A
Little House
in War-time
Agnes and
Egerton
Castle

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A LITTLE HOUSE IN WAR TIME

TO THE

REV. ST. GEORGE K. HYLAND, D.D.

"Guide, philosopher, and friend"

September, 1915

The Little House

A LITTLE HOUSE IN WAR TIME

BY

AGNES AND EGERTON CASTLE

AUTHORS OF

"THE STAR-DREAMER," "INCOMPARABLE BELLAIRS,'
"OUR SENTIMENTAL GARDEN," ETC.

"God gave all men all earth to love,
But, since our hearts are small,
Ordained for each one spot should prove
Beloved over all;
That, as He watched Creation's birth,
So we, in God-like mood,
May of our love create our earth
And see that it is good."

RUDYARD KIPLING

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A FOREWORD

"... thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven."
RUPERT BROOKE.

A LITTLE chronicle of a great time may have an interest of its own quite incommensurate from its intrinsic worth. These pages do not pretend to any merit beyond faithfulness; but they are the true record of the everyday life of an average family during the first year of the war of wars; what we have felt, what we have seen; the great anxieties; the trivial incidents and emotions which have been shared by thousands of our fellow-countrymen. This home has been so far exceptional that it has had few hostages to give to fortune, and that it has mercifully been spared the supreme sacrifice demanded with such tragic universality, and given with such a glorious resignation: but, infinitesimal pulse, it has beaten with the great arteries, the whole mighty heart of the British Empire.

Annals enough there are, and will be, of the

soul-stirring events of 1914: the proud rise of the nation, its struggles, its failures, its appalling blunders, and the super-heroism that has saved the consequences. If Armageddon be not the end of the world; if there be generations coming after to carry the sheaves of that seed sown with blood and tears to-day, there will be no dearth of evidence to enable our children's children to feed upon the story of England's glory. They will be able to read and learn and look back, out of the peace won for them, to examples almost beyond the conception of idealism. Should, by some freak of chance, this humble book survive, it may not then be without an interest of its own.

This was how the quiet stay-at-home family felt and thought in the days of the titanic conflict; these were the little things that happened in a little country house. No great moral lesson certainly, no revelation of out-of-the-way philosophy; just the way we hoped and feared; the way we still laughed and talked, gardened and worked, the way we were led on from day to day and made to find, after all, what seemed unbearable, bearable, brought to see light where there was apparently no issue.

Being, as we say—so far—singularly un-

stricken in the midst of so much mourning, we have been able to enjoy the lighter side of existence, the humours, the quaintnesses, which relieve, blessedly for poor humanity, the most complicated and the most desperate situations. Perhaps, therefore, these random jottings, turned, many of them, to the lighter side of life, may, in some stray hour of relaxation, amuse here and there one actively engaged in the stern actions which the time demands. Perhaps the breath of the garden may be grateful to a mind upon which the wind from the trenches has blown so long.

There is a great deal of laughter about our country, even now. The troops go singing down the roads in the early dawn, and come tramping back to camp, with tired feet, but with joking tongues, after the long days. We know there is much laughter in the fighting-line; innocent, childish pleasantries, catchwords that run with grins from lip to lip. There is no laughter so genuine as that which springs from a good conscience. And so there is laughter in the hospitals also, thank God!

We trust our pages may add a little mirth more to the gallant spirit abroad; beguile the

fancy of one wounded man, or the oppression of one anxious heart. Then, indeed, they will not have been written in vain.

Would only that through them we could convey an impression of the surroundings in which we write; would we could bring our readers the atmosphere of these Surrey heights; of the rolling moorland, of the winds, sweet with heather, aromatic with the pine-woods, charged with the garden scents that blow about us; then truly would they find refreshment! Would we could show them our terraced borders where now the roses are breaking into wonderful bloom, pink, crimson, cream, fire-carmine, and yellow; where the delphiniums are arrayed, noble phalanxes in every shade of enamel blue and purple—spires marshalled together like some fantastic cathedral town, viewed in impossible moonlight, out of a Doré dream; where the canterbury bells are beginning to shake out their cups, tinted like the colours in a child's paint-box; and the campanulas, with their tones of mountain wildness—of snow and blue distance—bring coolness into the hotter tints of the border.

We look down on this July richness from the

small white house with its green blinds, which, though compact, round-windowed, comfortably Georgian, has yet an absurd Italian look.

On the upper terrace wall the ornamental pots, each with its little golden cypress, begin to foam with lobelia and creeping geranium; between two clumps of cypress-trees, Verocchio's little smiling boy grips his fish against a tangle of blush rambler. And that's a bit of Italy for you, even with the ultimate vision of wild moor!

The terraces run down the hill, tier below tier. On the other side of the valley the woods rise between the shouldering heather-clad hills, to the east; the wide, long view spreads to the south-west, where the hills begin to lift again, and distant pine-woods march across the sky.

Would we could but give to mere words the sense of altitude, of great horizons which our high-perched position gives us!

"You're in a kind of eyrie," says one visitor. And another: "Oh, I do like all this sky! It's so seldom one really gets the sky about one."

"You have," said an exile—an old Belgian religious—after tottering solemnly along the terrace walk, "you have here an earthly paradise. A spot God has wonderfully blessed."

A FOREWORD

Besides the startling contrasts and the fairness of its prospect, the little place has a special charm of its own, which is not possible to describe, yet which everyone feels who comes within its precincts. We quite wait for the phrase now, upon the lips of guests under the red-tiled roof: "It's so extraordinarily peaceful."

Peace! Peace in the midst of the boom of the war tocsin, echoing all round! Peace, in spite of the newspapers, the letters, the rumours, the perpetual coming and going of troops, the distant reverberations of gun practice, the never-relaxing grip of apprehension! Yes, in spite of all the world being at war—there is peace in the Villino.

Some of us believe it wells out from a little chamber, where, before the golden shrine, the Donatello angels hold up never-extinguished lamps. Or a visitor may say wonderingly: "I think it must be because you're all so united." Or, perhaps, as the old monk had it, there is an emanation from the place itself: so beautiful a spot of God's earth, so high up, so apart between the moor and the valley! Whatever the reason, we wish that some of the peace that lingers here may reach out from these pages, and touch with

serenity any unquiet heart or restless spirit that comes their way.

And since the soldiers we have written about wanted toys, like sick children, their mascot to hug—here comes a procession of our little fur folk walking vividly before your mental eye.

Here is Loki, the first and oldest of the pets. Loki, growing grey about the muzzle, elderly already by reason of his six years of life; with his immense coat, tawny, tufted, plumed, fringed; with his consequential gait; his "quangley" ways: so easily offended, in his own strong sense of dignity; with his over-loving heart; his half-human, half-lion eyes; Loki, with his clockwork regularity of habit; his disdainful oblivion, except on certain rare occasions, of the smaller fur fry; Loki, making windmill paws to the Master of the Villino, till he has succeeded in dragging him away from his pipe and his arm-chair for a walk on the moors; or yet frantically and mutely imploring the mystified visitor to go away and cease from boring him.

And here is Mimosa, the most Chinese of little ladies, hued like a ripe chestnut, with dark orbs so immense and protuberant as almost to seem to justify the legend that Pekinese will

drop their eyes about if you don't take care. Very sleek and sinuous and small is she, a creature of moods and freaks, fastidious to the point of never accepting a meal with the other dogs; with all kinds of tricksy, pretty ways of play, shrilly barking and dancing for bread pills, which she will fling in the air and catch again, throw over her shoulder and waltz round to pounce upon, more like a kitten than a little dog.

And the puppy, Loki's own contemned daughter, the colour of a young lion cub—the puppy, with her irrepressible enthusiasms, her unsnubbable demonstrations, her "pretty paws," her coal-black muzzle, her innocent countenance—"Plain Eliza"—whose heart, like her father's, is so much too big and tender and faithful, that happening the other day to see, over the garden hedge, a member of the family in whose house she was born, she rent the air with such shrieks of ecstasy that the whole Villino establishment rushed to the spot, thinking she was being murdered.

Then there is Arabella, the lavrock setter. "Perverse, precise, unseasonable Pamela," cries Mr. B. in Richardson's celebrated novel, when having pursued the virtuous damsel to her last

refuge, she not unnaturally misunderstands the purport of his next advance.

When she does understand she exclaims: "Mr. B. is the noblest of men, he has offered me marriage."

To come back to Arabella. We wish we could find a union of epithets as telling as that of Mr. B. in the exasperation of his conscious rectitude. Inane, inert, inconvenient Arabella, fairly well describes our sentiments towards her. She is a bore and a burden. She feels the heat and goes out and takes mud-baths, and comes in and shakes herself in the drawing-room. She cannot understand why she should not lie in our laps as well as the puppies. She howls mournfully outside the kitchen door unless she is invited in to assist in the cooking. She has destroyed three arm-chair covers in the servants' hall, preferring that resting-place to her basket. "Fond" is the word that might best be used to qualify our feelings towards her. We don't know what to do with her, but we should not like to be without her.

Then there is the black Persian, "Bunny," our kind dead Adam's cat. You will meet him circling round the garden. He will raise his

huge bushy tail when he sees you, and fix his inscrutable amber eyes upon you, questioningly. Then he will pass on with a soundless mew. He is looking for his master, and you can watch him slink away, superb, stealthy, pursuing his fruitless quest.

The fur children come first, being the Villino's own family, but there are other kinds with us now. The little Belgians run about the paths calling to each other with their quaint pattering intonation, so that long before you hear the words you know by the sound of the voices coming up the hill that these are the small exiles. Brown-haired Marthe, with her childish ways and her serious mind, her ripe southern-tinted face, and Philippe, with his shock of fine hair, hazel-colour, cut medieval fashion, and his little throat, which bears his odd picturesque head as a flower-stem its bloom. And sturdy Viviane, stumping up with her solemn air, precisely naming the flowers as she comes :

"Sweet Will-li-yam ! Del-phi-ni-um! Canterry bells !"

Soon Thierry, the schoolboy, will be here-too. The garden is full of Easter holiday memories of him ; a little perspiring boy, squar-

ing a tree-trunk with boxing-gloves five times too large for him, under the grand-paternal tuition of the Master of the Villino. It would have been difficult to say who was the more pleased, child or man. And Thierry can box with a right good will; a very excellent little boy this, with a bursting patriot's heart under his shy, reserved ways. No doubt he fancied he was hitting a German with each of those well-directed blows.

It is nice to have the children about the Villino; and that they are exiles adds pathos to the sound of their happy laughter in our ears, and a tenderness to the pleasure with which our eyes watch their unconscious gaiety.

Perhaps, however, if anyone wanted to have a really poetic impression of our little house, they should see it by moonlight, or—which, of course, nobody does except by accident—in the summer dawn. Whether it is because of an unconscious appreciation of the limits of our own intellect, or whether from some inherent vulgarity, human nature is prone to depreciate all that is laid out very plainly before it. We demand mystery in everything if it is to mean beauty to us.

Some such idea as this Mr. Bernard Shaw expresses—in one of his uncanny leaps of the

spirit out of his own destructive philosophy—when he makes the Christian martyr retort to the Pagan who accuses her of not understanding her God: "He wouldn't be my God if I could!"

To pass from the infinite to the atom: when the Villino garden and its prospects are but imperfectly revealed on a moonlight night the view, with mystery added to its fairness, becomes wonderful in its loveliness.

On such a night as this the valley holds mist in its bosom, and the distant moor ridges in their pine-woods might be the Alps, for the air of distance they assume, the remote dignity with which they withdraw themselves, pale and ethereal, into the serene sky. It may be the moon is rising over the great wooded hill in front of the Villino. The white radiance pours full upon us. We know all that is revealed, and yet all is different. Each familiar object has a strange and transfigured face. The little cypress-trees, rimmed in silver, cast black shadows on the grass, silver-cobwebbed. The great moors are exquisite ghost wildernesses, their hollows full of cloudy secrets. And you can hear the night-jar spinning out its monotonous, mysterious song, a song which does not break the

grand restfulness, but only accompanies it. We have no running streams—there is nothing perfect here below, it is a great want! But the song of the night-jar makes up a little for the voice of water in the night-time. It is the hearing of some such sound, lost in the turmoil of day, that emphasizes the incomparable silence.

Our heights in the sunrise show once again a world transfigured; a sparkling, coloured, other-worldly world.

> "Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
> Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops."

The saffrons and yellows begin to gather over the moors, and the crests of the hills and the tree-tops are tipped with light. Each flower has its shimmering aureole; each has taken a hue never seen in the garish fulness of the sunshine, enamel, stained-glass-window hues, difficult to describe. There is a curious look of life about everything. It is the exquisite hour of the earth, untroubled by man; garden and woods, hill and valley, unfold their secrets to the sky and hold commune with the dawn-angels. There is a freshness, a vividness, almost a surprise about the world, as if all things were made new again. An immense difference in the scene

compared to the night's grave mysteries. The latter is a canto from the Divine Comedy as against Fra Angelico's dance of Paradise. And to this innocent joy of the waking earth you have the songs of the birds. Some ecstatic thrush, or liquid slow-chanting blackbird, will have begun the hymns at the first glimmer of dawn, and hold the world spell-bound till the lesser chorus spreads a tangled web of sound from end to end of the valley and the garden heights, and the moor silence is reached.

Morning after morning of this glorious summer of the war, the pageant of sunrise marches, for those who have eyes to see, and night after night the mystery gathers in the moonlight. All England holds some such fair visions. Does it not seem a dream that it should be so? The horror, the devastation, the noise, the fire, the bloodshed, the agony, the struggle, only a couple of hundred miles away, are they the only realities in this red year? To us in England's heart, still mercifully unwounded, these sometimes seem the dream, the dream of evil, and our peace the reality.

Dream, or reality, it is our peace we want to bring to you.

A LITTLE HOUSE IN WAR TIME

I

THE VILLINO IS PINCHED

"Prepare, prepare the iron helm of war,
Bring forth the lots, cast in the spacious orb ;
The Angel of Fate turns them with mighty hands,
And casts them out upon the darkened earth !
Prepare, prepare !"
W. BLAKE.

THE most usual remark that people make after a visit to our little house on the hill is this: "How peaceful!"

Even in the ordinary course of life—those times that now seem extraordinary to a world already accustomed to the universal struggle—when everyone in England was in peace, except where their own unquiet spirits may have marred it, even then this nest of ours seemed peace within peace. We do not know now whether the contrast is not the more acute. One of the thousands of homes dedicated to the quiet joys and innocencies of life, where no one ever wanted to quarrel, because all found the hours so full of sweet content, we do not

flatter ourselves that we are singular: only typical. The shadow of the great cloud cast at first a hideous, unnatural darkness over our harmless ways.

All during the long golden summer, when we looked out across the moor basking in the radiance; when our roses bloomed and the garden rioted in colour, and the valley slowly turned from green to russet; when the harvest-moon went up like a huge brass platter in silver skies, the very beauty of it all clutched one's heart the fiercer. How fares it with our boys over there in the heat and the stress? How much worse it must be for them that the sun should blaze upon them, marching, firing, rushing forward, lying wounded, wanting water! . . . Oh, dear lads of England, how we at home agonized with you!

The little house, bought in a light-hearted hour, furnished with infinite zest in happy days out of distant Rome, was a sort of toy to us from the beginning; and kind friends surveyed it with indulgent and amused, yet admiring, glances, such as one would bestow upon an ingenious and pretty plaything. We called it the Villino, partly in memory of the

Italian sojourn, and partly because, though it is bounded by wild moors, it contrives a quaintly Italianate air. It stands boldly on the lip of the hill, and the garden runs down in terraces to a deep valley. Across the valley to the east the moors roll, curve upon curve. South, facing us, the trees begin their march; and westward the valley spreads, rising into moors again, where again the fir-trees sentinel the sky. The view from the terrace rather takes your breath away. It is unexpected and odd, and unlike anything, except Italy and Scotland mixed: the wildness, and the trim terraced garden with its calculated groups of cypress, its vases brimming with flowers, its stone steps, its secret bowery corners.

"Mount Ecstasy" an artist friend has dubbed it. "Is it possible," she asked us in the middle of this radiant October of the war, "that the wind ever blows here? Do you ever hear it shrieking round the house?"

We gave her a vivid description of what the wind could do when it liked; when it came up the valley with the rain on its wings. She looked incredulous.

"Is it possible?" she repeated softly

She had come straight from the great camp at Lyndhurst, where the 7th Division, gallant as ill-fated, had gathered in all its lusty strength before embarking for the bloody struggle in Flanders. She had just said good-bye to her eldest son; the call of the bugle, the march of thousands in unison, was in her ears; the vision of the crowded transport vivid in her mind. Yet here she would not believe that even the winds could break our peace.

This was very much what we felt ourselves when the Storm burst; it was incredible with this placidity all about us.

One tries to think what it would be had the Villino sprung to life in Belgian soil, or did the Hun succeed in landing, and come pouring, a noxious tide, across our country roads, taking the poor little place on its way. The first refugee from that heroic and devastated land who found shelter here was very smiling and brave until she came out into the garden. Then she began to cry.

"I had such pretty flowers too."

All our moors are turning into camps; they grew like mushrooms in a day, it seems. We hear the soldiers marching by in the dead of

the night, singing, poor boys! to give themselves heart—such nights, too, as they are this autumn, deluged with rain and blown through with relentless wind! We stand between two hospitals; and Belgian refugees overflow in the villages. We read of the bombardment of the coast and the dropping of bombs, and yet we do not realize. We still feel as in a nightmare from which we must wake up.

Yet the effects of war are beginning to stamp themselves, even in the Villino and in its garden. We are, some of us, naturally inclined to luxuries. The mistress of the Villino is certainly a spendthrift where bulbs and tubers and seeds are concerned; and for three out of the four years since she owned the little property, the spring garden has justified impenitence. Oh! the crocuses running through the grass of that third terrace called the Hemicycle! Oh! the scyllas making miniature skies under the almond-trees! Oh! the tulips swaying jewel chalices over the mists of blue forget-me-not: glories of the past, this coming spring, how shall the garden miss you!

It must be explained that our soil—greensand—our position—high-perched—our general

tendency—sloping down-hill—make us charmingly dry and healthy, but disagree with the bulb. It is impossible to naturalize anything less hardy than the daffodil. The snowdrop declines to live with us. Therefore our autumn bulb lists were copious and varied, and the results ephemeral and lovely. This year there has been no bulb list; who could think of this completely personal and selfish gratification when it is the flower of our manhood that is being mown down out yonder? when all that can be spared must be spared to help! There is so little one can do, and so appallingly much to be done.

And inside, too, we are being pinched; not badly, not cruelly, but just as if the war monster had reached out one of its myriad hands—quite a small and rather weak one—and had hold of us, enough to nip, not to strangle.

It will not surprise any garden owner to learn that this is the year of all others in which Adam, the Villino gardener, had an "accident" with the cuttings, and that therefore those bushes of chrysanthemums, which look so well on our grey and orange landings, have not been forthcoming. Another year it would not

have mattered. We should have gaily replenished the Italian pots from the local nursery, where chrysanthemums are a speciality. But as it is—we go without.

In a hundred other items the nipping fingers produce the same paralyzing result. The footman, who, we regret to say, gibbered at the thought of enlisting, and avowed to a horrified kitchen circle that he might perhaps be able to help to carry a wounded man, but face a bullet—"Never, never!"—found his post untenable in a household chiefly composed of the fair and patriotic sex. We conceived that the times demanded of us to bring the garden-boy into the house, thus reducing our establishment without inflicting hardship.

Such, however, was not the opinion of Juvenal, our eccentric butler. This strange being, from certain aspects of his character, might have been, as the Italian prelate said of a distinguished Jesuit preacher, "born in a volcano." He is devoted to the dogs, and has a genius for settling flowers; and he has become altogether so much a part of the establishment—the *famiglia*—that the Villino would lose half its charm without him. Nevertheless, he

is volcanic! And though at first he took the substitution of four-foot in buttons for six-foot in livery with an angelic resignation, Vesuvius broke forth with unparalleled vigour and frequency after a couple of weeks of the regimen. Unfortunately, Juvenal is not sustained by patriotic ardour. He deliberately avoids afflicting himself with thoughts about the war. "I never could bear, miss, to see anything that was hurt! And as for anything dying, miss, even if it was only a little animal—why, there, I couldn't as much as look at my poor old father!" Here is his point of view as expressed tersely to the Signorina of the Villino.

This being the case, he succeeds so thoroughly in blocking his mind against all facts connected with war time (except the entertaining of "a nice young fellow from the camp") that he has found himself injured to the core by our attempts at economy. And when it came to our unexpectedly inviting a refugee lady into his dining-room, and his having to lay three extra places for her and her children, the lava overflowed into the upper regions. We with difficulty extricated "Miss Marie" from the burning flood.

We are all slightly overwrought these days, and instead of pretending not to notice, which is the only possible way where Juvenal is concerned, we suggested that he should look for another situation. It would be difficult to say whether outraged feeling or amazement predominated in him. Of course, we all deeply repented our hasty action, and then ensued four uncomfortable weeks of cross purposes in which neither side would "give in." Finally the poor volcano departed in floods of tears, with twenty-four bird-cages and a Highland terrier.

"Don't you take on, Mr. Juvenal," said Mrs. MacComfort, the cook; "you'll be back in no time!"

There ensued a dreadful interlude with an anæmic young butler unfit for military service, who promptly developed toothache and a bilious attack, and whom all the servants regarded as a spy for the convincing reasons that he sat and rolled his eyes and said nothing.

He was, however, non-volcanic, and placidly accepted Jimmy, the promoted garden-boy. This was not reciprocal, for Jimmy, who displayed a degree of conscientiousness, peculiar

indeed in the light of after-events, could not reconcile himself to the change.

He would canter heavily, smothered to the chin in six-foot's pantry apron, into the drawing-room to announce with a burst of tears to the young housekeeper:

"Please, miss, 'e won't suit! 'E won't do nuthin' I tell him! Oh, please, miss, he's putting the cups—the mistress's own cup—in the wrong cupboard, and"—with a howl—"he ain't washed it, miss! And when I tell him, 'e says it doesn't matter!"

We didn't think he would suit, ourselves. We had all said so often that Juvenal was perfectly dreadful, and couldn't be endured another minute, and every member of the *famiglia* had so frequently declared with tears that if Mr. Juvenal remained she could not possibly stay; she had borne it as long as she could, not to make unpleasantness, but——

We were unanimous now in regrets.

"God be with poor Juvenal!" said Mrs. MacComfort, the dear, soft-spoken Irish cook; and added darkly: She wouldn't like to be saying what she thought of the new butler.

However, *à quelque chose malheur est bon*, for

had the following incident taken place under Juvenal's dog-loving eye, as Juvenal himself subsequently remarked, there would certainly have been murder done. We ourselves had been inclined to consider Jimmy an agreeable member of the domestic circle. Nobody minded telling him to take out the dogs, no matter how bad the weather was, and Jimmy always responded with that smile of cheerful alacrity that so endeared him.

The tale which is here narrated may seem irrelevant to the share which the Villino has had to take in the universal and terrible cataclysm, but nevertheless the incidents therein set forth directly issued from it; and, in spite of a dash of comedy, they were tragic enough for those chiefly concerned, namely, the youngest "fur-child" and Jimmy himself. If we had not taken Jimmy into the house, Jimmy would not have been told to walk the dogs; and if Jimmy had not walked the dogs, the singular drama of the phantom dog-stealers and the baby Pekinese would never have occurred.

There were then three fur-children: Arabella, the Lavroch setter—lovely, dull, early Victorian, worthy creature; Loki, the beloved, chief of all

the little dumb family, first in our affections—a quaint, saturnine, very Chinese little gentleman, with crusty and disconcerting ways, and almost a human heart; and Mimi, the heroine of this adventure—Mimosa on solemn occasions—really a beauty, with all the engaging Pekinese oddities and that individuality of character which each one seems to possess; spoilt, imperious, vivid!

It was a very wet day, and Jimmy had been ordered to don his master's mackintosh cape and take the fur-children up the moor. The first peculiar incident was that Mimi ran three times headlong from his guardianship. As fast as she was coaxed down one stairs she was up the other, with her tail between her legs. It might have made us pause, but it didn't. We said: "Poor Mimi doesn't like getting her feet wet." Anyone who had heard the boy cooing to his charges in tones of the most dulcet affection would have been as dense as we were.

That evening the dark adventure took place. Jimmy came running into the kitchen, more incredibly mud-encrusted than any living creature outside an alligator is ever likely to be again; and, bursting into loud wails, declared

that he had been set upon by two men and robbed of Mimi.

"Run, run," cried Mrs. MacComfort, "and tell the master!"

Jimmy ran, working himself up as he went, so that it was what our Irish nurse used to call "roaring and bawling" that he rushed into the library and poured out his dreadful news. The master dashed in pursuit of the miscreants, led by the hero, who cantered him uphill a good half-mile. He was followed by the cook and her Cinderella, valiantly brandishing sticks. Having reached the post-office, the chase was given up, and the master of the Villino was returning dejectedly when a yapping behind the hedge that skirted the road was recognized by Mrs. MacComfort as umistakably Mimi's voice.

Mimi was extracted, none the worse for her emotions, but with the remnants of a torn pocket-handkerchief tied round her neck.

Whether it was the abnormal layers of mud on Jimmy's countenance; or the curious fact that, in spite of the horrible treatment which he vowed had been inflicted upon him in a hand-to-hand struggle with two men, under the

mud there was not a scratch upon his ingenious countenance; or whether it was that, although the conflict was supposed to have taken place within our own courtyard, no sound reached anyone in the house—there and then Jimmy's master came to this conclusion: "I believe he's made it all up." But he didn't say so. The boy was only cross-examined.

"Why didn't you shout?" asked Mrs. MacComfort.

"I couldn't. They stuffed something soft into my throat—a handkerchief, I think it was."

"Where did you get all that mud?" asked the gardener next morning. "You never picked that up in here. You couldn't, not if you'd scraped the ground."

It was then that Jimmy discovered that the assault had taken place outside the gates.

Jimmy's mistress questioned him next, and she instantly saw that he was lying. To point the moral and adorn the tale she sent for the policeman.

"Why didn't you 'oller?" said the policeman.

Jimmy's knees shook together.

"I couldn't 'oller," he maintained doggedly. "They'd stuffed something down me throat."

"Oh, indeed!" said the policeman. "Maybe it was this 'ankercher, was it?"

He produced a dreadful rag that had been picked up on the road. It fitted neatly with the other rag that had been round Mimi's neck: awful *pièces de conviction!*

"I say it's your ankercher. Don't go for to deny it. I say it's your ankercher; I 'appen to know it's your ankercher. I say you did it all yerself!"

When a six-foot, black-moustached policeman, with boring eye, rolls out such an accusation in tremendous crescendo, what can a little criminal do but collapse? Jimmy collapsed. It was his ankercher. He 'ad done it. There never 'ad been no men. He never 'ad been knocked down. He 'ad rolled in the mud on purpose, in the ditch where it was thickest. He 'ad tried to 'urt Mimi.

"Why?—why?—why?"

Even our local Sherlock Holmes couldn't extract anything like a plausible reason. Loki's mistress had to piece one together for herself.

Jimmy hadn't liked taking the dogs out on a wet day. He had therefore planned to strangle Mimi and throw her over the hedge, believing

that if he showed himself unable to protect the dogs he would not be sent out with them any more.

The two immediate results of this event, extraordinary indeed in the annals of the Villino, where a St. Francis-like love of our little fur and feather brothers and sisters dominates, was the prompt restoration of Jimmy to the arms of Mrs. Mutton, his washer-woman mamma, and the summoning of Juvenal to the telephone. He was staying with his brother, a postmaster. We communicated the awful attempt. Juvenal averred, on the other side of the wire, that you could have knocked him down with a feather. Having thus re-established communications, we wrote, and, tactfully cloaking our own undignified yearnings with the innocence of the fur-children, we told him that the dogs missed him very much. He was swift to seize the "paw of friendship," and, following our artful lead, responded by return of post that Betty had been "that fretted," he did not know what to do with her —"*wine* she did from morning till night!"

It was obvious that anyone with a grain of decent feeling must instantly remedy such a

state of affairs. Juvenal returned with the twenty-four bird-cages and Betty the terrier.

We have compounded with an assistant parlourmaid; it is by no means an economy, but four-foot in buttons is in such demand that Jimmy is irreplaceable.

After all, so little has that war-pinch nipped us, that, if it was not to laugh at them, one would be ashamed to set these infinitesimal bruises down at all. And, thank God! now one can laugh a little again; the days are gone by when it seemed as if every small natural joy had been squeezed out of life, that existence itself was one long nightmare of apprehension.

We do not yet know what the future may have in store for us; but, pray heaven, those mornings may never dawn again when one could scarcely open the paper for the beating of one's heart.

It is not, we hope, that we are accustomed to agony, though no doubt there is something of habit that takes the edge off suspense and grief. We are also better prepared; we have got, as it were, into our second wind, and we are, after our English fashion, perhaps even a little more determined than we were to start with. When

it all began, with what seemed merely an insensate crime in a half-civilized country, no one would have thought that England, much less our little house, would be affected. Though, indeed, personally, the murder of the Archduchess touched the mistress of the Villino a little more nearly than most, for as children they had played together. It was, and is, a very vivid memory.

She and her sisters had been brought to Brussels for their education, and Sophie was one of the youngest, if not the last, in the nursery of the Austro-Hungarian Legation in that city. The Chotek family used to come to the *parc;* a tribe of quaint, fair-haired children. They wore short black velvet coats and caps, and plaid skirts, rather long. The Signora can see little Sophie before her now; a Botticelli angel, with an aureole of fair curls, silver-gold, standing out all round her small, pale, delicate face; a serious child, with lustrous eyes and immense black lashes, and a fine, curling mouth. She thought her lovely and longed to cuddle her, with the maternal instinct early developed.

"Have you much sister?" said the tiny

Austrian, addressing her English friend upon their introduction with great solemnity.

Who could have thought what a destiny lay before her, and in what a supreme act of self-devotion the soul, already luminous in that frail, exquisite little envelope, was to pass away? We have been told on some excellent authority that she was not popular in her anomalous position, at least in her own class. But her singular romance nevertheless was crowned by so true a married happiness that it can leave one in no doubt that she was worthy of the sacrifice made for her by the Imperial heir. He was—it is no uncharity to mention so well-known a fact—a man of bad life; she was his mother's lady-in-waiting, appointed to that post because of destitution, no longer in the first freshness of her youth, supposed to be a person of small significance—one of those colourless shadows that haunt the chairs of the great. But she captivated the most important Prince in her country, barring the Emperor; and, what is more, her spell never lost its power. To that last breath, which, greatly favoured in their awful tragedy, they drew together, they adored each other. She

made of him a model husband, a model father, a man of rectitude and earnestness. They had children, and these were all their joy. It was one of the reproaches cast upon her by the indignant royalties of the Vienna Court that the Duchess of Hohenberg was so economical she would go down to her kitchen and see the things given out. If she wanted to save money, it was for those children, cut off from their natural inheritance by the cast-iron laws that debarred their mother from a share in her husband's rank.

