As Others See Her

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AN ENGLISHWOMAN'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE AMERICAN WOMAN IN WAR TIME

By A. BURNETT-SMITH

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FROM A HUMBLE FELLOW-WORKER

IN THE GREAT CAUSE

A Foreword

IN the course of a fairly long life I have visited many countries other than my own, but have never been tempted to write a book about any. Further, I have on occasion fallen foul of the casual globe-trotters who have the effrontery to publish their impressions of a country through which they rush at lightning speed, gleaning their superficial knowledge at tables d'hôte and in railroad trains.

I therefore undertook the setting-down of my impressions of America with great reluctance, and no sense of equipment for the task.

This record, touched by the tenderness of real affection, and informed by gratitude which can never be fully acknowledged, will, I trust, be received by those who may read it in the spirit in which it is offered.

A quiet observer, who during a period of seven months was afforded unique facilities for getting to know the American people, may have picked up some unconsidered trifles which at least may provoke reflection. These observations were neces-

sarily confined to the sections of American life to which I had access in the course of my public work.

No time was afforded for private excursions, investigations, or adventures. I regret that although I received many invitations to visit universities and colleges, the only opportunities available were two fleeting visits to Princeton and Harvard, and a morning spent with the delightful Dean of Barnard College at Columbia. I shall always feel that I must return to America to make some study of her college life, especially as it affects women.

It only remains for me to say that naught has been set down in malice in these few pages, and to assure my critics that I have brought to my task the single-mindedness and complete sincerity with which I have essayed most of the affairs of my public and private life.

A. BURNETT-SMITH

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I

ONE summer in the early nineties, the abode of John the Baptist in Oberammergau was transformed into a rooming-house of the most primitive description, for the reception of guests who had travelled across continents and seas to witness the Passion Play.

The audience was so largely American, that possibly some who read these lines may be able to recall from personal memory how totally inadequate the little village of the Austrian Tyrol was to meet the demands made upon its accommodations. The few modest hostelries, and all the chalets and cottages of the villagers, were crammed to suffocation, and many were daily turned away. The beauty of that wonderful present-

ment of ancient and divine history seemed to me somehow marred by the sordid trappings with which the scene was invested.

The seething mass of humanity, fighting for food and drink and accommodation, displaying in their eagerness most of the less agreeable traits of mankind, almost made one secretly ashamed of having come to take part in such a strange orgy. Often one was irresistibly reminded of the scene in the temple from which the Master scourged the money-changers. Money-changers there were in plenty in Oberammergau; the sordid drama of buying and selling went on unceasingly.

One could not help considering, too, what its ultimate effect might be on these once simple mountaineers, and whether it was humanly possible that they could retain their simplicity of character, as their exploiters stoutly maintained that they would.

Climbing the narrow stairway to my appointed eyrie in the house of John the Baptist on a very sultry August afternoon, I ob-

tained through an open door a glimpse of a rather intimate interior.

The chamber was very small and very bare, being practically devoid of anything approaching comfort. The floor space was crowded by two truckle beds, a toilet stand on which stood a microscopic wash bowl, above which hung a queer little looking-glass. A couple of rush-bottomed chairs completed the furnishings. The low casement window was wide open, and a current of quite delicious air washed clean by twenty-four hours' heavy rain, passed through the reviving sunshine to the door.

Across the intervening space a clothes-line improvised out of a piece of stout box cord, fastened to the knob on the back of the door and to a curtain hook above the window, displayed sundry intimate feminine garments not usually presented to the public gaze.

Possibly my expression was a little startled, for there was a certain naïveté in the welcoming smile of the charming young woman

curled up at the foot of one of the beds, darning a stocking, which she had obviously removed from the bare foot peeping out under a skimpy tweed skirt.

"Oh, do come right in! I'm just feeling real lonesome. Hattie's gone back to the afternoon performance. Why aren't you there? I heard you say you'd got tickets."

I stepped in, nothing loath, for already I had felt drawn towards that bright young specimen of American womanhood, who with her sister was making a rapid joy-ride across Europe.

"I hope you aren't shocked at my family wash. They've got to be dried and packed in the grips to-night, for we're going in the first carriage after dinner."

"I'm sorry," I said with perfect sincerity.

"So am I — for some reasons, and Hattie she's plum crazy to stop. John the Baptist, however, having let our sumptuous apartment to a member of the British aristocracy we've got to quit. But you have n't told me

yet why you've let your husband go by himself to the play. Didn't you like it?"

I explained that I liked parts of it, but that we had had a very draughty seat on the previous evening, and that I had thought I would enjoy a walk on the outskirts of the village.

She nodded, as she bit off her darning-wool close to the heel of her stocking.

"I know — that's just how it affects me. I want to get away from it, not to it. I'd liefer listen to Deacon Ira Morris lecture on the Apocalypse in Elmira — that's my home town. Do you really think now that all the saints who from their labours rest up there —" She pointed with a slender brown finger towards the heavenly blue of the sky —"Do you think that they can like to see themselves rigged up like that, singing themselves to death to make a tourists' holiday?"

I smiled and shook my head.

"While the dollars are piling up," she con-

tinued viciously. "Not for John and the rest of the dear lovely people, but for some horrid Jewish syndicate in Munich. It gets me the wrong way, that's all."

It had got me just that way too, and was the real reason why I had allowed my spouse to go alone to the performance.

He had had some talk the previous evening with this vivid and interesting conscientious objector. Meeting us at table d'hôte in the queer little living-room downstairs, she had suddenly transfixed him with a rather embarrassing question which arrested the whole table.

"Say, you don't happen to be the Duke, do you? They say there's one in the house and I'm crazy to see a real duke."

The twinkle in his eye indicated that only the fear lest the real duke might happen to be present (for these things did happen in Oberammergau in the early nineties) deterred him from owning to the soft impeachment.

"My wash is all right, isn't it? If only they knew a thing about running water here —" she said with a little sigh as she vigorously shook one of the flapping garments. "Say, where do you go from here? Lindau and all these other wonderful Bavarian castles are next on our schedule. My, what a lot of them there are! Fancy spending your life building a new castle for every day in the week and trying to live in them. Could n't be done in a democratic country. Could n't we go together? It would be lovely and cost less for carriages. What a time poor Hattie has counting the dollars! She's the finance partner. Even with Cook's coupons it costs a lot more than we figured out at Elmira and we aren't half through with our schedule yet."

At my suggestion she produced the schedule, a remarkable document bearing the names of fifty-three towns and cities to be visited in England and Scotland and a considerable section of the continent of Europe. In addition there were scores of other objects

of interest in each place marked with red ink. The only comment I could think suitable was that it was a very large schedule, and somewhat inconveniently crowded into the space of seven weeks.

She dismissed that objection airily, especially the suggestion of possible fatigue.

"We simply have n't time to be tired, but we never are tired. We aren't built that way. If we'd got the dollars we might travel in leisurely state, perhaps. We've got seven weeks' vacation and fifty dollars between us, after we've paid for the coupons, hotel, and travel; that's our little lot. We'll arrive back in Elmira without a nickel and with very few souvenirs. That's worrying me a good deal, there are so many folks back home we'd like to take something to. Every blessed child in my school I'd like to remember, but it simply can't be done."

I asked whether she thought they could take it all in, and arrive home without confusion of ideals.

"Oh, yes, that sort of thing don't worry us at all. We'll sort it all out on the boat with the help of good old B." She leaned over to pat affectionately the fat, familiar red form of a second-hand Baedeker she had picked up in a bookstore in Albany for fifty cents.

There were many Sadies and Hatties in Oberammergau that summer. Before the war one met them in every travel haunt in Europe. Invincible little grey travellers, wearing shabby clothes and creased veils over depressed hats, carrying shabby microscopic grips, doing their own washing in hotel bedrooms, knowing neither weariness nor boredom, but enjoying every moment of their trip. Their one resolve was to miss nothing, their universal goal the accomplishment of their full schedule.

Will they come to us again, I wonder, when the nightmare of the four years' struggle has lifted from blood-stained Europe? If not, something pathetic and very gallant will have gone out of life.

One evening a little earlier in that very summer at the close of a crowded London season, I had happened to be a unit in a crowd pressing up the wide staircase of a great house where the American bride of a British peer was holding her first reception.

Her serene and exquisite figure was finely poised against the background of glowing hothouse blooms which showed up the pearly whiteness of her satin gown, and the wonderful clear pallor of her cameo-like face. Her small head crowned with diamonds was very regally held. Ropes of pearls hung from her stately neck, and her smile never wavered.

She managed to infuse into each new greeting something individual and personal, so that the least distinguished guest was enfolded in a special welcome. In her was vested something of the same gallant, tireless spirit that glowed in the little schoolmarm from New York State. The spirit of the

new democracy come to invest the tired Old World with the new wine of youth!

Yet between these two types there must be in the New World a great army of quite ordinary women of the home-keeping type, the women who make the backbone of a nation's life. It is of some few of those I would write my impressions with a courage that would be wholly admirable, if it had any assurance of success.

II

A DISTINGUISHED Scotchman of my acquaintance, when he takes a holiday, goes down to the railway station, and, without enquiring its destination, boards the first train that happens to draw up at the platform.

How he manages to elude the booking-clerk and the ticket-collector, or at what moment and by what impulse he decides to leave the train, or what are his subsequent adventures, I have never been able to discover. No first-hand information has ever been forthcoming. His journeying secrets, whatever they are, are most carefully guarded.

But he maintains the complete success of his scheme, and frequently repeats the experiment, asserting that the weighty paraphernalia surrounding a journey taken in the usual way — plans, schedules, and valuable information relating to possible destina-

tions and objectives — instantly rob it of its only possible charm, that of unexpectedness. He holds that all elements of travel, save that, are the abomination of desolation, to be avoided as such.

Though charming, he is, as may be supposed, a somewhat eccentric creature. Once a deputation of thoughtful citizens waited on him to ascertain his views on the opening of museums on Sundays. He somewhat perplexed them by replying with more heat than such an inoffensive question seemed to warrant: —

"I know of no reason why museums should ever be opened! If they were to remain permanently closed, a large number of inoffensive persons would be spared ineffable boredom, and there would be fewer deaths from draughts."

I must confess to sympathy with his attitude towards both subjects. As regards holiday-making, I have never been able to make a business of seeing the world. Care-

fully selected travel routes, elaborately prepared schedules, the system of tickets in a wallet which you cart round until you have torn the last leaf from it, are as little acceptable to my temperament as they were to that of R. L. S. Far rather would I journey with him alongside the deliberate and thoughtful Modestine, or commit my way to a crawling barge on some river that may lead to nowhere.

Most of my journeyings through life have been taken in a spirit of adventure. Is not life itself the greatest adventure of all? The thing is to be ready for whatever comes, bringing a cheerful courage to all. I may, in the course of certain erratic wanderings, have missed most of the objects, for the achievement of which, from time immemorial, a large number of persons have been willing to sacrifice the comforts of home.

The only possible advantage the persistent and accurate travel-monger can have over the casual is the right to correct others, and

to provide them with valuable but generally unacceptable information. Thank Heaven, I have never thirsted to inform my fellow beings about anything. Sometimes the task has been forced upon me, but in the main I have been far too busy informing myself in a world where one never comes to the end of signs and wonders.

Thus it happens that though a considerably travelled person as regards mere mileage, I am singularly, perhaps lamentably, ignorant concerning most of the landmarks which the travelling public rush forth in hordes to see. This disposition undoubtedly gives one a delicious sense of freshness. At every port, no matter how often revisited, one is tempted to say, and in a sense it would be true: —

"I have never been here before, but only dreamed it! This is the first, the only time!"

The voyage to America, rendered familiar to me through many crossings, proved to

be an entirely different experience in war time.

The name of the steamer was withheld from us; no crowded boat train glided out of Euston amid the farewells and good wishes of friends and relatives.

The handful of passengers, like aliens or suspects, were stowed into reserve compartments, dumped down at an unknown angle in Liverpool Docks, pushed into strange vehicles much resembling Black Marias, and driven through the murk to another part of the docks, where a huge monster in fearsome war paint waited to receive us. Such a pitiful few we were, to be presently swallowed up in the dim recesses of an ocean leviathan, used to carrying passengers and freight to her utmost capacity! One experienced an odd sense of loneliness creeping in and out of the vast, empty saloons, and in taking constitutionals on the long decks without meeting a soul.

Only sixty we were, all told, but of excel-

lent quality! Seldom have I enjoyed a voyage more, nor more truly grudged the passing of the days. Yet through many of them we lived as it were cheek-by-jowl with death; in the war zone, his grisly visage seemed to sit with us at meat. It was at a time when the sea pirates were particularly aggressive, taking each day hideous toll of precious lives and ships. Our courage was hardly bolstered by the sinister precautions taken, and the instructions given us how to act in the event of the dread emergency arising.

Fear affects people differently, making some noisy and blatant, and engendering in others a perhaps ominous quiet. I felt rather proud of the fact communicated to me by one of the ocean-going captains who had been torpedoed three times. He said that women passengers never gave the smallest trouble, but comported themselves in peril, and even at the supreme moment, with unfailing dignity and quiet, never complicating nor adding to the anxieties and responsibilities of

those in charge. He did not pay his own sex the same high tribute, but it takes all sorts to make a world.

We talked not at all about our danger, except for the exchange of a little badinage as we went through the solemn ceremony of the daily boat drill. One of the lessons we have learned in the past four years is to face the last enemy at least with a complete semblance of courage. Nevertheless, there was a distinct uprise in temperature when we awoke one morning to find that the boats had been swung in again and the guns covered up, mute assurance that we were out of the immediate danger zone.

The lover of adventure would surely find satisfaction, if not a cure for his passion, in such a voyage, but it had its compensations. The atmosphere, if a little serious, was fine, and we had our delicious lighter moments, and a full modicum of the laughter that doeth good like a medicine.

Among the passengers was Major Grayson

Murphy, the head of the American Red Cross in Europe, returning, on the conclusion of his organizing work, to his military duties. I mention his name because from his lips I received what proved to be a valuable and infallible key to the mentality of America.

Speaking of the work I was about to undertake he said: —

"I want you to remember that we are not the kind of people you in Europe think we are, just pilers-up of dollars, and nothing else. At heart we are idealists, and any appeal you may make from that platform will not fail."

How often had I occasion to bless these wise words during the next few months and how immeasurably they helped me, will never be told.

It seems necessary to mention here that I was travelling under the auspices of the British Government, to help explain to the American people the urgent need for closer food conservation on their part, in order that

their allies might be enabled to carry on the fight.

I have always loved New York, and have observed her approach in many moods. But never have I seen her wear so forbidding an air as on that most dismal Sunday morning when we crept up the river through the ice-floes in a temperature of ten below zero. We were unable to make the landing-stage until the ice-breakers, whose coming was long delayed, had made a passage for us, by which time the few faithful souls who had braved the morning rigours to welcome some of us had melted away, leaving only the desolation embodied in the dreary halls dedicated to customs.

How thankful we were to get away at last, and to be enfolded by the warmth and comfort of the Plaza Hotel!

Is there not something dreary and uninviting about such vast caravansaries, which have the same distinguishing features in

every part of the world? In some they are accentuated; that is all. They do not conspicuously invite the traveller, but rather suffer and hustle him. He becomes a mere number corresponding to his key, which hangs upon a peg.

I shall never cease to marvel at the courage of those who elect of their own free will to make homes in such places, though I am bound to admit that they seem in no way discouraged by the experience, but rather the reverse. Possibly their immunity from the domestic worries which harry simpler folk gives them this cheerful serenity.

