observe a single collision in the whole day or any injury to the passengers who were walking in the streets.

“ We were shown the Houses of Parliament and a great bridge which might be separated into two pieces only by pressing a button, also a fortress which contained the King’s crown and much ancient armour. Thence we drove to the palace of the Padshah him-

self. We stood outside and did not enter. I was told that the King was not within but that he was living somewhere underground. Why this is so, I cannot say, but Sant Singh tells me it is desirable that it should be kept secret where the King moves, and that nobody should know, on account of the many evil-minded persons who enter the country from enemy lands.

“Near the King’s palace there is a great shop which is itself a city, having openings into many streets. One-half of this is given over to the memsahibs, who were present in great numbers purchasing clothes. Every object that man can desire is obtainable here in large quantities, whether it be motor-carts and engines or merely cotton and thread. There was a room in which the sahibs sat reading newspapers and writing letters, and the Colonel Sahib told me that no payment was demanded for this. The material is free to all who come and go. I myself was permitted to sit down and write a letter to my brother Gunga Singh, who is in the trenches, and to my father, Sarup Singh, who is in the village of Mograon, in the district of Jullundur. For this purpose the owner of the shop gave me cards, on one side of which were pictures of the outside of the shop in which we were gathered. When I had written the colonel wrote in the English hand the names of the persons to whom greetings were sent and of the places in which they were dwelling. These messages also were despatched without any money being paid.

\* \* \* \* \*

“We passed from the great shop to Westminster Abbey to see the graves of all the great generals. After

this we took our meals in an Indian restaurant, where all the dishes were such as are familiar in my own country and prepared by a Brahmin cook.

“ When we had finished our meal we went to the garden of the animals and saw a tortoise that had lived eight hundred years and a snake which could eat a goat and sleep for a month afterwards, and a deer with a neck two yards long which could feed off the branches of high trees, and besides lions and tigers and camels a mouse that could live easily upon the bark of trees.

“ But, sahib, the most wonderful event which happened was this. At a certain place we left our motor in the street and entered a small room full of pictures, which at a moment when I was thinking of other things began to move, sinking downwards into the earth, and suddenly we were surprised to find ourselves underground. I had a very terrible feeling when the room began to go down, for I could not believe that such things could happen out of dreams.

“ And when we had descended a train came towards us with no engine. Sahib, how could it move? We went a long way in the train, and when we came out, merely by climbing a few steps and without ascending again into the moving room, we found we were back at the same place where we had left the motor.

“ And when Sant Singh expressed wonder that the houses of London were so adapted as to save the sahibs who dwelt in them the trouble of walking up and down, the Colonel Sahib said that this was not only the case with rooms, but there were stairs also which never stopped, but moved ceaselessly as if alive, one step taking the place of another, so that by standing still on the lowest one was lifted easily to the highest. It

appears, sahib, that nothing is impossible in London, and the smallest man in the city possesses powers which in my country pertain only to those who are by profession purveyors of magic.

\* \* \* \* \*

“To indulge our wonder, the Colonel Sahib consented that we should leave the motor and return to the big station by means of one of these staircases which move silently by consuming steam and oil, and we found everything as he had said. In all these moving houses one must stand and not sit. The highest no more than the lowest is permitted a seat, but pains are taken by those in authority to provide entertainment for such as come and go. Many curious pictures are attached to the walls; nevertheless one is not permitted to stand and observe these for any length of time, but is always carried forward hurriedly. For the English sahibs in their own country are all busy workers. It is a city without rest. Sahib, is it true that in all London there is no idle man?”

“In the big station we entered a room full of sahibs and memsahibs drinking tea. Here we were allotted two tables and similar entertainment, and the Colonel Sahib sat down and drank with us. When it had grown dark we returned very rapidly in the train to the hospital. Sahib, I have seen London now. More than I have seen cannot exist elsewhere, and I do not wish to see any other city.”

## THE BOY OF TO-DAY

NO one who has done anything ever has an ounce of side. Even young men who have been at grips with first causes are modest. They develop a sense of proportion. The modesty of the V.C. is proverbial.

Take the boy Graham's case. His V.C., he told me, was an inconceivable piece of good luck. He had stuck to his machine gun all right ; he admitted that. But it was the only thing he could do. " They had stopped shelling us," he explained, " and were coming on thick as hornets. Naturally I hung on. It was the one chance. The other fellows were down. What else could I do ?

" Skedaddle, I suppose ? I never thought of it. It would have wanted some pluck. ' Stuck to my gun ' ? I stuck to it to save my skin. It was all I had to hang on to. I can tell you, I should have had cold feet without it. But, of course, one doesn't think of all this ; the whole thing's mechanical."

But Graham saved the trench, and if there is any truth in despatches he did the job alone.

" That was luck too," he explained. " The Boches didn't know we were done in. They got fed up and turned just at the right mo'."

“ And you were badly hit ? ”

“ I discovered that afterwards.”

Graham's modesty was impregnable.

“ If every one got a decoration,” he said, “ for doing his job the ribbons wouldn't be worth taking home.”

And he argued that the selection was all luck. “ They've got to pick out somebody. My little show was a bit dramatic as it was such a close shave. It was an important bit of trench, too, and there happened to be a Staff officer looking on.”

It occurred to me that what the Staff officer saw must have been Homeric—a single man with a shattered leg holding back a wave of Boches, and then settling down to nurse his gun like a child. Half a dozen different things were going wrong with it. The feed-belt was wet, the pockets getting tight. In another minute the cartridges would have jammed. He had his first-aid box out, with its duplicate pieces, and was nursing the machine which “ had saved his skin ” when the loss of blood made him faint.

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“ An extraordinary feeling going off,” he said. “ Like taking gas. I never dared have a tooth out without gas.

“ I nearly fainted again when I heard about the V.C. I was in a base hospital in Boulogne and was taking a morning stroll to see the Folkestone boat come in. I bought a paper and took it into the buffet, and was just leaving it behind when my eye caught a headline, ‘ Lieutenant Graham, V.C.’ Even then, though the fellow had my name, I did not associate

it with myself until I found my own ugly phiz underneath.

“All the gush they had written made me feel quite sick,” he went on. “‘England’s wounded hero,’ and that sort of thing. My first feeling was shame. I wondered what the fellows in the regiment would think. Most of them were dead; I was glad they wouldn’t see it. But there were Brown and Holder and Mayes, a ripping good crowd—they’d had their necks in it for months and only one Military Cross and a D.S.O. between them, and I, who had just joined, got this merely for blazing away with my machine gun when somebody happened to be looking on. They looked on me as a rotter at the game, ‘not cut out for soldiering,’ as the major said, though, I will say, they didn’t rub it in.

“When I left the buffet I had a feeling in the pit of my stomach which I only remember having once before. It reminded me of a thing which happened to me at school. It was Speech Day and the hall was crowded with everybody’s people and all the masters and governors of the place. I suddenly heard my name called and had to march up and receive a prize I did not expect—for good conduct, or something silly. I was a miserable, sensitive, self-conscious little brat, and blushed like a fool, and felt that all the fellows were sniggering at me.

“But what put the lid on was, somebody had fished out a letter of mine and sent it to the editor of the rag, and they had printed it just under the photograph, as if I had been bucking about myself, and how I won the V.C. I can tell you I was not amiable when I got back to the hospital.”

