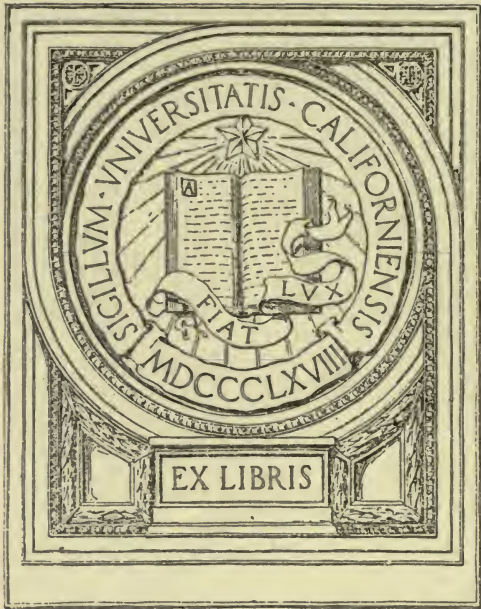


GEORGE CALDERON



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BY
PERCY LUBBOCK

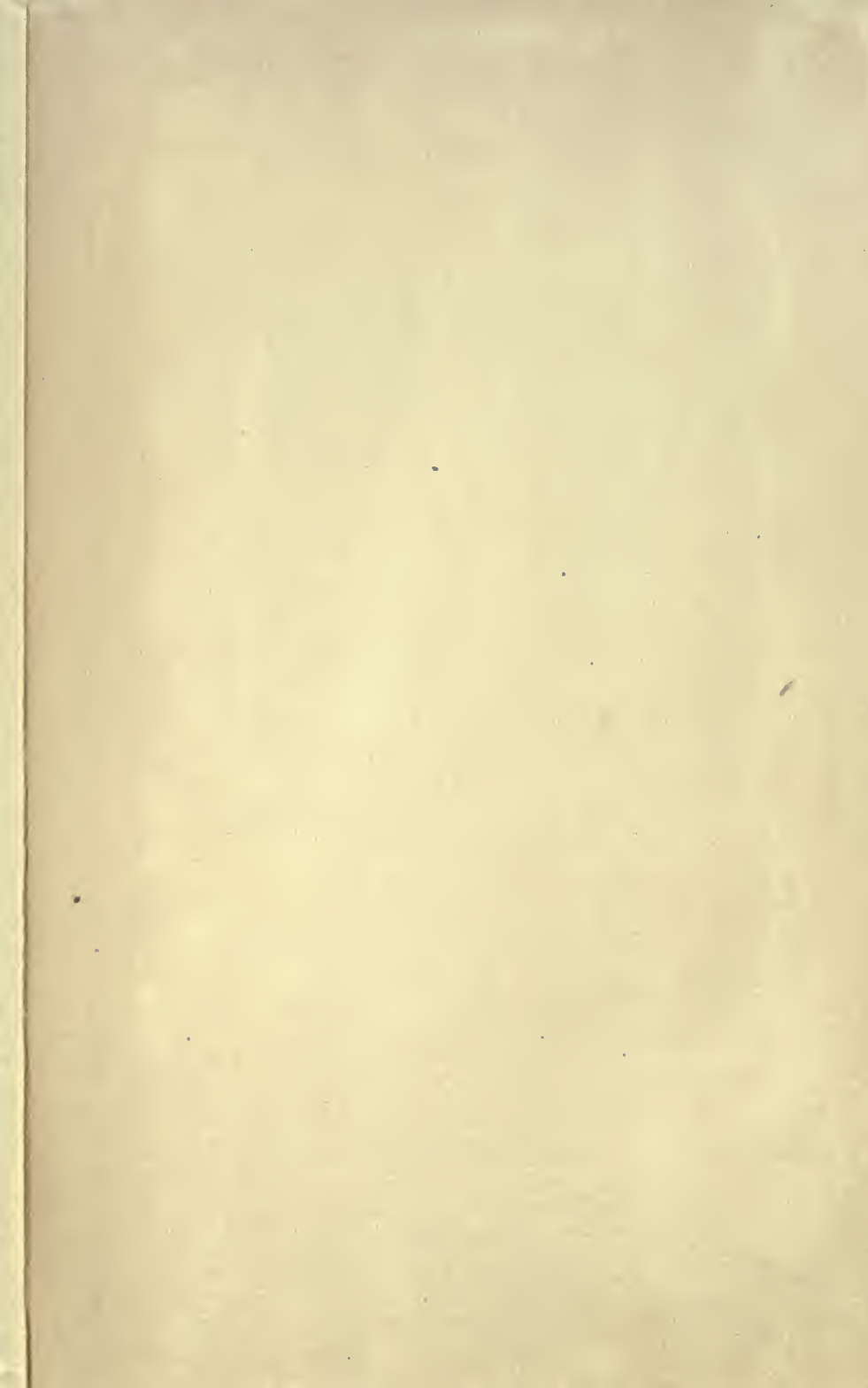


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George Calderon

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Emory Glass, pr. sa.

George Calderon.

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George Calderon

A Sketch from Memory

By

Percy Lubbock



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London

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EDINBURGH

George Calderon

2nd Dec. 1868—4th June 1915

*Wisdom and Valour, Faith,
Justice—the lofty names
Of virtue's quest and prize,—
What is each but a cold wraith
Until it lives in a man
And looks thro' a man's eyes ?*

*On Chivalry as I muse,
The spirit so high and clear
It cannot soil with aught
It meets of foul misuse ;—
It turns wherever burns
The flame of a brave thought ;*

*And whensoever the moan
Of the helpless and betrayed
Calls, from near or far,
It replies as to its own
Need, and is armed and goes
Straight to its sure pole-star ;—*

*No legendary knight
Renowned in an ancient cause
I warm my thought upon ;
There comes to the mind's sight
One whom I knew, whose hand
Grasped mine : George Calderon.*

George Calderon

*Him now as of old I see
Carrying his head with an air
Courteous and virile,
With the charm of a nature free,
Daring, resourceful, prompt,
In his frank and witty smile.*

*By Oxford towers and streams
Who shone among us all
In body and brain so bold?
Who shaped so firm his themes
Crystal-hard in debate?
And who hid a heart less cold?*

*Lover of strange tongues
Whether in snowy Russia,
Or tropic island bowers
Listening to the songs
Of the soft-eyed islanders,
Crowned with Tahitian flowers,*

*A maker of friends he went.
Yet who divined him wholly
Or his secret chivalries?—
Was all that accomplishment
Wit, alertness, grace,
But a kind of blithe disguise?*

*Restless in curious thought
And subtle exploring mind,
He mixt his modern vein
With a strain remotely brought
From an older blood than ours,
Proud loyalties of Spain.*

George Calderon

*Was it the soul of a sword ?
For a bright sword leapt from sheath
Upon that August day
When war's full thunder stored
Over Europe suddenly crashed,
And a choice upon each man lay.*

*Others had left their youth
In the taming years ; and some
Doubted ; some made moan.
To meet the peril of truth
With aught but a gay courage
Was not for Calderon.*

*Wounded from France he came.
His spirit halted not ;
In that long battle afar,
Fruitless in all but fame,
Athos and Ida saw
Where sank his gallant star.*

*O well could I set my mood
To a mournful falling measure
For a friend dear and dead ;
And well could memory brood
Singing of youth's delight
And lost adventure fled.*

*But that so fearless friend
With his victorious smile
My mourning mood has chid.
He went to the very end ;
He counted not the cost :
What he believed, he did.*

Laurence Binyon.

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George Calderon

Born 2nd December 1868, fifth son of Philip Hermogenes Calderon, R.A.

Educated at Rugby and Trinity College, Oxford.

Called to the Bar, 1894.

Studied at St Petersburg, 1895-1897.

On the Library Staff of the British Museum, 1900-1903.

Married, 1900, Katharine, widow of Archibald Ripley, daughter of John Hamilton, of Brownhall and St Ernan's, Co. Donegal.

Publications: *Downy v. Green* (1902), *Dwala* (1904), *The Fountain* (1914), *The Little Stone House* (1913), *Two Plays by Tchekhof* (1912), *The Maharani of Arakan*. Dramatised Version of a Story by Rabindra Nath Tagore; translation of Count Ilya Tolstoy's *Reminiscences of Tolstoy* (1914).

Production of Plays: *The Fountain* (First performed by Stage Society, 1909), *The Little Stone House* (Stage Society, 1911), *Revolt* (Manchester Repertory Theatre, 1912), *Geminae* (Little Theatre, 1913), *Thompson*, completed from MSS. of St John Hankin (Royalty Theatre, 1913), *Maharani of Arakan* (The Coliseum, 1916).

Went to Flanders as Interpreter with the Royal Horse Guards, 5th October 1914.

Received a commission on the field in the 2nd Royal Warwickshire Regiment, October, 1914; transferred to the Ox. and Bucks L.I., January, 1915; attached to the 1st K.O.S.B., May, 1915.

Reported wounded and missing at Gallipoli, 4th June 1915, afterwards presumed killed.

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I

To me, as I try to describe the quality of George Calderon's rare nature, and to number his many gifts, and to define the character of his achievement, it is his own figure that continually appears, vivid as life, with a well-known look which checks and deflects any undertaking of that kind. It is not that he held one off, or that he protected himself with deliberate reserve; it is rather that in his presence—which is where any friend of his must still seem to be, as soon as his name is mentioned—one is always concerned with new things, fresh questions, occupations that lead forward and outward, never with questions that turn back and linger upon ground already trodden. It is difficult to take a reflective view of George Calderon, because he seemed to take none of himself; he adopted no part, he held no theory of himself. His mind worked upon experience as it came, always ready for

George Calderon

more and of any kind ; so that while one is with him it is the question of the moment that absorbs attention, as it absorbed his own. What was his character, his nature, the cast of his mind ? That question never came up ; it was almost the only subject, it seems to me, in which he showed no particular interest, or on which he was not ready with a view or a query or a challenge of some sort. The thing in hand, which might be any of a hundred, the bit of work or play—upon this, when one shared it with him, all thought was concentrated.

But his look, as a friend of his may catch sight of it now, his manner and way, his laugh, his voice as he puts some provocative question and raises an argument—these return in a flash and revive the familiar terms ; it is as easy to drop back into his company as it is hard to give an account of what he was. Coming home after an absence, his dark face browner for travel, his satchel of books upon his shoulder, with his air of a leisurely wayfarer for whom the world is all open and

George Calderon

everywhere interesting, he falls immediately into the mood of the time and place, joins in whatever plans are on foot, makes something vivid and odd and enlivening of whatever material is offered him. This adaptability would be obviously natural to him ; he was a truly sociable being, and it was impossible for him to keep out of other people's employments. He would move forward to meet people wherever he found them ; he could not disregard the presence of another. The instinct of sociability was so deep and strong in him that the first word to say of him, as he comes back, seems to bear upon this companionable side. He would go towards a friend upon every opportunity, and towards a stranger upon the slightest excuse ; he can never have missed a chance of picking up a relation or of forming a new one. His advent made a difference to everyone within his reach ; there was not a member of the household, wherever it might be, a company of old friends, a tavern in a foreign town, a provincial boarding-house, who failed to be aware of George

George Calderon

Calderon's presence as a matter of particular and personal interest. He could not treat any human being with indifference when their paths crossed.

Yet that sociability, that ready wish for communication, was a quality that ran too deeply under the whole of his nature to be detached and described in a few words. It was most unlike the geniality of surface, the simple facility of intercourse, that can often pass for the true gift of companionship. You could never feel that his desire to be on terms with everyone he met was a mere easy preference for making himself liked or for establishing a pleasing harmony ; nor was it a simple overflow of good humour that spread indiscriminately around. He did not always create harmony, as we well remember ; we cherish the appreciation of many a telling discord, rich electric storms that he had the faculty of calling up in a quiet sky. His conception of the terms on which people should live together in the world went far beyond a prudent amiability, enough to serve as a screen for sharp

George Calderon

differences and a disguise for antagonisms. He possessed that intenser feeling for life which demands that life shall come out and show itself, say what it has to say, be what it is; his honesty, no doubt, might often be disconcerting. But in the memory of a hundred talks, as I look back, I see (what indeed no one could ever misunderstand) how straight and large and true his honesty was, how it looked full at the question before it, and how it was never used to cause discomfiture or to score a momentary effect. It is so rare, that sincere desire to understand and to participate, that it becomes a storm-centre at times; but when it is sincere enough, when it is perfectly disinterested, when it lavishly gives as much as it demands, and more, it is the true salt of life. George Calderon was that in all his ways.

So much as this to give the first word one says of him the right association. Gay and genial and untiring in amiability as one may so readily see him, rejoining a party of welcoming friends and enriching their pursuits

George Calderon

with his gifts, one knows that he brings a great deal more than the kindly humour which he lavishes in such abundance. That look of the wayfarer, turning up from the ends of the earth with no more baggage, apparently, than a satchel of books, is a suggestion, too, that leads one on. For a man so intensely sociable among his kind he preserved an air of peculiar detachment ; in middle life he still seemed to have been caught by none but a few of the very most essential ties. Where the rest of us created little circles of habit and convenience, and more and more relapsed into them, he remained a pilgrim with nothing to encumber him but his staff and his scrip ; it was so in his material life, and in his intellectual too. As a real palmer of old it would be easy to picture him ; the life of the medieval road would have suited his taste to perfection. He could make his home wherever he happened to find himself when night fell, a home immediately shared with the bagman in the inn parlour or the tramp under the hedge. Every journey he

George Calderon

made, if it was a walking tour in Kent or an excursion to a learned conference in a foreign university, became something of a picaresque adventure, with unexpected twists and turns. His wanderings in Russia or in the South Seas were merely larger cycles; hour for hour he was able to get as much experience, it seemed, out of an early morning walk on Hampstead Heath.

Yet his image again interposes with a look of ironic amusement at such a description of his ways. He was an unhampered pilgrim, perhaps; but he was so much besides that to dwell on his detachment is instantly to falsify one's memory of him. It suggests that he struck an attitude and held to it; which was exactly what he never did and was incapable of doing. When he was with us he became a sharer of the hearth, settled and domesticated, giving everything, withholding nothing; it was inconceivable that a friend should find the least touch of aloofness in his society. I hardly know how to express the sense one always had that though he contributed so

George Calderon

much more than most, he demanded less, made fewer claims and exactions, than any one else ; he seemed to ask for nothing at all but to enter, just as far as we wished, into our own various interests. Difficult it is to express, because with this he was the most strongly marked and defined and coloured presence in any company ; he fell into our work and our games with the kind of energy that in another man would have carried them *his* way, out of our hands ; instead of which he simply heightened them for us with his rousing talents and made us feel that he liked the chance of following such a lead. That air of dissociation vanishes when I think of the way in which his eye would travel towards one as he entered the room, light up at the sight of whatever occupation was forward, and bend over it with absorption as he took in the details, swiftly seizing the point of interest. His sympathy passed into the life of his friends so directly and naturally that before you could think of him as kind and considerate he had joined your mood, and you

George Calderon

were both working together upon the same quest.

That is what happens, I discover, as soon as one tries to write of him, in the hope of giving to those who did not know him some impression of a very remarkable man. It is easy enough to walk and talk with him, to see and hear him ; and in that exhilarating company the moments fly. They are full of his humour and his criticism and his steady attention, with that sudden veer, now and then, of disputatious contradiction. The difficulty lies in drawing away to a distance, far enough to sketch a portrait of him. All I can hope for, perhaps, is to catch and fix a number of straight glimpses, enough to show him in his characteristic ways ; and as they were all his own, all the expression of the strength and truth of his nature, it may so be possible to indicate what he was. His ways were very various in appearance ; and since he troubled little about accounting for them, they did not always strike everyone as accountable. He ranged widely and was

George Calderon

seldom at the pains of explaining the transitions that carried him from point to point. It was the thing to be done or thought that interested him, not himself as the doer or the thinker ; so that it never occurred to him to help the onlooker with any interpretation of himself. But in fact the explanation was that his courage and simplicity and honesty were so entirely natural to him that they passed as a matter of course ; where most people, acquiring some measure of these qualities with difficulty, exhibit them and take care that they shall not be mistaken, he had no attention for such things in himself ; they were always there and he noticed them no more than the air he breathed. He would have been most impatient of such a suggestion, but in truth his character was built upon foundations of utterly unconscious and instinctive goodness, a substructure not often associated with such a questioning and critical mind. So with his masterful brain and his unselfish heart, the critical part of him so highly organised and elaborated, the instinc-

George Calderon

tive so straight and simple, he seemed a man whom it was not easy to understand ; such is the effect of a perfectly transparent consistency and integrity in a world accustomed to the sight of compromise everywhere else.

The glimpses of George Calderon that come back to his friends as they think of him are extraordinarily diverse ; there are those which show him as an adventurer, as a scholar, as an artist, as a man of action ; and I could not say which of these he chiefly was. I am sure he never regarded himself as any of them in particular ; all activities of mind or hand were of interest, and it was impossible to call him a student who took a part in practical affairs or a fighter who was sometimes a man of letters. There was nothing he did of which you could say deliberately that it was not his proper task ; it all fell in with the line of his genius and was the natural expression of it ; though there might always be reasons for wishing that his powers, like other people's, were more restricted in their choice of application.

George Calderon

That in any one line he had less to show, finished and producible, than he might otherwise have had is soon said ; it is true enough that with a tenth of his endowment a less versatile man would have put forth ten times as much as he did. But the point is that for him as he was, his constant shifting from one kind of work to another did not mean that he ever left his own work incomplete, thickly as his path was strewn with books half written, schemes of all sorts projected and abandoned. His own work went forward through everything, though the second half of the book might be replaced by a political campaign, and the campaign itself, after a round or two, lead into the production of a play. One might then regret the missing climax ; but his work as a whole looks differently now, and I do not find its development anywhere broken. If he was at the same time a man of action and a man of letters, if he was *not* (what we have seen in other cases) an artist now and then turning against his own trade, or a fighter occasionally

George Calderon

attracted by the arts of peace—if he was both essentially, in his degree—the conclusion to be drawn is that his genius was independent of any single vehicle, that he could work in one material as seriously as in another, that the task he began as a writer he might reasonably continue as a speaker on public platforms and finish, perhaps, as a dockyard hand unloading a coal-barge.

Each of the many things he put his hand to is thus a chapter of a single, completed work—a work that was his life. And it is because the chapters are so scattered and apparently so disconnected that we wish to bring them together, so far as one friend may, and to show how closely they were harmonised in his own imagination. We have most of us known, I should think, no such example of a many-sided man—a man who faced in many directions, not because he was prevented from concentrating upon one by an irresolute levity or an indiscriminate facility, but because he really possessed the rare gift of bringing the whole of himself

George Calderon

to bear upon the thing before him, whichever way he turned. He had more talents than most, no doubt; his dexterity, intellectual and manual, was unfailing. But his real versatility seemed to spring from something much deeper than his ready skill in writing and drawing and acting, playing the piano, playing games, telling stories, learning languages. His mere facility he used very lightly, for the amusement of himself and his friends; it did not dictate or affect his perpetually shifting choice of a line of action. Still less was his changeability due to a casual lightness of mind that only half believed in the tasks it set itself, or that threw over its convictions as it passed from one to another; if ever he was supposed to want seriousness, or a settled faith that nothing could shake, it was by no one who understood the spirit of his work. If I am able to indicate what that was, it will be seen that every occupation he undertook engaged all his forces and brought them into play; he had the power of satisfying the full strength of his mind

George Calderon

with work of almost any sort. This is certainly most unusual ; the common experience is to find, long before middle life is reached, that one form of expression alone, whether in words or deeds, will use the whole of our capacity, all other forms becoming then mere occasional means of relaxation. With George Calderon, on the contrary, one felt that he could have used, and have been fully used by, many more than even the multifarious kinds he practised. He seemed to be just as much of a poet, a maker, a creator, whether he was championing a political cause or writing a comedy or learning the songs of a South Sea islander—and not less so, it was very clear to see, when he fought and fell in the war. Life was all plastic material for his hand, and it did not matter at what point he confronted it.