I found the Plaza beautiful, comforting, and entertaining during the few days I spent under its roof. It afforded me, during some leisure days which were destined never to be repeated, an opportunity of making certain observations, from the outside, of an interesting phase of New York life.

I used to sit in the foyer, watching the revolving doors which revolved all day without

ceasing, for the ingress and egress of hundreds of persons who seemed to have no other business in life except to compass revolving doors. War! No such dark visage would dare encroach on this beautiful, leisured, flower-filled atmosphere! Perish the thought! I could not imagine myself so much as murmuring the word "economy" in the ears of these smiling, occupied people, or trying to remind them by word or look of the intimate horror of war from which I had come. Still less could I imagine them scuttling like rabbits to their holes when the dull boom of the warning gun proclaimed the approach of the pirates of the air. War made a background for certain naïve conditions to the toilet, perhaps; that was all.

The most persistent was the war work-bag, an immense creation of satin or brocade or the homelier cretonne, worn over the arm as a sort of insignia. It contained knitting, I supposed, and the great point was that it should be big enough. When it looked as if

its frail and dainty bearer could make an ambush of it and escape boredom or threat by creeping inside, it then seemed to give a singular serenity and complacence to the expression.

Watching the endless procession through the foyer, to the restaurants, the tea- and dance-rooms, I obtained a picture of the youth, beauty, and fashion of New York which can never fade from my memory.

American womanhood has an exquisite, alluring charm, distinctly more French than Anglo-Saxon. Coming from a country where half the women were in uniform, and the other half wearing simple and sad-coloured clothes, I was perhaps more impressed than I should have been at another time by the beauty and richness of their attire. The warmth of the indoor temperature permitted the wearing of the thinnest, most diaphanous materials, and when furs, rich and luxurious beyond the dreams of avarice, were thrown aside, the picture presented was calculated

to arrest, sometimes to startle. After some observation, I arrived at the conclusion that such was its intention, and I carried away, especially from the dance-room, the impression that nowhere in the world is the lure of sex more provocative.

It worried me, an old-fashioned person, to see so many lovely and piquant faces so unnecessarily made up.

There appeared to be only one standard for clothes, the youthful standard.

Grandmamma, disporting herself in abbreviated skirts and high-legged-coloured footwear, plus the inevitable make-up, did not always appear to me an edifying spectacle.

Still I am obliged to record my impression that, having visited most of the capitals in Europe, I saw more beautiful women, and in a shorter space of time, in New York than I had seen anywhere else.

On Fifth Avenue on a fine afternoon these enchanting creatures seemed worthy of the noble thoroughfare they adorned.

III

IF I were an American I should be prouder of New York than of anything else in the country, excepting the beauty of its women. I would not have missed these quiet days before I began to work to an inexorable schedule, they afforded so fine an opportunity for some intimate, unbiased study of the city.

I prowled about the streets on foot, walking many miles, lingering wherever fancy tempted me, slipping into second or third rate restaurants where you see and hear queer and some enlightening things.

In this way I obtained a good many sidelights on the mentality of a people but recently enrolled in the ranks of those fighting to save civilization. There was a method in my madness, since it was above all things necessary that before beginning to speak I should know something about the public I

presumed to address, or, to put it more correctly, of the great forces behind that public. Those with whom I came in daily contact at that time, and with some of whom I held intimate converse, do not go to the kind of meetings arranged by accredited authorities and advertised in the newspapers by Publicity Bureaus. They sometimes meet in holes and corners, however, and if you have the luck to discover the rendezvous and slip in unobserved, you learn a mighty lot.

A Boston friend to whom I recounted later some of my experiences asked in rather an awestricken voice:—

"Were you not afraid of being arrested as a German spy?"

I replied that that contingency had not occurred, but that I knew I had met and talked with a good many of that engaging breed.

The beaten tracks are easy to tread, and offer very little in the way of adventure or of enlightenment, whereas in the byways

one may come up without effort with the very bit of information most ardently desired.

I had been frequently assured that the great majority of naturalized Germans in America are absolutely loyal to the land of their adoption, but in New York City I began to have my doubts.

One day in the café of a big downtown department store, I chanced to seat myself at a small table, beside a large, stolid-faced woman dressed in a tight-fitting coat of dyed rabbit-skin. She was accompanied by a girl of fourteen or thereabouts, giving promise of the same ample dimensions, and wearing a plaid frock, and two plaits of fair hair hanging down her back. The quarters were very close, and the service the slowest on earth.

To beguile the time I ventured on a remark. I did not find in America, as I expected to find, a universal desire on the part of the people to converse with the stranger on the smallest provocation, or on none at

all. I believe it to be one of the numerous libels on the American people.

On long-distance journeys I have sometimes been subjected to considerable cross-examination, but then, I am good at asking questions myself. It is the only known way of obtaining information, and the most direct.

Moreover, anything is preferable to the frigid atmosphere which can be created, and, alas, maintained in a first-class compartment in an English train. The most awful thing about that atmosphere is its lasting quality. I have frequently felt the desire to scream, or to do something outlandish to break it up.

The poor service in the store provided a handy peg on which to hang a few remarks, and my *vis-à-vis* revealed her nationality by the accent in which she replied. After a time I ventured to ask her how she thought the war was going. The news from the fighting fronts was bad just then, and my cruel anxiety slept not, night or day. Also I

was feeling too far from the heart of things, and suffering from lack of access to reliable information.

She looked at me rather narrowly and gave her massive shoulders a little shrug. "Vat are you?" she asked. "Ver do you come from?"

"Scotland," I answered calmly and with perhaps a conscious pride. "A little country that has done her bit in this war."

"Ach, Schottland is not so bad," she assented. "They fight well, your Schottish soldiers. I haf heard my Adolf say that, and he knows."

"Your son is over there, then, helping to win freedom's cause?"

Her eyelids shut down with a curious flicker.

"Yes, he is over there, fighting, no, not for freedom, but for life. It is vat it has come to, and the strongest is going to vin."

Now this very ambiguous answer seemed capable of but one interpretation. Adolf

was fighting on the wrong side. I deployed a bit to try and find out.

"I much admire what I have seen of the American army. Yesterday I watched a battalion swinging down Fifth Avenue and they were the most beautiful things I have ever seen, so clean and strong and fine. It raised my spirits to look at them and to reflect that they were just the outposts of the greatest army in the world."

Another shoulder shrug, and an impressive command to pigtails, who was staring hard at me, to get on with her chicken salad.

"Did you see the parade?" I asked.

She raised her heavy lids and I imagined ineffable scorn in the depths of her eyes.

"I did not. I live in Brooklyn. They parade all right, but, as Adolf's father says, when they come to fight, ach —"

Then quite suddenly she transfixed me with her gaze.

"You are from Schottland, you say; how soon haf you come?"

I replied that I had been exactly eight days in the country.

"But vy did you come, for what reason? They do not allow much travel; there is the difficulty of passports."

I said I had come to make some talk about the need for food conservation in America. Then a slow passion, like a consuming fire, seemed to gather in her bosom, and she brought down her heavy hand with a thud which shook the crockery on the frail table, and attracted the notice of those nearest to us.

Observing that, she took care to lower her voice when she spoke, but it had concentrated force and hatred in it.

"Himmel! Food conservation, soon they vill make life impossible for us. We are no longer a free people, but slaves of our masters. For me, I haf given my son because I could not help myself. He vos drafted and we had no choice. But my food I gif up for no von, and, look you, it iss no good at all, this talk

about vinning the var at the table. There is only von vay of vinning the var, and only von country in the vorld that vill do it. Come, Minna, you haf eaten enough. Ve vill go."

And she departed with a noisy rustling of skirts, without a motion of farewell. If ever hostility to any cause blazed in a human soul, it did in hers; her large, vacuous face was convulsed by its malignance. Bad news from the fighting fronts was good news to her, and even the sacrifice of Adolf would not be grudged, provided the war was won by "the von country in the vorld."

I pondered on how many in Belgium, and no doubt in Germany, had been shot for less. Also having come up against one of the dark forces which had made America's entry into the war so perilous and complicated an undertaking, a new understanding came to me. I left my luncheon half consumed and sallied forth into the open air to try and get rid of the miasma which oppressed me.

Seeking some diversion from the heaviness of thought, I paused a little later to listen to the vapourings of a street orator at the corner of Madison Square. He was more blatant and unconvincing than his confrères to whom I had sometimes listened "away back home" in Hyde Park or on Tower Hill.

One learns very little from these weird exponents of unpopular causes, their arguments almost invariably degenerating into mere personal abuse hurled at the head of some trust, or some individual capitalist.

But the crowd always interested me. I never got away from the pathos of it. Nobody ever laughed or cheered, or offered the smallest sign either of approval or disapproval. The courage which inspired these stump orators to orate to such a stolid crew struck me as sublime. One must suppose that the mere talking somehow relieved them, there could be no other explanation.

Among so many outward evidences of the

great upheaval it was a relief to meet, one day in a Broadway chop-house, an old man who had never heard of the war. He had a face like a rather tired cherub and looked like a decayed artist or poet, most picturesquely attired in a flowing cloak somewhat suggestive of stage property.

He was a bit of a visionary, quite willing to talk over his poached egg and café-au-lait. He confided to me that he earned a modest livelihood at a picture store as a cleaner and restorer of gold frames.

He must, I think, have painted pictures himself at one stage in his career and he certainly had a wide knowledge of art, speaking familiarly of the great pictures and with accurate knowledge of where they were housed.

The faces of the people I observed in these places of resort, as well as in trolleys, subways, and in the streets, seemed to me to be set in an invincible gravity.

Perhaps it was a war-time expression, but

there remains an indelible memory. The dearth of smiles in New York streets!

How is it that in every big city there are thousands of women who appear to have nothing to do except throng the streets, crowd round shop windows, and congest the aisles in department stores? The spectacle in London had often raised this question in my mind, but it was impossible to get away from it in New York. No matter at what hour one sallied forth there they were, moving automatically, a never-ending procession, well-dressed, smug, wearing a happy air of leisurely preoccupation.

Watching them in the stores, one observed that they were all buying lavishly and that war-time prices had no terrors for them. All the lunch counters and the store restaurants filled up with their pervasive presence long before noon. Where do they all come from? What kind of homes do they possess, and who looks after these homes? Is there no

baking, cooking, washing, mending, or cleaning to be done in them, and if there is, who does it? From what remote family burrows do they come, and if commuters, of what calibre is the commuters' life? I never obtained any answer to these wonderings, but left America at the point of interrogation concerning them. They were a leisurely, happy, interested crowd, though immensely serious.

To me shopping in department stores is a chastening experience. There is not time in the whole world to enable you to get what you want in them. If I had my way I should sweep them all with a besom off the face of the earth, and restore the small trader, your personal friend, who always had the merchandise you wanted, and whom you could consult regarding it, assured that he would give you the benefit of his advice and experience.

Department stores are like too many of the big hotels, the only interest they have in you

is a financial one. Their specious advertisements promise you all sorts of intimate and personal service, but I should like to find a place where these fine promises are made good. There may have been something about me that repelled the sales-ladies, though at home I am considered a meek, inoffensive shopper, generally knowing her own mind, and giving no trouble.

Their deportment troubled me a good deal. The sales-ladies seem to possess everything except the one essential of their calling, i.e., to persuade and invite you to buy. Take it or leave it, was the impression given, and the sooner you made up your mind about it the better.

There was also a familiarity about their address which brought one sharply to realization that America is the land of freedom, where no class distinctions exist or are tolerated. I am not through with this solemn myth yet, but would only remark here that while the last thing on earth one wants is

servility, yet there is a difference between that repulsive quality and courtesy. There are grades, and sales-ladies ought to be taught to observe them, and to acquire, even through chastening, some abiding standard which will attract and not repel.

But while I had often the greatest difficulty in getting simple wants attended to in these vast and wearying halls of merchandise, I must record an excess of attention which I have never been able satisfactorily to explain to myself or to any one else.

The incident happened in a quite well-known ladies' hair-dressing saloon in New York, where I had gone for some treatment for my hair which appeared to be affected by the American climate, and to be desirous of parting company from its legitimate dwelling-place.

In the course of these treatments, I had had a good deal of intermittent talk with the proprietress, a well-informed woman, espe-

cially about New York celebrities. On paying my last visit and my bill before sailing, I expressed my gratitude for her kind attention, and the trouble she had taken to serve me. She instantly threw her arms round my neck, and kissed me affectionately, at the same time imploring me to write from the other side and let her know how I was getting on. It was one of the odd happenings one wishes another could have witnessed. I am assured, however, that it is an unusual one.

I was much moved by the spectacle of the waving flags on Fifth Avenue, the visible expression of the people's will to victory, and the little crosses in the windows pathetically proclaiming the universal determination to help forward the work of love and mercy which must follow in the wake of war and help repair its wastage.

Accustomed to our grim repression of national, sometimes even of natural, feeling, I was for the moment bewildered, imagining

that some victory of which I had not heard at sea was being celebrated.

Then the beauty of it all struck home. If only we had done a little more waving of flags, laid aside the garment of our national reserve, and very particularly more enthusiastically shown our fighting men our immeasurable pride in them as they marched out or came home in broken remnants, possibly both we and they might have continued the struggle with a better heart.

My eyes never fell on the tiny service flag in a home window without going back in memory to a grey and cheerless morning in Rouen when I rose at cockcrow to watch a handful of the boys go down the long avenue from the camp to entrain for "up the line."

One passing dear to me was in that thin marching column, and I wanted him to know I was there, thinking of and praying for him. But lo, when they came in sight, I, who was thinking of only one, felt, as they were enfolded in the encircling mists, that

they had melted into one great pathos of sonship and that I was mother to them all. So my heart warmed to all the service flags of America, great and small, and took pride in their record.

The war has revealed the oneness of fatherhood and motherhood, and, greatest of all, has brought into strong relief the sonship with God which gave our boys the courage they needed in the day of testing on the field of battle.

IV

I BEGAN my work where I least expected to begin it, in the houses of the rich. A great many fairy tales have been circulated regarding millionaires' houses. We have even had wafted to us across the Atlantic whispers of golden stair-rails studded with precious stones.

It is firmly believed in "the old country," to use the affectionate Canadian title for England, that every penniless emigrant heading for the shores of America has the glorious chance of achieving that golden stair-rail and all it stands for. It is popularly supposed in many quarters even yet that the moment he arrives he begins, by some mysterious automatic process, to accumulate the dollars which in due course will convert him into a copper king, a steel or oil magnate, or in the presidential control of a great trust.

It is quite extraordinary what fascination such fairy tales have for the imagination.

I have to admit that in my walks abroad I took a lively interest in the exterior of the millionaires' houses, industriously pointed out to me by casual acquaintances. The plainness of their exteriors, and the total absence of any surrounding space to throw their majestic outlines into relief, gave but little indication of the glories within. When in course of time I began to have a certain amount of intimate acquaintance with some of these interiors, I found most of them beautiful and very few of them dazzling to the eye. Severity of outline, the kind that has to be paid for by large cheques, was very often the keynote. I have never had any use for the kind of house that through the acquisitiveness of its possessor resolves itself into a museum.