Graham was still something of a child, a good bit younger than his nineteen years. His modesty soon recovered from the shock of the V.C. When he discovered that exactly the same thing had happened to other fellows he didn't mind. The lion's skin sat more easily on him. He found that a V.C. has its compensations.

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Life was made very pleasant for Graham. There had been an impossible, unapproachable "she." She had laughed at him kindly before the war. And now she took him. The glamour of the bit of ribbon made half the difference; the boy's delightful modesty the other half. She was dowered with the fairness which is the proverbial reward of the brave. He had six months' convalescence at home, the time of his life, in a beautiful old house by the river, and she was with him all the while, and everybody was as nice as he could be.

It would be difficult not to be nice to them. To see them together was a cure for depression. I often used to go down to the house, and Graham would talk to me about his plans, what he and Mary were going to do after the war. It was always "after the war." In spite of his V.C. he was not drawn to the Army. His diffidence about his value as an officer was incurable. He told me he had none of the qualities of a soldier, that he hated the whole business, was essentially a man of peace, and had great misgivings whether he would be able to live up to the part or even "to stick it out" at all.

"Nonsense," I said. "It is instinctive in you to do the right thing."

“ Oh, I suppose I’ll keep my end up,” he said doubtfully.

Early in the autumn he went out again. This time to the Dardanelles, attached to another battalion of his regiment. He had not been at the front a week when his name was in the casualty list “ Wounded,” and then again, in a few days, “ Died of wounds.”

It was a machine gun again. This time the thing was steaming and they were short of water, and somebody had to get it. The nullah was a death-trap in the daylight, enfiladed by snipers, and the odds against coming back were more than two to one. I wonder how Graham would have explained away this second act of heroism. The “ to save my skin ” argument would not hold here. It was done in cold blood, when spirits are lowest after hours of squatting under shell fire in shelter, and the strain of days and nights without relief or sleep. Also life meant very much more to him, as much as it can ever mean to a young man.

He was hit directly he left the trench and was seen to wriggle into cover and then out again. He was hit a second time and lay still.

He had time for reflection. The old garden, with its late October flowers, the red beeches, the yellowing avenue of limes, and the flicker of the fire seen through the window from the drive and the shadow of the girl knitting beside it—all this must have come over him, gently tugged him back, and then as surely, more irresistibly, driven him on.

He must have seen the old house which would have been his and hers—if he came through; a haunt of

peace to pass quiet days in. For it was agreed he would never serve after the war. He hated noise, loathed routine, shrank from pain and blood. And he was quite sure he had none of the qualities that make a soldier.

## TEGH BAHADUR

**M**OOORE, of the 12th Gurkha Rifles, was dining with me last night. His wounds have been patched up for the second time, and he is going back to France, where he will find none of the original officers of his own battalion left, save possibly the colonel.

“I am a bit pipped,” he said, “I have just heard that my orderly, poor old Tegh Bahadur, is dead—blown up by a hand grenade in a night attack. He was such a top-hole fellow.”

And he began to tell me of the shooting trips they had had together and how Tegh Bahadur had turned a bear out of a cave and tackled a huge wounded boar in the forest with his *kukri*.

There are many races, castes, and creeds in the Indian Army; but every British officer, whether it be through love or conviction, swears by his own men. This is as it should be, but speaking as an outsider who knows a little of most of the Indian fighting stocks and not a great deal of any, I have always envied the man who commands the “Gurk.”

He is first of all a soldier and a shikari, and honours his British officer as such—not because of his white skin, but because of the steadfast virtues of his class. There is no sophisticated twentieth-century race-feeling

about the "Gurk." He can be perfectly at his ease with his regimental officer without any encroachment upon respect.

"He was an ugly little devil," Moore said, "and a chunk had been torn out of his face by a leopard. I didn't take to him at first until one day I was in the jungle at Ghoom and heard woodcutting in a forest reserve where woodcutting is forbidden. It was in the leave season and everybody had cleared out and I was left in command. When I appeared in the clearing I saw three pairs of heels scurrying away. I recognized Tegh Bahadur and called him to the orderly room.

"You were cutting wood," I said.

"Yes, sahib."

"You know it is against orders?"

"Yes, sahib."

"Why did you run away?"

"When we saw the captain sahib coming we were frightened and had to bolt."

"Is there any reason why you should not be punished?"

"Yes, sahib; it is a first offence. The colonel sahib never punishes a first offence."

"There were two others?"

"Yes, sahib."

"Tell me their names."

"No, sahib. I cannot tell you their names. We do not betray one another. . . . Perhaps if I talk a little to them in the canteen they will come to you themselves and confess."

The next day the two men came and confessed and were forgiven.

A simple story with no point in it to one unversed in the evasiveness of the more sophisticated East.

“Soon afterwards,” Moore continued, “we were in Waziristan, Wana way, when the country was disturbed. I went out after markhor one afternoon without an escort, and I had an uncomfortable feeling all the while that I was being stalked. It was five in the evening when I noticed that a pointed rock near me cast an unnaturally bulging shadow. I covered it with my rifle and waited. Soon a voice came from behind it: “Don’t shoot, sahib, it is me,” and after the voice there appeared the forage cap and scarred face of Tegh Bahadur.

“He was ashamed at being discovered. He didn’t want the sahib to be scuppered, he said, and seeing that I was not angry he grinned sheepishly. But just think of it! He had been shadowing me the whole afternoon and I had not twigged it, and I was drawing my pay for training him, teaching him to stalk and scout!”

The fidelity of the man Moore took as a matter of course, but his story reminded me of a tradition that holds in most Gurkha battalions. In the attack the British officer always runs a little ahead. That is the custom whatever troops he leads, but it is not always easy to keep the lead; two men in a company of Gurks are told off to stand by him on either side. Against steel at least he must not fall. But, of course, this has to be a very furtive proceeding.

There is a long-standing alliance between the Highland regiments and the Gurk. The Highlander is attached to him because of his cheery face, and the face of the Gurkha is the index of his soul. He has

the heart of a lion and the head of a child. No sepoy is so dependent on his sahib.

In the trenches of Flanders he is thinking all the while "This is the country of the white man; these are the ways of the white man," and when all his officers are killed he is a little lost and bewildered. He is a cheery, but not a calculating, fighter. He loves a scrap, and likes to look into the whites of his enemy's eyes; but an enemy composed of terrible sounds, unseen shocks, and tortuous forms of death is a manifestation of the devil with which it is hard to cope alone. If there is one place where Togh Bahadur is the better man it is in the listening gallery of a mine. For his ear is as good as his eye. Here one is happiest without imagination as one sits waiting in the dark for sounds in the neighbouring sap, subtle as the footfall of a bear on wet leaves. The Gurk's ear is true; he does not hear sounds that are no sounds; he is not haunted with the thought that the hole where he squats is the shape of a tomb.

But in the white man's war as a rule, in the trenches under the night flares, Togh Bahadur is as dependent on Moore, as Moore is dependent on him in the Himalayan jungle, his home.

And apparently Togh Bahadur was a very lovable little man. Moore, who has lost most of his pals, was sunk in depression half the night. He was thinking of camp fires in Suru and Baltistan and his trusty little friend squatting over the hot rhododendron ashes in his Gilgit boots and Balaclava cap, blowing the embers into a flame and chattering between puffs, of red bear and big sheep, and the monster ibex which he has marked down for the sahib on the morrow. One more of the bright visions blotted out by the Hun.

