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THE DAY OF GLORY

BY
DOROTHY CANFIELD



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THE DAY OF GLORY

ON THE EDGE

As far as Jeanne's personal life was concerned, what little was left of it ebbed and flowed to the daily rhythm of the mail. She felt it begin to sink lower with the fatigue of preparing and serving the lunch for the six noisy children, always too hungry for the small portions, so that at the last she divided most of her own part among them. It ebbed lower and lower during the long hours of the afternoon when she strove desperately to keep the little ones cheerful and occupied and at the same time to mend and bake and darn and clean and iron and carry ashes out and coal in; her long slim pianist's fingers reddened and roughened till they bled, because cold cream was far too costly a luxury. It sank to its stagnant lowest during the tired end of the day when the younger children, fretful with too much indoors, disputed and quarreled; and when, as she prepared the evening meal, she tried to help the older ones with their Latin declensions and Greek verbs so that they might be worthy sons of their father. And oh, the nights, the long nights, when she woke again and again, dreaming that she saw André wounded, dreaming that some one called to her in a loud voice that he had been killed at the head of his men.

But after midnight she felt the turn of the tide. In less than twelve hours there might be a letter. She dozed, woke to make the round of the children's beds to be sure that they were covered, and noted that it was three o'clock. In seven hours she might have news again. She slept, and woke to hear the church clock clang out five, and knew that if she could but live through five hours more—

In the morning, the countless minor agitations; the early rising in the cold; the smoky kindling of the fire; the hurried expedition for the milk through the empty streets, dripping with the clammy fog of the region; the tumultuous awakening of the children, some noisily good-natured, some noisily bad-tempered; the preparation of the meager breakfast in the intervals of buttoning up blouses and smoothing tousled hair; then, as school time approached, the gradual crescendo of all the noise and confusion into the climax of the scampering departure of the three older ones, blue-nosed and shivering in their worn, insufficient wraps; the gradual decrescendo as she dressed the thin, white bodies of the younger ones, and strove to invent some game for them which would keep them active and yet allow her to do the morning housework—all these tossing, restless waves were the merest surface agitation. Beneath their irregular, capricious rhythm she felt

physically the steady, upward swelling of her expectation as the clock-hands swung towards ten.

Till then she knew nothing, nothing of what might have happened during the portentous night behind her, for every night, like every day, was portentous. There was no calamity which was impossible. The last four years had proved that. Anything might have happened since the last news had come in from the outer world—anything, that is, except the end of the war. That alone had come to seem impossible.

And yet, in spite of that great flooding tide of her expectancy, when the ring at the door finally came, it always gave Jeanne an instant's violent shock. Her heart flared up like a torch with hope and fear, its reflection flickering on her thin cheeks as she hurried to the front of the house and, her delicate work-worn hands shaking, opened the door on Fate.

First her eye leaped to see that there was not the official-looking letter without a stamp which she had received so many times in her bad dreams, the letter from his captain announcing that sous-Lieutenant Bruneau—no, it had not come yet. She had another day's respite.

She could breathe again, she could return the white-haired postman's "Bonjour, Madame Bruneau."

Next, even on the days when there was a letter from André, she tore open the Paris newspaper and read in one glance the last communiqué. After this her hands stopped shaking. No, there was no specially bad news. No horror of a new offensive had begun. Then she could even smile faintly back at the tired old face before her and say, in answer to his inquiry, "Oh yes, all pretty well, thank you. My own are standing the winter pretty well. But my brother's children, they have never really recovered from the nervous shock of that dreadful experience of bombardment, when they lost their parents, you know. Of course none of the six are as plump or as rosy as I would like to have them—Michel is growing so fast."

"You ought to thank God, Madame Bruneau, that they are too young. There are worse things than being thin and white."

"Yes, yes, Monsieur Larcade," she apologized hastily for her unmerited good fortune compared to his, "what news from your sons?"

“Still no news from Salonique. A letter this morning from Jules’s surgeon. They are not sure whether he will ever be able to walk again. The wound was so deep—an injury to the spine.”

A wordless gesture of sympathy from her, a weary shifting of his heavy letter bag, and he went on to the next door, behind which another woman waited, her hands shaking; and beyond that another one, and then another.

If it was to be a good day, if there had been a letter from André, she opened it hurriedly and read it all in one look, even though the children clung clamoring to her skirts, even though the fire smoked and threatened to go out. Then she set it carefully in the bosom of her dress and put on the faded caps and patched wraps and darned mittens to take the children out for their outing, while she did her marketing. They were too small to leave alone, even for half an hour.

During the painful experience which her marketing always was, she felt warmed and sustained by the letter tucked inside her dress. Everything cost more than the month before, twice as much as the year before when her income was the same minute sum as now.

But André was alive and unhurt.

She looked longingly at the beefsteak which the older boys needed so much, her own children, and bought instead the small piece of coarse pork which must make a stew for them all, those other children of her blood whom the war had thrown on her hands.

But she had a letter from her husband in her bosom.

She priced the cauliflowers, sighed, and bought potatoes, and less of them than she had hoped to have, the price having gone up again. She was horrified to find that rice cost more than it had, an impossible sum per pound, even the broken, poor-quality grade. She would try macaroni as a substitute. There was no macaroni, the woman clerk informed her. There was none at all, at any price. Jeanne turned to another item on her list. The doctor had said that the children absolutely must have more fruit in their diet—*fruit!* Well, perhaps she might be able to manage prunes. They were the cheapest fruit—or they had been. “Prunes, Madame Bruneau? They are only for the rich.” She named a price which made Jeanne gasp.

She calculated the amount she would need for one portion each for her big family. It was out of the question. She was really aghast, and appealed desperately to the woman clerk, "What do *you* do?" she asked. "We do without," answered the other woman briefly.

"But your children? Growing children can't be in good health without *some* fruit."

"They're not in good health," answered the other grimly. "My Marthe has eczema, and the doctor says that Henri is just ripe for tuberculosis." Her voice died.

Jeanne closed her eyes during the instant's silence which followed. The woman clerk shoved aimlessly at the sack of dry beans which stood between them.

Then they both drew a long breath and began to add up together the cost of Jeanne's purchases. She took out her pocketbook, paid soberly, and went on to the baker's.