Surely the inward joy of every treasure is its rarity. The Japanese have a wise conception of what really gratifies the eye without tiring it; hence the sparse decoration of their houses. Those who live in millionaires'

houses are in the main simple folk, never at any time desirous of thrusting their magnificence and their possessions on the stranger. But then I was fortunate in meeting those who, under the stress of the new call to service and consecration, had suddenly realized how much there is in the world to-day which money cannot buy.

It did not take long to discover that the war spirit of America had its being first in the hearts of the women. At the moment when I arrived in New York the Voluntary Food Conservation scheme promulgated from Washington was coming into operation. There is no harm in admitting now that in England voluntary food conservation failed all along the line.

It is a somewhat chastening reflection, and one of the many new things we have learned about ourselves in this war that food is one of the supreme tests of humanity. We see to what pass the lack of it has brought

millions of our fellow beings in Europe and the Near East, and how hunger breeds anarchy and all the dreadful spectres which follow in its train. In England we dallied a long time with voluntary rationing, depending on the national will and the idealism of our people.

But somehow it did not come off. People will give up cheerfully new clothes, large houses, motor cars, amusements, but they have a different code of honour where food is concerned. When the shoe pinches there, we behold a reversion to type, a revival of primeval instincts.

We had hoarding, shameless hoarding, of the necessities of life, to say nothing of the luxuries, in places where we were entitled to look for something better. There was no peace in the land until we followed Germany's lead and introduced the card-rationing system.

America, of course, was not subjected to the supreme test, because never at any time

was her abundance threatened. All she was asked to do was voluntarily to abstain from certain articles of food in order that the supplies sent abroad might be maintained, and when necessary increased.

She responded nobly to that appeal. But no one knows how she would have faced a real shortage, nor whether her people would have consistently maintained the high level of generosity which filled us with profound wonder and gratitude. I rather think myself that humanity is much the same all the world over, and that the test applied to one section may with certain reservations be taken as typical of all.

But in this conclusion I may be quite wrong.

Seeing several paragraphs in the newspapers concerning the voluntary conservation movement in New York, I wrote to the lady entrusted with its organization, explaining to her that I had just arrived from

England with a good deal of first-hand information regarding the food situation and home economics in my own country, and should be glad to pass that information on for the benefit of the cause she had at heart.

At her house, within the next few days, to a most sympathetic audience I explained the whole situation. After that, the difficulty was to keep pace with the number of invitations to repeat the message. I was then greatly struck, though by no means for the first time, at the crowning advantage personal experience has over acquired or second-hand information.

My knowledge of conditions both in the French and English war zones, and my somewhat vivid personal acquaintance with a prolonged course of devastating Zeppelin raids, paved the way for my appeal for food conservation as nothing else could have done. I can never forget the quick response to that appeal in these great houses, nor the

pathetic eagerness of rich women to become part of the world-wide sisterhood of service.

I came to the conclusion quite early that there was no height of sacrifice to which American women would not pledge themselves, and that they would faithfully redeem that pledge if the need were but shown. Opportunity and responsibility make women as well as men, yet with a difference. For whereas men have to fight, using their primeval instincts for the maintenance of the family, there is in the service women render to both family or country a singular selflessness, not usually found in men.

There is nothing profound or surprising in this observation. Service was God's ordination for women from the beginning, and it is when this ordination is despised and set aside by individuals or groups of women that confusion and disaster ensue.

In connection with the appeal in New York for food conservation, two meetings stand

out in my gallery of remembrance. One was a convention of housekeepers belonging to the most select circles in the city, attendance only by invitation. The gathering interested me keenly because a representative of almost every well-known American family was present.

With the customary scorn of time noticeable through the entire length and breadth of the country (confounding to one accustomed to conserve minutes like pearls of price), the meeting assembled itself in the most leisurely manner, which certainly afforded the quiet observer in a corner excellent opportunity for study of interesting types. Two predominated, the large, opulent type, which so easily gives the suggestion of being overdressed, and the slim, elegant, well-bred type always a joy to behold. But there were all sorts. Gorgeous furs were worn, and pearls beyond the dream of avarice.

I lost myself for quite a few minutes trying to compute how much food for starving

Europe could be purchased by the jewels in the audience.

The hats were almost without exception small and close-fitting, so that there was no obscuring of the features. There were many striking and some lovely faces, as well as the mediocre ones, which, however, if illumined from within, sometimes linger longest in happy memory. The gathering seemed like one large, intimate family. There was quite a buzz of talk and much fluttering from one seat to another, exchanging greetings. About twenty minutes late the meeting commenced with an admirably delivered address from the chairman. She was followed by Dr. Alonzo Taylor, one of Mr. Hoover's ablest representatives who had just returned from Europe, and was therefore able to give a very clear picture of the situation and the urgency of the need. The meeting was then thrown open, and I ventured on a few remarks, to which they listened with very cordial interest. The net result of the gather-

ing was a deepening of the pledge to conserve food and I was certain that it would be faithfully kept.

The second meeting was held on a Sunday afternoon in a hall crammed to capacity by a very different kind of audience. It was convened by the chefs of the families of whom I have just been speaking. Before three thousand persons, the chefs pledged themselves to carry out to the letter the instructions from Washington. The meeting was presided over by a Scotch butler who looked like a statesman and spoke like one.

New York was then in the throes of war service. I was overwhelmed by the number of women's organizations devoting themselves with unexampled ardour and devotion to the great cause. All of them had well-equipped offices and abundant staffs in uniform all eager and willing to serve.

As in England, the secret desire of every woman's heart was to be needed and sent

"over there." The heart-sickness of hope deferred, however, was never suffered to impair the quality of the service rendered at home.

If I were asked to name the rock on which the activities of American womanhood would be likely to split, I should unhesitatingly reply over-organization. The number of leagues and councils and associations all doing the same work might with advantage have been enrolled under one banner. Venturing to air this suggestion, however, I was assured passionately that each organization was individual and apart, and that no other could do its work so well.

There was an obvious yet not unwholesome jealousy between these organizations, and a rivalry which undoubtedly helped towards greater efficiency. The women who had accepted office took their obligations most seriously, and suffered nothing, not even home duties I am afraid, to interfere with their conscientious discharge. They

slaved long hours at their desks, or spent themselves travelling and advocating the claims of their organization with a zeal that knew no weariness.

Many of these were women who had never before known anything about work except as something they paid other people to do. Like the lilies of the field they had toiled not nor spun. Now, having tasted the joy of work and the sweet sleep which follows on it, will they ever go back?

I wonder — but I do not know.

V

WHOEVER conceived and promoted the idea of the Red Cross in the window deserved well of his country. There could be no symbol in war time more appealing or more invincible. For whatever may be the mental attitude towards war, there can be no dissentient voice regarding the work of mercy required to repair its cruel ravages.

In our country the hospital service was admittedly the only one ready for war, and never during the anguish and the need of the years of war did it prove inadequate to the demands made upon it.

Of the work of the Red Cross chapters in America I can only say that I was thrilled and astounded by the completeness and thoroughness with which the work had been organized. Nothing was more suggestive of the happy rivalry existing in the service than the assurance, passionately given to me in every State, city, and township I

visited, that their quota was the largest and most efficient that had been offered on the altar of service.

The figures, increasing by leaps and bounds, regarding bandages and dressings, bewildered at last by their sum total.

I was immensely touched, hearing at Hartford, Connecticut, that a considerable portion of the year's labours had gone down in a torpedoed ship. Daunted or dismayed? Never! The devoted workers in that chapter immediately set to work to make good and surpass the former output. It meant a redoubling of effort, that was all.

As was the case in England, the Red Cross, perhaps more than any branch of war work, helped to break down the barriers between class and class. I know how the word "class" is hated in America, which is surprising because nowhere in the world are there more classes, between which the dividing line is sharply drawn. Where no position is very clearly defined, perhaps this is inevitable.

I always indulged in an inward smile when the subject of class distinction came up, as it quite frequently did. There was a certain unconvincing naïveté in the attitude of those who professed to scorn it.

I happened one night at a dinner table to speak of a village, well known to me in England, where feudal conditions prevail to the extent that the village children, at the order and discretion of the lady of the manor, have to wear red cloaks and hoods, and march in them to church on Sundays. My listeners professed to be revolted by this interference with personal liberty, but one could detect a secret admiration and a full appreciation of the picturesque effect.

In spite of all the cosmopolitanism of America, it is one of the most conservative countries in the world, and in some directions one of the least progressive. The system of living, fundamentally based on the older civilizations from which the people originally

sprang, continually proves this. The fundamental traits more and more assert themselves, and heredity is more powerful than we are willing to acknowledge.

In Boston, for instance, there flourishes a conservatism which is not excelled, hardly even equalled in England now.

I am aware that I am treading on very thin ice here, but if these few impressions are to have any value a certain amount of candour must be allowed.

The subject happens to interest me a good deal because I have lived for the past twelve years in one of the most feudal county towns in England.

When outsiders for business or pleasure select it as a place of residence, they have no choice as to the kind of position they propose to occupy in it. It is defined for them by certain laws immutable as those of the Medes and Persians. Your place in the social orbit is plainly indicated and you are ex-

pected to revolve in it peaceably, according to immemorial tradition. When you don't, you merely upset yourself, you don't alter the attitude of other people. Sometimes there descend upon our quietude breezy hustlers from the outside, who think they can "wake up the drybones," a favourite term used to describe our lives. And very often they start by asking the wrong people to tea together. Only the very new do that, and after a proper interval they invariably leave off. It is no use trying to be a good mixer in our dear but mediæval town, because the whole litany of life in it is that there shall be no mixing, but that each unit properly labelled shall remain in that place to which, not Providence, but his good neighbours, have called him and more especially her.

It is predicted that the war after the war will pronounce the doom of such communities, but I "hae my doots."

Anyway, I do not expect to live to see it. I am not even sure that I want to. There is

a certain Old-World charm about life in such a place, more especially if one has been blessed with the saving grace of humour. That I admit is essential, to lighten the partial social gloom under which a considerable section of the community is obliged to live.

We are all perfectly friendly, understand, only in an aloof, detached sort of way. When our neighbours are in trouble, we go to them, if the terms of our intimacy permit it; if not, we always send flowers and polite enquiries. We know the houses which we may enter to offer personal service and the doors at which we merely enquire.

How does one know where to begin and where to leave off in America?

Does any one ever really begin, or do you just act on primeval impulses, cultivating people if you like them and ignoring them if you don't?

There is nothing so pronounced as that in our little town. Good manners forbid it.

Everything is politely veiled, even hostility of which a considerable deal exists. It is only the persistent climbers who sometimes overstep the boundaries of good taste in their frantic efforts to step on the magic carpet which proclaims that they have safely arrived. The magic carpet is not altogether a myth, though I have never seen it. It used to be spread, so I have been told, in the Shire Hall at the County Ball, and the social status of the dancers and their attendants was defined by their proximity to the carpet. If you had the right to take up your place at once upon it, why, then the lesser lights bowed down.

Are there no magic carpets in America?

Are not the Aubussons and the priceless old Persian rugs as arbitrary in their pronouncement? I should like an answer to that. The true one would be enlightening.

But to return to our muttons, war service has undoubtedly done wonders in the way

of reconciling formerly irreconcilable elements.

One of the most distinguished and beloved of American war workers told me that her experience had been a complete revelation to her. As chairman of the Women's Council of National Defence in her own State she came into contact with all sorts and conditions of people, who really never existed for her before, except in the abstract. A rich woman and acknowledged leader of society, she, for the first time in her life, came into close relations with women of quite different social strata, the common bond being work.

The devotion of her colleagues in the service was only equalled by her affectionate admiration for them. She learned that the fire of patriotism made it possible for a working-woman, with her home to care for, to give certain regular hours to the work of the Council. These hours had to be paid for in a way that the rich and leisured do not perhaps quite understand.

It meant an hour earlier up in the morning, an hour later getting to bed at night, a curtailment of leisure and the sacrifice of most of the simple pleasures that had once illumined the drudgery of life, as so many women know it. Being a rich woman, my friend was able to do many lovely things for those with whom she came in contact. And wherever possible these things were done in secret. She told me just one which I must set down because it touched me so profoundly that I have never forgotten it.

She observed that one of her co-workers was rather depressed and that the depression did not wear off as the days went by, but rather increased, though it in no way impaired the quality of the service so freely rendered.

If you care for a person, and are really interested, there is established a kind of telepathy which makes you very sensitive regarding changes in that person's state of

mind. A little judicious questioning, never intrusive, at last elicited the fact that this woman's husband had lost his post and was finding it impossible to obtain another one. They had been suffering, if not privation, at least the most acute anxiety regarding their present and their future. Yet she had carried on without saying a word, her pride and independence forbidding her to make the slightest use of her position to further her own private ends.

It was a glorious opportunity for her chief, who immediately set to work to use her own influence, which naturally was wide, to secure another post for the husband of her fellow worker. The offer of one came to him in due course and so delicately was it done that the recipient never knew the source from whence it sprang. Observe the fineness of the gift, of sisterly service! They were comforted and uplifted, thinking that merit was merely being recognized in the usual way. The brightness returned to the woman's eyes and

the joy of life to her work. She does not know to this day what her chief did for her. My eyes filled up at this beautiful story, and I just said that I could have rendered the service joyfully, but that I was not sure whether I could have held my tongue about it. I did not know this splendid specimen of American womanhood in pre-war days, but I know what she is now. And when the claims of active war service slacken, she will not return to the old round of social pleasure, but remain for all time in the service of humanity.

I came across others, less fine, and some who as in England used their war service as a cloak for social ambition and social supremacy. But they surely were in the minority.

The over-zeal for war service sometimes afforded a little comic relief.

A very choice bit came under my observation one night in the ballroom of a private

house on Fifth Avenue, where a meeting of the Junior League had been convened for the purpose of considering how practical economy in clothes could be adopted as a war measure without actually going into uniform.

An interesting, and at times rather lively, discussion was contributed to by some of the older members. The subject was standard war dress, which was to consist of a walking suit for mornings and a dressy garment for afternoon or demi-toilette wear.

After much diligent enquiry and searching through the stores, certain patterns had been agreed upon, and were paraded on a mannequin for exhibition to the prospective wearers.

The parade began amid breathless excitement, and many thrills of expectation. The sweet faces of the buds and their chaperons presented a study in expressions. The parade was received in ominous silence. Towards the close a handsome young matron sitting

beside me remarked, with an uplift of her level brows:—

"I hope I love my country, but can you imagine me in *that?*"

I could not. It was the epitaph of the standard suit.

VI

"AMERICA? Oh, yes, I dessay it's all rite for them as likes it."

I had begun to like it so much that this guarded comment somewhat dashed my enthusiasm. The woman who uttered it was from my own country, and we were sitting together in her living-room on the sixteenth floor of an apartment house on the East Side. I had been asked by a friend at home to look her up and try to discover how she had fared in the land of her adoption.

In England she had been a housemaid in excellent service, her husband whom I shall call Raikes, a jobbing gardener at the same place.

I felt oppressed by the closeness of the atmosphere, the narrowness of the space, the total absence of anything in which a housewifely woman could take a proper pride. I remembered the spacious rooms, the good food, the beautiful surroundings in which

I had last seen her, and could have smiled at the popular superstition pertaining there regarding the good fortune she and her husband had achieved in America.

She informed me by rather slow degrees that Raikes was not now working at his trade, but was employed as a packer in a dry-goods store where he earned three dollars per day.

In England that would be considered a high wage, even for a man with a wife and family of three to support, and I commented on the difference between it and the six dollars per week he had earned at home.

She merely shook a discouraged head.