## THE JAP ON THE WESTERN FRONT

**T**HERE is, or was, one Japanese fighting on the Western front. I found him among the Indians, a slip of a boy with the face of a "Gurk" and the laughing eyes of a Celt. His name was Hara, and, oddly enough, his last initial was "O." In a Highland regiment he would no doubt have answered to the name of "Pat." In a Gurkha battalion he might have passed to the eyes of a casual observer as true to type—only sublimated. But among these swarthy, bearded, Mazbi Sikhs with whom he saw battle, men of heavy build, slow of gait, and slower mind, you would have taken him for the regimental mascot. Between him and his companions there was the elemental difference of earth and fire. I was reminded of an old print of a leprechaun sporting among the shaggy cave men.

Kipling's Namgay Doola, that red-haired, blue-eyed Irish half-breed, must have presented just such a contrast to his fellow subjects of the Himalayan Rajah's State, as Hara to the Mazbis. A contrast stronger even in the inward springs of the spirit than in the outward physiognomy.

When you have left the Mediterranean behind, you do not come across this type until you reach Japan. There must be something mercurial in an island soil, or perhaps it is that beyond Hong-kong you have over-

shot the East. In no Arab, Hindu, Chinaman, or Asiatic Mahommedan will you find the insatiable curiosity which drives men forth to wander for the mere sake of adventure, seeking no concrete reward and having no material pivot to turn on.

When he was seventeen Hara, with some thirty fellow-students and an old man in command, sailed in an eighty-ton schooner from Tokio to Hawaii. It was a vacation cruise. Two professors went with them, and the old man, who had retired from the Japanese Navy as a lieutenant many years before and had not since been to sea, instructed them in mariners' lore. But Hara learnt more than the professors or the old man could teach. Twenty-three days out they were driven on a reef, lost the ship, took to the boats and landed on a desert island. They lived mainly on turtles and unsuspecting gulls which they killed with their oars, and drank the blood of turtles eked out with rain-water caught in shells from an occasional providential squall. One of them died; they burnt him on a stack of marram grass; when they were picked up by an American ship many weeks afterwards they carried the charred bones home.

On leaving college, a boy of nineteen, he offered himself as a wandering correspondent to a newspaper in Tokio. There was not a living wage in it; but a hungry curiosity is the mother of contrivance, and Hara was hungry in every sense of the word. China, the Philippines, Siam, Singapore, Ceylon, India, received him in turn. When the great war broke out he was instructor of ju-jitsu to the men of the King's Own Scottish Borderers at Lucknow.

Ju-jitsu was of course abandoned for the greater

game, but it was not easy for a vagabond Japanese to become enrolled on the spot in the British or Indian Army. The search for a way was a small Odyssey in itself, and carried Hara from Calcutta to Peshawar. It was at Bombay that he met the sympathetic "O.C." of a regiment of Sikhs.

I knew the man—he is dead now—we will call him Rorke. He was the kindest of Irishmen, just the kind of man to lend an ear to a boy in search of a scrap. "Can you cook?" he asked the odd little figure whom he found standing in the verandah outside his room. Hara said that he had not cooked for Europeans, but that he would like to try. He was taken in the transport the next day. As a cook he was not a success. He could boil things which he had first extracted from tins, he told me, but beyond this he was not trusted. As a seaman he had more experience, and he has a story of being given the wheel in the Red Sea.

Thus he passed through the gates of the East in an Indian troopship, a favourite with all by reason of his zeal. He landed at Marseilles and entrained with the Sikh regiment, going north to other fields of romance, marching through the streets of Orleans, past the cathedral, under the statue of Joan of Arc, to the camp by the Loire.

In a few days the regiment was at the front, fighting at Festubert. In the recapture of the lost trenches they displayed their mettle, the same dogged, steadfast, unimaginative breed who entered the breach at Delhi, a race apart, who, in spite of their great military traditions, will ever be outcasts in the eyes of the orthodox Sikh. Most of the officers were killed; the others wounded. Half the battalion was wiped out, but they

held their ground. The colonel was shot through the head. Hara has his pipe which was picked up where he fell—a sacred treasure.

The Jap, being a mere camp-follower, was not in this, though afterwards he obtained his wish and by the exercise of much cajolery found himself in the trenches and fired off many rounds at the Boches. But it was not in the firing-line that Hara received his wounds. He was back in regimental headquarters, occupied in some unromantic routine, scraping pans or drying plates, and staring up at a German Taube, when a falling bomb killed a man a few yards from his feet.

Hara stripped off his shirt and showed me a skin clouded blue and grey with wounds, rayed and blotched like the inside of a scallop shell fresh from the sea. He looked as if he had been held down and tattooed all over by some brutal and drunken Hun.

He has passed his summer in pleasant quarters in an old Hampshire manor house, now a hospital, on the cliffs by the sea. But here again the spirit of adventure has brought him very near death. None of the Indians in the camp would bathe in the *Kala pani* (black water); but the Jap, who is a strong swimmer, used to take his morning dip throughout the summer. He was defeated one day in a wrestle with the tide and was picked up exhausted far out at sea.

Hara has found a new profession. He is now a masseur. But he is not likely to endure this peaceful rôle for any length of time. His present hankering is for flight. He once piloted an aeroplane in Japan in the early days of flying. But whatever element he chooses to disport in, he is sure to find adventure. A mere boy, with all the world in front of him and a

few crowded years behind, he is born into an age in which sober fact transcends the old-time legends of his race—the age of the new chivalry in East and West, prolific in real dragon spawn on which to blunt his Samurai sword.

# THE CARE OF THE SEPOY

## I

### WHITE MAGIC

THE hospital on the hill, a landmark for miles across the Sussex downs and far out at sea, is a small city in itself. In mere size there is no precedent to it, for it consists of three general Indian hospitals joined together under one command.

It covers many acres. It has its own travellers' mosque and Gurudwara, or Sikh temple, its own shops, stores, laundry, asylum, isolation hut hospitals, kinema shed, miniature rifle range, and common room for Indian officers. Apart from the blocks which hold accommodation for two thousand beds, the quarters of the seven hundred Indian personnel of the hospital make up a considerable little village.

In this miniature city the immemorial uses of the East continue. The Mahommedans in Ramazan fast between the rising and the setting of the sun, and the cooks are at work all night; the Brahmans are preserved from contact with the unclean; the butchers of the two communities kill by the *halál* and *jatka*, the stroke that is prescribed by religious rite, the Mussulman striking at the throat and the Sikh at the back of the neck; the water from the Hindu and

Mahommedan taps cannot conceivably intermingle ; and a caste committee of Indian officers has been appointed to see to it that the least minutiae of ritual are observed.

But in the mere mechanical world the West is impinging. The cook has adopted a rolling-pin and no longer flattens out his food with the palm of his hand. He cooks on a gas-stove and has learnt not to blow out the jet when his work is done ; the dhobi sadly manipulates an up-to-date laundry plant and sighs for the flat stone by the village tank ; and the sepoy changes his clothes at night when he goes to bed.

