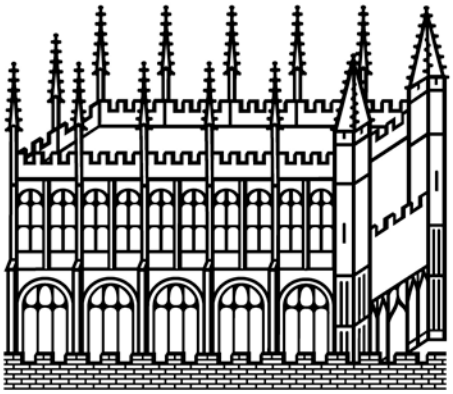

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MEANWHILE

A PACKET OF WAR LETTERS

By the Same Author

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MEANWHILE

A PACKET OF WAR LETTERS

BY A. C. BENSON

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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FOREWORD

I EXPRESSED a strong wish to the friend, H. L. G., who wrote me the following letters in days of great sorrow and trouble, that he would allow them to be published. It is my belief that they may help other people, as they have helped me. He said that they were only intended for me ; and I replied that it was just this which gave them their value, that they were not written for effect, but to help a particular case ; not intended to win credit for the writer, but just to face a disaster which many people have had to face, more or less. He consented, and I am grateful to him ; and I hope they will be read rather than criticised, and treated as an affectionate confidence between friends. They may throw light on a dark path ; and that is the most that any words can do.

K. W.

NOTE

The names of people and places are throughout fictitious, for obvious reasons.

MEANWHILE

I

HILL STREET.

I THINK you may be surprised at hearing from me, or you may have been surprised at *not* hearing; but you have been very much in my mind since we met at Rushton. I have often thought of that talk we had in the garden at dusk, with the air so full of scent, and the western sky fading from gold into the pale green which always seems to me the saddest of all colours, because it means that the light is withdrawn,—and "after that the dark." It stands for the seeming calm of sorrow uncomforted, sorrow without hope, except for the secrets which the night may hold within itself!

All this was dimly in my mind when you then opened your heart to me, and when I was too helpless even to try to answer. I had nothing that I could give you, except that sympathy which is almost more painful than

silence, because it is the last sign of weakness both in the giver and the receiver ; the receiver knows that there is no help that can be hoped for, and the giver has nothing but a fruitless pity.

Do you remember all this, I wonder? I felt that I chilled you and disappointed you. But I could find nothing to say except what was better unsaid—that I loved you and pitied you with all my heart, but could not help you. You came, thinking that I should be strong. I remember that all those days I had fought against that talk with you. I saw in your eyes that you wished to speak, and I knew that my mind and heart were empty of anything that could sustain you. You thought, I do not doubt, that I was bearing my own burden with courage and hopefulness, because it is always your way to think the best of those whom you love. But it was not so : I had simply grown used to the darkness, and the cheerfulness that I showed was just the cheerfulness of one who had learned to live in the moment,—as one can enjoy oneself in a strange way in the interval that must elapse before some event which one dreads can take place ; as a ruined man can be gay, if he has a few days before his ruin is made known.

But even so you did not reproach me ; you did not even shrink from me bewildered. I think you supposed that I thought it better for you to bear your burden in silence, and that it would only increase your pain to speak about it. I can even believe that you thought me wise and strong, may God forgive me !

But now I am writing to say that though I have nothing to bestow, except the affection of which you do not need to be assured, yet I think that if we can write freely to each other, we may find some comfort together. I can say what I think in writing ; I often cannot say it in talking, because the personality of a living companion, with present needs and sorrows, comes so urgently in between my heart and my mind. Shall we try like children, hand in hand, to find some happiness together ? That is the best way, and the only way. But I will not write till I know for certain that you wish it. I do not want to do anything that you would not wish.

II

HILL STREET.

Thank you a thousand times for your letter ; I cannot say what a relief it is to me

that you did not think me at all events unkind ; you are always generous in your interpretations. But in this matter you have had so far more to bear than myself. You had lost a husband, a year ago, of whom I can only say that I can conceive of no one in the world to whom I would more joyfully have committed the happiness of one whom I loved ; and now you have lost your only child, a boy whom I cared for as if he had been my own, and whose simplicity and sincerity, to say nothing of his charm and beauty, seemed to assure a noble future. You must not forget this—that you have had to sacrifice not only your affections but actually your life—its occupations, cares, hopes, activities. I have lost friends and relations, but none whose life was vitally knit up with mine. I am essentially solitary and diffident. I make friends and comrades easily, but I have not the power of admitting people to my heart—only to my mind. It is only the very few who have ever claimed me —as you have done—who have ever seen the inside of my life. And then you have not only a belief in immortality, but an undoubted intuition of it. I have noticed many times that you continue to speak of those who are gone, not by an effort, but naturally, as if they were still

there. I am different ; I believe intellectually that life continues ; but I am so bound to the visible and tangible things, the looks, voices, handclasps of my friends, that I can form no picture of them apart from the body. I cannot feel them hovering near ; they seem to have plunged into some unknown element, which has closed over them. I don't want them in angelic guise and heavenly temper—I want them as they were, with all their failings and foibles and ways.

So what is there that I could give you ? In losing husband and child, you have yet lost neither. They are as real to you as ever, only hidden from you for a time. I know the awful dreariness of your life ; but you are strong and wise and kind. You have gone on with your duties ; you have failed no one. I have helped you before—you say it, and I believe it—but only in intellectual things. I have read more, thought more, talked more ; I have learned to criticise and differentiate things ; I have got a sort of clear-sightedness, by practice, and do not confuse qualities, or think unimportant things important—but it is only so that I have been of use—to help you to disentangle things complicated and difficult.

But I cannot help you now. You have

passed into a region where the mind is of little use. The mind cannot deal with suffering, except to distract itself a little. But because I bore my own long trial patiently, out of a mere courtesy that kept me from letting it overflow upon the happiness of others, you think I have some secret source of strength, when I have only sufficient self-respect to play a certain part. I was tempted, of course, at Rushton, to try to say mysterious and solemn things to you, to hide my helplessness in epigrams. But that I could not do.

Now that I know you wish it, I will write to you freely, day by day. I will look into my mind and try to make clear what I feel and why I feel it; but I shall really be coming to you for help, because I am strangely bankrupt. I mean that I have lived in the dreams and activities of peace with all my might; and what this frightful war has done for me is to give me a sudden sense of unreality, as if all my fine visions had been but a vain shadow, and that I had got to the truth at last—a truth so hateful that I cannot bear to face it, and yet cannot return to the old thoughts and joys. You see there is nothing of the combatant in me at all. I simply do not believe in force as settling anything except

which of two antagonists is the stronger. David killed Goliath, it is true ; but that was one of those lucky chances which contradict all human experience, and are therefore beloved of romancers ; and I am sick of romance. I believe in liberty with all my heart ; but I should not be converted to a belief in force, if Germany set her heel upon all Europe ; and though there was nothing for us to do, but to fight, we shall win, if we do win, not because our cause is just, but because we are the stronger. If it had been but a war between Germany and Belgium, Belgium could not have beaten Germany, though all right and justice had been on her side, and every evil principle on the side of Germany. I hope and I believe that liberty will triumph, but even so it will not be liberty that will have prevailed, but force. What is more, it is clear that Germany is fighting with a passionate patriotism, and with a firm belief that she possesses a morality, an ideal, a hope which the world would be the better for accepting. She believes that she is ringed round with envious foes, who hate her greatness and her righteousness. She believes too that war is the medicine of God for sick nations. The theory, hateful as it is, has a terrible consistency ;

and no one can doubt the intensity of the faith which inspires her. How it has been developed is a different matter, but it is there. If we love liberty passionately, they love discipline and subordination no less passionately. The self-worship, the complacency, the insane pride which it has produced, may be hideous to us : but no one can doubt that there is a sublime self-sacrifice about it all ; and all passion that ends in cheerful, reckless self-immolation, in a thirst for obedience, has something sacred about it.

That is all I can say to-day ; but no rational person can sweep it all away as pure aggressiveness. There is a burning sense of wrong in Germany, and an ardent belief in the righteousness of her cause, which is what terrifies me, because it is so tremendous a force, however it has been generated.

III

HILL STREET.

No, indeed, I have no vestige of sympathy with our foes ! It seems to me, this war, like a volcanic eruption of forces inimical to the

calmer hopes and designs of man ; or like some horrible festering centre of corruption which has risen to a head, and infects the very air. I think the war to be the most ghastly exhibition of the power of evil that the world has probably ever seen, because there is nothing uncivilised about it ; it has burst out in the very midst of organised peace, and between the most orderly nations. Do you remember what Satan says in *Paradise Lost*?

> " I therefore, I alone, first undertook
> To wing the desolate Abyss, and spy
> This new-created World, whereof in Hell
> Fame is not silent : here in hope to find
> Better abode, and my afflicted powers
> To settle here on Earth, or in mid-air ;
> Though for possession put to try once more
> What thou and thy gay legions dare against ;
> Whose easier business were to serve their Lord
> High up in Heaven, with songs to hymn His Throne,
> And practise distances to cringe, not fight."

Of course Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost*, and his case is always stated more convincingly than the other side ! But it is just that curious contempt for the easier business of heaven, that derisive misinterpretation of the angelic purpose, as of spirits who prefer ease and music to stern conflict and fiery pur-

pose, which seems to me so characteristic of Germany now. It has just the same dark grandeur : and however deeply I believe that peaceful combination is the only hope of happiness for men, I can't banish as pure perversity the force which emerges in such stubbornness of courage, such contempt of death. I am not afraid that the world will ever choose it ; even if this theory were victorious now, it would be slowly and surely disintegrated. I do not doubt where the hope of mankind lies ; but the appearance, on so prodigious a scale, of the forces of evil, makes me feel as I should have felt if I had stood in Gadara to see the evil spirits enter into the herd of swine. That is my first and greatest difficulty, that this outbreak of evil, so fiery in its quality, has knocked to bits my old gentle theories about the moral government of the world. I used to believe, I think, that evil was a sort of phenomenon of good, an educative thing, a rough side of life, which made man inventive and sympathetic and strong, dashed undue confidence in pieces, shook men relentlessly out of mild dilettante ways, made them serious, tender-hearted, humble, threw them on the love of God. Of course it was a complex dilemma, even so,

because one has to think of man choosing evil, when there was no evil to choose. But that seemed only a technical difficulty, and that was my belief about God and duty and probation ; but it is not tenable now. At least I can hold it no more.

IV

HILL STREET.

Yes, I know, there is a degree of pain, physical or mental, which must make people oblivious of all but pain and obliterate

> " All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame."

Then one must simply carry one's anguish away out of sight ; one has no business simply to rack others by the spectacle of misery which they can do nothing to relieve. Besides, people are very differently constituted in this as in everything else. Pain frightens some natures, and both the memory and anticipation of it are a terror to them. More elastic people rebound from pain the moment it is relieved. Then, again, some people find

themselves helped and sustained by sympathy. It is not so with me ; if I am suffering, and another comes to help and comfort me, if possible, and if I see the reflection of my own suffering in his compassion, why I have to bear his pain as well as my own. The only friends who have ever helped me to endure anything are those who simply ignore my misery, and take for granted I shall behave reasonably. That stimulates me to conduct myself decently, though I know there are others who would feel it to be heartless.

I think we ought never to judge any one's methods of suffering and enduring. It is not the reason or the will that suffers, it is something much deeper than that ; and I believe that in great suffering, the way that sufferers behave is the best way for them—the instinctive, curative way. Yet we blame people for seeming cold and hard in suffering, or for being weak, egotistical, hysterical. Some cure themselves best by silence, some by the relief of complaining—and anyhow, one recovers, not by reason or thought, but by simply living on.

It is strange to think how little any of us can ever *give* to another. Our time, our money, our care, our advice, our companionship—

how little use any of these things are! If we are happy and contented, we hardly need them; if we are unhappy and suffering, they are of no value at all. Suffering can't be charmed away, and still less argued away. When we suffer through the loss of those we love, the only help is just the silent affection of those who love us, which streams into the gap and reminds us that much love is left. But in the first hours of loss, even that cannot help us, because the ashen dreariness of pain makes us impervious to joy. Yet I have had a few moments myself, in the middle of very severe suffering, when I have felt a strange sense, almost of rapture, at having dived so deep in experience, and having found something so terribly and amazingly real. Do you know what I mean? I can hardly describe it, but it is a sense of saying to myself, "Yes, I can bear even this—even this cannot destroy me!" It is the knowledge of being ultimately unconquerable, a consciousness, I think, of immortality. I don't think the psalmist was utterly miserable when he wrote, "All Thy waves and streams have gone over me."

Of one thing I am quite certain, that the only hope of endurance is to put the will in league with the suffering, to take up our cross

—that is to say, not to be dragged to torture resisting and reluctant, but to lift up the very symbol and instrument of our pain and disgrace, and bear it forward like a banner. Do you know the fine lines in Wordsworth's Ode to Duty ?

> " Yet not the less would I throughout
> Still act according to the voice
> Of my own thought ; and feel, past doubt,
> That my submissiveness was *choice*."

That is the secret, if there is a secret—acceptance. But you know all this better than I can tell it you ; and my first and last thought in all that I have said is the deep desire I have to help you, if only I knew how.

V

HILL STREET.

Do you remember our long talks together in the old days, when we agreed to believe in *beauty* ? It sounds very affected when it is written down, and there's a hollowness about it, as if the kernel of it had fallen into a ball of dust. But it is true for all that, and the

sun is shining somewhere above the waves ; shining on the blue, moving waters, with crests of foam ; on rocky promontories, with their close-fitting carpet of grass ; on sandy bays where the children are playing, even though you and I are down beneath in the dim and shapeless water-world. It was not, you remember, to be what was commonly called beauty—sunsets, and far-off plains, pretty forms and faces, refining and strengthening with the years, arches full of rich strains of light and rolling music—those were all beautiful enough, things to be grateful for ; but we were to try to go deeper, to calm thoughts and patient deeds and fine flashes of character. The idea was to look at the truth of things ; not to lead sheltered and fastidious lives, but to work and mix with people, to be bored, if necessary, and to suffer if we must ; but through it all to practise an attitude to life, sharing happiness, not grasping at anything, spending ourselves. We did not mean to make a romantic picture out of our lives, or to expect that it was to be all like a morning in May, with the thorn-thickets in flower ; it was not to be a fastidious or a secluded sort of beauty at all, the sort of paradise which can only be bought by the toil of others : it was

to be a steady and undismayed facing of life, with all its broken purposes and ugly endings ; but we were to recognise beauty everywhere, and be true to it in our own hearts and lives. We were to fight its battles, not by argument and fault-finding, but by peace and patience and goodwill ; not fret or strive or be afraid, but move quietly forwards, like a summer wind. I am not going to turn upon all that and despise it or vilify it. It was fine and true, I am sure. But now a storm of chilly wind and sharp rain seems to have broken upon it and whelmed the world in wet. And with you it is worse still, because the very house of love has fallen in ruins about you ; and the worst of the pain which you have endured is that it seems to turn all beauty into a kind of heartless and mocking spirit, as when Ariel's song broke out in the air over the heads of the shipwrecked mariners :

> " This ditty does remember my drown'd father ;
> This is no mortal business . . ."

So Ferdinand says, and the horror of it was that the sweet, fanciful song played with his grief and bedecked it. " Coral and pearls ! " Job was wiser when he said, speaking of the price of wisdom, " No mention shall be made

of coral or of pearls ! " You see even now how these echoes haunt me !

But are we to consider that all our old dreams were foolish and wasteful illusions, just born out of our happiness and our affection, like fairy children, who vanish with a confused sound, like Prospero's dancers ?

No, I dare not think so. For the life of me, I cannot see where we were wrong. I am not ashamed of the talk of those light-hearted mornings. If our plans had been all made to sort the shining fragments out of the muddy ore, and to throw the rest away, it would have been different. But we never meant or wished to withdraw ourselves into a garden of spice, away from duty and common life. Our hope was to transmute what was common into something fine, both for ourselves and those about us. I went on with my work and my business—meetings and journeys and letters and interviews—very tiresome and dull, much of it ; and I tried to keep my little corner of life wholesome and sweet. And you did thrice as much as I, because you kept nothing at all for your own private delight, as I kept my music. You lived wholly for others, to my endless wonder and even envy. No, I do not believe for a moment that we were

wrong. If I had it all to do over again, I would still do it, though I would hope to do it better. But can we ever find our way back again to that shining path ? Of one thing I am certain, that I do not mean to keep this horror of war at arm's length. I do not want to shirk it, to forget it. I want to see its full significance. " I'll cross it, though it blast me," as Hamlet says. I mean to be different, if I can, even though it means the giving up of all the old dreams. I will withhold nothing, if I can but get at the truth. I want no illusions or comfortable pretences ; and I am sure that you desire the same.

VI

HILL STREET.

Your letter has moved me more deeply than I can say, from its depth of patience and pity. But you must believe me when I say that I have no touch of self-pity in all this. I do not feel like a child whose game is interrupted. I don't feel it to be pathetic—I want no pity, even from God. Don't you remember how we agreed that self-pity, and the plea of being

misunderstood, was the weakest and basest of all attitudes? No one is ever misunderstood except by his own fault. But though I see your faith, and though I think it perfectly beautiful, I cannot follow it. You see you will have to help me, after all! I can't feel any submissiveness—I don't think one can ever submit. However dark and miry the path is, I want to walk side by side with God along it. I don't want to be dragged, or even tenderly pushed along it. I am not sure that I fully understand you, but I do not believe that all this misery and waste and hatred is from God at all. I think God is fighting it with all His might, and is sore beset and hindered. If He retreats, and He seems to be retreating, it is wisely, intently, eagerly done. If He casts His thousands into the assault, and sees them fall and die, it must be that they do not die at all, as we count dying—they are but transferred to some other part of the field—born again, perhaps, to help the world a generation ahead. Of course He cannot be vanquished—I do not think that. But He says, as the Saviour said, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Yet it is the great gathering of the hosts of evil which daunts me; it seems to me so inconceivable

that they could not have been dispersed before. I am sure that God has not been hardening their hearts ; but He must have seen the whole great horror growing and storing itself, and leavening the poor souls that caught the poison. This is the thought that almost stupefies me—what if we, the lovers of liberty and peace and equal thought, are in the wrong after all ? What if we are mistaken in thinking that the individual is God's concern ? That seems to have been the strength of Christianity. It came into the world when human beings were treated as things of no account, could be bought and sold and mated, just for the pleasure and profit of their owners. The message of Christ was to every one of these, assuring the lowest slave of his dignity, his significance, bidding him believe that what he did, said, thought, mattered to God, and was God's concern. That was why it crept, like spring, across the world, and everywhere threw up blossoms of hope and love. No one guessed what was happening at first. Then there were suspicions, threats, persecutions ; but still the world went on blooming and flowering, till it found itself Christian. It was that which I still believed was going on. I saw order,

kindness, goodwill, humanity, pity, sympathy, all on the increase, men learning to live together. But now there falls this dark shadow. What if all that has gone as far as it can go, and a new page has to be turned? Now that the individual has reached a certain average sense and kindliness, has he to learn to be welded together in a new order, in which he is to think nothing of his own dignity and individuality, and just serve a cause blindly, with a dumb self-devotion? Is it a new message from God after all? Is what we called liberty a mere pleasure, a luxury which we have now to forego? Have we to learn that we can do nothing singly, share nothing, aim at nothing except the suppression of all our highest hopes and visions? I am not saying that Germany has wholly grasped it, but is she on the right line? Is her pride and vanity and self-sufficiency only the shadow cast by the brightness of her light? I do not believe it for an instant; I am only putting into the plainest words I can the terror that assails me; my loathing for the whole theory, my deadly shrinking, may be but the shiver of the flesh when the edge of the knife, that is to bring healing, cuts down through the nerves. Is it the bitter truth? Is it only that I am too

old and soft-hearted and luxurious to understand it and to face it? At present I only feel like Christian when Apollyon straddled right across the way. Every instinct of my mind and soul cries out that this is the Prince of Darkness; but even so I must recognise his virtues, if they can be called virtues. He has strength, valour, skill, determination, inventiveness. These qualities are not the monopoly either of evil or of good; and I am taught to use them all against him, if I can. There is a difficulty, that if these are good qualities, I must recognise that he has them. Reason, in fact, cannot help me here; and if I fall back upon instinct, how am I to know that my instinct is right and the instinct of Germany is wrong?