He leaves us, then, with no sense that his work is incomplete, even though he was taken from it at the height of his powers, with a score of plans broken off midway at a stroke. The tangible results that he bequeathed, fine

George Calderon

and interesting as they are, represent a fraction of what he was and did, and much would have been added if he had lived. But his work was not of a kind that depended on the fulfilment of a particular plan or the finishing of a certain number of books. It progressed by its own law, without interruption ; and even the last interruption of all, when he disappeared without a trace in the fighting at Gallipoli, does not seem like a thwarting of the purposes he had in mind. It rounded them off, I could rather feel, with a final page in which the whole character of his work was summed up. It all makes, as it is, a profounder, a more perfect and more comprehensive achievement than any single task that he might have lived to carry out. Nothing he might have accomplished could have made his life a completer argument of his great gifts. So at least it must appear to his friends, who were able to watch and follow it throughout ; and they must wish that others, who can now only read what he left behind him, should to some extent share their fuller knowledge.

George Calderon

This sense of the completeness of his life is a protection against the sore resentment we might easily feel, thinking of the sacrifice he made, five years ago, of his innumerable hopes and ambitions. There was no claim on him to do so, none that anyone else would admit ; a man no longer young, with everything to make him wish to live, he might have stood aside from danger and continued to work out his own designs. He preferred not to do so, and there is nothing for any of us to say but that he was right. All we have to mourn is the loss, not of what more he might have done, but of the ever-welcome delight of his company. Five years have not been long enough to measure what this loss has meant to many ; but it is a sorrow in which there should be no bitterness, while his noble and generous memory is still here.

II

IN 1900 and thereabouts, when he was a little past thirty, George Calderon was not, I think, a man with whom it was easy to proceed beyond the beginnings of acquaintance. A keen-eyed, dark-featured, watchful man, sturdily built, not tall, seemed to look at you warily and to choose his words with deliberation, rather as though he had travelled off his own ground into the company where he found himself, and was taking stock of it before he went farther. His Spanish blood (though he was half English) showed strongly in his appearance and gave him a certain air of mystery, of loneliness, of untraceable experience ; that was how it struck people, I should imagine, who met him casually in those years. In the light of later knowledge it is odd to recall how his quiet, steady look seemed at that time to take in more than it readily gave out ; you had the sense that a great deal had

George Calderon

gone on, was going on, behind it, but that his world lay apart, that he would presently carry his thoughts and reflections back to it without spilling them. Yet it was easy to believe that those who did share his world were royally welcomed there ; depths of confidence and affection were divivable, in which a friend would be received without a shadow of reserve and made to feel simply and naturally at home, once for all. Truth, constancy, loyalty were unmistakably about him, a kind of silent radiation that made words superfluous ; if he watched and measured you, there was nothing cold or ungracious in his contemplation.

Of all that there was behind him in those days, however, a later friend never learned much from him directly. To pass into friendship with him did not mean that he undertook to expound himself, to tell what had happened to him ; it meant rather that you went forward together, on free and open terms, with all that had gone before tacitly assumed. He was so little of an egotist that

George Calderon

he never cared to cultivate his past ; it only came up by the way, in illustration or support of some further discovery. Years afterwards one might still, in talk with him, pick up anecdotes, recollections, heard for the first time, of outlandish adventures in the past, things of interest that he had never used for the purpose of making himself interesting. With this habit of leaving old times untouched, he always gave an impression of being unrelated to any particular background. I have no doubt that it would have been possible, for instance, to be intimate with him for long without knowing the conditions of his childhood, happy and dear to him as they were in fact. Of his childhood and early youth I should indeed have little to say, if I had to rely on what I gathered from him. He did not withhold such facts of set purpose, he did not proffer them ; there they lay in his mind, like an old book that some chance might lead him to open and glance at and put back again. He valued the book for what it was, excellent and time-proved matter ; but

Line of
Calderons



G. F. Watts, R.A., W. pinxit

Emery Walker ph. sc.

Philip Hermogenes Calderon, R.A.
father of George Calderon

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George Calderon

to hang over it romantically and to heighten it with sentimental colour was not his way.

It might have been difficult to guess, then, that he came from a Victorian painter-circle of jovial and genial Royal Academicians, a group who flourished and enjoyed their art after a manner that now looks incorrigibly romantic. Philip Calderon, his father, was a very gifted artist; he painted charmingly in an esthetic climate sunnier than the season of to-day. That degree of talent seems now to expose a man to sharper winds; it makes him theorise and speculate, it drives him into experiment; but then it allowed him to work among buttercups and singing birds and pretty faces, and still satisfy himself and please the world. George was one of a large family, upon whom an inheritance of talent descended in different forms. On their mother's side, too, they had associations with the Royal Academy; she was Miss Clara Storey, a sister of the distinguished artist of her name. Their home was one of the rallying-places of the "St John's Wood school"; it was a centre of large and

George Calderon

easy hospitality, and they must have had a delightful childhood. George, I suppose, had many young memories of studios full of prospering work and informal entertainment, with the fine figure of his father in the midst, surrounded by friendly colleagues. He could only look back with gratitude, as he certainly did, but it was curious to see how little mark his early life left on him. I cannot connect anything one knew in him afterwards with the pleasant cheer of Victorian art. It was not that he in any way rebelled against it or broke with it; he simply proceeded on his own private line, following his strong twist of originality.

A vivid strain in the temperament of the household was due to the mixture of their blood. Philip Calderon's father was a Spanish monk, who became a Protestant and in due course arrived in England as a refugee from Spanish orthodoxy. Perhaps he was one of the disconsolate band of his countrymen described in a well-known page of Carlyle, the exiles who once haunted the London pave-

George Calderon

ment in the neighbourhood of St Pancras. He seems to have kept clear of their plots and disasters, however, for he became professor of Spanish at King's College and a minister of the Reformed Church of Spain in London. He had married a Basque wife from the Pyrenees before he reached England. None of the family that he founded here appears to have renewed any tie with their southern kindred; but it is not forgotten that the great Spanish poet was among their collateral ancestors. Better still, one of the friends of their ancient house was St Francis of Assisi, who is recorded to have visited the Calderons of his day. After a generation in England they were completely anglicised, save for their name and their dark southern complexion. But it is much easier to associate George with the adventures of his grandfather than with his own English setting. He never asserted any affinity with the heretic or seemed to set any store by his picturesque origin; it was only another small curiosity of his past, which he might produce casually,

George Calderon

like some anecdote of Russian tramps or Portuguese card-sharpers, if he happened to be reminded of it. Yet I can imagine the zest with which he, if not his grandfather, would have flung himself into the councils of the St Pancras refugees, haranguing and exhorting them, studying the theory and practice of revolutions, devising and carrying out the most ingenious enterprises. He would have been completely at home in such a society; it was only where there was no opening for action of some kind, revolutionary or otherwise, that he might seem to be out of place.

He was at Rugby in the eighties (he was born in 1868), and passed on to Trinity at Oxford. Both places brought him friendships that lasted to the end of his life. As for his education, I should suppose that it was more his own affair than that of any of his masters; his burrowing, unresting mind always worked where it chose, with a strong capacity for resisting conventional claims. He would never have attended to

George Calderon

a subject simply because it chanced to appear in the curriculum at a certain stage; he would have had perfectly clear reasons to show why it was inappropriate just then, and his obstinacy was quite immovable if he liked to exert it. Nor would he ever have been stirred by the desire to follow and imitate an admired example. He was a friend such as there are few, but he was not at all a hero-worshipper; through all the causes in which he marched as a supporter he was nobody's disciple. On the other hand he was a student born, with a talent for annexing knowledge, in steady, methodical explorations, that was disguised but never weakened by the variety of his interests. A contemporary recalls that at school he either neglected his work carelessly or slaved at it with passion, according to his fancy. I shall have more to say of his scholarship later on, as I used to watch it enviously in after years; enough to say here that it was already wide and keen in his schooldays, when his various abilities

George Calderon

were remarked and rewarded. If he had his own way of cultivating them, he did not miss his share of academic distinction, mathematical, classical, historical. It appears that his mathematical promise in particular was considered brilliant. He fulfilled it no further after leaving school, and seemed in later times to have forgotten all about it; perhaps it was an aptitude that passed into his music, and found, as often happens, sufficient exercise in that direction. But the thing is worth mentioning as an early example of the way in which he apparently had to disembarass himself, shedding superfluous gifts, instead of acquiring and cherishing one or two. Athletic distinction also fell to him; though there again his manner of dealing with games was original and adventurous, ardent without solemnity—not the most usual grace in youth.

He never spoke much or enthusiastically, that I can remember, of either Rugby or Oxford; and since he was deeply attached to both, the thought of his casual tone

George Calderon

brings me back to the point I touched just now. More and more one perceives how far he was divided from the people who are vocal on the subject of their attachments. He never appeared to feel the need of declaring a sentiment, with all his eagerness in proclaiming an opinion. And so with the friendships he inspired and ensued ; these were all about him everywhere, but they were unannounced, not pointed at or formulated. They were like great wells, full and deep, sunk far below the surface ; a hidden store which you found you were aware of as soon as you knew him, though nothing had seemingly revealed it. But that kind of undemonstrative loyalty, so described, may imply shynesses, timidities, affectations even, which George Calderon was completely without ; his was not the pose of manly silence, screening an actual fear of emotion. No sort of pretence or pose whatever can live in the thought of his quiet glance, when he recognised and noted such things and turned away without comment. Affectation under

George Calderon

his eyes became simply uninteresting, not worth a word. The standard of sincerity, of naturalness, which he brought with him was such that the whole question of attitudes and relations was passed over; his relation with a friend needed no more remark than the floor one stood on. This great gift he seemed to possess like his hand or his brain; he had always had it and used it as a matter of course. It must have made of his youth a very rare experience, with its emotional values already true and fixed while he was still in the stage of intellectual experiment. His popularity among his contemporaries and elders at college was wide and very great; he was recognised (I quote from a private letter) as "one of those human diamonds, clear and hard right through, that catch the light at many points"—recognised as a nature of this kind, and found entirely lovable too. Great things were expected of his future; for though his actual performance in the schools was not of the best, everyone could see that his powers were extraordinary.

THE
CALDERON



From a drawing by P. H. Calderon, R.A.

CLARA CALDERON

Mother of George Calderon

George Calderon

“The most popular man in the college—witty, clever, with grace of body as well as of mind,” says another friend of that time.

He was called to the Bar ; and no one doubted that he might have made a striking career there if he had been able to afford the preliminary waiting and delaying that it involved. But he put aside whatever ambition he may have had in that line, when another opening showed a way of speedier self-support ; he was one of many sons, and he would not draw upon the family resources for longer than he could help. He turned to literature, or rather at first to journalism ; and he took a step that had a lasting effect upon his life when he decided to go to Russia, with a commission for occasional correspondence with more than one newspaper in London. This was in 1895 ; to settle in Russia, to talk the language and read Russian books, was then to acquire a qualification as a man of letters that was very uncommon ; and it was with the thought of gaining a useful kind of

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special knowledge, not from any predilection for the country, that he went. While he was still at Oxford he had suddenly announced one day that he meant to take up Russia ; it was a neglected country, he would make it his province. His lifelong Russian studies had already begun when he reached St Petersburg. He stayed there for two years, absorbing a profound and thorough experience of Russian ways and thoughts, supporting himself by writing articles and giving lessons in English. The enterprise gave him far more than the limited advantage he had aimed at ; it opened an ever-spreading field of interest, literary and linguistic, social and political, on which he was constantly occupied in later years. Many Russians came to him in London, first and last—refugees, tourists, poets, dancers ; his house seemed sometimes to have become an unofficial legation for stray Muscovites with theories or grievances, with books that he was to translate or paths that he was to smooth ; among them a few good and valued friends with whom intimacy

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had begun in their own country. In countless ways one might see what he had made of his time in Russia and how energetically he had used it ; I only wish he had left the lively record of his two years there that he was capable of making. A book of his life in St Petersburg would have been rich entertainment ; but he never collected or amplified the many fugitive pieces he sent home to his newspapers. Among them, somewhere in the files of the *Standard*, are his impressions of the ill-omened coronation of Nicholas II.

He came back to London, anyhow, with a stock of new erudition that could be variously turned to account. Articles, stories, sketches, generally dealing with some Russian aspect, began to prove acceptable to the monthly reviews ; that he could speak and write the dark tongue with perfect fluency made him even a curiosity. Moreover his knowledge was in some ways that of a scholar, and before long he took a post in the library of the British Museum, where use was made of his special familiarity with certain Slavonic subjects. He

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had started his long work on Slavonic folklore, work for which he amassed an immense amount of material ; it gradually took shape as a book, never finished but never abandoned, round which there gathered a mountain of careful and orderly notes, systematically accumulated in the course of very wide reading. Of this I can only speak in so far as it throws light on his exact and patient methods, of which there will be more to say later on. He was an enterprising and inexhaustible reader, when he was tracking some particular train of ideas ; no barrier of language, however barbarous, long delayed him ; he tackled the grammar, learned the necessary thousands of words by heart, and assailed a fresh literature for its contribution to his notes. Otherwise his literary culture was eclectic, and always remained so, with odd, unlikely excursions in obscure quarters, and a bland ignoring of some of the most conspicuous. A book in the void, a book that he was not drawn to by a turn of his own thought, exerted no claim on him merely because it

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was illustrious. The gaps in his knowledge of books were sometimes surprising; they were marked by such utter blankness, never by the haze of half-knowledge that rounds off the culture of most of us. I dare say that what he called ignorance would often have seemed to many of us enough for a confident opinion; but he certainly had a gift for avoiding slight acquaintances in literature, cultivating intimacies only.

I come back thus to the time I spoke of, when it was possible for a new-comer to be slightly mystified by his aspect, and to feel (what was indeed the truth) that there was more behind it than would be quickly understood. What was undoubtedly far from the truth was the suspicion, if it crossed one's mind, that he was shielding himself with his quiet circumspection, that his shadow of reserve was intended to hide his mind. He never in his life had such a thought as that. His mind was all open to anyone who wished to share it; but in those days, and in the company where I see him, looking

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back, there were special reasons why it should seem guarded. It happened that he presented in many ways a remarkable contrast with one of his greatest friends; and it is with the thought of that friend, very near by, that my own early onlooker's impression of George Calderon is closely associated. His friendship with Archie Ripley had begun at Oxford; very like each other and very unlike, their alliance was strong and deep during the few years that remained to one of them, and was not interrupted by Archie's brief married life. He died in 1898, and two years later his widow married George. The gay, whimsical, expressive memory of the lost friend was always near the other, and it is impossible to separate them now. To one who had known Archie well, George might seem baffling at first; each was so much that the other was not. But their community would soon become clear; and now that they are both memories together, I cannot write of George without reaching back to his friend as well.

III

DURING the three years of his married life Archie Ripley lived in a beautiful old house, once Angelica Kauffmann's, in Golden Square. It was destroyed some while ago, and the new buildings are all offices of business ; Golden Square has almost lost the last vestige of its gentility. But at that time it still retained a look of what it had been, that familiar look of fallen, faded distinction that we see obliterated year by year from the streets and squares of Soho. On summer mornings Piccadilly and Regent Street, immediately round the corner, used to seem very remote ; the leafy square, with its white statue among the trees, was neat and quiet ; the wash of traffic swept close round about and left it untouched. The house, No. 17, from its marble-paved entrance-hall to the queer little octagonal observatory on the roof, held the tradition of style as though

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it were still a natural grace ; it wore its creamy panelling, mahogany doors and wreathed ceilings, as though a fine taste were no more than good manners. It had spread out behind, since Angelica's time, to include an out-building, a high studio or music-room, which made a comfortable, informal contrast with the straight-backed elegance of the old parlours. It was a house that deserves to be commemorated by those who recall the romantic hospitality it lavished in its late days ; it can never have known a blither atmosphere of freedom and originality than it knew in the time of its last owners.

The house suited Archie exactly ; his gay humour, his unconventional intelligence, his ready welcome to all the conditions of life, showed against that background of orderly beauty with a special charm. He loved and understood it ; and he loved it in the same easy spirit of comradeship that he offered to life in general. The dignified past was drawn into his circle, just as the young and

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old, the rich and poor of the present were haled in without ceremony to be his friends. Nobody, I should think, withstood his cheerful summons ; his confidence was not to be resisted, his familiarity was always gratifying. He was young when he died, little over thirty, and in some ways he was very young indeed ; there was always something of the undergraduate in his slashing, swooping opinions. But in the utterly indifferent terms of equality that he extended to the oldest and the youngest, making the old feel a little like undergraduates too, and the very young like men of the world, he was altogether mature and competent ; his gift of equal fellowship to all alike was not youthful, not presumptuous, but a genuine power of abolishing reserves and barriers wherever he moved. No one gave such an impression of moving always in the open, without the faintest fear of anything or anyone he might chance to meet ; the more he encountered, the stranger types, the queerer manners, if only they were manifestations of life in some sort, the better

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he was pleased. He gathered them all in and made them welcome ; they had no choice but to become companionable and humane.

With all this there was a sharp pathos for those who knew him, though never in the least for himself, in his exuberant enjoyment of his days. His endless, dreary battle with ill-health, from childhood on, could not be forgotten for long ; frail and slight, marked with suffering, he lived only too clearly upon his buoyant spirit. He faced his many and exhausting ills without ever losing heart ; and yet his courage could hardly be called courageous at all, it was so unlike a deliberate attitude of endurance. Just as there was nothing hectic or strained in his love of life, so his bravery, or what would have been bravery in others, seemed to be careless and natural in him, a quality possessed unconsciously rather than exerted by his will. There was not the suspicion of display about it ; nobody stopped to admire it, for except on reflection (which came later and certainly showed enough to admire) there appeared

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to be nothing to wonder at; he bore his perpetual burden of lung trouble as if it were a casual ache or twinge. I could almost feel it irrelevant to speak of his burden at all, except that it did as a matter of fact so hamper him at every turn, curtailing his power of work and his happiness in activity. Whatever pitying sympathy went out to him from those who knew, it had less than nothing to do with their eagerness in flocking round him; so far from asking for sympathy, he seemed to have energy and health to provide for all his circle. I well remember how a younger friend would feel quickened, encouraged in interest, restored to confidence, after an hour with him; and so it was, I judge, with all who joined him in the long, lively, argumentative sessions that he loved.

A favourite haunt of his was the Savile Club, where he was well known; a certain air of the college common-room, which the Savile contrived to diffuse, drew him out unfailingly. But I see him myself before

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the great brick hearth of the studio in Golden Square, smoking, talking, chuckling, announcing his positive views on life and provoking indiscreet admissions on the part of his guests. Always to the front of that picture is the much-beloved Scotch terrier, a very personal member of the household; Jones had his share in all the talk. As for the guests, of all ages and conditions, they had nothing in common but their readiness to submit to Archie's spell and be led on to talk at ease. Their host had managed to see the world, in spite of his disabilities; he had travelled far and made friends all round the globe. He had much to tell, in a vein that mingled things he had seen and done with fearless generalisations on men and the future of mankind. Genial and communicative always, his touches of engaging solemnity passed off in a chuckle and a dig of humour; I know from experience how the young responded to his company, and I have seen how the old were amused, transformed and rejuvenated. Sometimes his candour was

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very boyish, there was a defiant challenge in his honesty; he called upon free and enlightened youth to overthrow the base superstitions of their elders—it sounded like that. But he understood the meaning of brotherliness in a spirit that was older than any of his views and opinions; it was a wisdom that he seemed to have inherited from all time, mellow and true and kind, often extraordinarily discerning. It flowed out from him everywhere; it constantly brought people—older men in especial, very remarkably—to appeal to him and rely on him. It was the expression of a sense of community with the world, an alliance that to him was no careless form of words. He rejoiced in a crowd, it could be seen that he was really conscious of the presence of brothers. With the sight of him by his own fireside I would set a stray glimpse, caught from a summer evening when he had carried a friend for an excursion on the top of an omnibus—a glimpse of him in the thronged bar of the Angel at Islington, a

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light, lean figure in the good-humoured London jostle, radiant among his kinsmen. I cannot describe the humorous, touching charm there is in this thought of him—so fragile, so insecurely built, so unfit for the battle of life, and yet so ready for it and so proud of his place in the ranks.