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The way in which the complexities of administration have been reduced to smoothness by the commandant and his staff, the disciplined compromise between East and West, would provide material for a small book. All this is taken as a matter of course by the casual visitor whose first interest is the patient. Statistics will show him that 70 per cent. of the wounded cases have returned to the front, 29 per cent. have been passed as unfit for active service and returned to India, and 1 per cent. has died. The percentage of deaths among all admissions, sick as well as wounded, is only .9. Yet the glass cases filled with fragments of projectiles extracted from wounds make up a small museum in the commandant's office.

In the X-rays rooms negatives, which run into thousands, point to the amount of work which has been put in since the hospital was opened in January. Every case is examined as a routine measure. In the operating rooms the new telephone-probe has brought

down the percentage of mortality. Directly the needle touches metal it sends the message through to the ear, a jarring vibration like the buzz of a bee. It distinguishes bone and lead in the most uncanny manner. But the most specialized work will be found in the orthopædic wards. The Indian, with his fatalistic resignation and tendency to let things mend themselves, is apt to allow his joints to stiffen, and constant vigilance is required, especially in cases in which the tendons of the hand are shattered, to preserve for the patient the use of his limb. The orthopædic specialists employ four distinct processes, and the patient is subjected to one or all of them.

First there is the process of ionization. The sepoy seats himself gravely in a kind of dentist's chair and dreams away twenty minutes with his four limbs dipped in four cells, while a solution highly charged with electricity is driven through the skin, infiltrating the bones.

"Do you feel it?" I asked a Pathan.

"Ha, sahib. It is like small thorns," he said, thinking perhaps of the prick of the camel-thorn on bare feet in his native hills.

And by reason of the thorns he had faith, the virtue of the drug being sensible.

The next process is the electro-radiant treatment. The patient basks on a bed in the centre of glowing cylinders, which are heated up to 350° Fahrenheit. Here, too, he is subject to some mysteriously benevolent agency.

It is the third process which he abhors—the special drill and exercises and the scientific appliances by which the affected joints are kept in motion and saved

from stiffening, the calf exercises, and the lifting of weights on the end of a string by the finger. To the sepoy this is meaningless monotony without visible reward.

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The fourth process is the massage, a treatment well understood and practised in the East. It is the most grateful of all. There is nothing the convalescent sepoy enjoys more than lying back in a chair at his ease and being rubbed down by a British orderly. At such moments his face is wreathed in visible content. The bliss is partly physical, partly gratified prestige. One sees the same look on the faces of men who are being wheeled about on the pier in bath-chairs.

The sepoy has ceased to be surprised at the miracles of healing. A Gurkha told me that the most wonderful thing he had witnessed in Wilayat was a blind man on a bench by the sea who was reading a large white book on which there was no visible print.

“Sahib,” he said, “in Wilayat the blind are given eyes in their fingers. There is no miracle which the doctors cannot perform unless it be to bring back the dead.”

Next door to the orthopædic wards an eminent bacteriologist is installed. The sepoy does not see the ringed and spotted parasites and bacilli revealed by the microscope, the little enemies more insidious than the Boches. But the special and peculiar invader of the organism of Ram Singh or Tegh Bahadur is duly recorded, docketed, and filed in accordance with the neat carded system which prevails through the whole institution, and the diagnosis is passed on to the regimental medical officer.

Then there is the asylum. Every mental case among the Indians in France comes to the hospital on the hill. There was only one patient in the wards when we visited it, a lonely figure standing by the window stroking his left hand gently with his right. The man was a Mahommedan, with all the native melancholy of the East in his eyes, to which was added a very present and poignant grief.

“Sahib,” he said to the commandant, who asked him why he was so sad, “all that I have is gone, looted! The savings of a lifetime!”

The commandant laid his hand kindly on the man’s shoulder. “Keep a good heart,” he said. “All will be recovered.”

But there was no answering gleam in the man’s eyes. I met him the next day and he repeated the same formula with a gesture of despair. He had the fixed gaze of a prophet and a prophet’s dignity, and seemed to be looking into the bottomless pit.

“Many of these cases get cured,” the commandant said to me.

And I knew that if science, or care, or kindness is of any avail the man would come into his own.

# THE CARE OF THE SEPOY

## II

### THE BLACK WATER

**E**ARLY in the year an old Hampshire manor-house with a wide lawn in front, overlooking the sea, was converted into a home for convalescent Indians.

Here the sepoy comes for rest and refreshment until such time as he is fit to return to the trenches or, if Fate has dealt hardly with him, to his own country. The crumbling cliffs are falling away on all sides down to the beach. In a few years the house itself will disappear. In the meantime this little plot of vanishing England has lent itself to hospitable uses.

From their windows the sepoys overlook "the black water." Somewhere beyond the open space between the Needles and Christchurch Tower lies Hindustan, or so it seems to them, separated from the land of their birth by vague distances.

"The water under the cliff is one end of the road home." Most of the Indias are reserved; a few unburden themselves; but this thought must often occur to all. A Sikh in one of the wards is looking wistfully out to sea. As the doctor passes on his round he detaches him and pours out his tale.

It is well known in the hospital that it has been a dry season in the Punjab—one of the driest for many years—and his land which he has left in charge of a small brother, Kartar Singh, a weakling, is fed by wells, and lies far from any stream or canal ; and now there has come news from a maternal uncle that a cousin, Bhagwan Singh, is drawing the water off on to his own land. The soil is as iron ; the thin crop is withered by the drought. Will the doctor sahib write to the Deputy Commission Sahib at Bahadurgarh and see that justice is done. The doctor spoke comforting words to the Sikh.

“ Be of good cheer,” he said, “ you will look into this matter yourself. To-morrow you go before the board, who will decide that the cure for your rheumatism is the dry air of Hindustan. In ten days you will be on board a ship. A month later you will see Bahadurgarh and Kartar Singh, and you will be able to take such measures against the thievish cousin as you may think fit. Be sure that the Deputy Commissioner Sahib will not permit any injustice to be done upon the estate of a sepoy who is fighting for the Raj.”

The Sikh had not an expressive countenance, but I guessed that the grey sea under his window had become a pathway of light.

It would be interesting to know what waking or sleeping thoughts, if any, this open roadway of the sea brings to the Pathan. In the case of Mir Ashgar it is probably revenge. He carries a bit of the East in his ribs beside a splinter of Prussian shrapnel. The X-rays man discovered it deeply embedded, and there it remains, an old wound, and an old score to pay in

a little family disagreement which arose out of the infidelity of a woman.

"It is Madghali's bullet," Mir Ashgar explained. "I knew it was there somewhere. I have not forgotten."

Madghali had stalked him one night as he was slipping back over the border into British territory to join his regiment at the end of his leave. But there were consolations; he had accounted for Madghali's father, two brothers, and one son, whereas only two of his own kin had so far fallen. When Mir Ali goes East Madghali will have to lie low, keep an eye on his loopholes, and cut the communication trench deeper between his tower and his field.

Madghali's son whom Mir Ashgar slew was a boy of five, but honour required it, and this Pathan has the polished, genial manners of the brave. "May you never grow tired," he said to me, as I left him, with a salaam. "You are the most welcome person."