All this is put hurriedly and confusedly; but I know you will see my point—it is simply, what criterion have I by which I can test the rival theories? I do not want to take up a sloppy sort of sentimental fatalism, and say, "If I cannot believe what I feel, I cannot believe anything;"—that is the last cry of irrationality and prejudice; and I cannot bear to think that I am at liberty to erect my own prejudices into a final Court of Appeal.

You see I believe with every fibre of my

being in the hopes of liberty, and loathe the theory of force : but I cannot take refuge in a blind faith ; and the more repugnant to me the cause of my opponents is, the more anxious I am to do justice to it, and to see what its claims really are.

VII

HILL STREET.

One of the things just now which causes me most pain and bewilderment is the constant arrival of the tidings of death—suddenly whispered by a friend, or in a letter which one hardly dares open, or in the papers day by day. I feel as a man that goes about his business in a plague-stricken city, and as he sits at his work, hour by hour, the knell rings out above the house-tops, and he wonders if it is the death of some friend that is uttered upon the air, so thick already with sighs. I have lived so much in the world, and have known so many people in such various ways, that I cannot unfold the paper without knowing one or more of the groups into whose midst the bolt has sped. One grows, not callous indeed, but

expectant of some doom or other. When it all began, I thought I could not bear it, and yet it goes on, and I do not lose my senses or even my health. The heart cannot bear more than a certain amount of suffering, and I think of the story of the man who was condemned to be broken on the wheel, who after the first blows had been struck, smiled, and presently said to the priest that he smiled because the pain he had been dreading was so slight a thing after all. One is numbed, I suppose! Yet when I think of all that it means, all these young lives, the very best and finest and freshest that can be found, spilled and wasted: when I remember that these, in their energy and strength, their cheerfulness and their self-sacrifice, are the very men whom we most need to people and replenish the world, and to fight most eagerly against the evil of the world: and that all this is the result of a theory of aggression and world-dominion and ghastly vanity in a nation that wastes its own strength as recklessly as it wastes the strength of others—then I recoil, and thrust the horror away from me, and feel that I must just endure, with what patience I can, a dismay that I can neither gainsay nor comprehend. And yet I think, so strangely

are we made, that the very frequency of it has a reconciling power. *Thou know'st 'tis common,* says Hamlet of death. To walk in a graveyard is not a misery—it rather persuades one that death is not the evil we feel it to be, and that we ought not so to fear what all must pass through. I remember constantly that splendid letter written by Sterling to Carlyle from his deathbed, in which he says that it is more strange than sad, and not near as strange or sad to the dying man as to those who stand round. All experience says that men who die do not fear death : and when I have had to confront it, I did not fear it or even think of it at all : it seemed no more than a sleep, and it stole upon me softly enough. Why we fear it in health is because of our will to live : but when death comes, it takes that will gently away. There is a noble line in a Latin poet which says that the gods conceal the happiness of death from those who are meant to go on living, that they may have patience to live : and I do believe, in a trembling way, that death probably contains some blessed experience, and delivers us from most of our troubles without destroying our life. This is the furthest that our faith can go : and if I were a combatant, what I should

fear would be disablement and invalidism, as the result of wounds, more than swift and silent death : and I dread the thought of a life lingering on in a broken-winged way for my friends more than I dread death for them : because I know what the problems of the shattered life are, while death takes all problems, all bewilderment and anguish, straight out of our hands.

But the part of it with which my religion seems powerless to deal is the fact that something has put it into men's minds to admire and respect, and even enjoy war : and this instinct is so strong that, though we value civilisation too, we do not hesitate to sacrifice it to war. We fear a German civilisation more than we fear the bankruptcy of our own. That is what seems to me the hardest dilemma of all, that it does seem the design of God that we should learn to combine, to live and work together peaceably, to help the world along : and yet He either encourages, or else He does not, or cannot, banish the lust of fight that makes all kindly co-operation impossible. I cannot believe that God is fighting against Himself in this, and inspires men with a desire on the one hand to live together in unity, and on the other hand with a desire to waste all

that makes unity possible. I cannot acquiesce in that. It is the last and most hideous sort of cynicism : it makes God into a creature of moods, sometimes passionately hoping for peace, and sometimes, in a fit of wild fury, yielding to a lust for slaughter. I end, as I have told you, in believing in the reality of evil, as of something implacable, outside God altogether, with which He fights as wisely and as eagerly as He can.

That is the shadow over the non-combatant ; that he has not a plain duty to do, a risk to take, a work to perform, but is compelled to agonise over it all, to wonder whence it all arises, and what remedy could have been found. Nor do I think that we ought to allow ourselves to be so amazed and thrilled by the splendour of the courage and self-sacrifice and nobleness that war evokes as to wonder if there is not something great in it after all. A great conflagration is a picturesque thing to a spectator—the loosing of the stored-up flame from inanimate things, the wild leaping-up of the fire, the volleying smoke, the awful, devouring force of it—and the courage, too, which it arouses in the men who fight it—that has its splendid side ; but we do not set our cities on fire that we may see

it and conquer it. There is not even a political party which is in favour of that!

But that is the burden of the non-combatant—that he must look on, as from a high window, and see a hideous tragedy enacted, without being able to raise a finger to stop it or to palliate it. I have helped as far as I could, with work which must still be done, with money, with words and letters: but there is little enough that I can really do, and much of it is to salve my own desire to help; while I cannot flatter myself that much of it, except perhaps the money, has been really useful—while mine has been sadly diminished by the war. Yet it has been a year of harder work than I have had for a long time, and the little calls on time and energy are endless, and I have often felt really worn out by work and anxiety and distress. Yet I cannot pretend to myself that I have done anything to help the cause in which I so deeply believe, except to carry a few shifted burdens. All this has poisoned life for me, and has given me many hours of unutterable dreariness, sleepless nights, sad days, wasting strength and hope and courage in fruitless loathing for the waste, the ruin, the loss, the carnage of it all. There have been many days—I say this to you—

when I would have welcomed death. To step through, to close the door on the enraged and troubled earth, that seemed a blissful vision ; but it is morbid, I know : and I end by just hoping and praying that the war may not leave me worse than it found me—more tired and helpless and despondent. There, I have said enough ! I have no wish to shift my burden on to your shoulders : and indeed there is nothing that you can do to help me except to let me trust your love and your understanding—which is like an anchor to me in these waste waters.

VIII

BRAXTED RECTORY.

After writing my last letter to you, which was probably, I think, everything which a letter ought not to be—dull, sad, solemn, and very long, a mere shower of stones—I came away to this house which a friend of mine, Stanton, has taken for a month, to recruit after heartbreaking labour in the War Office. I could hardly bring myself to go, and very nearly wired to say I was unwell : I did not

know whom I should meet, and I did not feel that I could behave with decent cheerfulness. However, I found myself the only guest: Harry Stanton and his wife are both old friends of mine. I had a long talk to him last night about the situation, and though he is very discreet and lets nothing out, there was a calm atmosphere about him which did much to exorcise my demons. He did not minimise the difficulties and the risks, but he spoke about it all as if he felt no doubt of the issue. That comforted me, though it revealed to me how much of my depression is due to fear, pure and simple: not personal fear, I hope, but fear that the world may be about to lose a precious gift, slowly matured and gained. I slept well: and to-day has been beautiful, calm and sunny. The house is a rectory, ancient and large: it lies, with the church, at the end of the village street, in meadows set with old, big trees, going down to the clearest of rivers, which wanders away through wide pastures, fringed with bulrushes and loose-strife and arrow-head reeds, now full of flower, past little willow-sheltered islets, with here and there a lock in the open field, or a great humpbacked mill: sometimes the ground rises high and steep above the stream, with a

hanging wood descending to the water's edge, or else the waterway passes out into interminable fields, with clumps of trees and spires on the horizon. There were kingfishers to be seen, darting jewels of light, and at one place five or six herons rose and flapped away across the river-beds. The air, when I went out, was full of the sound of distant bells: there were just a few people about, sitting lazily in punts moored under wooded promontories, and again and again I heard the musing notes of birds hidden in leaves close at hand. I walked alone—the Stantons going to church: and I came in with my troubles washed away, and with my mind as clear and cool as the river itself, with all its dim pools and trailing weeds. It was not that I forgot the troubles of the world, or your sorrows, or my own anxieties; but they fell into place as a part of life. I could look calmly at them—it was no longer a hurried flight under storm-clouds and sharp airs. Ought one to be so impressionable? Perhaps not, but that is how I am made: and if a sensitive mind lets one down into pits and marshes of thought, it also lifts one out again speedily—and I have no belief in continuing wilfully in sadness. What helped me, I think, was the sight of the

old life of the world, its real, vital life, going on just the same, wholly unaffected by anything grievous that might be happening, till I felt that, bad as it was, it was not my business altogether—at least I was not so wholly responsible for everything going right as in my morbid hours I tend to feel. We have got to live, I know, whatever happens—and to live fully and gratefully—and then the deep sense of the beauty of it all came back, not in mockery, but as a thing to hold on to, to commit oneself to with a will. We must love our fate, whatever it is, not by a contortion of mind, or a piled-up fancy, but because it is lovable, and because love is in it and behind it. I wished with all my heart you had been with me that you might have shared it. I stood to watch the cattle moving slowly up the great meadow, the bulrush-beds just quivering as the cool water plucked at their stems, at the hill with all its climbing oaks—and though I remembered that there were scenes, once as calm as this, on which the fury of that accursed host has been poured out—on ruined homesteads and battered churches and wasted fields —yet I saw too that there was a vast power of recuperation everywhere, a power of living, and settling, and making a home, and doing

the simple work of life, which would begin again, instantly and eagerly, and flow into the gap. I won't say that all the scheming and planning of men, all our designs, good and bad, seem a mere waste of time—because we make progress that way; but I saw that there was a deeper thing still, which is every one's concern—to live eagerly, to love faithfully, to see that our own little circle lives happily in mutual confidence and care. That remains our eternal business: to recognise other spirits, to link ourselves with them, and to lift up our hearts into harmony with the vast and peaceful life of the earth, which was proceeding, I saw to-day, over endless fields, in hamlet and town, on beneath the flowing seas, and again in tropic forests and sea-girt islands—a belt of richest life flung round the world, between the silent, frozen poles. I do not wish to use large words, but God assuredly talked with me, in a great, fatherly kindness, showing me that He is there indeed, wherever life is to be found, filling all living things with a sense that they share the great inheritance, and the blessing and delight of life.

IX

BRAXTED RECTORY.

In the afternoon we sat out under a great lime-tree full of scent and humming sound, the bees coming, gathering, going laden away, while the light passed over to the west, and threw long shadows. We read a little—Stanton reads beautifully in that grave, slow voice of his : and there was music later. It is not that the pleasure of it all was only made possible by wealth, because the best part of it was pleasure which any human being in that countryside could have had if he had desired it. The sun, the river-bank, the stream, the scene, were free to all alike. The pity is that when there is so much joy accessible, people don't seem to want that particular kind of joy : but it is coming, I think. A little more imagination, a little more consciousness of the right of others to be happy too, and we should be far upon the road.

I wish you could get a day or two like this : it would heal your sorrow a little, I believe. What hurts us most is the struggling and the striving against our lot, the restless constructing of pictures of what might have been —and then the blessings pass by unheeded.

Don't think that I forgot how much harder your case is than mine, missing voices, steps, presences that cannot come again. But I think that you are happier, though you cannot know it now, even than I : for I have never known that nearness of contact, that intermingling of life : and whatever happens, your life and memory have been infinitely enriched by it, and love like yours is a possession which nothing can ever take away. I envy you that, even though you have lost it awhile. You have a treasure waiting for you outside life to which I can lay no claim—you know the secret of love !

It is late—I hear the church-bell, muffled in leaves, strike midnight. The garden scents float in at my window, and I see thin wefts of mist drawn across the stream in the soft moonlight. I am sure that it is all trying to whisper something to me, which I cannot learn just yet, but which if I once could learn, I should never know doubt or regret again.

X

WIMBLEDON.

Yesterday was a heavy, thunderous day, the sky bright and clear in places, but with

looming clouds drifting about, that looked ready to come down at a touch. I had been walking down the river, and was returning by a footpath through some open fields in the suburbs. There were soldiers drilling and exercising, and some big huts close to the pathway, stores and canteens. We were passing by one of these when there was a crack of thunder, and the rain came down in sheets. A corporal standing at the door invited us to come in and shelter. Inside, the hut, a great roomy place, was exactly like a scene, my companion said, in one of Bernard Shaw's plays. There were piles of tins and cans, neatly built up. On the long tables stood boxes of dried beans and grain, and a big pile of sausages ready to be distributed for tea, with a block of butter and a row of fresh loaves. A soldier was sweeping up some spilt grains; another was pulling out nails from boxes which had been emptied of their contents. Four young soldiers were sitting round a table playing a game and laughing loud. It was a busy-looking, cheerful place, with the sense of pleasure which stored provender always communicates to the human mind.

We stood waiting; when there congregated

round the door a lot of children who had been out playing, some little boys and girls, with three or four perambulators containing phlegmatic infants, sucking gravely at bottles, and looking at the soldiers with fixed and serious eyes. "Come in, children, come in," said the corporal, "you'll get drenched out there." The children ran in, and the little girls, at imminent risk of upsets, tried feebly to wheel the perambulators in, the step at the door being a high one. Two of the soldiers ran out into the rain and carried the perambulators in bodily. Another of the soldiers rushed out in his shirt-sleeves, saying, "Good Lord, I've left my coat outside." The children began to play about, and even to touch the stores. "Now then, boys, hands off!" said the corporal good-naturedly. I said to the corporal, "Why, you will have the whole parish in here in a minute." "Oh, let 'em come," he said smiling, going on with his work; "it'll be over almost as soon as it has begun." One of the soldiers who was playing took a small boy on his knee to watch the game, and the others clustered round him. It was a pretty scene, full of gentleness and kindness from end to end. What I liked best was the way in which the children took for granted that when

they were among soldiers, they were among friends.

XI

WIMBLEDON.

I talked to a most estimable man yesterday, sensitive and tender-hearted all through—indeed I thought his head fully as soft as his heart—who was very anxious that people should discuss terms of peace, face possibilities, consider what can be done, get used to the idea. He thinks that peace would be more rational, more considerate, more peaceful when it came. I can't agree with him. It seems to me in the first place the whole thing would be so provisional as to be futile for ordinary people—of course I hope that our statesmen may be considering it—and then, too, it seems to be mixing up two frames of mind, like the schoolmaster sandwiching pathos and ethics in between the strokes of the cane. Get the caning over, and then consider the ethics of the case. We are in the position of a man whose companion suddenly puts a pistol to his head. That isn't the time to ask for

a consideration of first principles ! And then so much depends upon the frame of mind of Germany. If Germany sees, to use her own expression, that, war being the medicine for sick nations, she is the patient and not the doctor, as she supposed ; if she sees that she has been gulled and drugged and misled and exploited by her militarists and her professors, and has ruined herself for a generation, only to prove that decent nations cannot be allowed to behave like insane freebooters—then there is some hope for Europe. But if Germany ends in a sick, sullen, and revengeful despair, and sets to work again to make herself more like a porcupine than ever—why then it only means another and another war. You can't treat a great nation like a cross child ; Germany can't be slapped and put in the corner ! The hope is that the huge delusion may clear off like a cloud, and that she may see herself ugly, truculent, complacent, and accursed. Of course I feel, like many people, that our newspapers have done us much harm both by their hysterical abuse and their nervous self-disparagement. They have done their best to dissuade neutrals from joining us by so insisting on our weakness and our disorganisation. I hope that the Government may take the

matter in hand, and try to prevent the voice of the nation, as the newspapers must appear to be, from being so unworthy and so unrepresentative of our real frame of mind. I can thankfully say that I have not met a single human being as irrational as some of our newspapers, as timid, as acrid, as harassed, as brutal. The smallest sign of moderation, in any speaker or writer, has been instantly abused as pro-German ; and I must honestly say that the only shame I have ever felt for my country during the war is the shame evoked by the thought that any one could suppose that our great, calm, tolerant, good-natured nation should indulge in such base outcries. It has been a real attempt at tyranny, based on evil passions and deliberate design, to crush both freedom of speech and freedom of thought, utterly un-English and un-Christian. The strangest part of it all is that side by side with the fiercest denunciations of Germany, the only practical measures recommended have been that we should hurriedly adopt all the worst features of the German system ; so that, having reviled Germany to our hearts' content, we are to set to work to organise ourselves in every department on German lines ! Could our fear of Germany be more openly expressed than by

preaching that our only way of salvation lies in copying her? That would indeed be the worst legacy of the war, if we fell in love with the system which is responsible for the woes of Europe. If I believed that, I should indeed despair.