"It don't go fur in this country," she observed stolidly. "A dollar ain't worth more than a shillin' at 'ome, an' the stuff you buys with it ain't as good. Take the boots for the children. Paper I calls 'em, nuthin' but brown paper blackened all over to look like the real thing. Do you remember the boots old Silas Peart used to make at 'ome? Miss Lucy gave me a pair oncet an'

I've got 'em yet, bin soled an' 'eeled they've bin, six times—"

I gently remarked that no leather appeared to possess the staying quality of ancient days.

As I spoke, I found it difficult to recognize in this dun-coloured woman with the anxious, somewhat furtive air, the rosy-cheeked girl I remembered in the old manor house in the Lea Valley. Her house was neat and her person too, though I had taken her unawares, but there was a lack of vitality in the atmosphere, moral as well as physical. The harp of life was obviously out of tune.

Once the natural English reticence was gotten over, she was quite willing to expand, more especially about her children.

"They're all quite well, playin' in the streets, they are. No, there ain't anywhere else an' when they'se shet up 'ere, they gits desprit. They're growin' up shockin', but don't tell Miss Lucy—"

That was a pathetic touch. Miss Lucy

was the only mistress she had ever known, the wise, tender-hearted woman, who, though she had never held child of her own at her breast, was a born mother, who cared greatly for every human thing that came within her ken. Evidently Mrs. Raikes's thoughts were often turned longingly towards the Little Manor of Hormead and its gracious mistress.

No wise interviewer, however, seeks to influence the object of his attention one way or another; if he knows his business, he is fully aware that he gets the best results by allowing the stream to meander in its own course. I had no particular object excepting to learn of her welfare; nevertheless, I learned a lot from Bethia Raikes in that brief half-hour we sat together in the living-room of the East Side apartment house. She had not fared to her satisfaction in the Mecca of the emigrant's dream.

"It ain't as if it were an or'nery street," she went on passionately. "There's all kinds down there, more speshully the kinds people

brought up like I was have no use fur. You can't sort 'em out. My Jerry, only twelve, would smoke as many cigs as his father if he could git 'em."

"Have n't you any control over Jerry?" I asked.

"No," she answered stolidly. "There ain't any control in New York streets." There was obviously but one reply to this startling statement, but before I could make it she went on: —

"All sorts down there, folks with heathenish names, Germans first and foremost pretendin' they likes the war w'en they don't, celebratin' in most 'ouses w'en our boys are bein' mowed down over there. Tell me, 'ave many gone out of the village at 'ome?"

I said they had all gone, and she rocked herself to and fro.

"But the Germans ain't allus the worst; they're peaceable, 'ard-workin' folk as fur as they goes. Eyetalians we've got, and Poles, an' Russians, an' all sorts what eat

queer food an' speak a lingo we carn't follow. As fur religion there ain't any. My chillen are growin' up without it."

I asked why they didn't keep up the habit of church-going, since there were plenty of churches in the city that would have been glad to welcome and incorporate them.

"It ain't the same. Yes, there are churches wheer nobody don't know anybody. It ain't like at 'ome wheer Sunday was the best day of the week, wheer you could make sure of seein' the folks you knew. Sunday mornin's 'ere, Raikes don't git up till dinner time, and I'm busy all the mornin' a-gittin' of it ready. That's 'ow most of us wimmin live 'ere on the East Side, cookin' w'en we've got anything to cook, an' w'en we ain't, doin' without."

"But is your husband not in regular employment?" I asked, dismayed by the suggestion of such irregular meals.

Her expression informed me that I had touched the spot.

"The Sunday pipers say we'se goin' to be a dry state, but if it ever comes it'll be too late for some of 'em, Raikes among 'em. They'll git drink from somewhere, dry or not dry, and it'll be the business of somebody to see that they gits it. They're all plum sure about that."

I asked then why she and Raikes had not gone into the country on their arrival. Life would have been easier and more wholesome there and he could have stuck to his own calling.

Another flicker, resembling a spasm, crossed her dull face.

"It's what we oughter done, but Raikes, 'e was fair spell-bound with Noo York. All the Broadway lights an' sech like got 'im. 'It's like fairyland, ain't it Beth?' he says. 'We've never lived before, ole gel, an' we'll stop 'ere.'"

"But even yet would it not be wise to pull up stakes?"

"Too late; 'e's forgotten most he knew

about gardens, an' anyways it would n't interest 'im any more. 'E's quite 'appy 'ere, an' don't want nuthin' else."

After a moment she went on, wringing her hands in a queer soft way on her lap: —

"It ain't any kind of a way for folks to live as we live 'ere all huddled on top o' one another. It breeds all kind of wickedness. I could tell you things, only I won't. I would n't like my dear Miss Lucy to know 'em. Bless her dear 'eart, they'd keep her awake nights. You won't tell 'er, will you ma'm?"

I suggested that people fared no better in the crowded cities at home, more especially in London, where overcrowding and the housing conditions generally in the quarters of the poor are shocking. She at least had three rooms, whereas it was well known that thousands upon thousands had to live and move and have their being in houses of one room.

But the argument left her cold and un-

convinced regarding the relative differences or merits of the two countries.

She had her knife, as the saying goes, in the heart of New York. Bethia Raikes was out-and-out a homesick woman, and her thoughts of home were therefore distorted, as well as her views of the land of her adoption.

"You won't tell my dear Miss Lucy," she repeated earnestly. "I would n't like 'er to know we're not gittin' on a treat. I've always written cheerful, because I didn't want 'er to know. I wish you could 'ave seen my li'l' Lucy named for my old missus. She's the pick of the market bunch."

I promised to send back the best report I could, but begged for some bright spots, a compensation or two to colour my tale.

"There's the movies," she said, brightening perceptibly. "I goes an' takes the chillen whenever I can spare a quarter. The only time I'm reely happy is when I gits in front of the screen, an' sees Mary Pickford an'

gits a larf on Charlie. It was deadly dull in 'Ormead, don't you think, ma'm? Folks would n't ever want to leave the country ef something could be done to keep 'em in it."

I was impressed by this viewpoint, having sat on a commission to discuss this very question. But we had never got much further than discussion, the brightening of village life to a degree sufficient to prevent exodus to large towns being less simple than it seems.

Bethia meandered on: —

"Folks should all stop in their own countries, thet's what I think. If them as do emigrate would tell the truth, folks would n't be so keen on it as they are. Emigration reports is mostly lies. There ain't no fortins to be made anywhere cep'in' by them that's born wiv a silver spoon in their mouths. Raikes 'e's punched his cousin Bill Cudham's 'ead more than oncet for the lies 'e sent 'ome to 'Ormead about America. Bill's a bartender in the Bowery, not a bit o' good, an'

wot's wuss, 'e's bin an' married a coloured woman."

I felt relieved after a time to escape from the sordid area of the Raikes's family history. So far as I could see at the moment nothing could be done to help them; they had simply become bits of drift on the measureless sea of East Side life.

A little later in the afternoon I was taking tea in another apartment house overlooking Central Park.

The mistress of that delightful apartment was a comparatively young woman married for eight years to a prosperous business man. She was a pretty creature who had quickly acquired, in addition to her own, the dainty, elusive feminine charm of the land of her adoption. She showed me over her pretty home, and I told her of my visit to the Raikes. She was sympathetic up to a point.

"I suppose it is pretty awful on the East Side — I've always heard that it is, especially in the hot weather. No, I don't interest

myself much in that sort of thing. Ted would n't like it. He doesn't even like me to go anywhere by subway, though I sometimes do without telling him. You see there isn't time when one gets in one's bridge and teas and what not. Just now, of course, it's my Red Cross work; I assure you I work like a galley slave at it. I had to get a special dispensation from my commandant to stop in for you this afternoon."

"Do you like America?" I asked.

"Why, yes, of course, don't you? You get used to it, and then you like it so much you don't ever want to leave it. Life would be too slow at home now — I just could n't stand it. But tell me how dear old smoky London looks. I shall always love it, of course, and directly the war's over, Ted has promised me a long visit home."

There was no child in that pretty and quite ample home, but when I touched on it she smiled a little in a detached sort of way.

"We don't want children. Fortunately Ted

and I are agreed about that. It would mean giving up golf and heaps of things we're both passionately devoted to. Besides, we'd have to leave this house."

"Why? There seems ample room in it for one small child or even two."

"But it isn't allowed. Our landlord doesn't let to people with children; it's one of the conditions of tenancy."

I thought it awful, and said so, but she merely bubbled with laughter.

"No, there isn't a child in the block. How many people? Oh, about a hundred, I suppose; no, not all old, heaps of them like us. A little later, perhaps, Ted and I would n't mind, but just at present there doesn't seem to be room in life for another solitary thing."

"A little later, perhaps!" No room in life for the only thing which really gives meaning to it!

As I was whisked down from the eleventh floor to the street, certain words of Holy Writ buzzed in my ears.

"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Something in the atmosphere had stifled me even more effectively than the mingled odours permeating Bethia Raikes's apartment on the East Side. I was glad to step aside into the park and try to walk it off.

There were very few pedestrians, but many automobiles flashing along the wide roadways, on which the soft twilight was closing down converting New York into a dream city. About halfway across I was arrested by a dejected female figure huddled on the corner of a seat, with her face hidden in her hands. Nobody appeared to notice or disturb her, and there was no policeman in sight. It was impossible for me to pass her by, so making pause I asked her gently what ailed her and whether I could be of any use.

She raised her head and I saw that tears had marked the channels on her pretty

painted cheeks. She looked sullen and resentful just for a moment, but presently moved up a little, making room for me beside her. She began to talk after a bit in slow, disjointed sentences. She had come from the country not more than two years ago, lured by the promises of well-paid work and much enjoyment. She had roomed with her sister, married to a Dutchman who was employed at one of the wharves. They were all very poor, and she had merely shared a bed with the children, earning poor money as a machinist.

Her sister took three quarters of her earnings for her keep, and what was left hardly sufficed to buy her clothes and modest lunches.

Then she fell sick, and Jan, her brother-in-law, pretty soon showed her that her room was better than her company.

She had had a spell of ill-luck, and in the end a desperate longing for some brightness, an escape from the sordid misery of life,

had made her succumb to the temptation always lying in wait for a pretty girl in the streets of a great city. But he had tired of her, too, and married some one else, and now she was thrown out of her room and had no money to pay for another.

No; she could n't go back to her sister; Jan had shut the door on her. They were respectable people and had no use for a girl like her.

Incredible hardness, it seemed, and yet her story carried conviction!

Asked whether, if she had the means, she would go back to her home village, she looked up at me with a curious brilliance in her eyes.

"You betcher life," was all she said. "But there isn't anybody goin' to be sech a fool as gimme money for my railroad ticket. Them things only 'appen in books."

I offered her the money on condition that she permitted me to buy her railroad ticket, as she called it, and put her on the train.

We made that little journey together on

the green omnibus that plies up and down Fifth Avenue and I put her on the train for Vermont.

"You bet your life she got out at the next station and is in New York now —" said one to whom I related the incident a few days later.

And, oddly enough, he added, as the waif had done, "These things only happen in books."

The wanderer in the byways occasionally finds that they happen in real life too. Anyway, I like to think she went back to Vermont. I have even pictured the meeting in the white farmhouse on the hill behind the stately line of poplar trees.

If you go through life fully convinced that your fellow travellers are mostly rogues and vagabonds, why, you may take it from me that they are the only sort you will meet.

VII

I NEVER came to an end of questioning regarding the women's clubs which play so large and important a part in the national life of America. We have a few women's clubs in our large cities, but none in the country. Club life, as understood by American women, is therefore practically a sealed book to us.

The London women's clubs, as known to me, are, with one, or perhaps two, notable exceptions, mere places of rendezvous, in which the real essence of club life created by unity of purpose and community of interest is conspicuous by its absence.

Probably the true explanation of the failure of women's clubs to take any very deep root in England is that we are not really clubable people. The air of remoteness and aloofness which enables us to maintain unbroken silence towards one another through an entire railway journey, would probably

militate against the central ideal of club life, i.e., comradeship.

I was beyond measure interested in the women's clubs, and as I was invited to speak at a large number of them, had ample opportunity for making pretty extensive, and in some degree intimate, study of them.

I approached the subject, I admit, with some prejudice, always remembering, at odd and provoking times, an adjective which had fallen from the lips of a highly intelligent American man we happened to entertain once as a guest in England. In reply to some question I put to him regarding the women's clubs, he described them as "accursed." I regarded him with a startled air, easily diagnosing some strong personal reason for his antipathy, but I was far too shy to ask for enlightenment.

I could not make up my mind all the time I was in America whether the women's clubs were an asset to the national life.

I spoke in a large number of club-houses

in town and country, and carry away from these particular gatherings a vivid impression of vast numbers of active, highly intelligent, and extraordinarily restless women who talked a great deal, often to considerable purpose.

After the lapse of some months, I find that the restlessness is the dominant impression left with me.

Perpetually I asked myself how it happened that so many women who, judged by the ordinary standards of life, could not possibly be seeking to kill time, nor yet have much to kill, could afford to spend so many hours of each day at their clubs. Unless life differs tremendously from life in any other country, I could not just see how they did spare these hours, without neglecting or at least shirking something else.

A house cannot be run successfully over the telephone nor yet by merely given orders to this one or that. It has to be pervaded by the personality of its mistress like a subtle

but most acceptable aroma. The difference between a house and a home lies just there. It is the amount of personal care a woman gives to the infinitesimal details which some call drudgery which makes the subtle difference.

Many years of faithful housekeeping, which I admit has frequently interfered with some of my cherished aims and ambitions, entitle me to ask how it is that my sisters in America have so much time to spare for their club life? Are they better organizers and conservers of time, more efficient in the housewifely arts, or just merely compromisers?

I should like to have these questions answered in the good faith in which I ask them. They have interested and troubled me a good deal.

In the auditorium of a woman's club in a flourishing Eastern town one afternoon I saw rather an odd happening. A meeting of three

or four hundred had been called for the purpose of hearing about food conservation, then the question of the hour.

Before I ascended the rostrum certain preliminary business connected with club affairs had to be gone through. These informal conferences, from which they never shut me out, afforded considerable opportunity for learning about the ideals and policy of the club life and the mentality of its members.

After the routine business of the meeting was got through, a member suddenly stood up in the auditorium and enquired whether she had the chairman's permission to speak. A nod reassured her, and she then explained that she was getting up a club supper in aid of some pet war charity. In order to obtain the necessary funds and make her effort a success, she had to appeal for gifts of food for the supper. She had her proposed menu in her mind; its achievement, however, would depend on the response to her appeal.

The price of the tickets, provided she secured the necessary supplies, would be sixty cents. She required pork and beans, cakes, butter, and sundry other items, all of which were asked for separately. The members willing to contribute either called out their names or bobbed up from working at their huge knitting-bags.

It did not take long; the cause being popular the response was generous; soon the suppliant had her notebook filled with the necessary guarantees, and with a word of thanks sat down, entirely pleased with herself and her fellow members.

All she had to do now was to sell the tickets, but apparently that was not permitted in the meeting and guarantees of attendance were not asked for. The selling of tickets had to be a separate undertaking.

Commenting later on this novel and interesting way of getting up an entertainment I found my hostess strangely wroth over it.

"She won't make a success of it; the

menu isn't what they like. Food hogs a lot of them are, no matter what the cause! Give them ice cream and chicken salad and they flock to it. They think of nothing but their insides."

This seemed to me a heavy indictment, but as the ground seemed to be delicate, I did not venture to intrude farther.