Here a girl weighed out for her with scrupulous care the exact amount of bread allowed for the family, and took the bread tickets along with the money in return. At the sight and smell of the fresh-baked bread the children began their babbling, begging, clamorous demand which Jeanne dreaded almost more than anything else. She winced away from this daily pain, crying out, trying hastily to stop them before the tears came, X "No, no, my darlings, you can't have any now. No, Jacqueline, *don't* tease auntie! Annette dearie, you know if mother lets you have any now there will be just that much less for you at lunch and dinner. You *know* I can't give you any of what belongs to the others." She was imploring them not to ask her for the food she could not give them. Anything but that! The daily repetition of this poignant little scene was intolerable. If she could only leave them at home, could only spare them that daily ordeal of the visit to the bakeshop where their poor little heads were turned at the sight and odor of all that food. Not to have *bread* to give them!

She was almost on her knees before their shrill, insistent demands when she felt her husband's letter crackle against her breast, and stopped short. She was on the edge of losing her head, like men after too long shell fire when they walk dazedly straight into danger. She knew better than this! The tragic manner would never do for little children who cannot live and thrive save in gaiety and lightness of heart. She was only making a bad matter worse.

She summoned all her strength, put her hand on the letter in her bosom, and burst resolutely into a hearty laugh. “Oh, children, just see that funny picture of the little kitten. He’s chasing his tail, do you see, round and round and round. Annette, do you know how he feels! See, I’ll hang this string down your back, and you try to catch it by turning around quickly. See, the faster you turn the faster it gets away from you. Maurice wants to try? Well, we’ll just hurry home, and I will give you a piece of old red curtain cord and you *each* can have a tail and be a little kitten. And when the big ones get back from school you can show them how to chase tails. Won’t they laugh?”

They were safe in the street by this time, the bakeshop forgotten, the loaf in the basket hidden, the children looking up, laughing through their tears at Jeanne, breathless, pouring all her vitality into her cheerful face and bright voice, so that there was not enough left to keep her knees from shaking under her.

Back to the house quickly, lest the wretched war coal, half black stones, smoking sullenly in the cook-stove, should go out in their absence. The invention of the curtain-cord tails was still valid, even after the pork had been put on to cook with the potatoes. The children were still playing, still unexacting. Jeanne would have time to read her letter.

She put the paper-thin potato parings to cook in an old kettle for their three hens, who occasionally presented them with a priceless fresh egg; and, wiping her cold, wet, potato-stained hands (was it possible that those hands had ever played Beethoven and Debussy?), took her treasure out of her bosom and unfolded the double sheet, warm still from the warmth of her body.

This time she read it slowly, taking in, absorbing to the last cell of her consciousness, every one of those words, written by candlelight, underground, to the thunder of shells exploding over the *abri*. They were plain, homely words enough, rambling, unstudied familiar phrases, such as husband and wife write to each other when they have shared their daily life for many years and still try to go on sharing what may be left to them of days in common.

It had rained, as usual, all day long, but the new trench boots had kept his feet almost dry. Yet he was ashamed of the price she must have paid for them—she, straining every nerve to buy food to keep the children well. He was a man, a grown-up, and the war had done for them forever. Let him shift as best he could.

Everything ought to go to the children, there would be little enough. But they must have the best chance we could give them. Whoever else was responsible for the war certainly the children had nothing to do with it. And they must be the torch bearers. Did she remember how he had always wondered why no musician had ever composed music on that theme? He could conceive such a noble symphonic poem called "The Torch Bearers." He had wondered all day if the coal had finally arrived at Méru. It went beyond his imagination how she could manage at all, the days when the coal supply was so low. In their little underground *abri* they had a stove—yes, a real stove. It had been left there by some American ambulance men who had used the *abri* before them. So they were really warm, part of the time, and occasionally almost dry. But the wood they were burning—it made him sick. It was what his men tore out from the ruined village houses near which the trenches ran. Of course it could never be used for houses again, but when you know what it is to have a home of your own, and how it grows to be a part of you, it is not much fun to put parts of other people's houses into your stove. No, he did not need any new socks. He did not need *anything*; she need not go on trying to slip in some new luxury for him out of her impossibly small budget. Did she remember that poor Dury, the youngest of his men? He had been shot yesterday; a stray ball, not meant for anybody in particular—such a silly way to be killed. And now there was the letter to write to his mother. Heavens, how he dreaded writing the letters to the parents of men who died or disappeared! He hoped little Maurice's throat was better. What a sickly child that poor kid was! He was evidently one who would have to be nursed along all through his childhood, and since the war had killed his parents, it fell to his poor aunt to do the job. And then—"Now, see here, Jeanne darling, don't kill yourself over that little boy because you feel so guilty at not loving him more. He's not a lovable kid. His own mother, poor nervous thing, never could keep from snapping at him, and you know your brother cared enough sight more for Jacqueline than for him. Don't you blame yourself. Take it easy!"

Jeanne laid the letter down with a little exclamation, half a laugh. How ever did André know she did not love the little nephew who reminded her so of the sister-in-law she had never been able to love? She had not thought that anybody could guess that the child to whom she was always the gentlest was the one—and here was André, quite casually as usual, walking into her most secret places! How he knew her! How he knew the meaning of her smallest gesture, the turn of her most carefully worded phrase! How near he was to her! How there was no corner of her life where he did not come and go, at ease, and how she welcomed him in, how she rejoiced to feel him thus pervading the poor, hurried, barren

inner life of her, which had bloomed so richly when they had lived it together. How *married* they were! That was, after all, an achievement, to have wrested that glory from so horrible a thing as life had come to be. Let the heavens fall, she had known what it was to be one with a noble human soul.

She stood up, her thin face glowing, her tired eyes shining, as they always were after reading André's letter. It was the only moment of the day when she felt herself wholly alive.

This was the high tide of her daily life, poor, scanty trickle of life it was, even at its best, compared to the fathomless deep surge of the fullness of the days before the war, days when it had seemed natural that André should be there always, that they should profoundly live together, that there should be some leisure, and some music mixed with their work, and warm rooms and clothes and food as simply as there was air to breathe.

A whiff of acrid coal smoke in her face, a wailing cry from Maurice who had pinched his finger, a warning half-hour stroke from the kitchen clock—she came back to the present with a start and strove loyally to use for that present the little renewal of strength which came from a momentary vision of the past. She changed the drafts of the stove, stirred the stew and, gathering the weeping child up in her tired arms, began to make a funny nonsense song, purporting to be sung by the hurt finger. Her voice was obliged to pass through a knot in her throat, but it came out bravely, and in a moment the children were laughing again, their thin faces turned toward hers like little pale flowers toward the sun.