But what gives me hope is that though certain newspapers have done their best to drive us mad with fury and anger and fear and self-depreciation, the nation has yet proved incapable of hatred. A deep and serious indignation, an abhorrence of the fraud and violence of Germany, such as she has evoked, is wholly unlike the quality of rage which Germany has felt and expressed. Germany's hymns and execrations, her gnashing of teeth, her brandished fist, her howls of vengeance, are all simply insane; and the way in which it has all been evaporating, as plan after plan has come to grief, is a sign, I feel, that they are coming ruefully to their senses. They began by offering to revise the religion and the spirit and the institutions of Europe; they are now beginning to say that they have been entirely misunderstood. I believe indeed that they have been ruined more by closely organised stupidity than by anything. Their endless mistakes and mis-

interpretations and blunders, whenever it was important to know what other nations felt and thought, are all instances of the blindness of supreme self-conceit. They have no knowledge of the world ; they believe only what they want to believe. It is all so childish and immature ! They do not seem to have got beyond the point of thinking, as schoolboys think, that if you can twist a boy's arm till he says what you want him to say, you have persuaded him of the truth of it. They do not seem to me like grown-up people ; they have just the silly, vain, greedy, bullying horizon of the boy who fancies himself a man, and thinks that he knows everything worth knowing. Germany, in simple language, has made such a fool of herself ! A nasty, deceitful, truculent child can make itself felt in a household, and it is a deep anxiety to its elders how it is to be brought to a sensible frame of mind. It is not enough simply to punish it—it has to be educated, it has to grow up ; and this seems to me to be the great problem for the future, how to bring into line with wiser nations a nation so foolish and insolent and conceited, so destitute of imagination and sympathy. That is what the future will have to solve.

XII

HILL STREET.

What a curious thing the love of power is—I mean it is such a difficult thing to disentangle. Most ambitious and power-loving people disguise it to themselves by contriving to believe that it is an intention of benefiting other people on a large scale. No one sets out by saying to himself that he intends to be feared and hated. It is always a sort of popularity that men desire—to be admired, respected, valued, and loved. The Germans, even, maintain that their aim is to benefit the world. They believe that they have discovered the right way to live, and they propose to teach other nations how to conduct themselves. It is the same with all the ambitious people that I have known. They believe that they know how some particular sort of institution ought to be run, and they begin by hard work and civility to make themselves indispensable. But the strange thing is that when men have attained power, it always turns out to be very different from what they expected. They dream, as a rule, that it will mean an easy, comfortable sort of life, that they will issue orders which others

will obey, that they will be trusted and confided in and implicitly followed. Instead of that, it means toil and responsibility and anxiety and strife ; and most men at the end of a long life of power and influence say frankly that it has hardly been worth the trouble. And yet it is a thing which very few people wish to lay down. It seems like a potent drug, which a man cannot give up using. There are very few disinterested people who really live a public life for the sake of the public, and desire only to be useful and to be beloved. These are men who really help the world along ; but it takes longer to establish an influence of that kind, and it is not so picturesque a thing, because it arrives slowly and secretly.

The real impulse behind it is the impulse to make oneself felt ; and it is a more visible and tangible triumph to do that by thwarting other people's wishes than by sacrificing one's own. But it is a difficult thing to submit to contempt and disdain, and the easiest way to make oneself felt is to make people afraid of resisting you. Yet I believe that most ambitious men regard that as a preparatory stage, and intend, when they have got the reins into their hands, to be kind and just, and to

make their subjects happy and contented. A man of influence does not simply want to take away the pleasures of others ; he only wants them to admit that they hold them at his disposal, and to feel grateful. That I believe underlies all ambition, the desire for the gratitude of others. The powerful man argues that even if his dependents do not feel grateful at once, they will be grateful in the end, and that it is natural and wholesome for them to obey. Very few despots intend to be anything but benevolent. That is what makes ambition an infirmity of the noble mind, that it presents itself in the guise of intending to make others happier ; and the most ambitious man in the world hopes to earn the applause of a grateful country. The entirely unscrupulous and selfish tyrant has generally had a touch of insanity about him, and even he has generally certain friends whom he loads with favours. Indeed I believe power to be always in its origin a desire to bestow happiness rather than to take it away.

It makes me feel that the love of power is the perversion by an evil spirit of a desire to make others happier ; and it makes me, in dealing with other people, mistrust the instinct one has of withholding what one thinks is not good

for them, and giving only what one believes is right for them to have. I had rather make mistakes of indulgence than mistakes of repression! Of course it is necessary sometimes, with very inexperienced people, to explain to them the probable disadvantages of some self-gratification; but if you want to help people, it is necessary to show that you love them, and it can't be done by peremptoriness or indifference.

I think that the reason why I loathe the German method so much, at the present moment, is because of their insufferable priggishness and self-glorification. If they were purely aggressive, purely selfish, I should detest it, of course; but at least I should not have the misery of knowing that they expect to be admired for their greatness, their inventiveness, their perfection. They seem to me so low in the human scale. They claim the knightly virtues. They call us a nation of shopkeepers, and think it ignoble to produce a thing by honest work, and to make a profit on it. Their idea of chivalry is to come and take it away without paying for it; and one of the meanest things in this war is the way in which they have looted and poached the result of other men's labours, and called it the

power of the sword. If they had been scrupulous, kindly, generous foes, it would have been very different; but they have not yet got beyond the belief that resourcefulness apart from honesty is the mark of the hero. Their morals are the morals of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The great man is not only the strongest man, but the man who can lie and cheat, spoil and plunder. They have no sense of honour, none of the feeling that there are certain things that a gentleman cannot bring himself to do. I think it was Napoleon who said that power is never ridiculous; it may not be ridiculous, but it can be contemptible—and that is what the Germans have made it.

XIII

HILL STREET.

I have had a curiously interesting fortnight and have returned from it in a much more tranquil and I believe sensible frame of mind. Major Barton and his wife are old friends of mine. He has got a Staff appointment down at Nutwell, and being a wealthy man, he has taken a house there. I met him casually in

my club in London, and we had a long talk about the war. It ended in his giving me a cordial invitation to come and stay with him for a week, and see what it was all like on the spot. So I went, feeling shy and nervous at the prospect, and I have ended by spending a fortnight with them.

Nutwell is a very quaint and charming little country town, with houses of every picturesque kind, from Tudor dwellings with low gables, and overhanging upper stories, and bits of pretty carving, to big red-brick mansions with large gardens. The streets wind about strangely : and it is all built upon a hill, with the river on one side and a stately old church at the top. I have lived a very much occupied life. Barton's house is a quaint old place, belonging to a retired solicitor, who hates a fuss and has fled to a watering-place. It is full of low, panelled rooms, and has a large shady garden at the back, though it looks out into the main street. Some of the troops are billeted in the town, others live in huts in an adjoining park. I have seen a great many officers of all kinds. Barton is a hospitable fellow and invites men in freely. I have dined at mess often, been present at simple festivities and sing-songs, and really mixed, as far as a

civilian can, with the life going on there. There were a certain number of professional soldiers, and a good many Territorials. The Territorial officers are men who have come away from various forms of civil employment—solicitors, merchants, country gentlemen, and so forth, of very different social standing. Some of them are wealthy men, others have made great sacrifices of prospects and incomes. I have made several real friends. The hard work, the exercise, the sociability, the sense of usefulness, the interest of it all have produced in them, as a rule, a great cheerfulness and good-nature. They gave me a very kindly welcome, and talked freely about themselves and their concerns. Their frankness was a pleasant trait. I found them interested in all sorts of things—books, art, antiquarian things, politics, religion—and I had several very memorable talks, memorable, I mean, because of the sincerity and directness displayed. I have heard military affairs and methods criticised with great outspokenness and good sense. One or two of them seemed aware that they were a little old for the job, and I had some touching confidences from one or two about their family concerns and anxieties. Indeed, the result of the life they are living, with the

prospect of fighting ahead, seemed to me to remove in a curious way our natural reserve and secretiveness. I have seldom met so many men who seemed to be really saying what they thought and felt. I remember particularly a long, quiet talk in the garden one warm evening with an elderly colonel, which gave me a clearer idea of the religion of a very simple and upright man than anything I have ever heard. He had a great dislike, I found, of all that was symbolical, mysterious, artistic, in religion, and a fine instinctive grasp of principle and duty.

The professional soldiers of high standing were a little disconcerting to me at first, from a bluff authoritativeness which gave me a sense of royalty—as if they were unconscious of one's presence. It was far removed from anything pedantic or superior—it was like the centurion in the Gospel, accustomed to be obeyed: "Do this—and he doeth it."

One of the Staff Captains struck me very much. He was a member of a well-known business firm, and a very prosperous man. His whole day was taken up in office work, filling up endless papers, constantly interrupted. He would be called out of the room two or three times during dinner to answer a question.

But I never saw him in a hurry, or irritable, or downright. He never said that he couldn't attend to a thing—he always settled it on the spot with quiet assurance. He was often tired and out-of-sorts, but it made no kind of difference to his serenity and his childlike smile. I don't think I ever saw a man with more perfect self-restraint. I saw an old Brigadier lose his temper once with him about some detail, and speak very sharply. "Yes, sir," he said, "it ought not to have happened, and it shall not happen again." Even the Brigadier was softened, and said, when the Captain left the room, "I declare that Golightly is the best fellow in the world!" I entirely agreed. I had some long talks with the Major's wife. She is very much attached to her home and her children; but she and the Major agreed that they would not bring the children down, but leave them at home in the charge of an aunt. "It's not altogether a good atmosphere for children," she said to me. The officers like them and make much of them —and they get excited and out of gear, however good they are." But what I liked about her was the way in which she accepted the situation and indeed enjoyed it. "It makes a dreadful break, of course," she said, "but

it is Harold's job and so it is my job—and I must confess I like it. I simply live for the day and in the day "—and she added with a smile, " I believe that is how we are meant to live : I'm not sure that thinking about things doesn't rather spoil them. This sort of life puts you in your place ; it makes you feel useful and it removes the unpleasant sense of being important. It is wholesome to find how well everything goes on at home without you : and I am sure it is good not to feel so responsible. It is a bad habit of mine," she went on with a smile, " to take things into my hands, and to try to mould people. The excuse I make is that I want every one to do what is right—but it is only my idea of what is right, after all ! "

She told me a good deal about the soldiers—she goes and helps in some rooms where they get coffee and tobacco and can write letters. " It is marvellous," she said, " the way in which they will confide in you ! If I could put down a quarter of the queer things I am told it would make a book worth reading. I am never surprised at anything now. I don't think I shall ever be able to read a novel again. Indeed, I can't think where the conventional ideas about life come from. The traditional

things are not the real things. I feel inclined to say, like Tennyson, ' What an imagination God Almighty has ! ' "

I have come away feeling very differently about the war. I have got in touch with the fact of it. No one at Nutwell theorises about it, or wonders why it has happened, or what is going to come of it. It lifts one right away out of metaphysics into an extremely vivid and fine world. These men that I have lived with are face to face with some tremendous realities. They know that they will possibly never come back to the old life at all, or that they may come back disabled. But they do not anticipate anything. There doesn't seem a touch of fear about them. They talk quite freely of friends who are killed or wounded; and in their company all morbidity comes to an end. There is no horror about it at all. It is a great sane, active affair—men in the presence of a vast and widespread danger, and doing their best, patiently and good-humouredly and without excitement or rage, to meet it and avert it.

XIV

HILL STREET.

We make a mistake, I expect, in thinking of the losses and sorrows of war too much in the mass. The amount of it frightens us. It is inevitable, I suppose, in these days of newspapers. Those vast, closely printed casualty lists, who can look at them without a sense of horror? Hardly a day passes without one seeing a name one knows. And yet, so strangely are we made, the sight of all the deaths in a newspaper in normal times, and the thought of all the deaths unrecorded, does not move us. We are a nation of 45,000,000 and our annual death-rate is 14 per 1,000. That is to say, over 600,000 people die every year, an average of 1,700 a day. That is a sufficient carnage, one would think! Of course it is infinitely worse now, because just the very people are dying who would naturally expect to live. But still, it seems strange that we should be plunged in such misery by the added tale of deaths in war, if in peace-time we think of the daily toll of death with comparative indifference, as a matter of course. We should all feel that a man who could not bear, in ordinary times, to look at a

paper, because it reminded him of the prevalence of death, was a hysterical sentimentalist. Why is it that we are so little moved by the everyday sorrows of the world, and yet so profoundly moved by its additional and artificial sorrows ? Why do we now grieve over all the homes left desolate, when we do not grieve in times of peace over the same thought ? A death, in every case, is a dark problem for a little circle of people ; yet I cannot help feeling, speaking quite sincerely and truthfully, that it would not be so uncomforted a sorrow if a son of my own were to die on the battlefield as it would if he died by some accident or by some preventible disease. The thought of his bravery and his self-sacrifice would, I am sure, help me a little to bear it, more than if his life had been cut short by some mischance and disaster.

I am not arguing against or for sorrow. I am only saying that it is strange that we should find the thought of death so bitter now, when we banish it so easily in times of peace. It shows how much we are at the mercy of what we happen to have brought to our attention in a vivid way, and how conventional much of our grief is. So many homes a day are stricken with the shadow of death, in peace, and we

hardly give it a moment's thought. We should not dream of calling a man heartless in times of peace for going to the theatre and not reflecting that in the course of the play more than a hundred of his countrymen had passed beyond the veil. It seems to me that we ought to regard it either more or less than we do. My own sense of horror about the war lists is that they are all in a sense unnecessary deaths, forced upon us by the hateful passions of a single nation. It is the quality of our loss more than the quantity which makes me mourn. Yet the truth is that, for every minute in the year, as it passes, even in times of peace and quiet, more than one, out of our own nation alone, goes up to the gate of death and passes through ; and that whatever we are doing—sleeping, talking, working—the endless procession files past. But we have to live in spite of it all, though our own place in the waiting throng is fixed for us. I can conceive a man getting to dwell upon this thought till it became a madness. Yet it would not be sane to realise it, nor ought it to destroy our joy in life and our zest for living. How hard, it would seem, is it to choose the right path between over-sensitiveness and callousness ! Almost all of those endless deaths mean a

little centre of grief and dismay ; yet we cannot sympathise with each of them, for that would simply wreck our power of living at all. It shows, I think, that our sorrows must be personal things, and that we cannot pour out our sympathy on statistics ; indeed, that our habit of trying to comprehend a huge conspectus of human affairs, such as the newspapers give us, probably weakens and diffuses our power of active personal sympathy, and wastes in vague sentiment what might be used for the help of those whom we know, and whom we can therefore love.

XV

HILL STREET.

I have felt disappointment all through the war at the line taken by our religious teachers and leaders. I do not say that they have not done their best, but it seems to me a shallow best. That is the worst of religious agencies devoting themselves so enthusiastically to social activities, and the absence of profound wisdom and disinterested aspiration is the

price which Churches pay for working so hard to secure the respect and concurrence of the average man. I think it is perhaps inevitable that if a Church sets itself to the task of practical civilisation, and feels very strongly its responsibility to the commonplace and ordinary mind, it must abandon detached, disinterested, and frankly idealistic inspiration. There is very little sign of practical organisation in the Gospel or in St. Paul's Epistles. There is no attempt to condescend to human weakness or to indulge it in the New Testament ; what there is, is an attempt to make very high and lofty conceptions simple and intelligible.

There is a sublime indifference in the Gospel to all mundane considerations ; you are not told how to behave, but how to feel and hope. The noble passions of humanity, love, self-sacrifice, generosity, neighbourliness, goodwill, patience, compassion are aroused, and left to overflow into life. But when religion becomes a matter of practical organisation, raises money, organises relief, builds churches, practises choirs, sets up clubs, enlists workers, devotes itself to the decorous and respectable conduct of life, it is very difficult for it to take a fearless and independent line of thought.

Doctrine and worship and morals have to be conciliatory and moderate, have to aim at including rather than separating, at making people behave like orderly citizens, at accommodating religion to ordinary habits of thought. I do not mean that there has been any concession made to a low standard of morals. It is quite the reverse : and moreover it would be altogether unjust and ungenerous to undervalue the immense diligence and activity of ministers of religion and religious agencies. What, however, may be questioned is whether the financial and administrative business involved in the carrying on of such elaborate institutions has not tended to claim too large a share of the energies of the ministry. It is a very difficult situation. A parish church or a chapel is the centre in many cases of a large organisation, which involves all sorts of practical work, accounts, and similar detail. The higher up among the officials that one goes, the more is all this detail multiplied. An Anglican Bishop, it may be said, is a man who has to combine a pastoral charge with duties such as a permanent secretary of a public office discharges. His days are filled with correspondence, business, travelling, interviews. To make a secluded and contemplative preacher

a Bishop would be an impossibility. Whatever else he is, a Bishop must be a healthy and good-humoured man of business, who can manage smoothly and tactfully a vast staff of subordinates.

A time of strain like the war, when all institutions which depend at all upon voluntary contributions have to attempt to keep their organisation going on diminished resources, is bound to reveal whatever deficiencies exist. The war has revealed that the deficiency does not lie on the practical side, but rather on the spiritual. The clergy have shown themselves good managers, and they have appeared, moreover, in a patriotic and public-spirited light. But no one can say that they have led or inspired the spiritual impulses of the nation. What the nation needed was something lofty, tranquil, steady, simple, and sincere. It needed to be shown plainly that fear, recrimination, haste, confusion, agitation were not the fruit of Christian graces. I honestly think that the war has revealed the secularity of our religion very clearly. No one can really maintain that the Churches have thrown themselves into the scales against the current tendencies and impulses. They have rather busied themselves

in finding good reasons for prosecuting the war with vigour.

The nation has certainly shown itself chivalrous and courageous, capable of great devotion and self-sacrifice. But the Churches have not sternly rebuked the evidence of unchristian temper ; they have not set their face against recrimination and intemperate wrath and anger and disdain ; they have rather accepted these things as the regrettable but inevitable shadow of war. There have even been episcopal utterances of great practical vigour which contained no reference to religion at all. In fact, the clergy have shown themselves citizens first and Christians afterwards ; and the sense of disappointment which I feel is that the appeal to spiritual forces and Christian principles has been so faint and half-hearted. I am not saying that the clergy are not perfectly right in emphasising the significance of the war as a protest of freedom against oppression. The war has an essentially idealistic and sacred character ; but the true function of the clergy would have been, it seems to me, to indicate by every means in their power the necessity of living a Christian life through and in the new conditions which have prevailed, and especially in the face of all the

moral problems created by transferring the cream of the youth of the country out of the labours of peace to the life of the camp and the billet and the parade ground. The sacrifices made by young soldiers in every town and village have been a magnificent testimony to the sound and sterling principles which prevail : yet this is not a response to the exhortations of the clergy, but a perfectly spontaneous national instinct. The clergy might have realised that they were not needed in that field of work, but that they were greatly needed to tranquillise all the urgent impulses released by so vast a social convulsion as the militarisation of a peaceful nation.

I do not want to criticise the clergy harshly, because they do not deserve it. They have engaged in active work, they have proved one of the most energetic of classes : but I feel that the war has revealed clearly what part the clergy play in the nation ; and though it is an admirable civic part, it is impossible to maintain that they have taken the lead in spiritual emphasis, or have made it clear what Christian duties are apart from civic duties. It is possible that these are not different in a Christianised State ; but I have not felt that the clergy have had any clear ideas on the

subject apart from the ethical ideas of the ordinary, man. It may be that Christianity has melted into ethical duty ; but the teaching of the Gospel, in that case, seems unreal and fantastic, and wanting in practical value. There does not seem to be any resemblance between the very practical view of our clergy and a parable like that of the Prodigal Son, with its endless tolerance, its perfect simplicity, and still less resemblance to the deep personal and mystical appeal of the talk with the woman of Samaria, beside the lonely wayside well. All that view of religion seems banished as useless, poetical, childish, too good to be true. " Yes," our teachers seem to say, " those are pretty fancies for untroubled people, all very well for peaceful life and normal times—but in a crisis like the present we have to act and work ! " Perhaps it is true ; but if so, Christianity has broken down and must be relegated to the domain of leisurely and impracticable dreams, if, when a strain comes, it is to be brushed aside, as a professional man in money difficulties would think he had something better to do than to listen to the innocent prattle of his children.