Of course there are clubs and clubs, the same as there are people and people.

What happy memories I have of delightful intercourse under the roofs of the women's club-houses of America, where I was enfolded by the warm comradeship of innumerable dear women with whom I had much in common!

What impressed me most was that they regarded their club as a secondary home, which was entitled to claim their interest and their personal supervision or rather participation in its communal life. Is this one of the articles of constitution in the women's clubs of America?

Never in any single instance did I find it regarded, as with us, as a mere convenience, or a makeshift, used oftenest by those who for some reason or another find home life disappointing.

I found the club women of America keen, not only in war work, but regarding most of the national questions, more especially suffrage. They were very kind to me; even forgiving, or at least excusing the feebleness of interest in women's suffrage.

"What! A woman like you not to be on the right side? What a loss!" they would say.

But whether a loss to me or to the Cause they did not specify.

One of my most delightful experiences of club life met me in a little agricultural town on the far edge of New York State.

I had travelled all night from the West and arrived at a little railroad junction at the discouraging hour of 9 A.M. I was met there by a woman about my own age, in

charge of her own motor car, in which she conveyed me by a series of rapid movements over the worst roads in the world to our destination, her own comfortable farmhouse, on the outskirts of the little town where I was to speak on food conservation to the members of the women's club.

One of the delightful features of that amazing journey through America in war time, and one which specially appealed to my imagination, was the sublime uncertainty as to what might happen next.

It might be a millionaire's house one should alight at, or a shack on the edge of some vast wilderness, or, again, one of those dubious little Western hotels so conspicuously furnished with cuspidors, and sometimes very little else. I used to wonder what was the mentality, the business, and the final destination, if any, of the large numbers of men who sat in armchairs in the halls of these hotels, with their feet up on the window sill, or the bar of another chair, wrapped in

silence and the profoundest gloom. Sometimes they had their hats on, drawn closely over their brows, and would appear to be asleep. Then suddenly one would arise and dash away somewhere, presumably for refreshment, and another would take his place. They were, generally speaking, youngish-looking men with alert, keen faces. Being informed that they were business men waiting for appointments, I wondered how, where, and to what end these appointments came off.

The travel adventure on this particular morning brought me to a purely agricultural district where the meeting would be largely composed of farmers and their wives interested in food production as well as its consumption.

It was a raw, cheerless-looking morning, but a sudden breath of real spring air had banished the greater part of the snow and unloosed the freshets.

The "dirt roads" of America in spring are indescribable, but they have no terror for Henry Ford, who successfully and cheerfully negotiates every obstacle.

My hostess, unperturbed, calmly efficient, guided Henry through the freshets, apologizing cheerfully for the showers of water sent flying over the axles and plentifully bespattering us. At the close of this hectic joy-ride, we alighted at a neat, inviting-looking frame house which received us with the gentle, pervasive, comforting warmth which so often fills with envy those who have existed in only partial warmth all their lives.

I was interested to find in this house no help of any kind, but just a capable, energetic, altogether delightful housewife, for whom every-day domestic duties had no terror. She not only did all her own work, managing to present a cheerful, matter-of-fact front, but she had time and to spare for intellectual pursuits. The living-room had its full complement of up-to-date books and

current magazines, and there was no hint of poverty of soul in the conversation that ensued. Seldom have I come up against a keener, more alert intelligence. She was a keen suffragist, but though disappointed to discover that my interest in that knotty problem was rather lukewarm, she did not suffer it to interfere with our enjoyment of that fruitful hour.

As I regarded her swinging to and fro in her roomy rocker, serene, thoughtful, finely poised, her pretty grey hair softening the somewhat severe outline of her face, I tried to picture a farmhouse of the same status in my own country, receiving what she frankly admitted had appeared a formidable because quite unknown guest, from the other side of the world, at nine o'clock in the morning. And that in a house where there was no help of any kind! I have a pretty good imagination, but I could not picture such a scene in any farmhouse known to me in England. There would have been dismay, much tra-

vail of soul, and a conveyed sense of effort, which would have taken the fine edge off hospitality. The heart would be just as kind and hospitable, but the method would be more cumbersome.

After about an hour's comradely talk my hostess jumped up and said:—

"I would like you to visit with me in the kitchen. I've got to get our dinner ready."

This was a great compliment of which I was both conscious and proud. We retired to the kitchen where, over the mysteries of chicken salad and casserole cooking, we achieved a quite new comradeship of a particularly intimate kind.

It was an entirely happy morning, and prepared us for a successful afternoon meeting perhaps better than anything else could have done.

At twelve the man of the house appeared. We ate our good dinner with much appetite, and after washing up, retired to the meeting, assisted thither by the invincible Henry

Ford. I only found then that she was the president of the women's club and chairman of the meeting. She made an excellent speech, though I was somewhat nonplussed by her relation of the events of the morning, even down to what appeared to her its most amazing feature — that she had been able to ask me to visit with her in the kitchen! The surprise and naïveté with which this announcement was received threw an odd little sidelight on the American woman's conception of her English sister.

"Parlour company" is the epithet they apply to us. That we are regarded as cold, aloof, difficult to know, is rather a pitiful comment on our travel record, isn't it? I did my best to dispel it, and in two back blocks at least was conscious of success.

I have related this experience, one of the pleasantest in my recollection, because my hostess seemed to me typical of the club woman at her best.

Also I received there an object lesson of

the value of the Woman's Club in a purely rural district; how much it does towards compensating the women for the loss of town privileges. It provides a centre for their activities and a pivot for their interests such as we do not possess, yet desperately need, in rural England.

VIII

IF HEALTHY rivalry is to be accepted as a token of virility, ambition, and progress, America is easily the most virile, ambitious, and progressive country in the world. National pride is indeed sometimes in danger of being eclipsed by pride of State, city, or community. It is a very fierce and jealous emotion which brooks no question. Beyond doubt it makes for efficiency.

The noble rivalry displayed by the Red Cross chapters, their frantic endeavours to outstrip other cities and communities, made my first introduction to an outstanding American trait.

There is much drawing of comparisons, and not always a too scrupulous regard to dimensions. The aim is to excel, to get ahead of the other fellow, to be "on time," no matter at what cost. With a sigh I have to admit that it makes for tremendous efficiency, but one has to have years ahead

instead of behind to enter into full partnership or appreciation.

The strongest and fiercest rivalry is that between East and West.

"East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," sang the poet of all nations. But in America they do meet sometimes, in the great game of competition; then the fun begins.

The East, secure in her traditions, her older culture, her established forms, has but a tolerant forbearance for the noisier, more hustling West, not yet socially or intellectually out of her swaddling clothes.

The West, on the other hand, has her own strong contempt for the airs the East gives herself. The rivalry between the cities is of a very virulent type. In Boston they will assure you solemnly that New York is not America, and that it is highly misleading to allow one's thoughts to be coloured by the cosmopolitanism of the dumping-ground for every nationality on earth.

"This is the real America, here in Boston," they seem to say by their very air. "Come and sit at our feet."

New York smiles at Bostonian pretensions much as one might smile at the gambols of an elderly and dowdy aunt.

All this, displayed with the most charming frankness for the delectation of the stranger, is immensely entertaining, and provocative of much reflection.

I never quite got the "inwardness" of it, as we say in Scotland. Surely cities must inevitably differ like human beings in character and attributes, there being something to admire in all.

But they will not have it like that. It is too milk-and-waterish.

You have to deliver a pronouncement one way or other, and accept judgment accordingly. They have no use for the universal lover who worships at countless shrines. After my first experience of New York, she must remain for me a wonder-city of dream

and fancy, shirred by sordid reality. None will ever break the spell of her. To the end I shall thrill when my feet press her pavements, my pulses must tingle at sight of her fantastic silhouettes against the sky.

But Boston I quickly learned to love. Nay, learning was not needed. There is a difference when the traveller's way is prepared. I should like to set down here and now the names of the dear people who made it their business to see that I loved Boston. I certainly felt at home in the city from the moment I set foot in it. The individual charm of Boston makes special appeal to any visitor from the Old Country. There is something in her very air and disposition which instantaneously grips the imagination.

The noble sweep of the Charles River bears on its bosom endless galleons of memory and of promise. The narrow, historic streets have naught to do with the pretentious sweep of wide boulevards, yet lose nothing by comparison. The Common is redolent of the

fragrant comradeship of noble minds, and the stately homes on the Back Bay, the fine suburbs losing themselves in flourishing individual communities, have a rich and settled air.

But the essence which sets Boston apart, and provides endless quip for envious jest, is her conservatism, of the rich, fruity, unassailable kind with which we are so abundantly familiar in England.

One afternoon at a party given by the Colonial Dames I found myself in an atmosphere which had naught to do with the New World. I felt like rubbing my eyes more than once and asking myself where I was. One sensed something rare, remote, graciously condescending, and felt that an honour of the most signal kind had been conferred by the invitation. Colonial Dames! Could there be a title more suggestive of dignity, of that aloofness which cannot and will not be imposed upon?

Their demeanour did honour to their traditions. One thrilled to hear them address

one another by their Christian names, feeling that they ought all to have titles, not conferred, but hereditary, which they would wear with a regal air.

The prelude to the party was a screen lecture on Old-World gardens, a wholly admirable and fitting theme for the occasion. Most of those present had withdrawn themselves for a brief space from strenuous war work to enjoy the leisure and beauty of their own pleasaunce. Immediately I felt myself transplanted to the mediæval town in which I live, felt my feet on the rim of the magic carpet.

Over one interested in the literary life, Boston casts a complete spell. How often in the throes of continuous war meetings, I longed for a little leisure to imbibe the delicate flavour, to wander over classic ground in Boston and Cambridge, to meet in more leisurely and intimate communion those who were cherishing, even amid the clash of worlds, a priceless heritage.

Occasional precious glimpses only was I vouchsafed, mere tit-bits to a hungry soul. Thus I heard quite by accident from the dear woman who entertained Rupert Brooke on his visit to Cambridge, that the only thing she could remember about him was how beautiful he was!

Yes, surely Boston has every right to be proud, with a great pride, and her lovers all over the world, some envious of her heritage, will continue to lay homage at her feet.

But there are other cities in America!

I see yet the puzzled, almost shocked, air with which they received my glowing praise of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh? Oh, yes, excellent, of course, a flourishing city, heart of the steel industry, and all that; but why Pittsburgh? Why not rather Philadelphia?

Could any one of free choice live in Pittsburgh? Yes, I could, and revel in the choice. Perhaps its natural beauty ap-

pealed to me first, though I have never met any one else who had been struck by its beauty.

Possibly it is because Pennsylvania has many features resembling those in Scotland that I admired it so much. The wooded heights and rolling uplands, the rapid rivers, which seemed to gurgle as they flowed, and had no sluggishness about them, the cypresses and the pines silhouetted against the mist-green of spring foliage, combined to make a picture I shall never forget, nor wish to forget. Pittsburgh, riding proudly on her seven hills clustering above the flow of her noble rivers, the great valley alive with mighty steel mills, created an indelible and moving picture of the nobility and dignity of industry.

She suffers as Ireland does from her absentees, and the marble palaces of her magnates are, with few exceptions, untenanted.

But she gets along merrily, a vast hive of

untiring and apparently contented industry. In the course of my work I had to visit by motor many little outlying towns in the Allegheny valley and thus came in close touch with the living forces of Pennsylvania which have done so much to make America great. Again and again one had driven home the spectacle of alien races living together in complete harmony under one flag, the flag of freedom and brotherhood. Sometimes the swarthy faces of these working-class audiences moved me so deeply that I had some difficulty in commanding my voice. When one feels like that, it is easy to reach the heart. By some subtle yet quite natural process sympathy, comradeship, and confidence are established, and the message cannot fail.

At the close of one of the meetings, at a busy little town about twenty miles from Pittsburgh, a man in workman's garb came up, and somewhat shyly drew a sheaf of dollar-bills from his pocket.

"What are they for?" I asked. "I did not make an appeal for money."

"They're for the folks you've been tellin' us about, ma'm," he said quietly. "The folks away back home, that have n't all they need to eat, 'specially the kiddies."

To these people a war four thousand miles away was necessarily a shadowy affair. Once convinced of its actuality, they needed no pressure to make them help. Nay, they were instantly eager. In Scotland we have the proverb, "We're a' John Tamson's bairns."

I was so often reminded of it among these eager, warm-hearted people of varying nationalities; no big human appeal based on the verities of life will ever fail to reach the spot, provided it is shorn of self-seeking and ulterior motive. All along the valley, there, as we swung back on our wonderful night rides, watching the millions of lights illuminating the dark places till they looked like fairyland, I was conscious, not so much

of the might nor the dignity, nor even the romance of Labour, though all were present, but rather of the great, pulsing heart of humanity, which everywhere beats true to God-implanted impulses. When it does not, there has been some gross injustice or perversion, and the revolt is against man-made systems.

At Pittsburgh I beheld a striking example of the tireless and wonderful organized war activity of American women. To inaugurate what I believe was the Third Liberty Loan a monster procession was organized; fifty thousand women representing every class of work and calling; walked in it, mostly dressed in white. Many other processions of a like kind had been organized in other cities, but Pittsburgh assured me she had topped them all. I could easily believe it, but had no ocular demonstration of the claims of others to that proud distinction.

It was in Pennsylvania one evening at a dinner table that I came into intimate con-

verse with the German-born American, absolutely loyal to the country of his adoption, a personality whose type is distrusted and discredited by those who have not come in personal contact with it.

They were comparatively young people, attractive to look at, and had been very active getting up the food conservation meeting. While we were discussing the war situation, the lady suddenly remarked: –

"I think we ought to tell you that we are pure-bred Germans."

Slightly taken aback, I observed rather quickly: —

"But absolutely loyal to the great Cause, else surely I should not be sitting by invitation at this table?"

Then the husband spoke. It would not be possible to set down one half of the impetuous stream which rushed from his lips. He spoke in impassioned tones, wholly convincing, of the lost soul of Germany — of his own people, his father and grandfather,

lovely, gentle souls, who seeing what was coming had torn themselves away from Germany to escape the curse gradually poisoning the life of the nation. These people seemed ten times more loyal than pure-bred Americans; at least their passion showed itself more freely. Having tasted both freedom and the slavery in countries where men are not free-born, they have ground for the faith that is in them.

I met many such people in America, and the women were even more pronounced in their loyal passion than the men. How knowledge of their existence must have tortured and pursued the dreams of the Kaiser who had counted on their loyalty to him!

One cannot doubt, however, that they are in the minority. There were thousands of German-Americans who for personal reasons veiled their real sentiments towards the war by a display of patriotism that had no real foundation.

In the Middle West, I encountered some

very hostile areas, even one little township where the German landlord of the only hotel had no room for the travelling Englishwoman, though his hotel was empty!

Such experiences, which one might easily multiply, brought home the vast network of conflicting forces which make up America and complicate legislation and nationalization.

The Middle West stands out like a clear-cut cameo in my gallery of remembrance. In a sense it interested me perhaps more than any other part of the country. It is individual and apart in a quite strong, conscious way, not loud-mouthed or assertive, but simply fully aware of its power and its destiny.

From various remarks and criticisms heard in the East I seemed to sense a slight uneasiness regarding the growing prestige of the Middle West. It is creating rapidly a standard of life which is going to matter, and which will ultimately influence the whole life of the nation.

One felt the pulse of material power in the great, vivid, progressive cities and the steady growth of a finer standard in quieter places, even out to the foothills of the Rockies.