Then there was the table to set, of course in the kitchen, since there was no coal for another fire in the cold house. How Jeanne suffered from this suffocating necessity to do everything in one small room! It made an intolerable trial of every smallest process of the everyday life, to prepare food, and eat it, and play, and wash, and study, and bathe the children, and dress and undress them—they were like pigs in a sty, she often thought, working feverishly to keep a little order and decency in the room which seemed to her fastidious senses to reek stiflingly of the effluvia of too-concentrated human life.

As she worked she felt, like an inward bleeding, the slow ebbing of her forces. The good moment of the day had come and gone. There was nothing to look forward to now till the mail of the next morning.

And this was a good day, one of the best, when there had been no special activity

on the front, when the daily letter from André arrived on time. But what of the days when the communiqué announced laconically, “Heavy artillery fire between Fresnes and Villers-Raignault”? (André was stationed at Fresnes.) Or worse, when the great offensives began, when all personal letters from the front were stopped, when day after day the communiqué announced: “Violent fighting all along the Champagne front.”

The feeble, tired old postman, shuffling on his rounds, was a very snake-crowned horror to the dry-eyed women, waiting and hoping and dreading to see him come. Always there were cases of hysteria at such times; old Madame Vielé, who shrieked out suddenly in the market-place that she had seen her son fall dead before her; Marguerite Lemaire, who, returning from Paris on the night train, had found her husband in the compartment with her, had kissed him, held his hand, wept on his breast—and suddenly she was alone, with the train rushing on through the darkness to Méru, where she was met by the news of his death.

At such times Jeanne braced her shivering limbs and throbbing nerves to steady rigidity and bore her burden as though she had the strength of eternity in her heart. Scraps of phrases from André’s letters came before her eyes, as voices speak to tranced saints. As she worked she saw, written before her, “Whoever is responsible for the war, the children are not.” Or again, “We are all evil creatures, God knows, and our motives must be mixed in this war because they are mixed in everything else. But with whatever of virtue there is in me, I am fighting for what I think best fit to survive in the world I wish my children to inhabit.” Or again, for her own comfort, “Dearest darling Jeanne, the very powers of hell cannot take away from me the ten years of supreme happiness you have given me.”

The days went by, one, two, three, four, five, with no letters, with no words at all beyond the steady advance of the Germans. The nights went by, the long, long nights, not black and empty, but filled with dreadful lightning visions of what might be happening, even at that instant, as she lay in her bed. Jeanne felt no fatigue, no hunger, no consciousness of her body at all, at such times. It happened once, after one of these long, numb days, that she cut her hand deeply, and did not know she had done it till she saw the smears of blood on her skirt. Her first thought was that it was the only skirt she possessed and that she must not spoil it with her blood, because there was no money to buy another.

It was that very evening, after she had tied up the wound on her hand and was beginning to undress the younger children, interrupting herself frequently to help

beginning to address the younger children, interrupting herself frequently to help Jacques with his Latin, that she heard the front door of the house open and shut.

She went as cold as ice. Her heart stopped beating, her hair stirred itself on her head. It had come. Some one had brought a telegram with the bad news.

She put the children on one side, quietly, opened the kitchen door, and stepped out into the cold twilight of the hall.

André stood before her, a shadowy figure in the obscurity, pale, unshaven, muddy, smiling, a strange, dim, tired, infinitely tender smile. His arms were outstretched toward her.

For a moment—a long, silent, intense moment of full life—she knew nothing but that he was there, that she held him in her arms, that his lips were on hers. Nothing else existed. There was no war, no danger, no fear, no wonder how he could have come. There was nothing in all her being but the consciousness that they were together again. She was drowned deep in this consciousness; the blessed flood of it closed over her head.

Presently the door of the kitchen opened, and the littler ones trooped out to find her. They could live but so few moments, those littler ones, without sucking at her vitality.

She fell at once into the happy confusion of the usual leave of absence, crying out to the children, “See, see, papa has come! See, Uncle André is here!”

It seemed to her the children were singularly apathetic, not instantly molten joy as she had been. The younger ones were even a little shy of him, who was, after all, an unknown man to them; and more than a little jealous of him, who came to share with them their *maman*, their auntie, the source and light and warmth of their exacting little, new lives. It seemed to Jeanne that they looked even more queerly at him this time than usual, and that there was in the sidelong glances of the older ones an element of strangeness. Their father was becoming a mere legend to them, she thought with a painful contraction of her heart.

She found herself talking a great deal, in a quavering, excited voice, gone back to her old exuberance of expression. It seemed to her that she finally asked André how it could have happened, his coming, and that he explained across the children’s clamor that his regiment had gone down to the gates of hell in the offensive and that what was left of them had been given a twenty-four hours’

leave of absence.

Oh, yes, she understood with no further words, she who knew by heart every way of communication between his sector on the front and her door; he had reached Paris by the 3.20 train, had hurriedly changed stations, had caught the 4.40 train out and reached Méru at twenty minutes of seven. And oh, she had not been at the station to meet him! But of course he had not had time to telegraph. So, if it were only a twenty-four hour leave, he would need to take the midnight train back. He had come so far, so far, for five hours with her.

She thought this all out while flying to get him some food, to open the can of meat, preciousy kept for just such a golden chance, to heat the potatoes which were left, to set Jacques to grinding some coffee, real coffee, such as they never used, to uncover the sacred little store of sugar, wide, to his hand! And at the same time to talk to the children. How unresponsive children are, she thought; how quickly they outgrow whatever is not immediately present. It is hard to remember that four years, so long in the life of a child, is all eternity to a young child; his utmost imagination cannot compass it. She said all this to André, to explain the children. How absurd to try to explain them to André, smiling his deep understanding of them and of her, far deeper than she could ever fathom!

Then she was driving them all upstairs to bed, leaving the kitchen to André, the big tin bathtub and the clean underclothes which she had always ready for the first ceremony of every return from the trenches. If only there were more hot water! But she always let the fire go down toward night, to save coal. For her there was no need of fire. She could put a blanket around her shoulders and wrap her legs in a rug of an evening as she sat writing her letter to André by the poor light of the one lamp, filled with war kerosene, which smoked and glimmered uncertainly.

She hardly knew what she was doing as she hurried the children into their beds in the cold rooms. Hurry as she might, there were six of them; and many, many, of the priceless, counted-out moments had passed before she ran down the stairs, as madly as any girl racing to meet her lover.

André was there, at table, washed, shaven, a little color in his lean, deeply lined cheeks under their warlike bronze. When he heard her step flying down the hall, he pushed back from the table and, his napkin across his knees, a good light of laughter in his eyes, he held out his arms to her again, crying like the traditional

bridegroom, "Alone at last!"