XVI

HILL STREET.

I have not thanked you as I should for your letters. They are beautiful to me, not only for what you say, but for much that you do not say. As I read them, the old words rise to my lips, " I know thy faith, and thy labour, and thy patience." It is wonderful to me how little your troubles overflow into your words. I almost wish that you could give yourself more relief; it would show me that your sorrow was more bearable, because any tragedy is becoming bearable the moment it is possible to speak of it. What you tell me of Mrs. Fell's letter of sympathy is amazing. Yet I see what she means when she says that it must be a comfort to you to think that many other people are bearing similar troubles. The feeling is the right one, though it is strangely phrased. She means, I am sure, that there is a help in the sense of fellowship in suffering. If in peaceful and prosperous times some calamity befalls us, we are apt to feel that we are singled out, that there must be some specific ill-will to us, as Carlyle said. That is a great torture, to think that God is not using us justly. But we can't avoid that torture,

as long as we believe God to be responsible for our sore troubles. At least I think this is so. If we think of Him like Caliban, watching the land-crabs pass, letting twenty go by and stoning the twenty-first—

"Loving not, hating not, just choosing so"—

then we are miserable indeed. But I think I am just as miserable, if I think trouble is just dealt out to me as a trial of my strength, because I cannot resist the feeling that God does not know how bad it is, nor how it takes away all my power for hopefulness or usefulness, and shuts me up in my own soreness.

The result of the war has been to give me an entirely different belief—I revert, as I often do, to the parable of the Prodigal Son. That does not represent the wretchedness of the prodigal as having been prepared for him by the Father. There is no hint that the Father says, "If I give the boy his money, he will come to grief; that will be a lesson to him, and he will turn to me for help." No, it is inconceivable that this should have been in the old man's mind. He rather does what the boy wants, without any idea of discipline. When the wretched creature stumbles home for shelter and food, he does not say, "There,

that is the result of your perversity and folly ! " He is just glad to have him on any terms. Neither does he overwhelm the elder son with reproaches and sharp contempt. He simply says, " Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." He does not find fault with any one. He simply fights evil with utter gentleness and love. He does not even blame himself and say, " If I had trained these two boys differently, they would not have turned out so ill as they have done." He merely shows a wise and generous patience ; and he never says a word of pathetic reproof. At least one might have expected him to remind them how ill a return they had made for his kindness.

It may be said that this is pressing a simple story too hard ; but I do not think so, because the parable is so full of definite art and intentness. Well, I believe that to be the attitude of God to ourselves. He is on the side of all that is good, peaceable, and happy. He trusts His sons absolutely ; and if they come within range of evil, He knows too well how strong the forces of evil are to reproach them—because He knows that the only reproach worth anything is self-reproach. But He does not even calculate upon that ; He merely meets

them, whatever evil they have done, however hard-hearted they have been, with infinite pity and love. Surely, if we can feel that, it evokes all the love that we can give. If we believe that all our happiness comes from God, and that He is grieved that it should be otherwise, we can love Him with all our strength.

Do you remember the scene in *The Mill on the Floss*, when Maggie cuts off her hair, and is overwhelmed with reproaches by her aunts and even by her mother? She runs to her father, hides her face on his shoulder, and bursts out sobbing. Her father puts his arm round her and tells her not to cry—"Father'll take your part!" Those are the sort of words which evoke love and the desire to please the beloved one, which no amount of prudent counsels can arouse.

I believe that God will take our part, however damaged we may be by evil, by our own perversity and wilfulness, by whatever calamities we may have brought upon ourselves. If only we will love Him! We cannot love Him if we know that He has brought disaster upon us; but if He is in the same case as ourselves, fighting evil by tenderness and sweetness and silent love, then we can do our best to help Him.

I believe that we are right to put away from our thoughts of Him all idea of punishment, even of discipline. We are disciplined a little, by sorrow and by evil, it may be ; but that is not because they have hurt and wounded us, but because He gives us strength to resist them and joy to oppose to them. He is patient, He waits long, but He has no harshness or severity for us. It is not Him that we have to fear ; our only task is to love Him as He deserves to be loved, and as we shall some day love Him.

He has taken the two whom you loved best to His heart, away from all evil and sorrow. They dwell in His love and joy, which wait for you and for me, and indeed for all mankind.

XVII

HILL STREET.

I went to dine " quietly " last night with the Petty family—and, by the way, ought one to write " the Pettys," or " the Petties," or " the Petty's," if one is speaking of the family ? It would be characteristically English if the last of the three were grammatically

wrong and yet orthographically right. I was asked at short notice to meet old Rumbold-Scott, who was member for Littleford for ever so long, and in the Ministry, though I forget in what capacity. There were about ten people present, all calling each other by their Christian names, so I suppose that made it " quiet " in the diplomatic sense, though it was rather noisy than otherwise. But the two people who interested me most were an elderly woman and a young woman, who I gathered lived together, and were respectively aunt and niece, and related to every one else. They were both ardent supporters of National Service—I only hope they are not typical ! The aunt described a plan she was organising. They were to collect about a hundred elderly women—they were to be elderly in order to evoke reverence and loyalty—and they were to " make their way " to the trenches, " clad in white," each carrying a small banner with a dove embroidered on it, and they were to be called " the Peace-bearers." They were to march along between the opposing lines, and at intervals they were to halt and sing some verses out of the Epistles of St. John set to a simple and pathetic plain-song ; as they went, the fighting would cease behind them, and they were to go all the way

down the trenches. But how they were to get there, how they were to be fed, where they were to sleep, and how they were going to walk so many miles, that was all left to fate. This announcement created a sort of stupefaction, and Jack Petty, in the Foreign Office, said in a meditative tone, " I suppose it wouldn't work if the Peace-bearers were merely to be *dressed* in white and not *clad* ? "

The niece—they called her Hilda—rose to the fly. She was a handsome girl with large grey eyes and a beautiful face—the sort of face that you see in an old Italian picture, full of dreams,—and yet an unsympathetic face for all that, because of its self-absorbed air. She said, " Don't be ungenerous, Jack—it's a wonderful scheme, even if it can't be carried out ! " Then she went on, " But I want to ask you, Uncle John, whether nothing can be done to meet *our* claim—the claim of the young—for service ? At a time like this, surely we can all claim our share. You men have all something to do—isn't it selfish to keep us out ? "

Old Scott put on his glasses and looked at her. " Well," he said, very amiably, " what are you good for ? What can you *do* ? That's the point." " Oh, nothing as yet," said

Hilda, " but I can learn—I have hands and feet and a brain." " Yes, no doubt," said Scott, " but who is to teach you ? Don't you see that if several millions of women who want teaching have to be taught, that will mean that a good many men and women, who *are* of use, will have to be detached to teach you ?" " Yes, but only for a time," said Hilda, " and think of the strength and help that would follow ! " Old Scott got a little nettled, and said, tapping his glasses sharply on his plate, " Yes, for a time, as you say, but if in that time Germany contrived to conquer the Allies, where would you be then ? Don't you see that the war is a matter for experts—for people who can fight and people who can keep the fighters supplied with all they want. All those people are wanted."

" But the soldiers have to be trained ? " said Hilda, " why should not the women be trained ? "

" Yes, but what for ? " said Scott. " A certain number of nurses are wanted, but you can't deluge the hospitals with learners now. The Government have got to win the war, and it will take them all their time to do it. You can't expect them to leave the war alone in order to train millions of people who would

like to bear a hand. It's just as if a man's house was on fire—this isn't my illustration, but I saw it in a paper—and he were to tell the firemen to stop a few minutes, in order that each of his children might throw a mug of water on the flames, in order to have had the satisfaction of having helped to extinguish the fire. It isn't what *you* want that matters, but what the Government want. Don't you see that the point is for people to be on the spot if they are wanted, and for them not to be in the way if they are not wanted. Who is to say, after all, what is war work and what isn't? Apart from the combatants, all the non-combatants have got to be fed and clothed; children have to be taught; sick people have to be cured. "The nation wants us all," you say. "But the nation is a collection of individuals, not a personified and omniscient being. Depend upon it," said Scott, looking sharply round, "if this nation is beaten, it will be because of all the idle people who are claiming to be found work; and if Germany is beaten, it will be because she has trusted too much in being organised. The worst thing in the world, Hilda, that you and your friends can do, is to waste the time of the Government by making a fuss and saying you have your right to ser-

vice. The result of that sort of squabbling about service is what happened in that Irish book, where the servants had been disputing about who was to hand things at dinner, with the result that the dish was broken and the salmon pulled in half. If the country had a financial crisis, could all the ladies claim to be instructed in stockbroking? I quite see your point, and it's deuced generous and high-minded—but it's not the way to win the war."

"I care much less about winning the war," said Hilda, "than about evoking the spirit of devotion."

"Yes, but devotion to what?" said Scott.

"To our great, noble, suffering nation," said Hilda.

So it went on. It wasn't a very pleasant party. When the ladies left us, old Scott broke out about sentiment, and wished it further, as Carlyle said, than I need repeat at present. He said that young slackers and impassioned females were the curse of the country, and he didn't know which were the greatest curse. I am afraid I agreed with him. What do you think about it all? My own view is that faith is a blend of imagination and common sense, and that the dangerous people are the fanatics who are ruled by

imagination, and the materialists who can't get further than personal prudence ; but as old Petty said, shaking his silver head, " the truth is we have much to learn."

XVIII

RUSHTON HOUSE.

Do you remember the walk here through the meadows and across the stream and up among the larches—a footpath which comes out in the road near Bretton ? Five years ago, or more, Regie had the larches cut down. I was very angry with him at the time. I told him he was spoiling one of the pleasantest walks. The green of the larches in spring and the little rosy tufts were delicious ; and in summer, when the sun lay hot in the valley, the resinous scent of the place, and the soft carpet underfoot, and the gentle sighing of the breeze in the tree-tops, and the mist of green among the lichened trunks made it an enchanted place. I vowed I would never go there again, but I broke my vow to-day, as one should always break a rash vow—and I was rewarded, because it has become a far

more lovely place. It is just a bit of open forest, and the birch trees have shot up everywhere, with their white limbs and delicately-hung leaves, while the ground is thick with wild strawberries and bramble-thickets.

I am going to moralise a little, because I felt my own utter stupidity in saying what was beautiful and what was not, and not trusting nature to replace it in her own perfectly tender way. I am sorry the larches are gone, but nature has plenty of cards up her sleeve, and she has made an even better job of it. The mistake is in thinking that because a particular kind of thing which one has grown to love is swept away, one has any right or reason to complain.

I have seen the same thing happen in families. Some one dies, a group is scattered; and one goes off in a resentful sort of sorrow, feeling uprooted and forlorn. But another group gathers, and another happy party builds up happiness there.

We ought to fight very hard against our instinct for permanence—it is a dangerous and dismal sentiment, and we christen it loyalty, and are proud of it. We ought to love change, and to rejoice in change; and even if our happiness seems ruthlessly swept

away, we must build another nest and find new joys. If it isn't a pleasure, it must be a duty. "Thou hast put a new song in my mouth, even a thanksgiving unto the Lord"—that's a fine verse! It's better than warbling the old ditties, which bore people profoundly, —and it's better than saying tearfully, "I cannot sing the old songs now." We mustn't be tearful, whatever happens; it only prevents the happy people from singing their own new songs in our presence. I do earnestly pray that I may never be a wet blanket.

Do you remember old Madame Fabre, that statuesque, ruinous old lady, who gloried in having lost everybody and everything, and loved tragic entrances and exits. She did this one day at Earlsdown, and was standing in awful majesty, robed in black with a sort of mantilla, in front of the fireplace, delighted to find that she had produced a hideous stillness in the room; and Lady Jane, whose tongue is as sharp as her eyes, said to me in an undertone, "Look at Madame Fabre; isn't she a perfect kill-joy?"

I don't want to be that; we ought to want to go on feeling, not to make ourselves felt at the expense of others. There really is no subtler temptation of the devil than the pious

pleasure of making other people uncomfortable.

XIX

HILL STREET.

I have been reading a very illuminating little paper, in the *Hibbert Journal*, I think it was, by Eva Madden. She was attached to a German girls' school, of a fashionable type, as a sort of informal teacher of conversation, ten years ago. There was much evidence of the hatred of England, a very crude, unintelligent, not wholly unintelligible hatred, diligently fostered by the authorities. But the talk of the girls was the really interesting thing. There seems a spirit of revolt among them, of revolt against parental control and all old-fashioned ways and beliefs. They want to be *modern*, they say. It presents a curious picture of a revolt within a revolt—Germany rebelling against European control, and these girls rebelling against German control. It did not seem a very effective protest, this modernity. The girls who professed it ended by doing very much what their parents told

them to do, married the husband chosen for them and settled down on conventional lines.

But several of them seemed to have a feeling that it was right to sacrifice themselves to the claims of Genius, in a highly practical way ; that if a man of genius was married, and if he did not find the full stimulus he required in the society of his wife, it was right for a girl to give herself to him, if he desired it, to foster his genius.

One of those girls said : " Power—*Kraft*, as our splendid German calls it—and achievement, these are the great things of life. They should not be personal, but combine towards an end. What good could my poor little *Kraft* do ? But if I gave it to the end of Genius, don't you see I am achieving too ? What a wonderful thing to give yourself to a Genius, if by living with him you can spur him on, just where his wife, even if he loves her, cannot."

That seems to me a very remarkable statement. The first idea, of power and achievement directed to an end, but not a personal end, is undeniably fine. It is a fine bit of idealism ; the wonder is how the girls got hold of it. Was it taught them ? Could it be taught ? Could we teach it to our children ?

It is the sort of thing which we should think almost priggish to *say* ; but then we take all our emotions, including patriotism, for granted.

But then the sequel ! That seems to me like romanticism gone mad. Are geniuses as common as blackberries in Germany ? Or is any young man of strength and ability a genius ? Is it just an instance of their immense power of self-worship ? The acquiescence of the wife seems to be taken for granted, and it seems all to end in the ethics of the poultry yard !

It seems to me to prove that the Germans are entirely *entêtés* just now with romance and nobleness and self-sacrifice. To give yourself without asking for what you give yourself is the end of it all. It appears again in that strange story of a line of young German soldiers, advancing arm-in-arm singing the *Wacht am Rhein* against a strongly held position. They were mowed down ; another and another line came on to certain destruction. But the joyful glory of it moves the heart by its passionate aspiration. Yet when the Dervishes did the same in the Omdurman campaign, one only felt a pity for their fanaticism. After all a man's duty is to live for his country if he can, and he can't harm his

country more than by dying uselessly. Death is a risk and not a goal.

But it all seems to me a rather ghastly business, because it is an insane sort of thing at best, imagination gone mad. Neither is it wholly impersonal—it is a personal desire for a particular sort of glory, I think. But I find it very hard to make up my mind about it, because it contains such undeniably noble elements ; and any passion which makes men utterly disregard and despise death ought to have something great about it.

Still, I end by feeling it an uncivilised thing, both in the case of the girls and the students—by which I do not mean that people ought to be cautious, prudent, and calculating *first* ; but the element of *sense* ought to come in. Life is a precious thing, and a country needs the life of her best sons. If they are to throw life away, it must be with an end in sight, unflinchingly faced and truly weighed. It is a magnificent thing to despise death for your country's sake ; but you don't prove your love of your country by leaping off a cliff into the sea—nor even by giving your girlhood up to a Genius in order to provide a stimulus which his wedded wife cannot provide.

XX

HILL STREET.

One thing all through the war has filled me with pride in my nation; and that is the response to the call of service. Surely we do not want to substitute for that a system of State compulsion? The people, so far as I have come across them, who want compulsion, are the people who would not themselves be called upon to serve under any system of compulsion, but who feel intensely their right to be defended! What the splendid rush to the colours has revealed is the old adventurous quality of the nation, so characteristic of its former history, and which evidently has not been extinguished by prosperity.

And better still, it has all been done so simply and impulsively. I have seen a good deal of it going on. It is natural to praise the self-sacrifice of it, and great sacrifices have been made. But it has not, so far as I have seen it, been done in a solemn or self-conscious spirit at all. I should not have admired it so much, I think, if the thought "How much I am sacrificing!" had been in the minds of these young men. No, so far as I have seen it, the first men who hastened to volunteer

did it out of pure eagerness to take part in a big, fine affair, from a high-spirited sense of adventure ; then a great number of men followed suit out of *camaraderie*, because they wanted to do what their friends were doing. It was gaily and cheerfully done, with a due sense of the seriousness of it all, but yet as an outlet for courage and energy. Some found it tedious at first, the drilling and exercising ; but then came a new comradeship, and the friendships formed between young officers and their platoons brought a new and vivid interest ; and then too came the gain of health from living an entirely wholesome life in strict training. All this produced a great deal of the best sort of happiness ; I was reading a letter the other day from a young officer who was killed in the trenches, written only a few days before the end, in which he said, " Whatever happens, you must not forget that these months since I joined the Army have been out and away the happiest months of my life—I have enjoyed every day of it ! "

I like to think of this side of it. I have known a few cases in which young men of a more reflective and solitary kind have joined the forces from a sense of real duty, and have stuck to it with a will, even though they con-

fessed frankly that it was not a life they would choose under ordinary circumstances. That is fine too—wonderfully fine! But I prefer, even so, to think that the majority of young men have joined out of simple energy. And, in any case, if one speaks of self-sacrifice, it is difficult to disentangle choices. It is after all self which chooses, and the sacrifice is of one part of self to the other part of self—the self that loves the adventure and the game, and even the risk, carrying away with it the self that loves ease and placid enjoyment and the quieter forms of happiness. I have known some cases of men who were emphatically rejected on medical grounds, to whom the rejection has been of the nature of a deep and poignant disappointment, and who have felt bitterly, day after day, that they have lost the opportunity they most desired.

It has been a great comfort to me to think of all this—to find that my nation is sincerely peace-loving, and that it prefers to get on with its neighbours on genial competitive terms if possible; but that at the same time, if its liberty is menaced, if it is faced with a tyrannous and domineering type of aggression, it can rush to war with a spirit eager to repel insolence, and to fight for what it holds dear. That

seems to me the spirit of the champion, the true knightly temper, as different from harsh and cruel junkerdom as day from night. Yes, it has been a constant joy to me to realise how generous and courageous our youth has been, how ready to discipline itself without submissiveness, how eager to put aside the business of peace for a time, how light-hearted and good-humoured! The combination of independence with a real power of subordination, when needed, seems to me the most hopeful spirit in the world.