An invited guest at the wedding of the present young hereditary Archduke to the Princess Zita has given us a description of an incident which well illustrates the treatment which the non-royal wife of the Heir Apparent received at the hands of her royal relatives. When the Duchess of Hohenberg entered, her long, narrow train caught in some projecting obstacle as she swept up the little chapel. The place was full of Archdukes and Archduchesses, in their wedding attire. Not one of these high-born beings budged. Each looked straight at the altar, absorbed in pious prayer. The ostracized lady had to disengage herself as best she could,

and advance, blushing hotly, to her appointed place, unescorted. A few minutes after a belated Archduchess, entering swiftly, met with the same mishap. Instantly she was surrounted with politely assisting Hoheiten.

The friend to whom we owe the anecdote remarked that it had been "a dreadful moment," and that one could not help feeling sorry for the poor Duchess. But it is to be remarked that she herself—delightful, cultivated, large-minded creature though she was—had been among the stony ones, and there had even been a glint of pleasure in her eyes under the compassion as she told the story.

Sophie was of those who are hated; but, after all, what did it matter? Was she not loved?

Our daughter's Hungarian godmother—a most fairy and entrancing lady, with all the spirit of her race under the appearance of a French Marquise—like most Magyars, championed the cause of one whom they intended to make their future Queen. She gave us a pretty account of the great pleasure it was to the common people in Vienna to watch their Archduke and his wife at the theatre.

They sat in the royal box, not formally, one at each end, as is the etiquette, but close, so close that everyone knew they were holding each other's hands. They would look into each other's faces with smiles, to share the interest and joy of what they beheld and heard. So the lesser folk were fond of her, though the fine Court circle could not forgive.

When she went to Berlin, the astute William received her with a tremendous parade of honour, which made him very popular with the Archduke, as well as with the multitude that espoused his cause. But it was only a hollow show of recognition after all—a banquet elaborately arranged with little round tables, so as to avoid any question of precedence under the cloak of the most friendly intimacy. Our simpler-minded court had to decline her visit at the Coronation on account of this same difficulty of precedence. Whatever might be done in Austria, this was insulting from England. "But she is of better family than many of your royalties," said a Bohemian magnate to us across the table at a dinner-party, his blue eyes blazing. "She is of very good family. She is"—tapping his capacious

shirt-front with a magnificent gesture—"she is related to me!"

The petty malice of those whose prerogatives had been infringed pursued her to her blood-stained and heroic grave. To the last she was denied all those dignities which appertained to her husband's rank. Her morganatic dust could not be allowed to commingle with that of royalty in the Imperial vault. The two who had loved beyond etiquette were given a huddled and secret midnight funeral; and beside the Archduke's coffin, covered with the insignia of his state, that of his wife was marked only by a pair of white kid gloves and a fan.

Such a pitiful triumph of tyranny over the majestic dead! Horrible juxtaposition of the ineptitude of pomposity and the most royal of consummations! Sophie and her mate must have smiled upon it from their enfranchisement.

Perhaps if the doomed pair had not yielded themselves to those Berlin blandishments their fate might have been less tragic. There are sinister rumours as to whose hand really fired the revolver. We in England to-day may well have come to believe that those whom the

Kaiser most smiles upon are his chosen victims. The laborious grin of the crocodile to the little fishes is nothing to it; but England is rather a big mouthful.

Already one is able to say that any death has been merciful which has spared an Austrian the sight of his country's dissolution. We are glad that our fairy godmother has not lived to have her heart torn between England, her adopted country, and her passionately loved Hungary.

The cloud no bigger than a man's hand in the clear sky—shadow of the mailed fist—we looked at it from over here with that stirring of surface emotions that is scarcely unpleasant! How horrible! we said. How wicked, how cruel! The little bloodstained cloud! it hung in horizons too far off to menace our island shores. We were very sorry for the old Emperor, pursued to the last, it seemed, by the inexplicable, unremitting curse. "I have been spared nothing," he is reported to have said when the news of the Archduke's murder was broken to him. Was he then in his own heart sheltering the deadly spark that was to kindle the whole world? We thought of the playmate of Brussels

days with a romantic regret, and envied her a little. Since one must die, what a good way it was to go with one's only beloved! And then, in the full summer peace, the clouds suddenly massed themselves, darkened, and spread.

"Austrian Ultimatum to Servia! World's Peace Threatened!" so read the newspaper headlines, like the mutter of thunder running from pole to pole. We saw without conviction. It seemed too inconceivable that such a crime could be committed in our century; and the folly of it too manifest in face of the Slav menace. And next came the crack and the lightning glare—hideous illumination over undreamt-of chasms!

Will any of us ever forget that Saturday to Monday? War was declared on Russia; war on France. Luxemburg territory was violated, and rumour raced from one end of England to the other: "We are going to stand aside; the peace party is too strong! . . . We are not bound by deed to France, only by an understanding. England means to let her honour go down on a quibble. . . ."

We had guests in the house—a brother, retired after hard service in the army; a slow-

spoken, gentle-eyed man of law, who hid the fiercest fire of British pugnacity under this deliberately meek exterior. They were both pessimistic, the soldier angrily so in his anxiety. "I'll never lift my head again in England!—I'll never go into a foreign country again! I'd be ashamed!—Upon my word, I'll emigrate!"

And the other gloomily: "From my experience of this Government, it's sure to do the worst possible thing. I haven't the least hope."

In our own hearts we had resolved, with the soldier, that we would give up home and country. Our thoughts turned to Canada.

The relief was proportionate to the hideousness of the doubt. What though the cloud had spread and spread till it reached right across the sky, there was brilliant sunshine over England—the light of honour.

Two ardent young patriots had visited us unexpectedly in their car that Sunday night. They brought small items of consolation. They had been to Portsmouth. It was ready for war. Fixed bayonets gleamed at every corner; the port was closed. Both these youths were full of martial plans. One was hurrying to the

London Scottish, the other northwards to put all affairs in order before joining too. The London Scottish boy obligingly kept us *au courant* of the turn of events by telephone. During the length of Sir Edward Grey's speech perverted extracts reached us and plunged us into ever deeper gloom: "We are only to intervene if French ports are bombarded. . . ."

Then at midnight on Monday the bell rang. "Belgian neutrality had been violated; general mobilization was ordered." It was war. And we slept on the tidings with a strange peace.

Perhaps the universal feeling was most impressively voiced by a Franciscan monk, who said to us later (during the agonizing suspense between Mons and the Marne): "Nothing can be so bad as those days when we did not know what the Government would do. Whatever happens now, nothing can compare to that. Shall I ever forget how we prayed?"

Little Brothers of Peace and Poverty, humble, self-despoiled servants of the rule most rigid in its tenderness, clamouring at the throne of God for a thing of pride, a priceless possession—their country's honour! Paradox can scarcely go further, it would seem. Yet, even before

Mr. Chesterton pointed it out, most of us had long ago accepted the fact that the deeper the truth the more breathless the paradox. Is there an Englishman among us who would lift his voice to-day against the sacred precept : *He that loses his life shall save it?*

II

OUR LITTLE BIT

> " 'J'entends des paroles amies
> Que je ne comprends pas.
> Je me sens loin, bien loin, de la patrie . . .
> D'où vient que ces voix me semblent familières ?'
> 'Mon père, nous sommes en Angleterre.' "
>
> CAMMAERTS.

It is frequently said in letters from the front, by the officer praising his men, or *vice versa:* "A dozen things are being done every day that deserve the Victoria Cross." But if you speak to one of these heroes of their own deeds, you will invariably get the same answer: "I just did my little bit."

How immense a satisfaction it must be to feel you've done your little bit! And how out of it are the stay-at-homes! Yet we also have our part to play—infinitesimal in comparison, but still, we hope, of use—the minute fragment that may be wanted in the fitting together of the great jigsaw puzzle.

Our first little bit at the Villino when we woke to activity after the stunning of the blow, was obviously to house refugees. We wrote to

a friend prominent among the receiving committee, and offered, as a beginning, to undertake twelve peasants out of the thousands of unfortunates flying from the face of the Hun. From that charming but harassed lady we received a grateful acceptance, announcing the arrival of our families that afternoon—hour to be fixed by telegram. We feverishly prepared for their reception. We were ready to shelter five; kind neighbours proposed to take in the other seven. We had a fleet of motor-cars in readiness, and Mrs. MacComfort, our cook, concocted large jars of coffee and other articles of food likely to be relished of the Belgian palate. No telegram arrived; but to make up for it, our telephone rang ceaselessly with anxious inquiries from the assisting neighbours—inquiries which very naturally became rather irate as the hours went by, while we took upon ourselves the apologies of the guilty.

Next day we ventured to address an inquiry to the harassed lady. That was Saturday. On Monday we received a distraught telegram: "Will wire hour of train." It reminded us of the overdriven shop-assistant in the middle of a seething Christmas crowd: "Will attend to

you in a minute, madam." We felt the desire to oblige; but it left us just where we were before.

On Wednesday an unknown Reverend Mother telegraphed from an unknown convent: "Are you prepared to receive two Belgian families five o'clock to-day?"

This message was supplemented by another from an equally unknown Canon of Westminster Cathedral: "Sending twelve Belgians to-day. Please meet four-twenty train."

We had scarcely time to clutch our hair, for it was already past three, when a third despatch reached us, unsigned, from Hammersmith: "Two Belgian ladies seven children arriving this afternoon five-five train. Please attend station."

The question was, were we to expect twelve or thirty-six?

We rang up the devoted neighbours. We increased our preparations for refreshment. We spread out all the excellent cast-off garments collected for the poor destitutes; and we "attended" at the first train.

Before proceeding any further with the narration of our thrilling experiences, we may mention that eighteen Belgians appeared in all,

whom we succeeded in housing after singular developments; the most unexpected people showing a truly Christian charity, while others, ostentatiously devoted to good works, bolted their doors and hearts upon the most frivolous excuse.

A neighbour of ours, in precarious health, with a large family, a son lost in Germany, a son-in-law at the front, and an infant grand-child in the nursery, would, we think, have given every room and bed in her house to the exiles.

"Only, please, do let me have a poor woman with a baby," she said. "I'd love to have something to play with our little Delia."

Another, a widow lady, with a large house and staff of servants to match, and unlimited means, was horrified at the idea of admitting peasants anywhere within her precincts; and as to a small child—"I might be having the visit of a grand-nephew, and he might catch something," she declared down the telephone, in the tone of one who considers her reason beyond dispute.

About five-thirty the Villino opened its portals to its first refugees. The two ladies

with the seven children were fed, and half the party conveyed farther on, we undertaking a mother and three children, under three, and a sprightly little *bonne*. The Villino is a small house, and we had prepared for peasant women. A bachelor's room and a gay, double-bedded attic—it has a paper sprawling with roses and big windows looking across the valley—were what we had permanently destined for the sufferers. Matters were not facilitated by discovering that our guests belonged to what is called in their own land the high-burgherdom; and that they, on their side, had been told to expect in us the keepers of a "family pension."

We do not know whether the unknown Church dignitary, the mysterious Lady Abbess, or the nameless wirer from Hammersmith were responsible for the mistake. We do not think it can have been our high-minded but harassed friend of the Aldwych, as some six weeks later we received a secretarial document from that centre of activity, asking whether it was true that we had offered to receive Belgians, and if so: what number and what class would we prefer to attend to? By that time, we may mention, we had been instrumental in estab-

lishing about sixty of every variety in the environs.

However, we had reason not to regret the misunderstanding which brought Madame Koelen under our roof.

It was " Miss Marie," the Villino's Signorina, who went down to meet her, accompanied by those kindly neighbours. Madame Koelen descended from the railway-carriage in tears.

"Poor young thing," we said, "it is only natural she must be heart-broken—flying from her home with her poor little children !"

The first bombardment of Antwerp had been the signal for a great exodus from that doomed city.

" We were living in cellars, *n'est-ce pas ?* and it was not good for the children, *vous savez*, so my husband said : 'You must go, *vite, vite ;* the last boats are departing.' We had not half an hour to pack up."

It was a piteous enough spectacle. She had a little girl not three, another not two, and a three-months-old baby which she was nursing. We thought of the poor distracted husband and father; and the forlorn struggle on the crowded boat; and the dreadful landing on un-

known soil, herded together as they were, poor creatures! like a huddled flock of sheep; and our hearts bled.

Towards evening, however, when calm settled down again on the astonished Villino, and Madame Koelen, having left her children asleep, was able to enjoy Mrs. MacComfort's choice little dinner, she became confidential to the young daughter of the house. She began by telling us that we must not imagine that because a name had a German sound that her husband's family had the remotest connection with the land of the Bosch. On the contrary, he was of Italian extraction; descended, in fact, from no less a race than the Colonnas! Having thus established her credentials, she embarked on long rambling tales of the flight, copiously interlaced with the name of an Italian gentleman; "a friend of my husband"; a certain Monsieur Mérino.

"When my husband was putting us on the *remorqueur* at Flushing, we saw him standing on the quay, *vous savez*, and then he said, *n'est-ce pas*: 'Ah, Mérino, are you going to England? Then look after my wife!'"

And Monsieur Mérino had been so good,

and Monsieur Mérino had amused the children, and Monsieur Mérino was so anxious to know how they were established, and Monsieur Mérino would probably come down to see for himself, and Monsieur Mérino was so droll!

We are very innocent people, and we accepted Monsieur Mérino in all good faith. We announced ourselves as happy to receive him; we were touched by his solicitude. Madame Koelen had surprisingly cheered, but there was yet a cloud upon her brow.

"Still," she said, "I do not think it was right of my cousin to have accepted to dine alone with Monsieur Mérino, and to have passed the night in London in the same hotel with only her little brother to chaperon her—a child of eight, *n'est-ce pas?*—and she only eighteen, *vous savez*, and expected in Brighton."

We quite concurred. Monsieur Mérino's halo grew slightly paler in our eyes. Monsieur Mérino ought not to have asked her, we said, with great propriety.

Madame Koelen exploded.

"Ah, if you had seen the way she went on with him on the boat! She was all the time trying to have a flirt with him. Poor Monsieur

Mérino! and God knows what *blague* she has told him, for he was never at the station to see us off, and he had promised to be there, *n'est-ce pas?* Oh, I was so angry! *Cette Jeanne*, she prevented him! I cried all the way down in the train."

Certainly she had been crying when we first beheld her; and we who had thought!——

Madame Koelen was a handsome, sturdy creature, who would have made the most splendid model for anyone wishing to depict a *belle laitière.* Short, deep-chested, and broad-hipped, her strong, round neck supported a defiant head with masses of blue-black hair; she had a kind of frank coarse beauty—something the air of a young heifer, only that heifers have soft eyes, and her eyes, bright brown, were hard and opaque; something the air of a curious child, with a wide smile that displayed faultless teeth, and was full of the joy of life; the kind of joy the milkmaid would appreciate! We could quite understand that Monsieur Mérino should find her attractive.

Before the next day had elapsed we began to understand her view of the situation also. Like so many other Belgian women whom we

have known, she had been married practically from the convent, only to pass from one discipline to another. The husband in high-burgherdom, as well as in the more exalted class, likes to pick out his wife on the very threshold of the world, so that he can have the moulding of her unformed nature; so that no possible chance can be afforded her of drawing her own conclusions on any subject. The horizon of the Belgian *nouvelle-mariée* is rigidly bound by her home, and the sole luminary in her sky is her husband. She must bask on his smiles, or not at all. And if the weather be cloudy, she must resign herself and believe that rain is good for the garden of her soul. Presently the lesser luminaries appear in the nursery, and then her cup of happiness is indeed full; the fuller the happier!

"*Il ne me lâche pas d'une semelle!*" said an exasperated little lady to us one day, referring to the devoted companionship of a typical husband.

No wonder, when Monsieur Mérino flashed across the widening horizon of Madame Koelen with comet-like brilliancy, that the poor little woman should be thrilled and dazzled.

When, on the morning after her arrival, the papers announced an intermittent bombardment of Antwerp, she screamed: "Ah, *par exemple*, it is I who am glad not to be there!" without the smallest show of anxiety on the score of the abandoned Koelen. We realized that, to quote again our frank and charming friend: "*Ce n'était pas l'amour de son mari qui l'étouffait!*" And when she next proceeded to hang on to the telephone, and with many cackles and gurgles to hold an animated conversation with the dashing Mérino, we began to hope that that gentleman might not make his appearance at the Villino.

He did, however, next day; and, under pretence of visiting houses, carried away the emancipated Madame Koelen for a prolonged motor drive, leaving the three-months-old baby to scream itself into fits in the attic room upstairs; she was tied into her crib while the little *bonne* promenaded the other two in the garden.

The Villino is a tender-hearted place, and the members of the *famiglia* vied with each other in endeavouring to assuage the agonies of the youngest Miss Koelen, but

nobody could provide the consolation she required.

Madame Koelen and her *cavaliere servente* returned for a late tea, no whit abashed; indeed, extremely pleased with themselves. He had a great deal to say in an assured and airy manner, and she hung on his words with her broad smile and many arch looks from those brilliant opaque red-brown orbs.

Monsieur Mérino was tall, quite good-looking; with a smooth olive face, fair hair, and eyes startlingly blue, in contrast to the darkness of his skin. He gave us a great deal of curious information. Summoned from Antwerp, where he had a vague business, he was on his way to join the Italian colours, but, calling on the Italian Ambassador in London, the latter had given him leave to defer his departure for another ten days. He was, therefore, able to devote his entire attention to the interests of Madame Koelen, which he felt would be most reassuring to her husband.

We rather wondered why the Italian Ambassador to the Court of St. James's should occupy himself with the movements of a casual Italian merchant *en route* from Antwerp; or by

what curious intermingling of international diplomatic arrangements he should be able to give military leave to a reservist; but we were too polite to ask questions.

Monsieur Mérino departed with many bows and scrapes and hand-shakes; and Madame Koelen evidently found that existence by comet light was worth having.

In the course of the evening she was very communicative on the subject of this gentleman, and several anecdotes of his drollery on board ship were imparted to us. She had found out that he was married—that was a funny thing, *n'est-ce pas?* She had always heard of him about Antwerp as a bachelor.

"We thought he was a friend of your hus band's," we faltered.

"Oh, a friend—a coffee-house acquaintance, *tout au plus!* . . .

"It was very droll. It came about this way. He was playing with little Maddy, and I said to him: 'Oh! the good Papa that you will make when you marry.' Judge of my astonishment when he looks at me and says: 'I am married already! Yes,' he said, 'I am married, and my wife lives at Sorrento; I see her once

in six weeks when I make my voyage of business. *J'ai des idées sur le mariage, 'il dit, comme ça.*"

These ideas she next began to develop.

"'I do not think one ought to be bound,' he says. 'Do you not agree with me, Madame, a man ought to be free?' Oh, he was comic!"

"But," we said, "we do not think that is at all nice." The Villino is very moral. Its shocked atmosphere instantly made itself felt on Madame Koelen. Her bright eye became evasive.

"Of course I made him *la leçon* at once. Ah! I very well made him understand I do not approve of these *façons.* My husband teases me; I am so serious, so rigid!"

Before we separated that evening she told us in a disengaged voice that she would spend the next day in London. Monsieur Mérino could not rest, it transpired, knowing her in such dangerous surroundings; so far from a station, in a place so likely, from its isolated inland position, to be the objective of the first German raid. He was, therefore, going to occupy himself about another home for her; and at the same time he would take the opportunity of

conducting her to the Consul, for "it seems," she said, "that I shall have to pay a *grosse amende* if I do not go immediately in person to register myself in London."

"But the baby," we faltered.

"Oh, the baby!"—she flicked the objection from her—"the baby will get on very well with Justine. Justine knows how to manage her."

Justine was the minute *bonne* who had tied the infant into the cot.

Then there was Monsieur Mérino. The more we thought of it, the less we felt that Monsieur Mérino was to be trusted. Luridly our imagination worked; we saw ourselves left with three small Koelens in perpetuity; we pictured that baby screaming itself into convulsions. We thought it quite probable that we might never hear of its Mama again. And poor Papa Koelen, the brave Anversois Garde Civique, dodging bombs in ignorance of the horrible happening!

The Master of the Villino was prevailed upon to speak; in fact, to put his foot down. Next morning he spoke, and crushed the incipient elopement with a firm metaphorical tread.

"Madame, this plan seems to be rash in the

extreme. I cannot permit it to take place from under my roof. I feel, justly or unjustly, a mediocre confidence in Monsieur Mérino. You will, if you please, wire to him that you are prevented from meeting him."

Madame Koelen became very white, and though her opaque eyes flashed fury, she gave in instantly; being a young Belgian wife, she was accustomed to yield to masculine authority.

Again she hung on the telephone. We were too discreet to listen, but radiance returned to her countenance.

After lunch she explained the cause. Next morning she and her whole family would depart. Monsieur Mérino would himself convey them to Brighton.

The mistress of the Villino is occasionally troubled with an inconvenient attack of conscience—sometimes she wonders if it is only the spirit of combativeness. In this instance, however, she felt it her duty to warn Madame Koelen.

It was a brief but thrilling conversation. Madame Koelen, her eldest little daughter on her knee, occasionally burying her handsome countenance in the child's soft hair, was as cool

and determined, as silky and evasive as a lusty young snake. She had a parry for every statement; that she ate up her own words and manifestly lied from beginning to end did not affect her equanimity in the least. It was the Signora who was nonplussed. There is nothing before which the average honest mind remains more helpless than the deliberate liar.

Monsieur Mérino was her husband's oldest friend. He was intimate with her whole family. She herself had known him for years. She was under his charge by her husband's wishes. She had probably been aware of his marriage, but it had merely slipped her memory—not having his wife with him in Antwerp made one forget it. He was perfectly right to invite her young cousin to dine with him, since she had her brother to chaperon her. Certainly the brother was grown up and able to chaperon her! How extraordinary of us to imagine anything different!

"You are young, and you do not know life, my dear," said the Signora at last, succeeding in keeping her temper, though with difficulty.

Madame Koelen bit into Maddy's curls. It

was quite evident she meant to know life. She had got her chance at last, and would not let it escape.

"I do not think," said the unhappy hostess, firing her final shot, "that your husband would approve."

The wife wheeled with a sudden savage movement, not unlike that of a snake about to strike.

"*Ah, voilà qui m'est bien egal!* That is my own affair!"

There was nothing more to be said. We wondered whether the Garde Civique had ever had such a glimpse of the real Geneviève Koelen as had just been revealed to us. Even to us it was startling.

An extraordinary hot afternoon it turned out. The sun was too blazing for us to venture beyond the shadow of the house. We sat on the terrace, and Madame Koelen wandered restlessly up and down, biting at a rose. The master of the Villino suddenly appeared among us, all smiles.

"A telegram for you, Madame. I have just taken it down on the telephone. It is from your husband. He is coming here to-day."

He was very glad; it was the burden of responsibility lifted. Not so, however, Madame Koelen.

"From my husband? How droll!"

She snapped the sheet of paper and walked away, conning it over.

We sat and watched her.

The garden was humming with heat. The close-packed heliotrope beds in the Dutch garden under the library window were sending up gushes of fragrance. In the rose-beds opposite, the roses — "General MacArthur," "Grüss aus Teplitz," "Ulrich Brunner," "Barbarossa" (we hope these friendly aliens will soon be completely degermanized), crimson carmine, velvet scarlet, glorious purple—seemed to be rimmed with gold in the sun-blaze. It was a faultless sky that arched our world, and the moor, already turning from silver amethyst to the ardent copper of the burnt heather, rolled up towards it, like a sleeping giant wrapped in robes of state.

On such a day the inhabitants of the Villino would, in normal times, have found life very well worth living indeed; basking in the sun and just breathing in sweetness, warmth, colour

—aspiring beauty, if this can be called living! But in war time the subconsciousness of calamity is ever present. Inchoate apprehension of bad news from the front is massed at the back of one's soul's horizon, so that one lives, as it were, under the perpetual menace of the storm.

The wonderful summer was being rent, laid waste, somewhere not so very far away; and the sun was shining, even as it was shining on these roses, on blood outpoured—the best blood of England! In the hot Antwerp streets, we pictured to ourselves some tired man going to and fro; the weight of the gun on his shoulder, the weight of his heavy heart in his breast; thinking of his wife and little children, hunted exiles in a strange country, while duty kept him, their natural protector, at his post in the fated city.

To have seen what we read on that young wife's face would have been horrible at any time: it was peculiarly at variance with the peace of the golden afternoon, and the lovely harmony of the garden. But in view of her country's desolation and her husband's share in its splendid and hopeless defence, it was hideous.

We do not even think she had the dignity of a *grande passion* for the fascinating Mérino; it was mere vanity, the greed of a pleasure-loving nature free to indulge itself at last. She was only bent on amusing herself, and the unexpected arrival of her husband interfered with the little plan. Therefore she stood looking at his message with a countenance of ugly wrath.

"*Ah, ça, qu'il est ennuyeux!* . . . What has taken him to follow me like this?"

The thoughts were printed on her face.

"Is it not delightful?" said the guileless master of the Villino, who never can see evil anywhere.

"Ah, yes, indeed," said she; "delightful!"

She could no more put loyalty into her tone than into her features.

"Heaven help Koelen!" thought the Signora, and was heartily sorry for the unknown, but how glad, how indescribably thankful, that the planned expedition had been prevented!

Dramatically soon after his telegram Monsieur Koelen arrived—an exhausted, pathetic creature. He had stood twelve hours in the steamer because it was so packed with exiled

humanity that there was not room to sit down. He had exactly two hours in which to see his wife, having to catch the night boat again from Harwich. He had given his word of honour to return to Antwerp within forty-eight hours.

We did not, of course, witness the meeting, but it was a very, very *piano* Madame Koelen who brought Koelen down to tea; and it was a cold, steely look which his tired eyes fixed upon her between their reddened eyelids. Whether he really came to put his valuables in the bank, whether he was driven by some secret knowledge or suspicion of his wife's character, we shall never know. We naturally refrained from mentioning the name of Monsieur Mérino. The host deemed his responsibility sufficiently met by a single word of advice:

"Madame is very young; we hope you will place her with people you know."

Monsieur Mérino was mentioned, however, by the husband himself. It transpired Madame owed him money. She wished to see him again to pay him.

"I will pay him," said Monsieur Koelen icily; "I will call at his hotel on my way."

Madame's head drooped.

"*Bien, mon chéri*," she murmured, in a faint voice.

In a turn of the hand, as they would have said themselves, her affairs were arranged. She was to go to Eastbourne, under the care of some elderly aunts, Monsieur Koelen presently announced.

We had thought he looked like a hunted hare. He had that expression of mortal agony stamped on his face, which is often seen—more shame for us!—on some poor dumb creature in terror for its life; but he had still enough spirit in him to reduce Madame Koelen to abject submission.

We could see he was oppressed with melancholy: that his heart was bursting over the children. We understood that this parting was perhaps worse for him than those first rushed farewells.

He seemed scarcely to have arrived before he was gone again. The young wife must have had some spark of feeling left—perhaps, after all, under the almost savage desire for a fling she had a stratum of natural affection, common loyalty—for she wept bitterly after his depar-

ture, and, that night, for the first time, came into the little chapel and prayed.

We met the nurse with the children in the garden, just as the father was being driven away: a small, upright creature this, with flax-blue eyes and corn-coloured hair, which she wore in plaits tightly wound round her head. She did not look a day more than sixteen, but she had the self-possession of forty; and possessed resource also, as was demonstrated by her dealings with Baby.

"Monsieur is so sad. Madame is so sad, because of Antwerp, *n'est-ce pas?*" she said to us, and by the sly look in those blue eyes we saw that she was in her mistress's confidence.

It was true that he was sad for Antwerp; if the word "sad" can be used to describe that bleak despair which we have noticed in so many Belgian men who have found shelter in this country.

"It is impossible that Antwerp should hold out," he said to us; "the spies and traitors have done their work too well. The spies are waiting for them inside our walls. They know every nook in every fort, every weak spot better than we do ourselves."

That was mid September, and we put his opinion down to a very natural pessimism. No one knew then of the concrete platform under the gay little villa outside the walls, built by the amiable German family who was so well known and respected at Antwerp; and we have since heard, too, of the shells supplied by Krupp and filled with sand; and the last Krupp guns made of soft iron, which crumpled up after the first shot.

Alas, he was justified in his gloomy prophecy! But we do not think that it was as much the sense of national calamity that overwhelmed him as the acute family anxiety. Yet, honest, good, severe, ugly little man—worth a hundred plausible, handsome, lying scamps such as Mérino—he was a patriot before all else! He would have had a very good excuse, we think, for delaying another twelve hours to place his volatile spouse in safety with the elderly relations at Eastbourne—but he had given his word. Had he arrived at the Villino only to find that she had tripped off to London, with that chance acquaintance of cafés, Monsieur Mérino (to whose care he had in a distraught moment committed her); had he thereafter been assailed

by the most hideous doubts; had he believed, as we did, that she meant to abandon husband and babes at this moment of all others; or had he—scarcely less agonizing surmise!—trembled for her, innocent and lost in London, the prey of a villain, we yet believe that he would have kept his word.

"*J'ai donné ma parole d'honneur!*"

What a horrible, tragic story it might have been, fit for the pen of a Maupassant! We shall never cease to be thankful that it did not happen. That is why we are glad to have received Madame Koelen at the Villino.

Our next refugees came to us quite by accident, and then only for a meal. A home had already been prepared for them in the village, but the excellent Westminster Canon, who seemed to be the channel through which the stream of refugees was pouring to us, announced five, and casually added a sixth at the last minute, with the result that the party were not recognized at the station. The name of the Villino having become unaccountably associated with every refugee that arrives in this part of the world, the Van Heysts landed

en masse at our doors, demanded to have their cab paid, and walked in.

We all happened to be out, and Juvenal, our eccentric butler, acquiesced. Standing on one leg afterwards, he explained that, being aware of our ways, he didn't know, he was sure, but what we might have meant to put them somewhere.

Weary, tragic creatures, we weren't sorry, after all, to speed them on their road! The three fair-haired children were fed with bread-and-butter, and the young mother talked plaintively in broken French, while the old grandfather nodded his head corroboratively. But the father: he was like a creature cast in bronze—would neither eat nor speak. He sat staring, his chin on his hand, absorbed in the contemplation of outrage and disaster.

They were from Malines.

"And then, mademoiselle, it was all on fire, and the cannon were sending great bombs; and we fled as quick as we could, *n'est-ce pas?* I with the littlest one in my arms, and the other two running beside me. For five hours we walked. Yes, mademoiselle, the two little girls, they went the whole way on foot, and that one there

always crying, '*Plus vite, maman! plus vite, maman!*' and pulling at my apron."

The young husband sat staring. Was he for ever beholding his little house in flames, or what other vision of irredeemable misery? He remains inconsolable. Poor fellow! he has heart disease; he thinks he will never see his native land again. And there is yet another little one expected. Alas! alas!

Of quite another calibre are the Van Sonderdoncks; a very lively, cheery family this! There are, of course, a grandpapa, a maiden aunt, a couple of cousins, as well as the bustling materfamilias, the quaint wizened papa, the well-brought-up Jeanne, who can embroider so nicely, and the four little pasty boys with red hair and eyes like black beads. They are comfortably established in a very charming house lent by a benevolent lady, who also feeds them.