For a little more than two years he and his wife made the house in Golden Square a place to which many returned and returned again, a glow of brightness and colour in its grey surroundings. And I must not seem to forget—no one ever failed to remember—how much of its character it owed to the presence of his wife's mother, enthroned in the striped and wreathed and fluted drawing-room upstairs. Mary Hamilton is far too vivid a memory, and too closely knit with the memory both of Archie Ripley and of George Calderon, to be passed over on this page, though it would have to be a remarkable page to do her justice. She sat upstairs, with lace on her head and a table of books at her hand, to receive her perpetual visitors ;

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she entertained them with a style that was both stately and jovial—stately with a rare old Scottish pride, jovial with a shrewd, twinkling, incurably vivacious and inquisitive relish of life. Scottish by birth, Irish by marriage, Mrs Hamilton bore herself with an air of substantial, time-honoured worth. Behind her there seemed to stretch long lines of provincial magnates, patriarchal, convivial, nut-ripe forbears, free with a jest at cottage doors, free with a bottle in black old northern town-mansions; broad of speech, high-tempered, soundly cultivated too. She upheld a crusted tradition, while at the same time her native originality took its own way and acknowledged no law. She delighted in the young and fair, the masterful and manly; she lectured them majestically, she gossiped with them till she shook with unaging laughter. Her pungent sagacity was mixed with an inconsequence that touched the wildest limits; called back from her flights, she would turn upon herself and join the mirth of her antagonist, even while she

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explained and defended herself with seriousness undaunted. With her many old friends of both sexes she enjoyed long, ramifying, backward-reaching talks, in which heads were shaken over family legends, ancient scandals were recalled, the affairs of a vast circle were dealt with, all to the accompaniment of a quick wit and a keen sense of the ludicrous in men and manners. Staunch and true, wilful and prejudiced, often unjust, always entertaining, always herself, she was memorable in many lives; she died in old age, still as young as ever in her love of a jest and her interest in the play of the world.

These two intensely living people, Archie and his mother-in-law, acted upon each other with brilliant effect. I remember many evenings in the small panelled dining-room in Golden Square, when their laughter and their battles and their extravagances were delightful to watch. Gay as a schoolboy, sage as an old clubman over his port, in either capacity Archie spread a generous mood round him; he imparted the solid

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appreciation of good things that gives weight to an evening's entertainment, and the breeze of carelessness that lightens it. He was a perfect host ; he caught up and harmonised his mixed parties, so that the suave cleric and the beetling lawyer and the raw journalist—I speak quite at random—found themselves all festive together. His mother-in-law at the side of the table held her own and began with a dignified entry into the talk. She desired the sense of the cleric, perhaps, on a point of doctrine or Church discipline ; she asked for information in deliberate, imposing tones, confounding her interlocutor with the form of her question, naming Sarasate or Horatius Cocles with impressive conviction when she meant Savonarola or Ignatius Loyola, and winding up with a still more serious appeal to the company at large, as she became conscious of having started a ripple of mirth round the circle. She met the jeer of her son-in-law with surprise and protest ; she announced her authority for the query and her grave reason for wishing the

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doubt set at rest ; she contradicted herself and emerged in a different quarter of the subject with a serene change of front ; she wavered, was betrayed into a telling retort, repeated her first question, and finally broke down altogether in helpless amusement under a hail of mockery. Many such scenes come back to me ; they seemed, they still seem, to be life at a high pitch of human comedy.

To frequent the house in Golden Square was in short an education in amenity and sociability ; the air of the world blew through it ; we were drawn out of narrow, workaday interests into a bright and eventful sphere. I shall never forget how the climate appeared to change as soon as one crossed the threshold ; how the squalors of the outer day gave place to the colour and light within ; how one was made free of large and liberal ways of thought. It was an emancipation from oneself that was exquisite at the moment and valuable ever afterwards ; it was a lasting standard of humane intercourse. It is strange to remember that all that cycle of experience

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was contained within two years or so ; it seems to have endured and extended over tracts of time, compared with which the succeeding years have been a hand's-breadth. Archie Ripley's short and broken career, which left no material gage of his powers, bequeathed this possession to many memories. He has the kind of name and fame that he desired, a shining life in the remembrance of those who knew him. For one who lived so keenly in his contact with others it is the right way to survive among men, and that was his own feeling. He once said that he wished for nothing to mark his grave but some wooden plank or cross, that would have decayed away by the time there was no one left to regret him personally. That day is not yet, and even when it comes we may hope that some echo of our recollection will be transmitted to others ; it is hard to think that oblivion should completely fall on anything so alive and so appreciative of life.

IV

OF the friendship that united Archie Ripley and George Calderon I can say little ; yet something must be said, for it was deeply involved with the times of greatest sorrow and greatest happiness that George ever knew. He returned from Russia to find that his father was dying, and that his friend, married to a stranger, was living on a thread of life which grew continually frailer. Archie's wife was critically viewed, not without some mistrust at first ; but as months went on, and it became clear that she and his friend were both fighting with their backs to the wall for the same beloved existence, nothing mattered beyond the fact that both were able to help him in their different ways. It was a losing struggle, and it ended with Archie's death in the autumn of 1898 ; but by that time George's gift of friendship had been shown, tested and shared to the full. "The only

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help for you," he wrote, "and that is small, is to know that others feel the greatness of your disaster. I have lost the only friend with whom I could tell and be told everything."

For myself, I never saw them together, but in imagination it is easy to see how they would suit and understand each other. George's strong, well-weighted mind, Archie's airy enterprise and assurance, would make the kind of contrast that fructifies in talk; for each had the deep-seated passion for reality that carries talk out on a search and with a purpose, and in so doing pushes acquaintance forward from the very start. An hour with either of them produced matter by which he could be known and judged; so that friendship never stood still, was always covering ground and acquiring experience. Together they must quickly have become firm friends; each might recognise his own rare honesty in the other, and they both brought a talent for intelligent and generous devotion. But to one who was accustomed to Archie's open-

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handed torrent of opinion and assertion, it was likely that the other's far maturer and solider style—intellectually maturer, not morally—should seem difficult of approach at first. And indeed the tough terms on which George had already dealt with life might well place him beyond the reach of many ; he had been through harder schools than I ever clearly understood from himself, and had finally discovered and proved his own strength at a time when his contemporaries, and much more his younger friends, were still making their random experiments. I have spoken of the way in which he decided on the line he should take with his studies ; when he went to Russia it was not so much a question of following an inclination as of holding to a reasoned choice, one that he had made while he was still an undergraduate. It was persevered with and carried through as we have seen ; and the amount of resolution it required was hidden under his quiet manner. Yet it was also betrayed by the unmistakable sense one received of a full,

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furnished, packed character underlying the surface.

He had had no easy time in Russia, living with extreme spareness and working ceaselessly towards the end he had in view. A mind like his, naturally disruptive and questioning, was not one that could be forced along a single channel except by a powerful will; and between restless speculation and concentrated purpose the ferment within must have been very great. His selection of an unfamiliar field to traverse simplified his prospect for the moment; whatever was disconnected with Russia was ruled out. But there was still the doubt to be settled, whether it was as a scholar or as an artist that he proposed to tackle his future; and I should imagine that this question seldom arises as ambiguously as it appeared in his case. To most people, in presence of the alternative, nothing is clearer than the list in one direction or the other, towards a research among facts, for the use of a student, or a research among impressions,

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for the use of a writer. The distinction commonly seems fundamental ; yet there are a few, and George Calderon was one of them, for whom it is apparently a matter of indifference. He must have been conscious of possessing exceptional gifts in both kinds ; but I question whether he felt that the one had any greater claim upon him than the other, or even whether he saw them as antithetical at all. As things turned out, he may have been wrong in devoting years of labour to a special and scholastic inquiry ; perhaps he had better have written novels and plays from the beginning. The mistake, if it was one, arose partly, I think, from his refusal to regard the art of letters as a separate and exclusive claim ; and this again was a revulsion from the way in which it was the fashion to trumpet the claim in those days. But it was due still more to the variety of his endowment, which opened too many paths to him, all equally promising.

Moreover there was the pressing need of a trustworthy income ; and when in the

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course of some investigation of Slavonic rites and customs he lit upon what appeared to be a new line of research in the history of religious cults, he formed the idea of supporting himself, and at the same time of following this track in convenient conditions, by finding a place on the staff of a Russian university. This idea was soon dropped, and he carried his work home to London and the British Museum. But the work itself was pursued for some time to come, till his other talents, growing more insistent, were found increasingly to interfere with it. In the first years after his marriage (which took place in 1900) he was still a student, piling up material for the big book he had sketched, and slowly writing it. I shall not trust myself to say much about the nature of this book, beyond quoting a few words of his own from a letter he wrote to his father at the time of its first projection. These indicate, however, only the starting-point from which it grew.

“I have sent to . . . [he writes from St

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Petersburg in 1896] a sketch for a book which, if ever written, will call all my best powers into play, do immense credit to my education, and bring me no small glory. I told you six months ago that I was engaged with *Demon Feasts*. This developed into the sketch for the book. The subject of it is an inference of the first beginnings of religion in the Indo-European race, way back some 6000 years, by a comparison of customs, languages, etc. The method and the inferences are new ; but I find that the gist of my conclusions is supported by the results of other people's inquiries. The book requires some knowledge of Greek, Latin, Slavonic languages, a smattering of Sanskrit, and the ability to read French, etc., as the inquiry ranges over all countries ; so there is no waste of education. I class this book among Slavonic studies, inasmuch as the Slavonic side of it is as important as all the rest put together, and constitutes the main value of the work. I have discovered some very astonishing Bulgarian folk-lore ; this in itself is not a very great performance, but

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it is a good piece of the thin end of a very considerable wedge."

The wedge accordingly was driven in with much energy for a long while. As the process went on he found it increasingly difficult to maintain, beside his regular work on the staff of the Museum. The implications of the book grew and spread, and at length it became clear that it could never be finished in by-hours; he left the Museum in 1903, and never afterwards held any professional post. The books he had to read, the languages he had to acquire, multiplied apace; he sometimes seemed to have taken all learning for his province, it was so hard to say what escaped the embrace of his subject. His index of notes filled many boxes, under a bewildering variety of headings; a leaf was added and a new section created on the most improbable suggestions. The book, if ever finished, would have been learned, original, and above all amusing; it would have brought him no small glory.

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That it was not finished was far from meaning that he lost confidence in it, or that he found his first ideas on the subject insufficient to see him through. Nor did it mean that it grew beyond his control and got out of hand, as a large discursive inquiry will when it is followed by an open mind. A measure of resolute blindness to side-issues and importations is no doubt necessary for the finishing of any book whatever ; without this it is impossible to fix a term to the lapse of every subject into every other. But though his mind was open, it was not easily distracted ; the mass of detail that he handled was kept in its place, and he knew his way among it all. He worked with immense precision and in business-like order ; he had innumerable devices, highly ingenious and all of his own invention, for commanding his means and regulating his progress. He would stop short at a given point to master some primitive dialect that proved to be part of the needful equipment ; he surrounded himself with grammars and dictionaries, filled a note-

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book with a new vocabulary, and rehearsed it on a system mathematically calculated to lodge it in the memory within the shortest possible time. He would be back again at the same spot, punctual to the moment, in full possession of the arm he had lacked. That was how he always worked, with a zeal as methodical as it was devouring, a passion which never seemed to flag or grow stale until the point was reached where for one reason or another it suddenly ceased, stopped dead, and instantly belonged to the past. Various causes dealt this death-blow to his occupations at different times ; but they never dropped through mere inanition, or through failure to give what they had promised in value and interest.

The great book, however, was not altogether laid aside. The thought of it was never far from his mind, I believe ; the leading ideas it embodied were always ripening in stillness, and he would have put them into final shape some day if he had lived. It seems, indeed, that he was near doing so on the eve of the war ; he had begun to be conscious

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that this central preoccupation, which he never ceased to regard as the main work of his life, was ready for completion, and that it would fulfil its promise at last. It would take an ethnologist, a philologist, a student of folklore, I know not what besides, to criticise his conclusions, or even to state them; enough that they were based on a comparative study of primitive religion, in which the history of language played an important part, perhaps the chief. Some part of the book was actually written; though all that appeared, I understand, was a paper, "Slavonic Elements in Greek Religion," which he read before the International Congress of the History of Religions held at Leyden in 1913. But of all this I have only to say that at different times he put far more labour into it than most of his friends suspected. Though for a long while he seemed to have entirely forgotten his book, it is clear now that he knew it to be steadily taking shape throughout, and that he looked forward to making an important contribution to scholarship with it. As for another under-

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taking which he apparently ran into by the way, it is much less clear how he came to think it worth the enormous toil he spent on it. His work led him, I suppose, to investigate the elements of language ; and finding himself among these, he grew interested in the construction of a "universal language" that should be really rational and logical. Volapuk, Esperanto and the rest failed to satisfy him on examination ; and thereupon he worked himself relentlessly, worked himself at last into a very serious illness, in an attempt to make a perfect form of speech. For a year and a half he had practically to give up all work, so long and so complete was the rest that was needed to relieve the long strain. Even when at last he began again tentatively, the least want of caution was instantly punished. Mischances always befell him in picturesque form ; and I feel it is natural that when, one Saturday afternoon, he fainted away after too hard a morning, it should have been on Hampstead Heath, while he sat on a bench with five Polish Jews who were keeping their

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Sabbath there ; they escorted him home, all talking Polish together. After that adventure the universal language was fortunately heard no more.

I confess that when I turn over the stacks of papers which represent the labour he bestowed on six thousand years of Indo-Europeans ; sheets of references, extracts, finished pieces, lists of strange words, philological roots, liturgical forms, primordial symbols ; all his multifarious matter assorted and arranged as on the day when he last touched it, immediately ready for his hand whenever he should decide to take it up again : I confess I could wish he had happened to overlook that very astonishing Bulgarian folk-lore. His imagination might have been creating and producing all that time nearer home, instead of travelling off into such spaces ; his life, with its perpetual assimilation of the life around him, might have been recorded in substance and form. But he certainly never himself regretted the expenditure of so much of his energy with

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so little to show for it after long years. Nobody cared less for quick returns when there was real work to be done ; even if he had foreseen at the start the impossibility of cleaving to his book till it was written, doubtless he would have chosen to write at least as much of it as he could. The desire to finish, the lust for completion, held him for the time being, but it was not the master passion ; and perhaps in saying this I give away my contention that he might have devoted all his energy to the art of letters. For creation *is* completion, and an artist necessarily looks forward to the end and counts on it, where a student is in honour bound to consider chiefly his means, faithfully following them and letting the end take care of itself. Anyhow he had plenty of energy still for literature in its turn ; and if, as I suggested, it was himself that was complete, rather than his work—or his work at large, rather than any part of it—then all his researches, including the wretched universal language, had their share in rounding the whole.

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Besides there is life as well as lore in the world of learning, and George had his keen eye with him, and his creative humour, when he frequented the society of scholars. His passion for the quest of an idea made him feel that no stone, however unpromising, could be left unturned; but many of the assemblies and congresses that he loved to join attracted him, I dare say, as much for what they were as for what they discussed, as much for observation as for instruction. He showed an extraordinary readiness, as it used to seem to me, for joyless, inconvenient excursions to attend debates or to hear papers read; he could always be drawn out into the night by the lure of a suburban lecture on some lost tribe or forgotten creed. I remember an occasion of the sort, a chill evening when he had made one of these pilgrimages, ranging half across London, comfortless and unfed, to listen to an account of the rise and fall of the Celts (or whatever it might be); an account that had been illustrated by some kind of poetic rhapsody, declaimed by its author. What

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George had acquired from that entertainment was not so much a contribution to his ethnological notes as the image of the rhapsodist—I never forget his rendering of her look and tones: a little grey, near-sighted lady, who peered at her manuscript and wailed and chanted the lay of the strong-armed lovers who had come from the north to woo her. Spoils of this sort he never failed to bring back; his gallery of representations was inexhaustible. Many familiar figures, the friends he picked up on his wanderings, I could intimately recall, known to me only as he dramatised them in ten words of an anecdote. He brought them to life with a single gesture, a sudden look, and there they remain.

Gradually, I suppose, he discovered that the practical considerations which had confirmed his bent towards research had ended by moving over to the other side. Whereas the prospect of a career had first pointed him to academic studies, the matter was different when he began to find a footing on literary ground. His early essays in criticism and

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fiction were as by-play to his main work, but their hold upon him grew steadily stronger. And so it was the turn of the learned book to take the second place; he had left the Museum because it was impossible to do two things at once, and now the book had to yield to books of another kind. I should say there was no struggle of conflicting desires; the thing he put behind him was never troublesome in that way. He became to all appearance a single-hearted man of letters—a novelist, if he was to be classed, though a novelist committed to no particular school. His critical work (mostly to be found in *Literature*, and in its successor, the Literary Supplement of the *Times*) was indeed that of a very free lance; with books in general he dealt in an irregular, unprofessional spirit, penetrating in judgment where he chose, passing lightly where his interest did not happen to be caught. But his dramatic sense was so sure and strong that he was drawn completely into whatever he wrote, and worked in a

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rage of concentration. So his stories were produced, and afterwards his plays; he was beset by a crowd of ideas and subjects, not a tenth part of which he had time to represent.

Yet there were days when it seemed after all as though nothing would have satisfied him quite as well as the life of a student. The glee, for instance, with which he would sit down to any sort of linguistic task was really even greater than that with which he would fling himself into a toilsome or dangerous disturbance, such as a game or a fight, that happened to come his way. I doubt if he was ever more solidly contented than when he was laying up knowledge with no motive at all but that of the purely disinterested collector. Languages came first; but there was no species of fact, one might say, that he was not pleased to add to his stock. Though he would have denied it himself, he seemed to enjoy the mere process of remembering; he liked to exert his tenacious memory as though it became uneasy

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with inaction. If there was nothing at the moment to learn by heart, it would serve in some degree to invent wonderful ways of digesting the next slab of facts he should choose to devour. I recall a summer day, spent with him, when the morning was given to a correspondence with a professional "thought-reader," whom he had fallen in with somewhere and whose imperfect system of remembering everything about everyone he had undertaken to improve; the rest of the day being devoted to a minute tabulation of the different dialects in the poetry of the Walloons. The art of letters, strictly speaking, could not hold him thus; he would break out of it and become involved in practical, discursive, extraneous questions. But in the pursuit of knowledge he appeared to find all he needed; he could keep within that horizon.

V

HE, his wife and Mrs Hamilton moved up to Hampstead soon after his marriage, and with Hampstead he was thereafter always associated. A rambling house with a pretty old garden in the Vale of Health, tucked under the slope that leads up to the Heath, was his home for some years: a delightful place, in which his faculty for striking no roots anywhere, even in the most favouring soil, was made curiously conspicuous. Under the hands of himself and his household Heathland Lodge became exceedingly attractive, and no doubt he was as fond of it as were the many friends to whom it was constantly open. Yet whereas they clung to it and missed it when his tenure came to an end, it always seemed as though he himself might have hung up the key and gone out and abandoned it for good at any moment, without leaving any real part of his being behind him. There was no

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restlessness in this ; it was more like a deep conviction, unconscious perhaps, that many things which mattered to most of us did not to him matter at all. He appeared to have no instinct of possession whatever ; with a pen in his pocket and a bundle of notebooks he was ready for the road. He surveyed his charming, graceful surroundings, and helped to create them, not without pleasure, but with an air of being in no way engaged or committed by them. No one could have been less the creature of habit, though he was fond of inventing and announcing some new rule on which his days were to be arranged and his production doubled. There would be charts of work, a catalogue of hours, a fixed programme for going out and coming in—things of that kind ; they would be taken almost seriously for a brief time, and then shown to be based on a fallacy. His desire to relapse into set methods was always defeated by the fertility of his resources.

You never knew what might be the prime

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interest of the moment, as you descended the steps from the outer gate of Heathland Lodge to its tree-hidden lawn. The possibilities grew more and more various as time went on. But there was no doubt upon one point, which was that he himself, apart from his changing affairs, would be the same as ever, absolutely to be counted on for a welcome that bridged any absence without an effort. His ideas kept turning up in fresh conditions, far from the spot where they had last been seen ; but he himself was always *there*, like a rock of reality and consistency in a world of makeshift. So far from being uncertain or unaccountable, he seemed to hold veracity fast, through everything, while others drifted aimlessly. I speak of those who really knew him ; there were some, no doubt, who mainly saw the things he held loosely and dropped without ceremony when he had done with them. I have said that he never looked back upon himself or thought of justifying his position ; he often baffled and puzzled, gave offence sometimes, was misjudged, I dare say,

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not seldom. Indeed he could make it very difficult to judge him rightly. In unsympathetic company his whole look changed ; he became blank and stony. He could be trusted to meet a possibly ungenial challenge with a perversity that made misunderstanding worse than before. Yet even to those, and they were not few, with whom he fought outrageously, his unshakable honesty must always have been clear ; he might be exasperating, but he could not be less than genuine. To all who came near him he was indeed in himself the example of truth ; he possessed something that remained in memory as a test of integrity.