So it began on the light note, that incredible good fortune of their evening together, she perching on his knee, watching him eat, filling his plate, pouring out more coffee, talking, laughing—yes, really laughing as she only did when André was there on permission. When he had finished she cleared the table, made up the fire, recklessly putting in lump after lump of the sticky resinous coal and opening all the drafts. They sat down together before the stove, beside the surly ill-conditioned lamp, and their tongues were loosened for much talk—light, deep, sad, hopeful, brave, depressed, casual, tragic. They poured out to each other all the thousand things which do not go into letters, even daily ones. She heard of the unreasonable irritability of his captain, and the plain, restoring good faith of the old colonel; the heroism of the men, the cowardly slinking back to a clerical position at the rear by young Montverdier, the son of their *député*. He heard of her struggles with the boys' Latin and mathematics, and with the little ones' alphabet. "Just think, André, Annette, the obstinate little thing, will not admit that B's name is B. She says it is 'loof' and she knows it is because she dreamed it was—haven't children the most absurd ideas?"

She spoke out with a Frenchwoman's frankness of her moments of horror, of despair, of doubt of the war's meaning, of revulsion from the industrial system which had made the war possible. There deep answered deep; he brought to her the envenomed hatred of war which fills the trenches to the brim. "It is not glorious; it is infamous. I am not a hero; I am a murderer. But there are worse things. It would be worse to have peace, with the German ideas ruling the world. No, every one of us would better die than allow that to happen. Yes, I have had too—who hasn't?—moments of doubt, moments when the horror of our stupidity was too great, when I have thought that any other way would be better than war. But not since the Russian affair, not since the Germans marched into defenseless Russia. *Russian children will be brought up in German schools* to form a new generation of Germans. I would kill my children with my own hands before having them added to those ranks. No, since Russia, there seems no other way but to go on to the end, and to make that end an end to war forever." The worn phrases, dubious and tarnished on the facile tongues of public orators, repeated there in that dimly lighted room by that worn man and suffering woman, became new, became sacramental.

They clung to each other for a moment again, and gradually felt the tension of the spirit melt away in the old cure of simple bodily nearness. His cheek against hers— at the sensation she became just a woman again.

hers—at the sensation she became just a woman again.

She stirred, she smiled; she told an amusing story of their queer old neighbor,— she interrupted herself to say reproachfully, “But I *do* love little Maurice! I don’t love him *as* I love the other children, but just because of that I love him more, because I pity him so.”

“That,” he said with conviction, “must be true because nobody but you would be capable of such mixed language and emotions.”

She had laughed at this and, remembering suddenly that she had a box of cigarettes for him, jumped up to get it. He was amazed. Where, in Heaven’s name, had she been able to get cigarettes in France in 1918? Ah, that was her little secret. She had her ways of doing things! She teased him for an instant and then said she had begged it for him from an American Red Cross camion driver who had stopped there to get water for his radiator. The recollection brought to mind something painful, which she poured out before him like all the rest. “Oh but, André, what do you think the woman in uniform sitting by him said? Of course she couldn’t have known that I understand English, but even so— She looked at me hard, and she said, ‘These heroic Frenchwomen people make so much fuss about, I notice you don’t see any of *them* turning out to run cars or distribute clothes to refugees. Much they bother themselves for France. They stay right inside their comfortable homes and do fancywork as usual.’ Yes, she said that. Oh, André, it *hurt*! I was ashamed that I could be hurt so cruelly by anything but the war.”

This led to talk of America. “All our hope is with them, Jeanne. You mustn’t mind what one woman said—very likely a tired woman too, fretted by being in a country where she doesn’t speak the language. All the future is in their hands, and, by God, Jeanne, I begin to believe they realize it! They are really coming, you know; they are really here. I see them with my own eyes, not just doctors and nurses and engineers and telegraphists, as at first, but real fighting men. They are in the sector next to ours now. They fight. They fight with a sort of exuberance, as though it were a game they were playing and meant to win. And they all say that their country is back of them as France is back of us, to the last man, woman, and child. They’re queer fellows. They remind me a little of our Normans and a little of our Gascons, if you can imagine the combination. Whenever there is a difficulty they have a whimsical, bragging little phrase, that they drawl out in their sharp, level voices, ‘Never you mind, the Yanks are coming.’ It made me smile at first, at their presumption, at their young

ignorance. But there is something hypnotizing about the way they say that jerky, unlovely phrase, like the refrain of a popular song that sticks in your mind. It sticks in mine. ‘The Yanks are coming!’ The Russians have gone, or rather the Russians never were there, but ‘the Yanks are coming!’”

Jeanne had been looking at him hard, scarcely hearing what he said, drawing in a new conviction from his eyes, his accent, the carriage of his head. “Why, André! you are really hoping that it may end as it ought!” she interrupted him suddenly, “You are really hoping—” He nodded soberly. “Yes, my darling, I really hope.”

He was silent, smiled, drew her to him with a long breath, his arm strong and hard about her. They might have been eighteen and twenty again. “And I know,” he whispered, “that you are the loveliest and the best and the bravest woman in the world.”

The tears ran down her cheeks at this—happy tears which he kissed away. When she could speak she protested, saying brokenly that she was weak, she was helpless in the face of the despair which so often overcame her, that she was perilously poised on the edge of hysteria. “Ah, who isn’t near that edge?” he told her. “Not to go over the edge, that is the most that can be done by even the strongest in these days.” “No, no,” she told him. “You don’t know how weak I am, how cowardly, how I must struggle every day, every hour, not to give up altogether, to abandon the struggle and sink into the abyss with the children.” “But you don’t give it up,” he murmured, his lips on her cheek. “You do go on with the struggle. I always find the children alive, well, happy. *You weak! You cowardly! You are the bravest of the brave.*”

The clock struck ten.

They went upstairs hand in hand to look at the sleeping children and to try to plan some future for them. Jeanne told of her anxieties about Michel, the oldest, who had silent, morose fits of brooding. “He’s old enough to feel it all. The littler ones only suffer physically.” André put his father’s hand on the sleeping boy’s forehead and looked down at him silently, the deep look of strength and comprehension which was like the wine of life to his wife. She thought it was a benediction to the boy which no priest could better. André took his watch out of his pocket and laid it on the table. “See here,” he said, “I’m going to leave this here for Michel when he wakes in the morning. I only use the old wrist watch nowadays. It may please the little fellow to know I think him big enough to have my watch.”