Another tribesman who is to sail by the next eastward-bound transport is a magnificent young Afridi from the territory beyond our border. He stands 6 ft. 2 in. in his socks, is uncommonly fair, and carries himself with the easy, careless grace of the frontier. He was in the very first affair in which Indian troops were engaged, at Neuve Chapelle, at the end of October last year. Here he was slightly wounded, but returned after a short interval. An attack of pneumonia in March meant a longer convalescence. In May he sustained the injury to his right hand which has put him out of action.

In the meantime, his folk have been raiding our Indian frontier while he has been fighting for us in

Flanders. But this is all in the ordinary day's march, a sporting event on the border as regular almost as the Derby. The independent tribesman, once enrolled in the Indian Army, is true to his salt, even if he finds himself taking the field, as often happens, against his own kin.

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The corrugated iron recreation room on the cliff is a very British-looking affair, with its billiard table and stage and the sporting pictures hung on the wall ; but there is nothing hybrid in the group within. The settee by the wall is admirably adapted for a praying-mat, and on it a wild-looking Beluchi, with loose, hanging, elfin locks, is swaying rhythmically, gazing Mecca-wards, repeating his evening prayer to the setting sun with that rapt and blind absorption which looks so odd in a cold English setting—more especially odd in a building which might have been constructed for a Bethel or a parish meeting-room.

Mir Ashgar has descended and is buying cigarettes at the little stall in the corner, and a Sikh has a covetous eye on a row of bottles—hair restoratives of different kinds. He buys three of them, counting his English pennies, and retires prepared for an orgy of oil. He cares not for corks or pin-prick apertures, but will strike the neck off each bottle in turn and pour the contents over his long loose locks until they glisten in the lamplight in a manner dear to his heart.

The Gurkhas, children of the hour, are playing on the carpet. Things they have seen and endured in blood-stained Flanders, and homelier far-away things which are hidden from them for a time, have left no trace of wistfulness on their happy Mongol features.

One of them has a gash on his cheek, a cicatrice like a starfish with rays covering the whole side of his face. The disfigurement only adds to the broadness of his smile as he squats happily on the carpet absorbed in a game of dice with cownie shells. A crutch by his side shows that this wound is not his only injury. His next voyage will take him to his native hills.

He and his three comrades in turn throw the six cownie shells on a piece of sacking, and the game is to make them fall with the aperture upwards. A fifth scores with an Oriental cloth draught-board the shape of a Maltese cross. I asked them if it was a game of skill or a game of chance. The Gurkha who was winning told me it was a game of skill, and the Gurkha who was losing that it was a game of chance, and the five of them smiled broadly.

Gurkha mirth, Sikh and Moslem melancholy seemed equally remote from the genius of the tin shed, and one wondered how much of the stereotyped west the sepoy would carry home with him. Little, it is to be hoped, beyond the picture postcard and the gramophone, which is already established in the village bazaar.

One cannot help moralizing when one meets the Indians in the forest. It is good to think that this plot of old Wessex, trodden once by Roman, Jute, and Norman, should be tenanted by them for however brief a time before it is swallowed up in the purging sea. They have come from the land of their early conquest, back into the west, fighting beside us to hold the pure soil of England free from the last contamination of the Hun.

## BAGHDAD

**A**N ancient though hardly a beautiful city, yet possessing an indefinable charm of its own. Entering it from the east, after having spent years in the other easts, I felt that I was coming into the real East for the first time, the dry, parched and crumbling, unluxuriant, biblical East, the East of Sir Richard Burton and Nebuchadnezzar, the original and essential East that is printed on the mind in childhood through the Bible and the Book of Hours.

One sees date palms, domed Arab tombs, and veiled women going to the well with pitchers, in other Oriental cities scattered far and wide ; but one has to come back to the Arab to evoke the familiar scene, the Bedouin walk, the desert gaze, the peculiar hang of the turban and poise of the head.

Baghdad, or Ba-a-agh-dad as the Arabs style it—the two “ a’s ” are rolled and the “ h ” is sounded—is a city devoid of any kind of grandeur. The narrow, tortuous alleys are impassable to carriages. The saddle-bags of the camels rub against the walls of yellowish brick and jam uncomfortably at the corners. Many of the streets are too narrow for beasts of burden other than the mangy, ragged little mules and asses which descend in a continual stream with their empty water-skins to the Tigris bank. Following them

through the maze one need never lose the way. The pariah dogs which one meets everywhere are the scavengers; each has his own quarter, and if he passes his neighbour's landmark he is attacked and driven out. Lean and starved-looking as some of them are, the reek that goes up from the garbage of the city proclaims that their work is ill done.

The bazaars are often roofed, and the houses, except in the upper stories, present a blank wall to the street. Here the high-gabled windows on either side almost meet, and one catches a glimpse of an arm and sometimes a face of a surprising paleness, which is hurriedly or reluctantly veiled according to the degree of modesty that impels the action. These fretted Jezebel windows are in keeping with the hoarded romance of the city. It is the architecture of the illustrations in Lane's "Arabian Nights." One feels that a black slave may appear behind the curtain with a naked scimitar, or an afrit peep out of a neighbouring window. I saw the girl, fair as a Circassian, violently seized by the shoulder from behind and drawn back into the room by a jealous hand, and hoped that it would not be her fate to be sewn up in a skin and cast into the Tigris.

There was no hotel in those days—sixteen years ago—in the European sense of the word. Only a shanty kept by an Armenian. Turkish cooking and accommodation and no bath. One is supposed to go to the *hamman*, but I commandeered a monster cooking vessel, a kind of Arabian Nights cauldron, and sent it sailing down the Tigris when I left, lest any other European should come along.

My companions in the hotel were a Greek, a Jew,

a Turk, an Armenian, a Levantine, a Bombay Eurasian, and an Italian-Abyssinian half-caste, who told me that he had had French lessons from General Gordon in Khartum. He dealt in liquorice, and I remember a seller of roots coming into the city, an Arab, a dweller in black horse-hair tents driven to Baghdad by hunger, as distrustful of walls as of a cage, and afraid to enter the door of a house with his wares. He struggled and spat when the Abyssinian, who wanted to buy his stock, dragged him over the threshold.

My bedroom window opened into a verandah overlooking the river and the Bridge of Boats. Here every morning I was reminded of the antiquity of the city as I watched the *gufas*,<sup>1</sup> described by Herodotus, "round like a buckler and freighted with casks of palm wine." He tells how they floated down stream from Armenia each with a live ass on board, and how when they arrived at Babylon the vessels were taken to pieces and the ribs of willow, date-palm, and pomegranate sold with the merchandise, and the covering of skin carried back on the asses to the merchant's own country.

Afterwards I saw the bitumen wells of Hitt on the Euphrates, where the pitch is exuded with which the *gufas* are plastered over to-day as in old times. They are still belching forth the clouds of dense smoke which made the ancients believe them the mouth of hell.

No doubt the Turks, who will have commandeered all the craft of the Tigris, have a fleet of these cauldron-like boats freighted with supplies and munitions

<sup>1</sup> Coracles.

of war spinning down stream from above Nineveh, each with "the two navigators standing upright," who will be lashing the stream furiously to reach Baghdad against the day when our first armoured motor-cars invade the palm-groves of the city.

I remember evenings spent in the house of an Armenian, K—— Effendi—it is not safe to give his name—when with shutters barred and doors closely guarded a servant would stand by the glowing brazier and sing national songs.