So much was certain, and also that for an argumentative man of strong opinions he was singularly ready to be interested. The veiled, withdrawn look that I remember from far back soon disappeared ; instead, there was an alert movement of response that rose at once to any suggestion, drew it out and fostered it, turned it over, fell on it then very likely, but always established an intercourse that

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ran forward. He talked—he talked freely and keenly—he criticised, questioned, wrangled; but he always—perhaps I mean nearly always—talked receptively; he never, almost never, snatched the argument and made off with it on his own account. The delight of walking and arguing with him is blended in my mind with many scenes, and continually with a sense of watching new light upon unfolding distances; he had a way of intently handling one's old, confused, unscrutinised notions so that one suddenly saw through them into clarity. He was not at all given to abstractions; an idea, when he discussed it, seemed to become hard and bright and edged, and the distances he revealed were as definite as a view of hills after spring rain. He hated the misty blurs behind which, with such a conviction of delicacy, his companion might shelter the uncertainty of his meaning; I can hear the tones in which he would translate one's fine shades into their plain prose, seriously, interrogatively, as though asking for enlightenment, with deadly effect upon

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their futility. He lived himself in a world of absolutely straight and lucid thought, with which no liberties were ever taken or dreamed of; the cast of his mind made him mistrustful of a romantic twilight. But when the mist was dispelled, you found yourself in the presence of an understanding of ideal values as much larger and deeper as it was more rigorous than that which he had destroyed.

A remarkable companion for a walk or a journey, it may well be believed, and many discovered it. He was a considerable traveller in his way, and whether he took a friend with him or made his friends as he went, his excursions were highly sociable. A voyage of some kind was his favourite form of rest; a sea voyage in particular was often the tonic he needed for his rather difficult and uncertain health. But his idea of travel was most accommodating; it hardly seemed to matter whether he went to Tahiti or to Boulogne or to Ponder's End—from either he would bring back a sheaf of notes and sketches to enrich his return to work.

1877
California



Clara Weston
Vernon, California

A LEAF FROM A SKETCH-BOOK

George Calderon

At one time it was part of his daily plan to roam afield in the very early morning—with Jones, in Jones's later life, and afterwards with Tommy, an odd tangle-haired scapegrace of a dog whose origin was always obscure. There was no end to the discoveries and acquaintances he owed to this habit. I remember a walk with him along Piccadilly, on a dank November evening, when he stopped to greet a friend of his who was shambling down the pavement and picking cigarette-ends out of the gutter: a haunter of the Heath, he told me, like himself, whom he sometimes encountered in the dawn. Now and then he would set off on a vagrant tour among country villages, avoiding what he suspected of being places of note, and accepting the company and the entertainment that he happened to find. Or he would decide that for perfect ease it was better to refuse shelter and to sleep under a hedgerow—he would maintain the principle ironically, fancifully, and carry it out through picturesque misfortunes. I have a glimpse that shows him descending with a companion

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upon a sunlit lawn and a party of cool, clean people, after one of these ventures ; and a memory of the ludicrous account he proceeded to give, an account of two miserable men, waking by a roadside in the grey light, one silently handing the other a sardine, held by its tail—their breakfast that morning.

An occasional week in Paris, and several excursions by sea, to Lisbon, Marseilles, the Canary Islands, gave him many volumes of lively notes. Wherever he went he kept up a running commentary in a manuscript-book on the things that struck his fancy, the journal of a very impressionable tourist. They were not the notes of a tourist of culture and sentiment. When he ought to have been visiting a famous monument or a place of historic association, he was apt to be playing dance tunes with the landlady's daughter or sitting at cards with a party of commercial agents. Their faces, their talk, their manners, all went into his diary ; he studied their past and recorded his research as though they were palaces and picture galleries—though indeed

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by a chance word one might discover that these also had been seen and digested. He must have given an uncommon experience to a great many people, and I should like to know what some of them made of it. What they saw was an enigmatical sort of being, who might have been an actor or a doctor or a seafaring man if he had not evidently been much else besides ; I do not see how they can ever have come to a conclusion. No doubt there was much speculation about his affairs and his motives ; I have no idea how he explained himself, if he explained at all. At any rate he was better company than most people would expect to meet with on an ordinary errand of business abroad. I suppose there are scattered officials and foreign correspondents at this moment, in many parts of the world, who recall the clever, funny, friendly man they once sailed with and never quite made out. He was foremost in amusement, infinitely resourceful in devising occupations and distractions ; and yet there was that in his pointed speech and watchful eye

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that gave pause. "Hist! the Corregidor"—I can imagine the word going round, as among the contemporaries of Browning's poet in Valladolid.

For himself he acquired a variety of personal experience that was absorbed into work of more kinds than one, active and literary—work that he accomplished, and much more that he would have brought into shape with time. His plays are full of sharp, queer points of character, unmistakably seized in the quick; and his power of establishing an understanding with all conditions of men was to be proved again and again, when more than the fun of observation depended on it. And if he was promiscuous afield and abroad, he was certainly not less so at home. He took whatever came, and was as much prepared to take the appropriate and conventional in its turn as all the rest. There was not in him a grain of affectation, or the shadow of a pose of eccentricity. Life he treated as good enough in all times and places, from the duchess's kitchen to the

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queen's croquet party ; none of it came altogether amiss. I have seen him irreproachably handing dowagers round at a country ball and enchanting them with his attentive style. What was never seen was any un readiness on his part in the face of a sociable proposal. A festive gathering that drooped with boredom would be roused again by what appeared to be his enjoyment of it. Not the most patient, very far from the most conciliatory of men, his good-humour never failed before well-meant dullness ; he somehow made it serve his purpose, much to its own delight.

But he enjoyed most of all, I take it, a small and crisp society that was fortunately close within his reach at Hampstead—first at Heathland Lodge, afterwards in Well Walk, where the two last years were spent in a house on the ridge overlooking the view of London. The company dropped in sporadically or it assembled deliberately ; some of its leading features changed in course of time, as chance carried them away, but it remained

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and kept its character, and was to be seen in very happy circumstances in George's house. It happened to be painters and poets and writers and ballet-masters and I cannot say what else, but essentially it was a hundred ideas, much remarkable work, and hours of congruous talk. It was not to be called a literary or an artistic or an intellectual society ; not to be given such names, because it had no such bonds, or indeed any at all but a love of talk and work and ideas ; it had no common object in the pursuit of these. George Calderon's place in it was peculiar ; of all his circle he was the least identified with a calling or a doctrine ; he continued to evade even the roughest classification. It made him a meeting-point for those who lived upon his level of thought but whose destinies were fixed ; they found in him something very unusual to clash against, a man of ripe and masterful parts that were still equally ready for experiment in any quarter. A most varied company, therefore, could unite and forgather in him, and it

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constantly did ; his criticism rose to every kind of defiance. And whereas the criticism of most people grows familiar sooner or later in its general form, there was nothing in his to be foreseen but its edge and weight.

The art of converse needs a nice mixture of seriousness and irony, conviction and detachment, to produce a tone that will never seem either heavy or shrill. The perfect tone is easily recognised when it is heard, and it seems to me that it was heard in George's presence as it seldom is. He had a swing and an action when he caught up an idea, an air of purpose in setting to work on it, which precluded all notion that he was trifling with argument ; provocation started a sound in his voice which was not to be mistaken for play. But there was another sound merged with it, a ring of mockery and extravagance, and the two persisted together as the talk rose, both of them audible, neither predominant. When I invoke this strain I see him in the company of one friend in particular, the friend with whom

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he probably found contention most rewarding; at least it is hard to imagine that he ever met an antagonist more resolute, with better arms or more skill in using them.¹ Together they ranged the Heath, not lacking subjects for disagreement; the trenchant voice and uplifted finger of his friend seemed to drive all accepted faiths to annihilation, while George would goad and confront him, personate the champion of reason and keep an eye on the path at the same time. "A truth," cried one, blind to all else, "a truth, I say, among a million lies"—while the other steered him surreptitiously down the right turnings, incited him to his most thunderous epithets, and was vigorously ready for him at any pause. That picture somehow expresses George, as I feel, with a peculiarly right and characteristic air.

A break was made in these full and fruitful years by the necessities of his health, which at length had to be drastically taken in hand. Short outings and excursions were not enough;

¹ William Rothenstein.

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he was advised to try the effect of a long sea voyage. In 1906 he disappeared to Polynesia for a number of months—opening his front door and strolling off to Tahiti, it is remembered, as though for a morning's walk like any other. He returned, it may be supposed with what a haul of notes, and also with much of the physical benefit that had been hoped for. But there was now a change in his household. While he was away Mrs Hamilton had died, mourned by the many friends who would never wrong her memory by recalling it in woeful words. She and George used to have constant and lively passages. His mind and methods were something of a puzzle to her; she would try to penetrate the mysteries of his work by posing him with wonderful questions about its aim and object, or by reading his books with the firm purpose of finding them entirely unintelligible. His humour, however, which marched so well with her own, and his unselfish, unfailing loyalty and care, she understood and ended by resting on implicitly; two

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such ripe-natured and genuine people had to become allies. He on his side understood and served and managed her, laughed at her and with her throughout. He was a son-in-law for whom that relationship was no colourless part, as indeed it could have been for no one in his position ; he played it with perfect insight and spirit.

And here for one moment, remembering that to be utterly discreet would be to falsify his portrait beyond recognition, I must speak of him as a husband. I shall do so in general terms, which a reader will apply as they are meant. A man whose wife enters into every occupation and train of his thought with eager intelligence, perfect sympathy and untiring cheer ; whose wife is a partner in all his friendships and all his undertakings, an ever perceptive critic of his work, an adviser, a support, a sharer of every mood ; whose home is not only charming and happy, but perennially amusing and interesting too : that man, if he is as variously gifted as George Calderon, has not been unfortunate in his lot,

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it will be agreed. He will have that which may make him enjoy his hearth and prefer it to anything else in the world, and which will engage his appreciation to the depth of his nature. Anyone who failed to understand this aspect of such a man's life would have a very imperfect knowledge of what he was, and no one could know much of him without learning to do it justice. "To plunge out again into the fresh-smelling sea, to new faces and new talk, it is a pleasant thing! And at the end a slim black figure and a little dog perched on the white cliff of England. Au revoir, my little best." So he wrote from Tahiti, and it can rest at that; George's life was nowhere incomplete, and I should hope it is already plain that for completion by the right companionship a very notable and manifold bestowal was required.

He returned from New Zealand and Tahiti with materials for a very remarkable book. As he travelled differently from other tourists, so his book of impressions was not likely to resemble theirs, and among other distinctions

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it was a much harder book to write. It was never really finished, but he fortunately left it in a state to give a picture of his Tahitian days, more or less as he planned it. They affected him very deeply; they gave him perhaps the most penetrating experience he ever had till the war came. In Tahiti the decay of an immemorial civilisation is to be watched taking place, from day to day almost, in a space about the size of Middlesex; the history of millenniums is so foreshortened that time is seen at a glance—not as a succession of centuries, but as a piled-up mass of them. Such an assault upon the imagination is like no other. So George found; but his record remains, and I need not speak of it here. Of his other books, however, I must say something; not so much by way of literary criticism—to which I do not find them altogether amenable, for a certain reason—as for the purpose of giving his likeness from every point of view. The view of him as a writer is one which dissolves into other phases as one looks at it; his writing

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becomes talking, as his talking immediately becomes acting. Yet his writing was always marked as his own, his stories and plays have intensely his own voice and accent. Perhaps they even show the more clearly how he looked at his world for being rather casual and conversational—unguarded, so to say, and loosely girt, though I am far from meaning carelessly considered. He worked with full seriousness, and if a book was to him a receptacle (I must shift my metaphor again) for an overflow of ideas and images, rather than a piece of ideal and imaginative sculpture, it was not that he handled a book without knowing very clearly what he was doing. I remember his once rebuking me, long ago, for using some hazy, picturesque phrase about the fundamental oneness (or perhaps the heavenly twinship) of writing and living, how they were mysteriously the same, or could be or should be, I am sure I forget which; he said, on the contrary, they were utterly and justly different. Yet for his own case my phrase seems not unfit,

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though I should prefer less portentous words. His love of literature was not a jealous passion, not an all-exacting service ; it dwelt quite happily with his love of life, and was ready to drop into the background if need be ; there was no satisfaction he got from the one that he could not at any moment get from the other.

VI

THE difficulty I find in criticising his literary work is that on the one hand it is not full enough for an account of his mind as a whole, while on the other it is not compact and homogeneous enough to stand out and become independent of himself. A man's art, to be really discussable as art, must be entire from one or other point of view ; it must have the character of an object of some kind, a thing seen by itself in detachment. It may be a fragment of life cut and fashioned, saved from futile accident and completed according to its own law, like a play of Æschylus, a poem of Keats ; that is the substance of solid art. Or else it may have the look of a loose cluster, a cloud that takes the shape of a man ; in that case all the books of a writer are one book, embodying his imagination, working it out to the end ; to choose a single play

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or poem from the mass is like isolating a page of a chapter that should be read as a whole. No doubt opinions would differ in seeking examples of an artist of this kind ; but perhaps they would agree upon the great sphere of thought and experience which bears the name of Goethe. That is the commanding case, surely, of the man of one book, the book which consists of nothing less than the entirety of his work. At least the distinction is clear and well known to criticism ; it is expressed by many pairs of words, classical and romantic, impersonal and personal, objective and subjective ; more or less adequately they indicate a deep divergence. The contrast holds broadly. On one side the work of art drops away from its author and exists in its own space ; on the other it is entangled throughout with the mind that created it, and is not to be separated. But there is precisely the same necessity for both—the need of constituting in some way or other a whole and single fact.

The loosely clustering agglomeration, however—if that is how a man's work is to be

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taken—must be ample and abundant. Where each successive part of his achievement is to be read as a chapter of one book, there must be chapters enough to tell the whole story. And if he has only written a few pages here and there, with blank spaces in between, the few pages may be delightful to read, they cannot rightly be criticised. It is easy to be enthralled by the monthly instalment of a novel in a magazine, but to judge it seriously the beginning must be recovered, the end awaited. In George Calderon's book, as I have said, the chapters were by no means all written with ink on paper; many of them were created in other material altogether. There were passages that have to be sought in his active work, and a just review can only rest upon these as well as those. So much it seems to me necessary to say—more necessary perhaps than to one who may know him solely by what he printed. To such, I can well believe, his written work may appear more than enough for judgment; beyond its own originality, lucid and attractive, full of savour

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and character, there should be no need to look. But this will not satisfy anyone who does happen to have read the whole story ; the printed pages fall short of that, and in speaking of them I cannot forget the rest. He would have written it all with time ; his literary projects were extremely varied and very plentiful, as his notebooks show. Broken off in the midst, in literary shape they leave his story but half told.

The play-form was that which suited him best, I cannot doubt ; its opportunities were those of which he could make the most, its limitations did not hamper him. It is useless for a man to attempt to write plays if his set is in the direction of big slow subjects, dragging trains of development behind them and requiring much room to turn round in ; useless if he sees the story of character as a picture unrolled, not in momentary and disconnected aspects. A dramatist is forced to be content with symbolic summaries ; any desire to write them out in full, any delay over the fringe of implication that hangs

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on every action or incident, brings him into collision with the bounds of drama; nobody can move comfortably within them who hankers after literality. And so a dramatist is one who jumps to a conclusion, or at least who reaches it by the fewest possible stages, missing all but the essential. I have heard play-writers lament over the difficulty of simplifying a subject, almost any subject, so as to make it fit into a play of less than a hundred acts; a patient prosier can thoroughly understand the embarrassment. But from George Calderon no such complaint was heard; for him a question, a motive, a conflict, fell naturally into sharp decisive facets, and he was not tempted to pause and ruminare. He abounded in ideas for plays, and they were always ideas that could be exhibited promptly and briskly; they had the stamp of dramatic presentability. He did not need large spaces, like an analytical novelist. Even when he wrote descriptively, he never wrote with what I should call a continuous line; he touched

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the points that he needed, here and there, and left them.

The simplification of a human being, too, which the stage demands, was a process that he liked, not a restraint that irked him. When he talked about people, their sayings and doings led him straight to their mid-most quality, to a peculiarity of the core; wandering speculations in psychology did not interest him, or researches into the niceties of emotion. I am not trying to prove, be it noted, that a psychologist cannot write plays; only that the frame of a modern comedy is especially suited to a man more attracted by the immediate clash of character, less by the natural history of its growth. It was a world of distinct and salient objects that George helped himself from, when he came to write plays; it was not a world in which a meditative fancy lost itself beneath the surface. I remember very well, at the first performance of *Revolt* (it was at Manchester, in 1912), how rapidly and certainly the figures on the stage made their effect; their

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various voices came straight over to us, where we have had to follow a doubtful echo so often. It was like facing a proscenium from which someone had removed a sheet of glass, unsuspected before. This, I think, was the chief and rarest of his theatrical abilities, this power of instantly fixing a clear impression, I will not say of his story, but of the men and women concerned in it. The gift was natural to him from the start, it was his own way of seeing people; they showed themselves in plain and irreducible terms. All the creatures who appear in his plays, London types, commercial folk, spirited young women, voluble young men, have this directness of utterance; you know where you are with them, you see their quality; the least of them is a portrait in decided lines. And his command of dialogue has the same assurance; it looks very simple to read, but in speech it reveals its subtlety by the ease with which it carries and tells.

Revolt deals with strikes and crowds; it is a drama of the struggle between the lonely

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being in a man's brain that invents and creates, and the other being, suspicious, hostile, that starts up in the brain of any crowd and can only destroy. *The Fountain* (produced by the Stage Society in 1909) is based on the old difficulty of curing the ugly parts of civilisation with any resources but those which its ugliness yields. Some of his smaller plays were acted at different times, and also two of his translations from Tchekhof, *The Sea-gull* and *The Cherry Orchard*. But besides these there are many that remain unpublished, comedies, farces, operettas, short pieces mostly, though one of them is no less than a five-act historical drama in blank verse. This last, *Cromwell Mall o' Monks*, is the most remarkable of his many surprising experiments, from first to last. I doubt if he had ever before written a line of serious poetry; but some chance opportunity prompting it, he sat down at once, acquired a mouth-filling, concentrated manner that was entirely new to him, and worked out a masterly scheme of the rise and fall of Wolsey's Cromwell. He

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finished it without delay, and never thought of writing a blank verse again. His interest in the art of ballet and pantomime bore fruit in a number of wordless plays ; it was a form that he studied very carefully and practically. All that he wrote, indeed, was guided by a keen perception of stage conditions, a sense that was stimulated by no great love of the theatre, I think, but rather by his pleasure in mastering the theatre's grammar and idiom, when it befell him to use it.

He did not belong to the school of criticism founded by Dogberry, who held that reading and writing come by nature. His view, on the contrary, was that the craft of play-making had better be learnt in the carpenter's shop of Scribe and Labiche, with a more advanced course in the lecture-room of Aristotle and Lessing. He put himself under instruction, accordingly, and produced a volume of notes in which everything that a play could be or do was conscientiously recorded. His resolution to be taught was very businesslike ; it admitted of no loose talk about inspiration

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and originality ; the points, the effects, the devices of drama were written down like the rules of arithmetic. Having mastered these he wrote his plays, cutting and trimming and polishing them with patient scrupulosity. Outside Dogberry's school instruction is held to be valuable always, and I am not going to say that George's academic discipline was anything but wholesome. Yet it may be that in studying the ways of theatrical drama he tended to think more of details and moments than of the wholeness and continuity of a subject fully wrought into form. On an act or a scene or a phrase he would spare no effort in the search for the precisely just and happy twist ; but on the development of a theme, so that it turns completely on itself and is displayed to the utmost, he apparently had less to bestow. Except in quite short pieces his writing always suffered, to my sense, from the fact that the idea did not seem to have unfolded steadily from the middle, but to have broken out in bits, with much brilliancy, and in bits to have been treated.