On the Signorina's first visit she found Madame Van Sonderdonck in a violent state of excitement. She had received such extraordinary things in the way of provisions "*de cette dame.*" If mademoiselle would permit it,

she would like to show her something—but something—she could not describe it; it was *trop singulier.* "One moment, mademoiselle."

She fled out of the room and returned with—a vegetable marrow!

She was rather disappointed to find that mademoiselle was intimately acquainted with this freak of nature, which she surveyed from every angle with intense suspicion and curiosity. Politeness kept her from expressing her real feelings when she was assured of its excellence cooked with cheese and onion and a little tomato in a flat dish, but her countenance expressed very plainly that she was not going to risk herself or her family.

Having failed to impress with the marrow, she repeated the effect with sago. She had eaten it raw. Naturally, having thus become aware of its real taste, she could not be expected to believe it would be palatable in any guise. Nevertheless, she was indulgent to our eccentricities. If anyone remembers the kind of amused, condescending interest that London society took in the pigmies, when those unfortunate little creatures were on show at parties a few years ago, they can form some

idea of Madame Van Sonderdonck's attitude of mind towards England.

Good humour reigned in the family as we found it.

Though papa Sonderdonck had a bayonet thrust through his neck—he had been in the Garde Civique—and they had already had a battle-royal with the Belgian family who shared the house, they seemed to view the whole situation as a joke. As they had routed their fellow refugees—the latter only spoke Flemish, Madame Van Sonderdonck only French, and an interpreter had to be found to convey mutual abuse—and furthermore obtained in their place the sister-in-law and the two cousins, unaccountably left out of the batch, they had some substantial reasons for satisfaction.

Monsieur and Madame Deens are once more of the heart-rending order. She, a pathetic creature always balanced between tears and smiles, with pale blue eyes under her braided soft brown hair, looks extraordinarily young to be the mother of two strapping children. He is the typical Belgian husband, devoted but grinding.

Our first visit there was painful. Madame Deens was like a bewildered child, and the husband, a stalwart handsome fellow, who had been chief engineer on the railway at Malines, was torn between a very natural indignation at finding himself beggared after years of honest hard work, and bitter anxiety about his wife, who was in the same condition as Madame Van Heyst.

He beckoned us outside the cottage to tell us in a tragic whisper that he had good reason to believe that "all, all the family of my wife," her father, mother, and the invalid sister, had been murdered by the Germans; and their farm burned.

"How can I tell her, and she as she is? It will kill her too! And she keeps asking me and asking me! I shall have to tell her!"

The tears rolled down his cheeks. Yet he was a hard man; it galled him to the quick to be employed as a common labourer and receive only seventeen shillings a week.

They had been given a gardener's house: the most charming, quaint abode. It had an enormous kitchen, with a raftered ceiling, and one long window running the whole length of

the room, opening delightfully on the orchard. The walls were all snowy white. He might have made himself very happy in such surroundings for the months of exile, with the consciousness of friends about him, the knowledge of safety and care for the wife in her coming trial, and the splendid healthy air for the children. But Deens was not satisfied.

"I had just passed my examinations, *n'est-ce pas?* monsieur, madame, and had received my advancement, and we had just got into the little house I had built with my savings. Now it is burnt—burnt to the ground. And these wages, for a man like me, mademoiselle, it is something I cannot bring myself to. *Je ne puis pas m'y faire, savez vous.*"

"But Madame Deens is so well here, and we will look after her," said Mademoiselle.

"Ah, but I could earn more money elsewhere! I might have something to bring back to my own country."

Of course he has had his way. A bustling lady got him into a motor factory, and he dragged his weeping but resistless spouse to a townlet, where they are lodged in one room; where the only person we could think of to interest in

their favour was the old parish priest, who turned out to be queer in his head, but where Deens is in receipt of thirty-two shillings a week. We are sure that what can be saved is being saved for the *retour au pays*, and meanwhile the poor little woman's hour of trouble is approaching, and she must get through it as best she can, unbefriended. We feel anxious.

Before she left, with many tears, she gave the Signorina, who had sympathized with her, the only gift she could contrive out of her destitution. It was the youngest child's little pair of wooden shoes!

III

OUR MINISTERING ANGELS

"Chi poco sa, presto lo dice !"
Wisdom of Nations.

Of course we are not behindhand in our village in the Red Cross movement.

Nearly every woman, whatever her views, fancies herself nowadays in the rôle of ministering angel. It may be doubted whether an existence devoted to the Tango and its concomitants has been a useful preparation for a task which demands the extreme of self-devotion; and we have heard odd little tales of how a whole body of charming and distinguished amateurs rushed into the cellars at the whiz of a shell, abandoning their helpless patients; and how the fair chief of a volunteer ambulance staff fainted at the sight of the first wounded man.

Yet there may be many, even among what is odiously called "the smart set," who only find their true vocation at such a moment as this, when unsuspected qualities, heroic capacities

spring into life at the test. It is not enough to say that times of great calamity sift the good from the bad, the strong from the futile: they give the wasters in every class of life their chance of self-redemption — in numberless instances not in vain. While freely admitting, however, that there may be a good proportion of society women who are drawn to work among the wounded by a genuine desire to help, and have therefore taken care to qualify themselves for the task, who can deny that with others nursing is merely a new form of excitement, the last fashionable craze? It was the same in the South African War. Indeed, the episode of the wounded soldier who put up a little placard with the inscription, "Much too ill to be nursed to-day," has, we see, been revived in connection with the present conflict. It may be taken as the classic expression of Tommy's feelings towards this particular form of attention. We do not suppose, however, that the case of the tender-hearted but unenlightened lady who went about Johannesburg feeding the enteric patients with buns will be allowed to repeat itself at Boulogne or Calais. We well remember reading her

letter to the papers, in which she innocently vaunted her fatal ministrations, inveighing against the monstrous fashion in which "our poor sick soldiers" were being starved. We believe eleven victims of her charity died.

A late distinguished general had a genial little anecdote anent the energies of a batch of fair nurses who landed in Egypt during the last campaign. Happening to go round the hospital one morning shortly after their arrival, he saw one of these enchanting beings, clad in the most coquettish of nursing garbs, bending over a patient.

"Wouldn't it refresh you if I were to sponge your face and hands, my man?" she inquired, in dulcet tones.

The patient, who was pretty bad, rolled a resigned but exhausted glance at her.

"If you like, mum. It's the tenth time it's been done this morning!"

Perhaps, like the war itself, everything is on too tremendous a scale now to permit of such light-hearted playing with the dread sequels of combat. We can no more afford to make a game of nursing than a game of fighting in this world struggle. It is possible that only

such of our *mondaines* as have the necessary knowledge and devotion are permitted to have charge of those precious lives, and that the others confine themselves to post-cards and coffee-stalls, and dashing little raids into the firing-lines with chocolates and socks. We trust it may be so. We confess that what we ourselves beheld of the local amateur Red Cross fills us with some misgiving.

Of course, as has been said, being a very enlightened community, we were not going to be left behind. A special series of lectures was announced almost within a week of the declaration of war. The daughter of the household determined to join.

On her arrival, a little late, at the village hall, she was met by the secretary of the undertaking; a charming and capable young lady, looking, however, at this particular moment distraught to the verge of collapse.

"Oh, *do* you know anything about home nursing? *Do* you think you could teach a little class how to take temperatures? You could easily pick up what you want to learn afterwards, couldn't you? There are such a lot of them, and they're all so, so——" She sub-

stituted "difficult to teach" for the word trembling on her lips. "Nurse Blacker doesn't know which way to turn."

"Oh, I can certainly teach them to take temperatures," said the Signorina. Nurses, like poets, are born, not made; and she is of those who have the instinct how to help. Besides this she has had experience.

She was disappointed, however. She had come to learn, not to teach. It seemed to her, moreover, almost inconceivable that any female who had arrived at years of discretion and was of normal intellect should not be able to take a temperature; but she swallowed her feelings, after the example of the secretary, and went briskly in to begin her task.

She was provided with a jug of warm water, several thermometers, and a row of various women, ranging from the spinster of past sixty to the red-cheeked sixteen-year old daughter of the local vet—who ought to have known how to take a temperature, if it was only a dog's! There were also two fluttering beribboned summer visitors from the neighbouring hotel; these were doing the simple life, with long motor veils and short skirts and a general condescend-

ing enthusiasm towards our wild moorland scenery, which they were fond of qualifying as "too sweet!"

"Perhaps," said the secretary to the Signorina as she hurried away, "you could teach them to take a pulse also. They can practise on each other. It would be *such* a help."

The Signorina felt a little shy. It did seem somewhat presuming for anything so young as she was to be instructing people who were all, with the exception of the vet's daughter, considerably older, and, therefore, obviously considerably richer in experience than herself. It added to her embarrassment that the summer visitors should fix two pairs of rapt eyes upon her with the expression of devotees listening to their favourite preacher.

However, she summoned her wits and her courage, and gave a brief exposition of the mysteries of thermometer and pulse, patiently repeating herself, while the students took copious notes. Certainly there was something touching in this humble ardour for useful knowledge. Then the thrilling moment of practice began.

The spinster first monopolized the instruct-

ress's attention. Her white hairs and her years entitled her to precedence.

"Of course," she remarked, with the air of one whose scientific education has not been altogether neglected, as she balanced her thermometer over the jug, "the water won't really make it go up, will it, no matter how hot it is?"

The Signorina did not think she could have understood.

"I mean," said the maiden lady, waving the little tube, "it's not heat that will ever make the thermometer go up. It's fever, isn't it?"

"But fever is heat," mildly asserted the "home-nurse."

"Oh no, I don't mean *that*," said the spinster loftily. "Of course, I know you're hot with fever; but it's something *in* you, isn't it, that affects the thermometer? It wouldn't go up, even if I put it on the stove, would it?"

"Put it into the jug and try," said the Signorina, who did not believe that language would be much use here.

"Oh, I think," interpolated a summer guest who was much impressed by the spinster's grasp of the situation, "I'd rather try my thermometer on my cousin, please! I think one

would learn better. It would be more like hospital practice, wouldn't it?"

The spinster turned from the jug with alacrity.

"I'm sure you are right," she cried. Then wheeling on her neighbour: "Oh, would you mind?" she pleaded.

The neighbour, a tailor-made lady with a walking-stick, who looked on with a twisted smile—we suspect she was a suffragette, pandering to the weakness of a world distracted from the real business of life—submitted to be made useful. Her smile became accentuated.

"Shouldn't mind if it was a cigarette," she remarked in a deep bass, and thereafter was silent, while the spinster laboriously prepared to take two minutes on her watch.

"Please, dear child," cried one of the motor-veiled ladies in her impassioned tone of interest, "will you explain to me again, what is normal? *I'd better take it out, dear! There's no use doing it wrong, is there?* You said something about a little red line—or is that for fever? How silly I am—red would be for fever, wouldn't it? No? *Red is normal, darling. Oh, I do hope you're normal!* What did you say, ninety-

eight, point four? I never could do arithmetic and I'm so stupid. My husband always says—*doesn't he, Angela?*—'You won't do much adding up, Birdie'—he calls me 'Birdie,'—but I can trust you to subtract all right,' dear, naughty fellow! He loves me to spend, you know, *doesn't he, Angela?* Oh dear, it hasn't moved at all! Is that very bad? *Angela, darling!*"

"But you didn't leave it in two minutes," said the persevering teacher. "Supposing you were to put it in your mouth now, and your cousin were to take you?"

"Will you, Angela?" The summer visitor's eyes became pathetic. "I'm sure I've been feeling quite dreadful with all this anxiety."

"Your temperature," said the spinster triumphantly to the suffragette, "is a hundred and twenty-eight."

The Signorina started.

"But that's quite impossible! Look here, let me show you. It won't mark over a hundred and ten."

For the first time the spinster was flustered.

"Oh, perhaps I read it wrong! Let me look again."

After much fumbling and peering she became apologetic.

"I see I did make a mistake. It's twenty-six."

"Perhaps," said the little lecturer hopelessly, "if I just went over the readings of the thermometer with you all once more——"

But she was interrupted.

"Would you mind"—the harassed secretary seized her by the elbow—"would you mind coming to superintend the bed-making? I've got to take the bandage class, and Nurse Blacker can't really manage more than twenty with the compresses."

The whole room was full of the clapper of excited female tongues. The Signorina was not sorry to leave the jug of warm water and the extraordinary fluctuating temperatures. She was followed by the summer visitors, motor veils and ribbons flying.

As she left, a cheerful, red-faced lady was heard to announce casually, as she dropped the fat wrist of the veterinary's daughter, that there was no use her trying to take that pulse, as the girl hadn't got any.

The clamorous group surrounded the camp-

bed, upon which was stretched a sardonic boy-scout, fully clothed, down to his clumping boots. He was aged about twelve, and assisted in the education of the "lidies" by commenting from time to time on their efforts in hoarse tones of cynicism. After one impulsive neophyte had seemed to be practising tossing him in a blanket, he remarked into space: "Nurses are not suppowsed to move the pytient."

And to another who jerked his heels up: "Down't you forget, miss, I'm a bad caise!"

The Signorina had never been taught how to make beds in the true hospital fashion before, and was painstakingly absorbed in the intricacies of rolling sheets without churning the "bad caise," when she was seized upon by one of the flutterers from the hotel.

"We're going now; it's been *so* interesting, we *have* enjoyed it. I shan't forget all you told me about temperatures. I feel quite able to look after our dear fellows already. Oh! I *must* tell you. You've got such a sympathetic face. I'm sure you will understand. I had a most *wonderful* revelation the other day, in church—in London, you know. I had such an extraordinary feeling—just as if something came

over me—and I thought the church was full of dead soldiers; and a voice seemed to say to me: 'Pray.' I felt quite uplifted. And then in a minute it was all gone. Wasn't it wonderful? That kind of thing makes one feel so *strong*, doesn't it? Oh, I knew you would understand. The last news is *very* disquieting, isn't it? What a darling little fellow!"

The "bad caise" scowled at her horribly; but the sweetness of her smile was quite unimpaired, as she fluttered out of the hall.

"It is very important," said Nurse Blacker to the compress class, "that the nurse should wash her hands before touching the patient's wounds."

"Now, tell me, Sister," interposed a meek voice, "is that precaution for the nurse's sake or for the patient's? I mean, I suppose it's in case the nurse should incur any infection from the wound?"

This point of view—that of the White Queen in "Alice Through the Looking-Glass" —had not apparently struck Nurse Blacker before.

It all seems too ridiculous to be true, but yet the facts are here set down as they actually occurred.

We think there are a good many women about the world of the type of the spinster and her sisters, and we are also convinced that it would be quite impossible to succeed in impressing upon such minds even the most rudimentary notions of nursing; yet it is likely enough they may all have been granted certificates eventually. Professionals are dreadfully bored in dealing with amateurs, and are often glad to take the shortest road to deliverance.

We were once witness, in pre-war days, of the examination of a Red Cross class in the north of England. There was a weary doctor on the platform with a bag of bones; and a retired hospital nurse, very anxious to be on good terms with the delightful family who were the chief organizers of the movement, had charge of the "show."

The doctor gave a brief address upon dislocation. It ran somewhat in this fashion.

"Dislocation is the misplacement of a joint. It is indicated by the symptoms of swelling,

redness, pain, and inability to move the limb. There is no crepitation as in a fracture. As to treatment: my advice to you, ladies, when you meet a case of this kind, is—ahem—to leave it severely alone and to send for a medical man."

The class took copious notes. The doctor dropped the two bones with which he had been demonstrating into the bag again, leant back in his chair and closed his eyes. His part of the transaction was concluded. It had been most illuminating, the ladies agreed, and the Signorina's chauffeur, who has a yearning towards general self-improvement, remarked to her on the way home:

"Ow"—like the boy scout, he has a theatrically cockney accent—"I am glad to know what to do for discollation. I'd never studied that, loike, before."

While the doctor leant back and rested, the hospital nurse examined each student privately on the subject of the previous instructions. The Signorina happened to be quite close to a little old lady with bonnet and strings, and a small, eager, withered, agitated face under bands of frizzled grey hair—the kind of little old lady who is always ready to respond to the

call of duty, and who is in the van of knitters for "our dear, brave soldiers" or "our gallant tars."

"What," said the hospital nurse tenderly, "would you do for a bed-sore?"

The little old lady began to twitter and flutter:

"I would first wash the place with warm water, and—oh, dear me, dear me, I *did* know, I knew quite well a minute ago—with, with something to disinfect."

"It is something to disinfect, quite right," approved the nurse.

"A salt, I think—I'm sure it was. I could get it at the chemist——"

"Certainly," said the nurse, as if she were speaking to a child of two years old, "the chemist would be sure to keep it. It's quite a simple thing. But you would have to know what to ask for, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, dear me, yes. P—p— or did it begin with an I?"

"Perchloride of mercury," said the nurse, smothering a yawn.

"Oh yes," cried the little old lady, delighted, "that's it."

"Well, now you know it, don't you," said the nurse brightly, wrote "Passed" in her notebook, and turned to the next.

"How much liquid nourishment would you give a typhoid patient at a time?"

This to a village girl, who looked blank, not to say terrified, and wrung her hands in her lap.

"I mean," helped the questioner, "if the patient were put on milk—a milk diet, very usual in typhoid cases—how much milk would you give at a time?"

The girl's face lit up.

"Two quarts, miss," she said with alacrity.

"Not at a time, I think," corrected the examiner, quite unruffled. "Two quarts, perhaps, in the twenty-four hours, if you could get the patient to take it—that would be splendid. Typhoid is a very weakening malady. It's a good thing to keep the strength up—if you *can*, you know."

The Signorina heard this optimist make her report a little later to the charming daughter of the charming family, who had herself studied to good purpose, but was too modest to undertake the instructions.

"They've all answered beautifully. Look at my notebook——"

It was "Passed," "Passed," to every name.

"That *is* good," said the gratified organizer. "We *have* done well to-day."

No doubt one occasionally comes across odd specimens even among professionals. Certainly, during a long illness with which the Signora was afflicted a couple of years ago, three of the five nurses who succeeded each other in attendance upon her cannot be said to have lightened the burthen.

The first, sent for at eleven o'clock at night, distinguished herself by instantly upsetting a basin of hot water into the patient's bed. As she repeated the process next night, and greeted the accident with shrieks of laughter, it could scarcely be regarded as the exceptional breach which proves the rule of excellence.

The Signora, who was not supposed to be moved at all, has, fortunately, the sense of humour which helps one along the troublesome way of life, in sickness as in health. She laughed too. The nurse, who was an Irishwoman, immediately thought herself rather a

wag. She was a little, vivacious creature, ugly, but bright-eyed. She was extremely talkative, and perhaps the most callous person the Signora has ever come across. It is our experience that all nurses are talkative. If the patient wants to make life endurable at all, the talk must be guided into the least disagreeable channels.

The Signora's dread is the tale of operations —"of practice in the theatre," which one of the nurses of her youth told her she considered "an agreeable little change."—This particular Dorcas's favourite topic was deathbeds. The patient was quite aware that the supreme experience was a not at all impossible event for herself in the near future, so she had a certain personal interest in the matter. Anyhow, she permitted the discourse.

She heard at full length the narration of Nurse MacDermott's first deathbed in private nursing. It was a horrible anecdote, which might have formed a chapter in a realistic novel. "A gentleman at Wimbledon it was," evidently of the well-to-do merchant class, and he seemed, poor man! to have been the unhappy father of a family as cold-blooded and heartless

as the wife in Tolstoi's painful story of death. But here there was no one to care, not even a poor servant lad—not even the nurse whose vocation it was to help him through the final agony. She arrived at ten o'clock, and at eleven the doctor warned the family that the patient would not pass the night. Thereupon everyone—the wife, two daughters, and a son—retired to bed, and left the dying man in charge of the newly arrived attendant, who sat down to watch, reading a novel. About two o'clock the moribund began to make painful efforts to speak.

"Charlie, Charlie," he kept saying.

"Ah, the poor fellow!" said the little nurse, as she recounted the story, "he had a son who was a scapegrace, it seems, off away somewhere, and he wanted to send him a message. I ran and called the wife out of her bed—what do you think? She'd put her hair in crimpers! Upon my word, she had; they were bristling all round the head of her. Well, I didn't want to have him die on me while I was out of the room, so I rushed back. And he made signs to me. The power of speech was gone from him. He wanted to write. I had a bit of pencil, but

there wasn't a scrap of paper that I could see, so there was nothing I could give him but the fly-leaf of the book I was reading; and ah! the poor fellow, it was only scrawls he could make after all. And sure, he was dead before his wife came in. And she just gave one look at him, and, 'I'm going back to bed,' says she, and back to bed she went. But it was the hair-curlers that did for me. I never can forget them."

She was sitting at the end of the Signora's bed, and doubled herself up with laughter as she spoke. We have no doubt but that she went back to her novel, scrawled with the dying father's last futile effort.

We never knew anyone quite so frankly unmoved by the awful scenes it was her trade to witness. She found vast amusement in the wanderings of delirious patients. Whenever she wanted to cheer the other nurses up, she informed us, in the Home where they dwelt together, she could always make them laugh with little anecdotes from the typhoid ward; and the "wanderings" from the different beds.

She tried to cheer the Signora up on these lines; and the Signora, on wakeful nights, has to force her mind away from the "humorous"

memories. She infinitely preferred the story of Nurse McDermott's love affairs. Like many ugly people, the young woman believed herself irresistible, and paid a great deal of attention to the conservation of her charms. Once, having settled her patient for the night, she reappeared unexpectedly *en robe de chambre.*

"I have just come to tell you how many creams I have put on myself," she cried to the bewildered lady. "I know it will amuse you! There's the pomade for my hair, and Valaze for my face, and the lanoline for my neck. I do hate the mark of the collar—for evening dress, you know—it gives one away so! And there's the salve for my lips, and the cold cream for my hands, and the polish for my nails——"

She went away in a hurry to a bad case at Liphurst, jubilating because we were paying her journey, and she would get it out of the other lady also, and the doctor had offered to send her in his car.

Of quite another type was Nurse Vischet. No one could say that she was unaffected by her patient's symptoms. They had the power of flinging her into frenzy. Capable enough when things were going fairly well with her

charge, the first shadow of a change for the worse produced in her what can only be described as fury. Her face would become convulsed, her eyes would flame, she would knock the furniture about as she moved, and could barely restrain herself from insulting the sufferer.

At first the Signora, who was very ill and weaker than it is possible to describe, could not at all understand these outbursts. "What can have annoyed Nurse?" she would wonder feebly to herself. But presently she understood. It was really a mixed terror of, and repulsion from, the sight of suffering. Why such a woman should have become a nurse, and how she could continue in the service of the sick, feeling as she did, remains a mystery. The key to her extraordinary behaviour was given one day by a little dog, who happened to be seized with a very common or garden fit of choking through the nose; such as affects little dogs with slight colds in their heads. Nurse Vischet started screaming.

"He's all right," said the Signora. "He only wants his nose rubbed. Carry him over to me if you won't do it yourself."

"Ugh!" shrieked Nurse Vischet. "I think it's dying. I wouldn't touch it for the world!"

One of the symptoms of the human patient's illness were agonizing headaches, during which she could scarcely bear a ray of light in the room. In spite of frequent requests, Nurse Vischet always seized the occasion to turn the ceiling electric light full on the bed, and when at last forbidden to do so, she declined to enter a room in which she could not see her way. The Signora gave her the name of her "ministering devil." She was a rabid Socialist, and had peculiar theories, one of which we remember was that condemned criminals should be handed over to the laboratories for vivisection.

She had also to an acute degree the hospital nurse's capacity for upsetting the household Our butler, a hot-tempered man, happened to drop a stray "damn" in the hearing of the under-housemaid, and Vischet, hanging on the landing over the kitchen regions, as she was fond of doing, overheard the dread word. The whole establishment was turned upside down. Maggie was told that she "owed it to her womanhood" not to allow foul language in her presence. Maggie gave notice, but being,

after all, an Irish girl with a sense of humour, was as easily soothed down as she had been worked up. Certainly, however, if we had kept Nurse Vischet, we should have lost, one by one, our excellent staff of servants. Besides playing on their feelings against each other, she had a horrible trick of telling them they were at the last gasp upon the smallest ailment. She did not like her patient to have symptoms; but she encouraged the domestics to fly to her with theirs.

Irish Maggie had an indigestion. Vischet declared her condition to be of extreme gravity. She rushed to the Signora with her tale. Maggie was ordered to bed. Vischet produced an immense tin of antiphlogistine with which to arrest "the mischief."

The daughter of the house went up to visit the sick girl, and came down laughing to console her mother.

"You needn't worry about Maggie," she said, and gave a pleasant little description of the scene and the invalid's remarks.

"Ah, sure I'm all right, miss. It's all along of a bit of green apple. Sure, Mrs. MacComfort has just given me a drop of ginger, and it's

done me a lot of good already. Do you see what Nurse is after bringing me? God bless us all, wouldn't I rather die itself than be spreading that putty on me! I'll be up for tea, miss."

"She looks as rosy as possible," went on the comforter, "and ever so nice with her hair in a great thick plait tied with ribbons, grass green, for Ireland."

Through one recollection Vischet will always remain endeared to the mind of her victim; and that was for her singular pronunciation. There was a story to which the Signora was fond of leading up relating to por-poises, (pronounced to rhyme with noises), and another connected with a tor-toise, which happened to be the pet of a recent "case." There was also a little tale of a dog: "I was out walking on the embankment," said Vischet, "and I saw a man coming along leading two dogs—one was a great bulldog, and the other was one of those queer creatures you call a dashun" (the Signora prides herself on her intelligence for instantly discovering that the narrator meant a dachshund). "And there was running about loose the queerest animal ever I saw," went on the

nurse; "it had the head of a bulldog and the legs of a dashun."

The third nurse was very different. The daughter of an officer, who was seeking the most genteel way to make her living, she frankly handed over the chief of the attendance to the Signora's own devoted maid; which, on the Signora becoming aware of her incapacity, she was on the whole glad that she should do. Nurse Fraser was a tall, handsome girl, who was fond of sitting on the sofa at the foot of the patient's bed, her hands clasped round her knees, staring into space. She was by no means unamiable, but she was bored; and the Signora, who rather liked her, was not averse to screening her deficiencies. When the doctor inquired after the temperature that had never been taken, she herself would declare it had been normal; and she was amused when Nurse Fraser would next vouch for a "splendid breakfast." She not having appeared in her patient's room till noon.

She made no attempt to conceal her complete inefficiency in the treatment of the case.

"Oh, *do* tell me what I'm to do," she had cried on arrival to the district nurse who had

come in as a stopgap. "I'm sure if I ever knew anything about the illness I've quite forgotten."

One day—she, too, was garrulous—she informed her patient that her mother had shares in Kentish Mines. "If ever they work out, we may get a lot of money, and then," she cried, quite unconscious of offence, "no more beastly sick people for me!"

She left us in tears. She had enjoyed herself very much.

It would seem as if our experience had been unfortunate, and yet it is not so; for surely to have known two perfect nurses one after another is sufficient to re-establish the balance. Chief of these, first and dearest, was Nurse Dove. She was the district nurse, called in, as we have said, in a moment of emergency. How Miss Nightingale would have loved her! Blessed little creature, it was enough to restore anybody's heart to see her come into the sick-room, quiet, capable, tender, her eyes shining with compassion for the sufferer and eagerness to relieve. She was as gentle as she was skilful: to anyone who did not know her it would be impossible to convey the extent of the virtue contained in this phrase. The Signora would

have placed herself, or, what means a great deal more, her nearest and dearest, with the completest confidence in her hands alone, in any dangerous illness.

Among the poor she was an apostle. It seemed to have been her fate that, during her brief stay in our village, several young mothers found themselves in mortal extremity. She never lost a life. We think now with longing of what she would have been among the wounded. Alas! we were not destined to keep such perfection with us. It was Cupid, not death, that robbed us of this treasure—if Cupid, indeed, it can be called, the dingy, doubtful imp that took her away from her wonderful work among us. Alas! charming, devoted, exquisite being as she was, she had a very human side. We fear there was a touch of "pike," as the old gardener had it, in the business, but in spite of all our efforts a "coloured gentleman," an invalid to boot, a shifty elderly fellow with an Oriental glibness of tongue, carried her off away with him back to India. She has since written to us describing her palatial abode on the borders of a lake with a horde of servants and a private steam-launch,

but we strongly suspect that if the pen was the pen of Nurse Dove, the words were the words of the coloured gentleman.

The individual was a Baboo, a clerk in the Madras Post Office, and had already been invalided out of the service before he left England. We cannot believe that the pension of an underling in the Indian Civil Service runs to these Rajah-like splendours. Moreover, there was a tragic little postcard, sent to a humble friend, which did not at all correspond with the highflown letter above-mentioned: "The world is a very sad place; we must all be prepared for disappointments."

There is one thing quite certain—wherever she goes she will be doing good.

Curiously enough, the second perfect nurse resembled her in dark pallor of skin, splendour of raven tresses, and thoughtful brilliance of brown eyes; but she was younger and more timid. She will want a few more years of experience and self-reliance before she can develop into a Nurse Dove.

But nevertheless, resembling her in countenance, she had the same deep womanly heart for her patients. Suffering in their sufferings,

she would spare no pains to relieve them. And she had the touch of imaginative genius and the courage to act on her own responsibility which made her presence in a house of sickness a comfort and a strength. In fact, the life was to her a vocation. She nursed to help others, not herself. She had not grown callous through the sight of agonies, only more urgent to be of use.

God send many such to our men in their need to-day!

IV

"CONSIDER THE LILIES"

"For the first time the Lamb shall be dyed red. . . ."
Brother Johannes' Prophecy.

"CONSIDER the lilies, how they grow. . . ."

The sad thing is that with us they decline to grow. When we bought the small, high-perched house and grounds on the Surrey hills there is no doubt that the thought of lilies in those terraced gardens was no unimportant part of the programme. Oddly, the little house had from the first an Italian look, which we have not been slow to cultivate.

Now we were haunted by a picture of an Italian garden: a pergola—vine-covered, it was—with two serried ranks of Madonna lilies growing inside the arches; flagged as to pathway, with probably fragrant tufts of mint and thyme between the stones. In the land of its conception this vision of shadowy green and exquisite white, cool yet shining, as if snow-

fashioned, must have given upon some stretch of quivering, heat-baked country.

Without being able to provide such an antithesis, the garden-plotter — she means the dreadful quip—otherwise the mistress of the English Villino, with a vivid and charming picture in her mind's eye, fondly imaged a very effective outlook upon the great shouldering moors that rise startlingly across the narrow valley at the bottom of her garden. But the lilies refused to grow.