The Turk is not loved by subject races. The Jews and Armenians in the city, if they escaped with their lives, would no doubt welcome the sound of the British guns. Yet in all social relations the traveller will find the well-bred Osmanli of the old school what the German eminently is not—a gentleman. Like the Bedou, he has a code. There are things which are done and things which are not done, and expediency does not juggle with the rules.

The most picturesque figures in the city are the Arabs ; the Bedou, with his keen eyes cast from long habit on the horizon ; the grave sheikh with his staff, his long grey beard and steadfast gaze, and turban bound with the black *aagal*.

The Bedouin distrust the Turks, and their antipathy is seasoned with contempt. Outside the city they were free as the wind. There was no armed control beyond a gunshot from the walls. The sheikhs of the tribes were subsidized to let the camel post go through to Damascus, and the Turkish Government had no hold on them unless one of their number came into the bazaars of Baghdad for supplies. I made the journey across the desert with an old haji, who guided

himself by the stars. Twelve days on a fast dromedary, riding eighteen hours at a stretch with two short halts for meals, and the beast had only one drink between the Euphrates and Damascus. I was held up and robbed a day and a half from Hitt, and owed it to the haji that I got through alive.

When we entered Damascus we found the old city turning in its sleep after an imperial visit. We saw painted on all the façades of the houses what I should have recognized, if I had been wise, as "the writing on the wall," the mark of the beast, the beginning of all this coil, the finger pointing to Baghdad. Horizontal stripes of red, black, and white, the brand of the Hohenzollern. William, the friend of Abdul, had visited the oldest city in the world. The Sultan was—literally perhaps, figuratively certainly—to be clasped in a tight and, as after events may prove, a suffocating embrace. Not a sacred dwelling was spared, not even the house of Ananias or the house where St. Paul was let down in the basket; and the little mountain train that takes one on to Lebanon and the sea wore on every carriage the same livery. And, last profanity of all, even at Baalbec on the temples of Jupiter and the Sun was inscribed the legend, "*Imperator Germanorum visitavit.*"

## THE MAN WHO WOKE UP

### I

HE lived in a kind of upright coffin underground—a wooden fortress on an isthmus between two tunnels, which shook with the vibration of the incoming and outgoing trains. At night, when he rose into the upper air, he was guided to his home by the same artificial rays which lighted him in the underworld. The war did not affect him at first, except that he emerged into a more Stygian darkness.

The mission in life of Arthur Husk was to distribute small packets out of a glass window. An uncle who was a retainer in the household of a tobacco magnate had secured him the berth in the wooden box, and his parents had impressed him so deeply with a sense of his unworthiness that he accepted his lot as a special intervention of Providence. He had unquestioning belief in his star, which is the privilege of those who secure promotion through influence. At thirty-two he believed his position in the subterranean stronghold to be impregnable. He clung to it when every other citadel of the kind was occupied by girls and matrons.

His complacency had first been disturbed by an extraordinary old gentleman of mountainous proportions with a coffee-coloured skin and eyebrows like

small birds' nests who had demanded a brand of cigar unknown to his employers. This particular weed, it seemed, was affected by every one remotely connected with the planting of tea, coffee or rubber on the coast that had given the old gentleman his individual complexion. The ignorance of Arthur Husk concerning the elementary business of his trade had annoyed him even more than the infrequency of the Richmond non-stop trains.

"You don't keep them? What do you keep?"

The old man glared at him so fiercely from under his beetling brow that Husk felt personally at fault.

Another Ealing train passed.

"You live here, do you?—underground—in the dark—all the year round?"

This also seemed a cause of offence. The man spoke with such conviction that Husk felt something like a sense of guilt.

"You should get out of it—do you hear?—into the light."

Husk was too confused for resentment.

"I can't be hanging about for a job," he said sheepishly.

The intruder overshadowed and dwarfed his citadel as some gross pagan god a little lighted shrine.

"This is not a job, it is an interment," he bellowed. "What do you think the sun shines for? Never seen a flamingo, I suppose?"

The word recalled to Husk a picture on an ephemeral brand of cigarettes he had once sold—a white paper box with a row of pink, long-legged birds by the water's edge and a pink sun setting behind a palm.

"Go and see one at the Zoo. Can't get away, I

suppose. Sundays, gardens closed, eh?" The huge man's brows puckered as if Providence were given a poser. "You have fifty-two days in the light, say sixty-five in the year. That leaves three hundred underground—in the grave. You inhabit the box with the glass lid until the other box comes along. Same thing—one vertical, the other horizontal."

The man had forgotten the little tobacconist who cowered at his feet. The case of Husk had become one of abstract wrong—a quite impersonal problem. It was only the rumbling in the tunnel that brought home to him again its personal application.

"This can't go on," he said. "We must arrange something. You will see me some time to-morrow."

An arrow of silver light pointed to the Richmond non-stop train, and the great impulsive Providence was borne away like any ordinary mortal.

Husk spent a disturbed night. He repeated to himself as he walked home that it was no business of the stranger's, that he had no call to interfere or to make little of a man's honest calling. He resented the intrusion as soon as the shadow of authority passed. He could not deny the authority. This was not a person one could tell to mind his own business. One's own affairs and other people's might well be pertinent to such a man.

The next morning the walls of his case seemed narrower. His shop was ablaze with the same cryptic insignia; the cigarette-boxes exuded the same Oriental perfume; but the pyramids, the camels, the palms, the sand reminded him of the stranger. The Sphinx intrigued him. Those lustrous-girdled women of the East, Salome and Semiramis, with the twin plaques

fastened Cleopatra-wise over their bosoms, gave his visit a quite illogical importance.

At noon the Providence reappeared out of the Cimmerian tunnel. An almost empty train disgorged him. He blocked the aperture through which Arthur Husk ministered to the underworld.

“Take these,” he said. “Members’ tickets for Sunday. Got a wife? No? Very good thing. Don’t marry until you get out of this—into the light I am arranging something. Don’t forget the flamingoes. See the penguins fed. Visit the eagle-owl. He’s a bird of the dark like you—but he has vision.”

The plan that was hatching for the deliverance of Arthur Husk was never disclosed. Another train appeared from the opposite tunnel and carried the Providence off on his erratic orbit. Husk never saw him again.

No doubt he is playing providence on a larger scale. The need of millions is engaging his foresight, and Husk is forgotten; for three days after this visitation England declared war. Even the underworld was affected. One man in every four who came to the glass box was wearing khaki.

Husk, holding the members’ tickets in his hand, was disconsolate. He did not know that these cards provided him with the entrée to life. “The light” that he was to “get out into” meant nothing to him. Yet he was profoundly dissatisfied with his underworld. All his values were upset. He had lost caste. It irked him to think that there were people going about who could make light of a permanent job, an appointment secured and held by influence, carrying a salary sufficient to ensure respectability in the tenant

of the subterranean box. He tried to persuade himself that his visitor was a crank with a prejudice against the dark. He consulted the bookstall man. "A queer customer indeed," his neighbour said. "I shouldn't wonder if he hadn't been in prison."

The analogy was distressing with its suggestion that he too, viewed from a different angle, had the appearance of serving his term. Husk was not convinced, but there was little comfort left him in the impregnability of his citadel.