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The play as he carried it to the stage, however, had not nearly reached the degree of finish that he gave it in action. I vividly recall the beauty and harmony of the picture that he created in *Revolt*, where the form of the play—purposely, I believe, left somewhat hesitating and doubtful in the writing—grew strong in the charm of its production. Not only he, of course, was responsible for this; but I believe I may say that his talent for calling a play into life was very great, and I know at any rate that his co-operation was warmly welcomed. To make a play express the whole of its capacity smoothly and clearly is a matter of many delicate arts, no doubt; I could not pretend to give an account of them. But whatever they are, George would lavish time and trouble on them without stint; he enjoyed the practical work of directing and organising and exhorting, enjoyed even the long weeks of provincial lodging-houses that seemed always entailed for him by rehearsal of a play. If one dropped into the midst of his busy life for

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the first performance, he was found to have made a circle of attached friends, whom he enlivened and encouraged with his irresistible spirit; a hard-worked troop of actors and actresses became a club of companions. He toiled with them, not sparing their patience, but still less his own; and after the event it was agreeable to see him presiding at a feast of these friends in the small hours, to celebrate the occasion, like an undergraduate host giving a party on his twenty-first birthday. The token of good will was not wanting on the part of the company; the silver cigarette-case would be presented in style, "in recognition of the very sporting manner in which he has conducted the rehearsals."

I should like to give an example or so of the many swift flashes that made a play of his such a living and stirring thing to watch. There was a quality about it that I can only describe in one way, a quality that was like the grace of a wild animal; and that is not an effect which it is easy to catch and pin down to a particular moment. An unexpected

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wing of poetry seemed suddenly to wheel and shine and vanish ; it was there, it was gone, shaking the air, but not to be seen precisely. It would be useless to quote, even if I could find a quotation ; the pretty, disquieting glint of motion would not appear in the mere words. Romance settled on them for an instant un-awares, in some phrase which looks much as the rest on the printed page, but which stood out in the conditions of life. And there were other, more seizable effects, abrupt turns of humour and wisdom and irony, that were not less delightful. One of the scenes of *Revolt* shows the sick-bed of a young man, very near his death, who faces the fact that a scientific discovery he has made will all but certainly be extinguished out of the world when he goes. It is barely possible to hand on the clue in the minutes left him ; the sense that an idea, a unique and immortal thing, should be at the mercy of these miserable human chances creates a strong excitement for a spectator as the minutes fly. It is a beautifully written scene, and I never knew a stroke

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that went home more sharply than the voice of the young man, whimsical, perverse, inconsequent, calling after the doctor who has to leave him at last, to die with the day. The doctor can do no more, and he turns away. "Don't forget the match," cries the young man, suddenly and airily, from his pillow. "What match?" "Why, our boxing-match—I fight you on Friday." It was a light, ringing cry of derision, mocking the cruel fatuity of things in general, that fell like the cut of a lash.

Indeed the sound of poetry, romantic and exquisite, or grave and keen, was never very far from the path of George's imagination, though it seemed to lead away from much that is thought poetical. His great delight in Heine—in Schumann's Heine, as well as the *Buch der Lieder*—was the most conspicuous sign of interest in poetry books that I recall in him; he did not often appear to take much account of the rest. But the true tone is in more of his writing than its look would suggest; its manners may be flighty and

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casual, but behind them there is something else which speaks to the ear. It seldom speaks openly ; yet the echo is not to be missed. It is a strain of perfectly simple and quiet nobility, so unconscious in its ways that it calls no attention to itself, but clearly recognised at last, and known to be aware of all beauty. And now and then, at the due moment, the fitting words were easily found ; there comes an outburst so true and straight, so large and real, that poetry is the only name for it. Once, and I think not more than once, he wrote a piece that was entirely in this vein, a couple of scenes in which there is nothing whatever but the single effort to express an exquisite, baffling, torturing emotion. The piece, still in manuscript, has never yet been acted ; its mixture of tragic intensity with a kind of goblin irony, of shadowy mystery with hard lucidity, would certainly tax the art of the producer on the stage. But the picture of a man who has lived and died in vain longing ; lived till it could be borne no more, and then stopped it with a bullet ;

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and has not stopped it after all, he finds, even by death, for death only disintegrates the band of creatures that have lived in him, and leaves his longing still the familiar torment, to be endured in the sinister whispering-gallery of darkness instead of the bitter light of day : this is a picture that would reveal an extraordinary beauty under interpretation, I cannot doubt. Strange and difficult as it is, he wrote nothing more penetrated by passion.

What he would have done, what he would be doing now if he were here, it is impossible to guess ; he would have struck off along new lines foreseen by no one. Of such a mind it is only certain that it can never stand still. In some of its flights he had experimented with farce and extravaganza, and that was the region he had first made his own. His earliest book, an ample jest, was a continuation of the history of the Verdant Greens, with the appearance of one of them as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. It was followed (in 1904) by a much more serious, not more restrained, ebullition of satiric humour in *Dwala*, an

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incursion of the "missing link" into modern London. The fierce flashes of insight in this book, and many biting touches of description, showed where his talent might have found much further exercise, if he had cared; he had the power of looking at everyday things as though he had never seen them before, and at monsters and miracles as though they were everyday things, which is one of the best arms of satire. But he turned elsewhere, and soon found himself happier in dramatic work; so much so that he never went back to narrative fiction again. He might have done so eventually, though for reasons already given I judge that the full scope of the novel was more than he needed. Anyhow he would always have proceeded in his own way; nobody could influence him, whether to take up a task that did not satisfy him or to put down another that did.

VII

AN extremely amusing and incisive little pamphlet of his on the question of Votes for Women is dated 1908, and I suppose it was about then that he was suddenly discovered to have plunged into public controversy. It may have been in that same year that I saw him on the platform of a big hall in the West End of London, sitting beside a tall and elegant antagonist and facing the glare of a crowded audience. It was an open debate upon the great topic. The lady began it; her fluent, attractive appeal was listened to in a charmed silence, broken occasionally by a few happy sighings and purrings; she was a beautiful figure of a Diana, earnest and brave and free. The audience rose to her eloquence; the thorny quarrel was raised to the level of a large, splendid, wind-swept passion; it was the contest of Milanion and Atalanta, of Theseus



Osborn & Platt

George Calderon
1909

Day of
California

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and Penthesilea, fought out with flashing limbs on golden sands, under the arch of heaven, but with what a different issue from of old. There the question stood when she ceased, in a rapture of applause. And then the opponent came forward, George began his reply, and it was as though Mephistopheles had landed upon the shore of a Greek island. With his arguments and his sarcasms, his crude interrogations, his facts and his dates, the atmosphere was chilled and the shining spaces contracted. From fervent souls the listeners were changed to mere pouting and hissing human beings ; they turned upon the intruder who so degraded them. It was a curious scene ; the running fire of indignant interruption grew louder and bolder, as the speaker firmly, politely argued ; the lofty passion had become a squall of exasperated dissent.

He was not the insidious, undermining spirit he was taken to be on that occasion, *der Geist der stets verneint* ; he was ardently practical and constructive, with his own

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positions laid and defended before he ever attacked another's. But he certainly carried the apple of discord with him ; his oratory had few of the more appeasing tones, and for the opposite sex in particular it always seemed to have a good many of the more provoking. He had an annoying trick of reducing a large abstract dispute, in which principles stood out plainly on ground disencumbered of facts, to a dispute in terms of small, literal objects, where its universality was cramped. I remember another platform on which he persisted in arguing a high economic problem—one that had just been doing faithful service in the cause of woman—as though it were an affair of bananas and coco-nuts, brought by a conspiring black man from his plantation and laid at the feet of a bangled matron, where she sat in the shade ; we all had to descend to earth, readjust our ideas, and try to catch him out in an unfamiliar language. It might be amusing ; but if you had been very much uplifted it was a jar. And so far from laying aside the irrelevant advantages of man—such

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as his brutality, his coarseness—and meeting his opponent in the sexless world of reason, he appeared to brandish and uphold them as serious arguments. Indeed he was sometimes not much less disconcerting as an ally than as an adversary; his support could be not a little damaging, when his own side were disposed to parley. He was generally polite himself, on platforms, and did not often lose his temper; but he would not sink the masterfulness of man out of sight nor take a due attitude of chivalry; he would insist on explaining, and apparently think it no wrong, that men are naturally sultans. I can imagine his associates occasionally wishing to pluck him by the coat-tail, while he spoke. He could be most undiplomatically frank.

Of his solid and serious thought on this question of women's votes, of his careful study of the controversy and the conclusions that he arrived at, I need hardly now speak; the question has been answered after a fashion, and interest drops until there come results that can be measured. I doubt whether he

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would have been as courteously ready to surrender his position as some of his old allies have proved ; but his active defence of it was only an interlude, though a very full one, in the business of his later years. Other causes claimed him, especially one that would certainly have occupied him more and more in these days. Before he came to that, however, there were several lesser matters, minor applications of a particular principle, to which he gave their portion of his zeal. Two of them I may mention, the support of the rights of the plain man, first as a pedestrian on the road, secondly as a buyer in shops ; these crusades in their turn appeared in the shape of committees, subscriptions, pamphlets, with an organiser at the head of them who would take any trouble, do anything and go anywhere, and who was only an uncertain guide because he would presently seem to have entirely forgotten the quest. He had not, indeed ; but he knew precisely the moment when he had made his peculiar contribution to a cause and could not usefully

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give more. At that point he would stop, or rather he would be gone, like the Red Queen at the end of her marked course ; and it might be confusing to some, because, unlike her, he did not announce the point in advance. So there was a time when, to vindicate the peace of the country road and shame the motorist, he would trudge through wind and rain while his looser companions rode in comfort ; and then there was a time when he joined them in their car without a word of excuse. No explanation was given ; and if his committee of road defence were left to stare, there was no one to reassure them.

The principle of these enterprises was always the same ; it was the assertion of the fair claims of the community. Where these were concerned a very old English pride and obstinacy came to the surface in him, unweakened by the mixture of his blood ; or perhaps it was even reinforced by the Castilian quarter of his ancestry, though it appeared as the true temper of the Pymys and the Hampdens. He was one of the

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rarest kind of insurgents against tyranny ; there may be many who are dismayed by no force of opposition, but there are few who are deterred by no complexion of alliance. He did not care whom he fought beside, so long as they faced the enemy. To be willing to accept the rude and obscure as brothers-in-arms in the war against oppression—that is one thing ; it is quite another to admit the partnership of the fat and well-liking, when the *infâme* to be crushed has shifted its position. There is no difficulty in rebelling against a usurped authority ; a man of George's turn of mind is perpetually in revolt, as a matter of course. But most of us end by forgetting what our particular *infâme* exactly is, or rather we judge what it is, and where, not by its own infamy, but by the people who happen to be crushing it. Is the right man, our natural affinity, offering or resisting violence ? It is a holy war. But is the other man, the wrong man, with whom we have nothing in common, doing battle somewhere

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else? That man cannot have marched in a just cause; no need to look further, his allegiance condemns it. Or if he can prove that he is on the right side, nevertheless to be ranked with him spoils everything; it may even look like betraying one's friend; it certainly gives rise to false presumptions.

And so indeed it did, more than once, in George's case. Some of his confederates on one field could never understand how he came to be joining hands with others on another. It was natural and right for him to attack specious pretensions in high seats; but he seemed to hold there was nothing inherently sacred in claims put forward by a crowd in the market-place. If he was a democrat, how did he justify his refusal to take orders from any and every crowd, provided only that it was properly shirt-sleeved?—so the argument would run. He objected to the motor-car of the rich, when it infringed on the poor man's path; and then he apparently objected to the picket of the unionist, when it defied the rich man. The fact was, of

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course, that he respected one despotic class or section as little as any other, and that he was on the side of the plain man of all classes. But the bond that unites the democracy of plain men is not obvious to the eye; it includes people so different in appearance that it is hard to think of them as a community, as *the* community indeed. Perhaps it is not so hard now as it was a few years ago; the bond is increasingly felt, and from time to time this mixed body seems to speak out with a common voice. There was ambiguity enough, however, in those days, to make it difficult for all to follow the logic of George's rigidly consistent course.

His action during the weeks of the coal strike of 1912, when he hurled himself into the enterprise of breaking the ring of the strikers, was not approved by some of those to whom he felt justified in looking for help. But in that affair, as often before, the misunderstanding he might create among those with whom he parted company was nothing to the false hopes he excited elsewhere. It

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has been said or sung that if the good are apt to be hard on the clever, the clever are always rude to the good ; and there is no greater pleasure for the good—by whom I mean the settled and satisfied—than to discover a change of heart in those by whom they are used to being scorned. George was admittedly a clever man ; there could be no question of it. And yet at times he would really talk as though there were good arguments for a conservative orthodoxy ; it appeared that he was not entirely the malcontent which his type implied. Odd little scenes come back to me, when I have watched the dawning surprise of worthy people who found that this intellectual freebooter was actually agreeing with them ; not carelessly or sarcastically, but with open conviction. *Non tali auxilio*, I have felt inclined to warn them ; and indeed the warning would not be needed for long. It soon became too evident that his orthodoxy was not to be trusted far ; it had promising features, but they involved a good deal more

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than the unwary bargained for. They involved, among the rest, a regard for strict principle, impartially applied, which was likely to shift him out of most camps in time.

But of all his qualities the one that it was least easy to accommodate was his way of acting on the spot, there and then, come what might; and not only that, but of demanding that everybody else should lend a hand. While sympathising friends were conversing with him unsuspectingly, and even while he seemed as leisurely and disengaged as usual, they would find themselves presented with a plan of campaign and expected to march with him at once to the scene of action. He at any rate would be there within the hour; by the afternoon he would have addressed a meeting, distributed leaflets, and opened an office for volunteers. He really did something of the kind, in that ugly spring, two years before the war; and at nightfall he was toiling at the docks, not without danger, handling cargoes with a

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band of amateur porters. His view of the strike, and of all that went to produce it, may have been much too simple ; I dare say he might have agreed that it would become so when the strike was over. But meanwhile the country was being coerced by a class, and he could no more have stood still than he could have sat and watched his own house burn. It was then that he showed how little he was touched by any sceptical misgiving. An awakened, versatile mind like his so often owes its very agility to the spur of doubt, that one almost expects it to hesitate before action, when doubt becomes a drag ; it seems generally accordant that Hamlet of the restless thought should also be Hamlet of the irresolute will. George, when the hour struck for action, might never have seen two sides of a question in his life ; he was aware of nothing but the one side, demanding an immediate deed ; every other distraction dropped instantly.

He never knew, furthermore, another of Hamlet's great difficulties ; and this immunity became suddenly conspicuous at a crisis. It

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would appear hopeless for a man of imagination to keep the sense of kinship with his neighbour always strong and alive; not because the imagination, building its own world, loses touch with the world of others—far from it; but because it is the difference, the distinction, the variety that an artist looks and cares for in the mass, not the general likeness. I picture the world in an artist's brain as a much *vivider* scene, what we call more real, than it appears to other people; but for that very reason as a world in which every creature is disjoined from every creature, refusing common classification. And this is the difficulty I speak of—the puzzle of believing in congregations, of feeling happy and at home in a rank or group. Yet a man like George Calderon shows that it can be solved, though he hardly shows how. He had to the last intensity the sentiment of the commonwealth, the instinct to take his place in the group. Lonely work never pleased him so well as a partnership of two, and he preferred one of hundreds and thousands. His con-

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ception of nationality was as robust as the patriotism of an Elizabethan seaman, and it was not less keenly practical. He was scarcely attracted by ideal visions of brotherhood, but rather by the companionable life of the city within its walls, the nation within its coasts. A wider commonalty, he might have put it, as the tie of kinship is enlarged ; but till then a citizen, a man of a race and a country, was what he felt himself to be, not one who soared above frontiers into the thin air of catholicity. He and Grenvile or Raleigh would have understood each other at once ; with any unsubstantial doctrinaire he would have come to blows in three sentences.

This sentiment, which was his patriotism, became a white-hot passion from the moment he saw a blow aimed at the country, from within or without. In 1912 the blow came from within ; a group of men tried to intimidate the plain man. The rights or wrongs of the group had nothing to say to the duty of resistance, in his view ; and he saw at once that it was a far larger issue than any he

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had joined before. The other causes had interested him ; this one devoured him. No one who was present is likely to forget a certain performance of one of his plays at Oxford, on the eve of the great strike. It was much applauded, and he was duly called before the curtain at the end. And then, instead of the graceful word of thanks that was expected of him, there came an outbreak that greatly shocked a few of his listeners and excited the rest to ardour ; a call to the young men who filled the theatre, an appeal to them to fight the battle of the people. The people were threatened, they must defend themselves ; they must come forward to be enrolled for national service, wherever it might be needed. The air was very full of electricity at the time, and in the days that followed he had to face mistrust and disapproval (and ridicule, which was harder) from many in whom he looked for allies. But the details can well be forgotten. He acted as he did, not wildly, but as a practical man ; this was to be proved after his death, when in a like emergency—

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the strike on the railways in 1919—his action was imitated by thousands, with the result he foresaw. And if this side of his conduct was less clear that night at Oxford, there was no doubt about the flaming zeal that exalted him.

The mixture in him of a plain professional soldier and a knight-at-arms might have contained the secret of leadership; the man to follow in a struggle must be the man whose hold on reality has just the tighter clutch that is added by romantic zest. The point of chivalry, not much talked about, indeed rather carefully disguised, but known to be there, is a power that some few are able to wield; there are fewer still who are unmoved by it. Anyone who remembers the man I am writing of would hate to use exaggerated words about him; but he had the soul of a paladin—that must be said. It appeared very rarely, and never when it could possibly have the look of a parade; never, for example, in a flourish at a crisis. His manner of exhortation was not rhetorical; it was more like a good-

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humoured offer of a share in an adventure, one that he had luckily chanced upon and that was open to all. If some held back he had no time for reproaches ; he was much too busily engaged with those who offered themselves. And yet, though he stirred and interested people, his influence fell somehow short ; it did not carry so far as the personal impression he easily made. Perhaps a born leader must always have some touch of the love of influence for its own sake ; without this he does not acquire the ascendancy that acts as a fly-wheel on the energy of his followers, driving them on over any moment of uncertainty. George, at any rate, who never had a thought but for the cause itself, won admiration and affection by his devoted labours, but not authority.

I am speaking still of the years before the war, and in those his figure, as I see it, is that of a ranging champion, bold and genial, witty and wise, and above all transparently honest. His part in the world was better than that of a counsellor or a reformer ; he

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was of those who give a clear meaning to our ideas of good. The authority that he missed in practice, he exerted in other ways without question; that which satisfied his sense of truth and honour was absolutely to be accepted as the best. There never was a part so unconsciously played; or if that suggests that he was dull enough not to know what he was, played, let me say, with such simplicity and unconcern. It must be great happiness to be as intelligent as he was, and yet never to have to face the discovery of any small meannesses in the mind—or if ever, then only to cast them out on the instant; and happy he was, with his broad full nature, though the surface was tempestuous at times. His rich gift of anger was visibly troublesome only at times of physical ill-being, but I could believe that it had often tried the strength of his will. None the less it was on serenity that he was based, the serenity of a clear knowledge of whatever is excellent and unchanging.

VIII

WORK that was always accomplished at such an exhausting pressure ought to have left him entirely spent in the intervals, unable to rest except in perfect idleness. But it was not so; his rest was never anything but a change in the direction of his energy. His work was laid aside, and immediately he was ready for play. It was various and picturesque; and such an extraordinary assortment of talents was kept for it, talents that were not used in his work, that a few glimpses of him at play must be given here. I have very many to choose from, and some clever, curious face of his versatility would be illustrated by each of them. But in remembering him at play, I always begin with the sight of him, on summer afternoons at Hampstead, seated over his work by the lattice-window of his study, half hidden by a tangle of ivy and wistaria. The sound of sociability in the

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Emory Walker, p. 30.

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or kicking or trundling a ball, and all the devices by which brains may be teased with a pack of cards. He might have been the man for whom games were invented ; at any rate he was one of the small band of players whose happiness is never marred by them ; he was an excellent companion in pleasure, for he had the gift of taking it cheerfully. An odd variety of some familiar game, possibly croquet or cricket, was much affected in his garden ; it was played with passion by large and mixed parties and in many languages. I am reminded of one occasion when a venerable professor and a very exquisite young critic of Mayfair were pitted against each other in the twilight, and batted or putted, or whatever it was, to the delight of an assembly of foreign anthropologists, admiring the habits of the English home. Perhaps it was on that evening that one of the visitors had been warned, by the friend who introduced him, of the variety of types to be seen in George's circle. By an easy misunderstanding he supposed himself to be taking part in a gathering

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of Russian *maîtres de ballet* ; so that to him at least the anthropologists were a baffling study. It was made no simpler when he overheard two of them greet each other effusively and recall the fact that they had last met in a Siberian prison. I pick up my impressions at random, and it is possible that these belong to different dates ; but there were plenty of summer evenings that might have offered as many.