She tried them in border after border. She set clumps of Auratums under the dining-room between the heliotrope and the Nicotianas, which swing such gushes of fragrance into the little house all the hot summer days. She got monster bulbs of Madonnas from the first specialist in the kingdom, and put them singly between the red and white roses against the upper terrace wall. She ran amok upon luscious spotted darlings; Pardelinum and Monadelphum, Polyphyllum and Parryi, and had them placed in a cool, shady walk against a background of delphiniums. She thrust Harrisi under the drawing-room bow; and the glorious scarlet-trumpeted Thunbergianum

where they would flame in the middle distance. They showed many varied forms of disapproval, but were unanimous in declining to remain with us. Some were a little more polite than the others. The great trumpets blew fiercely for one season, almost as with a sound of glorious brass, in their dim nook; and a single exquisite, perfect stem of Krameri rose intact amid a dying sisterhood, and swayed, delicately proud, faintly flushed, a very princess among flowers, one long, golden September fortnight. But such meteors only make our persistent gloom, where lilies are concerned, the more signal.

The pergola had to go the way oi so many cherished dreams. Yet there is an exception. With just an occasional threat of disease, there is one border favoured by the tiger-lily. She is not a very choice creature, of course; she has neither the fragrance nor the mystic grace of her cousins; but such as she is, she is welcome in our midst. On our third terrace there is a stretch of turf, curved outwards like a half-moon, against a new yew hedge: we call it the Hemicycle. In spring it is a jocund pleasaunce for crocus and scylla and flowering

trees—almond, *Pyrus floribunda*, and peach; in summer the weeping standards hold the field, set between the pots of climbing geraniums. That is on the outward curve. A rough wall, overhung with Dorothy Perkins, clothed from the base with Rêve d'Or, runs straightly on the inner side. It is in the border underneath this wall that the tiger-ladies condescend to us.

Last year, by a somewhat accidental development of seeds, we had a marvellous post-impressionist effect along the line, for all the stocks there planted, between the Tigrinum, turned out to be purple and mauve. They grew tall, with immense heads of bloom: drawn up by the wall, we think. Over the orange and violet row the Dorothy Perkins showered masses of vivid pink. A narrow ribbon of bright pale yellow violas ran between the border and the turf. To connect this mass of startling colour, an intermediate regiment of lavender-bushes and the cream hues of the Rêve d'Or roses against their grey-green foliage acted very successfully. It is not a scheme that one would perhaps have tried deliberately, but we could not regret it. It does one good sometimes to steep the senses in such a fine

tangle of elementary colour. The shock is bracing, as of a sea wave; like the march of a military band, we could enjoy it, in the open air and sunshine, just where it was placed; away from the house, with its distant background of fir-trees and moors.

Yet it is a mistake to use the word "post-impressionist" in connection with our border; for that movement, with all its pretended revival of the old pagan spirit of joy, was only an effort to conceal fundamental misery. The tango is no dance of gods and nymphs, but a dreadful merry-go-round of lost souls. The post-impressionist painting is not a flag of radiant defiance—youth challenging the unbelieved gloom of life—but a kind of outbreak as of disease: something spotty, fungoid, shaped like germs under the microscope.

Let us come back to the lilies. Come out of the fever-room into the garden.

We once tried to make a field of lilies. Our lowest garden has a different kind of soil fortunately from the greensand which makes the upper terrace beds such rapacious devourers of manure and fertilizers, and all the other necessary and unfragrant riches. The Signora

took thought with herself and made a kind of nursery plantation at one end of the vegetable garden, to the meek despair of our gardener, who, like all other gardeners, cherishes a cabbage-patch with a passionate preference. She invested in a good three thousand bulbs, among others, hundreds of Candidums. Was it a punishment for her extravagance? Many years of life and experience have taught her that where we sin we are punished, by as inevitable a law as that of cause and effect. Or was it just the cursed spite of those wandering devils who, Indian and Irish folk alike believe, are always hovering ready to pounce upon success? Whether justice or malice, it is immaterial; the result was disaster. They had sent up straight spikes of vivid green, untouched by a trace of the horrible bilious complexion that bespeaks the prevalent disease, when the May frost came and laid them flat and seared.

After all, they would hardly have been much use in that especial spot, as far as garden perspective is concerned; and except for the hall and staircase lilies are not indoor flowers. The Signora loves the warm fragrance to gush

up diffused through the house, but in any room it becomes overwhelming, almost gross. She does not even care for them pictorially at close quarters, meaning here the larger kind, including Candidum. They are essentially open-air flowers; they need the sun and the wind about them, background and space. It seems almost blasphemous to say so, but on the nearer sight their appearance becomes like their scent, a little coarse.

On an altar, once again, they assume their proper proportions; and, carved in stone, they are decorative and satisfying. But the Arum lily, which is not a lily at all, long-stemmed, in a vase, with its own gorgeous leaves about it, is something to sit and gaze at with ever-increasing content!

The nearest thing to a field of lilies the Signora ever saw was a whole gardenful at the back of a little house in Brussels. She was only a child at the time, a weary, bored, depressed small person at that, in the uncongenial surroundings of a detested private school. But one Sunday morning, for some unremembered reason, she was taken after Mass by the second mistress (an ugly, angry

woman, inappropriately baptized Estelle), and brought out of the dust of the scorching street into this, to all appearance trivial, not to say sordid, little house.

"Would Mademoiselle like to look at my garden?" said its owner.

She was old and wizened and yellow-faced; but she had kind eyes, and it was certainly a kindly thought.

The whole of that garden, some forty by twenty feet, was filled with Madonna lilies, growing like grass in a field, with only a narrow path whereby to walk round them.

"Consider the lilies how they grow. . . . Not Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these!"

The child that saw them was too unyeared and ignorant to apply these wonderful words if she had ever heard them. She could not feel her pleasure sharpened by the exquisite sensation of having the vision phrased in language as beautiful as itself. But she has carried away the memory, as sacredly as Wordsworth that of his daffodils—

> "I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
> What wealth the show to me had brought:

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the Daffodils."

Wordsworth, notably among poets, has the gift of expressing the inexpressible, of clothing in language some fleeting sensation which seems, of its exquisiteness and illusiveness, undefinable. There are lines of his that follow one like a phrase of music.

"The sounding cataract haunted me like a passion."

"The light that never was on sea or land."

". . . Old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago."

The first effect of any sight of surpassing beauty, indeed of any strong emotion of admiration, is an instant desire of expression; then comes the pain of inarticulateness to most of us —there is a swelling of the soul and no outlet! That is why, when someone else may have perfectly said what for us is inexpressible, there is a double joy in discoveries.

To wander from our lilies to flowers of speech and description: the perfect phrase has

in itself a delight that almost equals that of the perfect thought.

For those who, like ourselves, work in words, however humbly—poor stone-breakers compared to such as make the marble live—the mere art in the setting of the words themselves has a fascination of its own. It is not only the idea—it is sometimes not even the idea that enchants. There is a magic of cadence alone. Sometimes, indeed, just a conjunction of two words seems to make a chord.

To go further, a single word may ring out like a note upon the mind. The Italian *Amore*, for instance—who can deny that it echoes richly and nobly? It is a sound of gravity and passion mixed. It is like the first vibrating stroke of a master-hand on the 'cello. Did not the resonance of the word itself go as far as the meaning to inspire Jacopone with his ecstatic hymn wherein he plays upon it like a musician upon a note which calls, insists, repeats itself, for ever dominates or haunts the theme?—

> "Amore, amore, che si m'hai ferito
> Altro che amore non posso gridare:
> Amore, amore, teco so unito. . . ."

You could not take the word "love" and ring the changes in this way, not even upon the kindred-sounding *Amour*, losing in its "ou" exactly the tone of solemnity that makes the Italian equivalent so royal.

In a delightful series of musical sketches recently published, the author remarks, speaking of Tschaikowski's "Symphonie Pathétique":

"For those who have the score there is an added joy in the titles, 'Incalzando,' 'feroce,' 'affretando,' 'saltando,' 'con dolcezza e flebile,' 'con tenerezza e devozione'; it makes most interesting reading. But the most splendid title of all is that of the last movement, 'Adagio Lamentoso'—can't you hear it? What a lot our language misses by the clipped and oxytone 'lament'! Even 'lamentation' is a mere shadow beside the full roll of the Latin tongues, the ineffable melody that sounds in 'lamentabile regnum.'"

We do not, however, agree with this pleasant writer on the subject of "clipped and oxytone lament." To us the English word is infinitely keener reaching than any added vowel could make it! "Lamentable" we grant to be pompous and middle Victorian. It is eloquent of

the conventional mourning of the funeral mute, while *lamentoso* has to our ear a horrible wobble like the howl of a lonely dog.

We defy the most poetical and profound scholar to render in any other tongue the *guai* of Dante. Who could give the value of the hopeless cry of sorrow culminating in that line of which *guai* is the central wail!

> "Cosi vid' io venir, traendo guai
> Ombre portate della detta briga."

This is not to insist on the obvious that Italian is a musical language and Dante a star apart. Every language that has served literature will be found to hold its own words of magic. It is not the moment to quote German, but we think *Trauer* tolls across the senses like the passing-bell, while the French *Glas* falls upon the soul with a frozen misery indescribable outside itself.

Those fortunate scholars who have mastered as much of the secrets of Greek as the modern can master, tell us that it is impossible to convey in any other tongue the richness, the value, the wide meaning and exquisite shades of the ancient Greek language. We know that they had words in each of which a whole

picture could be set before the mind. To read Gilbert Murray's fascinating "Ancient Greek Literature" is, however, to find a revelation which severer and more extensive writings fail to convey. A poet, he alone has caught and interpreted the echo of those lyres still ringing across the ages. And he, too, computes his impressions in terms of music. "Many lovers of Pindar," he says, "agree that the things which stay in one's mind, stay not as thoughts but as music."

Of course, the Greeks wedded words and music after a fashion unknown to us, who merely set words to be sung to music in our operas and songs. It is a lost art.

But it seems conceivable that there may be an actual music hidden in language itself, something that the senses of the mind apprehend, quite apart from the idea incorporated. The late Sir Henry Irving, just before his famous production of Macbeth, discussing his intention of introducing music at the moments of crisis, defended this much criticized point by saying: "I mean to do it, because music carries the soul beyond words, even beyond thought."

We are not sure that he was right, except in so

far as the appeal to the gallery was concerned, which, after all, every actor-manager, however artistic and perceptive, is bound to consider first of all. In fact, we are quite certain that he was wrong. The music of Shakespeare should not have been overlaid by any sound of violin or trumpet.

We can conceive no sorrow of muted strings which could intensify the poignancy of Macduff's cry: "All my pretty ones, did you say all?" A cry, too, so spontaneous in its truth and simplicity that, according to a current phrase in the theatrical profession, the part of Macduff acts itself.

Who would want to add more melody to the following

> "That strain again—it had a dying fall:
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing, and giving odour. . . ."

Will anyone deny that there is music in these lines, that the singular impression produced by them is due not only to the perfection of a thought perfectly expressed, to the scent of violets exquisitely and instantly evoked by the cunning of genius, but to the actual words?

The phrase rises and falls. Read or heard, it is the same, a strain of melody.

To one of the writers the two words, "Scarlet Verbena," have always produced the impression as of a trumpet blast. Hoffmann used to say that he never smelt a red carnation without hearing the winding of a horn.

No doubt the senses are indefinably intermixed.

> "Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
> Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,
> O tell me where the senses mix,
> O tell me where the passions meet"—

cries Tennyson to the nightingale.

Nevertheless, must one not believe that there are distinct senses of the soul and mind which are called into action by the spoken or written word? It is trite to say there are moments when one is gripped by the throat by a mere phrase, not, mind you, because of its dramatic force, but rather from some inherent spell of beauty or sorrow. There are others when one seems to lay hold of a set of words; as it were, to be able to touch and feel them as though they had been modelled.

And again, who has not felt an actual pain, as

of a delicate blade being thrust into the heart, by some phrase of scarcely analyzable pathos. Heine had that weapon. The art of it, we suppose, is that of extreme simplicity combined with selection, but the emotion is quite incommensurate with the importance of the theme, the value of the expressed idea.

To use another simile, it is like a wailing air on some primitive instrument, which by its very artlessness pierces to the marrow of the consciousness.

> "Ces doux airs du pays, au doux rythme obsesseur,
> Dont chaque note est comme une petite sœur,"

as Rostand has it.

Think of the effect in "Tristran" of the shepherd's pipe at the beginning of the last act.

It comes to this after all, that however one may study, however perfect the technique of writing, however one may inspire oneself from the springs of genius, it is artlessness, not art, that reaches home. It might be truer to say that it takes a consummate art to touch the right note of artlessness; yet we all know how curiously we can sometimes be affected by the words that fall from childish lips.

A Belgian babe of two, a dimpled, radiant creature, seemingly untouched by the storm which had flung her from her own luxurious nurseries into a bare English lodging, was found, two days after her arrival in exile, kissing and talking to the little crucifix which hung round her neck. Her mother bent to listen.

"Dear Jesus," the child was saying, "poor wounded soldier!"

The profound and mystic consolation of the link between the human agony and the Divine had somehow dawned upon the infant mind, and found this tender expression.

A little boy we knew said to his mother one evening as she tucked him up in his cot:

"Oh, mammie, I die a little every night, I love you so." Here, with an exquisite directness, the inevitable pain of a deep tenderness is laid bare by the lips of innocence.

It is this quality of simplicity and directness—yes, we are not afraid to say it, of innocence—which makes the stories of our soldiers so infinitely touching.

"Tell daddie and mammie," said a dying Irish lad to the comrade who bent over him to take his last message, "'twas against their will I 'listed; tell them I'm not sorry now I did it."

No fine-sounding phrase, no stirring oration, could more piercingly set forth the triumph of the ultimate sacrifice of patriotism. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*

Our men are like children in their gaiety—pleased with little things as a child with a toy; joking, making believe, making a game out of their very danger; unconscious of their own heroism, as the best kind of boy, who risks his neck for a nest; blindly confident in their leaders. If it had not been for this complete trust in what their officers told them, could the retreat from Mons have ended in anything but disaster? Yet we know that—like children—whole regiments burst into tears when ordered to give up the positions they had won.

A war correspondent ends a terrible account of the further withdrawal from Tournai by a description of a night in a barn where scatterers had taken refuge.

"And all night long," he says, "there were

the sobs of a big corporal of artillery, weeping for his horses."

In the throes of the great struggle, this side of humanity—call it the childish, if you will, we have Divine authority for believing that it is akin to the spiritual—asserts itself, nay, becomes paramount. To be more precise, the real man is stripped of his conventions, sophistries, and pretences. Only the things that matter are the things that count.

When the Emperor Frederick was dying, his last message was this: "Let my people return to their faith and simplicity of life."

If he had been spared to his own land, it would be a different world to-day. Under the dreadful test of war the German soldiery as a mass, indeed the whole people, have sunk below the level of the brute. It is the English who have come back to faith and simplicity.

The Rev. W. Forest, Catholic Chaplain of the Expeditionary Force, writes: "It is true to say that the German Kaiser is fighting a community of saints—converted, if you like—but with not a mortal sin scarcely to be found among them." The special correspondent of

the *Sunday Times* has a touching testimony in a recent issue to men of all denominations: "To be at the front," he declares, "is to breathe the air of heroes. The Church of England chaplains, in accordance with the general wish among the men, are giving Early Communion Services. It is a marvellous sight," continues the journalist, "to see the throngs of soldiers kneeling in the dawn, the light on their up-turned faces. They go forth strengthened, ready for anything, feeling that the presence of Christ is amongst them."

With our French Allies, too, the spirit of faith has reawakened. An English officer writes to the *Evening Standard*: "The French soldiers go into the trenches, each with his little medal of Our Lady hung round his neck—they pray aloud in action, not in fear, but with a high courage and a great trust."

"On All Souls' Day," he adds, "I saw the village *curé* come out and bless the graves of our poor lads. The graves, mark, of rough Protestant soldiers, decorated with chrysanthemums by the villagers. These poor dead were blessed, and called the faithful departed, and wept over and prayed for."

"And thine own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

If one may reverently paraphrase Simeon's prophecy to the mother of the Man of Sorrows, can one not say that the soul of the world is pierced to-day, and the thoughts of the nations revealed?

A neutral diplomat, recently arrived in England from Vienna, via Paris, has told us of the singular indifference of the Austrian capital to the tragedy in which her own sons are taking part. "Vienna," he says, "has shown only one moment of emotion, and that was when the little breakfast rolls were condemned. No one cares in Vienna. Life is—how shall I say?—it is all one 'Merry Widow.' It is not that they have any confidence in their own army. They shrug their shoulders and spread out their hands, but in Germany—they have the faith of the hypnotized! Nothing can happen to Germany, therefore Austria is safe."

Recently an order was issued to have the cafés closed at one o'clock in the morning. It was not agreeable to the public, but they have

contrived a substitute for their *petits pains* which is some slight compensation.

"I shall return," he added pensively—"I shall return with how much regret to the indecent carnival that is Vienna!"

His impression of France was very different. He could not sufficiently express his astonishment at the change that had come over the country. The dignity of France, the quiet strength of France, the spiritual confidence of France! In the army was only one apprehension: lest they should not be upheld by the civilians in their determination to fight to the very end. The churches were crowded; men and women have alike returned to the faith of their fathers. There was no unseemly merry-making there, no unworthy attempt in café or theatre to forget the agonizing struggle.

At a recent entertainment in a very poor quarter a pretty girl dressed as France appeared arm-in-arm with an actor got up like a British soldier, and there was immense applause; but when she started the tango with her companion she was hissed off the stage.

As for Paris: "Tenez," said our friend, in conclusion, "I will give you a little instance.

I was walking down the Rue de la Paix, when I heard a woman laugh out loud. Everyone in the street turned round to look at her."

Of the thoughts of Germany what can be said? They need no pointing out. They are written in blood and fire from end to end of Belgium, and in a long stretch of once smiling France; in Servia, carried out by Hungarians and Austrians, under German orders; in Poland. They are written in the German Press for all the world to read: blasphemy, brag, bluster, hysterical hatred, insanity of futile threat, shameless asseveration of self-evident falsehood. "Do nations go mad?" an American paper has asked. Germany presents the appalling spectacle of a nation run to evil. It is not only the war party, the soldiery, the press, the learned professors. It is the very population itself. The soul of Germany is revealing its thoughts.

The lily-garden in the little Brussels by-street on the way to the Bois de la Cambre, if it is still in existence, must have ceased blooming before the Germans entered Brussels.

Otherwise it is not likely that it should have escaped the fury of destruction which seizes them at the sight of anything pure and noble and beautiful.

"Consider the lilies."

We know how the Uhlan officers deliberately rode backwards and forwards over the blooming flower-beds in the great *Place* upon the day of their entrance march.

We know how they stabled their horses in the world-famous conservatories of the Palace of Laecken—a custom they have practised at nearly every château in the country; how in that orgy which will for ever disgrace the name of the Duke of Brunswick the portrait of the young Queen of the Belgians, that royal flower of courage and devotion, was unspeakably insulted.

We know how whole regiments have trampled over straggling children in the village streets —these little flower blossoms, as the Japanese call them.

And those humble lilies of the cloister that have fallen into sacrilegious grasp, we know how they have been considered; how Rheims, with its hawthorn porch, blossoming in stone

flower of all the Christian shrines of all the world, stately lily of the days of faith, has fared at the hand of the German.

"*Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint,*" says the Spirit of Evil in Goethe's "Faust."

It has always seemed a marvellous definition; the negation of good, the spirit that ever denies. But the demon of present-day Germany comes from a deeper pit than Goethe's intellectual mocking devil. It is the spirit that forever destroys.

The struggle has not brutalized but spiritualized our men. Through the appalling conditions in which they fight they reach out to the mystic side of things. When they speak of death they call it "going west." It is the old, old Celtic thought of the Isle beyond the Sunset. They "talk of God a great deal," as the soldiers' letters tell us. The Irish Guards fell on their knees at Compiègne before making their famous attack up the hill. As they charged, "our men crossed the plain, hurrahing and singing, while many of them had a look of absolute joy on their faces." They have their visions. A soldier lying wounded and helpless on the field and gazing agonized on the

breach in our line, saw the Germans rush and then fall back; and beheld St. George standing in his armour in the gap; then heard the Lancastrians cry, as they dashed on: "St. George for England!"

What yet more august revelation did he have, that dying French sergeant, who, looking profoundly upon the surgeon who was ministering to him, replied to his encouragement:

"Mon Major, je suis déjà avec Dieu," and instantly expired.

Every regiment must have its emblem; the minds of the men turn naturally to the symbolic.

"I'd like to look at the colours," said a mortally wounded gunner to his Captain.

"Look at the guns, my man, those are the gunners' colours!"

And the boy was uplifted to look, till his eye glazed.

We do not take the colours into action now, but we know what the Standard means to our Allies. It seems a pity that political revolution should have displaced the ancient lilies of France. There is something so grand in tradition. Dignity of noble ancestry is not confined

to man alone. Houses possess it, and lands, and surely nations. Are not our soldiers to-day the heirs of the yeomen and bowmen of Agincourt?

"O God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts!" is the prayer on the lips of all of us; and we feel through all, even as Harry the King, the same proud confidence in the good blood that cannot lie. Shall not those who stay at home "hold their manhoods cheap, whiles any speaks" of Mons, or Ypres, or—of those glories yet to come?

Thus, in a way, it seems to us that if France fights in her body under the Tricolour, in her soul she is fighting under the Lilies. It is the old France again, the France of the days of faith. In one of Joan of Arc's visions she saw Charlemagne and St. Louis kneeling before the throne, pleading for the land they had loved and served. She who carried the Oriflamme may now form the third in that shining company and look down, perhaps, considering the lilies growing out of the field of blood. Perhaps she may say: "Not Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."

V

DEATH IN THE LITTLE GARDEN

"O Saul, it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee, a man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever! A hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand."

ROBERT BROWNING.

March.—We bought the small place on the Surrey highlands and furnished it out of Rome; and set statues and cypresses and vases overflowing with flowers about the quaint terraces that run down to the valley; and we have a bit of Italy between pine-woods and wild moorland. We have called it the Villino.

The idea started as a week-end cottage. Gradually, however, we came to pay the flying visits to the London house and spend the most of our time in the country. Since the war began we have settled altogether on the span of earth which has become so endeared to us. Never was any home established in such a spirit of lightheartedness.

The new property has been our toy; something to laugh at while we enjoy it. It is absurd and apart and beloved and attractive; and though

the great shadow that rose in August overcast the brightness of the Villino garden and all its prospects, we could yet look out upon the peace and the fairness and take comfort therefrom; turn with relief to the growing things and all the innocent interests that surround and centre in a country life.

It never dawned upon us that the garden itself could become a point of tragedy; that every pushing spike of bulb and every well-pruned rose-tree would have their special pang for our hearts, yet so it is. Never again shall we be able to look with the eyes of pure enjoyment on terrace and border, rose-arch and woodland.

Adam, the kindly gardener of our special plot of earth, has been struck down; hurled, by an inscrutable decree of Providence in the zenith of his activities, from life to death.

He was as much a part of the Villino as we ourselves; a just and kindly man, not yet forty; one of the handsomest of God's creatures, and the most gentle-hearted. We cannot see the meaning of such a blow; we can only bow the head.

"Doesn't it seem hard," cried the daughter of the Villino, "that in these days there should be one unnecessary widow!"

DEATH IN THE LITTLE GARDEN

The last time the Signora saw him alive was about a week before the tragedy. He had come into the funny little Roman drawing-room—all faint gay tints and flamboyant Italian gilt carved wood—carrying a large pot of arum lilies. He scarcely looked like an Englishman with his dark, rich colouring and raven hair prematurely grey; though he was so all-English, of England's best, in his heart and mind.

A little Belgian child, on a visit to us, rushed up to him, chattering incomprehensibly. She is just three and very friendly; something in Adam's appearance must have attracted her, for she left everything she had been playing with to run to him the moment he appeared.

This is how the Signora will always remember him, standing, big and gentle, looking down at the child with those kind, kind eyes.

There was never anyone so good to little animals. We used to say he was a true if unconscious brother of St. Francis, and loved all God's small folk. Never was a sick cat or dog but Adam would have the nursing of it.

One would see him walking about the garden wheeling his barrow, with a great black Persian coiled round his neck like a boa. Nearly two

years ago a little daughter was born to him here, to his great joy. She was always in her father's arms during the free hours of the day; and not the least piteous incident of the tragedy was the way this baby, just beginning to babble a few words, kept calling for "Daddy, daddy," while he lay next door in the tiny sitting-room he had taken such pleasure in, like a marble effigy, smiling, beautiful, awful, for ever deaf to her appeal.

He had been slightly ailing since an attack of influenza; but on the morning of his death he said to his wife that he felt as if he could do the work of six men that day. The kind of cruel light-heartedness which the Scotch call "being fey" was upon him. Like Romeo before the great catastrophe, "his bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne." Strange freaks of presentiment never to be explained on this side of the grave! There are those who feel the shadow of approaching fatality cloud their spirits—we have heard a hundred instances of certain forebodings of death during the present war—but this mysterious gaiety of the doomed is rarer and more awful. Yet Adam must have had his secret sad warnings

too, for his poor wife found, to her astonishment, his insurance cards, his accounts made up to the end of the week on the Thursday of which he died, the ambulance badge he had been so proud of—all laid ready to her hand. He had set his house in order before the summons came. We have every reason to think that in a deeper, graver sense he was equally prepared.

"'Whatever time my Saviour calls me, I shall be ready to go. . . .' Often and often," Mrs. Adam told us, as her tears fell, "he has said those words to me."

Like many another active, hard-working man, the thought of failing health, debility, old age, was abhorrent to him.

"He never could have borne a long illness." Thus the widow tries to console herself—pitiful scraps of self-administered comfort with which poor humanity always attempts to parry the horror of an unmitigated tragedy!

There are strange secrets between the soul and God. Among the many wonders of the City of Light will be the simple solving of the riddles that have been so dark and tormenting to our earthly minds. From the very beginning

of the war this honest Englishman had wanted to go out and serve his country. He was over age. His wife and two children depended on his labours, yet the longing never left him.

"I doubt but I'll have to go yet," was a phrase constantly on his lips.

He had joined the Ambulance Corps and, indeed, was on his way to that errand of mercy when he was stricken. Did he in those inner communes of the soul with God breathe forth his desire to give his life for his country, and was it somehow mystically accomplished? For death smote him and he fell and lay in his blood, as a soldier might. Who knows that the sacrifice was not accepted?

It was terrible for us—it seemed an unbelievable addition to her burthen of sorrow for the woman who loved him—but for him it may have been the glory and the crown.

When all human aid is unavailing, when everything that science can do to assist or relieve has been accomplished and fellow-creatures must stand aside and watch the relentless law of nature accomplish itself, then the value of religion is felt, as perhaps never before, even by the most devout.

Had poor Adam but belonged to the Old Faith the call for the priest would have been more urgent yet than the call for the doctor; we would have had the consolation of hearing the last Absolution pronounced over the unconscious form. The soul would have taken flight from the anointed body, strengthened by the ultimate rites; the child of the Church would have gone forth from the arms of the Church—from the arms of the earthly mother, to the mercy and justice of the heavenly Father.

We did what we could, his own clergyman being away. Never were we more impressed with the value of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. It is all very well to say that we must live so as to be ready to die; that as the tree grows so shall it fall. Here are trite axioms that will not stand a moment before the facts of life and the needs of humanity. They make no account of the mercy of the Creator on one side nor of the weakness of the failing spirit on the other. They forget the penitent thief on the cross, bidden to enter into Paradise upon the merit of a single cry. If the Church of our ancestors watches anxiously over the whole existence of her children; if she

hovers about the cradle, how does she not hang over the deathbed to catch the faintest sigh of repentance; nay, how does she not "prevent" the least effort, pouring forth graces and supplications, anointing, absolving, pursuing the departing spirit beyond the very confines of the world, sublimely audacious, to the throne of God itself!

She has caught the precious soul, for whom the Lord died, before the infant mind was even aware of its own existence. She is not going to be robbed of her treasure at the end, if she can help it.

But our poor, dying Adam was not of this fold, and could have no such aid and sanctification for his passing. Even his afflicted wife quailed from the fruitless agony of witnessing his last moments. "Since I couldn't do anything, ma'am, it's more than I can bear."

She went down to her cottage at the bottom of the garden to prepare a fit resting-place for the body, while in the garage the soul of her dearest accomplished its final and supreme act on earth.

We read the great prayers to ourselves—those wonderful prayers commensurate in

dignity and grandeur to the awful moment. We cried upon the Angels and Archangels, upon the Thrones, the Cherubim and Seraphim; we bade the Patriarchs and the Prophets, the Doctors and Evangelists, the Confessors and Martyrs, the Holy Virgins and all the Saints of God to rush to his assistance. We supplicated that his place this day should be in peace and his abode in Holy Sion; we cast his sins upon the multitudes of the Divine mercies, and strong through the merits of Christ our appeal rose into triumph. With confidence we summoned the noble company of the Angels to meet him, the court of the Apostles to receive him, the army of glorious Martyrs to conduct him, the joyful Confessors to encompass him, the choir of blessed Virgins to go before him. We conjured Christ, his Saviour, to appear to him with a mild and cheerful countenance. And, with this great name upon our lips, we "compassed him about with angels, so that the infernal spirits should tremble and retire into the horrid confusion of eternal night."

All the household, except the very young servants, knelt round him praying silently, since we did not dare obtrude our own tenets

about the deathbed of another faith. The Master stood with his hand on his dying servant's head; and so the end came very peacefully.

A belated curate appeared at the cottage as the daughter of the house went down to tell Mrs. Adam that all was over; but he fled before the sad burthen was carried in.

We had often noticed it before, but never so forcibly, this shying away of some excellent religious people from any contemplation of the immediate experience of the soul after death. Beyond sentences of comfort as stereotyped as they are vague, which place the departed "safe in the arms of Jesus," one would almost believe that the average man had no very vivid sense of the future life at all. How otherwise explain the remarks, so frequently heard, that a sudden death is such a desirable end; that it was "such a comfort so and so didn't know he was going"; how explain the attitude at the sick bed, where the sufferer to the last is deluded with false hopes that he may be spared—what? the knowledge that he is summoned to the house of God, the last opportunity of preparation.

Even when Mrs. Adam's clergyman came to

see her, chief among his consolations was the remark, made in all sincerity: "That's the kind of death I should prefer to die."

Good Adam was ready to go, we know that; but can any man with a true sense of his own soul bring himself to wish to be taken in like manner? It is, after all, to wish for one's self the death one would want for one's dog. Without even belonging to a Church where the last stage is hallowed and made a culminating act of precious resignation and the highest virtue, it seems to us that the instinctive nobility of man should rebel against the craven doctrine that death is a thing to be huddled through, a step to be taken drugged and blindfolded, that the consciousness is to be chloroformed against the anguish of dissolution. It is to rob humanity of its supremest quality—the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, the noble acceptance of our lot, the dignity of the last renunciation.

Browning, the most virile of our poets, cries:

> "I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
> The best and the last!
> I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forebore,
> And bade me creep past.
> No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
> The heroes of old."