Arthur Husk was a native of Pimlico. He had never travelled so far north as Regent's Park until he found himself alone one Sunday morning outside the Zoological Gardens with two members' tickets in the brim of his black bowler hat. The bookstall clerk had "cried off." He was a Sunday habitu  of Waterlow Park and Finsbury. The Sabbath was for ozone, he argued, and at his time of life he was not going to risk the breathing of tainted air.

In this crisis Husk could think of no one to share his adventure. His citadel in the Underground stood in a moving human sea. His fellow-creatures were carried past him in a continual ebb and flow, but he inhabited his small coffin-like box as if it were a shell that had hardened round him. The integument was impermeable. The average mollusc or mole has probably more mates to pass the time of day with than had Arthur Husk in his subterranean cell.

Standing outside the gate he was conscious of privilege. He had obtained his tickets through interest. It was more his habit of nailing down opportunity than any sociable bent that made him look round for a companion. It was the merest

chance that a soldierly-looking old gentleman should be pursuing his leisurely way down Albert Road at the very moment when Arthur Husk was waiting irresolutely by the north gate. There was something in the stranger's eye and bearing, a benevolence enhanced by his thick white hair and brown skin, that made the offer of the ticket easy and its acceptance the most natural thing in the world.

"It is most kind of you; very kind, indeed," he said, in answer to Husk's explanation. "To tell you the truth, I was wondering on whom I should descend for a ticket. Sunday in town is a dismal affair, isn't it? I was due in Hampshire this morning, but half an hour ago I had a message putting me off?"

Husk was puzzled by this modest courtesy. He had never spoken to a gentleman before save in the way of business. Now it seemed that the stranger wished for his company.

"I am interested in beasts myself," he said. "I have done a bit of shooting in odd places. We can compare notes." And he insisted that the tobacconist should be his guest at lunch.

Husk blinked at him uneasily. He followed him with some suspicion, but before noon he was less tongue-tied with his retired sapper colonel than he could ever have been with the bookstall man. He offered few comments, but such as he made puzzled the kindly old officer, who studied men as well as beasts and wondered what kind of human mole he had unearthed in Regent's Park. The sun shone. Brightness and colour flooded the gardens. The flamingoes danced for him and spread their wings. The eagle owl flushed an eye of vision. The king

penguin in his orange stole bowed gravely at his feet. Everything conspired that he should see day. Those gorgeous Himalayan fowl the monaul and tragopan carried light on their wings.

Husk learnt from the colonel how he had shot the monaul in the rhododendron forest, where the birds would fall among the crimson blossoms that stained the snow; how he had had his thumb nearly bitten off by a wounded hornbill—"that red-eyed villain who affects the blue tie"—somewhere on the Siamese side of the Tennasserim River; how he had fallen down a cliff in the close embrace of one of those white-cravated bears and seen a brown mother emerge with her young from her winter lair—the hollow bole of a tree into which he had climbed and looked across abysmal valleys at the white peak of Siniolchum. He heard of fighting widgeon and pink-footed geese stalked in the frosty reed-beds at dawn. The colonel spoke of these things with the zest of a child. He could tell what wild fowl were passing over at night by their cries and the sound of their wings. He had watched the ibex in their native precipices of Baltistan. He made Husk wait nearly an hour by the flamingo pool to see how the markhor would come down.

Husk thought he would like to handle a gun. He had made a bull's-eye once, he said, in a shooting gallery in the Strand.

"Have you ever thought of joining the Army?" Husk explained that he was a tobacconist. The colonel said kind and complimentary things about the uses of nicotine. He spoke of Husk's trade as if he were a philanthropist dispensing solace all day long to the harassed denizens of cities. Then he returned

to the East. Mappin's terraces seen across the gardens reminded him of the mud walls of a citadel far away on the banks of the Indus in Chilas. There was one narrow gully overshadowed by walnut trees. The rest was earth—"just that colour." It was hard to distinguish the fortress from the rock.

Husk said nothing of where his own citadel was pitched. For the first time in his life the thought of it depressed him. On parting the colonel gave him his card and begged him to come and see him should he think of the Army as a profession. It really looked as if there were going to be war. "If so," he said, "we shall all have to lend a hand."

For six weeks Husk looked out of the window of his box. When he was not too busy he felt strangely cramped, and wished that the Providence who had come like a purging wind into the dim underworld would be swept with some human eddy on to his island again.

A great war placard had been posted in front of his box; it blocked all space, filled his whole horizon. The appeal had become almost personal. He could not sleep easily at night.

He sought the colonel out and found the old gentleman in uniform. His white hairs were relieved by the red band over the peak of his cap, and he was wearing red tabs like the flamingo. Husk profited by the visit. In six weeks he had learnt to walk like a soldier and a gentleman.

Another month passed, and he saw the flamingoes from the deck of the troopship. They stood in solemn row by the margin of the pools and the salt lakes. The sun was setting behind them just as it had done in

the panorama on the cigarette-box, touching the distant sandhills with a delicate tulip tint. He looked for the palm tree which used to break the disc in the picture. Nature had not provided it. He saw instead the human throng in the Underground passing eternally up the narrow stairway into the light.

\* \* \* \* \*

Husk was a useful recruit. He had great application. It seemed that the chrysalis stage had had a steadying influence on him. Not that the full-blown product of so prolonged a hibernation did in any way especially shine ; but he could form fours, slope arms, and fix bayonets with the best of them, and he was a cool, deliberate marksman, at one time the best in his company. He was a frequent butt, and so resignedly so that he became almost popular. He felt much inward satisfaction that he was accepted by the others as of the same currency. The first time he was called " Husky " was a kind of baptism into humanity, and he became more human as the name clung to him.

In India he saw more concentrated light in a day than he had seen in all his brief seaside holidays. Every Thursday and Saturday were his own in a land where adventure is respectable. He kept goal in a regimental tournament and won the match for his company ; he killed two cobras with his bayonet on a morning's route march ; he shot a barking deer in the jungle of the foothills ; he saw the crimson dhâk forest burst into bloom ; he even collected " bugs " in a furtive way, though he could count the butterflies he had seen in England on the fingers of one hand. After a month of the hot weather he was sent up with some other men of his company to a depot

in the hills. In a few weeks he had seen a Tibetan devil dance on the mall and ridden through a Himalayan forest by moonlight on a Bhutia tat.

Husk was not a student of Indian character. He knew the natives of the bazaar as folk of elastic prices with whom it was amusing to haggle. For the rest his regiment had been indoctrinated with a vague but wholesome idea of Hindu susceptibilities. The Territorials were warned that there must be no "incidents."

The "incident" that gave Husk his chance was not of his seeking. It was thrust upon him, and he accepted it with the same eye for opportunity with which he had accepted his billet in the Underground and his members' tickets for the Zoological Gardens. The only difference was that he was now his own Providence; in the last few months he had attained manhood.

Husk had gone down to the plains again at a season when heat and light become a weariness to the spirit and nerves are highly strung. The brain-fever bird in the *nem* tree outside the barracks had become a burden. Husk laid down his newspaper and listened. He thought he heard distant firing. It was three o'clock, the hottest hour of the afternoon, and the men were lying listlessly under a punkah which disturbed the stillness of the room with fiery currents of air.