In St. Paul I was entertained in a house containing the finest private library I had met in America. I do not mean to say that it possessed the largest number of expensive books, or rare editions, but it was a real book-lover's library. The people lived among the books, loved every one of them, had dear and intimate friends among the great minds of all the ages.

Then the finest artistic flavour was revealed to me in a simple ranch-house in Montana, a hundred miles from any centre of civilization.

Involuntarily the question, What is civilization? springs from the heart to the lips. Somebody must write a book about it. The war having upset most of the accredited systems and standards, the time would

seem to be ripe for a new evangel or at least a new pronouncement.

The pulse of life beats strong and free in the Middle West. Again and again something in its current reminded me of Stevenson's "winds austere and pure."

The Middle West occasionally smiles at the heavy patronage and tolerance bestowed upon her by the East. She can afford to smile and to wait, knowing what wonderful things come to those who wait. Her self-sufficiency, strong without being offensive, is a different quality from the indolent superiority of the South, which claims to be the aristocrat among the States.

The South was like a story-book to me, and in no way had the sense of virile reality which one felt in the West. I admired the Southern grace, its remoteness and indifference to the strain and stress of life as feverishly endured by others. Their pride of long descent equals, nay, excels, New England conservatism.

"You can always tell a Southern woman by her walk and her soft voice and the poise of her head," they told me.

But it was from the Middle West came the neat *bon mot:*

"You can always tell a Boston woman — but you can't tell her much —"

IX

I HAD a fellow passenger on the outgoing steamer for whom the submarine had no terrors. His air of complete boredom during the daily boat drill, his indifference towards all ordered precautions for our safety, filled the heart of this trembling sinner with admiration and wonder, though it did not meet with the approbation of the authorities.

Asking for an explanation one day, he replied with a certain airy assurance:—

"Nothing will happen to this ship while I am on board."

No elucidation of this cryptic saying being forthcoming, I evolved from a brilliant imagination the suspicion that he might be in league with the sea pirates, a very glaring libel on a wholly inoffensive and loyal Englishman. When I learned a day or two later that he was a Christian Scientist, his assurance was fully explained. The basis of

the Christian Science faith appears to be that things are not what they seem.

I had heard of it as a cure for many ills and the creator of certain others; this was my first direct contact with its operations in the secret recesses of the human soul.

Aware that America is the cradle of Christian Science, I was disposed to ask my new and interesting friend a good many questions. But he was not so frankly disposed to answer them. A little later I discovered this odd evasiveness to be an outstanding characteristic of all who practise Christian Science. Perhaps it partially explains its hold on a certain cast of mind.

Do we ever prize or cherish what we fully understand with the same degree of intensity as we pursue that which lies ahead, out of our reach, existing possibly only in the realms of pure imagination?

In New York I had an opportunity, which I considered a privilege, of hearing my fellow passenger lecture on Christian Science

to a congregation of over two thousand persons, in a large uptown church. He took me there himself and introduced me to one or two members of the congregation waiting with great enthusiasm in the anteroom to welcome him back to his work in America.

Ever eager for information and enlightenment, especially regarding the conduct of life, I gave to the lecturer close, unmitigated attention, which hardly ever wavered, for an hour and a quarter. When he appeared on the rostrum accompanied by a lady in full evening dress, officially termed a reader, every eye was turned upon him with approval and expectation. He certainly made a pleasing figure, immaculately dressed and with a quiet air of assurance of which, being a nervous person myself on a platform, I felt distinctly envious.

During the brief interval before he appeared I made some study of the faces of the audience. That they had gathered there for a serious purpose was evidenced by their air

of cheerful expectation. It was a universal expression; beyond doubt they had for the moment laid aside the fret and fever of life and come to have the bread broken to them, with full expectation that they would not be sent empty away.

They looked like solid, middle-class people, and were of all ages.

In spite of my conscientious concentration, I had great difficulty in following the lecturer. In fact, I may as well confess that I did not know what he was talking about. His voice, a pleasant monotone of excellent quality, was seldom raised, or thrilled by the passion which we usually associate with deeply felt problems of the soul-life of man.

It was a reasoned discourse, for those who had the key, and he completely riveted the attention of his hearers. The stillness was profound and not an eye wandered from his face. Principle and God were the two words which oftenest occurred, but they did not seem to me to lead anywhere and the

secret of his hold over that great audience must remain a profound mystery. They were undoubtedly being fed from some secret spring, while I hungered and thirsted on the outside.

He closed on the same rigid monotone, and there was no thrill of reaction, but rather a quiet settling back in the pews, a little flutter of satisfaction, an exchange of glances which, had a word been required to express it, would have been found in "Wonderful!" I turned to the woman at my side and asked whether she could tell me what it was all about, and sum up the Christian Science faith in a few simple words.

She shook her head murmuring, "Read Mrs. Eddy's book."

In the car returning to the hotel, I put the same question to the lecturer and received the same cryptic reply, "Read Mrs. Eddy's book."

It seemed to be the only accredited reply to any questioner. I certainly heard it from

countless lips. I got the book and tried honestly to understand it, but without success. I am still wondering what was Mrs. Eddy's secret. How has that simple though astute woman been able to influence so many millions of her fellow beings?

That it has been an uplifting influence few will seek to deny. Men and women have been raised from the depths by it, and set once more on the pinnacle of self-respect. It gives a most complete assurance. There is no room for doubt. Once able to accept or grasp the tenets of her creed, then all's well with this world, and the next. There do not seem to be any doubting Thomases in the Christian Science camp. But there seemed to me to be very little joy or radiance about it all. Surely we need joy in a joyless world.

The Frenchman who said that England had twenty-seven religions and only one sauce, would need to think up a new *bon mot* to describe the religious life of America. It was our denominations he was criticizing,

but in America he would have to deal with religions. I have often pondered on this curious and interesting psychological development of a great nation, and asked myself what will be America's outstanding faith when she shall have reached the zenith of her power.

Meanwhile she is the prey of religion-mongers. Everywhere one comes up with new sects, beliefs, cults, not all of which can be dignified with the name of religion or of faith.

I lived for a space in a delightful house at Washington where the husband and wife were disciples of the New Thought. The moment one entered that house one was conscious of something helpful and comforting. It emanated like a subtle aroma from those who lived in it. They were instant in service for others, doing good by stealth in the most wonderful way. I have never seen such a helping of lame dogs over stiles. It seemed to be the litany of their lovely lives.

They told me how the New Thought had uplifted them, giving physical health and mental well-being for weakness and discouragement, and full confidence for self-consciousness. They were not reticent like the Christian Scientists, but eager to pass their prescription on. Their secret was the assurance of Divine Power within, and they obtained their inspiration from the Scriptures, aided by sundry helpful little manuals published from the headquarters of the New Thought. Their creed of life was elimination of doubt and fear, undoubtedly two of the basest passions which embitter life and paralyze achievement.

Naturally a doubting Thomas from my youth up, having reached serener air through much tribulation and by long, tortuous ways, I had envy of these disciples who with such apparent ease had reached the heights of full assurance, and there remained unassailable and undismayed. While Christian Science remains a sealed book to

me and one which does not greatly tempt me to its pages, there seemed to me in the New Thought something with which all could have kinship and sympathy. What talks we had over it! But it requires much concentration from its devotees, and more withdrawal from the fret and fever of life than I shall ever attain on this side.

"Come ye apart," is an injunction that I have had to regard as a privilege exclusively reserved for others.

Yet in hurrying crowds, amid the stress and the din of battle, I have been comforted by a secret strain, some echo of the choir invisible.

Perhaps the strenuous worker has his own compensations. With him, if he truly seek it, may abide forever the melody of the everlasting chime.

Deeply, enthrallingly interested in whatever medium through which the need of the human soul seeks to find expression, I am not the stuff of which converts are made. A

sturdy, somewhat austere, Presbyterianism, handed down through a long line of godly forbears, has coloured and informed my whole life, and is likely to remain my shield and buckler to the end.

All these phases of universal seeking for a strong house of defence against the ills of this life and the possible adventures of the next fill one with an immense, almost a divine compassion.

They go such a long way round to garner experience, seeking for happiness, which is humanity's eternal quest, outside the portals of the distant and the dim, whereas it dwells with us in the very house of life itself, the key, where the Lord Christ himself left it, on the homeliest doorstep.

Simple, childlike souls thus achieve the radiance for which the scholars have been searching throughout the ages. It falls like a benediction on the heart attuned by simple faith and service to the music of the spheres.

The exigencies of my work prevented my making even the most casual study of the church life in America, so that I could draw no comparison between it and that existing in my own country.

I was often speaking myself on Sundays, oftener still making interminable railway journeys to reach remote destinations, but I found everywhere a profound reverence for religious faith, and a most pathetic and almost universal seeking for more light. This profoundly significant trait was revealed to me at every gathering I addressed. Part of my programme, quite distinct and apart from the official one, was to make a spiritual appeal at the end of my address.

This was not done for effect, but simply and solely because it is impossible for me to separate the spiritual element from human affairs. To insist on such separation, is to court disaster and defeat. The spiritual element cannot be eliminated from the life of man. Man-made treaties have to be based

on Divine law, promoted and ratified by Divine approval before they can operate for the people's good.

In America more than any other country, the spiritual appeal, sincerely made and felt by the speaker, will never fail. No matter what the nature of the audience — and I had many strange and hostile ones — that part of my message never failed to arrest and impress. It interested and moved me profoundly and gave a peculiar joy to the work, such as I have never felt elsewhere. American audiences, though they do not cheer a speaker much, are far more emotional, and it therefore requires less courage to make the direct spiritual appeal. I record this indisputable fact with gratitude.

They are not ashamed of showing feeling as we are in England. I have often wondered how the stolid British audience affects American orators. This American characteristic has nothing in common with the tearful emotion exhibited by the negro, for instance,

whose religion is a mere ecstasy with very little bearing on his conduct of life.

I wonder what effect this emotionalism has on ordinary affairs, whether it enters at all into business relations? One has heard American business methods described as the keenest on earth, but I don't see how this peculiar trait can be altogether eliminated. Because the human element in business is the one that counts always.

I shall never forget while I live the profound effect made on me at Washington by the spectacle of a body of hard-headed business men, representing part of the best brains in the country, moved to tears by a simple appeal I made to them for their coöperation to help England out of her food hardship and peril.

I could not conceive of such a thing happening in England. They might probably feel as much, but they would rather die than show it.

What will be the ultimate effect of this

very wide racial difference between units of the English-speaking nations? It is a fascinating theme, on which one might enlarge indefinitely.

There can be no doubt that it is our national reserve, carried to almost indecent lengths, which has militated, and is militating now, very strongly against the full understanding so ardently sought for by those who are fully awake to its supreme importance.

Our coldness repels them. I had considerable sympathy with the American soldier who remarked to me, rather indignantly, one afternoon as we stood together on the deck of an homewardbound troop ship:—

"The Englishman may be a very good chap, as you say, but I've no use for him. Why should I, or any other fellow, waste good time digging him out of his hole? Let him come out and show himself a white man, and he'll find us the same. I've no use for a chap who says no when he means yes, and can hop along without even a bit of a smile."

One was conscious of some bitterness there, possibly born of a personal experience, but the incident serves to show how prejudice may be innocently and quite unintentionally created. And prejudice once rooted is difficult to uproot. It takes a severe surgical operation.

The only possible way of clearing up these discouraging mists which undoubtedly are retarding the dawn of full understanding, is to promote endless traffic across the dividing seas. You must come more and more to our shores, and we to yours, not as mere casual guests in the vast caravansaries where only false or at least partial views are obtained, but as welcome guests in one another's homes.

The Anglo-American Union will have to bestir itself, and become a vast and vitalizing force. Upon that force, and the final fusion of the English-speaking peoples, the future of the world depends.

X

LAST evening I presided at a lecture on "House Building and Town Planning," delivered by an expert under one of our new reconstruction schemes. It was easy to see that his laborious outline of the ideal house set in the ideal town appeared merely a Utopian scheme to his audience.

Reflecting on what the scheme must have cost in committees, reports, and recommendations, I longed to invite them to a night ride across the Atlantic in an aeroplane, to a country where concrete examples of what he was talking about could be found outlining any board walk.

British posterity would require to find considerable consolation in pride of ancestry, because undoubtedly there has been handed down to us a heavy legacy of difficult, sometimes impossible living conditions. Pride of long descent may stiffen the back, but it won't keep it warm in winter, nor yet

protect any of us from the consequences of openly defying the laws of health.

The complete absence of any system in ancient town planning no doubt gave a pleasing and artistic irregularity to the outline of our mediæval towns, but the fact remains that many of them are insanitary and fertile hotbeds of discomfort and disease. I have lived in many varieties of houses in Scotland and England, and have had practical experience of both new and old styles of architecture. Artists and lovers of the antique may go into raptures over the beauty of Elizabethan roofs and eaves, or the clean, fine lines of Queen Anne panelling, point enthusiastically to the quaintness of low doorways and projecting windows, but when you have to live intimately with windows which refuse to open at the top because they were not fashioned to open that way, if at all, and when the green mildew in your clothes and boot cupboards convinces you of the sad fact that your

abode has been constructed minus a damp-proof course, the artistic side of things ceases to charm, except on rare occasions.

You live in perpetual warfare with hostile forces militating against the health and well-being of yourself and your household, and that is a distinct check on artistic leanings. I crossed the Atlantic in mid-winter in a somewhat chastened mood regarding our climate, which had been behaving so much worse than usual that even the war, provisional excuse for many shortcomings, could not palliate it. It was therefore very easy, nay, inevitable, that I should fall in love at once and permanently with American houses.

If I were offered a handsome sum for an adverse criticism, I should have to refuse it. The only possible flaw in their construction, from my point of view, would be the absence of privacy conferred by doors perpetually open, or non-existent. But living in the open is, after all, only a matter of

habit. I could with ease shed all my prejudice against it, though I have lived for over half a century in a country where a man's house is his castle, to which he alone possesses the key.

In these castles, great and small, we live furtively, as if cherishing a secret dread of inspection or even friendly intervention by our neighbours. And we are very particular about doors shutting firmly, and having keys to them. Lots of keys! Some of us even train our cats and dogs to shut the doors.

The lightness of the domestic duties in your wonderful labour-saving houses partly explains how America has come to be regarded in other parts of the world as woman's special paradise. In England women are perpetually at war in their houses against cold and draughts, and are seldom or never warm all over at one time. Occasionally we achieve, at great cost and much travail of body, a kind of sectional warmth which has to do duty for the real.

When we live in old houses we forget to be proud of their antiquity, because we are so busy stuffing up cracks and fissures to exclude draughts, or inventing new wind-screens, which in some houses are as much a necessity as on motor cars. We pile up coal and wood, and watch it blaze away cheerfully in our wide and artistically beautiful fireplaces, mournfully assured that both heat and flames will exhaust themselves in trying to warm the chimney instead of the room. Draw close to the fender, and you may feel the glow, retire a few paces back, and you are glad to despatch willing young feet to fetch your grandmother's shawl.

That is how the great majority of us live in England in winter, and those who survive bear others to carry on.

I have no sort of false pride about it, nor any hesitation in handsomely acknowledging that I was physically comfortable and warm for a longer time in America than at any other period of a long and I trust a

comparatively blameless life. I have heard Europeans complaining of the overheated houses of America, but why complain when the remedy is simple, and always at hand?