Yet this curious evasion of the inevitable is only the natural outcome of a looseness of theology which, while it admits the dogma of right and wrong, of free will and human responsibility, hurls the perfect and the imperfect, the saint and the sinner alike, into the same heaven without an instant's transition. As very few now believe in hell, it is no unfair onɿclusion to draw that the mere fact of death cheem, in the eyes of most people, to qualify ses soul for eternal bliss. It is idle to ask whaf becomes of the generally accepted doctrine fo moral responsibility, why, if all are alike and certain to be saved, anyone should put himselt to the disagreeable task of resisting temptation, much less strive after perfection here below; but failure to provide help for the dying is the direct consequence of the denial of future expiation.

"What man is there among you who, if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone?"

The Viaticum, the bread of life, is denied to the passing soul, and the draught of comfort of devout prayer withheld from the beloved in the fires of expiation; but the tombstone will

be considered with loving thought, and erected over the insensible dust.

The Old Faith shows a profound knowledge of and tenderness for the mere human side in its hour of anguish, even while providing for the paramount needs of the soul. There is one, one only comfort for the bereaved—to be able to help still, and of that they are deprived.

"It isn't as if I could do any good," said poor Mrs. Adam, when she turned away from her husband's deathbed.

She had the power to do such infinite good if she had only known it. What prayer could be so far-reaching as that of the cry of the wife for the chosen one, from whom God alone reserved Himself the right to part her? What act of resignation could be so meritorious as that of her who was making the sacrifice of her all?

"I sent down to tell them to ring the passing-bell," said the widow. She was eager to accomplish every detail of respectful ceremony that had been left to her.

The passing-bell! Touching institution of the ages of belief, the call for prayers for the soul in its last struggle, the summons to friend and stranger, kindly neighbour and stray

passer-by, the cry of the mother for the last alms for her child!

"Oh," exclaimed our daughter that night, reflecting on these things, "my heart burns when I think how the poor have been robbed of their faith!"

And the mighty lesson which the ancient Church taught by her attitude to the dying is that by calmly turning the eyes of the faithful towards the need for preparation, the duty of warning the sick in time, the immeasurable gain of the last Sacraments as compared to the loss of an unfounded earthly hope, she is giving the only possible comfort alike to the living and the dying; she is placing within reach of the mourners just the one factor that makes their grief bearable—the power of being of use.

Mrs. MacComfort, our Irish cook, who is as near a saint herself as one can ever hope to meet, said to us, the tears brimming in her soft eyes: "Oh, doesn't it make us feel ashamed of ourselves when we see what our holy religion is, and how little we live up to it!"

And, indeed, that our poor fellow-countrymen are so good without these helps is at once a wonder and a rebuke to us. Mrs. Adam made

her sacrifice with a most touching submission: "God must know best."

"When they came down and told me there'd been an accident, my hands were in the wash-tub, miss," she told one of us later, "and as I ran up the garden drying them in my apron, I was praying God all the while that he would give me strength to bear what I might have to see."

God never refuses such a prayer as that. Adam was an example. It is astonishing the effect the death of this simple gardener has made in the district, and the testimonies of his worth keep coming in. It shows how wide the influence one good man can exercise in any class of life—

> "The very ashes of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

In a narrower sense we shall ourselves always feel that something of him has gone into the soil of our little garden, for which he worked so faithfully. Some of the fragrance of that humble soul will rise up from the violet beds and hang about the roses.

We have been the more disposed to draw these parallels between the Old Faith and its

substitute because, by a curious coincidence, Adam's was the second death to fling sadness over the Villino.

The first was not a personal loss, like that of a servant in the house. It concerned, indeed, a being whom only one of us had seen. It happened far away in the bloody swamps of the Yser; yet, none the less, the tidings filled the little household with mourning.

Among the many exiles flying to our shores from the horror of the advancing Hun were two young mothers with their children—two charming, delicately nurtured, high-born, high-minded women, whose husbands were, one, an officer in the Belgian army, the other, a volunteer working in the ambulance at Calais. The soldier's wife, the niece of an old friend of ours, a gay, courageous creature, who twice had gone into the line of fire to see her husband, was never tired of speaking to us of "Charley." He seemed in the end to have become almost a familiar among us. We knew by his photographs that he was handsome, and, by the portions of his letters which she read to us, that he was tender and deep-feeling and strong of courage.

Some weeks ago Charley's wife left to live with her sister; her cousin still remained with us. It was the latter who was sent for to the telephone that evening when the shadow of death rolled up suddenly and hung over the little house.

An unforgettable moment when she turned from the instrument, crying in accents that pierced one: "*Charley tué! Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, Charley tué!*"

It was when we afterwards learnt the details of the tragedy, which were piteous in the extreme as far as it affected the wife, that the noble consolations of our religion emerged in all their beauty.

The officer had announced an approaching leave, and the joyful anticipation of his little family was commensurate to the love they bore him. As one instance of that love, let it be noted here that his small son, only six years old, could never hear the name of his absent father without tears.

The wife was alone in the garden, resting from the fatigues of a morning spent in preparing for that visit, when a telegram arrived, badly transcribed, in French. She could at

first only make out her husband's name, her brother's signature, and the words, "Shall be at Calais to-day."

She danced into the house in ecstasy, crying to the children: "Papa is coming; papa and Uncle Robert are coming."

And it was only on the stairs that a second glance at the sheet in her hand revealed the fatal word "*tué*."

A cousin—another young exiled wife and mother—who lived in close proximity, was summoned by the distracted maid, and writes in simple language of the scene of agony: "As soon as I got into the little house," she says, "I heard her dreadful sobs; I ran to her. 'Charley is killed, Charley is killed!' she cried to me. I have never seen anyone in such a state. She was almost in convulsions. I put my arms about her. 'Make your sacrifice; offer it up for the good of his soul,' I said to her. 'No, no! I cannot,' she said. At first she could not, but I held her close, and after a little I said to her: 'Say the words after me: "O my God, I accept your will for the good of his soul."' And once she had said it she did not go back on it. From that moment she was calm."

So calm, indeed, that the unhappy young creature had the strength of mind to go in to her children, terrified at the sound of her weeping, and smilingly reassure them, talk and play with them, till their bedtime. She meant to start that night for Calais, and did not wish her little ones to know of their loss till her return.

All her energies were strained to the single purpose—to see him once again before he was laid to rest. She had her desire. The journey was an odyssey of physical and mental pain, but by sheer determination she won through, and found her brother, who had obtained leave of absence from his regiment to meet her. By him she was conveyed to a little village at the back of the Belgian line, where, in a chapel belonging to a convent, the dead man lay.

It had been his last day in the trenches. The next was to begin his brief holiday. He had been posted in that celebrated Maison du Passeur, among the slimy waters, destined to be the scene of one more tragedy. There was an alarm that certain enemy snipers were lurking about, and a small patrol had been ordered to take stock of them.

"I will not," said the young officer, "allow my men to go into danger without me."

It was not his duty—it was scarcely even advisable—but he took up a soldier's carbine and went forth with it. He was actually taking aim when the sergeant beside him saw him fail and slowly collapse. There was, perhaps, a noise of cannon to confuse the man's senses, for he heard no shot. There was certainly no start or shock apparent. He called out: "*Mon lieutenant, qu'avez vous?*" believing it was a sudden attack of weakness. When he went to his lieutenant he found that he was dead. He had been struck by a bullet under the eye, so well and truly aimed that it had instantly ended the young, vigorous life, as far as this world is concerned. The only mark on his calm face, when his wife saw it, was that small purple spot, where the wound had closed again.

> "'Tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as
> A church-door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve."

We have seen a snapshot taken of him as he lay wrapped in his country's flag. It is a noble, chiselled countenance, looking younger than the thirty-two years of his life, set in a great serenity, with yet that stamp of austere renun-

ciation, of supreme sacrifice, measured and accepted, which we sometimes behold in the face of the dead.

The whole regiment congregated in the little chapel the afternoon of the day which brought the widow to her calvary. The building was decorated with groups of flags, and about the bier were heaped the wreaths of his brother officers, dedicated nearly all in the same words:

"To the comrade fallen on the field of honour,"
"To the comrade who has given his life for his country."

In the midst of a profound silence the Colonel read *L'Ordre du Jour*, which, by King Albert's command, conferred upon the fallen *Guide* the Order of Leopold—for valour—and the bereaved wife was given the decoration to pin over the cold heart that had been so warmly hers. There was a muffled roll of drum, and all present sang the "Brabançonne." So much for the comfort which the world could still give.

Next morning the funeral Mass was said at the altar. The bier lay at the foot of the step, so close that each time the priest turned round to say *Dominus vobiscum*, his hands were uplifted over the dead. And the widow and all

the officers of the regiment kneeling round received Holy Communion for, and in memory of, the slain.

It is not possible—although we know her grief to be as ardent as was her attachment to him—that this widow can mourn as those who have no hope.

The chaplain of the regiment told her that her husband had been to Confession and Holy Communion the morning he had entered into the trenches, three days before. "Have no fear, my child," said the priest, "he made his Confession as he did everything, with all his heart."

Blessed religion, which across the deathbed shows us the heavens opening for the departed soul, and bids the holy angel guard even the grave where rests the body, hallowed for the resurrection!

VI

BABIES: CHINESE AND OTHERS

"In how several ways do we speak to our dogs, and they answer us!"—MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE.

THE war-baby was very dear and downy when we first saw her.

She is the daughter of a Chinaman (an important member of the household), and a neighbouring lady. The Chinaman was, in fact, so important that the usual matrimonial procedure was reversed in his case; and the family of the lady made unabashed and persevering advances for his favour before he could be induced to condescend to the alliance.

Anyone familiar with Oriental calm will not be surprised to learn that the potentate received with imperturbability the announcement that his lady wife was likely to present him with a family. It was, however, perhaps pushing Eastern reserve a little too far to walk away from his infants with every appearance of disgust, and to threaten to bite those officious friends who sought to extract some show of

parental feeling from him by turning him round once more to confront the seething cradle-full.

The cradle was a flat basket, in which the babies maintained a ceaseless movement, crawling one over the other, with a total disregard of such sensitive portions of the anatomy as eyes and noses. They were extraordinarily ill matched as to size—we do not know if this is usual with triplets—looking more like a job lot of Teddy-bears than anything else. There was one as large as the other two put together; there was a very lively medium one; and a very small third, who lay and feebly squirmed under the others vigorous toes. They all had beautiful black noses and little cream-coloured tails tightly curled over their backs. The intelligent reader will by this time have perceived that we are not referring to mere humanity. The war-babies belong to the race of Pekinese, being, in fact, the offspring of the celebrated and priceless Loki, master of the Villino of that name, who fame has already spread far and wide.

His consort was Maud, a chestnut-haired lady, who, we regret to say, had already contracted a *mésalliance* with a highlander, to the

despair of her family. We are convinced that the union is regarded by Loki as a mere matter of politics, but what Western would ever dare to penetrate the barrier of relentless reserve which the Manchu raises between his domestic affairs and the foreign devil? We fear, by his expression and the looks of reproach with which he has since regarded us, that we have already gravely infringed his ideas of decorum by bringing his daughter to dwell in his house.

She is the only daughter of the trio, the two extremes having run to the masculine gender. We chose her on account of her perkiness and her engaging manner of waving her paws in supplication or allurement.

These little dogs have all of them more or less the gift of gesticulation. It is not necessary to teach them either to beg or pray. The puppy—Plain Eliza—will dance half the length of the room on her hind-legs, frantically imploring with her front paws the while, with a persistency and passion that would melt a heart of stone.

The other day, when the butler walked on the paw of Mimosa, the Peky nearest to her in age, who rent the air with her yells, Plain Eliza

instantly rose on her hind-legs and added her lamentations. One can truly say that at the same time she wrung her paws in distress over her playmate's suffering. She has a very feeling heart.

These two adore each other, which is a very good thing, because Mimosa is really a little Tartar. She is the first fur-child to bring discord into the happy family at Villino Loki, and to break the Garden of Eden spell by which cats and dogs of all sizes and tempers dwell together in the most complete amity and sympathy. A small, imperious person of a vivid chestnut hue, with devouring dark eyes and the most approved of snub noses, we flatter ourselves that Mimosa will become a beauty when she gets her full coat. But she will not stand cats, still less a kitten, anywhere within the kitchen premises, and Mrs. MacComfort, the queen of those regions, has actually banished the beloved Kitty and her offspring to the greengrocer's shop in order to pander to Mimosa, who regarded them much as the honest Briton the alien Hun—something darkly suspicious, to be eliminated from the community at all costs. Mimosa, indeed, has taken matters

into her own paws, as the man in the street has done, and Mrs. MacComfort has acted like the Government. Discovering the youngest kitten completely flattened under Mimosa—the latter, her mane bristling, endeavouring to tear off all her victim's fur—it was decided to remove the alien element for its own benefit.

Harmony is now restored to kitchen dominions. The other morning the young lady of the Villino found the two little dogs solemnly seated each side of the hearth, their eyes fixed on an infinitesimal earthenware pan which was simmering on a carefully prepared fire.

"They're just watching me cooking their breakfast, miss," said Mrs. MacComfort in her soft voice. "They're very partial to chicken liver."

It was sizzling appetizingly in its lilliputian dish.

From the moment of Plain Eliza's entrance upon the scene, squirming in a basket, Mimosa showed a profound and affectionate interest in her. We were, if truth be told, a little afraid to trust these demonstrations, fearing they might be of a crocodile nature, but never was suspicion more unjust. The elder puppy has

completely adopted the younger one, and is full of anxiety and distress if she is not in her company. She will come bustling into the room, talking in her Peky way, saying as plainly as ever a little dog did: "Has anyone seen Baby? It's really not safe to let the child go about by herself like that."

When she discovers her, the two small things kiss and embrace; after which Mimosa abdicates her grown-up airs, and romping becomes the order of the day.

The name of Plain Eliza is the one which has stuck most distinctively to the great Mo-Loki's daughter. It seemed appropriate to her, in the opinion of the mistress of the Villino, and arose out of a reminiscence of her Irish youth. There happened to be in Dublin society in those far-back days a young lady of guileless disposition, not too brilliant intellect, and what Americans would call "homely" appearance. Presenting herself at a reception at a house which boasted of a very pompous butler, and having announced her name as Eliza Dunn, he forthwith attempted to qualify her with a title.

"Lady Eliza Dunn?"

"No, no," quoth she. "Plain Eliza."

Rumour would have it that he thereupon announced in stentorian tones: "Plain Eliza."

It is not so much the uncomeliness of the Baby's countenance as the guileless trustfulness with which she turns it upon the world which seems to make the name appropriate. Anyhow, it has come to stay.

The little children that run about Villino Loki these days—war-exiles, most of them—have scarcely crossed the threshold before their voices are uplifted, calling:

"Plain! Plain! Where is Plain Eliza?" And when the favourite is found there is much cooing and fond objurgations of: "Darling Plain! My sweet little Plain! Dear, darling, Plain Eliza!"

She is the only one of the Pekies that can be allowed with perfect safety in the hands of the children. Mimosa is uncertain, and may turn at any moment with a face of fury, her whole body bristling. She is secretly very jealous of the children. And Loki is not uncertain at all. He has never hidden his dislike of them, and his lip begins to curl the instant a small hand is outstretched towards him. But Plain Eliza, if bored, remains patient and

gentle; and however "homely" she may seem to her attached family, she is all beauty and charm in the eyes of their little visitors.

Recently a most attractive child was for ten days, with her charming young mother and baby brother, the guest of the Villino. To console her on departure she was promised another Plain Eliza, should such a one ever be vouchsafed the world. Her mother writes: "She prays and makes me pray for the new Plain Eliza every day, and I think fully expects to see her come shooting down from Heaven."

A very dear child this, with a heart and mind almost too sensitive for her four years. Many delicately pretty sayings are treasured of her. She must have been about three when her first religious instruction was given her. It made a profound impression. For months afterwards she would date her experiences from the day of this enlightenment.

"You know, mammy, that was before Jesus was born to me!"

Her father is at the front. He has not yet seen his little son, the arrival of whom was so much desired. This baby, an out-of-the-

way handsome, healthy child, is a prey to the terrors which it will be yet mercifully many years before he can understand. He cannot bear to be left alone a moment, and wakes from a profound sleep in spasms of unconscious apprehension. Then nothing can soothe him but being clasped very close, the mother's hand upon the little head, pressing it to her cheek. "He is nothing," said the doctor, "to some of the babies I have seen this year." It is not astonishing; but how pathetic! These little creatures, carried so long under an anguished heart, come into the world bearing the print of the universal mystery already stamped on their infant souls.

When will the dawn arise over a world no longer agonized and disrupted? When will the wholesome joys and the natural sorrows resume their preponderance in our existence? Surely every man's own span holds enough of trouble to make him realize that here is not our abiding-place, and long for the security of the heavenly home. Perhaps it was not so. Perhaps we had all fallen away too much from faith and simplicity, and we needed this appalling experience of what humanity can inflict

upon humanity, when Christ and His cross are left out of the reckoning.

"The world has become profoundly corrupt. There will surely come some great scourge. It will be necessary to have a generation brought up by mourning mothers and in a discipline of tears," said a man of God in what seemed words of unbearable severity, a year before the war broke out.

So it may be that we are not only fighting for our children, to deliver them from the intolerable yoke of the Hun, but that we are also suffering for our children, to deliver them from the punishment of our own sins.

We meant to call this chapter "War-babies," only for the newspaper discussion which has made even innocence itself the subject of passionate and unpleasant discussion.

There have been a good many war-babies in the neighbourhood as well as Plain Eliza. The Signorina of the Villino has already acted god-mother several times to infant exiles. These little ones, we thank Heaven, have arrived surprisingly jolly and unimpressed. Yet the poor mothers had, most of them, fled from the

sound of the cannon and the menace of the shells, happy if they saw nothing worse than the flames which were consuming their homes and all that those homes held and meant for them. The Signorina is very particular that the girls should be called Elizabeth and the boys Albert, with due loyalty to a sovereignty truly royal in misfortune.

"Mademoiselle," writes one young woman, "I have the happiness to announce to you that I have the honour to have become the mother of a beautiful little daughter.

She meant what she said—marvellous as it may seem not to regard the event in such circumstances as an added anguish!

We have heard of the birth of a child to a widow of eighteen—a peasant girl in Brussels—who was forced by the invaders not only to watch her father and husband and both brothers struck down under her eyes, but to assist in burying them while they were still breathing.

"It is a very ugly little baby," writes the kind lady who is its godmother, "and the poor mother is very ill. When she gets better it will be a comfort to her."

In these days, when the lid of hell has been

taken off—as Mr. Elbert Hubbard, one of the victims of the *Lusitania*, graphically declared—when legions of devils have been let loose upon an unsuspecting world, the case of the eighteen-year-old peasant woman in the Brussels *asile* is by no means the most to be pitied. Her child will be a comfort to her. Not so will it be with the many unfortunate Belgian village mothers—to whom children are being, we hear, born maimed in awful testimony of the mutilations which the wives have been forced to witness deliberately inflicted on their husbands. War-babies, indeed! Stricken before birth, destined to bear through a necessarily bitter existence the terrible mark of the barbarian foe.

Let us get back to the fur children. It is such a comfort to be able to turn one's eyes upon something that can never understand the horror about one.

Plain Eliza's only trick is to put her front paws together, palm to palm, in an attitude of prayer, and wave them. This is called in the family "making pretty paws." When the children plunge for her and clasp her close, the first cry is always: "Plain Eliza, make pretty paws! Dear Plain Eliza, make pretty paws!"

She will not do it for them every day. Little dogs know very well that human puppies have no real authority over them. Perhaps it is because of the rarity of her condescension in this direction, or perhaps because of the wonderful emphasis of her supplication when she does so condescend, that the youngest of the small exiles, three-year-old Viviane, regards this accomplishment as the very acme of expression. She is a pious babe, and is fond of paying visits to the little Oratory in the Villino. One day her governess observed her wringing and waving her dimpled hands before the altar. When she came out she confided in tones of devout triumph: "I have been making pretty paws to little Jesus."

Viviane, the most satisfactory type of sturdy childhood it is possible to imagine, combines a great determination, an understanding as solid as her own little person, with an extremely tender heart. She quite realizes the advantages of the good manners which her English governess inculcates, and she can be heard instructing herself in a deep *sotto voce* when she sits at tea with grown-up entertainers.

"Vivi not speak with her mouth full. Vivi wait. Now Vivi can speak."

"Good-bye, my little girl," said her mother to her the other day, sending the child home in advance to her early supper. "I hope you will be good."

"Vivi good," was the prompt response, "good, obedient, nice manners at table."

She walked out of the room with her peculiarly deliberate gait, murmuring the admonition to herself.

During the terribly dry weather in the beginning of May we had a great fire on our moor; whether caused by incendiarism or not remains a moot point. The first hill that rolls up from our valley is now charred half-way. Viviane was much concerned.

"Poor moor burnt! Poor moor burnt!" she lamented. Then, with a delicious impulse qualified by characteristic caution, "Vivi kiss it where it is not black; kiss it and make it well!"

When her cousin and playmate's father was tragically killed on the Yser, the little creature, who is devoted to her own father, was deeply concerned. The latter is heroically devoting

himself to ambulance work at Calais. For many nights after the news of the young officer's death was received, Viviane would anxiously inform everyone who came into her nursery that Papa was quite safe, pointing out his photograph on the chimney-piece at the same time.

"Vivi got her Papa quite safe," in a confused association of ideas.

Though she has only seen him once for a very short time all these nine months, the child's affectionate memory of him remains as distinct as ever, and returning the other day from a morning walk with a scratched knee, she declared pathetically she wished it had been a wound, for then Vivi's father would have had to come and nurse her.

The spirit of the Belgian children is one of the most remarkable things of the war. As soon as they can understand anything at all they seem to grasp the situation of present valiant endurance and future glory. They know what sacrifices have been demanded of their parents. There is not a child that we have seen but measures the cost and its honour.

Upon the arrival of the *Faire part* of that

same young officer above mentioned, with its immense black edge and unending list of sorrowing relatives, Viviane's eldest brother, a boy of nine, asked to read it. When he came to the words: *Mort pour la patrie*, he looked up, his face illuminated.

"*Oh, Maman, comme c'est beau!*"

Not the least among the miscalculations of the Germans in Belgium has been their insane attempt to stifle the courage of the little country by ferocity. But Germany has never counted with souls, and it is by the power of the soul that this huge monster of materialism, with its gross brutality and gross reliance on masses and mechanism, will be overthrown. There is not a *gamin* of the Brussels streets that does not mock the German soldiery, finely conscious that, by the immortal defiance of the spirit, Prussian brutality itself is already vanquished. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings! . . .

There was humour as well as heroism in the heart of the oppressed Antwerp Belgian on that afternoon of his King's birthday, when he sent the three little girls to walk side by side through the streets dressed in black, orange, and red. The Hun stood helpless before the

passage of the living flag, not daring to face the ridicule which would fall upon him all the world over were the babes arrested and taken to the Commandatur. It was a superb defiance, flung in the face of the despot, flung by the little ones! The whole history of Belgium's glory and Germany's shame is in it.

It is just the feeling that they are blessedly ignorant of the universal suffering that makes the company of our pets so soothing to us now.

"My dog is my one comfort," cried a friend to us, surveying her Peky as he sat, fat and prosperous, his lip cocked with the familiar Chinese smile, triumphant after the feat of having silently bitten his mistress's visitor. "He is the only person that hasn't changed!"

The bite of a Pekinese does not hurt, it may be mentioned, and the visitor quite shared his owner's feelings.

It may be something of the same sensation that makes the wounded soldiers in the hospital near us long for the forbidden joy of something alive for a mascot. They picked up a very newly hatched pheasant in the grounds the

other day, and carried it home to share their bed and board. It was fed on extraordinary concoctions, and after three days was discovered to have passed away. There was a strong suspicion of the matron, who had not approved from the beginning. They consoled themselves by a military funeral. A very handsome coffin having been made by an expert, they went in solemn procession to lay the infant pheasant to rest. Now there is always a wreath on the grave.

Invited to the Villino this week to see our azaleas, they arrived, a batch of twenty, at the odd hour of ten o'clock in the morning, to be regaled with buns and lemonade, no tea-parties being allowed. They enjoyed themselves very much, but the feature of the entertainment was Mimosa, the small ruby Pekinese. She passed from embrace to embrace. She licked them so much that they told the Sister they would not need to have their faces washed any more. This is the kind of joke that is really appreciated in hospitals. When Mimi returned to her devoted Mrs. MacComfort in the kitchen, the latter remarked "she was so above herself she couldn't do anything with her."

Unfortunately all little dogs are not happy and protected like ours. Belgian friends who passed through villages and towns after the first wave of the invader had spread over the country tell us of a horrible and singular by-way of wanton atrocity. The soldiery slaughter the dogs wholesale, some said to eat them, but that seems hardly credible. Most probably it was part of the scheme of general terrorism. To burn the houses and slay the husbands and fathers, to spear and mutilate and trample down the children, to insult the women, it was all not enough. The finishing touch must be given by the murder of the humble companion, the faithful watch-dog, the children's pet. Piles and piles of dogs' heads were at the corners of the streets, our friend told us.

We know they laid hold of the poor dogs to experiment upon them with their diabolical gas. But there was at least some reason in the latter brutality.

One hears many stories about the dogs of war.

At the beginning of the conflict the trained ambulance dogs were reported to have done splendid work in the French trenches. We do

not know if we have any such, but we do know that the men have pets among them out there, whether mascots brought out from England or strays picked up from the abandoned farms. The deserted dogs! A French paper published an article upon these dumb victims, not the least pathetic of the many side tragedies of this year of anguish. It was a poor shop-keeper who described what he himself had seen in passing through a devastated town within the conquered territory.

"The dogs have remained in the town, from whence the inhabitants have fled. The dogs have remained where there is not left a stone upon a stone. How they do not die of hunger I cannot imagine. They must hunt for themselves far out in the country-side, I suppose, but they come back as quickly as they can and congregate at the entrance of the suburb on the highroad.

"There are two hundred, or three hundred perhaps — spaniels, sheep-dogs, fox-terriers, even small ridiculous lap-dogs—and they wait, all of them, with their heads turned in the same direction, with an air of intense melancholy and passionate interest. What are they wait-

ing for? Oh, it is very easy to guess. Sometimes one of the old inhabitants of the town makes up his mind to come back from Holland. The longing to see his home, to know what is left of his house, to search the ruins, is stronger than all else—stronger than hatred, stronger than fear. And sometimes then one of the dogs recognizes him. His dog! If you could see it. If you could imagine it. All that troop of dogs who prick their ears at the first sight of a man coming along the road from Holland, a man who has no helmet, a man not in uniform; the instantaneous painful agitation of the animals who gaze and gaze with all their might—dogs have not very good eyes—and who sniff and sniff from afar, because their scent is better than their sight. And then the leap, the great leap of one of these dogs who has recognized his master, his wild race along the devastated road, ploughed with the furrows by the passage of cannons and heavy traction motors and dug with trenches; his joyous barks, his wagging tail, his flickering tongue! His whole body is one quiver of happiness. The dog will not leave that man any more, he is too much afraid of losing him. He will follow close to his heels

without stopping to eat; one day, two days if needful; and in the end he goes away with him.

"But the others? They have remained on the road. And when they see this dog depart, having found at last what they all are seeking, they lift up their muzzles despairingly and howl, howl as if they would never stop, with great cries that fill the air, and re-echo until there is nothing more to be seen upon the road. Then they are dumb, but they do not move. They are there; they still hope."

VII

OUR GARDEN IN JUNE

"Still may Time hold some golden space
  Where I'll unpack that scented store
Of song and flower and sky and face,
  And count, and touch, and turn them o'er."

RUPERT BROOKE.

June 1.—The garden in early June! Like a great many other things the idea is very different from the reality. The first of June in the garden represents to the mind's eye bowers of roses, exuberance in the borders, a riot of colour and fragrance. As a matter of fact, with us, in our late-blooming, high-perched terraces, it means a transition stage, and is annually very exasperating and disappointing to the impatient spirit of the Signora. It is the time when the azaleas look dishevelled, with their delicate blossom hanging depressingly from the stamens. The forget-me-nots have all been cleared away, and in those places where bulbs are preserved against the future spring, masses of yellowing tangled leaf-spikes are an eyesore. The bedding-out plants still look tiny on the raw borders. All our roses, except those climbers against the house, are yet in the bud.

There are just the poppies that flaunt in the borders; and even their colour becomes an exasperation, because they would have done so much better to wait and join in the grand symphony, instead of blowing isolated trumpet flourishes, prepared to relapse into sulky silence when the delphiniums strike up their blue music.

There is also another frightful drawback to this first week of leafy June, and that is that it would be easier to separate Pyramus from Thisbe than the gardener from the vegetables. A constant enervating struggle goes on between us on the relative values of cabbages and roses, beans and poppies. We want the roses sprayed, we want the borders staked, we want sustenance in the shape of liquid manure and Clay's fertilizer copiously administered to our darlings; and he wants to put in "that there other row of scarlet runners and set out them little lettuces." And when it comes to watering: he doesn't know, he's sure, how he's to get them cabbages seen to as they ought to be seen to; a deal of moisture *they* want, if they're to do him any justice.

Meanwhile our terraces are panting. The

climbing roses up the house—and this year they would have been glorious—are pale and brittle in petal and foliage, as if they had been actually blasted.

The master of the Villino, after due representations from the Padrona, has seen the necessity of sacrifice, and assiduously waters the garden every evening—and himself! The hose is defective; being war time we cannot afford a new one. Two jets break out at the wrong angle and take you in the eye and down the waistcoat at the most unexpected moments; and though amenable to persuasion, the Padrone's devotion has its limits, and he positively declines the remanipulation of the tube which will bring it—after having done service in the Dutch garden—to the end of the Lily Walk. So that, as it is two yards short, the deficiency has to be made up by hand watering, and two obsolete bath-cans are produced out of the house, which seems, for some unexplained reason, easier than using the proper garden furniture. These cans are generally left, forgotten, where they were last used, unless the piercing eye of the mistress of the Villino happens to dart in that direction.

Yesterday we had visitors—in eighteenth-century parlance, a General and his Lady—and of course the two cans stood in the middle of the path, confidingly, nose to nose. Being war time nobody minded. It is the blessing and the danger of war time that nobody minds anything. And the General's Lady, being tactful, kept her eye on the buddleia.

Death having come to the little garden and taken Adam away; and greed of gain having deprived us of Reginald Arthur in favour of the post office; and patriotism having rendered the local young man as precious as he is scarce, we were five weeks—five invaluable, irreplaceable weeks—gardenerless, odd-manless at the Villino. Nothing this year will ever restore the lost time. No amount of pulling and straining will draw the gap together.

Japhet, Adam's successor, is worn, as the Americans say, very nearly "to a frazzle." He is a deeply conscientious man, and peas and beans and cabbages are to him the very principles upon which all garden morality is built up. He was much grieved the other day when someone "passed a remark" on the subject of weeds in the back-garden.

Weeds! We should think there were! It was so blatantly self-evident a fact that we wondered that anyone should have thought it worth while to pass a remark upon it. But Japhet was hurt to his very soul: considering his vocation, it would perhaps be more in keeping to say—his marrow.