XXI

HILL STREET.

We had much talk at Amworth about conscription; and it was useful, because the discussion was conducted by people who really cared and felt about the whole subject, had thought about it, and were really ready to listen to arguments. There was no loss of temper, no irony, no suspicion of motives. Lord Finborough, of course, believes that conscription is not only necessary now, but in itself beneficial. He thinks that it would injure no

one to be drilled and disciplined, and do many men a great deal of good. He believes in the justice of it, and he further believes that there are a good many men who would wish to fight if only they were made to do so, but who can't face making up their minds. Carlton, on the contrary thinks that with our Navy and our insular position it is not necessary. He thinks that our defence must ultimately be a naval defence, and that we should do better to increase our Navy, if we are in the least degree insecure. He believes we had better be a supreme naval power than waste our resources in becoming a second-rate military power.

Durant, on the other hand, thinks conscription an unmixed evil. He believes that it would be likely to make us aggressively military. He thinks that if we raise and maintain a big Army, we should create a large class of active and efficient men, whose one hope and delight would be the prospect of war. He says plainly that it would demoralise us just as it has demoralised Germany. He feels too that it would be a waste of our commercial resources, and that wealth is ultimately a more powerful thing than arms.

Again, Jack Gilston, takes an ethical

view. He is afraid of developing a type, efficient and strong it may be, but still a low type. He says that all the people at any age who have done much for the world have been the people ahead of, or in opposition to, the conventional beliefs and tendencies of the time. He thinks that conscription would tend to decrease independence and originality, and stereotype a mode of thought which he mistrusts. He believes that the nation would become capable of following a great and ambitious leader like Napoleon along the path to ruin ; and he says that the growth of German patriotism is a proof of the debasing effect of such an emotion, because of the sterility it produces in all arts and ideas. He is afraid, in fact, of any dominant passion which is capable of being adopted and held by ordinary minds—" I mistrust all democratic enthusiasms," he said frankly.

Then there was Travers, the most practical of politicians, who simply says that there are so many of the industrial classes who do not believe in compulsion that they could not be coerced into it. He thinks that the working class generally perceive that war is not in their interest ultimately at all—that it means that they have to fight, and pay the bill, and

lose time and money. He does not think it a very exalted belief, but it has the strength of common sense.

So you see there were a good many shades of opinion, and I was glad to hear them temperately stated. Of course we came to no conclusion, and I do not think that any one was converted. The conclusion I myself arrived at was that conscription was not a desirable system, even if it became a temporary necessity ; and I do not think it desirable, because it might make for militarism, while it would certainly impair our commercial activities ; and I felt inclined to agree with Jervis, who advocated a light sort of military training, on the lines suggested by Lord Roberts, for schoolboys and young men. This would give discipline and fellow-feeling, and would furnish us with a great reserve of men who could be trained as soldiers very quickly and easily. The real danger seems to me to lie in familiarising people with war as a matter of course, and of interesting them in it ; and my own private belief is that the number of recruits we have got, and the fine Army we have created, is a proof, if proof were needed, of the fact that our long peace has not in the least degree

dimmed our martial ardour, when it is wanted. As Amworth said, in his dry way, "We are quite sound—we have not suffered too much from education. Our reason tells us not to fight, and our instinct tells us when to fight; now the Germans are suffering from their reason telling them to fight, and their instinct not telling them when *not* to fight."

XXII

HILL STREET.

One of the most impressive and inspiring things about a time like this is the way in which so many simple people of one's acquaintance have turned up trumps, so to speak, have exhibited such unsuspected reserves of strength and tenderness and simple goodness. I have seen two friends to-day whose conduct fills me with admiration and respect. Fred Holderness, who is a coach here in town, with a wife and three young children, was one. He is a delicate man, but he tried to join the army for all that. He was rejected on medical grounds. His work has gone entirely to bits. He has no pupils, and he must be living on a slender

capital. He has done all sorts of war jobs, and he said to-day that he had enjoyed the change immensely. It was stale work, he said, for ever preparing men for examinations which did not test any qualities except the capacity for acquiring useless information, and he had been for once feeling of real use. He didn't say a word about his troubles and anxieties, and only added that he had been able to see a lot more than usual of his wife and children. Yet what his prospects are of ever picking up his old livelihood, I can't imagine! He was not putting a brave face on it with an obvious effort. He was simply brave and cheerful, not looking ahead. Then too I saw Ralph Mayne, a mild *dilettante*. He looked full of importance and zest, and I found that he was slaving away in some Agency or other from morning to night. He is a man of nearly fifty, and I should have said had lived a lazy and luxurious sort of life. But now he was finding life immensely interesting, though he couldn't say why. "You see a lot of different kinds of people, you know," he said, "and by George, it does make you sit up!" That was not a very deft analysis, but I saw that he had got hold of a definite bit of life, and was enjoying it thoroughly. "Aw-

fully sad, and all that," he went on, "but it is something to be able to help." Those are just two casual instances of the big thing that is going on, but I feel the stir of it everywhere. It is like the tide coming in, and breaking fresh in the stagnant rock-pools. But best of all, it makes me feel how sound and wholesome human nature is ; and though I feel that peace is our real business, and that we must learn to enjoy work and life without this kind of stimulus, yet the war has done something if it has only revealed to a good many men and women that reality and occupation do bring a joy with them which no amount of indolent self-pleasing can ever bring.

My own problem is rather a different one. I have always worked hard ; and, if anything, I have sometimes felt that I had lost the wholesome capacity for taking a holiday. The war has knocked to bits work in which I was intensely interested ; and at my age it is hard to transfer interests. I must not take any credit to myself for being laborious, for it is a mere instinct, inherited from lines of bourgeois ancestors. I used to see my father made wretched and restless by a holiday, and go back to his work with visible and audible

relief. I used to think in those days how dreadful it was to be so drearily interested in work, yet the same fate has over taken me! But I have got a chance now—I mustn't say more—of getting work connected with the war on my own lines, and I shall be thankful when it begins. It has been humiliating not to be wanted, to have so little to give, especially when all my friends are exhibiting such energy and unselfishness; but I have a job in front of me, I believe; and you shall hear as soon as it is settled. Meanwhile, I am very proud of my unpretentious and gallant countrymen, who after a comfortable sort of life can put their hand to the plough and say that it is splendid fun.

XXIII

HILL STREET.

I have been reading the life of Berlioz; it consists of an autobiography he wrote at intervals, and some letters. It is a terrible record, because it exhibits a man who is the prey, almost, of one supreme faculty. He became a musician in spite of determined opposition on the part of his family, in spite

of ill-health, poverty, money difficulties, and repeated failures. I suppose he must have had his times of joy, the rapture of inspiration, the delight of seeing his work take shape. But very little of that appears ; almost the only touch of sunlight on the pages is when he was spending a few weeks all by himself in comparative idleness in the Riviera. There he wandered about all day, drinking in beauty and abandoning himself to silent dreams. Even so, it is hard to see what his dreams were : perhaps he planned great works, and built up vast unseen palaces of sound, airy intricacies of music—who can say? But his life generally was full of bitterness, disappointment, animosity, and fury. He thirsted for fame, for recognition, for applause. He was disdainful, passionate, suspicious, and yet never seemed to see that his own irritability and acrid temper was what wrecked half his enterprises. He hated any one who opposed him or got in his way, and he attributed it all to personal spite and ill-will ; and his pleasure in applause, testimonials, complimentary banquets, and the praise of princes has something crude and even vulgar about it.

I suppose that there is this great drawback about orchestral and operatic music—that it

is so expensive a matter to perform it, especially when it is written, as Berlioz often wrote, on so immense a scale, that it is very difficult to secure an adequate performance at all, and to see your dreams take full and worthy shape. The expense of painting a picture, making a statue, publishing a book is so small, that a very little success enables you to gratify your desire. But a symphony or an opera means such an assemblage of people, each of whom has to be managed and controlled, that it is an almost strategical affair. The musician has to secure the obedience, the sympathy, the devotion of so many persons that it requires infinite patience, tact, and leadership. It was almost impossible for Berlioz to obtain this, he was so irritable and quarrelsome and peremptory. Then he was always in want of money, and he had few influential friends ; and in order to live, he had often to put his music aside, and to scribble musical criticism of works which he abhorred, while all verbal composition was a difficulty to him. Moreover his health was wretched, and he suffered tortures from neuralgia for months together.

The only touch of charm about him comes out in his letters. He had a real need of loving and of being loved ; and his letters to

his son, his few intimate friends, his relations, have a pathos about them, though even here there is something ungainly and extravagant about his expressions of affection. His marriage was an unhappy business ; it began with a fantastic passion for an actress, about which there was something feverish and unbalanced. Then at last he married her, though he interspersed other love affairs ; and then came companionship, swift disillusionment, and separation.

What is repellent about it all is the lack of anything calm or dignified. It seems to me a life of shapeless impulse, uncontrolled, irregular, and with a quality that can only be called commonness all through. His exultations, feuds, agonies, sufferings are all melodramatic, self-conscious, second-rate. It was a fiery sort of nature, and that ought to be fine. But it is impotent fire, not a steady conflagration, but a series of insolent and petty outbreaks, like an exhibition of fireworks, at once furious and trivial.

The wretchedness of it is that he was a man of genius ; his face has something very beautiful about it, with its finely cut features and its large, sorrowful eyes ; but the mouth is thin-lipped and full of spitefulness, and the final

impression is one of weakness, self-pity, self-adoration.

The sadness of the whole life is the sadness of artistic isolation. Berlioz had no power of combination or of equal friendship ; even his power of loving was the expression of a need and a claim. He hungered and thirsted for a fulness of life which he could not attain ; he gathered in fiercely whatever he could grasp ; but he was a sort of spendthrift, who lavished everything on his own satisfaction. Yet he never attained any sort of security or balance. A life without self-sacrifice, which feebly wards off suffering, enduring because it must, is always haunted with envy and dismay. It is not always so with men of genius. If there is an equipoise of character, as in rich natures like Walter Scott or Dr. Johnson, then genius becomes bearable ; but it seems too often joined to a narrow and inadequate nature, when it multiplies anguish and is an intolerable burden. It seems a melancholy thing that humanity should have to purchase some of its best and most beautiful gifts of art at such a price. A time like this, when the best hopes of humanity seem to depend upon a power of simple and courageous co-operation, throws a figure like that of Berlioz into a dark

shade, because he appears as a man who could not ally himself with humanity, and had to live and die, in spite of his genius, in a bitter and fierce solitude which seems almost the worst fate that can befall a man.

XXIV

PENTLOW GRANGE.

Here—need I say ?—it is all just the same as ever : beautiful, fragrant, quiet. I never saw so small a place which has such stateliness, and Rachel moves about with the same alert, queenly, kindly air. She has been doing it ever since she was forty, and it's a beautiful life in a way. She makes her circle happy, and she is a very benevolent despot ; she knows that it is good for them all to obey her. But somehow this war has changed all the tones and values of things ; not a pleasant change, but wholesome—at least I expect so—it makes me ask uneasy questions where I used to acquiesce and admire. To-day I feel that the sameness of the life here is amiss. Rachel's half-solemn, half-passionate convictions, enunciated in her fine, liquid voice, with those great deep, kindling eyes, don't seem to lead anywhere in particular just now. She

accepts the war, as I knew she would, as a great, sacred, entirely magnificent thing. All the Allies are splendid, self-sacrificing, stainless, chivalrous people—the Italians have now joined the noble army of martyrs, though they were waverers, fickle, self-regarding folk a few weeks ago. The Germans and Austrians are all earthly, sensual, devilish. Their courage and discipline are simply proofs of the strength of evil communications. It is useless to argue, because she *knows*. I said that if she really felt like that, she ought to support a policy of extermination, and put to death all the women and children in Germany. "What have they done, poor creatures?" she said, with heightened colour. "They are misled, of course, but they are loyal—that is their only fault. *That* is not a thing we could call upon our soldiers to do! But of course you do not mean it—it is only one of your paradoxes." I said something about their bringing up their sons to believe in the same principles as their fathers. "Of course, it is miserable," she said in her rich voice. "But when they are conquered, they will see they have been blind—they will repent!" I said no more. It is what is called a womanly view, a power of instantaneous idealisation. Its deficiency, in

my eyes, is simply that it doesn't correspond with the truth. It is really the frame of mind of the Germans themselves, an irrational and romantic glorification of their own point of view, the conviction that your own side has a monopoly of the knightly virtues. It is a strong view—it isn't a true one. Fortunately Rachel doesn't allow us to talk about the war much. "One can't talk about anything one feels so deeply," she said to me. "It can be prayed about, it can't be spoken about." We came away from church yesterday, and she said to me, "I have had the news this morning of the sinking of a German submarine, with all hands. Isn't it magnificent? I thought you would not wish to hear it before the *Communion!*"

I can't admire this frame of mind. I quoted to her what Abraham Lincoln said to a preacher, who rebuked him for not seeming to care whether God was on his side. "What I am concerned about," said Lincoln, "is to believe that I am on the side of God!" "Yes, that is splendid!" she said. "That is why I am so hopeful now, because I know that we are fighting on God's side and He on ours!"

I am working hard; I have a big report to get into shape for Outram. It is very com-

plicated, but I see my way ; and it is good to feel of some use. Rachel lets me do exactly as I like, and has given the strictest orders that I am not to be disturbed. She has organised the women's work here, and they are all employed—that is worth doing, at all events. They are not allowed to gossip, only to *feel*.

XXV

PENTLOW GRANGE.

I have finished my report and sent it off, and I am very tired. I have seldom worked so continuously, and even in dreams I arranged paragraphs and appended notes—I am going back to town to-morrow. To-day is very hot, and I sat out in the Arches half the afternoon, just feasting my eyes on the turf and the flower-beds, and the old stone gateposts at the end of the alley, and the walnut trees beyond —a tapestry of green. There was an anthology of religious verse on the table ; I was too idle to go and find books, and I read a good deal of it. The war has affected my feeling about religion in a strange way. I feel that religion ought at a time like this to make one brave, almost gay. Yet I know that what

lies at the root of most religion is the passionate desire to justify oneself to God, to be set right with Him, to be changed, to lose the sense of weakness and frailty and sin. It is a reaching out from the seen, with all its failures and fears and meannesses and negligences and ignorances, into the unseen, with all its strength and beauty and serenity and purity. I know that. But I do not want to be haunted by a sense of sin now. I want to be light-hearted, courageous, to go hand-in-hand with God, not to fall at His footstool. I have a feeling that He needs our cheerfulness, our hopefulness, our power of facing calmly the worst risks.

"Broken hearts and downcast eyes
Dare not lift themselves to Thee:
Yet Thou canst interpret sighs;
God be merciful to me!"

That does not seem to me the right mood in the presence of a common danger. Even that hauntingly beautiful thing of Christina Rossetti's:

"I take my heart in my hand,
O my God, O my God,
My broken heart in my hand;
Thou hast seen, judge Thou.

"My hope was written on sand,
O my God, O my God:
Now let Thy judgment stand,
Yea, judge me now."

Tell me, do *you* feel that? I think not; and yet you have more right to feel it than I.

But I do not think God wants our weariness, our sense of vileness, our sin-laden weakness *now*. Does He ever want them? I am not sure. I do not think that wicked people ever feel their vileness; only the weak, who are not vile. No one is vile who depends trustfully and even despairingly on Strength and Purity and perfect Love. I know wickedness when I see it, and I have seen it. I have seen people whose very souls seem to emanate corruption, who are utterly isolated, and go about seeking just their pleasure, without pity or gratitude or fellowship. I do not think the great sinners, like Augustine, were ever like that. No one who wants to be cleansed is wicked. It is the people to whom good and evil mean nothing, present no contrast, who are wicked.

But in any case I do not think God wants that sort of dependence now, any more than a General wants confessions from his troops. He wants to find us alert, even gay. What really did help me was Emily Brontë.

"O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity,
Life—that in me has rest,
As I, undying Life, have power in Thee. . . .

"There is not room for Death
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed."

That came to me like a great trumpet-blast of faith—faith in life and living. Yet she wrote it when she was dying of consumption, a few weeks after seeing the body of her brother, a wreck of indulgence in sensuality, drink, and opium, laid in a dishonoured grave, with a sense of infinite relief that at all events his open shame was over.

The faith which I want is that death does not matter, that it is only the falling back of the shattered spray into the fountain, and that life will rise again to live, in spite of evil. I think that is what you are feeling too, or I should not dare to write thus. Forgive me if I say anything that hurts you. You must suffer, but I do not want you to suffer. I want your courage to be a joyful freedom, not a burdensome strain; and you know well that if I could help you by suffering instead of you, I would pay that price willingly for your joy—

but there is no such thing as vicarious suffering; it is the one thing that cannot be shared!

XXVI

HILL STREET.

I am glad to have seen you again, and to have *seen* what I *knew*, that you are not crippled by sorrow. You are alive behind it all —I could see that. I have seen many friends in the first excitement of suffering—they are hardly to be pitied then. Abraham was not to be pitied when he took the knife to slay his son. The sense of sacrifice gave him supreme courage, I doubt not. When he was to be pitied was before, when he was helping the boy uphill, listening to his eager questions— "Where were they going? What were they about to do? What was the knife for?" That must have rent his heart. But with the stones set and the boy kneeling, and God above, when he knew what he would dare to do, that must have been a moment of exultation.

When the worst has happened, and the words of praise and love come flowing in, and the heart whispers, "I withheld nothing, not

even my son, my only son," it is, it must be, a moment of passionate joy. Then even to miss the beloved one has a sense of joy about it, the joy of giving. It is when people come back to the maimed and silent life, and the awful dreariness of reaction sets in—that is when the wheels of life run low. Let me say, dear, that I felt a joyful abasement in the presence of your calmness, your self-forgetfulness. Ah! that was worthy of yourself.

I shall not forget how we walked in the garden late, when the moon was up, and the mist rose from the low meadows by the stream, and the garden-scents stole abroad into the dusk—the heat had shut them drowsily into their cool bells all day. I knew from something that you said that you felt the beauty of it gratefully and not resentfully. And even though I saw you wince a little, as we came back into the peacefully-lighted room, at the thought of those who might have been waiting for you, and could never come again, I saw that you did not repine—did not feel it pathetic—did not make a picture out of it all. We must never do that—it is the last luxury of weakness!

I have endless things to do—dull things, things I hate doing, things that must be done

now, because we have to sweep up the mess that this intolerable German nation has made.

What stirs my fury is to think of them pounding on, fiendishly busy, pompous, dignified, self-glorified, making a high-souled romance out of a hideous piece of realism. I can't contain myself for rage when I think of all the time and sense and fine emotion that is streaming to waste, when we want all our strength and courage to fight the vile and dangerous weeds of peace . . . but I will not rave. We must not be so tortured at the sight of detestable things that we become detestable ourselves in a different way. Horror must not make us horrible. I do admire our British placability—and our indignation must make us stern and strong, not leave us fuming and saying it ought not to be allowed, like the Comte de Faverges. We must not be in a fuss! That is the sickening part of these neurotic newspapers, that as soon as one spectre is laid, they raise another. They are determined to be frightened, like a neurasthenic man, waking early in the morning, and anticipating with anguish the perils of the day. That's not the way to fight!