I never found any windows hermetically sealed, though I admit in certain hotels there was a prejudice, almost malignant in its intensity, against opening them. But a little firmness always prevailed. How often have I, returning tired and chilled from some evening meeting, blessed the inventor of universal central heating as I closed my bedroom door and sat down comfortably to rest, without having to bother about stirring up a fire or replenishing it with fuel. Then think of the extra wraps it does away with!

One winter day at a London terminus, from whence depart trains for the south coast, I watched the spectacle of an elderly couple and their belongings getting entrained for their annual seasonal visit. It was rather a mirth-provoking sight.

They wore stacks of clothing which effectively disguised their natural figures and converted them into miniature moving mountains. A manservant and a lady's-maid followed, with additional fur coats and rugs, and two hot-water bottles in flannel bags. Two pet dogs in red flannel coats, and a canary in a cage completed the *entourage*. Think of the trouble, the expense, the worry, and the thought involved even in preparation for such a migration!

I am proud to record the fact that I travelled right across America with one suit-case and a roomy dressing-bag, one fur coat, and a muff, which I lost. Thus equipped I travelled fifteen thousand miles covering a period of four and a half months, and was always turned out respectably in neat, workmanlike garb, suitable to the occasion. I could not have done it anywhere except in America, where the comfort of houses, hotels, and trains can be depended on.

I will not, however, expatiate to any great extent on my travelling experiences. They would need a small book to themelves. I spent about half of my American nights in lower berths on the railroads, and not only survived the process, but became very agile, through much practice, at getting in and out of these heathenish bunks, and dressing on my hands and knees.

All I shall say here is that I shall die convinced that in spite of their reputation for go-aheadness the American people must have a strain of angelic long-suffering concealed about them somewhere. I don't know any other kind of people who would have endured the system so long.

The initial cost of central heating in houses must be considerable, but the actual cost of maintenance appears to be much less than that demanded by our inadequate methods. I enquired of the mistress of a lonely house on the edge of a prairie in Iowa, in which,

though the outside temperature was ten below zero, I was entirely and delightfully comfortable, how much she reckoned that it cost to warm their house throughout the entire winter. After some computation and consultation with the man of the house she reckoned that it took eight tons of coal at ten dollars per ton.

I gasped with envy, and mentally shook my fist at a kitchen stove with which I had lived in intimate but never amicable relations, whose capacious maw could and did swallow twenty tons of coal per annum for cooking purposes alone, only deigning to throw in a little hot water for bath purposes when the wind happened to be in a direction to suit its evil temper.

I take off my hat to the American plumber, and only wish he would migrate in large numbers to this country to teach us how to live comfortably and with economy in the matter of heating. If we had houses arranged and fitted like yours, we should

have no domestic servant problem in England, because very few of us would keep servants.

British women are not afraid of work, but we have so many hard and unnecessary tasks thrust upon us through our ancestors not knowing anything about house-building or sanitation, that most of us have gotten discouraged and willing to hand on the perpetual struggle to others. Filling coal scuttles in a cellar and carrying them up four or five flights of stairs is a discouraging job, even for a strong, conscientious, and enthusiastic housewife.

Then think of what happens after the contents of the scuttles have been converted into partial heat and very impartial dust! All the ashes have to be carefully swept up, taken out, carried downstairs, and deposited in the dustbin, and the room then swept and garnished.

All English housewives wage perpetual war against dust and cold, but never against

heat. Some of us would welcome that kind of warfare as a change.

I do not find in my vocabulary any words adequate to describe American hospitality as it was bestowed on me in every kind of home during these strenuous but happy and enlightening months. Everywhere its quality was the same, spontaneous, warm-hearted, and sincere. You were made welcome in the way which makes you glow all over. In a word you come home. To a woman like me, a home-lover and student of human nature, this tremendous privilege was appreciated in a way I cannot explain.

American hospitality is different from all other in the world, but I am not going to expatiate on its psychology. We do not dissect the thing we love, but merely take it to our bosoms.

Everything interested me, your furniture, your crockery, the way you set your tables, and make your beds, and your graceful

wearing of your beautiful clothes. Your food I think is on the whole better cooked than ours, especially in quite ordinary households, but I think you have less variety. I was rather struck by the monotony of the menus: always excepting salads, the beauty and variety of which used to fill me with admiration, not unmixed with awe. But I never ate any of them.

Salad-eating is an acquired habit, and we have not acquired it to any great extent in England yet. Let us blame it on the climate, as we blame so many other things, all the ones we can't otherwise explain away. I do fear that in England a wisp of chicken salad and an ice-cream would be considered an inadequate meal, especially for a winter day. But I observed that it was a favourite order given in the restaurants.

In Scotland the unregenerate refer to salad as "green meat," and one delightful lady of the old school politely declined it at a dinner

party, explaining that she preferred her vegetables boiled.

I gratefully remember your coffee, surely the finest on earth. France cannot excel nor even equal it. I shall never dare offer any of my dear American friends coffee in my house. I shall have to get them to acquire the tea habit while they are under my roof.

The pleasant custom one so often meets in American houses, of serving a guest's breakfast in her room, has much to recommend it, both from the viewpoint of the hostess and the guest. It gives the latter a delightful feeling of freedom and at-home-ness as well as the assurance that she is not imposing on a busy woman's time. In England bedroom breakfasts can be comfortably served only in large, well-staffed houses because the kindling of fires is involved. A warm atmosphere has to be secured before there can be any comfort.

As I pen these lines, the pictures of many fair and dear interiors to which I was intro-

duced in America rise up before my mental vision. The mulberry suite in a precious New England home, the solid comfort of the guests' quarters in a stately house in the Back Bay in Boston, the exquisite colouring and luxury in a marble mansion in Pennsylvania, and the dear, intimate cosiness of a little bedroom in a prairie farmhouse in the Far West, where you could step out from the window to a wide piazza and face the loneliness and the benediction of the stars; all different, but all informed and vivified by the same loving-kindness which at once and successfully banished the homesickness of the wayfaring woman into the limbo of forgotten things.

Repay? It never can be repaid. The very word is an insult to that royal giving. It can only be acknowledged and cherished, as it will be by my grateful heart, to the very end of my life.

XI

ONE evening in the dining-room of the Ritz Carlton Hotel at New York I was fascinated by the looks of a woman, dining alone with a man, as I was, at a little table not far away. I directed the attention of my host, a man who knew New York well, and asked if he could tell me who she was. She seemed to be concentrating entirely on her *vis-à-vis*, leaning across the table towards him with that slightly appealing air which the average man finds it hard to resist. She was very beautiful in the artificial, modern way, and gowned to perfection, with due regard to the display of somewhat mature charms.

My host shrugged his broad shoulders, and dropping his eyes went on with his dinner.

"I know her very well. She's one of the women whose business in life is to understand other women's husbands."

"Pickers-up of unconsidered trifles. Receivers of unappreciated confidences. One of the refuges modern civilization provides for the great misunderstood," I murmured. "So he isn't her property?"

"Good Lord, no, anything but — and her own lawful is quite a decent sort of chap. I see you know the type. Does she prevail much in England?"

I replied that I feared she was indigenous to every soil.

From the understander of other women's husbands, we drifted into further talk about marriage in general and its effect on individuals. My host was a widower, but regarding his matrimonial experience I had no knowledge. He was a comparatively young man still, and immensely eligible so far as the possession of worldly goods went. But apparently he had not felt inclined to make a second venture, which, in a country where second and third and even fourth matrimonial ventures are airily trifled with, nat-

urally surprised me. As I was very nearly old enough to be his mother, I ventured a few remarks on a subject which had begun morbidly to obsess my thoughts.

"I'm afraid I don't like the attitude of a large and apparently increasing section of your people towards what old-fashioned people still persist in labelling holy matrimony. The canker is eating into the very vitals of your country. I saw some figures in a newspaper the other day alleging that one out of every ten marriages here ends in divorce. If these appalling figures are true, what are you going to do about it?"

"What can we do?" he asked gloomily. "And it's the women's fault."

My answer was obvious.

"It takes two to make a bargain, and the men could stop it if they liked. After all, they have the last word."

"Oh, have they, though?" he asked with a quick uplift of his level brows. "You could n't substantiate that, not in the States

anyway, however hard you try. Fact is, our women are shirkers — I don't say all of them, because if there weren't some saviours of the country left in it, why then we should n't exist long. I suppose that's what it amounts to.

"But I freely admit that there's a big stratum in our social order, where the standards are absolutely rotten. The women are unmoral, rather than immoral. If they weren't, could there be a blot on the landscape like Reno? My God! I can't think why the Almighty doesn't send down fire from Heaven, supposing such a place exists, to burn it up."

I held my breath, for he spoke with passion, and I wondered whether he was going to touch on the tragedy of his own life. I mightily feared it. For it is one thing to utter platitudes on things in general, quite another to be faced with actual tragedy and be asked to deal with it. I've had my share of that, and getting too old for the job.

Before I could say anything he went on: —

"I went to the place once to see one of my sisters who made a mess of her life. She was the loveliest and the best, but she got a blighter for a husband. He had his good points, however, and if she'd stood to her guns and played the game in spite of him, if they together had made an honest try of it, they might have settled down into peace which can on occasion be a very good substitute for happiness. Fact is, it's too dashed easy for us here to get our heads out of the noose, — easier than to get 'em in sometimes."

"Of course it's all fundamentally and dreadfully wrong," I said, looking him straight in the face. "'For better for worse,' the service says and the vow 's got to be taken literally, and stood by, to the bitter end."

"You'd go as far as that?" he asked in apparent surprise.

"Every step of the way. I'm with the

Romans in that; at least, I don't believe in divorce."

"Not even for the major sins?"

"Not even for the major sins. In business honourable firms have to stand by their bad bargains as well as the good ones; it's the only way the commerce of the world can be held together. Should we be less particular about our matrimonial engagements on which the future of the race depends? We've got all wrong somehow with our marriage standard, and you are more wrong in America — at least more of you are wrong I should say — than anywhere else in the world. But you are more open about it."

"That surely ought n't to be a bad thing. But no divorce!" he repeated. "Infidelity, drunkenness, cruelty, drug-taking, insanity, a ghastly crew, aren't they? You'd make poor devils stick any one, or even them all?"

"You don't cast off a member of your family, thrust him or her out of the home, because he or she happens to be

stricken with a physical disease. You keep him there, and try to cure or at least to patch him up."

He stroked his chin reflectively.

"Yes," he drawled. "But it isn't quite the same, is it? Still, there might be something in it." He swept the glowing restaurant with his eyes, and I gathered that he was making some sort of survey or computation.

"In this room I see five men and six women who, between them, have had more than thirty matrimonial affairs. See that woman in the cyclamen pink frock? She's with number four."

I did not turn my head to regard the cyclamen frock. Nostalgia prevented me.

"I see very little difference between her and the woman of the street," I said calmly. "A woman who, goaded by infidelity or studied cruelty and indifference, cuts herself off from her husband, deliberately preferring to live her own private life in peace, any one can sympathize with and respect. But when

it is simply a choice and variety of men — I confess I do not see much difference between the cyclamen pinks and the wayside weeds who ply their trade on the Great White Way."

"Would you stand by that anywhere in public?" he asked, with a curious glint in his eyes.

"I would — if the occasion justified it. I have said it in this very country to intelligent women who agreed with me. It is a betrayal of the race, that's what it is. After all, the primal object of marriage is children, isn't it? Where do they come in when they happen to have cyclamens for their mothers? I'm told there are children in America to-day, poor lambs, who don't know where they belong."

"Quite true," he murmured. "I know some of 'em myself."

"Then surely something's got to be done, a bar sinister placed on these unholy and casual alliances, masquerading as marriage.

It's as bad as polygamy; worse, because it pretends to be something better."

"Have n't you got this sort of thing in your country at all, then?"

"Too much of it. During the decade before the war there was a steady shirking of motherhood and of every kind of responsibility. One day some years back in London where my husband had a large family practice, he was counting all the married girls in it who ought to have been mothers, and were not. There was nothing earthly to prevent them because they were all healthy, strong young women, perfectly normal in every respect. They were just shirkers pure and simple, afraid of their figures and of having their good time interfered with. Spoiled, selfish, pleasure-seeking creatures, every one. Of course husbands are not kept that way, but apparently they were willing to take the risks."

"Then what happened? Did anybody do anything to stop it?"

"The war intervened and altered the whole standard of life and thought. People were simply forced back to the bedrock of things, and the primal instincts of humanity are reasserting themselves. It may not be a permanent cure, but at least decay has been arrested for the time being."

"You call it decay?"

"What else is it? It's a lack of virility of mind and body. Do you know what has given me the biggest heartache since I've been in this country? When the women came up at the close of the meetings I have addressed, which they always did, saying, 'My only son is over there.' 'My God!' I said to a woman I was staying with one night, 'Is America a country of only sons, and are they all going over there to be killed? What has she done to merit a punishment so awful?'"

"The war ended too soon for us on that count as well as on others," he said gravely. "We certainly don't have enough of children. I had three. Two of them are over

there, and the other with me in my business; no, not married. They don't seem keen on marrying. Of course the youngest is only twenty-one."

"But early marriages, even if a certain amount of hardship ensues, make for happiness and the stability of the family life. And the more children the better. The happiest and the best people and the finest assets to any country are the members of large families. They are prepared there for commerce with the world. It is a miniature world where the battle is fought and won every day. The only child in comparison with these brave young warriors hasn't an earthly chance in the game of life."

"I should n't wonder but you're right," he said, and his sombre eyes seemed to glow.

"The over-indulgence which can hardly be avoided in the one-child family is so bad for the child too! Only yesterday in a man's office downtown I was witness to an exhibition of the most complete selfishness on the

part of a daughter I have ever seen in my life. That she was a particularly charming daughter was merely an aggravation of the offence. Her settlement in life had come under discussion and she was out to squeeze the last cent out of the old man. It was all apparently that he existed for. When she had gone he said to me, 'Now perhaps you understand what I meant the other day when I told you that in America a man's home is his office. He is happier there than anywhere else because it is the only place which belongs to him.'"

My host smiled a little bitterly.

"I've observed that most daughters are spoiled. Who can help spoiling them? I'm afraid I could n't."

"I admit that it isn't easy not to, but in England to-day we are suffering from the complete overthrow of parental authority."

"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were the models of all the family virtues over there."

"Are we? 'I hae my doots.' You know I'm Scotch, and since I've been in this country nothing has interested me more than the cheerful persistence of the Scotch. One finds them everywhere, mostly in good billets, cheerfully overcoming difficulties, and generally making good. They are the best pioneers in the world. It's in their blood, because they have centuries of real piety and hard discipline behind them. I can look back to my own young life in my father's house where discipline and unquestioning obedience to parents was absolute and know that it was the soundest basis for life. The decline of it in family life marks the beginning of decline in national greatness. It's a business proposition after all. Can inexperience rule experience, dictate policy, insure solidity or success anywhere? I submit that it is clean impossible."

"It's the way of least resistance, isn't it, and poor humanity is too easily disposed that way?"

"Don't I know it?" I said with a small groan. "But do you think honestly now that the men and women who shirk the real issues of life are happier — well, than you and me, who have at least tried to shoulder our responsibilities manfully?"

"Happy, by God, no! I've never come up with any real happiness, not since Judy died."

"She wasn't the cyclamen variety," I murmured sympathetically.

"No; she was the good old-fashioned sort. Wardsworth described her, don't you know, in these lines, I always remember them when I think of her: —

> " 'A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food.'