Professional pride is a very delicate and easily bruised growth. When the Padrona was in her teens the whole of her mother's orderly establishment was convulsed one June—a hot June it was too—because the professional pride of the family butler had been wounded by the footman's presuming to hand a dish which it was not his business to touch. His sense of dignity was doubtless sharpened to a very fine edge by the fact that, the June weather being so hot, an unusual amount of cooling beer had been found necessary. This may seem a curious mixture of metaphors, nevertheless the facts are exact.

Reilly—that was his name—was very deeply and, in the opinion of the rest of the household, justifiably incensed when Edmund lifted the entrée dish with the obvious intention of offering it to his mistress; and though it was re-

garded as an exaggeration of sensitiveness for him to knock the footman down immediately after lunch in the seclusion of the pantry, to kneel upon his chest and endeavour to strangle him with his white tie; and though the cook deemed it incumbent upon her to draw the attention of the authorities to the drama by seizing a broom and brushing it backwards and forwards across the row of bells; all the sympathies of the establishment remained with Reilly, and "the mistress" was regarded as extremely hard-hearted for dismissing him from her service. The footman was a shock-headed, snub-nosed youth, and we will never forget his appearance when, released from his assailant, he burst into the dining-room, collar-less, his white tie protruding at an acute angle behind his left ear, with a mixture of triumph, importance, and suffering upon his scarlet countenance.

So we were compassionate with Japhet when he waxed plaintive over his underling's house duties, and even forbore having the windows cleaned for several weeks, and endured tortures at the sight of her spattered panes, out of regard for his difficulties.

The underling is aptly named Fox. He has red hair and long moustaches and a furtive eye and a general air of alertness and slyness which show that if he had ever belonged to the animal kingdom in a previous state of existence, Vulpus he certainly was. But we did not expect him to develop garden susceptibilities too. This, however, it seems he has done.

"I've very bad news for you," said Japhet sombrely to his master last week, when he came into the long, book-lined room to receive his Saturday pay. He has naturally a lugubrious countenance.

His master's thoughts flew to Zeppelins, spotted fever, and other national dangers.

"Indeed, Japhet. What is it?"

"Fox, he says, he can't put up with the couch-grass and the docks in the lower garden. They seem to have got on his mind, like. He don't see how he can go on dealing with them. They '*ave* got a strong hold," concluded Japhet with a sigh, as if he too were overwhelmed by the enemy.

Well, it was tragic enough, for the precious Fox had been caught after long hunting, and

had made his own bargain—a foxy one—with every eye to the main chance. We want to keep him, but have a guilty sensation too, he being young and strong, and obviously the right stuff for enlisting; though, indeed, if docks and couch-grass daunt him, how would he stand shrapnel and gas?

The daughter of the house, who is extremely tactful, and who is generally trusted with delicate situations, interviewed him on the spot. She found him in a condition only to be described as one of nerve-shock. His long, red moustaches quivered. All he could reply, in a broken voice, was:

"It don't do me no credit. It won't never do me no credit."

Japhet, consulted, gave it as his opinion that it was not a question of his subordinate's bettering himself; but said "Fox had always been a sensitive worker." Nevertheless, we should not be surprised to hear that war prices have something to do with it.

It is only now, after nearly five years, that we are beginning to reap some benefit of our constant planting. The Signora wonders if

her irritable mind had allowed her to leave undisturbed those divers perennials and bushes which she had rooted up after a year's trial from beds and borders, how might she not now be gathering the reward of longanimity.

The Léonie Lamesche roses, for instance. She hunted them out of the middle of the Dutch garden; out of the beds before the entrance arches into the rose-garden; into that corner of the kitchen-garden where the derelicts gather. And just now the child of the house has brought into her bunch after bunch of little orange-crimson pompoms, delicious and quaint to look at, and delicious and quaint to smell, with their faint tartness, as of apples, mixed with an aromatic herbiness as of myrtles.

"There's quantities more," says the Signorina. Poor little things! they have been allowed to settle and spread their roots, and one would not know them for the nipped, disreputable, guttersnipe objects that hitherto called down the master of the Villino's scorn.

We do not regret them in the Dutch garden after all. It is too near the house not to have its garland for every season; and the forget-me-nots, hyacinths, and tulips are too precious and

beautiful in the spring. But under the rose-arches now there are gaps; and this year, between the loss of our poor Adam and war scruples, these gaps have not been filled.

If the Signora had left Léonie Lamesche where she was, all those nice varnished green leaves and all those darling rosettes of bloom with their odd colour and fragrance would be in their right place, instead of in the waste ground from which Japhet, with the zeal of the new broom, is already preparing to sweep them next autumn—not, be it said, with any special disapprobation for Léonie, but because he declares he wants to get rid of all that there stuff which hadn't no right to be in a vegetable garden at all.

The moral is—as has been said long ago in the "Sentimental Garden"—that chief among the many virtues a garden inculcates is patience. If the Signora had had patience, she would not have turned all the Standard Soleil d'Or and Conrad Meyers out of the Lily Walk, because the shadow of the buddleias interfered with their bloom. For behold! this winter's snow has cast the great honey-trees sideways, and the united efforts of Japhet and Fox, who

pulled and propped and strained in vain, have left them sideways, and sideways, in the opinion of these experts, they will for ever after remain. And the Lily Walk is in full sunshine. Had we but left the standards, who, of course, will be sulky in their new positions for a couple of years more!

June 15.—The complaint begun in the first week of our transitional garden has already been reproved by the mid-month's splendours. In spite of the drought and the desiccating south-east winds (which by some inscrutable decree of Providence have been sent to us this year when so much depends upon field, orchard, and garden), the roses are magnificent and of unusual promise.

Our peony beds—the mistress of the garden did know that peonies are slow ladies and will take their time—are beginning to reward her forbearance. Such a basketful as came into her bedroom to-day with the Polyantha roses! —those large, pink, scented beauties which are so satisfying to settle in big bowls. We have put them in the chapel against boughs of the service-tree. The effect is all one could wish.

The service-tree bloomed this year as never

it bloomed before. It looked like the bridal bouquet of a fairy giantess! We trust this daring hyperbole will enable our readers to represent to themselves something at once immense and ethereal, misty grey, and delicate silver-white. It is of huge size and beautiful shape, and grows a little higher on the slope than the greater of the two beech-trees. For colour effect we know nothing more soul-filling than the way it stands between the ardent tawny glories of the Azalea Walk and the young jewel green of its cousin—the beech above mentioned. Put the shoulder of the moor at the back in its May mantle of coppery mauve heather not yet in bud—that is a picture to gaze upon under a blue sky, thanking God for the loveliness of the earth!

This last May, which will be ever memorable as one of the most tragic months of the war, hazard—or that *slithy tove*, the alien Hun—provided us with a background approximately *macabre* for the radiant youthful joy. Our moor has been burnt—five fires started simultaneously one day of high east wind, and the first great swelling hill is covered with a garment as of hell. The scattered fir-trees here

and there are of a livid, scorched brown. To look out on the scene and see them stand in the slaty black, casting mysterious shadows under the dome of relentless brightness we have had of late, is like looking upon a circle of Dante's Inferno, out of one of the cool, bowery regions of his upper Purgatorio. Our daughter finds a wilder beauty in our blossom and verdure against the savage gloom beyond; but not so the Padrona. She laments the tapestry of her peaceful, rolling heights. Now, past mid-June, bracken is creeping slowly through the charred roots of the heather, and she does not want a bracken hill. It is spreading democracy, taking the place of some royal line; the rule of the irresponsible, the coarse, the mediocre; though she grants there will be beauty in the autumn when it all turns golden. And perhaps there's a lesson to be drawn somewhere, but she will have none of it, for there is nothing so tiresome as the unpalatable moral.

Fox has condescended to remain another week, so we need not feverishly search garden chronicles for the quite impossible he, who

shall be strong, sturdy, ineligible for the army, and willing to take a place as under-gardener at something less than the honorarium of an aniline dye expert! All those who want places are head-gardeners, "under glass"; except "a young Dutchman speaking languages perfectly" who fills our souls with doubt. In every district it is the same story; we wish we could think it was all patriotic ardour, but we are afraid that the high wages offered by camps and greengrocers are responsible for a good deal of the shortage of labour in our part of the world.

One of the Villino quartette—we call ourselves the lucky clover-leaf—writes from Dorset that they have an aged man of past seventy-two who comes in to help in the flowery, bowery old garden of the manor-house where she is staying. In justice to simple rural Dorset, it may be mentioned parenthetically that there the response to the country's need has been extraordinary in its unanimity. So the superannuated labourers who have grown white and wise over the soil, instead of sitting by the chimney-corner and enjoying their old-age pensions, come tottering forth to do their little

bit, in the place of the young stalwartness that has gone out to fight and struggle and perhaps die for England.

Our Dorset clover petal writes: "Old Mason is very sad at having to water the borders. 'Ye mid water and water for days and days,' he declares, 'and it not have the value of a single night's rain. There, miss, as I did say to my darter last night, my Father, I says, he do water a deal better than I do.'"

Yesterday there came a box of white pinks from that Dorset garden; these have been put all together into an immense cut-glass bowl, with an effect of innocent, white, overflowing freshness that is perfect of its kind. And the scent of them is admirably fitted to the sweet clean wonder of their looks. It is a quintessence of all simple fragrance, a sort of intensified new-mown hay smell. That is another thing the heavenly Father has done very well—the delicate matching of attributes in His flower children. A tea-rose looks her scent, just as does her deep crimson sister.

"How it must have amused Almighty God," said our daughter one day last winter, lifting the cineraria foliage to show the purple bloom

of the lining which exactly matched the note of the starry flower, "how it must have amused Him to do this."

And surely a violet bears in her little modest face the promise of her insinuating and delicate perfume.

And if the big pink peonies had had bright green instead of shadowy grey foliage they might have been vulgar.

And if you had put lily leaves to an iris instead of their own romantic sword-blades, how awkward and wrong it would have been; whereas the lily-stalk, with its conventional layers, is perfection in support of the queenly head of the Madonna or the Auratum. It is not association, but recognition of a Great Artist, in all reverence be it said. "He hath done all things well."

To come back to the walled enclosure about the old Dorset manor house. Here, looking down our wind-swept terraces, we sometimes hanker for the sunny seclusion of that walled garden, though apparently all is not perfect even there, for the last message from it says:

"The strong sun takes all the strength out

of the pinks after the first day or two. It has been very hot in the early afternoon, and as the garden faces west all the poor little things are drawn in a long slant towards the setting sun. Some of the long-stemmed ones have got positive wriggles in their stalks from so much exercise; it is really bad for their systems."

In a previous letter she writes less pessimistically:

"I can't tell you the loveliness of the garden. It is like Venus rising from the sea—Venus and her foam together—roses, pinks, sweet-williams, everything leaping into bloom and over the walls. I have given up trying to harmonize colours. There is nothing so wilful as an old garden. The plants simply walk about, much as our 'Pekies' do. I planted nigella last year, which didn't do very well; however it skipped across a path of its own accord this year, and there is a patch of it in a forbidden corner which shames the sky. One looks on and laughs helplessly, as one does with 'Pekies.'"

The Penzance briar hedge dividing the new rosary from the reserve garden promises

very well. It is already breaking into many coloured stars, carmine, pink, amber, and the fashionable khaki. Is this the musk-rose of the "Midsummer Night's Dream"?

To contradict our statement of a page or two back, the Creator has made here one of the exceptions to His rule of rich and delicate balance, and it is the unsuspected fragrance of the sweetbriar that adds so extraordinarily to its attraction in a garden. No one would credit it with the scent, its evanescent fragile bloom gives no indication of it. And, like the perfectly saintly, its fragrance has nothing to do with youth or beauty. You pass an unimportant-looking green bush, and all at once you are assailed with the breath of Heaven. There is a mystery, almost a mysticism, about the perfection of this sweetness, this intangible, invisible beauty. One is reminded of Wordsworth's lines:

> "quiet as a nun
> Breathless with adoration."

It is the image of a pure soul exhaling itself before God, in a rapture of ecstatic contemplation.

The June scents of the Villino garden are

very wonderful, peculiarly so this year, under the searching brilliancy of the unclouded heavens. There is the sweetbriar, and there are the pinks, and there is one long border all of nepeta—against the Dorothy Perkins hedge still only green—with its pungent, wholesome savour. And there is the gum cistus, that smells exactly as did the insides of the crimson Venetian bottles which stood in the great white and blue and gold drawing-room in the Signora's Irish home. It was an old custom to put a drop of attar of roses at the bottom of these favourite ornaments in those days when the Signora was a little girl, and it was one of her great joys to be allowed to lift the stopper and sniff. The strange far-off Eastern incense that hangs about the rather uncomely straggling shrub—another instance of the Almighty's exceptions—brings the mistress of the Villino back with a leap to her childhood; to the late Georgian drawing-room, with its immense plate-glass windows hung with curtains of forget-me-not blue brocade which cost a hundred pounds a pair—people spent solid money then for solid worth; the white marble chimney-piece, with its copy of a fraction of the

Parthenon frieze—Phaeton driving his wild, tossing horses; the immense cut-glass chandelier sparkling and quivering with a thousand elfin rainbow lights; the white and gold panels, the plastered frieze of curling acanthus leaves; and the smiling face of the adored mother looking down upon the little creature in the stiff piqué frock, who was the future Padrona. No child analyzes its mother's countenance. It is only in later years that the beauty of that smile was recognized by her. It was a beauty that endured to the very last of those eighty-five years of a life that was so well filled. It was a smile of extraordinary sweetness and, to that end, full of youth. That's what the gum cistus brings back; a fragrance of memory, poignant and beloved. Everyone knows that through the sense of smell the seat of memory is most potently reached. The merest whiff of a long-forgotten odour will bring back so vividly some scene of the past that it is almost painful. It is to be wondered why ghosts do not more often choose this form of return to the world. The story told by Frederick Myers in his "Human Personality" of the phantom scent of thyme by which a poor girl haunted

the field where she had been murdered is, we believe, unique; but we know another record. This was not the struggle of any reproachful shade to bring itself back to human recollection, but the ghost of a fragrance itself. The late Bret Harte told the tale to a friend of ours. On a visit to an old English castle he was lodged in a tower room. Every afternoon he used to withdraw for literary labours, and at a certain hour the whole of the old chamber would be filled with the penetrating vapour of incense. He sought in vain for some explanation of the mystery. There was nothing within or without, beneath or above, which could produce such a phenomenon. Then he bethought himself of investigating the past, and found that his room was exactly over what had once been the chapel in the days of our ancient Faith, and that it had been the custom to celebrate Benediction at the hour when the incense—that wraith of a bygone lovely worship—now seemed to surround him.

A few steps beyond the gum cistus the buddleia trees this June have their brief splendour of bloom and their intoxication of perfume. It is as if all the honey of clover and

gorse, with something of a dash of clove spice, was burning in a pyre of glory to the sunshine. What wonder that the bees gather there and chant the whole day long! Happy bees, drunk with bliss in the midst of their labour!

It is all very well to speak of bees as a frugal, hard-working community, to hold them up to the perpetual emulation of the young. Few people seem to remember how extremely dissipated they become when they come across a good tap of honey. Who has not seen them —so charged with the luxuriance that they can scarcely stagger out of the calyx—buzz away, blundering, upon inebriated wing?

Greatly favoured by Nature, the bees combine the extreme of laudable activity with the extreme of self-indulgence. Anyone who wants to hear their pæan of rapture at its height, let him provide them with *Buddleia globosa*.

We have by no means exhausted the list of scents in the June garden. There are the irises! All Florence is in the sweetness that flows from them: a sweetness, by the way, not adapted to rooms, where, to be unpoetical, it assumes something faintly catty. The way the perfume of irises rolls over Florence in May is

something not to be described to anyone who has not breathed it. We were once the guests of a kindly literary couple, who dwelt in one of those charming, quaint, transmogrified farm-houses outside the city that makes us—even we who own the Villino Loki—hanker. It was called Villa Benedetto. One drove out from Florence along a road now only vaguely remembered. It skirted the river, and there were wild slopes on one side and poplar-trees; then one darted aside into the Italian hills and up a steep ascent—this vision is also vague; but we remember the little garden-gate and the narrow brick path and the irises! Irises and China roses! It is a lovely mixture for colour; and as for scent! anyone who knows anything about scent (and we wonder why there are not artists in it, as well as for music and painting) anyone who knows anything about scent, we repeat, is quite aware that orris, the pounded iris root, is the only possible fragrance to keep constantly about. It combines the breath of the mignonette and the subtle delight of the violet. It preserves, too, its adorable freshness of impression. You never sicken of it, you never tire of it. Of course

it has the fault of its delicacy, it is evanescent; but, then, it is never stale. Any woman who wishes an atmosphere of poetry should use nothing but orris, the pure pounded root without any addition, and that perpetually renewed. Precious quality, it cannot be overdone.

The odour of the flower itself in the sunshine is a different thing, far more piercing and far more pronounced. It must be enjoyed in the sunshine, or after a spring storm. Those other incomparable banquets to the sense which a bean-field or a clover-meadow will spread for you cannot be captured and refined in the same manner. More's the pity!

Lafcadio Hearn declares that human beings have lamentably failed to cultivate the rich possibilities of the sense of smell. In this respect, he says, dogs are infinitely superior. Who can tell, he asks, what ecstasy of combination, what chords, what symphonies of harmony and contrast, might we not be able to serve ourselves? But we do not think the idea will bear development, and certainly many suffer enough from an over-sensitiveness of nostril already to prevent them from desiring any further cultivation of its powers.

The Villino in June smells very good, however, and that is gratifying. And to complete the catalogue there are the new pine shoots delicious and aromatic, stimulating and healthy; a perfect aroma on a hot day.

"Tell me your friends and I will tell you what you are," says the sage; it sounds like a dog, but the Padrona feels that with one sniff she can sum up a character.

When Tréfle Incarnat, or its last variant, takes you by the throat, you needn't look to see what kind of young woman is sitting beside you at the theatre.

And when a portly friend, resplendent in gorgeous sables, heralds her approach with a powerful blast of Napthaline, you know the kind of woman *she* is, and that the word "friend," just written, is misapplied; for you never could make a friend of anyone so stuffily and stupidly careful.

And when you go to tea with an acquaintance—probably literary, living in Campden Hill and fond of bead blinds—and the smell of joss-stick floats upon the disgusted nostril from the doorway, you know the kind of party you are going to have. Your hostess will

have surrounded herself with long-haired and dank-handed young men, the Postlethwaites of the period, and brilliant young females who wear a mauvy powder over rather an unwashed face, and curious garments cut square at the neck, and turquoise matrix ear-rings, very much veined with brown! Besides the joss-sticks there is cigarette smoke, and the atmosphere, morally as well as physically, is fusty!

Then there is the female who produces a bottle of Eau-de-Cologne on board ship. If it isn't a German governess, it is a heated person with something purple about her and kid gloves—why pursue the horrid theme!

Let us end this divagation by a little anecdote as true as it is charming. It happened to a member of our own family. She was hurrying along one foggy November morning to the Brompton Oratory rather early; and the dreadful acrid vapour and the uncertain struggle of a grimy dawn contended against the glimmer of the gas-lamps. As she approached the steps of the church somebody crossed her, and instantly the whole air was filled with an exquisite fragrance as of

violets. Involuntarily she started to look round, and her movement arrested, too, the passer-by. For a second they stood quite close to each other, and to our relative's astonishment she saw only a small, meek-faced old lady in an Early Victorian bonnet wrapped in a very dowdy dolman.

The old lady gave a little smile and went her way. There was certainly no adornment of real violets about her, and to look at her was enough to be assured that artificial scents could never approach her.

The incident seemed strange enough to be worth making investigations, and the explanation was simple. The little old lady was very well known; mother of priests, a ceaseless worker among the poor; nearly eighty, and every day at seven o'clock Mass. Many people had remarked the scent of violets about her, and her friends thought, laughingly, it was because she was something of a saint.

This sweet-smelling saint died as she had lived. She had received the Last Sacraments; she knew her moments were numbered, but she sat up, propped by pillows, and went on

knitting for the poor till the needles fell from her hands.

If the story of the violets had not happened to a member of the family, the Signora would be quite ready to believe it on hearsay, because of the delicious simplicity and certain confidence of that placid deathbed.

VIII

OUR BLUE-COAT BOYS

" Ils ont le bras en écharpe, et un bandeau sur l'œil,
Mais leur âme est légère et ils sourient . . .
Ils s'en vont, grisés de lumière,
Etourdis par le bruit,
Trainant la jambe dans la poussière
Le nez au vent, le regard réjoui . . ."

CAMMAERTS.

WE asked them to tea; the Sister said that "the Matron said they couldn't do that"; but they could come for morning lunch about half-past ten o'clock, and have bread-and-butter and see the garden. And they would like to come very much indeed, preferably next day. The Matron further opined about twelve would feel well enough to avail themselves of our hospitality.

It gave us very little time for preparation, and the baker declined to provide us with buns so early. But it was very hot, fortunately; so Mrs. McComfort set to work at dawn to prepare lemonade and fruit salad, and immense slices of bread-and-jam. And we were very glad she had been so lavish in her Irish

generosity when we heard the sound of voices and the tramping of feet in the courtyard: it seemed as if there were a regiment of them! In reality there were only twenty—twenty smiling, stalwart "blue-coat boys." Some with an arm in a sling; two or three limping along with the help of a stick; one with a bandaged head; three, in spite of a brave front, with that look of strain and tragedy in the eyes which stamps even those who have been only slightly "gassed."

They are very much amused at the little outing, as pleased and as easily diverted as children, not anxious to talk about their experiences, but answering with perfect ease and simplicity any question that is made to them on the subject. They are chiefly excited over our little dogs. We wish that we had twenty instead of only three; or that we had borrowed from a neighbour's household for the occasion. Every man wants to nurse a dog, and those who have secured the privilege are regarded with considerable envy by the others.

The younger members of the *famiglia* are in a desperate state of excitement, and there is a great flutter of aprons, and cheeks flame

scarlet under caps pinned slightly crooked in the agitation of the moment.

Miss Flynn the housemaid, Miss O'Toole the parlourmaid, are stirred to rapture to discover an Irish corporal, wounded at Ypres. We think they talk more of Tipperary—it really is Tipperary—than of Flanders. Miss Flynn, a handsome, black-eyed, black-haired damsel, with a colour that beats the damask roses on the walls of the Villino, has been born and bred in England. She is more forthcoming than Miss O'Toole, who has the true Hibernian reserve; who looks deprecatingly from under her fair aureole of hair, and expects and gives the utmost respectfulness in all her relations with the opposite sex.

They say this lovely sensitive modesty of the Irish girl is dying out. The penny novelette, the spread of emancipation and education—save the mark!—facilities of communication, have done away with it. More's the pity if this be true, for it was a bloom on the womanhood of Ireland no polish can replace; it added something incommunicably lovable to the grace of the girls, something holy, almost august, to the tenderness of the mothers.

When the Signora was a child in Ireland the peasant wife still spoke of her husband as "the master"; and in the wilds of Galway, quite recently, she has seen the women in the roads pull their shawls over their faces at the approach of a stranger. The humble matron of the older type will still walk two paces behind her husband. These are, of course, but indications of the austere conception of life which an unquestioning acceptance of her faith kept alive in the breast of the Irishwoman. When she promised to love and honour him, the husband became *de facto* "the master." Yet the influence of the Irish wife and mother in her own home in no way suffered from this conception of her duty. She was as much "*herself*" upon the lips of her lord as he "*himself*" upon hers. It used to be a boast that the purity of the Irish maiden and the Irish mother was a thing apart, inassailable. The Signora's recollections of Ireland, of a childhood passed in a country house that kept itself very much in touch with its poor neighbours and dependants, bring her back many instances of drunkenness among the men, alas! and the consequent fights and factions; of

slovenliness among the women, and hopeless want of thrift and energy; in one or two instances, indeed, of flagrant dishonesty; but she never remembers a single occasion marked by the shocked whisper, the swift and huddled dismissal, or any of the other tokens by which a fall from feminine virtue is mysteriously conveyed to the child mind.

Among all the poor cottage homes, the various farms, great and small, prosperous or neglected, each with their strapping brood of splendid youth, never one can she recollect about whose name there was a silence; never a single one of these dewy-eyed, fresh-faced girls that did not carry the innocence of their baptism in the half-deprecating, half-confident looks they cast upon "the quality."

Naturally there must have been exceptions; and naturally, too, this state of affairs could not have applied to some of the more miserable quarters of the towns. Nevertheless, the Ireland of a quarter of a century ago had not forgotten she had once been called the Island of Saints; and her mothers and daughters kept very preciously the vestal flame alive in their pure breasts.

Times have changed, and more's the pity, as we have said. But now and again a flower blooms as if upon the old roots, and though Mary O'Toole is transplanted to England, we trust that she may keep her infantile innocence and her exquisite—there is no English equivalent—*pudeur*.

It was a picture to see her in her cornflower-blue cotton frock, with her irrepressible hair tucked as tidily as nature would allow beneath her white cap, staggering under the weight of a tray charged with refreshments for the wounded. She is about five-foot nothing, with a throat the average male hand could encircle with a finger and thumb, but among the twenty soldiers, all of different ages, classes, and, of course, dispositions, who visited us that day, there was not one but regarded her with as much respect as if she had been six foot high and as ill-favoured as Sally Brass—we hope, however, with considerably more pleasure.

When the blue-coat boys have been duly refreshed, they wander out into the garden. They remind one irresistibly of a school, and there is something tenderly droll in their complete submission to the little plump sister, who

orders them about with a soft voice and certain authority.

"No. 20, come out of the sun. No. 15, I'd rather you didn't sit on the grass."

Then she turns apologetically to us: "It isn't that I don't know it's quite dry." (We should think it was, on our sandy heights, after five weeks' drought!) "But I never know quite where I am with the gassed cases. That's the worst of them. They're perfectly well one day, and we say, 'Thank goodness, *that's* all over,' and the next day its up in his eyes, perhaps!"

"I'll never be the same man again," suddenly exclaims a short, saturnine young Canadian, who has not—a marked exception to the others—once smiled since he came, and who keeps a dark grudge in his eyes. He seems perfectly well, except for that curious expression, to our uninitiated gaze, but his voice is weak and there is a langour about his movements extraordinarily out of keeping with his build, which is all for strength, like that of a young Hercules.

"I'll never be the same man again; I feel that. It's shortened my life by a many years. So it has with them over there." He jerks his

thumb towards his comrades in misfortune. "They'll none of them ever be the same men again."

The Signora tries feebly to protest, but the nurse acquiesces placidly. It is the hospital way, and not a bad way either; misfortunes are not minimized, they are faced.

The Signora has an unconquerable timidity where other people's reticences are concerned, and was far from emulating the amiable audacity of a close relative—at present on a visit to the Villino — whose voice she hears raised in the distance with query after query: "Where was it? In your leg? Does it hurt? Do you mind? Do you want to go back again?" But when she sees that the men indubitably like this frank attack, and respond, smiling and stimulated, the silence of her Canadian begins to weigh upon her. She tries him with a bashful question:

"Is your home in a town in Canada?"

"No, not in a town. Three hundred and eighty miles away from the nearest of any importance."

"Oh, dear! Then it must take you a long time to hear from your people."

The young harsh face darkens.

The post only comes to his home out yonder once a week, anyhow, but he hasn't heard but once since he left. Not at all since he came to England wounded.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the Signora again, scenting a grievance. "But if it's so far away, you couldn't have heard yet."

The lowering copper-hued countenance—it is curiously un-English, and reminds one vaguely of those frowning black marble busts in the Capitol: young Emperors already savagely conscious of their own unlimited power—takes a deeper gloom.

He could have heard. No. 9 had had a letter that morning, and *his* home was forty miles further north.

"Had No. 9 a letter?" asks the little Sister.

She sits plump and placid in her cloak, and looks like a dove puffing out her feathers in the sunshine. We have said she has a cooing voice.

"Yes, he had," says the Canadian, and digs a vindictive finger into the dry grass.

The Signora, fearing the conversation is going to lapse, plunges into the breach.

"What was your work at home? Farming, I suppose."

This remark meets with an unexpected success. The poor, fierce eyes—that seem never to have ceased from contemplation of unpardonable injury since that day at Ypres when the fumes of hell belched up before them—brighten.

"Wa-al! I do sometimes this and sometimes that. I can do most things. It's just what I happen to want to put my hand to. I'm master of half a dozen trades, I am. I've been on the farm, and I'm a blacksmith, and an engineer on the railway; and a barber, and a butcher."

"Dear me!" says the little Sister.

Her gaze is serenely fixed on the smiling green path. From the shadow in which we sit, it leads to a slope out into the blaze of the sunshine, where a cypress-tree rises like an immense green flame, circled with a shimmer of light. But perhaps her tone conveys rebuke, for our Canadian suddenly relapses into silence, from which we cannot again entice him.

A little further away a friend who is staying with us, and the relative above mentioned, are listening with intense interest to the talk of a

tall, black-moustached soldier. His face is very pale under its bronze; he is the worst of the three gas victims who have come to-day. It is only what are called the very slight cases that are treated in the hospital close by.

A much older man this, who has been many years in the army and came over with the Indian division. He has a gentle, thoughtful face. There is no resentment in his eyes—only the look of one who has seen death very close and does not forget—and a great languor, the mark of the gas. He is talking very dispassionately of our reprisals.

"Oh yes, we have used our gas, the freezing-gas! But it don't seem hardly worth while. It draws their fire so." Then, with an every-day smile and no more emotion in his tone than if he were descanting on a mousetrap, he goes on to describe the incredibly sudden effect of what he calls the freezing-gas, which we suppose to be the French Turpinite. "It freezes you up, so to speak, right off on the spot. You see a fellow standing, turning his head to talk to a fellow near him. He lifts his hand, maybe, in his talk like; then comes along the gas, and there he stands. You think

he's going on talking. He's frozen dead, his arm up, looking so natural-like, same as might be me this minute. Oh, it's quick! what you call instantaneous. But it ain't 'ardly worth while. The Germans, you see, it draws their fire so. Two or three times we got it in among our own men—oh, by mistake, miss, of course!" This in response to the horrified ejaculation of his interlocutor. "And that didn't seem 'ardly worth while."

Beyond this group, again, the daughter of the house, seated on a croquet-box, is surrounded by three sprawling blue soldiers. One of them is talking earnestly to her. The others are so much engaged in a game of "Beggar my Neighbour" with three-year-old Vivi, the Belgian baby, that they do not pay the smallest attention to their companion, and yet what he is saying is horrible enough, startling enough, God knows! The speaker is a fair, pleasant-looking boy with a cocked nose, tightly curling auburn hair, and an air of vitality and energy that makes it difficult to think of him as in anything but the perfection of health. He is a territorial, and evidently belongs to that thinking, well-educated, working class

that has made such a magnificent response to the country's call.

"No, miss, we are not taking many prisoners now. No, we're not likely to. Well, think of our case. Just one little bit out of the whole long line. They caught our sergeant—the sergeant of my company. We were all very fond of him. Well, miss, they put him up where we could all see him—top of their trench—and tortured him. Yes, miss, all day they tortured him in sight of us, and all day we were trying to get at them and we couldn't. And when in the evening we did get at them, he was dead, miss. We were all very fond of him. We weren't likely to give much quarter after that. And our officers"—here he smiles suddenly—"well, miss, we're Territorials, you see. Our officers just let us loose. We're Territorials," he repeated. "They can't keep us as they keep the regulars. Not in the same military way. No, miss, we didn't give much quarter!"