Thank you, dear, for all your goodness and sweetness. It is that which helps me most.

My pen has spluttered somewhat, but you would rather hear what is in my mind ; I do not want to shirk experience. I don't want oblivious antidotes. I want to bear whatever has to be borne, and I hope to emerge a better man for the war, not weaker and more despondent. And anyhow, it is a joy to know you better and to love you more.

XXVII

RUSHTON GRANGE.

Do you remember the walk we took here together, down to Freshfield past the church, and on into the little valley—if it can be called a valley—for it is really a softly dimpled plain, with the wold of Hartley Forest lying out along the southern horizon ? I went there alone to-day and thought much of you. I came to the place where the road crosses the railway by a bridge, which gives one so wide a view. Rachel told me once, I remember, that the walls and foundations of a great Roman villa were unearthed there years ago, and the place has ever since had a half-haunted air to me.

I stood there just at sunset, the western sky all washed with pale gold, and a few cloud-

streamers pointing westward, like the folds of a garment. There were four or five flocks of birds flying high in the air, shifting lines of dark specks. The stream wound away into the wold among green flood-banks and silvery-green willows, till it was lost in the woods, with here and there a reach gleaming golden among the dark fields. The long line of the hill, with a few dark patches of woodland, closed the horizon. One or two hamlets in sight, among their elms, and patch after patch of fallow and stubble and ploughland, as far as the eye could see. I seemed absolutely alone—there was not a human being in sight anywhere.

I had a few moments of deep emotion ; the earth, so patiently tilled and laid out for the use of man, peace so slowly won, so painfully matured, seemed to me to have something more lasting and permanent about it than any onset and anguish of war. The war itself became dim and remote, an angry ripple on a calm sea of life. Such a moment comes nearest to my idea of worship, and I felt much as I believe a devout Roman Catholic might feel kneeling before the shrine that holds the Sacrament—for it all became a symbol to me of beauty and life, moving to a great and

splendid goal. Such an emotion does not unfit one for life; it is not a mild and regretful sentiment at all; it rather quickens and awakens a sense of the vast and glorious significance of life. It tranquillises and refreshes the spirit, and sends it on its way, longing for richer, fuller, truer experience. It gives one an immense feeling of continuity and fellowship, and puts one in touch with all time and life, endless horizons, infinite depths of hope. The danger of the war is that it ties one down to this particular time with all its troubles and sorrows—it tethers the spirit to one cruel experience. But I felt to-day that there were links with the past and the future alike, that I was not a mere hunted atom, like spray blown aloft, but that my life was a shining thread, reaching far back into the old world, and passing on into the new—and not only my own life, but the lives of all.

I can't put all the happiness of it into words, but it *was* happiness, in spite of all the sad things that are going on. I wish I could communicate to you my feeling, because it was a real and vital assurance of immortality, which did not destroy the poignant reality of the present at all, or make me repine at all the strain and stress of it; no, it made me

resolve to do whatever I could find to do with all my strength, with a sure hope of better things to come, and better, too, in proportion as I can play an active part now. I am not afraid of emotions like these, because they have nothing weakening or indulgent about them. They knit one closer with the world, they do not detach one from it.

XXVIII

HILL STREET.

I wish I felt more certain of the right principle about war economies. It seems to me as if the sort of economies which are being recommended everywhere depend for their success, not upon every one practising them, but upon a great many people not practising them. That is the worst of all political economy, that it treats the worker like a cipher which can be taken away from one quantity and added to another. That is all very well in algebra. But the Vicar down at Merrifield said to me the other day, " Of course I could get on without my gardener, but he is an elderly man, and if I dismiss him, it simply means that he will be out of work, and

will have to be supported by the Guardians. The fact that I dismiss him does not make him available for munition-work; and it only means that if I cease to pay him, he will have to be kept by the public. He cannot support himself, with a delicate wife and an invalid daughter; while there is no one else to take him on." There must be many such cases. Then take the temperance movement, very patriotically initiated; but if every one abjured all kinds of alcohol, it would simply disorganise a whole trade, affecting thousands of people. My wine-merchant might be ruined as a wine-merchant, but it would not make him into a soldier.

My own case is comparatively simple. I am so much poorer that I must economise. I have had to give up my very humble hospitalities, and all travelling except to a few houses within reach. The only thing I have ever been extravagant about is buying books. I cannot afford to buy books now; but I do not like economising there, for the simple reason that authors are having a very bad time of it indeed. Greenfield, the novelist, told me a wretched tale the other day about his position. He just manages, as a rule, to live in quiet comfort, with very great care. Now he

is living on his savings, and he says pathetically that no one wants his wares.

Of course there must be hardship. The nation cannot spend five millions a day without that. But in so complex a society there are thousands of people who have earned a perfectly honest livelihood by supplying luxuries which now no one wants. They cannot starve, and yet they cannot, in numberless instances, do war work.

I do not say this sophistically, in order to justify people in going on as usual. But I do not think that a man who instantly practises a rigid economy, dismisses half his servants and washes his hands of them, is really acting in a public-spirited way. I prefer dear old Lady Jane's patriarchal experiment. She sent for her butler and housekeeper, told them she must retrench, and gave them the figures. She made it clear what she could afford for wages, and what for household expenses, and asked them to talk it over together. They entered into the spirit of the thing, and put a perfectly sensible scheme before her. She says they have become like one family, and are as pleased as possible if they can suggest economies. I am sure that is the right way to do it, for people to combine in groups to

live on simple lines, and to take households into full confidence. Then, instead of getting anger and misunderstanding and vexation, you get a number of people with a sense of fellowship, and almost enjoying the sacrifices it entails. That seems to me the way to draw classes together, while the system of peremptory economy and dismissal only emphasises the separation of interests.

I had a talk with the dear old couple who look after me, and they actually suggested foregoing all wages till the war was over. There is a fine bit of practical Christianity for you! I confess it brought a lump into my throat and the water into my eyes.

XXIX

HILL STREET.

Of one thing I am heartily glad, and that is that the industrial section of the population seems to have really learned, so far as one can judge, that war is a bad thing for them. I do not believe that this has ever happened in the history of the world before. I believe that workers, hitherto, have on the whole liked the excitement of a war, and have vaguely thought it good for trade. Now I believe that they have realised that it is they who have to

fight, and they who have to pay the bill. They show no signs of wishing to stop the war at all costs. They too realise that this war is the outcome of a great aggressive plot against the nations on the part of one very strong, unscrupulous, and efficient nation. They mean to see it through, and teach a tyrant a lesson; but after that I believe that they will take things more into their own hands, and elect as their representatives men who disbelieve in war, or who rather believe that it is a tendency which obstructs all progress and civilisation. What will be the outcome I cannot say. Probably a bad time for capital, and a rearrangement of profits. I do not think it is going to be a comfortable time for men who, like myself, depend partly on professional work and partly on capital. I am fully aware that the joint-stock company is a device for evading personal responsibility, and I think that it is a very weak point in our civilisation. I don't know how it is to be met, nor am I political economist enough to know what inherited capital really means—to what extent it is just, I mean, that my father's savings should give me a certain command over labour. I think it is very probably quite unjust, and I feel that the world may come to assess every

individual at his own value, and not allow him to profit by inheritance at all. But the instinct that a man ought to be able to provide for his children is a deep one, and will take some eradicating.

But anyhow, however uncomfortable it may be for me, I am whole-heartedly glad to see that the industrial class seems to have parted with the delusion that war is to their advantage. That seems to me to be the only real hope of bringing war to an end. How it will be brought to an end, I can't even dimly divine. International policing seems full of difficulties. But if the majority of the human race is once really convinced that war is a bad thing, wasteful, destructive, crammed with miseries, it must cease to exist. As long as men think it may be advantageous, they will not control their tempers ; but if they are quite certain that it is disadvantageous, they will find it worth while to control their passions.

It is the glorification of unreasonable anger by this detestable nation that has done the mischief. They still believe that hatred, envy, jealousy, force, have something romantic and knightly about them. It is a recrudescence of old barbarism and tribal pride. The contempt of the Germans for all other nations is a really

insane thing, and psychologically speaking, I really believe that they are suffering from contagious neurotism.

But we have escaped that, in spite of our newspapers. And few things in the war have given me such real and heartfelt joy as the plain statement by the Trades Unions that the worker does not believe in war, but realises that it is wholly against his interest, while at the same time he sees, as clearly, that this war must be fought to a finish in order to pulverise, once and for all, a noisome and devilish romanticism.

XXX

RUSHTON GRANGE.

It poured with rain to-day, and no one would venture out; but I can't forego my scanty opportunities of a walk in the country, under any conditions; and moreover, if you frankly abàndon yourself to getting wet, there is a sense of freshness about walking in a downpour which is extremely exhilarating. It had not rained here for weeks; and in the great highroad on which I walked, which is tarred for motor traffic, there were numbers of toads everywhere, which had crawled out of the

hedgerows and had abandoned themselves to the delicious weather. One monstrous old fellow sat there, rolling his eyes, like a statue of Buddha, worshipping the absolute. I never saw such a picture of absorbed rapture. But I made him walk off, which he did with obvious ill-temper. He did not seem in the least alarmed, though I suppose I must have looked as big to him as the Victoria Tower; but I did not see why his valuable life should be sacrificed to a passing car.

The result of my walk was that I worked off that mixture of irritability and anxiety into which one so easily falls in these days of strain. I think that we ought all to practise a mild asceticism just now, and try to be very temperate and orderly. It is a greater strain than we know, the perpetual wonder as to what is happening, the reading of the papers, the endless calls on sympathy, the dread which cannot be avoided. Old Sir John Finch, the diplomat, told me yesterday that he made it a rule not to read the papers for more than a quarter of an hour, and then only the official communiqués and reports. He is a wise old man; he is working hard at a book, a bit of political history in which he was personally concerned. He said it steadied his mind and

kept him sane. The result on him is a quiet equanimity which pervades the whole circle.

How different from poor old Humphreys, who is here too! He says that he thinks people take it all too lightly, and he expounds the situation whenever he gets the chance, in the darkest hues. He calls it facing the facts; but it really consists in magnifying all the disagreeable facts and minimising everything that is hopeful. The worst of it is that it gives him quite unmistakeable pleasure. "Now what do you say to this?" he says, gloating over the paper, and rolling out a bad bit of news. "So this is what you call a Government? I call it a set of bewildered maiden aunts, gossiping with the parlour blinds down!" He is a truly dreadful old man. But Rachel says that it does her good to know the worst, and to feel how precarious our civilisation is. She says she is reconstructing her life, and that it is better so.

The real difficulty is to be natural. The war has produced a great deal of pose, I think, in people. There is an anxiety to do, to say, to feel the right thing. When people say that at least it has made us unconventional, and brought us face to face with the real values of things, it seems to me very wide of the

mark. It appears to me rather to have created a new conventionality. The thing is so big and so dreadful that it has passed quite out of the reach and comprehension of ordinary people, and they have taken refuge in a set of phrases which represent not what they feel but what they think they ought to feel. Don't you know the way people have of saying of some one, in a bereavement, " He is simply wonderful ! " It generally means that a man is half stupefied by a blow, and that he has managed to pull himself together enough to achieve a dramatic propriety. It is a triumph, as a rule, of courtesy rather than a triumph of faith and hope. It is a disguise, in fact. The real thing that generally happens to people under a shock of grief or loss is that they have times of acute suffering, interspersed by vital reactions. The life within them sticks toughly to its task, which is to live on and to look for happiness in spite of anything terrible and wounding that may happen. But people are ashamed both of showing suffering, and ashamed too of showing relief from suffering ; and so they become " wonderful." We ought, I think, to be able to speak plainly of our sorrows to those whom we love and trust ; and equally not to be afraid of

being thought heartless when our own life reasserts itself, as healthy life does and must.

I do not honestly feel that the war has made most of my acquaintances natural, or stripped them of their disguises. It has made many of them assume a conventional disguise. Speaking for myself, there are hours when I feel the misery of the war acutely, and there are hours when it passes off my mind, like a cloud withdrawn.

It is really more important for ourselves and for the race that we should live sturdily on, be interested in life, in present and future problems, than that we should cultivate a sensitive kind of sentiment about it all. The future will grow out of our zest for life, not out of our sorrow and discouragement. We can't forget the war, but we mustn't try to remember it. We must not be ashamed of our vital moments, and say, " I ought not to feel hopeful or interested." I do not want to be crushed by the war, and though I should feel compassion for any one who was crushed by it, I feel far more admiration for the people who are not crushed by it. I prefer Sir John's quiet stories of old diplomatic days, told with genuine interest and humour, to Humphreys' Jeremiads and recriminations. It means that

Humphreys is afraid of life and that Sir John isn't. And a grain of courage is worth more than a pound of sentiment in these days.

XXXI

HILL STREET.

I am really sometimes overcome and overwhelmed, not with *pride*—that's far too personal and stiff a word—but with wonder, admiration, thankfulness, at the magnificence of the response of England to the call for service. Nothing dimly comparable to it has ever happened in the course of our history. We had jogged along so comfortably, we were rich, contented, independent, squabbling a little, no doubt, minding our business, not talking about our ideals or our greatness or our aims, and indeed not thinking very much about them, and so full of interest about our bargains and our business and our games that Germany thought us entirely lost in ease and enjoyment. And then we quietly create an enormous national army, and subscribe prodigious sums to anything and everything, and rush into a hundred activities—and all as if it were perfectly natural and obvious, taking no credit for it, without any self-consciousness or sacred raptures or self-advertisement.

And yet, to read the papers, one would imagine that everything was going wrong; that we had done nothing except blunder, that no one knew or cared what was happening, that there was no effort or emotion or self-sacrifice about.

Yet very little indignation or resentment seems to be felt or expressed at the way we misrepresent ourselves. No paper is suppressed on that account. Men write letters to the papers in which they utter howls of agony and terror, or indulge in sweeping and contemptuous recriminations, and no one seems to mind. I am not sure that this indifference to the shriekers and the scolders alike isn't another sign of magnanimity. The nation has simply been transformed, and yet there is not any self-satisfaction expressed, nor apparently any consciousness of how marvellous a change has come upon us. It is just a big job cheerfully taken on, and done as if it was a matter of course. The whole thing seems to me so generous and simple, and so free from any touch of priggishness. We have not even announced a programme; I doubt if we have any programme, except a quiet determination to save the sort of liberties we value. Compare it with the dreadful sermonising of Ger-

many, her readiness to explain every detail of her ideals, her sickening self-adulation ! I feel that I almost spoil the modesty of our own patriotism by trying to put it into words. Yet I may do it in writing to you, because I have not been able to contribute to it. It's odd that our pictorial presentment of our country should be so commonplace. John Bull, the old-fashioned farmer, in top-boots, redolent of health ; and Britannia a brawny virago with a fireman's helmet and a night-gown—could anything be more commonplace and melodramatic ? Neither figure seems to me in the smallest degree typical or symbolical. The couchant lion, lazy and good-humoured, is more near the mark ; but the thing that cannot be symbolised is the unpretentiousness of it all, the power of rising to an occasion, not as a matter of pride or excitement, but as a plain duty of which the less said the better.

I must not go on or I shall grow sentimental. But I will say this—that I bless with all my heart the fate which has made me an Englishman just at this very time, and has given me the profound happiness of seeing my beloved and honoured nation put out so quietly and so modestly her enormous strength like a giant awakening from sleep, without

either fear or braggadocio, not conscious of the inferiority of others, but just with the simple delight of health and strength.

And yet at this very time we choose to misrepresent ourselves as a sleepy, stupid, maligning monster, blunderingly warding off blows, the prey of countless fears. It is really pitiful!

XXXII

RUSHTON GRANGE.

I walked to-day alone in the woods; by quiet rides, where through the screening hazels you can see into the green darkness of the copse, along little winding valleys, where the full stream runs quietly among rich water-meadows, then out over high pastures, with far-off views of wooded ridges and rolling plains—the air of a liquid golden mellowness, and the colours not thin and spare, but concentrated and rich. I do not think that any sight could be devised which so wholly satisfies all my instincts of beauty—the homely usefulness of it all, which no mountains or moorlands ever give, the sense that it is all intertwined with human life and love, and that nature, though subdued and even tamed, has yet full scope for being beautiful.

There comes a deep sense of peace upon the spirit in such scenes, and an almost poignant gratitude for the joy of life. The war seems far off, like the beating of a fierce sea, which for all its rage and bitterness has yet a limit set to it beyond which it cannot pass.

This countryside has felt the hand of war laid upon it in old days. It has been harried and laid waste ; and yet how powerless it all has been to arrest even for a year the old life of the country, and birth and death of flower and tree, the lives of woodland creatures, the tilling of the earth. Day after day the dewy morning comes brightening up over these valleys and fields, the sun grows higher and hotter, or the rain-cloud passes over, and then the twilight falls, and the sunset slips across the western plains, and the stars come out over the dark woods.

The strange thing is to feel that one belongs to both the two lives—the life of wrangling and violence on the one hand and the life of calm and quiet progress on the other. I do not want to be quit of either. I want men to learn how to live in groups and societies, the emotions to define themselves, art and literature to expand, the soul of humanity to quicken. All my friendships and ties and

relations with others are the strongest and deepest part of my life ; but yet they are not the whole of it. There is something else in the world—there is nature first, to which I partly belong, moulded as I am out of the soil and the dew ; and then, beyond and behind all human relationships, there is something else, larger, fuller, more mysterious, which I name God ; something which holds in its hand, I think, a final sort of happiness, deeper than anything which nature or man can give. I cannot in the least degree express it or define it, but part of the happiness which this kind of solitude gives me comes from being assured of it, through a directness of contact. Nature alone cannot give it, because she is for ever bringing things to an end. There is a sombre menace of death in all that she does. Among men, too, one is constantly confronted by some one who seems quite outside, can share nothing, recognise no signals, admit of no fellowship. But the sense of God of which I speak is as of something large, patient, benign, fatherly, which cannot always make one understand, or restore one's peace, or lessen one's fears. But it is a smiling presence, and gives a certainty of *final* security. " Just live on," it seems to say, " have courage

and patience ; the answer to all your doubts and fears is here."

I come back to life, after such an assurance, not excited or bewildered, but steadied and comforted ; and I can feel trouble and even death to be a little thing in the presence of all the experience that awaits me, and the secrets full of joy that I shall some time know.

XXXIII

WIMBLEDON.

I must tell you of a very curious talk I had yesterday at Brendon with a young officer, a nephew, I think, of the old man, or perhaps even a great-nephew ? By the way, let me say that otherwise my Sunday there was a dull one, dull and sad. We talked about the war all the time, in a heavy, minute way ; and it seemed like a gathering of human beings with all motives for *meeting* subtracted. It wasn't any one's *fault*, exactly ; but if somebody started another subject, it was allowed to drop in a preoccupied silence, and then the heavy tide flowed in again.