“He’ll make it a talisman—it’s the very thing!” she agreed, touched by his divining sympathy for the boy’s nature.

They roamed then through the cold deserted rooms of the much-loved little home, unused because of lack of fuel, but the wan, clustering memories were too thick even for their tried and disciplined hearts. They went back into the smoky kitchen, shivering.

The clock struck eleven.

As it struck twelve, Jeanne turned back from the door, the lamp in her hand, the last echo of his footsteps faint in her ears. She stood for a moment, trance-like, staring at the yellow flame of the lamp, her eyes wide. Already it seemed impossible that he had been there.

She felt horribly, horribly tired, hardly any other sensation but that. She went upstairs, undressed rapidly, blew out the light, and lay down beside little Maurice. She slept with him, that she might be sure to watch over him carefully enough, fearing that she might not rise in the cold so readily for him as for the others. Almost at once she fell into a profound sleep.

She woke with a start, to find herself standing up in her nightgown in the darkness, on the cold floor, in the middle of the room, the cold, damp wind blowing in on her from the black opening of the window. And at once she knew what had happened—knew it as though some one had just finished telling her.

André had not been there at all that day. He had been killed, that was it, and her intense longing had brought his spirit straight to her for a moment, and all the rest she had imagined.

Staring into the darkness, she saw it all with perfect lucidity. That was why he had looked so dim and shadowy when she had first seen him in the hall; that was why his smile had been so strange. That was why the children had seemed so queer; she understood now, it was because they saw no one there and because they heard her talking to herself.

Did she, then, often talk to herself, that they should do no more than look sidelong and askance when she did it? Yes, she must have been slowly going

near the edge of dementia during the last weeks, and quite over the edge into madness the last five days of suspense.

A deadly chill shook her, so that her teeth chattered loudly in the darkness, audible even to her ears. What did it matter? André had been killed. There was no meaning in anything any more.

The cold settled around her heart, an icy flood, and congealed in her veins. She felt herself to be dying and ran out to meet delivering death.

She heard André's voice saying clearly, "Whoever else is responsible for the war, the children are not. They must not suffer if we can help it."

There was a pause when the world seemed to be slowly shifting under her feet.

She knew what was coming. In an instant it came. In all that was left alive of her, she knew that she must try to go on living for the children.

She turned her back on escape, and in a spiritual agony like the physical anguish of child-birth, she put out her hands to grope her way back to the fiery ordeal of life.

Her hands, groping in the darkness, fell on something cold and metallic and round—André's watch, which he had left for Michel!

But if his watch was there, *he had been there himself.*

She ran trembling to the match box, struck a light, and looked. Yes, there was the watch, and a burned-out cigarette beside it.

The match went out suddenly in the cold, damp breath from the window.

André had come, then! And she—she was in such a pass that she was incapable of believing that her husband had been with her for an hour. Stretched on the rack of long separation, her body and brain had lost the power to conceive of happiness as real. She felt now that she had not really believed in his presence any of the time. That was why she had fancied the children looked oddly at him. *She had not been able to believe it!*

But she did now! It had reached her very self, at last, the knowledge that he had

been there, that he had been of good cheer, that he loved her, that he thought the war might yet be won for the right, that he had even laughed, had said—what was that quaint phrase?—“The Yanks are coming!”

She took the watch up in her hands, laid it against her cheek, and began to cry, sweet, weak, child-like tears.

She groped her way back to the bed, weeping silently, the watch clutched tightly in her hand.

She lay down beside the unloved little orphan, whom she loved through pity; she took him in her arms; she felt the watch cold and hard and actual against her heart, and, the tears still on her cheeks, she fell once more asleep, smiling.

FRANCE'S FIGHTING WOMAN DOCTOR

The American public has just heard of Dr. Nicole Girard-Mangin, the woman doctor who was mobilized and sent to the front by mistake, and who proved herself so fearless and useful that she was kept there for two years amid bursting shells and rattling mitrailleuses. She is being cited spectacularly as a dramatic proof that women can take men's parts, and do men's work, and know the man's joy of being useful. But she is much more than a woman doing a man's work. She is a human being of the highest type, giving to her country the highest sort of service, and remaining normal, sane, and well-balanced.

Long before the tornado of the war burst over the world, Paris knew her in many varying phases which now, as we look back, we see to have been the unconscious preparation for the hour of crisis. Personally I knew of her, casually, as the public-spirited young doctor who was attached to the Paris *lycée* where my children go to school, and who was pushing the "fresh-air" movement for the city poor. People who met her in a social way knew her as an attractive woman with a well-proportioned figure, lovely hair, and clear brown eyes, whom one met once or twice a week at the theater or in the homes of mutual friends, and who enjoyed a hearty laugh and cheerful, chatting talk. Other people who saw her every morning in her laboratory garb, serious, intent, concentrated, knew her as one of those scientific investigators who can not rest while the horrible riddle of cancer is unsolved.

Those who saw her in the afternoon among the swarming sick and poor of the *clinique* of the great Beaujon Hospital, knew her as one of those lovers of their kind who can not rest as long as the horrible apathy of public opinion about tuberculosis continues. People who investigated cures for city ills and who went to visit the model tenement house for the very poor, near the St. Ouen gate of Paris, knew her as the originator and planner of that admirable enterprise, whose energy and forcefulness saw it financed and brought to practical existence. Observers who knew her in the big international Feminist Conferences in European capitals, saw an alert, upright, quick-eyed Parisienne, whose pretty hats showed no sign of the erudition of the head under them. Friends knew her as the gently bred woman who, although driven by no material necessity, renounced the easy, sheltered, comfortable life of the home-keeping woman for an incessant, beneficent activity, the well-ordered regularity of which alone kept

it from breaking down her none too robust health. And those intimates who saw her in her home, saw her the most loved of sisters and daughters, the most devoted of mothers, adored by the little son to whom she has been father and mother ever since he was four years old.

No one dreamed of war, but if the very day and hour had been known for years, Dr. Girard-Mangin could hardly have prepared herself more completely for the ordeal. Unconsciously she had “trained” for it, as the runner trains for his race. She was not very strong, slightly built, with some serious constitutional weakening, but she filled every day full to the brim with exacting and fatiguing work. She had two great factors in her favor. One of them was that enviable gift which Nature gives occasionally to remarkable people, the capacity to live with very little sleep. The other is even more noteworthy in a doctor—in whom close acquaintance with the laws of health seems often to breed contempt.