Our daughter groans a little. She understands, she sympathizes, yet she regrets. She would like our men to be as absolutely without reproach as they are without fear.

"But you wouldn't bring yourself down to the level of the Germans," she says; "you wouldn't cease doing right because they do wrong?"

He fixes her with bright blue eyes, and they are hard as steel.

"Your British blood will boil," he says slowly.

It seems impossible to associate such a dark and awful tragedy with this slim English boy and his unconquerable air of joyous youth. The Signorina remembers the repeated phrase, "We were all very fond of him," and she sickens from the thought of that hellish picture of cruelty and agony on one side, of the impotent grief and rage on the other.

To change the subject, she says:

"How were you wounded?"

And then it transpired he had been carrying in the British wounded at the end of that day. He had been hit in the leg without knowing it, and just as he was starting off to help to carry in the German wounded, he collapsed.

To help to carry in the German wounded! Those Germans who had tortured his own

comrade all day! Dear Tommy! Dear, straight, noble, simple British soldier! How could one ever have mistrusted your rough justice or your Christian humanity?

Real boy that he is, he warms up to the glee of narrating his audacities when out at night with a party on listening-post duty.

"Rare fun it was," he declares.

He used to creep up to the enemy's trench and bayonet what came handy.

"I couldn't fire, you see, miss, nor do anything likely to make a noise, so it had to be done on the quiet. But I got a good many that way."

Baby Vivi is tired of her game of cards. For a while past she has been amusing herself by boxing the two sitting soldiers. Very well-delivered vigorous thumps she applies on their chests with her little fists, and they obligingly go over backwards on the grass. She now comes to exercise her powers on the Territorial. He catches her in his arms.

The men all look at the little girl with strange, troubled, tender eyes. One knows what is at the back of their thought. One of them expresses it presently.

To think that anyone could ever hurt a little creature like that!"

Vivi's young mother sits with her small group further away. She has told them how she has fled out of her castle in the Ardennes at dawn, without having had time even to pack her children's clothes. They had thought themselves safe with the pathetic hopefulness that filled poor Belgium from the moment when the French troops and the English appeared in strength upon the soil. "Now all is well," they said; "now we are safe."

A French General and his staff lodged in the château, and the men camped in the park. On the vigil of the day fixed for their intended advance, the General took her on one side. An old man, he had been through the whole of the war of '70. He solemnly warned her of the folly of remaining in her home, as she intended.

"Madame, I know the Germans. I know of what they are capable. I have seen them at work; I have not forgotten."

Should the invader reach a certain point within ten miles of the district she must fly.

All that night the aviators kept coming with messages, and in the early dawn they

started. She was up and saw the cavalcade winding away through the park. She stood in the porch to wish them God-speed. The young men were full of ardour. They were going forth to meet the enemy. The General was grave. When he had reached the public road, he sent one of his aide-de-camps riding back at a gallop. Was it a premonition of disaster, or had secret news reached him by some emissary from the field of conflict? The message to her was, that she was to be gone at once with her family. At once!

The young husband had already departed at break of day in their automobile. He and his machine had been offered to the service of the country and accepted. The mother, with her four little children—among them the sturdy, two-year-old Viviane — had to walk to the station, with what luggage could be got together and trundled down in a wheelbarrow. Luckily it was not far—their own station just outside the park-gates. They got the last train that ran from that doomed spot. The German guns were within earshot as they steamed away.

In their hurry they had forgotten to bring any milk or water for the baby girl. The heat

was suffocating. The only thing that could be laid hold of was a bottle of white wine which someone had thrust into a bag. Vivi clamoured, and they gave her half a glassful in the end. She enjoyed it very much, and it did not disagree with her at all.

The men in their blue garb listen to some of this story with profound attention. They have a very touching, respectful, earnest way of talking to the Belgian lady, and are very anxious to impress upon her that soon they will have her country cleared of the enemy.

"You tell her that, miss. She do believe it, don't she? We're going to sweep them out in no time. Tell her that, miss. That's what we're over there for. She'll soon be able to get back there—back in her own home."

One of them gazes at her for a while in a kind of brooding silence, and then says huskily:

"Isn't it a mercy you got away, ma'am—you and your little children!"

He knows. He has seen.

Then Viviane is called upon to sing "Tipperary."

Though only just three, this child, as has been said before, she looks a sturdy four. The

most jovial solid, red-cheeked, blue-eyed, smiling, curly-haired little girl that it is possible to imagine. Her mother says that she never lost her balance and tumbled down even when she first began to toddle; and one can well believe it. There is a mixture of strength and deliberation in everything she does that makes one regret she is not a boy. But she has pretty, coaxing, coquettish ways that are quite feminine.

She now puts her head on one side, and ogles with her blue eyes first one soldier and another, and smiles angelically as she pipes "Tipperary."

This is a favourite song among the infant population these days. The child of a friend of ours calls it her hymn, and sings it in church.

There is something really engaging in Viviane's roll of the "r's." Her Tipperary is very guttural and conscientious, and her "Good-bye, Piccadeely" always provokes the laughter of admiration.

Encouraged by applause, she bursts into, "We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go." And is quite aware, the

little rogue, of the effect she will presently produce when, upon an incredibly high note, she announces, "We will *keess* you."

After this, she breaks into piety with, "Paradise, oh! Paradise."

The little plump nurse gets up and shakes out her cloak. It is getting quite late, and they must go back to the hospital. She marshals her charges up on the terrace. They obey her just as if they were very good little boys in charge of their schoolmistress.

"Now say good-bye, and thank you. I'm sure you've all enjoyed yourselves. No. 20, where's your hat? Go down and get your hat, No. 20. No; his poor leg's tired. You go down and get it, No. 13."

"I seen it a while ago," No. 13 announces obligingly.

They say "good-bye" and "thank you" with the conscientiousness of their simple hearts. We shake, one after the other, those outstretched hands that grip back so cordially.

A guest of the Villino—an honoured guest, who is not only one of the most distinguished women artists of the day, but has lived all her married life within soundof the drum; who

has been always inspired by the sights and scenes, the high glories and noble disasters of warfare—expresses the feeling struggling in our hearts as she retains the hand of the last of the file of blue-coats in hers: "What an honour to shake the hand of a British soldier!"

We hear them troop away through the little courtyard, laughing and talking. We think, as the small nurse said, that they have had a pleasant time.

One of the small side amusements in life is to hear other people's reflections upon experiences that one has lived through together, and to measure the distance that lies between different points of view. It makes one realize how extraordinarily difficult it must be to obtain reliable evidence.

A neighbour has obligingly come in to help us with the entertainment. She is the pleasant, middle-aged Irish widow of an Irish doctor, and her good-humour is as pronounced as her brogue. Finding herself alone on the terrace with the Signorina after the departure of the convalescents, she mystified her with the following remark:

"How frightened the poor old lady was!"

The poor old lady? The Signorina was all at sea. There was no one answering to such a description among us to-day.

"The poor old lady," repeated the other firmly. "Yes, Lady ——. I was talking to her, and oh! anybody could see how terrified she was. Nervous, you know; trembling at the mention of the war, upset, shrinking away. And no wonder, I'm sure," she concluded genially. "Hasn't she got a son out there?"

She betook herself down the steps towards her cottage. Our daughter watched the purple-spotted blouse meandering downwards from terrace to terrace till it disappeared. She was too astounded even to be able to remonstrate.

And, indeed, of what use would it have been? That Lady ——, distinguished, humorous, with her figure erect and slender as a girl's, and her refined, delightful face stamped with genius on the brow, and with the most delicate humour about the mouth; that this incomparable woman, actually in the zenith of her power, personal as well as artistic, a being whom it seems that age can never touch, to whom the years have so far only brought a maturing of

all kinds of excellence, should have appeared to anyone as the *poor old lady!* And that she should be further classed among the frightened! She who more than any fighter of them all sees the romance of war, the high lesson of war; who only the day before, speaking of a discontented soldier friend, had said to us in tones of wonder:

"He's not enjoying war! It seems so strange."

There was nothing for it but to laugh. But what an insight into the manner in which "other people see us."

In the Signora's early teens her family indulged in a Dublin season, during which a very worthy prelate, the Cardinal Archbishop of her Church, died. He was full of years and good works, but at no moment of his existence remarkable for good looks.

A sprightly housemaid of the establishment demanded permission to go and visit the church where he was laid out in state. On her return the Padrona's mother inquired how the sight had impressed her, expecting a duly pious response.

Quoth the damsel, with her brisk Dublin accent:

"Well, really, 'm, I thought the Cawdinal looked remawkably well!"

As a rule, however, the Irish lower classes are more quick to seize shades of feeling, refinements of emotion, than the poor of other races; especially—to hark back to a former page—that peasantry of the older type in which a vivid spirituality was kept alive by their faith. A chaplain has written to us from the Isle of Wight speaking of the immense consolation he had had in the presence of some Irish soldiers among the troops stationed there. "Their faith made me ashamed."

But indeed the feeling of religion among all our men, of whatever creed, and from whatever part of the British Isles they have come, is not one of the least remarkable manifestations of the war.

"I knew I would not be killed," said a wounded soldier beside whose bed we sat the other day. "But I knew I'd come back a better man, and I think I have."

Then he added that the only thing that troubled them, lying in hospital, was the thought of the comrades in the thick of it, and not being able to help them.

"Of course," he went on thoughtfully, "we can pray. We all do that, of course; we do pray, and we know that helps."

This man was neither Irish nor Catholic.

Infinitely touching are the remarks they make, these dear fellows; beautiful sometimes in their unconscious heroism.

"Well, at least," said the Signorina to a man permanently crippled by shrapnel, saddened by the decision that he could never go back to the front. "At least you know you've done your little bit."

"Ah, but you see, miss," he answered in all simplicity, "among us the saying goes, no one has really done his little bit till he's underground."

"Will you mind going back?" said a rather foolish friend of ours to an exhausted, badly wounded sufferer in a Dublin hospital. He had seen Mons and its horrors, all the brutality of war with little of its concomitant glory. The eyes in his drawn face looked up at her steadily.

"If it's my dooty, lady, I'm ready to go."

"I'd give my other leg to go back," said a maimed lad to Lady ——. He was in a hospital

at Lyndhurst, a fair, splendid boy, not yet eighteen.

"Don't make me too soft, Sister," pleaded an Irish Fusilier with five bullet wounds in his back, to his kindly nurse in the little convent hospital near here. "I've got to finish my job out there."

At a recent lecture delivered on "Five Months with the British Expeditionary Force"—his own experience—Professor Morgan made use of these remarkable words: "Our men count no cost too high in the service of the nation. They greet death like a friend, and go into battle as to a festival."

What wonder, then, that there should be such an unshakable spirit of confidence throughout the whole of our army, for with conscience at peace, and eyes fixed on their high ideal, they go forth to fight, knowing that, as a great preacher has said, those who do battle in a just cause already carry the flame of victory on their foreheads.

IX

IT'S A FAR CRY TO PERSIA

" Come, my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready !
Have you your pistols ?—Have you your sharp-edged axes ?
* * * * *
For we cannot tarry here—we must march, my darlings ; we must bear the brunt of danger !
* * * * *
O resistless, restless race ! O beloved race in all ! O, my breast
Aches with tender love for all !
O, I mourn and yet exult. I am rapt with love for all !

WALT WHITMAN.

THE master of the Villino got the telegram when he was shaving, that morning of October 26.

"Slightly wounded. Going London.—H."

He came straight in to the Signora, who instantly read all kinds of sinister meanings into the reticent lines.

Slightly wounded! H. would be sure to say that whatever had happened. Even if he had lost an arm or a leg he might very well try and break it to us in some such phrase. There were certainly grounds for consolation in the

fact that he should be "going London," but were not the papers full of accounts of the felicitous manner in which the transport of very serious cases was being daily accomplished?

The only brother and very precious! Always in the Signora's mind—stalwart, middle-aged man as he is—doubled by and impossible to dissociate from a little fair-haired boy, the youngest of the family, endeared by a thousand quaint, childish ways. That he should be wounded, suffering Heaven knew what unknown horror of discomfort and pain, was absurdly, but unconquerably to her heart, the hurting of the child. Alas! if an elder sister feels this, what must the agony of the mothers be all through the world to-day!

We telephoned to the clearing station at Southampton, and found that the ambulance train had already started. Then the master of the Villino, and the sister whose home is with us, determined to leave for London themselves and endeavour to trace our soldier.

It was late in the afternoon when a comforting telegram came through to those left behind; it told us that H. had been run to earth; that the

wound was indeed favourable ; that he was well in health, and that we might expect him here to be nursed in a couple of days.

Very glad the Villino was to have him, very proud of its own soldier, deeply thankful to be granted the care of him !

The Signorina immediately instituted herself Red Cross nurse, the local lectures having borne fruit after all. The wound was for us and for him a very lucky one, but the doctor called it dreadful, and, indeed, one could have put one's hand into it; and Juvenal, summoned to assist at the first dressing, fainted at the sight. But it had not touched any vital point, and though the muscle under the shoulder-blade was torn in two, it has left no weakness in the arm.

Like all soldiers we have met, he will not hear of the suggestion that it was inflicted by a dum-dum bullet. Nevertheless, it is a singular fact that where the bullet went in the hole is the ordinary size of the missile, and where it came out it is the size of a man's fist. Something abnormal about that German projectile there must have been. But we were ready to go down on our knees and thank God

fasting for a good man's life; and it was clear that it would take a long time to heal!

Anyone who knows our soldiers knows the perfectly simple attitude of their minds as far as their own share in the great struggle is concerned. Further, they have an everyday, common-sense, unexaggerated manner of speaking of their terrible experiences which helps us stay-at-homes very much—we who are apt to regard the front as a nightmare, hell and shambles mixed.

"We were a bit cut up that day, but we got our own back with the bayonet."

"Well, they took our range rather too neatly, but man for man Tommy's a match for the Hun any day, even if we were short of shells."

"Poor lads! they had to trot off before they'd had their breakfast—a six-mile walk and stiff work to follow—after three days and three nights of it below Hollebeke. We'd been sent back for a rest when the message came; but the men didn't mind anything, only the loss of the breakfast. 'Such a good breakfast as it was, sir,' as one of them said to me. Six o'clock in the morning and a six-mile march! A few of the fellows clapped their bacon into their

pockets. The line was broken and the Germans coming in. Someone had to drive them out, and the Worcesters came handy."

"Oh yes, we did it all right; running like smoke they were, squealing—they can't stand the bayonet!"

That was the "little bit" where our soldier got his wound.

"It's nothing at all, me child."

His sergeant dressed it first at the back of the firing-line, then he walked into Ypres. He went to the hospital, found it crowded—'Lots of fellows worse than I was'—so he strolled away and had his hair cut!—"A real good shampoo and a shave, and a bath, and then a jolly good dinner!" And then he proceeded to look up some nice fellows of the Irish Horse. And in the end he went back to the hospital, and they "did him up!"

When one thinks that in peace time, if anyone had accidentally received such a wound, what a fuss there would have been! What a sending for doctors and nurses! what long faces! what lamentations, precautions, and misgivings! It makes one understand better the state of things over there. How splendidly indifferent our

manhood has become to suffering! How gloriously cheap it holds life itself!

H. is happily not among those unfortunate brave men who suffer nervous distress from the sights, the scenes, and the strain of warfare, but he has a keen, almost a poetic, sensibility to the romance and tragedy of his experiences.

As he sat, those November days, in one of the deep arm-chairs before the great bricked hearth in the Villino library, a short phrase here and there would give us a picture of some episode which stamped itself upon the memory of the listener.

"Lord, it was jolty, driving along in the ambulance to the station! The poor boy next to me—badly wounded, poor chap! lost a lot of blood—he got faint and lay across my breast; went to sleep there in the end."

"Shells? 'Pon me word, it was beautiful to see them at night! Oh, one's all right, you know, if one keeps in one's trenches. One of my subalterns—ah, poor lad! I don't know what took him—he got right out of the trench and stood on the edge, stretching himself. A shell came along and bowled him over. We dug

him out. He was an awfully good-looking boy. There wasn't a scratch on him, but he was stone dead; his back broken. And there he lay as beautiful as an angel. The Colonel and I, we buried him. He was twenty-three; just married. The Colonel and I used to bury our men at night."

Suddenly the speaker's shoulders shook with laughter.

"Those shells! One of my fellows had one burst within a yard of him. Lord, I thought he was in pieces! He was covered in earth and rubbish! 'Has that done for you?' I called out to him. 'I think it has, sir,' he said, and you should have seen him clutching himself all over! And then there was a grin. 'No, sir, it's only a bruise!' Oh, you get not to mind them, except one kind; that does make a nasty noise—a real nasty noise; it was just that noise one minded. Ugh, when you heard it coming along! Spiteful, it was!"

In the private London hospital where he spent three days the bed next to him was occupied by a Major of Artillery, wounded in the head.

"There was not much wrong with him, poor

old chap! but he had got a bit of nerve-strain. Lord, he never let me get a wink, calling out all night in his sleep: 'D—— that mist! I can't see the swine. A bit more to the left. Now, now, boys, now we've got them! Oh, damn that mist! Ha! we got them that time—got the swine!"

The doctors who saw our soldier were rather surprised to find him so calm in his mind. They could scarcely believe he should sleep so sound at nights—that the human machine should be so little out of gear. Yet there were days when he called himself "slack," looked ill enough, and one could see that even a short walk was a severe trial of strength.

We shall not lightly forget a funny little incident which happened upon an afternoon when he seemed peculiarly exhausted. He was sitting in his arm-chair close to the fire, looking grey and drawn, declaring that the north-east wind never agreed with him. A kindly clerical neighbour rushed in upon us. He had just heard that fifty thousand Germans had landed at Sheringham. All the troops were under orders. Despatch riders had galloped from Aldershot to stop the billeting

of a regiment just arrived here. The men had started up in the middle of their dinners and begun to pack again. They were to go back to Aldershot and concentrate for the great move. Further—indisputable authority!—the Chief Constable of the county had private information of the invasion.

You should have seen our soldier! He was up out of his chair with a spring, his blue eyes blazing. All the langour, the unacknowledged stiffness and ache of his wound, were gone. If ever there was a creature possessed with the pure joy of battle it was he. How much the womenkind miss who have never seen their men leading a charge! What a vital part of a man's character lies dormant in times of peace!

There is, we believe, a large number of people who regard this fighting spirit as a purely animal quality; recently, indeed, a certain professor delivered a lecture on the subject of wild dogs and wolves who fight in packs, with special reference to the present state of humanity. These thinkers, sitting at ease in their armchairs, placid materialists, who have never known their own souls, much less do they know those of their countrymen.

What we saw in our soldier's eyes was, we swear, the leap of the spirit—the fine steel of the soul springing out of the scabbard of the body, the fire from the clay. Carlyle has somewhere a lovely phrase anent that spark of heroism that will burn in the heart of the lowest British soldier, the poorest, dullest peasant lad, and make of him hero and martyr, enable him to face long agony and death, endure as well as charge.

So H. flung off his languor and dashed out of his armchair and sprang to the telephone to order himself a car, and presently departed, already invisibly armed, in search of—this time—an invisible foe. For the foe was invisible!

No one knew whence the scare had come; whether there were any real justification for the preparations which were certainly ordered. The regiment which had had to pack up again just as it had got into its billets, and go back to Aldershot in the very middle of its dinner, was kept under arms all night; but there was never the point of a single *Pickelhaube* visible on the horizon at Sheringham or elsewhere. And on examination it turned out that the "Chief Constable" of the county, that unimpeachable

and alarming authority, had been none other than the local policeman, which was a come-down indeed! But the thrill was not altogether unpleasant, and we like to remember the sick soldier springing up, that St. Michael fire in his blue eyes.

In a short account written for his school magazine, H. summarizes the experiences of his own regiment at Ypres thus:

"All the officers in my company are wounded or invalided. The men are very cheerful under all the hardships and losses, and their behaviour under fire is splendid. The Brigade (5th) has been taken three times at least to 'mend the line' where the Germans had broken through. From October 24 to November 5 my regiment lost about 450 officers and men—mostly, thank God, wounded. The Germans can't shoot for nuts, but their artillery fire is accurate and *incessant*, and the machine-guns very deadly."

There is nothing more touching than the devotion of the officers to their men. They feel towards them truly as if they were their children.

"No officer," said the widow of a great general to us the other day, "ever thinks of himself in action, ever casts a thought to the bullets flying about him. Indeed, the officers don't seem to believe they can get hit; they're so occupied in looking after their men. All the time they're looking at their men."

Even as we write these lines we see the death, in the Dardanelles, of a young officer who had been under H. when he was training reserves during his recent period of convalescent home service. This youth was, in our brother's eyes, the perfection of young manhood. He prophesied for him great things. He told us many stories of his quaint humour and incisive wit. One anecdote remains. Among their recruits were between twenty and thirty extremely bad characters—slack, undisciplined fellows, worthless material belonging almost to the criminal classes. After working in vain with all his energy to endeavour to put some kind of soldierly discipline into them, young W. paraded them in the barrack yard, and addressed them in the following language:

"His Majesty's Government cannot afford

nowadays to spend money uselessly. You are a dead waste to the nation. You are not worth the food you get nor the clothes you wear. It has been decided, therefore, to send you to the front; and, as every man is bound to do his utmost to help his country in the present crisis, it is earnestly to be hoped that you will, each one of you, endeavour to get himself shot as soon as possible."

We understand that the result of this stringent discourse on that "bad hat" squad was miraculous, although the sergeant-major was so overcome with mirth that he had to retire to give vent to it.

This boy had been serving in the East in a wild and difficult district, and had distinguished himself so remarkably that he was summoned to the Foreign Office to advise upon an expedition which it was proposed to send to those regions. Never was there any life so full of promise. Gay and gallant youth, it seems a cruel decree that the bullet of some vile Turk should have had the power to rob England of a son so likely to do her signal honour and service in the future. "It is the best that are taken"—a phrase sadly familiar

just now that finds only too true an echo in everyone's experience.

There was another, whom we had known from the time when he was an apple-cheeked little boy in petticoats—a sunny, level-headed child, who gave the minimum of trouble and the maximum of satisfaction to his parents from the moment of his appearance on this earth. All his short life always busy, always happy. His mother said that she had never seen a frown of discontent on his face. Head boy at Harrow, where the authorities begged to be allowed to keep him on another year for the sake of the good example he gave; writer of the prize essay three years running; winner of all the cups for athletics; champion boxer and fencer—with these brilliant qualities he had—rare combination indeed!—a steady, well-balanced mind. With high ideals he had a sober judgment. He was but twenty. With all these achievements—splendid lad!—he fell leading his platoon of Highlanders at Aubers upon that most ill-fated, most tragic 9th of May.

"I always wanted my son to be just like Keith"—more than one friend gave this tribute to the stricken father.

Characteristic of the unchanged romantic mysticism that lies deep in the hearts of the Scots—Scots of the glens and hills—are the words in which the local paper refers to the loss which had befallen the country in the death of the gallant young officer: "He died like a Stewart: he dreed his weird, he drank the cup of his race!"

It is the fine flower of our young manhood that is being mown down. What is to become of England, robbed of her best? It seems such waste and loss; we who cannot fight feel at times as if the pressure of such calamity "doth make our very tears like unto bloode." But we must believe that it is not waste, but seed; that the nations who sow in tears will reap in joy; that each of these young lives, so gladly given, shares in the redemption of the country; that, in all reverence, in all faith, that they are mystically united to Calvary; and that their glory will be presently shown forth even as in the glory of resurrection!

A correspondent writing from the front describes the expression in the eyes of the friendly officer, who has been his guide, as he pointed out the myriad crosses of the burial-

ground. "He looked envious," he says, and adds that he noticed that all out there "speak with envy of the dead."

Is not the nation's honour sharpened to its finest point when the ideal of its manhood is to die for the country? *Dulce et decorum* . . .

We were very glad, nevertheless, when, in spite of his repeated applications to return to his own men, H. was ordered to take a command in the Persian Gulf. The link that binds a man to comrades with whom he has shared every possible danger and hardship, to those who have faced death with him, whom he has himself led on to peril and agony, the while they have been to him as his children—such a link is indeed one that is hard to break! Their peril has been his; their glory is his pride.

"If I can single out one regiment for special praise," said the Commander-in-Chief," it is the Worcesters."

And again:

"I consider the Worcesters saved Europe on that day."

It is no wonder that H. should be proud of them; that the thousand fibres should draw him back to them.

But, when the summons came, he was told "to prepare for a hot climate." And then, of all strange things, or so it seemed to us, we found that his destination was Persia. The Garden of Eden! Further, it was rumoured, the objective was likely to be Bagdad. It sounded like a fairy tale. He promised us Attar of Roses; and indeed, we think, carpets. And a flippant niece wrote to him that she was sure that by a little perseverance he could find a magic one, and come sailing across the sky some night after duty, like the merchant in the Arabian nights. She added: "And do bring me a hanging garden, if you can." But when the parting came it was a very cruel reality. It's a far cry to Persia!

He started on the day of the sinking of the *Lusitania;* a date branded on the history of the world till the end of all time. The two who had gone to fetch him and brought him home—so contented in their tender anxiety that he was safely wounded—saw him on board the great liner.

Many Indians returning to Bombay, a few officers ordered to his own destination, a batch of nurses for Malta, and one or two ladies

hurrying to their sons wounded in the Dardanelles—these were all his fellow-passengers.

It somewhat restored our confidence, shaken by the facile success of the monstrous crime, to know that they were to be convoyed a certain way, and that they had a gun on board. Nevertheless, they were not to escape menace.

"The evening we started," he wrote, "I asked the steward if they had seen any submarines about. 'No, sir,' he admitted reluctantly. Then brightened up, anxious to oblige, 'But we have seen a lot of luggage floating about—trunks and clothes, sir.'"

(It was obvious no passenger need give up hope; and, indeed, the letter posted at Gibraltar continues):—

"I have had no occasion to use your life-saving waistcoat yet, though, as a matter of fact, we *had* a small-sized adventure with a submarine. At dinner on Monday we felt that they had suddenly altered the ship's course. It aopears that a submarine was spotted about five hundred yards away. The captain slewed the vessel round to bring our one gun to bear on her. However, the smoke obscured our

view, and the submarine must have seen our gun, as she disappeared."

Then comes an anecdote, dreadfully characteristic of our happy-go-lucky English ways, a comedy that might have been—for this house, at least, God knows!—the direst tragedy.

"Next day," he continues, "we had gun practice, but it turned out that none of the gun's crew knew how to work her; and after fumbling for about two hours, a passenger came along and showed them how to manage her, and fired her off. We all cheered."

The next stage on that lengthening journey that is to take him so unrealizably far away from us is Malta. The place laid its spell upon him, though at first he writes:

"From the ship both islands looked most unprepossessing: dry, arid, khaki-coloured lumps, full of khaki-coloured buildings. Once on shore one begins to love the place. The buildings, fortifications, and general spirit are most inspiring and grandiose. One expects to see some proud old Templar riding down the gay streets, looking neither to the right nor left. I had no time to do any of the right Cathedrals, where there are wonderful paint-

ings by Michael Angelo, etc., nor the Grand Master's Palace Armoury, with the knight's armour, nor the Inquisitor's Palace. I went off to look for wounded Worcesters from the Dardanelles. I had no time to see anything else as the hospital was a long way off.

"Every hole and corner is turned into a beautiful garden, with lovely flowers and 'penetrating scents,' fountains, and shady palms and trees.

"How you would revel in the churches! They are more numerous than in Rome, and quite beautiful. The people, too, are intensely religious.

"There are many French shops here, and the French women look tawdry beside the Maltese, with their wonderful black cloaks and reserved aristocratic air.

"I am sending you a weird map full of quaint spelling, given to me by a wounded Worcestershire (4th Batt.) sergeant, at the hospital at Malta, and a rough idea of the difficulties of the landing. Early on one Monday morning, about 1 a.m., the ships got into position round the promontory, with the troop lighters behind. About 4 a.m. the latter were towed off during

a bombardment such as never has been heard or seen before in the history of the world.

"The Turks did not reply till the boats got quite close to shore and the ships' guns could not fire on the located maxims (which were sunk in deep, narrow slips close to the shore). As far as I gathered, the Lancashire Fusiliers were the first actually to get on shore on the extreme left at Tekki Barna, where they charged with the bayonet and the Turks retired. They were able to enfilade a good portion of the ground, and enabled the Essex and 4th Worcesters, both of whom had suffered very heavily from Maxim fire, to land and drive the Turks back. Three boatloads of Dublin Fusiliers were wiped out by gun and Maxim fire near Ish Messarer point. The Lancashire Fusiliers suffered rather badly from the fire of some of our ships' guns, which, of course, could not be helped.

"The Worcesters were sent up to help the Essex, and advanced against some barbed wire, which a young subaltern called Wyse volunteered to cut. He rolled over sideways till he got under the wire and cut it from strand to strand upwards. As he got to the last strand

a sniper shot off two fingers in successive shots.

"The snipers had their faces painted green to harmonize with the surroundings, and were calmly surrendering as we advanced, having picked off numbers of men. They were all shot, however, *pour encourager les autres*.

"My sergeant was shot in the hip that evening, but he told me that by Wednesday the troops had secured Envedos, a most important position, and the safe landing of stores and guns was thus secured.

"He said the Turks either ran from the bayonet or surrendered. The prisoners said they did not want to fight, but were forced to do so by the Germans.

"The ships are in their more or less correct position in the map, the sergeant says, as he took trouble to find out from a naval chart."

From Malta to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Aden, and from thence to Bombay. His letters mark each point of his Odyssey. And at Alexandria he is fascinated with the movement and colour; he goes on shore and visits the shops; he parts from the delightful American lady who has been the life and soul of the ship;

she whose wounded son awaits her in Cairo. At Aden, the heat striking at them from the shore prevents him from landing; an unattractive torrid spot. Here they take in a young Indian Government official, who gives an interesting detail upon his destination:

"He knew Wilcox very well, the man who was going to make the barrage on the Euphrates and Tigris, and convert Mesopotamia into the richest country in the world. Wilcox said he found all the details given in the Bible about the various depths and breadths of the rivers absolutely accurate — curious after all these centuries!"

At Bombay he has a pleasant time; a brother officer having wired to relations who take him about and show him what is most worth seeing in his short stay. He puts up at the Bombay Yacht Club, "wonderful place, like fairyland, with palms and fountains and music, with cool, quiet rooms looking out over wide and lovely views." He goes on long drives "under trees that grow for miles and miles along the sea coast, where the graceful-moving natives in their bright colours look awfully picturesque."

He sees the famous towers of silence where, with effective, but no doubt quite unconscious, alliteration, he describes "the ghoulish vultures sitting grimly in the glorious gold mohur trees."

His last letter says: "I start on Sunday for Bosra."