There were others again when the company was neither mature nor outlandish. George enjoyed the society of children—luckily for him, since he was the kind of person who cannot possibly escape it. They beset him and hung upon him, enchanted by his humours and dexterities ; they wished him never to cease inventing games, telling stories and drawing pictures for them. His orderly, businesslike imagination was just what they required ; he could answer all questions, his proposals could always be carried out on the instant, he knew how to circumvent all difficulties. When others were at a loss, he could

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be trusted to devise some entirely new employment, which yet needed no materials but those at hand. As he was the most willing of victims, his talents were not allowed to rust; he was equally useful on fine days out of doors and on wet days in the house. I see him constantly in the midst of a jumping, vociferating circle that closes round him with urgent demands. I see him in particular, on a very hot afternoon of August, carried out of the coolness of a friend's garden into a small and suffocating outhouse or loft, where he is to take part in a drawing competition: the pictures to represent a historical scene, drawn as best may be, but imperatively drawn on this one spot, among the dust and the flies. He would be the last to tamper with such a point of ritual; so he sits on a packing-case, while the sun blazes through dingy panes, and by tea-time he has produced the winning piece, a deliciously pretty and funny picture of a crusader taking leave of his lady, *partant pour la Syrie*.

The finish and spirit of his draughtsmanship

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is to be seen in the illustrations of one of his books, *Downy V. Green*. It was his share in a family gift; he used it as he chanced to possess it, and never tended it seriously. Now and then he sketched in water-colours by the light of nature, drawing the portrait of a landscape remorselessly, as though it were a human face. But his men and women were the best, from the types and figures of Hampstead Heath to those of the South Sea islands; he seized them on all his travels, not roughly or coarsely, but with a delicate and scrupulous touch. He took his skill so lightly, however, that not many people knew him as an admirable satirist with the pencil; a series of shrewd, sardonic cartoons, to which he added from time to time, was stowed away and seldom seen. They were pictures and symbols of modern life, full of astringent humour. One that I always recall represented a large-eyed, earnest lady manipulating a pair of dolls or marionettes; one of these, a winged Cupid, ill at ease in a small pair of modern trousers, subsided limply under her

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hand ; the other, wearing a rakish top-hat and crumpled evening clothes, threw up his head with a knowing look ; beneath was the legend—this was twenty years ago, perhaps—“The Lady Novelist with her two puppets, Love and Life.” From Tahiti he brought back a sketch-book filled with the portraits of island friends, lightly and neatly pencilled. There was a careful nicety, indeed, in his drawing that seemed exactly what it was not, the work of a professionally disciplined hand.

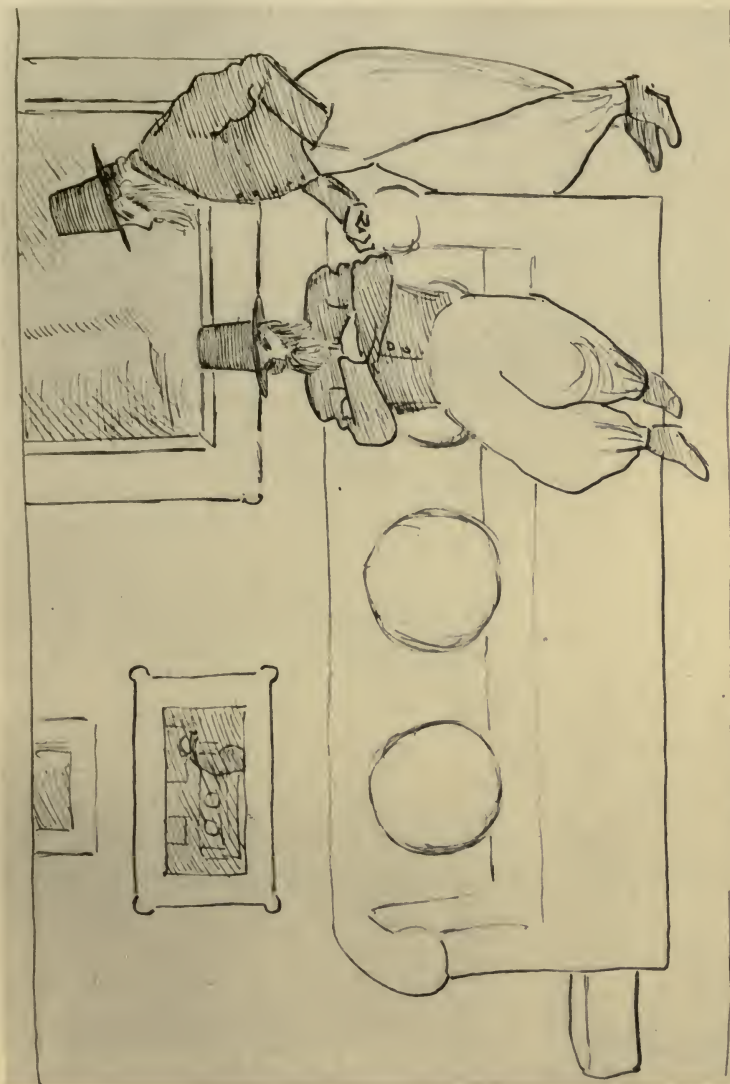
In that field of expression he trod tactfully, picking and choosing his way ; in music it was quite different. Here he advanced as a free adventurer, laying about him with masterful hands. It was a generous sight to see him, especially when he was joined in a duet by a like-minded friend, attacking the fortress of a difficult piece of music. “Storming a sonata” is how his action is described by one who often watched it ; and indeed he would cast himself upon Beethoven or Tschaikovsky with the impetus of a party of escaladers. The friend might falter and stumble before the climax ;

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George looked straight ahead, unwavering, carried the composer's most bristling defences and crashed upon the last chord in triumph. Nothing deflected him ; it is remembered that once, when the piano rocked under his assault, the lamp that stood on it tottered and lost its balance ; but George, tackling the key of seven sharps with one hand, had the other ready to catch the lamp and replace it without missing a beat. Beethoven came first with him, then Schumann, Bach, the Russians, and the later French masters ; beyond these he did not habitually range. His taste was heroic and romantic, he loved music unprofessionally and made no study of its artistry ; but where he was attracted his grasp of the import of music, and his remarkable skill in expounding it, showed that he had the true intelligence, if he had cared to develop it. Another gift had been thrown to him, it took its turn with the rest ; he had not the time, perhaps not the inclination, to get all he might have had from it, but he got continual and profound enjoyment.

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It seemed unjust that a man should have such talents to play with ; even Shelley only made a paper boat once in his life out of a five-pound note, and most of us have to be content with a mild and slender accomplishment or two, for the amusing of our leisure. It is quite unnecessary, after all, that our playthings should be of precious stuff ; there is endless delight in simple daubing and strumming, when work is finished, and the paper boat is just as effective if it is made of a waste half-sheet. George's accomplishments were needlessly solid ; there was that in each of them which would have borne the pressure of serious work, a core which would have rewarded concentration. If they had been fewer, it might have been a distress to him that he could not do justice to all ; he would have been forced to see their worth. As it was he could carry them easily, never having known the glaring difference between the aptitude that means something, that holds the seed of fruitfulness, and the other sort of aptitude that is incapable of ripening. He



THE BROTHERS, BY W. ROTHENSTEIN

THE MASTER BUILDER
WALKING WITH HIS SON-IN-LAW ON SUNDAY



THE MASTER BUILDER WALKING WITH HIS SON-IN-LAW ON SUNDAY

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might think it natural that all his amusements should be bits of real work, so far as they went, and he might so be saved from the pang of feeling good work entice him in quarters where he could not possibly attend to it in earnest. Certainly he was never troubled for a moment by the thought of the draughtsman, the musician, the actor that he might perhaps have been ; there was no question of being any of the three beyond the vacant hour. Yet while that hour lasted, though it was one of simple relaxation, he gave himself up to it as if it were to fill his life. There was no elegant trifling ; it was a matter of stiff and resolute application.

The recurrences of private theatricals in his house were regular and bound by certain laws. One of these decreed that the play must be composed for the occasion, another that no thought whatever was to be given to it before the day of the performance. This mattered little to the rest of the company (generally a very youthful one), since all the thought was his, even on the day itself ; it was easy

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to leave it to him, in the certainty that his invention would be punctual and abundant. An inspiration in his bath, elaborated while he dressed, would be ready for breakfast on the right morning. Parts were soon distributed, parts unwritten indeed, but expounded to each actor with such convincing particularity that no one needed "lines" or "cues" or any such pedantries of the stage. It was a three-act drama, with a correctly woven intrigue; but the day seemed to be quite long enough, not only for devising and rehearsing it, but for constructing the theatre, arranging the incidental music, preparing the scenery, the properties, the dresses. All was complete when the audience assembled for tea; or if the heroine demanded to have a crucial speech written out at the last minute for her to learn by heart, if the *jeune premier* found his moustache misbecame him, if the orchestra had lost her notes or the scene-shifter his tin-tacks, George was still prompt with advice and help. At the appointed hour the rest of us sat before the curtain, never know-

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ing upon what climate or period it would open, but knowing well that we were about to watch at least one first-rate comedian.

So long as any of those entertainments is recalled, the Ibsen pantomime will not be forgotten. It was afterwards committed to writing and made appearances elsewhere, but perhaps its first production was never quite equalled. It began with a prologue, delivered by the author in the person of a sleek foreign impresario, who laid his embarrassment before the audience. At Christmas-time, he pointed out, when young and old flock to the theatre together, the divergence of their taste places the dramatist in a difficulty; the old must have their pantomime, harlequin and fairies and all, while the young still cling to their Ibsen with their severer realism. For once they were both to be satisfied in a single evening. And so the curtain rose on a Scandinavian interior, bleak and spare and dry as a child could wish; a house in the middle of a dreary moor, where the inmates sat through the long hours playing dreary,

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weary paper-games, with no society but that of the young man from the gasworks, who sometimes dropped in depressingly to join them. "Mrs Inquest," a portentous matron, presided and dominated; the spirits of the party sank lower and lower over their play, appalled by the irony of life. But a chorus of fairies struck in, and life began to follow other laws; things happened rapidly, the irony of Scandinavia was countered by the inconsequence of Drury Lane. The struggle waxed, Mrs Inquest battled with destiny, till the climax came and the neighbouring gasworks exploded and the young man was blown sky-high. I forget whether the explosion symbolised the victory or the defeat of Mrs Inquest, but she remained to the fore, gloomily noting the details of the young man's fate. Her author created no richer part in his stage career.

As these visions succeed one another the years slip by, the company changes, the groups of children grow up, I approach the end of the story. The last of my own recollections

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is connected with George's last Christmas, that of 1914; I never saw him again, and before I speak of his service in the war I shall pause upon this final interlude. He had already seen fighting in France, had been wounded, and was free to spend a week with a household of friends in the country. That Christmas party had travelled far in a few months; but we have travelled so much farther since then, the last days of 1914 are such a speck in the distance, that it is hard to discern what we were. I seem to remember a frame of mind in which two firm convictions dwelt side by side—that the war must certainly end within a few months more, and that it would somehow *not* end after all; it was impossible to suppose that it would last, it was unimaginable that it should cease. But George himself was little concerned with this dilemma; he looked neither backward nor forward, he had work on hand that made the moment all-sufficient. He was a soldier in the war, slightly damaged for the time being, but well enough to be planning his return to

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activity ; and his interest in the war had come to be mainly bounded by the question of getting back to the line as soon as possible. But of that presently ; I wish now to think of him as the one member of the party who seemed to live serenely in the midst of the upheaval, on sure foundations that he could trust. All around him were trying, more or less consciously, more or less successfully, to adjust their balance to the new conditions ; he, from the first moment of the war, was firmly on his feet, and never had to think of the matter again.

Those were the days of the Belgians—the word is enough to recall what the end of 1914 was like in a good proportion of its aspects. “Come to us for next Sunday—you may bring your Belgians” : it was a current form of invitation, and it had been addressed to George and his wife by their hostess. For they had harboured three refugees in their small household, three young men announced to them in advance (is it surprising to remember ?) by a committee of charity as one

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young girl. The girl they had undertaken to befriend appeared as three lively and conversible youths, two of whom remained on their hands for a considerable time, but who fairly repaid them in amiability. George's company was a liberal education for anyone ; it is hard to picture what it must have been for a couple of young clerks, newly liberated from a counting-house at Antwerp or Charleroi. It is just to say that they made much of their chance ; they rose to his prompting, they did their share in animating the memory of that Christmas. He himself was at his kindest and sunniest ; he made that strange holiday seem even natural. My last sight of him thus fits on to all that had gone before ; he taught his Belgians to play billiards and build a toy theatre, he acted polyglot charades with them, all in the manner of so many old days. And if I try to recover a sense one also had that he had passed beyond our reach, that he had gained a height where he stood alone, I can find nothing definite to account for it ; I try to recall some token of

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inspiration and exaltation, and what I see is his whimsical, interested face as he describes the delight of searching a ruinous farm-house in the dark, where a German sniper is known to be concealed. Inspired, uplifted he was, there was no mistaking it; but the hint of solemnity which the words imply—this never appeared for an instant.

He was one of the few whom the war found ready, morally and intellectually; he had no further preparations to make. His life passed straight into it without a break or a disturbance, he seemed to enter into possession of an inheritance. No words were needed, least of all any argument; he had been through that long before and knew his mind. And as for the decision to act, to take the most practical part in it that was open to him, it could hardly be called a decision when it was simply the continuation of the state in which he had always lived; he had never had to pause to collect himself or to nurse his will for action; the heavier demand only meant a fuller opportunity. Of the heaviness he was

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at the same time quite aware ; he was much too clear-sighted to suppose that his enterprising gust, however youthful, would charm away the weight of the work before a man of his age. It may sometimes have come near to bearing him down altogether ; there were moments when the task, the effort of making himself young enough for it, taxed him to the utmost. But none, or almost none, saw him in these moments ; and he was carried over them by a most characteristic enjoyment of the appeal to his ingenuity. There was nothing he loved like outwitting a difficulty, and here was a long series of difficulties that he could treat as a game. To prove that the people who reasoned with him were wrong, that at forty-five he could get to the fighting-line within a few weeks, was the perfection of a puzzle ; it required all his wits, it kept them stretched, and yet it could be solved in the end. And so, sooner than dwelling on his bravery and his devotion, I like to think of his perpetual, inimitable, familiar *self* ; in which his great qualities had always shone

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needing no emergency to kindle them ; in which none of his qualities ever failed, the least with the greatest ; in which, the whole alert and amusing and splendid nature, we recognise our friend.

IX

HE happened to be holiday-making in the Isle of Wight at the end of July, 1914. Several days before the British ultimatum of August 4th he was back in London, already deep in the task, not an easy one then, of circumventing the awkward fact of his age. His first thought was to insist on somehow or other rejoining his old "Volunteer" regiment, now the Inns of Court O.T.C., with which he had trained in his youth; he was absolutely refused on the spot, he was accepted within twenty-four hours. One obstacle was cleared, but he was only one step nearer to the front; he was plainly told that nothing short of a *levée en masse* would give him the chance of combatant service abroad. He seized at once upon the distinction between "service abroad" and "service abroad as a combatant," suspecting justly that the difference would be less conspicuous overseas; the next step was

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accordingly to get to France in some capacity, no matter which. An interpretership was his best opportunity, he easily saw ; and during an arduous month of training with the Inns of Court he doubled his work with the study of war books, codes, technical vocabularies, and still had time for inquiries and appeals in any direction that looked promising. A distinguished soldier and friend, whom George regarded as his "war godfather," recalls a visit from him, late at night, to ask what more he could do to "get out." "An interpreter should be able to ride—can you ride?" "Not very well, but I can learn." He carried away a pair of breeches, borrowed from his friend, and was in the riding-school of the Royal Horse Guards at half-past seven next morning.

I believe it was finally the instructor in the riding-school, the "corporal-major," who opened the way to France ; patronage was oddly distributed in those extraordinary weeks, but it was in good hands there. By the middle of September George was in camp on Salisbury Plain, interpreter to the Blues. Un-

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likely experiences have become so very probable since then that the strangeness of that one is hard to recapture ; a little later a middle-aged dramatist may often have felt quite at home, with good right, in a cavalry regiment. In the second month of the war that point had not been reached, and I gather that George felt a very small new boy indeed when he entered the officers' mess at Windmill Camp. Not, however, for long ; the nature and the place of an interpreter might be doubtful to the Blues, but George was made welcome as he was. There were several in the mess who were to become his very good friends ; and it was soon clear to all that the rather inexplicable being who had dropped in on them, and who seemed to ask for nothing better than a full share in the general toil, was not a non-combatant officer of a usual kind. His preparations for active service went beyond acquiring the French for billeting and bivouacking ; sword-exercise was one of the duties of an interpreter, as he understood them ; whatever his companions were occupied with,

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during these last days of training, he was not far off. But the interpreter's white band was on his arm when the regiment disembarked at Zeebrugge in the first week of October ; it had got him across the sea, he valued it only for that.

Schloss or Château des —

S-and-y, Oct. 11th, 19—.

I have to be very discreet and communicate no essential facts. After two nights at sea we landed in an immense harbour (a steamer or two with a few timid old ladies in black came in, while we were on the wharf, flying from —). We passed on to the neighbouring fashionable watering-place, where the first of a series of triumphal receptions began. We march like monarchs, acknowledging salutations and crying *Vive la —*. A kind lady gave me two thick slabs of bacon in a village yesterday. After waiting a long time we started off in gathering night on the road for —, but before going a mile plunged aside into the sand-dunes (just like St Andrews) and bivouacked there for the night. Very cold and very beautiful. Sea plashing, moonlight, long grass and red smoke of camp-

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At midday we came to a town famous for its beauty, with a huge square and a great old perpendicular town-hall. The streets and squares were full of a fascinated and delighted populace. It seemed like history. Rows on rows of horses everywhere, all over the square and up the side streets, field and horse artillery too, the whole cavalry division, and a fine sunny midday. By the greatest spectacular luck a Taube floated over the city and the market-place, low and slow. A fusillade broke forth from every street and all over the square at once; women shrieked faintly in the shops and shut the doors. I took a gun and had four shots myself. Machine-guns in the square, pointing upwards. And soon a universal shout went up as its nose fell and it floated slowly down. Detailed rumours of the death of the two airmen, with exactitudes as to the method. The truth later; the aeroplane came down in a hedge three miles outside the town, and the two Germans ran away and hid before anybody came up with them.

The marching, waiting, wondering, returning, still continued; the interpreter's energies began to chafe. However he fell ill, and had to spend a few days at the base; on

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the way there he was lodged by nuns, at Ypres again.

We reached our destination about six in the morning. Stoppages, loading, unloading, filled most of the time; the distance was short. We were put out at a nunnery; little sisters with black veils over lumps like horns, all very kind and shocked. It is *our* hospital, but not *a* hospital. It is a pensionnat pour demoiselles, a splendid big school, with marble halls. I climbed into a cart at the entrance and saw three ferocious English soldiers, with fixed bayonets, looking down on two innocent little German soldiers, who lay on the floor, two Prussian dragoons.

One of the little innocents was an acquaintance of the night before, which had been spent in a tavern, used as a field-hospital. This scene, too, is described.

Three German wounded prisoners were brought in and added to those lying in the tap-room. One with merely a hole in the hand; an elderly reservist, dying; a splendid young Prussian officer, a big muscular superman, with a square-jawed clean-shaven eagle-

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face and scars of student duels. Everybody treated them tenderly, caressingly ; I talked with the dying reservist ; the officer's arm was splintered and had to be cut off.

At the same time a mild little old native peasant was brought in, who had been going about for four days with a bullet-wound through his ribs. I questioned him in what I could muster of his dialect. He had been shot on Sunday, at six in the evening, still daylight, as he was doing some job outside his house. A German passed and shot him. Why ? He didn't know ; he didn't seem to care.

The interpreter, inactive at the base, was taken from his regiment and allotted to the staff of his brigade. He made his way there with difficulty.

By great resource and adventurousness it is possible for a man to get back to the front again. One is looked at with suspicion ; sent from place to place ; put in a railway carriage with no lights, no food ; not told when or where to get out ; you alight when the train has stood still for an hour and make enquiries ; an angry man, occupied with something else, says it's no damned use staying in that train

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anyway ; you'd better go and hunt up the 3rd Cavalry Division Transport. You do. They are a jovial Rabelaisian crew ; they invite you to dinner with them.