This particular young man had been out to the front, wounded—not very seriously—had recovered, and was going out again. He was

a type, I thought, of the very best public-school and University product—and what an excellent product it is! He was not precisely handsome, but he was pleasant to look at, curly-haired, smiling, graceful in movement and talk. Then he was entirely friendly, modest, and good-humoured, never put himself forward, but yet had no inconvenient shyness or self-consciousness.

I went out a walk with him, and found that he had many interests apart from soldiering. He had read a good many books, he had preferences, he had even reasons. I don't know how we got on the subject, but we found ourselves talking like two old friends about death and what lay beyond. "I never could make much," he said very simply, "of the kind of religion we were taught at school. It didn't seem to me very real—I don't think it corresponded with life, if you know what I mean." Presently he said, "Well, I don't very much believe in 'meeting again,' and 'the further shore.' I don't think that we live on as persons. People live on, in a way perhaps, in their children; but if they die without children, it's like a blind alley, I fancy—it comes to an end." I argued a little—you know what I believe—and he said, "Oh, of

course, our life and memory will have had their effect on other people, and I think that continues in a way, even when we are ourselves forgotten."

I objected to this. I said that I did not at all acquiesce in the idea that my memory would be like the smell of incense on the air, when the incense was burnt—and I added that I did not wish to think of myself as living on only like the scent on some one else's pocket-handkerchief. He laughed at this, but stuck to his point, saying that if men and women continued to exist like shadowy presences, they would have found some means before now of communicating with those whom they loved—and that he couldn't think of the other world as a place in which the population, so to speak, was endlessly increasing. "No," I said, "but I think it very likely that I shall come back and begin again, many times over." He looked at me in surprise, and said, "That seems to me quite intolerable." We ended by agreeing that it was after all a conflict of personal intuition, and couldn't be argued. I said, "It is a comfort to me—a real comfort—to know that something quite obvious and definite does happen, when the road dips down over the hill; and I am glad to think that it isn't

affected in the least degree by what you or I or any one thinks about it. Whatever it is, it has always been happening, and will continue to happen." "Yes," he said, "that's a comfort." I suppose I must have expressed some surprise that he should feel as he did, and I went on to say that as I got older, it seemed to me more and more inconceivable that I should cease to exist. "Well," he said, "I don't know. I have enjoyed my life very much, almost all of it, and I enjoy it very much still. I haven't the least wish to die; but I think it rather a pointless affair—nothing *comes* of it. You have a good time, you like it, you get experience—you can't give anything away, however much you wish to—I mean you can't give away your enjoyment or your experience." "But you can help other people to enjoy it too?" I said. "Yes, but I don't think there's much point in that," he said; "I can't believe we are just here to amuse each other." I said, "Then I don't suppose you have ever been in love?" He smiled and said, "No—I haven't. Would that make a difference?" "Yes," I said, "I think it would make a difference." A little later I said that I was surprised to find he had thought so much about these things. "Oh, not very

much," he said, laughing; "I haven't had the time; but I am rather a practical person, I believe; and the sort of life that I have lived, and that all the people I know have lived, has always seemed to me rather an amateur affair—to lead nowhere in particular." "But that doesn't apply to the war?" I said. "Not in one sense," he said; "we had to fight or take a licking—and I'm not disposed to do that. But even so, I don't see the end of it. It seems a great muddle. I don't see what any nation is going to gain by it, and I see a great many things that they are going to lose." I talked vaguely about liberty. "Yes," he said, "the German idea is a bad one—I have no doubt about that. But I am not at all sure what use we make of our liberty, when we have got it. That sounds very cynical, I suppose—but I am not at all cynical or despondent. I like being what I am and where I am; but still I think that we are all in the dark, and that no one knows where we are going. The kind of teaching I have had about God would make me think that He did not know His own mind, so to speak; that He gave progress with one hand, and took it away with the other!" I don't remember now how it all ended, but he said that he was quite content to wait, and

that he didn't suppose he knew all there was to know—but that he had not got any very clear idea at present as to what it was all about.

It seemed to me a very remarkable frame of mind—extraordinarily courageous and sincere, as well as *clear*. It just shows how little it is possible to infer what is inside any one's mind, unless he tells you. I should have thought this young man just a delightful, cheerful, and contented boy, with probably conventional ideas about honour and duty. He is certainly happy, honourable, and dutiful ; but the fine thing about it all is that he has really tried to see what he does think, and is not content with ordinary explanations. He said he would like to write to me, if he might ; and we agreed to meet, if all went well, at some future date, and compare experiences again. He pleased me by saying that he wished every one was as easy to talk to ; and I went away with one comfort from my dull visit, that I really had made another friend.

XXXIV

HILL STREET.

I do not want to be pietistic, but I cannot resist the impression, in reviewing the war, of an extraordinary sense of guidance. I don't

want to resist the impression; but I always have a strong impulse to put anything severely to the test, if it seems at first sight almost too good to be true. The amazing blunders of Germany, the misinterpretation of all the signs of the times, and of all the national feelings involved, their fatal choice of the wrong moment, their impenetrable self-confidence, the marvellous and sudden union of the Allies, the instantaneous suspension of the German onset for causes still wholly mysterious, at the crucial moment, the gradual failure and disintegration of all the German efforts by land and sea—these things, selecting only a few of the most remarkable, do give me, almost in spite of my reason, a deep sense of some arraying of powers and marshalling of moral forces against the aggressor, in a way which seems almost independent of and external to the human faculties employed. The outburst was so unexpected, the resistance so little organised. No one seemed to know what was happening or what could be done—and yet Germany has thrust her sharpened sword, with all the animosity and hatred of which she was capable, at the heart of Europe, and found—what? A sort of intangible network of forces and agencies hardly conscious of themselves, which

have held up and repelled the thrust, and are now slowly closing upon the aggressor.

I do see in the violence, the insolence, the furious tyranny of Germany a real concentration of the forces of evil; and it would be simply faithless and childish not to see arrayed against it a marvellous concentration of the powers of good. If one believes in one, it is surely permissible to believe in the other?

But what has struck me more and more as the war has gone on is how conscious and resolute an attempt it was on the part of Germany, and of the evil forces for which Germany stands, to inflict a fatal blow on liberty and civilisation; and all that foresight and efficiency could do was behind that blow.

But the powers that are repelling it seem to me to be something quite apart from the will and energy of any one nation. The nations were taken by surprise; they had no concerted plan of resistance; their defence had all to be improvised. Even now they hardly seem to have a cohesive centre; yet they are all being used, as if by some master-mind, to break the force of the blow. There is no single statesman in Europe, no General or Sovereign, who has had the direction of all this resistance; yet it seems to have grown up of itself, to be in

the air, to be the definite design of some one mind, as I say, taking shape. I don't know if I make it clear ; but in spite of the fact that I can't lay my finger on a single personality, like Napoleon, let me say, or Bismarck, who seems to be in the background of the Allied forces, yet I feel the presence of a personality which intervenes, unites, guides, almost directs. Germany seems dashing herself in pieces against that personality, whatever it is ; and I am unable to give any sort of explanation of it all except the one obvious one, that it is God Himself It is not a mere yielding to a sort of primitive idea of a national Deity, for there is nothing distinctively national about our resistance. It is a *cause*, I think, of which we are hardly individually conscious, a real campaign of Divine forces against evil forces, which seem to have overreached themselves, as evil is prone to do. Does that seem to you fanatical ? I hope not, because I believe it, as I said, almost in spite of my reason, and because the facts do not point to any other explanation.

XXXV

HILL STREET.

What a good story it is of the English soldiers in a trench having a sing-song, and

roaring out Lissauer's Hymn of Hate at the full pitch of their lungs, to the amazement of their French comrades and to the fury of the Germans! The Germans no doubt thought it lacking in seriousness, possibly even irreverent!

I am glad to think that the English are simply incapable of the kind of hatred which the Germans seem to have cultivated so successfully, until it is "an emotion which they can experience at the word of command," as a trenchant writer said. English hatred is a personal thing visited on an individual who has earned it; and indeed it ought not to be called hatred, because hatred is anger inspired by a mixture of jealousy and fear. I don't think that jealousy and fear are vices of which we can be accused!

There was a curious confirmation of this in the account given by an escaped German prisoner of his experiences. He visited several music-halls, disguised as a clergyman, of all things in the world! But he recorded that to his astonishment he saw no evidence of any hatred for Germany, felt or expressed—indeed, very little proof that the English public were thinking about Germany at all, or were even conscious of her victorious progress.

What a strange story that is of Nelson, telling his midshipmen to hate a Frenchman as they hated the devil ; and either then, or on some similar occasion, he added, " Forgive me, but my mother hated the French." I do not feel that it was a very convincing reason ! But it shows, too, what folly it is to talk of permanent national hatreds, if it was possible for Nelson to speak of the French as he did a hundred years ago, considering what we feel about them now—their gallantry, courtesy, brotherliness, true chivalry.

To hate a nation, men, women, children, all alike, would be as impossible a task for me as to undertake to hate every one who bore the name of Brown. I want a better reason than that. I loathe and detest the German spirit, the German methods, the German solemnity and self-approbation ; but I am sure too that there are thousands of peaceable, honest, laborious people in Germany, who are in sore bewilderment, have no aggressive aims, and only want to be allowed to do their work and live a comfortable family life. The idea of hating these people simply for being Germans is wholly meaningless. And I think that the best way to treat *their* hatred is to make open fun of it, like our soldiers, because that shows

that it isn't a great, dignified, splendid emotion, but a petty, envious, timid, suspicious feeling, very closely akin to certain kinds of insanity.

If one could trace the wicked and abominable methods of the German militarists to their source, and discover who originated and authorised them, then I could and would inflict the most summary and exemplary punishment upon them. I could not forgive them, I fear, or even contemplate forgiving them. But it would be indignation and scorn that I should feel, not hatred, I hope, because I am sure that there is something essentially mean about hatred ; it can't be made into a noble passion.

XXXVI

HILL STREET.

What extraordinarily silly people there are in the world ! I have been talking to a good-natured and soft-hearted old donkey at my club this morning, who is wallowing in the sentiment of the war. He looks with tears at the pictures of soldiers nursing kittens or playing with French children, or graves with wreaths of flowers. He is furious about the destruction of old buildings, he thinks it

wonderful that a shell should knock down a church and leave a crucifix standing, he revels in the picture of a pocket Testament that has stopped a bullet. The whole thing is picturesque to him, God forgive him! I don't say that these things have not a pathetic touch—but to turn aside from the great, stern, gruesome business of war, all that it means and stands for, all the rueful waste and misery of it, and to be able to see nothing but the little touches and effects of it, sickens and horrifies me.

You can't explain to such a man what a childish business he is trying to make out of it. I said, in answer to his diatribe about Rheims Cathedral, the destruction of which he seemed to think was the supreme event of the war, that I really could not now bring myself to care much about architecture—and he thought me heartless and insensible. I would rather see fifty old buildings battered down than a single young life thrown fruitlessly away. Buildings—they must take their chance! Of course the wanton destruction of them, in order to strike awe into the world, is only another proof of the incredible brutality of the Germans and their hideous stupidity; but the torpedoing of the *Lusitania*, the

dropping of bombs on harmless streets, the shameless and abominable outrages in Belgium, are things which by their utter fiendishness put all else into the shade. How sentiment about kittens and old buildings can play a part in the mind of a sane human being just now, I simply cannot comprehend. To dally with sentiment in these days seems to me like throwing eau-de-Cologne on a stream of lava. And yet I cannot hide from myself that it does play a great part in people's minds, and even brings real comfort to simple natures! I do not want to speak roughly or harshly of such things. The story of the Angel Guard at Mons has, I really believe, helped some people to trace a Divine element in the crisis of the war. One must not find fault with people for representing a truth to themselves in a form which one does not happen to like; and I suppose that, in a way, what seems mere sentiment to me is a craving to believe objectively in the tenderness of God, in the midst of such horrible agonies of disorder and cruelty. I think that perhaps one does best to feel about it all as Coventry Patmore did in that beautiful poem, "The Toys." Do you remember it? The father had punished his little boy for disobedience, and sent him to

bed; and going up to see him, found him asleep with all his childish treasures arranged on a table by the bed, "to comfort his sad heart."

Then he writes:

"So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah! when at last we lie with trancèd breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
'I will be sorry for their childishness.'"

That is the secret, I think. Not to dally with sentiment, but not to despise it. It wins its strength from our imperfection, but it is trying to keep the truth in sight.

XXXVII

HILL STREET.

I saw a story about a child the other day—I expect a true one—who was being taught Old Testament History, the chapter about the

Golden Calf. "So God was very angry with the Israelites," said the teacher. "Very *what?*" said the little girl, blankly. "Very angry, dear, because of their disobedience." "Why, I should have thought most people would have *laughed!*" The little girl was right. That is the worst of the teaching we get about God from our Old Testament lessons. The old conception of God was that of the Sheikh, autocratic, sometimes indulgent, sometimes suddenly and excessively severe. He is a God, in fact, of moods rather than of principles. Of course it is a primitive and natural interpretation of the facts of life. Nature is like that, full of apparent moods, sometimes sparing a reckless person time after time, sometimes smiting down a careless one. The truth is that Nature is not thinking about us as individuals at all. She goes blindly on, like an express train, about her business. If you get in the way, you are annihilated.

But we cannot, we dare not, afford to go on thinking in that careless way about God. If we have to feel that God is behind the flagrant injustices and cruelties of Nature, then He cannot also be behind the moral law. But if we may believe in God as a Fatherly Power, Whose mind and heart is bent upon us, Who is

trying to help and teach and uplift us; and that He is fighting hard against cruel and evil and unjust tendencies, but cannot instantly abolish them, then we have a religion at once, because we can join His side, fight with Him, feeling that He needs whatever help we can give Him. The war has made this clear to me. I don't believe in the war as a punishment, because it falls most heavily on the innocent. I don't believe it is brought about by God in any way, or even permitted by Him. I believe it is a great deluge of evil, which He is trying to stem. This belief gives me real hope and energy, puts me on God's side, in love and faith, gives me a definite thing to do for Him and with Him. I do not say that it brings order out of chaos; it leaves the mystery of evil unexplained: but it enlists me in the army of God, and gives me a chance of believing in His perfect justice and love.

XXXVIII

HILL STREET.

I might have met you at Westcote—do you know, by the way, that Leonard has discovered that it was formerly called White Westcote, but says that even he doesn't dare

to revive the name—but I made an excuse, because Sir John Field was going to be there. I really couldn't face meeting him now. In the first place I am very angry with him because of his speech about America, in which he gave the Americans so much good advice, in the style of a schoolmaster saying farewell to an old pupil and indicating his weak points in a spirit of love. Really I think that America can be trusted to take her own line. Of course she is a very composite nation. There are many friends of Germany over there, and there are a good many people in the west and the south who are frankly only interested in the commercial side of the matter ; but apart from them there is an immense amount of passionate sympathy with the Allies, especially in New England. It is obviously the right line for the American Government, ruling a democratic nation, to try to find a policy which combines all interests rather than a policy which represents a section. They can help us enormously by not going to war with Germany, though I do not deny that the moral effect of their doing so would be great. But they would have to arm and equip themselves, and I doubt if they could detach enough ships or men to help the Allies very substantially.

But Sir John's speech was so provoking and so condescending that it could only alienate sympathy, while it certainly could not turn the political scale. It showed such a ludicrous lack of comprehension of what America is. Do you remember old Janeway, the squire at Tudham, who had a few heavily mortgaged farms and a hamlet of disgraceful houses? I remember hearing him talk about Puller, the great manufacturer, as a worthy man in the hardware line whom one couldn't ask to dinner because he was so rough. That is Sir John's line about America, both ignorant and indolent. And then, too, I really couldn't listen to his long, mellifluous expositions—all the mistakes the Government have made, all their military and naval blunders, all the things that " stand to reason " and " go without saying "—stale, ill-informed rubbish picked up at his club. He flows on at every meal, he gets hold of the *Times* and reads it out, he pays no attention to any one's questions, and only answers his own. He takes one out for a walk, saying that he wants one's opinion, and then he says he will make a few prefatory remarks—a most tedious monster, as Trinculo says. I can't think how Leonard endures him.

I suppose the war makes one captious ; but I can get more in ten minutes out of Amworth, a few dry facts and whimsical comments, full of knowledge and absolutely clear ; or there is Danby, who frankly will not talk about the war at all, but contrives to keep up his interest in science. That is refreshing enough. I like to meet people who will give me some real information to digest, or who will take me away into other realities ; but a wordy and gossipy pessimist—that is the soil in which the worst weeds grow. When Sir John talks I end by feeling both bored and frightened. I should have lost my temper with him, and tried to pin him down ; and he would have said, " Why, I should have thought that it was a matter of common knowledge," or else " Ah now I see you are theorising—what I say we want is to face facts, like practical men."

That is the worst of the present exigencies. We can't be told the facts for strategic reasons. We don't really know what is happening. We have to content ourselves with imperfect information and amateur forecasts. We realise by this time how serious it all is, but we have none of us yet grasped how big it all is ; that is the worst of being used to small news carefully potted for consumption, that we

want to interview the angels with the seven vials full of the seven deadly plagues.

XXXIX

HILL STREET.

I am doing a bit of work now for Lord Amworth of a confidential kind, and it is very interesting indeed. He talks very freely, so freely that I can hardly believe my ears at times ; but I suppose these great men have a kind of inkling as to whom it is safe to talk to. It certainly is amazing, the frankness with which he speaks of what his colleagues do and say—at least it amazes me. You know that brilliant way he has of arraying things, his quick glances, the movements of his arms, that gesture with his hands as if he were fingering a difficult piano passage. But the important secrets which he seems to toss so carelessly down before me, as if I were " one of us," are not, I find, easily recalled. Their interest resides mostly in the manner of telling and in the personality behind—which is whimsical enough and even petulant.

I am a mine of secrets, a treasure of " bright designs," and it amuses me to hear people talking of " the situation," and of the part

which certain people are supposed to be playing, knowing what I know.

It certainly has a very tranquillising effect on me! To read the papers, one would think that the Ministry were all asleep, as at the Cabinet before the Crimean War at which Lord Aberdeen read his memorandum, or, better still, as in Max Beerbohm's pictures of the effects of Coleridge's conversation, in which his auditors are heaped together, like a cluster of sausages, fitting into one another, drowned in lethargy. But I know better! They are alert, active, serene, indeed confident—and any apparent inaction means an equilibrium of forces rather than a paralysis of energy. I have a feeling of a phalanx—

"Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates,"

though the current view is the anarchy of the poultry-yard. I have recovered my balance, and I have parted with my vague fears. But I can't write much now; I am too busy.