He believes that they will remain at Bosra, and makes little of the fact that the heat is terrible there just now

"We will live in cool underground rooms," he says, "and be all right!"

And now we know that we shall not have news of him again for a long time. A thousand anxieties assail us, for which we can have no reassurance. We picture him in that strange region, but realize that of its strangeness we can form no real image.

He will see the dead cities and the great desert wastes and the swamps—it is in those swamps under the merciless sun that our terror lies; he will deal with a fierce and treacherous people whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, whose motives and beliefs are irreconcilably alien; and this dangerous race is fermenting under the influences, the money, the lies, the

ceaseless open and secret poison leaven of a race more treacherous, more dangerous still.

Blinding sunshine, black shadows, arid stretches of dried earth and mud and burnt vegetation; the colour of the Eastern crowd, the river waters and the harbour stretch; the Arab and the Kurd, the Turk, the Armenian, and the Jew, sights and scenes and creatures that have been but as names to us, are about him. He has followed the drum from Cape Town to Magaliesburg, from Bloemfontein to Bethlehem, from Gibraltar to Cork, from Soupir to Ypres, from Ypres to Plymouth, and from Plymouth to the Euphrates; he has left his cool, green Ireland, his hunting and his fishing, his own wide acres and the rural life among his beasts for this picturesque, unknown, uncertain destiny!

Often in the long hot hours will not his mind go back to those stretches of shady, luxuriant park land where his cattle feed; to the great lime avenue with the voice of the bees; the circle of the purple hills, the woods, those incomparable woods of our old home with their cool depths of bracken, silver green; the

dells, the climbing roads, the view over the "deer-park" to the sunset, which impressed even our childish imaginations; the voice of the wild pigeons through the trees; and the immense white house—empty—which before this war broke out, he was about to furnish; the corridors, the vast rooms full of memories; latterly, to us, of hopes. His heart will be there, we know.

And his home is guarded by his faithful Spanish servant, who followed him, out of love, from those far Gibraltar days of his young soldier's life; who, when a legacy made of him a comparatively rich man, refused to profit of it, and sent the money back to a distant relative in Spain, saying: "What do I want of it? You, my master, you, my father, you, my mother, you, my country, you, all I want!" Pedro, by a singular freak of fate, ruling this Irish land with an equal zeal and ability, writes to us: "I pray my dere master may come home safe. I have great hope in Our Lady, the Mother of God."

What is left to us, too, but a similar trust? We can but commend him to the Father of All that He may overshadow him with His

shoulders; that the sun should not burn him by day, nor the moon by night; that he may be guarded from the arrow that flieth by day, from the assault of the evil one in the noon-tide!

X

A THREE DAYS' CHRONICLE

> "Happy in England! I could be content
> To see no other verdure than its own:
> To feel no other breezes than are blown
> Through the tall woods with high romances blent;
> Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment
> For skies Italian . . ."
>
> KEATS.

JUNE 29, 1915.—The feast of Peter and Paul comes round with a new significance. In war time we learn the meaning of so much that has seemed unimportant; of things hidden away at the back of our consciousness—things neglected, unknown, or even despised—and we learn, too, the worthlessness of so much that has seemed paramount and necessary, desirable and precious. War is a stern master. He teaches above all the relative values; how to weigh the greater against the less; how to fling away with one superb gesture the whole sum of human possessions for a single imperishable prize.

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

He who spoke these words gently to a handful of poor Jews now seems to cry them with a voice of thunder from end to end of the earth.

Thus, this, their festival day, brings the two great champions of the Cross—and it is for Christ and the Cross that every son of England is fighting to-day—before our minds with a singular vividness and nearness: Peter, type of the natural man, untutored; sure of himself and of his own good impulses, of the honest purpose of his guileless heart; impetuous, loving, weak, with all purely human weakness, even to betrayal; and—divinely strengthened—Peter the rock, Peter the fisherman who conquered the world! Paul, the Patrician, the apostle born out of due time, whose ardour is all of the intellect, keen as a blade and burning as a flame; the little man of Tarsus upon whose spirit the teaching of all Christianity reposes as firmly to-day as does the Church upon the stone of Peter; Paul, whom the Captain, Christ Himself, enlisted by the miraculous condescension of a personal appeal. Has not every Christian, whatever his creed, vowed them reverence throughout all the ages?

To-day, may not the eyes of the believer look up to them with a new confidence?

The Signora, lying through a wakeful night and thinking of these things, went with a rush of memory back to Rome, to scenes and experiences and thoughts dominated by the memories of the two chief apostles.

There is nothing more characteristic of their lives than the different manners of their death. Peter is Peter to the end; first yielding to the natural impulse, then, by virtue of the grace of God, returning upon himself and leaping to the highest altitude of superhuman sacrifice. In the whole tradition of the Church there is no legend more touching than that which tells us how Peter, flying out of Rome, met the Christ carrying the Cross. It is the original Peter in all his guilelessness who, unstartled by the vision, with the perfect simplicity of his faith, asks: "*Domine quo vadis?*" And it is the sublime founder of the Church of God who, unquestioning, accepts the Master's rebuke, and retraces his steps to face his Lord's torment with the added agony his own holy humility demands.

Every pilgrim to Rome has knelt or stood,

prayed or pondered at the tomb of Peter in the golden twilight of the great Basilica, by the vastness of which, as Marion Crawford says, "mind and judgment are dazed and staggered." Who has not leant on the marble balustrade of the confession and looked down upon the ninety-five gilded lamps that burn there day and night, upon the kneeling white figure of the Seventh Pius?—a vision in which the whole linked grandeur and piety of the Church of Rome seems epitomized. In St. Peter's, Simon, the poor fisherman, is little thought of; it is Peter, saint and pontiff, who is paramount; he who has miraculously fed the lambs and fed the sheep from that hour on the sea of Galilee to this day. And very few remember the old man, too weak and aged to bear his cross, who had climbed half-way to the Janiculum, when his executioners, seeing that he could not advance any further, planted his gibbet in the deep yellow sand and crucified him then and there—head downwards, as he begged them. This is the ancient tradition, and it further tells us that he was followed by but few of the faithful, who stood apart, weeping.

Impressive as are these hallowed spots, these glorious memorials of the Eternal City; however full, to the believer, of the atmosphere of the days of faith—oases in the great desert of life, where the palms of the martyrs are still green and throw a grateful shade—there is nothing, to our minds, in all the grandeur of Rome, even under the dome of Peter, comparable to the effect produced upon the mind by a visit to Tre Fontane.

As Peter was led to die the death of the lowest criminal—the death of his Master—Paul was brought forth to the death of the sword, reserved for the Patrician.

To go to Tre Fontane and visit the spot of his martyrdom is to return to the primitive ages of the Church. The fisherman lies in a tomb such as no king or emperor, no hero or conqueror or best beloved of the world's potentates ever had. And Paul sleeps in that great pillared church *fuori le mura*, in a severity and dignity of magnificence very well befitting the stern fire of the apostle's zeal. But the memory of his martyrdom is consecrated in a curious isolation of poverty, one might almost say, aloofness; an earnest purity that reminds

one, as we have said, of early Christian times. You have all the splendours ; the golden glory, the marble, the mosaic, the sculpture and the jewels; the movement, the colour and the crowd of Rome behind, and you come out into the sweeping solitudes of the Campagna. For those who know and love those strange, arid, melancholy spaces, there is no more potent spell than the hold they lay upon the spirit. The gem-like distances of the mountains, the radiant arch of the Italian sky, the movement of light and shadow over the immense waste, the romance of each of the historic ways, the mystery of the secrets they hold—better pens than ours have striven to embody the charm and failed! Why should we try? It is like a strain of music the meaning of which is lost to us. We hear; we cannot understand. It is too full of messages. It is sad and beautiful and haunting, and withal intensely human. Here you have nature at her wildest and most untrammelled; and yet, never was city so peopled, so thick with memories of all races and all histories; endless streams of pilgrims have traversed the long roads; the centuries have come and gone upon them; the blood,

the tears, the strivings and hopes of all humanity are here.

One looks forward towards wave upon wave of low-lying ground, bordered by the mountain barriers; and each time one looks back, the dome of Peter hangs pearl-like against the sky.

Speaking of the memory of our drive to Tre Fontane, the Signorina is reminded that she has jotted down her impressions in an old diary.

"We drove to the Trappist Monastery," she wrote, "where St. Paul was beheaded. His head is said to have rebounded three times as it struck the earth, and on each of those three hallowed spots there sprang up a miraculous jet of water. The first spring is still warm as if with the glow of the great spirit that there left its mortal frame; the second spring is tepid; the third cold as death.

"The drive is a beautiful one; through the Campagna stretching wide and green on either side, bounded by the mountains, some now snow-capped. The first sight of the monastery breaks on one from the top of a little hill. The huddled buildings appear suddenly at the foot

in a deep valley, shrouded by eucalyptus groves. On the right of the convent the ground rises again, covered with a perfect forest of the same trees. It is one of the saddest and most impressive places I ever saw. It strikes chill, even when the rest of the Campagna is warm, and the continual shuddering of the eucalyptus leaves makes an uncanny murmur. We drove through an avenue of them, grey-green all over, trunks and leaves; and then came to an arched gateway closed by an iron gate.

"We dismounted from our carriage, already quite impressed, and pulled the bell, which echoed with a deep and beautiful note through the monastery grounds.

"A porter opened and we walked into the garden, still under the eucalyptus (mingled here with palms and lemons), and made more beautiful still by the fragments of antique sculpture that border the walks — marble capitols and broken acanthus leaves and pieces of old pavements wonderfully worked in scrolls and twists.

"Papa particularly lost his heart to a lion's head, with a dear flat nose! He could not

tear himself away from it; he wanted it so badly for our new little garden in Surrey!

"As there are three fountains, so there are three churches, but the miraculous springs are all under one roof. This is a fine, comparatively modern church, situated at the end of an avenue of eucalyptus and marble fragments. It has a classic pavement (pagan) representing the four seasons.

"Opposite the entrance are the fountains—built in, now, and covered over, but each with a little opening where the attendant friar will let down a ladle and draw up the water for the faithful. Over each fountain is an altar, with the head of St. Paul, in bas-relief, sculptured by Canova:

"'A la première, l'âme vient à l'instant même de s'échapper du corps. Ce chef glorieux est plein de vie! A la seconde, les ombres de la mort couvrent déjâ ses admirables traits; à la troisième, le sommeil éternel les a envahis, et quoique demeurés tout rayonnants de beauté, ils disent, sans parler, que dans ce monde ces lèvres ne s'entr'ouvriront plus, et que ce regard d'aigle s'est voilé pour toujours.'

"In the right-hand corner of the first altar is the pillar which marks the actual spot of the martyrdom of the fiery-hearted saint. The

ancient Via Lorentina passed along this very place, and here stood the mile-stone, whereat St. Paul was beheaded.

"'This is absolutely certain,' said the monk who conducted us. 'Even protestants acknowledge the death to have taken place here. For the rest,' indicating the three fountains, 'there is only the legend. You may believe it or not, as you like.'

"He looked so happy, this monk. He had been thirty years at Tre Fontane, but there was no sign of age on his face. It was, perhaps, a trifle withered, like a ripe apple that has lain long on a shelf, but that was all. And yet he said that, for the first fifteen years, he had suffered continuously from malarial fever. He had superintended, and even worked at, the planting of the eucalyptus groves which have so purified the district that there has not been one case of the sickness since.

"The other two churches are close to one another. The first is very old and utterly bare, and, in a strange, mournful way, deeply impressive. It dates from the sixth century, and is lofty and vaulted and almost Gothic in its spirit. It has several rose-windows, and there

are many round holes in the walls also. These are now either empty or fitted with common glass, but they were once filled with thin slices of alabaster, or other precious transparencies. At present it seems the embodiment in stone of the Trappist order, 'la piu severa ordine della chiesa Cattolica,' as our monk described it. The church is as cold as a well.

"The last of the three churches is of a much gayer mood: quite Romanesque, perched on a pretty flight of rounded steps. It has a crypt over the bodies of St. Zeno and two thousand and more companions, martyred Christians, who built the Baths of Diocletian."

The drive through that eucalyptus wood here described remains one of the most curious impressions of those Roman days. It was like passing through a Dante circle—the first circle of all, of Limbo, where Virgil met the poet; an unsubstantial wraith-like world, full of a perpetual whisper and murmur:

> "Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
> Non avea pianto, ma che di sospiri,
> Che l'aura eterna facevan tremare:
>
> E cio avvenia di duol senza martiri,
> Ch'avean le turbe, ch'eran molte e grandi,
> E d'infanti, e di femmine e di vivi."

Whether the sky became really overcast as we entered into these mysterious precincts, or whether the height of the trees shadowed the narrow way, certainly there was a dimness about us; not a positive darkness but a negation of light, even as the chill that enfolded us was not so much a cold as a cessation of heat.

But through the gates of the monastery courtyard we saw sunshine again, and white pigeons strutting about the cobbles, picking and preening themselves—a wonderful picture of peace. It is a consecrated spot; a place the most aloof, the most severe, the most denuded of all earthly joys that we have ever seen; a stage on the arid way of pilgrims forging determinedly by the shortest cut to heaven. And yet it is full of sweetness. As from a mountain ledge, the world must lie so far below these Trappists that it is no longer seen, scarcely divined behind its own vapours. No use looking down: looking up—there is the blue sky, and there are the peaks pointing heavenward, still to be conquered. There is very little comfort for the traveller, but he has a strange gladness. He is cradled in ethereal silences. The balm of majestic solitude bathes his soul; his spirit

is cheered by an air as pure as it is vivifying, and he knows that he will climb the peaks.

July 4.—Mrs. McComfort, our cook, has a brother on the Clyde. He writes an extraordinary account of the effort expected of, and given by, the able workman.

"It may be, miss," says Mrs. McComfort to the Signorina, her chief confidant, "he'll be called up for a job on a ship that's just come in, and that'll mean that he and the rest of them will be at it from seven in the morning till eight the next morning. Yes, miss, all night, as well as all day. And then they'll come home, and it's too weary to eat they are, and they'll just roll themselves up and fall asleep, as tired as dogs; and when they've slept a bit, maybe they can get a little food down. And then it's off back again to work! And that'll go on till the job's done. And when the battleships come in, the steamers do be waiting all night upon the Clyde, to take the men up to them, it's that urgent. And, oh, miss, how they do love the ships they've built! And when one is lost, you'd never believe the grief there is, with the men crying and saying: 'It's my old lady's gone, my poor old lady!'"

They need no comment, such stories as these. Here are humble heroes, martyrs of duty; here is the poor heart of humanity, with its infinite power of attachment. We have scarcely heard of anything more touching than the tears of these rough men for their "poor old lady."

We saw a letter the other day from a transport driver describing, to a relative in England, the meeting with an old friend on the blood-stained, shell-battered road at the back of Arras. This man had been the driver of a motor omnibus in a country district at home.

"What do you think?" he writes. "You'll never believe! If I didn't come across old Eliza! Me that drove her for more than three years. I knew her at once, poor old girl! knocked about as she was; I'd have known her anywhere, by the shape of her, knowing her in and out as I did those years, every bit of her. She was a bit the worse for wear, but she was fit for a lot yet; a trifle rattley; but there's a deal of life in her. I can't tell you what I felt when I came across her so sudden. There, I couldn't help patting her and patting her! Poor old Eliza! To think of her and me

meeting again like that, both of us doing our bit, like!"

This fourth day of July brings us the third of the rain and thunder squalls which have followed the great drought.

Japhet says, relaxing to something approaching a smile, that he doesn't see why this should not end by being a nice garden, and that the earth is in very good heart.

Dear English earth, it has need to be in good heart! Who knows what it may yet have to bear and give?

The Villino garden wears the war-time stamp, at least to its owners' eye! The Signora, who has always hitherto plunged at a horticultural list the moment there was a gap in her borders that needed filling or a mistake that needed repairing, which could not be done to her sense of perfection "out of stock," has had to teach economy to wait on necessity, and ingenuity on both. The result is not really gratifying. In all her long experience economy has never been gratifying in any branch of life. But even if the money were there for extravagance—which it isn't—thrift

has become a positive instead of a negative virtue.

"Thou shalt not spend" is now nearly as urgent a commandment as "Thou shalt not steal."

It has set her mind to work more and more, however, upon the desirability of permanence in the garden.

In the borders of the terraces round the house she has decided to put a foot-deep edging of Mrs. Simkins pinks. These are adorable in their time of bloom, and the grey-green foliage is tidy, and a pretty bit of colour all the year round.

This year the lobelia, scantily planted, and the climbing geraniums, pathetically subdivided, will take considerable time before forming the show of flower and foliage without which the Villino garden is a failure. But it is a very good thing for individuals as well as nations to be forced to stop and examine their manner of life. Hideous as the struggle is—dead loss of life and happiness and money—good comes out of the evil at many points. Not the least beneficial lesson is that which teaches us now what an extraordinary amount of money

and energy one has frittered away by easy-going ways, the amount of items one can put down in a household without being the worse —rather, indeed, the better! Even in a little household, what waste, what excess, what follies of mere show! And if this seems a flat contradiction to the remark upon economy passed a little while ago, let it be noted that conscience and inclination are for ever waging war, and that conscience, as is proper, must have the last word. Moreover, once the domination of conscience is established, the results are, in nine cases out of ten, surprisingly bearable. Frugality combines very well with refinement, and simplicity with dignity. One can be as happy with a three-course lunch and a three-course supper-dinner as one was with an endless array of dishes—those dishes which took so much time and material to prepare, and were so often barely touched! The contents disappeared—thrown away, perhaps, or, what was certainly the case in our household, disposed of as *hors d'œuvres* between the dining-room and the pantry.

"Why does your butler always come in chewing?" asked an observant relative.

Juvenal, indeed, despite a certain foreign disregard for his meal-times, made such a practice of snatching morsels in transit that the sixteen-year old footman—chief of the many grievances which determined our separation—who outstayed him, has had to be severely reprimanded for making a clean sweep of the dishes that caught his young fancy, with a special partiality for roast chicken.

The new regimen—agreeable this hot weather—of soup, one cold-meat dish, salad, vegetable, sweet, and dessert—supper, in fact, instead of dinner—has, besides its intrinsic economy, the further advantage of diminishing the expenditure of kitchen coal to an almost incredible degree.

We who have to render an account hereafter, even of every idle word, shall we have to answer, we wonder, for all that unconscious waste which mere convention has induced in our homes? How many poor families might have been fed from the agglomeration of the Signora's years of housekeeping! She did not think. No one thought. It has taken this scourge to make us stop in our easy course, to make us look into ourselves, into our ways.

"What can we do? What can we do without?" These must be now the mottoes written large round our house of life; and, indeed, the first includes the second, for it takes considerable energy to abstain.

"There is none that thinketh in his heart, therefore they shall go down alive into hell."

A very disagreeable text, which comes disagreeably to the mind this Sunday morning, for the *famiglia* have just come back from church, where what is vulgarly called a "hell-fire sermon" was delivered by a Welsh preacher, who, though a Franciscan, is, one of his congregation declared, a revivalist lost to his native hills.

"You ought to go down into hell in spirit every day, me brethren," he thundered, "or ye'll very likely find yourselves there in the end. And what an off-ful thing that 'ud be! And there's thousands and thousands of soa-ouls there this minute, better than you are!"

This was neither comforting, nor, we believe, theological, for the congregation was small, and, on the whole, devout. But no doubt there is a type of mind before which it is necessary to hold up a threat of everlasting punish-

ment; the type of person whom conscription alone can move to serve his country before it is too late.

Not the least remarkable result of the German brutality is that the great majority of its opponents find themselves forced back into the old simplicity of belief. We can no longer afford to deny the existence of demons and their power; and if reason is to keep her balance and the soul her ultimate faith in Divine justice, acceptance of the doctrine of hell and adequate punishment must logically follow.

A celebrated, if rather medievally minded, preacher, whom we once heard lashing the vices of the day, cried sarcastically: "You'll meet the very best society in hell."

Holy man, we doubt if he would have made the same remark to-day! The resort in question must have become so overwhelmingly German.

July 8.—The Signora had been a whole year at the Villino—perhaps the longest time in all her life in one place—but circumstances had summoned her family to London for a few days, and she could not contemplate their being exposed to Zeppelins without her.

The little London house which was our home so long, and—to use nursery parlance—the nose of which has been so completely put out of joint by the Villino, seemed glad to see us again.

How curious is the atmosphere of place! These walls that enfold us, that have seen our swift joys and our great sorrows, our merry hours and our sad ones, become fond of us, as we of them. We are convinced that there is a spirit in inanimate things, something that gives back, that keeps. Do not old places ponder? Are they not set with memories? Do they not know their own? Do they not withhold themselves and suffer from the stranger? Who has not seen the millionaire striving to make himself at home in the great house that will have none of him? Who has not felt what an accident he is, how little he belongs, how little he or his race will ever belong to the stones he has bought, and which he will never own?

And even a little London house in a street may become individual to oneself; and you may feel as the Signora did, that it has missed you, that through long absence you have been

unkind; that if you finally separate yourself from it, it will always want you, and you it. And, after all—it is with houses, as with people—the link is not necessarily that of the blood relationship or long acquaintance. You need not have inherited your affinity. You are in sympathy, or you are not. The Villino claimed us upon our first meeting, but we impressed ourselves upon the town dwelling. It is still home to us; not *the* home, *a* home

We sat in the high-ceilinged drawing-room, with its rather delicate Georgian air, and found old familiar emotions waiting for us. And we thought of all the kind and dear friends we had seen between these walls; of our gay little parties and the music-makers who had made music to us; hours that seemed to belong to another life. Here the great Pole, whose magic hands have refused themselves to the notes ever since his people have been in anguish, made the night wonderful with his incomparable art. We do not think the small London house can ever forget the echoes of that music. It was always a feast for it when he, with whose friendship we feel ourselves so deeply honoured, came to its board. Loki—he was in his puppy-

hood then—decorated with the Polish colours, would dance towards him on his hind-legs. The genius would come in like sunshine, happy himself in the immense pleasure his presence gave. Certainly this rare being seemed to give forth light.

"When he leaves the room," said a friend of his to us, "it is as if the light went out."

If one had the gift of beholding auras, what a halo of fire would one not have seen about that wonderful head? We once said this to him.

"Do you believe in it?" we asked.

He smiled. "I think everyone has got his flame to cultivate. I think I have cultivated mine."

Most truly, indeed, has he done so; and not only in the divine way of his art, for year by year the selflessness and the magnanimity of his character seem to deepen and extend; and so, too—inevitable tragedy of years—the sadness. Impossible for any perfectly noble mind not to gather melancholy as life goes on!—a melancholy culminating in his case with the burthen of agony which the present sufferings of his own race have laid upon his shoulders.

Therefore these memories of the days when

he was as a young god, the days when a celebrated painter could find no truer way of expressing him than by flinging on the canvas the radiant vision of an Apollo, are poignant memories. We are glad that we should have them, yet they bring a stab of pain for that lost high spirit which life inevitably dashes.

With us all, the good ship Youth sets forth merrily with sails taut and pennons fluttering, filling to the wind and breasting the waves! We know that inevitably the storm winds must catch her; that she will be beaten by breakers; drawn out of her course by false currents; that if she become not a derelict, if she does not founder with all hands, she must—too often—cast much of her treasure overboard, furl her white wings, and come creeping into a cold harbour. Even those who, like our rare and wonderful friend, have gathered glory and dignity and power, as they plough a mighty course, have passed from under radiant skies into the gloom of the storm. A sombre thing, the human span, at the best, and most blest nowadays.

What can we say of the fair craft that founders almost as soon as launched? Ah! the young

ghosts in that London drawing-room! The sound of the children's voices yet ringing in our ears! There is "Mustard-Seed," the splendid little fair boy, who had been the favourite of our Shakesperian revels nine years ago—not yet nineteen, not a month a soldier—shot through the head on that Flanders field, the graveyard of England's choicest! And the little Scotch lad, who used to prance about in his black velvet suit, with cheeks that shamed the apple—no one knows where he lies to-day; only two or three saw him fall. And his graver, gentler brother—a prisoner, even as we write in the first agony of the grief which has befallen him in the loss of his life-companion!

And out of a merry group of Irish children, irresponsible, high-spirited, noisy, two brothers sleep in that alien earth—now for ever English—"where their young dust lies," as the poet who wrote so prophetically of his own fate has beautifully said. And yet another is wounded, and another invalided; and the once merry sister, whose gallant husband was left wounded on the field and was missing long weeks, still mourns him as a prisoner.

Of the rest of the company, those companions

of our daughter's own unclouded childish days, some are widows; and some can scarce meet the morning for apprehension of its news, or return to their homes for fear of that orange envelope that may lie on the hall table, or sleep in the night for listening for the sound of the bell. And some are in the Dardenelles, under skies of brass, treading on earth of iron, and some are in those trenches, deep-dyed and battered a hundredfold. Two more brothers—the elder twenty and the younger nineteen—fell within a month of each other. A few are still on English soil, light-heartedly preparing for the great fray, straining like hounds at the leash, staring with bright, impatient eyes towards that goal with its unknown and terrible possibilities; cursing the slow flight of time. Of these one thinks, perhaps, with a heart more tightened than of all the rest!

The reaper has come forth to reap out of season, and the young corn is mown down in the green ear, and all the poppies and the pretty flowers go down with it.

Sitting in rooms which we had not revisited since before the war, these are sad thoughts that the crowded recollections bring.

London itself, however, seemed little changed; even that much-discussed night-darkness hardly noticeable. Driving in the daytime we instinctively counted, with frowning glance, the number of stalwart young men out of uniform, and wondered how any girl could walk with them, much less smile upon them. And our eyes followed the soldiers with pride as they marched by, singing popular catches to inspire themselves in default of the band which the stern necessities of this war forbid. What fine fellows they are—so well set up, looking out with such steady vision upon the future which they have chosen! And the lilt of the merry tune, with what a deep note of pathos it strikes upon the ear!

Of course there are a great many soldiers about London, yet no more than in Jubilee time, and there is no greater excitement among them, and a good deal less among those who watch them pass, than in the days when it was all pomp and circumstance, and no warfare.

London does not carry the stamp of war about her, but we carry it each one of us in our hearts. That is why we sicken from the music-hall posters; why wrath and grief mingle in

our minds at the sight of that bold-eyed community with its whitened face, its vulgar exaggeration of attire, and its unchecked and unashamed hunting of its prey; a prey sometimes visibly unwilling, sometimes pathetically, innocently flattered!

The Zeppelin menace has created no sense of apprehension in the town. The first night of our arrival we conscientiously prepared amateur respirators for ourselves and such of the *famiglia* as accompanied us. Pads of cotton-wool, soaked in a strong solution of soda, were placed within easy reach of the bedside. The next night we said "Bother!" and the third night we forgot all about it. Though the Signora, lying awake, had occasionally a half-amused speculation whether the throbbing passage of some more than usually loud traction-engine, or the distant back-firing of a belated taxicab, might not be the bark of the real wolf at last!

Our little white-haired housemaid, generally left alone to mind the London house, possesses this philosophic indifference. She made herself a respirator. We doubt whether she ever thinks of placing it handy. We believe she

shares the view of the old nurse of a friend of ours into whose garden a bomb really and truly did drop during the recent raid on Southend.

"Frightened, miss? Lord bless you, no! I knew it was only them Germans!"

Nevertheless, though London is neither alarmed nor depressed, we set our faces towards the Villino again with a sense of relief. These days it is better to be in one's own place; and in London we feel only visitors now. Yet, strangely, the country is far more full of the war than the town.

Beginning at Wimbledon, we meet motor-cars filled to overflowing with bandaged, bronze-faced young men, who smile and wave their hands as we whizz by. Dear lads! Some from that greater England beyond the sea, more closely our brothers now than ever before, with ties cemented by the shedding ot blood. *Blut-Bruderschaft*, indeed, you have pledged with us: a Teutonic rite put into practice after a fashion our enemies thought out of the range of possibility.

And presently we come to the camps. Here, where the pine-woods solitary marched, where the heather was wont to spread, crimsoning

and purpling to the line of blue distance—a wonderful vision of wild scenery—here is a brown waste, peopled with a new town. Rows and rows of wooden huts run in parallel lines. Where the trees stood you cannot even guess; but once and again there is the smell of the raw wood, and you see a giant lying lopped of his branches. And the whole place swarms in activity. We pass hundreds of ammunition and gun carriages—the two-wheeled carts for the new howitzers—some already with the guns in place; long sheds where half a dozen smiths are busy shoeing, with groups of patient horses, shoulder by shoulder, waiting outside; we hear the clank of iron upon iron from within; we catch the vision of red fire upon the sleek flank and the brawny arms wielding the hammer. Horses everywhere, it seems—lines of them, picketed; horsemen coming and going: detachments riding up and down among the thickest dust that you have ever imagined; and waggons lumbering, some charged with fodder, some, as we pass, with loaves fresh from the baking. And now a traction-engine, filling the air with noise and smoke, driven by two grimy Tommies who shout at each other

as they throb and bumble along, has to be dodged and left behind.

This is an artillery camp—a marvellous place which gives one a more vivid impression of England's strength, of England's new army, than any words can describe. These splendid, happy, vigorous, busy men; these rows of howitzer and ammunition carts; these thousands of sleek, lively horses; this untiring, determined movement of work and preparation . . . all for the Dardanelles, we hear.

We get out of the dust and the noise and the gigantic stir, and along the green roads again; and then into another camp. A curious stillness here: the myriad huts are all shut up, the sheds empty, even the new shops seemingly untenanted; only here and there stands a stray khaki figure to emphasize the loneliness. They left for the front the day before yesterday. To-morrow twenty thousand new men are expected, like a new swarm of bees, to take their place in the vacated hives.

Home again in the Villino, with all the fur babies washed and waiting for us. Rather a

silent group of dogs, a little offended because we went away. Loki, who generally screams with rapture, has certainly a reservation in the ecstasy of his greetings; but Mimosa clings to us with two little paws, like a child hugging a recovered treasure, and offers kisses, of which she is not generally prodigal. Plain Eliza is shy. She has grown perceptibly in three days.

The garden is full of sweet scents. The dawn, the coronation, and the crimson ramblers are bursting into lovely bloom beside the blue of the delphiniums.

There was always a special kind of joy in the old days about home-coming to the Villino. We used to go from room to room, taking stock of the dear, queer little place; greeting the serene, smiling Madonnas; the aloof angels folded into their prayers; pagan, pondering Polyhymnia in her corner of the drawing-room, brooding upon the glory of times that will never be again. . . . It is all just as it used to be: bowery, without and within, as usual.

Everything is scrubbed to the last point of daisy freshness and polished to spicy gloss against the Padrona's return, and smiling damsels await compliments on the stairs.

Other years, as we say, these were moments of unalloyed light-heartedness. It was always unexpectedly nicer than we had imagined.

"Isn't it dearer than ever?" we would say, then, to each other. "Don't you love it? Aren't we happy here?"

This year it is another cry that rises to our lips.

"Oh, how happy we might be, if only——"

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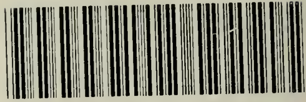
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