We got in here yesterday afternoon ; spent the night in the long loft of the tavern where I am writing. Madame has returned from mass with great local news ; three old maids at the château just arrested on charge of spying. Used to live very poor and dirty. Then their brother got a job in Bavaria and since then, it is alleged, they are rich. All the villagers coming out from mass said Hurray, Bravo. No evidence as yet ; but it's pleasant to see old friends in trouble.

Week by week the first battle of Ypres was approaching its climax ; and still there was little for George to do, at his brigade headquarters, but to warn off the farmers' wives who wished to milk their cows among the forward trenches. He had been right, however ; the question of an able-bodied man's age was not apt to be raised in Flanders, towards the end of October, 1914.

In the afternoon (Oct. 27) I was troubled in mind about the sound of a gun, sniping in the

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woods near. I got an officer of a quite irrelevant infantry regiment that happened to be up the road to send a party under an N.C.O. to round him up. I went with them as interpreter—with a gun.

The sniper evaded them, but next morning he was at work again, and George was nearly hit himself.

Feeling very strongly about it, I applied to the same infantry regiment as the day before, and again got them to send out a party. We started six, but six gaily joined us as we left, and we were twelve. Five went up to the left; the little officer-boy came up to the right, to cut off retreat; and I and two privates went on ahead of him, to get right round behind the sniper's position. I was interpreting again, with a borrowed gun. As senior private I was in command of these two, whom I may say I handled with consummate skill. It was a slow business, for we examined all the cover on the way, and all the empty farm-houses. You must imagine this in an open country, interspersed with little woods, cut up with hedges, deep narrow streams in the hollows, turnips, sunshine, and the per-

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petual bump and howl of shells at a safe distance to the side and front.

The same sniper was able to let them know that he was still there that evening, after they had ransacked every conceivable position. But he had helped George ("it really *was* a masterpiece, the way I handled that brigade of two this morning") to form a new plan. Interpreting (with a gun) for these new friends, a battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, was the chance he had looked for. "So I have applied to the very good but sadly reduced infantry regiment with which I have had the two unsuccessful snipe-hunts, to be taken on with *them* as interpreter." The next step was simple.

When I brought the officers of the R.W.R. the note saying I could join them, we altered the function. They were sitting at the roadside in a little group. The regiment has been blown to bits by Black Marias; about three hundred men remain and about eight officers. A captain commands the battalion. When I brought my note he asked me if I really

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wanted to interpret. I said No, what I wanted was a fighting job. "Then you're just the man for us ; sit down ; we're just re-organising the regiment." So they were : re-distributing the officers, appointing new sergeants and so on. So I was attached as Junior Subaltern to A Company. The Senior Subaltern is a tall tired nice hungry boy of 18. (He gave me a Warwickshire badge that he happened to have in his pocket, while we were resting in turnips after a rush.) I went over the road to my billet and burnt my interpreter's brassard. I was sick of interpreting ; the work's too hard for me. Then we started for the battle. Somebody got me a gun and equipment, and tied on my British warm with a bit of string ; and off we went.

George was shot through the leg that afternoon, and was soon in hospital at home. His promotion, his battle and his wound were covered by about four hours. From a casualty clearing station he wrote on the next day :

A battle seems to differ in many ways from a field day ; it lacks precision. You don't really quite know where you've got to go, so you all go different ways and get thoroughly

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mixed up with other regiments. We were out for a counter-attack. Wherever we found one set of trenches we moved forward to another, or busted over the carrots and plumped in a furrow. We came to a nice little wood where a number of gallant-looking Scots were drinking tea in enormously deep pits—and still a third regiment was mixed up with them. I say “we”—which by now was myself and R. and about 20 or 30 men.

We wanted to get into touch with the rest, so we boosted over a bit of open and jumped into some more trenches 100 yards away; however, that was a bit of a fourth regiment. I crouched and had a chat with a young officer, who said he and his men had been thirteen days in the trenches without a pause. It was no place to pop your head up, because there was a trench of German sharpshooters (their *good* riflemen are *very* good) ahead, and our own guns behind sending shrapnel very low. But a corporal hopped out into the beetroots and gave first aid to a wounded man out there, and hopped back uninjured. It appeared that the rest of our little hundred were behind us, and after a bit out they came with the C.O. (armed with a revolver and a spade) at their head. He brought orders for all the regiments there to advance on the

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Germans. We tootled ahead pretty gaily, flopping down at intervals. There were still British trenches ahead. At last we had just passed the last of them. I and another man trotted on to see what was there and thought we saw Germans on the left, half a mile away, moving in column. We came back and reported, advanced again with the whole crowd, when suddenly bub-bub-bub-bub-bub-brrrrr, from a little square wood fifty yards on our right, a heap of rifle-shooting. At us, if you please. They had let the scouts go and return, and were trying to demolish the thirty. We chucked ourselves flat and slipped into some empty trenches which very conveniently happened to be there. That wood was thick with Germans, who had no right to be there, quite on our side of the battle-field. (They got there in English uniforms, I believe, under the noses of our men.)

So there we were, crouching underground and rather wondering what next. After consultation with another officer I hopped out and ran like a hare for help to clear that wood. I performed this evolution at my best hundred-yards speed, scooting like a lamp-lighter behind a hedge and down to trenches full of English and Scotch troops; but for

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one good reason or another divvle a body would do anything about it. This was perfectly comprehensible. Besides the men who were keeping the front trenches, these hundreds of others doing nothing much were tired out and their nerves shattered by perpetual shell-fire, Black Marias, shrapnel and machine-guns. They know the treachery and tricks, the good machinery and skilful tactics of the enemy ; they know what undertakings are worth risks and what are not ; they can size the job up ; and they decided it was better to leave the men in what cover they had, to escape in the dark as best they could. All those I have seen are most gallant fellows, and like all good warriors take big risks when there is big good to get.

My tour ended in three-quarters of a circle at a farm-house, where a nice soldier led me to a general and his staff, leaning over a five-barred gate. I gave him an exact account, with numbers, points of compass, names of regiments. My tour had taken me nearly an hour, what with stopping to hold council with different groups of officers ; but it was only about a mile and a half in circumference. The general told me that he was sure the wood had already been evacuated by the Germans, for a large body of men had gone

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forward while I was hunting round. So I slung my gun over my shoulder and went forward again over the fields—turnips, plough, young crops perfectly flat—towards the spot where I had left my C.O. and the thirty men. There were no shots flying over it; it was perfectly empty; there was not a human being in sight anywhere. When I was half-way across, pip, something whacked my left ankle and knocked me over. I simply, without any pause, rolled as fast as I could, like a rolling-pin and quite as blindly, and I hadn't rolled over three times before I went pop into a nice newly-cut road-side trench, dug to carry the water off, 18 inches deep and wide. Bless the Flemish farmer that dug it! Pip, pip came two or three more shots on the roadway where I had fallen; the sharpshooters wanted to finish the job they had begun. The joke of it is that the shots came from that same little German-infested wood which the general had just told me was clear of the enemy. I played dead dog, with my head rammed down in the mud as low as I could get it and my right arm poked over it, the only way I could get complete cover. I soon found my wound was not so very painful, about equal to toothache in the ankle. I didn't dress it (1) because I didn't want to;

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(2) because I should have got a bullet through my head if I had sat up; (3) because I hadn't a field-dressing. I lay there for two hours, considerably cramped and awfully bored, waiting for the darkness. I felt pretty sure of getting back somehow in the dark; I had my compass and knew my direction. Not a soul passed. I tried to follow the battle by the sounds. I hadn't been there long before a furious exchange began between the British to the west of me and the Germans to the east. I was slap in the middle of the battlefield, snugly ensconced, but a little anxious. Shrapnel, rifle shots and machine-gun fire fizzed and pipped over my head. They rattled over my head and on the roadway; sometimes I thought they stirred my hair, but this was evidently fancy, for my hair is shorter than my moustache (which has been growing since I landed) and I was bald-patch up anyway.

I was wounded about 3.30, a stroke of luck, since the battle closes daily at 5 for tea. At 5.30 it was pretty dark. At 6 some delightfully tender-hearted English soldiers came by and helped me out. It had begun to rain by then. I taught them to make a dandy-chair, but they couldn't do it. Other men came back from east and west, most of them

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wounded. We soon met a doctor, who put us on the way. The soldiers carried me and puffed and panted and persisted. We sat under a leafless tree, in pouring rain, and waited for stretchers. The soldiers treated me as tenderly as mothers, covered me with their waterproof sheet, gave me cigarettes and water. The stretchers came. The men had no nails in their boots. The one at my head tumbled down on the slippery clay road, and hurt himself instead of me. I got to the field-ambulance at 7.30, in a farm-house, just where yesterday's sniper that we couldn't find was sniping. He was still at it in the darkness, and had a shot at all the stretchers except mine.

We lay on wet stretchers, very soaked and muddy, waiting for the motor ambulances, which never came. At 9.30 or so they were reported to be a mile off, afraid to come further, and wounded men were carried down the road to them. I waited for my turn till 10.30. Two of my brother officers came in about 9 and were very friendly (they were not wounded, but came to look round for men of the regiment). At 10.30 I was told that the brigadier-general of our brigade had sent his own motor car to take me off to the hospital. Bless the dear man! I and another officer

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were put into it and driven seven miles to this place.

I'm wondering if it is the general who was leaning over the gate in the farm-yard, and if he had guessed I was the man he had sent on with the assurance that that wood was clear. Was it penitence or was it benevolence? We got in at midnight, and here we are. So that's the end of a long story, and bless you and the man who pipped me in the leg and not in the stomach, and the drain-digger and the general.

I'm sitting up on the floor in my muddy uniform, which has got dry in the night, unshaven, but washed where it shows, by an orderly—after tea (about a quart), fried bacon, peppermints and cigarettes, for which also blessed be the kind donors who send them across as gifts.

I really haven't had a moment's depression since I joined the regiment, though I was pretty low-spirited before, with nothing to do. As I was carried out of the field ambulance last night, and said good-bye to the less lucky, a wounded officer wanted to know if it was "that cheery cove." I really enjoyed my day yesterday; I believe we cleared a bit of country, though I never saw a German (unless those were Germans and not bushes that we

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saw when scouting) and never fired a single shot. At any rate we are reported to have retaken lost ground in the course of the day. If I didn't see any Germans all day, I suppose on consideration that I didn't drive any back ; the others must have done it while I was lying wounded in my ditch.

That was how he succeeded in becoming a combatant officer within two months of the time when he had been told it was out of the question for him. He was troubled by no further objections, and had nothing to do but to recover the use of his leg as soon as possible. I remember the sight of him in hospital, while that process was going forward rather doubtfully. He lay in the charming drawing-room, converted into an officers' ward, of a house in Regent's Park. His wife had taught him to knit, and a wonderful work of art of his own design was growing under his clever hands, a pictured, parti-coloured web. In the middle of it was his signature—a small pot or cauldron that was part of the arms of his Spanish ancestors. One of these in a remote

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century had raised five companies of men, each a hundred strong, victualled at his own charge, to fight the infidel ; and five cauldrons, with a flag in each, were borne as the family coat thenceforward. George, as he lay in bed, looking very Spanish and picturesque, knitting his cauldron, seemed to belong more than ever to that ancestor. His cheerful British talk bridged the distance between himself and the rest of us ; I do not suppose he knew it was there ; but it was as though he had gone back to the first crusade. Everything that had happened to him in his own century now appeared to have been incomplete and unsatisfying throughout. The perfect satisfaction of all desire had been delayed, but it had come at last in a shape as simple, as unquestionable, as the call to the Holy War among the faithful. There was nothing to say about it ; for the first time in his life he followed a cause which did not stir him to argument.

He was passed by the doctor at the beginning of 1915, and his informal commission on

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the field became a regular one in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. He had four months of barrack routine at Gosport. There might be much to say of his part in this : his letters gave a lively picture of it ; the tales he occasionally brought home with him on leave were still more vivid. The annoyances, the exasperations, the very real hardships of training in those days of makeshift are an old story ; they were so often needless that he used to explode with rage over them, till he turned them into laughter. Better worth recalling would be the impassioned earnestness with which he made himself into a trained soldier ; he did not write about that, but it fills his letters. Best of all, perhaps, would be his total inability, even while his effort succeeded, to be anything but himself, the natural, original George Calderon, who made such a difference to those round him in the tedious months of practice and preparation. By officers and men he was affectionately remembered for his power of bringing new interest into work and play alike ; his

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lectures were in high demand, his ideas and suggestions were always fertile, there was no dullness in his company. "He took everyone's heart by storm," says a brother officer. His faculty of dealing with men was recognised to be admirable ; it was seen to be fitting on all grounds that he should stay at home and give his service in the instruction of others. But the qualities that made this the right course for him were exactly the qualities that made it impossible ; his value in a place of safety was to be measured by his resolution to reach danger. It certainly never crossed his mind that he should leave the danger to younger men ; everything he did was in order to arrive at one or other of the fighting fronts, of which there were now so many.

Early in May, 1915, very soon after the first landing at the Dardanelles, he received his orders. He was to be sent to the East, as an unattached officer, it might be to the Dardanelles, it might be to Palestine or the Persian Gulf. When he came home for his last leave before sailing, the change in his

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appearance struck all who saw him, especially the one who knew him best. It seemed to her and to others that he had become years younger, in the immediate prospect of arriving where he wished to be ; yet it was no excitement, it was a quiet radiance that changed him. Of all that had filled his mind in old days nothing was left but the spirit of dedication, absorbing every thought. It was very noticeable, moreover, that as other things vanished, the beautiful charity of his nature came nearer the surface than it ever had come before. He had loved his friends well in silence, but there was something new in the way he spoke of the many friends he owed to the army. There was something new beneath, a rarer, profounder peace. But one draws back from trying to see closely into such a mind at such a moment ; it is enough to say that he was happy, tender, serene. He went away with that look, the last that is remembered by those he left ; he went entirely possessed by an old idea, to right a wrong, to uphold justice, to fight the paynim.

X

May 10th, 1915, at Sea.

WHAT a comical send-off we had, packed like rabbits in our little van. A naval officer and an Army Service Corps man on the box by the driver, piloting him and urging him on—and our van squeaking all the way, running round the policeman who tried to stop us, driving the frightened populace out of the road, uphill, downhill, through the barracks, into the dock-gates, joggling over the stones, picking our way between railway-trucks and piles of cargo, till we pulled up at the water's edge, by the biggest and grandest liner I ever touched. And here we are, in a sumptuous palace—drawing-rooms, smoking-rooms, delicate oak stairs that we should admire in a country mansion, delicate food. And now every deck is strewn with sleeping soldiers; they don't fare so well, but it's luxurious sleeping this warm night, for all that.

Don't trouble over me. I'm off on a new and unknown adventure, but it either ends ill or very well, and no thought can alter it. So rejoice in the colour and vigour of the

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thing, and drink deep with jolly friends while it's doing—with C. and V. and other Rabelaisians. Your wishes for good will work all the better when two or three of you are gathered together.

I don't know whether we're a single ship or a convoy ; but four brand-new destroyers went out at a quarter to eight to see that the road was clear. Whether we are steaming to an anchorage for the night I don't know either, or whether we have started on the great voyage. But at any rate we have left the shore. Good-night and good-bye.

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Well, we lay at a buoy till midnight, and then suddenly went off with all lights out (while I was asleep) at full speed ; all the men with bare feet, life-belts and loaded rifles, pretending to be asleep on the deck, and half the officers alongside of them. And when I woke and realised that we were moving, every minute I could hear the little husky toot-toot of a little destroyer, which ran ahead of the great liner in the dark, saying : "Toot-toot, this is the way, old girl." There were some other transports and a little fast flotilla of scouting escort, but never a sign have we seen of either, only that little toot-toot in the night.

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As for the escort, I am told they left us at Ushant, and we then steered a bit of a crooked course, and now we are heading for Gibraltar, which we are to reach to-night.

There's a heap of officers on board who have been in Flanders, and had bullets, or frost-bite, or leave. There's a good many Scots, and about fifty nurses, who all cheered up and got to look less ugly when once the boat had started. They're mostly suited with officers now, and there isn't a corner of the deck that it is kind to peep round of a night.

We've got a rather crabbed old general in charge, but I doubt if he knows what he is going to command any better than we do. And when I say crabbed, he may be the best old boy in the world, but he's that sort of look about him. There are about twenty padres aboard, who play gentle deck-games, with hearty apostolic smiles of enjoyment at the mildest incidents; and a heap of doctors, who gravitate more to bridge. We shall drop most of the doctors and nurses at Malta.

May 22nd.

Here we are in the great big harbour of Alexandria, out in the midst, among shoals of

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ships, with coal-barges, launches, sailing-boats alongside, full of brown fellahs and black-brick niggers, all shouting and blowing steam-whistles with all their might to make as jolly a row as they can, and a windlass hanking away, and nurses and officers and tommies all peering over the sides and chatting idly in a tropical air. We've been here twenty-four hours without exact news. But at the moment it appears likely that we shall dump the rest of the nurses, doctors and chaplains here ashore and sail in this ship for the Dardanelles. It is still quite obscure what unit we are to join when we get there ; very likely territorials, very likely something better ; can't tell.

So we're up against it again. But I expect I shall be kept in reserve at first, and only come in for the sack of Constantinople when the Italians have cleared the way. So on through Bulgaria and Servia or whatever comes next, and meet F. in Berlin, coming from the opposite side.

I am challenged by a nice man to chess. I know him very well ; I don't know his name ; I hardly know anybody's name.

(Next day.) Prognostications are right. It is five in the morning. We are bound in this ship for Lemnos, fifty miles from the

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Dardanelles. There we shall be sorted out and re-shipped.

The next letter is from Lemnos, written in the harbour of Mudros.

*9 P.M., May 25th, in a blue
harbour surrounded by green
rock-broken hills, in a place
I may not name.*

What letters, long descriptive letters, we were going to write this morning, all of us ; for a small steamer was to come at sundown and fetch us away to a seat of war which it is unlawful to name. (The veil of secrecy has descended suddenly, with a thump.) But while I was dressing at leisure for breakfast, the little lugger suddenly turned up alongside and invited us to embark. So here I am, sitting under a bridge-stairway, on the floor, on a sort of little south-coast pleasure-steamer ; and in a few hours we shall see and hear much that is interesting. We haven't started yet.

This usually empty harbour is full of many things. What a time for lonely shepherds and shepherdesses to remember in after years. Last night a warm scented air, South Seasy, a bright moon and stars, dark forms of ships, two only gaily garlanded with green lamps

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and a bright red cross of light in the midst, like a regatta. And all around these lonely, soft hills, like the Kyles of Bute. In the day-time two or three bum-boats with dark, sad men selling chestnuts and oranges.

For a day or two we have been passing among countless islands of famous names, forgotten long ago. Half our shipload left at twilight last night, on a Jersey steamer with the garden-seats stacked away on the boat-deck; standing thick as barley, with not much hope of sleep. We are better off, as touching sleep and sight-seeing.

The soldiers all went with gay faces and songs. They're glad to escape this monotony; they have lived on the decks, day and night, lying down early; in the dark the occasional plaintive few notes of a mouth-organ; in the day often a game of loto or "ouse" (house), one hearty big fellow sitting on a stairway roof with great naked feet shouting out numbers he draws from a bag; at pathetic moments, parting from one port to another, officers waving adieux, his loud voice was heard from the fore-deck, "Thirty-seven, twenty-three, fifty-nine," etc. But there was no such voice yesterday when the first half went. Perhaps he was one of them. They had a monkey and two spaniels aboard to

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amuse them. Here on this deck are two canaries and a puppy and several officers.

Yesterday in the evening the ship was darkened as I sat sewing alone in the drawing-room. One or two officers came in, and one played the piano. Then the lights were switched off, others flocked in, and in complete darkness, with the red glow of a cigar or two, we all sang in lusty unison "Somewhere a voice is calling." Afterwards there was a little dark group about the harmonium in the gallery. I was sewing in my cabin then.

You see there's a lot to be done. I've taken out the lining of my tunic; we've all put our stars off our sleeves on to our shoulders; everybody's been sewing; what one of the youths called a "Dorking society" on deck.

So the scene changes. We still don't know to what regiments we are to belong; but not to our own, in any case. That sea's a peacock green, and makes the shore look yellow.

May 27th, on dry land.