Dr. Girard-Mangin is that rare bird, a doctor who believes profoundly, seriously, in the advice which she gives to others, in the importance of those simple, humdrum laws of daily health which only very extraordinary people have the strength of mind to obey. Never, never, she says, as though it were a matter of course, has she allowed fatigue, or overoccupation, or inertia, or boredom to interfere with her early morning deep-breathing and physical exercises, and her tonic cold bath. Never, never, no matter how long or exhausting the day, has she rolled into bed, dead beat, too tired to go through the simple processes of the toilet, which make sleep so much more refreshing. No matter how absorbed in her work, she has always taken the time at regular intervals to relax, to chat sociably with quite ordinary people, to go to the theater, to hear music. She has always breakfasted and lunched with her little boy, has steered him through his spelling and arithmetic, has gone on walks with him, has been his comrade and “pal.” This has been as good for her as for him, naturally. Every summer she has had the courageous good sense to take a vacation in the country. In short, she is a doctor who takes to her own heart the advice about rational life which doctors so often reserve for their patients.

To this woman, tempered to a steel-like strength by self-imposed discipline and by a regular, well-ordered life, came the great summons. And it found her ready to the last nerve in her strong, delicate little hand. You have read, probably, how on that “Day of Doom” when France called out her men, a *concierge* received, among mobilization papers for all the men in the big apartment house, one sending Dr. Girard-Mangin (presumably also a man, by the name) out to a

military hospital in the Vosges mountains. The notice of mobilization was handed to a woman, a patriotic woman who long ago had heard the call to fight for France's best interests. She had seen her brother go before her into the fighting ranks and she followed him, into danger and service. She said a quick good-by to her friends, to her parents, to her son, her only child, a fine boy of fourteen then, from whom she had never before been separated.

Will every mother who reads these lines stop here and think what this means?

There is no need to repeat in detail here what has already been told of the first three months of her service—her arrival at the field hospital, disorganized, submerged by the terrible, ever-renewed flood of wounded men, of the astonishment of the doctor in charge. “What, a woman! This is no place for a woman. But, good God! if you know anything about surgery, roll up your sleeves and stay!”

There she stayed for three months, those blasting first three months of the war, when French people put forth undreamed-of strength to meet a crisis of undreamed-of horror. Out there in that distant military hospital, toiling incessantly in great heat, with insufficient supplies, bearing the mental and moral shock of the first encounter with the incredible miseries of war, that modern, highly organized woman, separated for the first time from her family, from her child, fearing everything for them and for her country, had no word, no tidings whatever, till the 28th of August. Then no knowledge of her son, of her parents, only a notice that the Government had retreated from Paris to Bordeaux! Comforting news that, for the first! Next they knew that Rheims was taken. Then one of the men whose wounds she dressed told her that he had been able to see the Eiffel Tower from where he fell. This sounded as though the next news could be nothing but the German entry into Paris.

All France throbbed with straining, despairing effort, far beyond its normal strength, during those first three months; and to do the man's part she took, the delicate woman doctor, laboring incessantly among the bleeding wrecks of human bodies, needed all her will-power to pull her through.

Then the wild period of fury and haste and nervous, emotional exaltation passed, and France faced another ordeal, harder for her temperament even than the first fierce onset of the unequal struggle—the long period of patient endurance of the unendurable. The miracle of the Marne had been wrought; Paris was saved; the

sting and stimulant of immediate, deadly danger was past; the fatigue from the supernatural effort of those first months dimmed every eye, deadened all nerves. Then France tapped another reservoir of national strength and began patiently, constructively to “organize” the war. And that daughter of France bent her energies to help in this need, as in the first.

A rough rearrangement of competences was attempted everywhere on the front. Dentists no longer dug trenches, bakers were set to baking instead of currying horses, and expert telegraphers stopped making ineffectual efforts to cook. It came out then that the real specialty of the valiant little woman doctor who had been doing such fine work in the operating-room was not surgery at all. “I’m no surgeon, you know!” she says, and leaves it to her friends to tell you of the extraordinary record of her efficiency in that field, the low percentage of losses in her surgical cases. If you mention this, she says, “Ah, that’s just because I’m *not* a born surgeon. I have to take very special care of my cases to be equal to the job.” It was discovered that her great specialty was contagious diseases. There was great need for a specialist of that sort out at Verdun, where, alas! a typhoid epidemic had broken out. This was before the extra precautions about inoculations, which were taken later.

Dr. Girard-Mangin was sent to Verdun on November 1st, 1914, and was there steadily for more than a year, until the 28th of February, 1916. She found her sick men on mattresses, in tents, on such low ground that they were often literally in water. Whenever there was freezing weather, those who cared for them slid about on sheets of ice. Above them, on higher ground, were some rough old barracks, empty, partly remodeled, said to have been left there by the Prussians in 1871. “Why don’t we move the sick up there?” she asked, and was met by all the usual dragging, clogging reasons given by administrative inertia.

The sheds were not ready to occupy; there were no expert carpenters to get them ready; it would be impossible to heat them; no order for the change had come from Headquarters—furthermore, a reason not mentioned, the sheds, being on higher ground, were more exposed to shell-fire. Dr. Girard-Mangin had had some experience with administrative inertia in her struggles for better housing for the poor; and long before the war she had known what it was to put herself voluntarily in danger—the scar from a bad tubercular infection on her hand is the honorable proof of that. She knew that the sick men would be better off in the barracks on higher ground. So she took them there. Just like that.

She was to have the entire care of the typhoid epidemic, and the only help which could be given her was to come from twenty men, absolutely unassorted—such a score as you would gather by walking down any street and picking up the first twenty men you met. There were several farm-laborers, a barber, an accountant, miscellaneous factory hands. The only person remotely approaching a nurse was a man who had had the training for a pharmacist, but as he had never been able to stay sober long enough to take his examinations, you may not be surprised that he was the least useful of them all.

These twenty casually selected human beings went unwillingly up the hill toward the barracks, ironic, mocking, lazy, indifferent, as human beings unelectrified by purpose are apt to be. But, although they did not know it, there marched at their head an iron will, a steel-like purpose, and an intelligence which was invincible. They took this to be but a smallish, youngish woman in uniform, and were all in great guffaws at the comic idea of being under her orders.