She wasn't above trying to make an ordinary chap happy. Yet she died and the cyclamens flourish. That's what hurts and confuses, see?"

I did see. I was not able for a moment to make any reply.

"I say, this sort of talk is bad for digestion. You're not eating anything," he said quickly.

"Oh, yes, I am. It's only bad food that forces your attention. This is the nectar of the gods which makes you feel good by automatic process. It's a lovely dinner, but, yes — I think I've had enough."

"Oh, no; have something else; say, are you going to write up this stuff?"

I shook my head.

"I should be afraid. Besides, I have n't the right and I'm only a visitor to these shores. Has n't it been written up world without end over here already? It seems to me such a fruitful theme."

"The comic journals have their fling at Reno, but people seem loath to tackle the thing seriously. Of course it isn't savoury."

"It'll have to be faced here and all the world over. You're only at the beginning of your empire-building and you can't afford to have any of the foundation pins rotten or even shaky, can you?"

He pushed back his chair and we rose simultaneously. As our eyes met, mine were full of tears.

"Forgive me for preaching," I said, "but it has done me good."

A little later as I sat by my window in my hotel pondering these things, a mighty sadness that was like a pall descended on my spirit.

The sky-signs darting upward like tongues of flame obscured the clear message of the stars. They seemed symbolic — in tune — not with the infinite, but with the finite and the earthy, which drags the soul of humanity down to darkness and despair. I thought of what we had been discussing, the canker whose rim we had but skirted, of the prolific breeding-grounds on the East Side and in every alien and undesirable area, offering their full quota to the national life.

And the best was being wilfully withheld! My heart wept for America. She will have to

deal drastically and soon with this canker, cut it out fearlessly and forever from the web of her national life.

There is only one way. Men and women and especially women, since they are the leaders in every great moral movement, must accept full responsibility for their sex, shirking nothing, regarding it as the charge God has given them to keep for Him here. No other form of service, however noble, will palliate neglect of this.

I remember some years back being called to the bedside of a dying woman who was a little afraid of the swelling of Jordan. I tried to comfort her with reassuring pictures of what awaited her on the other side, but she continued to shake a doubting head.

Pressed for some explanation for her consuming fear at last she said:—

"I have n't done anything, not anything at all. Only cared about my home, looked after it, and tried to make my family comfortable and happy."

I bowed my head before her sublime humility.

"My dear, it is because you have done 'only that' that your abundant entrance is sure. If you had gone out to raise monuments of public service or tried to move multitudes and neglected that, you might have had some qualms. You've done the greatest thing a woman can do, and which none can do for her."

Unconsciously my poor dying friend, as the living one had done, voiced the world's universal need. The wife of whom he spoke with such yearning as one who was "not above trying to make an ordinary chap happy" is the type we need and must have if humanity is to be saved.

We need her in millions in every country. The foundations of home must be made unassailable so that they shall stand firm through sorrow and disillusion, aye, even through betrayal. It is the woman's part.

It was the grey dawn before I fell asleep, and then my dreams were haunted by the bitter cry of the unwanted children of the world.

XII

THE politics of one country can never perhaps be fully understood by another. While certain general principles guide the political systems of all nations, yet each plays the game in its own way.

I tried conscientiously to arrive at some correct grasp of the political situation, but found it an exhausting exercise. But I never lost interest, reading with avidity everything which would give more light, and asking the usual questions. I asked more questions in America than I have ever asked in the whole course of my life before, but it is on most occasions the only way of getting information. True, the information once acquired has to be sorted out continually, in the light of fresh information often from opposing sources. It is at least always a healthy exercise affecting the mind as gymnastics affect the body.

I found more acute and passionate party

feeling than in my own country, but distinctly less general interest in politics. The doings — and above all the talking — in Congress, except when something sensational is going on, are regarded by the average American with a very languid interest. There seems to be a more virulent brand of partisanship and people attach themselves to men rather than to affairs.

Hence the personal element enters the public life of America in a way which we could never understand. Except in very rare and flagrant instances, in England a man's private life, as apart from his public one, is respected. Nobody pokes his nose into his private affairs in search of damning, or at least detrimental, facts. His past, dark or otherwise, interests few. It appears to be otherwise in America, if one is to believe all one reads, sees, and hears.

It was in Washington I came into real touch with the political machine. We have not in any part of our Empire a city parallel

to Washington, and certainly not one so consistently dignified and beautiful as regards architecture and the disposition of its buildings. From the moment the traveller steps from the railroad track into the vast marble halls of Washington Station, he is impressed by the fact that the makers of the city had in view the sure day when America would become a great, perhaps the greatest, world-power.

Whether that be so or not, all must admit that the Government seat is worthy of the country for which it stands. I saw it for the first time under the disadvantage of war conditions, which had suspended everything and covered the city in parts with the temporary departmental erections of which we had gotten our fill in London. But there were other advantages, and it certainly gave me an opportunity of seeing how a peace-loving republic addressed herself to the art of war. Her methods did not seem to differ from the accepted methods of other countries;

certainly her war machine was just as cumbersome, if not more so, than ours.

One wandered bewildered through miles of temporary offices, busy hives where the click of the typewriting machine and the tread of hurrying feet never ceased. Suddenly a door would open, or through one slightly ajar, you would catch a glimpse of a hundred or two of earnest men who had been called to conference by their department to discuss the pregnant issues of the hour.

The heads of all the war departments, with whom I had much converse, were strong, serious men, fully alive to the critical nature of the hour and the importance of the problems with which they had to deal. I never could make up my mind whether the vast number of voluntary war workers in state departments at Washington were an asset or at times something of a liability. The difference between the voluntary and the paid official is that you can't without much personal travail dismiss the volunteer for

inefficiency. In the conditions of his service he may be, and often is, a law to himself. It appeared to me that a far greater number of business men of assured position and proven ability had simply abandoned their private interests for the purpose of serving their country.

It was a service loyal, splendid, and sincere. Mistakes were made, as is most inevitable when a great country embarks on an enterprise so stupendous and so full of unknown, unsuspected pitfalls. Again and again in America I was reminded of a passage in one of Lloyd George's most effective speeches:—

"What we have to remember is that for a peace-loving country war is, and must ever be, an undiscovered country, in great part a wilderness through which the straight path has to be cut. That there should be some side-tracking is inevitable, and the course may have to be changed with drastic rapidity any day."

These pregnant words may well be applied to the conditions of war service in America. They are true of war service in every country in the world.

The influx of thousands of new people to Washington rendered her housing problem so acute that the most extraordinary conditions prevailed. The number of strangers requiring accommodation was estimated at seventy thousand. What wonder, then, that two dollars and a half was charged, and paid, for permission to sleep on a billiard table, or sit up all night in a barber's chair?

I was rescued by a hospitable friend from the Powhatan Hotel after sitting in the hall for seven or eight hours waiting for a room to be vacated that had been engaged for me days ahead.

The social life of Washington was much affected by the war, but there was a good deal of quiet entertaining which afforded me on my different visits (I had to return to the city frequently to report and obtain further

instructions in my work) excellent opportunity of studying the types peculiar to the seat of a government. In London, which is so cosmopolitan, so honeycombed with every kind of interest and diversion, the political life of the nation does not stand out in such bold relief. In Washington everything has to do with Congress, whereas in London Parliament is but a section of London life, intensely interesting to many, but a sealed book, regarding which they are indifferent, to a vast majority of the people. Perhaps, while the war was going on, public attention was more intimately and intensely focussed on the Houses of Parliament where the questions of life and death so often hung in the balance, but in ordinary times it is as I have said.

I came to the conclusion that outside of the diplomatic circles women in the United States do not take much personal or active interest in politics. In England it is the secret ambition of many women to become the

wife of a member of Parliament, because it at once gives her a certain social prestige, which, if she is an ambitious woman, she can easily follow up to her advantage.

It did not seem to be so in America. I can never forget the impression of the narrow, prescribed life of the wives of Congressmen who live under the roof of Congress Hall, but who apparently have little commerce with the social circles in the city. I feel the need here and now of once more emphasizing the fact that these impressions are necessarily fleeting and partial, and in no sense final. But that is what I thought about the environment of the Congress-ladies stranded in Washington.

In London the political circle, if not the most brilliant, is certainly one of the most interesting and vivid that we have. Women take an intense practical and personal interest, not only in the constituency which has returned their husbands to the House, but in everything connected with his political

career. The day he makes a speech, even on the most trivial and unimportant subject, is an epoch-making day. It may be, and indeed often is, the beginning of a great Parliamentary career.

I seemed to miss that warm kind of personal interest in the Congress-ladies at Washington, but perhaps I didn't have sufficient opportunity of judging correctly.

Again and again, however, I was conscious of a singular detachment between the sexes, a distinct cleavage in their interests, aims, and activities. American women are far more independent of men than we are. They don't take up hobbies just to kill time, or fill up with, because the man is too busy, or doesn't come along. Their interests and their hobbies, whether focussed on their club life or elsewhere, seem absorbing and sufficing. There can I think be no question about that. It interested me profoundly. Possibly it may make, if not for happiness, then for more peace in the long run, but it left me with a

curious sense of the incompleteness of life. I missed everywhere the apparent comradeship in which so many husbands and wives walk together in my country. A man does not seem to go home and talk his business affairs over with his wife to the extent that it is done in England and in France.

This detachment has no doubt arisen, in the first instance at least, from the American man's known chivalrous attitude towards women. He shelters her mightily, makes his utmost endeavour to keep away from her every chill and adverse wind. He suffers cheerfully, or the reverse, long periods of absence, which would cause the English husband to conclude that his better half was through with him; the most she knows about his business is the satisfying fact that it provides her with the necessary funds.

This is all wrong. There cannot be a satisfactory partnership minus a sharing of burdens, and home life can be set on a sound basis only when all the cards are laid on the

table and both partners know how they stand financially.

There are, of course, women who are not worthy of such confidence, and who could not be trusted with the smallest business secret, but I am convinced that they are in the minority. Responsibility is surely the greatest factor in the development of character. The very knowledge that one is fully trusted at once creates a fine standard of honour.

Again and again I missed the visible atmosphere of close comradeship between men and women in America, especially between husbands and wives, and I should like to know whether it is general, and what its thinkers feel about it. May it not have some bearing on the prevailing slackness of the marriage tie? Matrimony being at once the most exact, as well as the most exacting, science on earth, you have to put your whole resources of body, mind, and spirit into it to make it a success.

And there has to be a mighty giving, especially on the part of the woman. That is the law of life. When it is withheld, why then the little rift within the lute can quickly make the music mute. The way in which fools and babes rush headlong into the greatest undertaking of their lives must make the angels weep.

The country seemed to me to be divided loosely into two great political factions, those for the President and those against him who were devoted lovers and followers of Theodore Roosevelt. Living sometimes in a Democratic house, sometimes in a Republican, I had opportunity of hearing both sides, but the political situation remained obscure to me to the end.

The attachment to Roosevelt, however, appeared to be of a very intimate, passionate, and personal kind. Men admired Woodrow Wilson for his intellect, his far-sightedness, his dignity, and command of the English

language, but stopped there. It was purely a matter of temperamental difference between the two men, a difference obvious to the most casual observer.

I had no opportunity for conversation with the President, but I carried away from my interview in New York with Mr. Roosevelt the impression of a very vivid, compelling personality, from which flowed not only a torrent of speech and passion for the right, but an extraordinary sense of power and life. A born inspirer and leader of men, with all the faults of his vivid personality, his death was an irreparable loss to his country in her most critical hour.

Surprised by the reluctance of some of her finest sons to enter the public life of America, I said one day to a very distinguished Pennsylvanian:—

"Your place is not here at all just now, but at Washington. Why don't you and men like you go into Congress or the Senate?"

He shook his head. "Too much mud-slinging; it's a thankless job."

I could only point out that the best way to stop the mud-slinging and lift the political life of the country to a higher level was for men of high ideal, with no end to serve but their country's good, to go into power. But he continued to shake his head, and merely remarked that the millennium hadn't come.

The feeling for Great Britain was very fine and warm on the occasion of my first visit to the States early in 1918, but when I returned after the signing of the armistice there was a distinct fall in the barometer. There was a reaction, of which was born a coolness, a new, subtle hostility which one could sense everywhere.

In all classes, but more especially among the splendid ranks of the war women who had thrown themselves so whole-heartedly into service, there was a keen disappointment that the war had ended before the

country had opportunity to prove her full strength and nobility of purpose.

There was also in some quarters a great reaction against any further participation in European affairs. I found that feeling strong in many places. A typical example may be cited. One day travelling between Chicago and Cleveland, I had some conversation with a business man in the dining-car over our evening meal. He was a typical Westerner, keen, vivid, rather picturesque in diction, and very charming.

"We did our bit while we were in it, but we're glad to get through with it now," he said. "Yes, ma'm, it's over, and we don't want much more talk about it. What we want is to get back to the normal again. The war held up everything, and we've got to get busy now over our own domestic problems."

"But you can still spare a little time, I hope, for world-problems?"

He shook a quite emphatic head.

"No, ma'm; what has Europe ever done for us?"

"Cradled you," I murmured. "And however hard we try we never get quite away from the pull of the apron string."

"Oh, that's mere sentiment. America for the Americans I say! That's the proper sentiment we want to cultivate now. We need all our strength and time for the development of our own resources, and the settling of our own private affairs."

I leaned across the table and said quietly:

"It sounds all right, my friend, but it just can't be done. You're in it now for all time. You've come out, put your hand to the plough, and you can't turn back. You're a world-power, perhaps destined to be the greatest of the future."

"Oh, that's all right, ma'm; we don't doubt it, but we can become a world-power without getting messed up with European politics."

It was a curious, almost insular, view to which he held with singular tenacity.

"But a world-power has got to deal with world-affairs. It can't exist as a world-power otherwise. Then there's another proposition. Why do you suppose you have escaped the intimate horror of war, slept in peace and safety in your beds, without having your houses bombed and your cities laid waste? And you've lost only comparatively few of your splendid boys! You're not exhausted, your resources have hardly been tapped, and you've got to carry on and shoulder your full share now. We're tired over there, how tired I never knew till I came here and felt the pulse of your strength."

His face was a study, but he took it well.

"You can't keep back the rising tide, friend, nor yet retard the march of destiny. You've got the most glorious and wonderful country in the world. You've got to live up to it, and not be a race of pigmies."

"I ain't got your tongue, ma'm! Have it

your own way! What I want is some immediate improvement in this railroad and better food on my plate at this moment —"

We parted quite good friends, but I wondered often whether my blunt travelling acquaintance represented any considerable body of American opinion. I never heard any woman voice such sentiments. That is easily understood, however, because women have more imagination and considerably more vision than men.

I left the country with an extraordinary sense of exhilaration tempered by anxiety. The spirit of youth, everywhere the dominant note, gave to a spirit worn with the stress of life a singular uplift. But youth and abundance and success make a perilous combination which has been known to shipwreck both men and nations. Therefore I pray that America will be guided in her counsels, her policy, and her destiny.

That it will be a very great destiny, it needs no particular vision to discern. She is

in a larger sense than she has yet grasped, the hope of the world. She needs all the wisdom, brains, and consecration of her finest sons and daughters.

Never, even during the solemn stress of war, was the clarion call to service more insistent. May she hear to her uttermost borders, hear and obey! Thus and thus only, can she rise to the far heights, above and beyond the cherished dreams of those to whom she is most dear.

THE END

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