I have been through another transformation, and am now a Scotch officer—in a first-rate regular battalion. My address is 1st Batt., King's Own Scottish Borderers, 87th Brigade, 29th Division, Mediterranean

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Exped. Force. I am vanitously wishing I could get hold of a glengarry, with the red and white dice border, and have myself photographed in colours. We arrived yesterday afternoon and landed under the crumbled ruins of a white castle; a yellow sea-shore and hill-slopes at every angle, covered with camps and troops and huts and enclosures and stacks of stores, pickets of horses, lines of mules on the roads; young navy-boys in dirty blue ordering sea-captains and colonels about for the landing; groups of Zouaves and Turcos on the pontoon pier where we landed, white breeches, red breeches, blue breeches, embroidered coats, bearded French faces, shiny nigger-heads, fezzes, shakos, turbans, topees; and, on Indian files of jogging mules, sad solitary Hindoos, in butter-muslin, with a cloth of the turban held by the hand over the mouth or fixed like a yashmak. So to a square place of sand, pegged out with barbed wire, a kind of little Gobi in the middle of the Sahara, where the men were drawn up, the draft, in their companies, and we (12) unattached officers in a group. Bang came a solitary shell of welcome, and threw a cloud of dust a hundred yards away, disturbing a mule at his afternoon tea, but causing no other offence. Then a little marching and

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halting and detailing and waiting; I and some others with a fatigue-party to get the officers' baggage and lay it ready for the "supply column," *i.e.* little mule-carts in a caravan, some with boxes of food, some with logs and dead branches, that go up at night to the lines.

At one of the haltings and waitings we were told we were all for the K.O.S.B. Their H.Q. on the beach offered tea and bread and jam. My fatigue was over, and I and my party went up in the young moonlight with the mule-carts; I walked with a charming Scots corporal. The firing had fallen still. Up the hill and on to a rolling plain, with broom and heather and a minty low shrub with a mauve flower. Two miles away a mound on a hill, the molehill top of a low mountain—that's *Him*, and all the open plain lies open before him. He shells about, but does little harm. After breakfast the shrapnel flew over our heads to the beach-camp or the sea, our men laboured digging without concern. Officers sat in a group, with maps, telescope, range-finder, cigarettes—till a shell fell short and another long, and we went our ways to different places. Men march in fours defiantly on sky-lines, and shells bang by, four at a time, but harmlessly.

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However : on arriving in camp last night (in a place on the rolling plain, dotted, like any other place on it, with little irregular trees, and marked only by a group or two of men cooking) we went to the mess ; a flight of earth-steps and a piece of corrugated iron, beneath which is a square pit with an earth-bench round the wall, and all the rest earth-table ; three hanging lamps, and jolly young tanned glengarried Scots officers round the wall, besides a doctor and a characterful old Presbyterian padre. Soup, fried steak and onions, rum, etc.—none of the horrors of war ; and I had expected cold bully and hard tack. After an hour or two, bed. This, for me, far off, in a big lonely ditch at the end of the line, with the stars above, the moon aslant and a corn-crake rattling softly. Desultory sniping all night, a rattle of quick fusillade in the small hours, and shells beginning slowly at getting-up time. Big spiders and little green lizards all among the bushes. So there you are, and that's my life at present.

1 P.M. At this moment I'm after inspecting 40 men dig a trench and am at rest under a little oak-tree. The padre sleeps beside me. I'm in B Company. There are shell-marks in the earth, and I found an unburst enemy shell with the time-fuse marked in foreign characters.

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R. buried it. Then a sergeant said it ought to be "handed in," so I dug it up again and carried it across the camp. Six soldiers pronounced it dangerous and recommended reburial. I left them digging its grave. One said "Its fuse is set to time." I said "I expect the time's expired now." They were silent awhile, then one laughed, and they all laughed.

I saw a little wooden cross and a mound. The cross is made of two strips of a wooden case, and on it is written "In memory of one unknown."

Lunch is announced. Our mess-pit is 12 ft. by 12 ft. ; we can sit 18.

(Later.) Since lunch I have been attending an instruction in bomb-throwing from trench to trench ; very interesting. It is strange, this careless, rather amused life at leisure in the sunshine, in full view of Him on the big mole-heap. Surely it must discourage him to see the tip-end of a big civilisation leisurely going about the routine of life while it closes up to swallow him.

A road runs through our camp ; it has a name like some street in Bayswater. Smart fellows ride doggishly by — Australians ; soldiers march, mules trot with carts ; the Holy Land with men in khaki. Dust flies in

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plenty ; shells burst now and again, angrily searching the big plain ; Western civilisation sleepily pursues its gentle avocations. I am beginning to repeat myself. We are like new Western Polovtsians, swarming over a fated country, a revenge for the Turks' oncoming. The K.O.S.B. are "in reserve," neither on the beach nor in the firing-line. The men are vara Scawtch ; they call a water-bottle in two syllables, a war-bol.

May 30th.

Still on the same spot, in broiling sunshine, dry and beautiful ; sea on either side. Daily the men go down to bathe. I bathed one day with them, then sat on the rocks and watched the shells falling in the next bay. Thence with six A.S.C. men I climbed a cliff and found a huge bakery, acres of logs and fires and ovens. A mug of water in a dug-out, a visit to the Ordnance to try and raise a few luxuries and necessaries. Failure.

I get up a little before six. The men run by twelves for ten minutes over the heath and back. 7-8, fiddling with a machine-gun. Breakfast in "White Horse Cellar." I go to my platoon (no. 8, all lovely Scots), look at rifles, talk about the need of leaving no rubbish about for flies ; G. comes round and does the

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same ; then Capt. S. does it again. Then the machine-gun again in the shade of a tree. In the afternoon all is rather drowsy ; we sit at the back of " Cadogan Mansions," under the little oak-tree, and read and write and talk. Rifle-firing is quietish there in the daytime. Our guns not far from here are sending up shells ; they throw up big black clouds on the hill, in lines. An aeroplane hums over ; little pops and little white clouds mark the enemy's shrapnel, chasing it. Officers of neighbouring battalions wander by.

After lunch a visit to H., who sits fatherly under his shady peach-tree in the midst of his vineyard, nursing and examining a Turkish rifle, with strange letters on the iron-work. Other officers drowse around him. I settle awhile to reading my machine-gun book, looking at maps, learning a few Turkish words. A man near by said " Ah'm hit ! " with surprise and indignation ; he was hit in the chest-muscles, by a stray rifle-shot aimed at the firing-line. R. nursed him and cosseted him ; the wounded man (still surprised) said " Why, I feel quite at home with you."

At 9 we had Church Parade, all gathered sitting in a big group. First the Old Hundredth. Then the Padre improvised a long good prayer, and read Exodus 4. Then

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we sang "Jesu, Lover of my soul." Then he began to preach on the symbolism of Moses' rod, and he had hardly begun when shells began to fall so mightily close that we threw ourselves on the ground. But not at once; we had to remain sitting and looking as unconcerned as possible, while the men dispersed gently, a platoon at a time. There were two men wounded, I think, and a mule, no more. I keep diving into the trenches.

Last night I was rather wakeful, and heard a great noise of fighting, rifle and cannon. It was one of the most beautiful nights I ever saw; a full moon shining on the waters to right and left of me, a clear starry sky, and a landscape of hills and woods and distances like an early Victorian steel engraving. In the contrast of scene and war the scene far outweighs the war, which only plays an accompaniment. The Pipers, save one taking a skirl at it, have not yet played; our regimental tune is "The Bonnets of Dundee."

The shells are still flying, and I am bobbing up and down like a moorhen as I write; G., quite unconcerned, stands chatting in the open. As I rise again from the bottom of my ditch, I am glad to see him taking cover. We hear heaps of news here; it is mostly untrue. Aeroplanes are going forward, that will quiet those uneasy

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gunners. Angry cannon behind us reply from time to time.

(On the envelope, outside.) *P.S.* Silence reigns.

June 1st.

Nothing in my letters need make you anxious, for you'd know if I were a casualty through the War Office before any letter had time to alarm you, just as we see the big brown clouds of smoke and dust flying long before we hear the bang of explosion. Such clouds! and right in the Turkish lines. There's a shaking bang behind to one side, then an irregular quiet whiz away over the landscape, and while you are listening to it you are suddenly aware that a cloud the size of the Hotel Cecil is drifting across the slopes in the distance, followed by bang two. We are free from shells since I wrote last, though a couple went just a little way over us this morning. Of course they go most for the artillery. They ended the day in the quiet evening sunshine, yesterday, with a shower of twelve screaming things, in about four seconds, into a greatly favoured nullah not very far from us.

There are horrible centipedes here, as fat as my fountain-pen, six to eight inches long; they get into dark places, under bedding, in

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boots, etc. There is a sweet smell from a sort of verbena that grows in quantities on the heath. It was not a corncrake that I meant, but a nightjar. The classical beauty of the landscape towards the blue Dardanelles is greatly heightened by the white pillars of a lost aqueduct.

This regiment (and all this brigade and division) has played a very gallant part out here, and it is a great honour to be attached to them. The brigade is all Borderers—the K.O.S.B., the Border Regt., and the South Wales Borderers. General ——, our crabbed-looking but rather noble old shipmate, commands the brigade in front of us. We pride ourselves that we are held in reserve to deliver the smashing and decisive blow.

We hear that the Turks may attack to-night, but expect nothing much for ourselves; there are two or three lines between us and them. But we shall go to bed in our boots. It is a consolation to think that if I sleep in my boots there can be no centipedes in them in the morning. Tea is arriving.

June 3rd.

I'm snug in the bottom of my dug-out, in shirt-sleeves, shaded by a new waterproof sheet. Last night I went on a fatigue; left

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here with 100 men of the company and went digging up by the firing-line. A hasty snack at the out-door table (the earth, with a trench round it for legs); marched off in blobs to a beautiful ravine; up it in the clean twilight. Sandstone cliffs, shelved with green, white sand bottom, with a stream along the edge. Sikhs and all manner of folk; camps with innumerable little fires in every chink of the cliffs; patient pickets of horses. Bullets plocked and hummed and zimmed overhead from the battle. At the first I bobbed my head, and a Scot by the wayside said "Ay, bob yer heid!" and laughed; they were most of them forty feet above us, I suppose. Another gang went up first to the line, and we lay down "to sleep" in a turn of the ravine, where there were telephones and R.A.M.C. caves; men smoked and talked, and the hollow magnified the plocks and the pips and the zims enormously, deafeningly. Sometimes a rattling fusillade silenced by a bang-whiz-bang of a round or two from the big guns firing over our hollow. Beautiful flash-lights, a curved rocket with golden sparks, ending in a bright silver star that hangs and illuminates. At 11.30 two guides took us up precipitous cliff-paths, across a hilly heath, into a great winding corridor of sand, endless

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and monochrome, with caves here and there in it; plocks and zims over the edge, and tired men lying sleeping in the pathway; telephone wires here and there to catch the chin. Through a side-door we emerged on an open heath again—where the plocks and the zims had a personal air. The first gang had broken the surface and got down a little. We continued the digging. I had to make bold once or twice, under the good example of other officers, to walk along re-distributing tools. When the moon rose the bullets seemed to be fired with some personal animosity. In some places we had to lie low and work on the belly. By 3 A.M. we had done a decent job of cover for those who are to succeed and deepen the work in the daylight. Nobody was hit. Dawn was breaking. We climbed down and marched home in early daylight, with an orange-tawny daybreak spreading horizontally about the tantalising mole-hill. I had worked with my own hands so vigorously that all the envelopes I cadged from the padre are stuck together (this is one). I was glad to get back at 4.30 A.M. to my broom-strewn bed in my little ditch; heath-strewn, rather, for softness. I staggered home at the head of my company like a drunken man.

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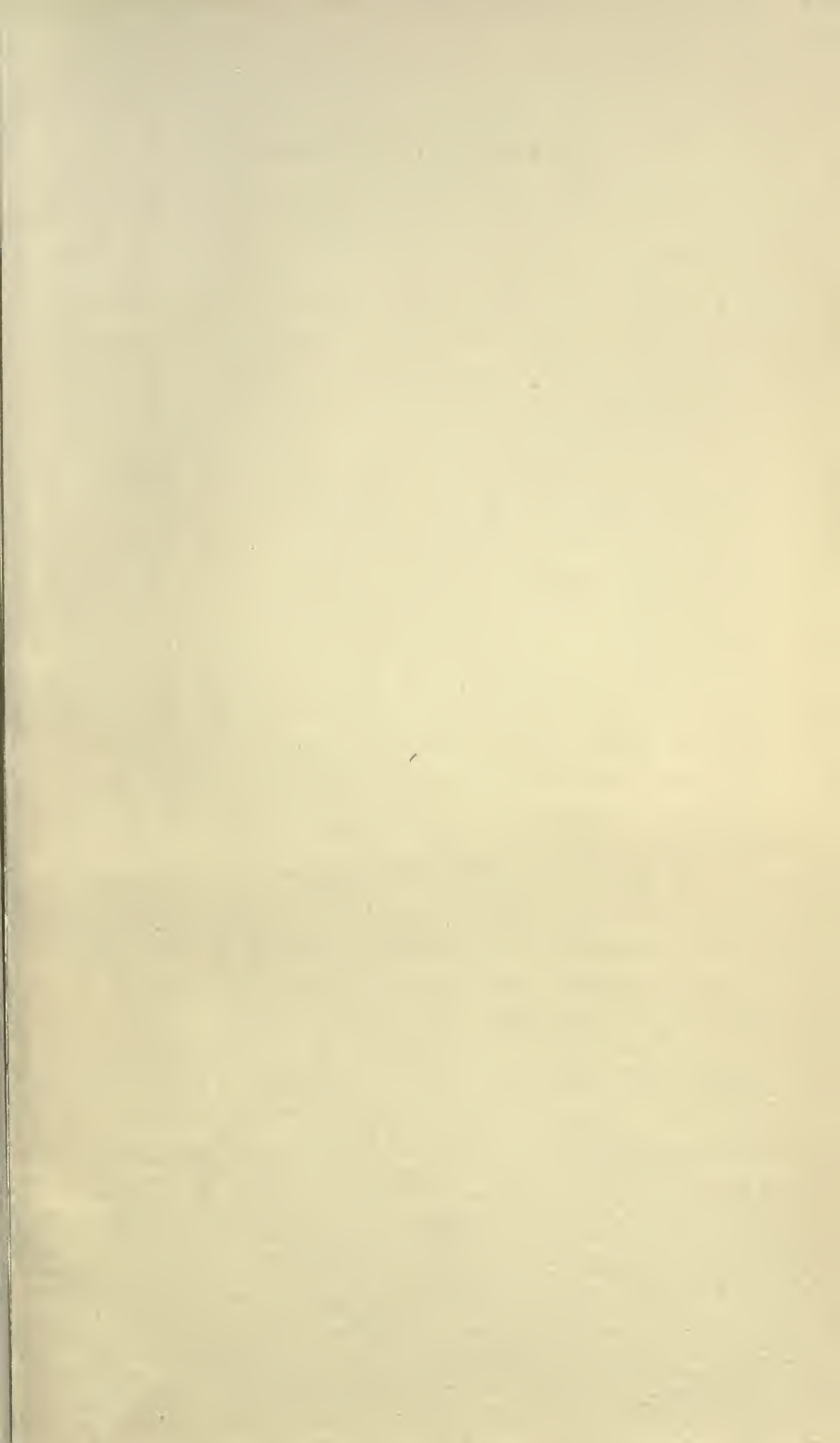
Well, nobody knows what may be happening to him in this land of adventure. But we all hope for the best, and nothing is safer than success, at which we all aim, and for which we are not ill provided. I only hope that the Turks will recognise the regiment; then they'll fly for Byzance yelling "Allah, it's them Scots again!" and nobody will find out that I'm a timid little penman from London. Anyway I'm always a fortnight behind the newspapers.

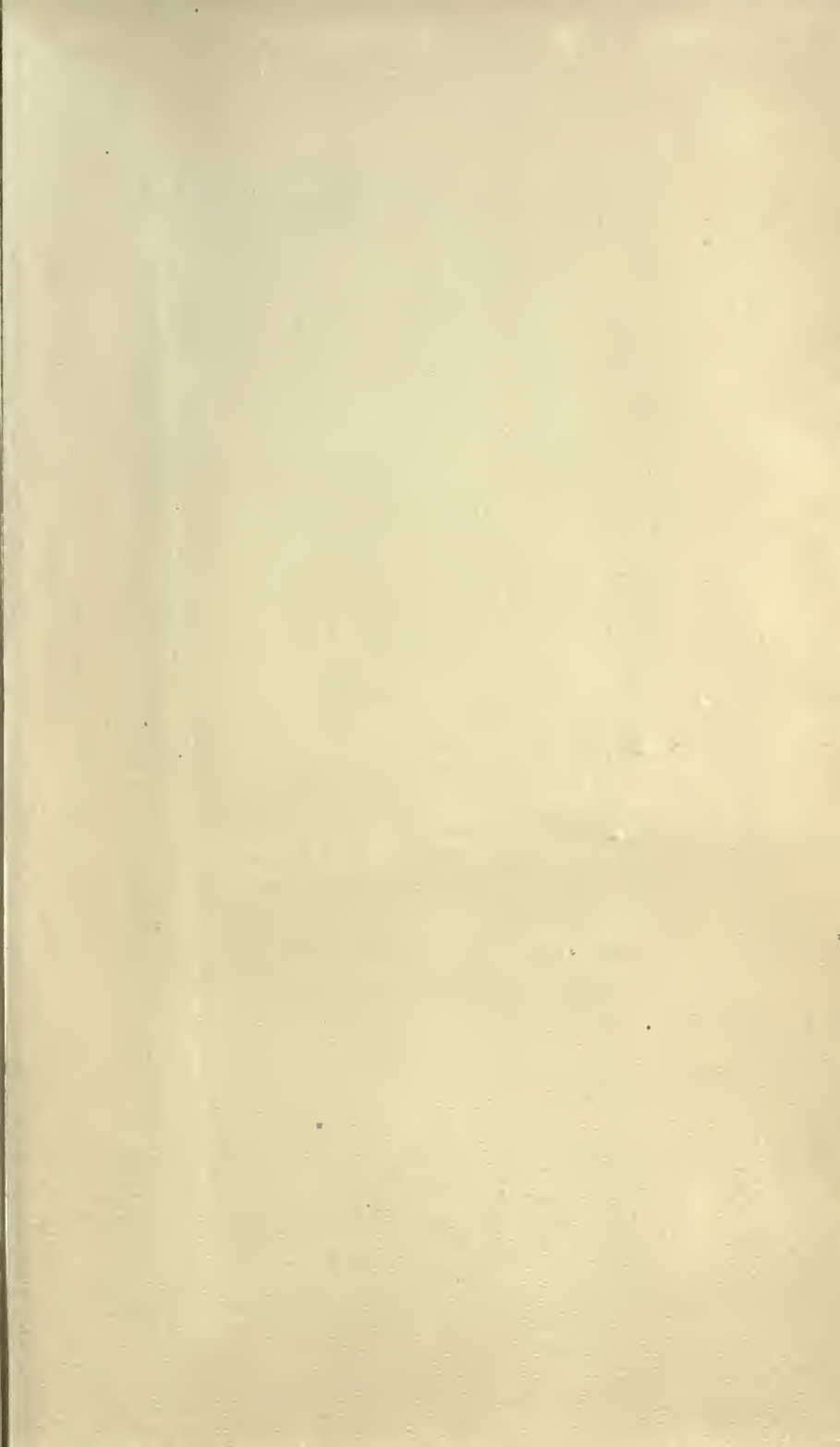
(Signed) P., who wishes he were safely back, but is nevertheless very well pleased to be where he is.

This letter was written in the knowledge of the British attack which was to be delivered on the following day, and in which his battalion was to take part. On the night of 3rd June they went up to take their place in the line. Almost the last that we can hear of George, in the early hours of the next morning, is an echo of cheerful talk with his men; he showed them a shrub which grew thereabout, and told them that the Turks chewed the leaves, "to make themselves

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brave." So the time passed; George's ingenious spirit could still be occupied. His company, in which he commanded a platoon, was among those who led the attack. George was seen to fall, severely wounded, in the open. He was close to a Turkish trench, however; and when he was reported missing there was a chance that he might prove to be a prisoner. Search and enquiry were pushed wherever it was possible; a friend in England sent an American agent expressly to Constantinople, a few weeks later, to follow up any clue that might be discoverable there. But nothing, then or since, has ever been heard, and at last there could be no hope of learning more. It is certain that he must have died on the field—4th June 1915, in his forty-seventh year. Since no stone can mark the place where he lies, let these pages stand for his epitaph to show what he was and how he died.





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