Of course, to begin with, she did not know one of her men from another, but she studied them closely as they worked, driven along by her direction, setting up the rough camp-stoves, stopping the worst of the holes in the walls, arranging the poor apologies for mattresses, and cutting off the tops of gasoline-cans for heating water—for our woman doctor was asked to take care of several hundred typhoid cases and was not provided with so much as a bowl that would hold water. Presently, as they worked, she noticed that there were but nineteen men there. All day she studied their faces, their bearing, what was written on them for the seeing eye to read. At night, at supper-time, there were twenty men. Those clear brown eyes swept around the circle and pounced on a mild-looking *poilu* innocently taking his soup with the others.

“Where have you been all day?” she asked him.

He fairly turned pale with astonishment, “Why, how did you—? I’ve been right here, working!” he tried to bluster her down.

“No, you haven’t. You haven’t been here since a quarter past ten this morning,” she assured him.

He hung his head a moment, then looked an ugly defiance. “Well, I’ve been in to Verdun to spend the day with a friend. What are you going to do about it?”

“I’m going to have you punished for disobeying an officer,” she said promptly, though so little military had been her beneficent life, that she had no more idea than you or I or any other woman would have of what punishment could be given in such a case.

“Officer’s orders!” said the man. “*What officer?*” All the men laughed.

“I’m your officer,” she said, and went away to telephone to the military authority in charge of such cases.

“I can’t be expected to have discipline if I’m not backed up,” she said. “This is a test case. It’s now or never.”

The answer was a non-com and a guard marching up to the barracks, saluting the military doctor, and, with all due military ceremony, carrying off the offender for a week in prison. Dr. Girard-Mangin laughs still at the recollection of the consternation among the nineteen who were left. “I never had any trouble about *discipline*, after that,” she says. “Of course there were the utter incompetents to be weeded out. For that I followed the time-honored army custom of sending my worst man whenever the demand from Headquarters came for a good, competent person to be sent to other work! Before long I had reduced the force of nurses to twelve. Those twelve I kept for all the time of my service there, and we parted at the end old friends and tried comrades. I have never lost track of them since. They always write me once in a while, wherever they are.”

As soon as it grew dark enough, that first night, for the ambulances to dash out through the blackness, over the shell-riddled roads to the *abris*, close to the front, the stricken men began to come in. Before dawn, that very first night, there were fifty-five terrible typhoid cases brought into the bare sheds. Then it was that Dr. Girard-Mangin, working single-handed with her score of crude, untrained helpers, needed all her capacity for going without sleep. Then it was that her men, seeing her at work, stopped laughing because she was a woman and admired her because she was a woman doing wonderful things; then, best of all, forgot that she was a woman, and took her simply for the matchless leader that she is, in the battle against disease. I think it was not wholly the guard, marching away the disobedient man to prison, who was responsible for the fact that our little woman doctor had no further difficulty with discipline.

The condition of the typhoid patients was harrowing beyond words. A man

going out with his squad to a front-line trench would be stricken down with fever on arriving. It was impossible for him to return until his squad was relieved and he could be carried to the rear on a comrade's back. There he was, there he must remain, for the three or four or five days of his squad's "turn" in the front lines. Can you imagine the condition of a man with typhoid fever, who has lain in a trench in the mud for four days, with no shelter from the rain or snow but an overcoat spread over him, with no care beyond an occasional drink of water from a comrade's flask? For your own sake I hope you can not imagine it. And I will not go into details. Enough to say that such men were brought in by the tens, by the twenties, by the fifties, filthy beyond words, at the limit of exhaustion, out of their heads with weakness and fever and horror.

And there to stem that black tide of human misery stands this little upright, active, valiant, twentieth-century woman. I think, although we are not of her nation, we may well be proud of her as a fellow-being who had voluntarily renounced ease to choose the life which had made her fit to cope with the crisis of that night—and of the more than four hundred days and nights following. For cope with it she did, competently, resolutely, *successfully*. "Oh yes, we gave them cold baths," she says, when you ask for details. "We managed somehow. They had all the right treatment, cold baths, wet packs, injections, the right food—everything very primitive at first, of course, but everything you ever do for typhoid anywhere. Our percentage of losses was very low always."

"But how? *How?* How did you manage?" you ask.

"Oh, at the beginning everything was very rough. We had only one portable galvanized-iron bathtub. Since they were all so badly infected, there was less danger in bathing them all in the same tub than in not fighting the fever that way. And then, just as soon as I could reach the outside world by letter, I clamored for more, and they were sent."

"But how could you, single-handed, give cold baths to so many men? It's a difficult matter, giving a cold bath to a typhoid patient."

"I wasn't single-handed. I had my twelve soldier-nurses."

"*'Nurses,'* you say! Farm-laborers, accountants, barbers, drunken druggists!"

"But I got rid of that good-for-nothing pharmacist at once! And the others—the twelve good ones—they learned what to do. They learned how to give the simple

remedies. They learned how to do the other things enough to give me a report—how to take temperatures, how to give the baths at the right degree for the right time, how to take the pulse.”

“How could they learn all that?” you ask, amazed.

“I taught them,” says Dr. Girard-Mangin, slightly surprised, in the simplest, most matter-of-fact tone.

You look past her, out there to that hand-to-hand struggle with death which was carried on by the one indomitable will and the one well-trained mind, strong enough not only to animate this woman’s body before you, but those other bodies and ignorant, indocile minds.

“They did it very well, too,” she assures you, and you do not doubt her.

That woman could teach anybody to do anything.

You come back to details. “But how could you get enough water and heat it for so many baths, on just those rough, small, heating-stoves?”

“Well, we were at it all the time, practically, day and night. We cut the tops off those big gasoline-cans the automobilists use, and stood one on every stove up and down the barracks. There wasn’t a moment when water wasn’t being heated, or used, or carried away.”

“What could you do about intestinal hemorrhages?” you ask. “You must have had many, with such advanced cases. Your farm-hand nurses couldn’t——”

“I never tried to teach them how to handle any real crisis, only to recognize it when it came, and go quickly to fetch me. I taught them to watch carefully and at the first sign of blood on their patients’ clothing or on the mattress, to take the knapsack out from under the sick man’s head—they had no other pillow, of course—to lay him down flat, and then to run and call me, from wherever I was.”

“You must have had almost no sleep at all.”

“That was the greatest help I had, being able to get along on little sleep. And I got more work out of my helpers than any man could, for they were ashamed to ask to sleep or rest, seeing that a woman half their size could still keep going.”

ask to sleep or rest, seeing that a woman, half their size, could still keep going.

“But how about your famous hygienic regularity, the morning exercises and cold baths and——”

“Oh, as soon as I saw I was in for a long period of regular service, I took the greatest care to go on with all the things which keep one fit for regular service.”