XL

I went down to stay with Lord Amworth for Sunday. As a rule I rather hate these visits —the long meals, the deluge of talk; but this

was a quiet affair, with hard work in the background. There was no one there but Lady Amworth, a married daughter with her husband, who has something to do with transports, and Wyse, the permanent Under-Secretary. I am lost in wonder at Amworth's energy. He sleeps little, he is what I should call ascetic in his habits—he seldom seems to finish what is on his plate, and he drinks nothing stronger than Seltzer. He looks as fresh as paint. He sat up till two o'clock on Saturday night reading my drafts; he was up early; in high spirits at breakfast. He went to church, had a long talk afterwards with the Vicar, strolled in the garden with me. Then we worked all afternoon and evening. I confess I was tired; but at dinner he was inexhaustible; he tells a lot of stories, but never *as* stories; they are always illustrations; and he pares his anecdotes to the bone. He amused me by quoting Plato to the effect that philosophy at an early age and in strict moderation was an amusing and appropriate pursuit; but that for an older man it was effeminate and disgraceful. I had forgotten that Plato ever said anything so decided! But it was a pleasure, I found, to be treated as a man of affairs and not as a philosopher. Lady Amworth is a delightful hostess, with a

spice of irony. She said that a subaltern had told her lately that his chaplain was an awfully good fellow. "Of course he isn't the sort of man you could talk to about religion—he wouldn't know where to look!" But later on I had a very interesting talk to her about Pascal. She said that she believed he died of the strain of having a really religious bent, with a sense of mystery and symbol pulling him one way, and reason impelling him on the other hand to mistrust everything that could not be logically stated—both instincts perfectly true, she said, but as bad for a man's brain as being in love and feeling obliged to account for it philosophically. She said that it was this that killed Tyrrell. She did not believe that religion could ever be anything but a passion, akin to art and not akin to intellect. This was all interesting.

As we came back on Monday, we were going up the Great Eastern and nearing London; you know how the valley widens there into what looks like a great estuary, with the wooded heights of Epping Forest on one side, and the high ground near Haileybury, I think, on the other. The town begins gradually on the Edgware Road, I imagine. There is a place where the flat meadows end rather

sharply, near some great reservoirs, and you see the slopes covered with rows of villas and new streets, with towers and churches rising among them, and further off the wooded heights, sprinkled with big houses, the blue river curving sharply across the fields. It was a fine, glittering morning, everything sparkling and shining in the sun, the smoke going up. Amworth looked out of the window and said to me, "There's a crowded bit of the world! What nonsense to think that all that can be conquered by any sort of force but persuasion! It might be smashed up a bit; but you might as well hope to sweep that river away with mops, as to think that you could stop civilisation with a few guns. That is the absurd side of Germany—they have no sense of humour!"

I thought that true and brave and beautiful as well. It does one good to be in touch with a man who can say that. I envy him his power of putting a big and subtle thought into easy words.

XLI

HILL STREET.

I am still very hard at work; don't think that I have become dry and *affairé*. I have

a great deal to write to you about ; but my little experience of really public work, though it is all done in the background, seems to have floated me out of all sentiment and morbidity, and given me a different outlook. When I say sentiment, I don't mean emotion. I feel the darkness of the whole thing as much as ever ; and the waste of life, and that the best life, is a thing of which I dare not think. But I feel less inclined to reason about it all, and still less disposed to dig down into the foundations of it. It has become a campaign, that is the truth, and I am more concerned with doing my part than with searching the unsearchable for reasons. I do not mean that I think my part an important one, but it has to be done, and I rejoice to do it. The wonder and the mystery and the sadness of the war are all there, immense and shapeless forces full of portent and doom ; but I am content to feel a part of it, and less concerned with trying to interpret it. Beauty and Duty—I wish they did not rhyme so trivially—I don't think they conflict after all.

"Stern lawgiver, thou yet dost wear
Thy Godhead's most benignant grace ;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face."

It is the smile that I am beginning to see—not the mysterious, shy, reflective smile of pure beauty—that is a perfectly real thing too—but the smile of energy and comradeship and well-loved work.

I went down on Saturday to a very different place from Amworth. A valley in Kent, full of pastures and woods, folding up into the downs, which looked as if they were carved out of a dim emerald in the summer haze. I stayed with Holt, the gentlest of essayists. It is quite easy to laugh at him for his mild delights, so temperately stated. But he doesn't mind that—he just goes on ; and he does a lot more good than he knows, because he shows ordinary people that they have beauty all about them if only they can see it. He has a huge correspondence, that man, with all sorts of obscure and humble people, to whom he gives that great gift, the sense of significance. He answers it all punctually and faithfully, and he wins his way by a pervasive patience, like the irresistible softness of water.

He has got a pungent mind enough behind it all, and he is full of humour ; but he says mildly that humour is a thing for talk, rather than for writing. I didn't agree with him, and told him, in an expansive moment, that

it was a thousand pities that he couldn't get the raciness of his mind into his books. "Oh, I know what I am about!" he said with his sleepy smile. "My humour isn't very reliable; all the quarrels I have ever had came from being humorous, and there is something prickly about me. It's only a thing to play with in my case. I belong to the preaching type, you know, in writing. 'I would rise from the dead,' as Stevenson said, 'to preach!' There is a demand for that, and I'm entirely in earnest. I am not going to spoil what I can do by irresponsible freakishness. Bless you, I know my own business."

I walked with him in the afternoon, and he took me to see a mill hard by. The full-fed leat came down through green meadows, under copses that dipped their leaves in the water. The mill was an old, irregular brick house, with a great timbered erection built out over the mill-pool. Stacks and cattle-yards further back, and an orchard full of fruit, with the stream encircling it—a perfect homestead. He showed me the great, black, mossy, dripping wheel, silent for the day, in its ferny niche. "There," he said, surveying the place from the road, "that's what I call a perfectly beautiful, useful, comfortable place—the very

best expression of human life. There isn't a thing there that doesn't mean something solid and sensible and contented and simple. Don't tell me that it isn't one man's work to explain to people the entire fineness and appropriateness and homeliness of that sort of thing? That is the sort of civilisation that I want; and I can't tell you how deeply that moves me, a place that has grown up out of man's thought and work and love and need, nature and man combining for once in harmony and peace!"

We talked very little of the war, but much of books and people; he has a comfortable wife and three pretty girls, whose simplicity and charm were enchanting. I gathered that he felt the shadow of the war in many ways—in income, no doubt! He said, "It's all too big and grim for me. I can't think about it. It gives me a lot to do for my neighbours in small ways—talk, advice, sympathy, help—all little businesses, but that's the way it comes home to me, just a sorrowful ripple. But I behave," he added with a smile, "like the sailors in the Acts, who threw three anchors out of the stern and wished for day!"

Now *that* visit has done me good too, because it makes me feel that the sort of peace which

Holt lives in and believes in and works for is worth making any sacrifice to preserve. There is not a touch of luxury or pretence or idleness or unreality about it—there is no fever of competition or jealousy or strife about it—it is full of life and love and energy and quiet. Bless old Holt! He is worth a whole troop of literary roysterers and buffoons and posture-mongers; he has got firm hold of a beautiful thing, and he believes in life more than he believes in literature.

XLII

HILL STREET.

When can I see you again, my dear? I seem to have been so full of work, with these odd glimpses of different lives and homes sandwiched in, that I have drifted away from you more than I like. You encourage me to do it, and you tell me quite truly that health lies there. But I want to know what you are thinking and feeling, and whether life is flowing into the gap. I can't realise that unless I see you; and I need not tell you that whatever is going on, you are always in the back of my mind. But of course I know that we cannot give the only things worth giving—the

joy and the peace of mind which make the simplest life into delight.

I do not mean that I have reached them either. The war still pours its dark stream between me and the sunny hills of Heart's Desire. But I have gained this—that I feel that blessed land to be there waiting, if not for us, at least for those that come after us. People say to me, over and over, " The world can never be the same again." Of course it cannot be the same, but I do not believe that all hope and joy is going to be crushed out of it. I believe in the resistance of human nature and its power of recovery. The stream of life will burst out afresh, with renewed volume and with even greater clearness and freshness. Look how soon nations recover from wars. See how France has been drained again and again of wealth and life ; by Louis XIV, by Napoleon, by Prussia. Yet she is of all nations the one who lives most freely and fully, in her love of beauty, her fine grace, her interest in ideas, her home affections, and this after endless disasters. The only nation in Europe which has gone rankly to seed from success is Germany herself. A complete and easy victory such as she won in the Franco-Prussian war, that has ruined her morally

and spiritually. She has reaped all the rich crop of pride and wealth and efficiency, and she is become the dread and loathing of the nations. What has kept us so free, on the whole, from the vanity of prosperity, it is hard to say—a certain natural temperateness, a good humour, a hatred of rhetoric, a suspicion of display—that is the one fine result, so far, of the war, that it has suddenly revealed to us the simplicity and the kindliness and the energy of our own nation. The satirists and the pessimists are silent now. The only thing that the panic-monger can find to reproach us with is that we are not so easily frightened as he could wish.

I had a letter to-day from a young officer who has been slightly wounded after a week in the trenches—his first week in action. He is a peaceable fellow, with no taste for war at all, with his profession—doctoring—just opening before him full of zest. He says that his wound is very slight, and he adds, "I am going to tell you something which will surprise you, and which has surprised me. My week in the trenches was pure enjoyment—I have never been so happy in my life; I am in the strange position of wanting to get back home to my work, and I should be profoundly relieved if

I heard that the war was over; but quite apart from that, in a different bit of my mind, is a perfectly unreasonable desire, as strong as they make them, to get back to the trenches again. I am almost ashamed to say how much I want to get well, and have a further go."

That seems to me to be the secret—not to be one thing or the other, but to be both at the same time—quite contradictory and irrational, but all the same practicable.

Let me have a line to say when you will be free. Sunday week would do for me—I could get down on Saturday by 2.30, and we might get a walk. I shall have to go back on Sunday evening.

XLIII

HILL STREET.

Our friend George Dacre came to spend an evening with me yesterday. I am ashamed to say how vexed I grew with him, and how difficult I found it to keep a civil tongue in my head. He said that all was over, and that whatever happened in the war, there was an end of all that he had valued and worked for.

I thought of all his timid and elaborate word-mosaics, his little effects and economies, his contempt for all roughnesses and bignesses—do you remember how he said once at Rushton that he couldn't read Browning, because it was like seeing an elephant taking a bath in a jungle-pool, and what was worse, an elephant with the ethics of a University Extension lecturer ?

He was bankrupt, he said, bankrupt in hope and purpose. He had seen, he said, in spite of our English Philistinism, a little sacred tradition shaping itself sedulously ; and that it was all knocked on the head. That the world would have nothing to think about for a generation except industrial problems and militarism. He said too that the social future of the world was dissolved—no one had the time to meet for serious talk or serious music—and I thought of Lady Croft's Japanese luncheon, and the invitation-cards with *A Private Music* on the top. He wailed along, till dinner had its perfect work ; and then he said he thought of quitting the world, and devoting himself to art in some sweet, secret place—a stone-built cottage in a Devonshire hamlet, with a close of garden-herbs. I suggested the possibility of his being bored, but he said that the

only quality left him was a sad patience—you know the sort of thing. I felt he was only wearing the æsthetic coat inside out, with the lining visible !

I did my best to comfort him, but I confess that depression when it takes a fantastic shape is a very difficult thing to condone.

But it made me very much ashamed of my own despondencies and gloom. It did more than that. It made me feel that the war, horrible and deplorable as it is, has at least made a clean sweep of the artistic spiders'-webs that have been undisturbed for a generation. It has done something, if it has just made an end of little poses and tiny raptures. One may think them harmless enough, but I felt, after listening to George, that our long and wealthy peace had encouraged the little people too much, and given them too comfortable a sense of their own significance.

I don't think that this year of war has been a good time for art, whether big or little. The bigger the artist, the more sharply he must have felt that he was not wanted. When the house is on fire there is a lack of interest in the aims of post-impressionism. It will all come back, no doubt, big art and little art alike ; but it will have given the big men something

to think about, some of the fruitful anguish out of which the large ideas are born.

But I don't know what to do for George. I don't know what to do for all the little folk who are simply bored by the war—there are a good many of them about, though they daren't confess it. If they dared, I should think better of them. But at present they are like Tweedledum and Tweedledee when the monstrous crow appeared; and Tweedledum wants to get back to his nice new rattle, and to see if it can't be mended after all. The difficulty with George is that he thinks he is desperately serious, and that he is wearing his sorrows with dignity. He doesn't realise that he is only the goose which has had a rather louder "Bo" than usual shouted in its ear.

XLIV

HILL STREET.

I have been thinking about George and his desire to seclude himself from the world. What has become of that desire nowadays? It was apparently not uncommon in mediæval times. A broken warrior took the vows of a monk, or a queen became an abbess. The

conditions of the world have changed, of course. If you lived in the world, you had to live a rough life, among plain-spoken people, and you could not get out of the way of blows. In a monastery, talk, if dull, was at least decent, and the only blows were those inflicted in Chapter with a knotted cord. But I do not think that human nature has changed much, and I think that people must still fly from the world, though one is not so patently aware of it. I suppose that soldiers now retire to the United Service Club, or live in the country and keep fowls.

All the same, I am distinctly conscious of the desire at intervals to *make haste to escape because of the stormy wind and tempest*. If there were only anything to escape to! I couldn't escape from my own thoughts, or my friends' letters, or the daily papers. There are no fortresses of quiet. And then, too, the monk lived a hard life; he might have been bored, but he could not be unoccupied. Moreover, though I believe in prayer, I do not believe in it as an engrossing occupation. It seems to me like eating and drinking, the supplying of a definite need. I could not eat and drink all day in the hopes that it somehow or other helped hungry people to a meal. Anyhow, the

world does not believe in it as a practical occupation for a philanthropist.

Besides, I think that the longing for flight is to be resisted—a cottage deep in the country, some literary work, long walks, a little good talk and music—how pretty and absurd it all sounds ! No, the best part of me wants to see this great business through, and to help a little in the settling down to normal life. I do not believe that the conditions of life will be markedly different. There will be more taxation, no doubt, greater simplicity of life, and above all more co-operation. I hope and believe that sensible people will set to work not only to make war impossible, but to cure the evils of peace which made war inevitable.

I have not found a single human being yet who wanted war, and I personally have not met a single person, male or female, who wanted to stop the war at all costs. I gather that there are a few pacifists—no one likes to call them peacemakers—but I think that rather an unnecessary row has been made about them. They are supposed to be insidious, but I believe that they are merely well-meaning people without an audience, and that the abuse they have received has, if anything, rather

furthered their cause. Personally, I confess that I desire with all my heart and soul to see Germany dash herself to fragments. I believe she has done so already, and that the cracks are daily widening. But the whole hope of the future lies in the utter failure of her ghastly experiment; and I want her to be despised. I do not think that hatred will cure her. As long as she is hated, she has the comfort of knowing that she is feared, because one does not hate anything that one does not fear. I want her to be weak and impotent, to have to sue for a place among the decent nations, to eat her own words, to be ashamed of the reputation she has earned. I do not think I am simply vindictive, but I honestly believe it is the only hope for Germany herself, to have to regain her self-respect, her honesty, her decency, her modesty. I want her to learn that violence is not justified even by success, and that the discipline which makes a nation self-righteous is purely poisonous. I am always a little suspicious of the desire that other people should be humiliated for their good; but I see no other way out of the present troubles. Germany, when she began the war, was in a bad way, and she will be in a worse way if she succeeds; but if we are to live

peacefully in Europe we can't afford to have an insane bully at large.

XLV

HILL STREET.

I must write you a few lines of gratitude and affection after my beautiful Sunday—one of the best days of my life, I think.

The pendulum had swung too far with me, I know. I began in an excess of dejection. My little boat at its quiet moorings was whirled away by the deluge, and I was both bewildered and dismayed. Then I got involved in public work, and became both tired and ashamed of my metaphysics. You will forgive me if, in my last letters, I seemed to lose sight of your own sorrow. I feel that I behaved like my little niece who was *angry* the other day with her sister for having toothache, because it spoilt her own pleasure. "Why must she go and have toothache on my birthday?" she said to me plaintively. That is what we many of us feel, though few of us are so frank.

It is a great difficulty—how to be impersonally interested in a great world-problem, and to feel the onset of all the great problems that arise, like the first rush of a landward

wave, seething and hissing, into a rock-pool, tepid and stagnant. There is a freshness about it when it comes, however much one has loved placid ease ; but the danger is that one forgets the personal side, and thinks of private tragedies only as "cases." How can a lonely mother, whose home has been laid waste, look through it into the conflict of historical and political tendencies ?

Yet you have done this, I felt, when I was with you, by reaching a region where private sorrows and public problems are somehow one. It seemed to me that you had room for both—and that instead of keeping your mind for the problems and your heart for the sorrows, you had both alike in your heart.

It is religion, I think ! But it is a religion deeper than any I have known. I myself take refuge in religion from life. I find myself at happy moments in a place of mystery where past, present, and future blend in a happy aspiration. But it is only a mood ; and what I do not do is to reach a point at which I become aware that God holds both the secret of private sorrow, and also the hope of guiding the world on practical lines. It is only to the Heart of God that I have access, and you, I think, have found your way to the Mind of God.

This is only an illustration ; but I remember that a friend of mine who had to talk to Bishop Grant about a very practical problem indeed, told me that the Bishop had indicated with perfect clearness and sense what was to be done, and had then by a few words lifted the whole matter into an entirely different region, making both my friend's course of action and his deep anxieties into *little* things —important for the moment, for efficiency's sake, but not to be unduly dwelt upon. " I felt," said my friend, " as though he were sending me into action, and did not forget my food and equipment, or my immediate duty, or the risk I was running, or anything ; but it was all in the right proportion."

The right proportion ! How easy it is to say it, how hard to arrive at it. The idealist forgets the boots and the water-flask, the materialist thinks of nothing else.

What you gave me was the sense that we were all employed in a mighty business, each with a little piece of work to do ; but that it *was* a mighty business, full of great dreams and visions and splendid realities—the twelve foundations of the city, each a precious jewel. And that yet all depended on our doing intentlyand carefully our little fragment of work,

not disregarding the sorrows and affections which are all in all to us, but yet not allowing them to blind and weaken us.

How can I express it? You will no doubt say that you were not conscious of having done anything of the kind. But I saw the range of your thought, and I saw that your sorrow was not only a private affliction, but a symbol of something great, august, and eternal. It is that power of seeing the great thing in the small thing that has given me so much light. It is the power that the poet has of seeing the great sweep of the circle in the broken scrap of circumference—of seeing the rainbow in the gem, the peace of God in the wayside pool, His love in the unfolding flower. To know that we shall see greater things than these, that is the secret; and that we shall not see them, unless we look unflinchingly into the smaller thing, and having looked, raise our eyes to the body of heaven in its clearness.

That is what you have done for me, my dear. God keep and bless you, and give you His joy and peace, now and in the ages to come —which *will* come, for you and me and all of us alike.

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