"Who's that loosing off?" somebody said casually. "This ain't Noov Chapelle." A rifle shot outside the barracks made those who were awake sit up in their beds. They became aware of shouting and hurrying feet. The Store-Babu bolted into the room in a

panic-fright with a story of a sepoy who had seen fairies and run amok. He had killed his havildar, winged a British officer, shot Private Deedes in the foot, and was now taking cover behind a water-butt at the back of the Fives Court.

As Husk ran out into the verandah with the others he saw a huge coil of unrolled matting at the foot of the stairs. He shouldered it and struggled after his mates to the quarter guard, demanded and obtained ammunition.

In the blinding glare after the darkened room and with the sweat pouring over his eyes he could hardly distinguish the figures by the Fives Court. He heard a man say, "He's the other side of the wall," and then a voice of command.

"Hold back there! We are not going to lose any more men over this."

Husk panted up with his improvised cover.

"I've got this, sir," he said. "Let me settle him. I'll fix it at the corner. I'll get him when he puts his head up."

The officer surveyed his dispositions. Husk's coconut matting was better than the trees, and he knew the man for a cool shot.

"All right. Go in there. We'll rush him from behind when you draw his fire. Keep your head down."

"How many rounds has he fired?"

Nobody knew.

"I'll sing out, sir, when he reloads." Husk proceeded to roll his bundle to the corner of the wall.

Through the chink between the hairs of the mat and the brick he caught a glimpse of the man's blood-

shot eye. His turban had fallen over the butt, and his long, loose, cavalier-like locks added to his air of wildness.

Husk laid his rifle on the top of the matting, covering the spot where the head had appeared, and then waited his time. It was a duel. The Pathan got in the first shot; it grazed the top of the matting an inch from his head. Husk saw from his chink that the man was aiming again. "Hold on," he called to his party; "he's got another round." He gradually raised his eye to the stock of his rifle and drew a bead on the inch of forehead visible over the butt. As he fired he fell back and put his hand to his neck.

As he lay on the brink he thought of first and last things. His bed was an isthmus; his spirit might go either way. Over there by the window was the light; the wall behind him screened an abyss. He was determined he would not sink down into it—down the steps into his wooden cage with its glass window and lid. He clung with both hands to the iron post of his bed lest he should slip down the incline and be carried along with the black-suited tribe into the underworld. The regimental doctor tried to unloosen his fingers but desisted, perceiving that he had found some stay which he could not guess.

When he came to he smiled. He had fought at grips with death and conquered. He smiled now at his fears. He would never be afraid of death again, and he knew now that if he had let go, if he had gone under, it would not have been into the darkness but into the light.

He thought of his shop. Supposing he had died in the little wooden box in which he had sold cigarettes

before he had come out into the light, his uninformed ghost, if it walked at all, would haunt the Underground. Not only would he have buried his body for the term of his natural life, he would have contracted ties by which his earth-bound spirit would have hovered in the artificial light, in that chill, uncanny draught in which one is swept along with the tide between the incoming and outgoing train.

He looked up and saw his colonel standing over him, and for the first time remembered the Pathan.

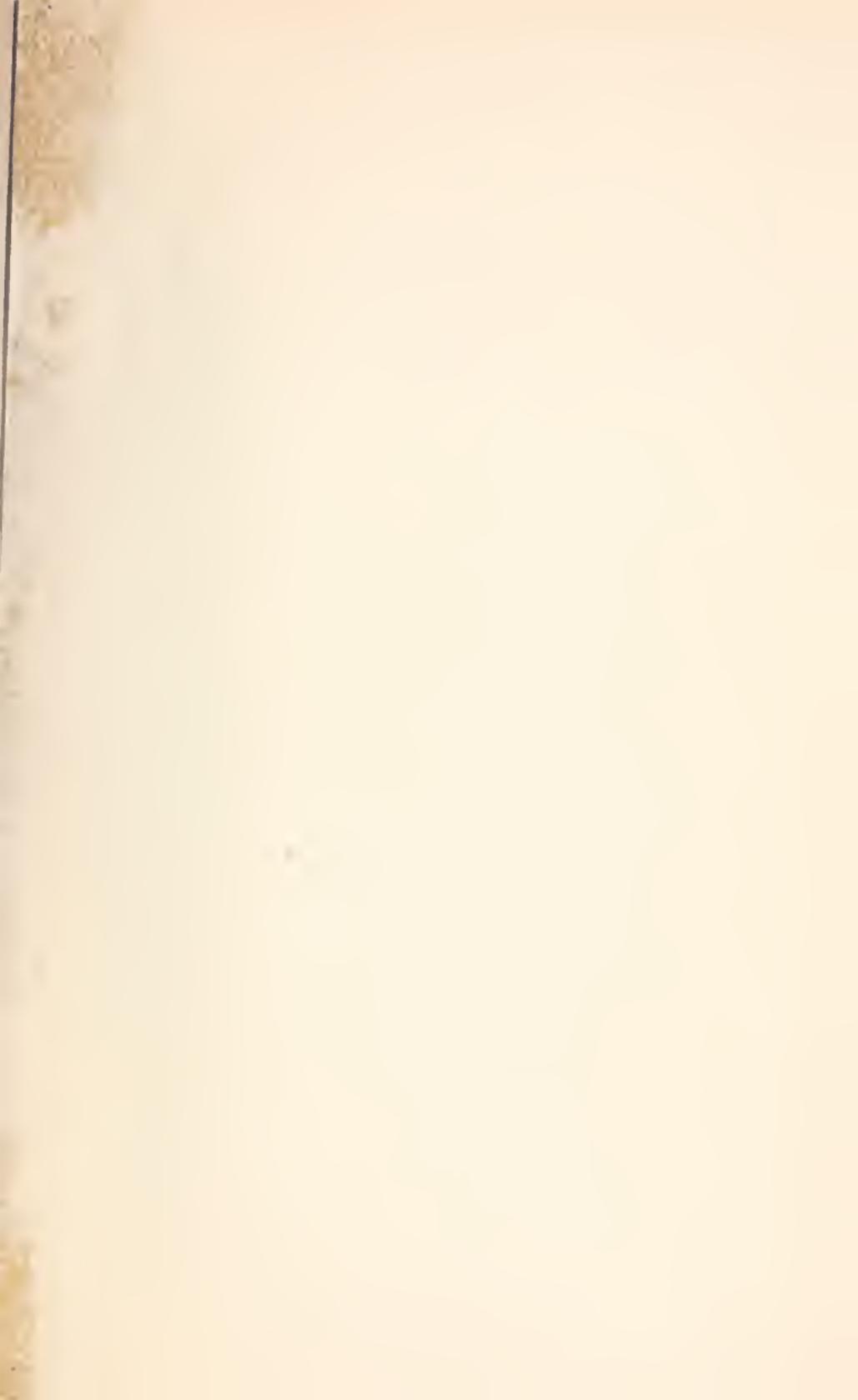
“ Did we get him, sir ? ” he asked faintly.

The colonel smiled, “ You got him all right ; straight through the brain-pan. I wish it hadn't been quite so clean a shot. He'd have been better hanged. But lie still now. You mustn't talk ; you've got to keep quiet. We're going to send you up to the hills.”

Husk heard him say to the doctor in the verandah, “ Good fellow, that ! I wish we had more like him.”

The throbbing of his pulses was a beat of triumph. He had learnt the meaning of pride.





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