“Morning tubs?”

“Yes, morning tubs! I slept—what time I had to sleep—in an abandoned peasant’s house in an evacuated village near the hospital. I didn’t take any of the downstairs rooms because people are likely to walk right into an abandoned house, and part of the time there were soldiers quartered in the village. Then there was usually somebody in the house with me. The other times I had it all to myself. I took a room on the second floor. It happened to have a flight of steps leading up to it, and another one going out of it into the attic. Of course, I never had any heat, and the drafts from those two open stairways—well, it was like sleeping in the middle of a city square. Sometimes I used to take down a bottle filled with hot water, but the bed was so cold that it was almost instantly chilled. Many a time I have gone to sleep, all curled up in a ball, holding my feet in my hands, because they were so cold, and wakened to find them still as icy. Oh, the cold! That is the worst enemy of all at the front, the most wearing, the most demoralizing, the most dehumanizing, because it *lasts* so. With other things—hunger, wounds, danger—either it kills you, or it passes. But the cold is always there.”

She loses herself for a moment in brooding recollection and you wonder if Jeanne d’Arc ever did anything braver for her country than did this delicate, stout-hearted modern woman, sleeping alone for months and months in bitter cold in a deserted house in a deserted village.

She comes back to the present. “And it was there that I took my morning tubs!” she says with an amused smile. “Of course the water froze hard into a solid lump. So I put *carbonate de potasse* into it. This not only kept it from freezing, but made it alkaline, so that it was an excellent detergent and stimulant to the skin. I assure you, after a night in which I had been incessantly called from one bed to another, when I felt very much done-up, my cold sponge-bath in that water was like a resurrection. I was made over. Then, of course, no matter how busy I was, I took care of my feet—changed my stockings and shoes every day.

Feet are one's weakest point in a long pull like that."

You venture to remark about a slight limp noticeable when she walks. "Yes, it comes from a frozen foot—I have to admit it. But it's really not my fault. That was later, at the time of the battle at Verdun. There are always brief crises, when you have to give your all and not stop to think. I went nine days then without once taking off my shoes. I hadn't my other pair by that time. The *Boches* had them, probably."

But we have not come to that terrific epic, as yet. Before that second tornado burst over the heads of the French and of our woman doctor, there was a long, hard, dull period of four hundred and seventy days of continuous service—for Dr. Girard-Mangin, being a pioneer woman, felt in honor bound to do more than a man would do. In the three years and more of her war service, she has had just three weeks' furlough, seven days out of every year to see her son, to see her family, to relax. Every other day of that long procession of days, she has been on duty, active, and, as befits a woman, constructively active.

She did not continue resignedly to struggle with tin-can drinking-cups, and one bathtub for two hundred men. Neither did she rely on the proverbially slow mills of the Government to grind her out the necessary supplies. She was not only the army doctor in charge of the contagious cases in the big sanitary section and hospital near Verdun, she was also a figure of international importance, the *Présidente* of the Hygiene Department of the *Conseil International des Femmes*—her predecessor had been Lady Aberdeen; she was high in honor at the big Beaujon Hospital in Paris; she was well-known to the charitable world in the Society for Hygienic Lodgings for the poor, which owed so much to her; and she had a wide circle of friends everywhere. The little *aide major* sent out from her bare shed-hospital, lacking in everything, a clarion call for help for her sick men. With years of experience in organization back of her, she set to work and, in the midst of the fury of destruction all about her, built up, item by item, a little corner of order and competent activity. In November, 1914, there was nothing but a windswept shed, with straw pallets and tin-can utensils. By June of the next year you would have found, if you had had the courage to go within two kilometers of the front line, a very well-appointed contagious ward of a military hospital, where nothing was lacking for the men's comfort—except a certainty that the whole thing might not be blown to pieces by a shell. And by the end of 1915, when there began to be talk of a great German drive against Verdun, the men under our doctor's supervision had as good care as they could have had

anywhere, with laboratory and sterilizing facilities—everything. Dr. Girard-Mangin knew what was the best to be had in hospitals and she did not rest until somehow, Aladdin-like, she had made it to blossom, out there in danger and desolation.

All during January of 1916 there was terrific tension along that front. The monster German offensive against Verdun was in the air. The month of January passed with desperate slowness, such intent, apprehensive suspense being torturing for human nerves, especially tired human nerves which had already been through a long, severe period of trial.

Everybody showed signs of nervousness. Our little doctor stuck faithfully to her bedrock principles of health, changed her shoes and stockings every day, took her Spartan baths and rub-downs in her colder-than-freezing water, went through her deep-breathing and her setting-up exercises every morning. By such merely feminine reliance on everyday sanity in life, she kept herself in excellent physical shape, and did not succumb to the temptation, which is too much for so many doctors under strain, of hypodermics of strychnin, and other stimulants.

February 1st came. The great storm, looming murkily, had not burst.

February inched itself along, and finally, because human nature can only stand about so much of strain, nerves began to relax in utter fatigue.

On February 21st, which was a Monday, it was fairly clear, cold, with what passes for sunshine in that region. Dr. Girard-Mangin stepped out in front of her shed-hospital ward, after lunch, and made this remark to herself: “I don’t believe the *Boches* are going to pull off that offensive at all. And to-day is almost sunny. I have a good notion to go over to the 165th and get my hair washed.” There was an ex-coiffeur in that regiment who kept on with his trade in his leisure moments.

As this singularly peace-time thought passed through her mind, an *obus* screamed its way loudly over her head. “That’s near,” she thought, “nearer than they generally are.”

Before she could get back into the hospital, the battle of Verdun had begun.

The blow was delivered with astounding rapidity, and with stunning force. Up to that time, nothing had ever been conceived like the violence of the artillery fire.

There in the hospital, only two kilometers back of the front, the noise was so great they could scarcely hear each other's voices. Upon those men, and that woman, unnerved by six weeks of nerve-racking suspense, the great crisis leaped with murderous fury. It was as though the world were being battered to pieces about their heads. Each one called up in himself all the reserve strength his life had given him and, tight-lipped, clung as best he could to self-control.

The first nerves to give way were in the bakeshop. The bakers suddenly burst out of their overheated cell and, half-naked in that sharp cold, clad only in their white-linen aprons and trousers, fled away, anywhere, away, out of that hell. One of the doctors, seeing this beginning of the panic, shouted out in an angry attempt to stem the tide of fear, "Shame on you, men! What are you doing! What would happen if every one ran away!"

One of the fleeing bakers, dodging with agility the outstretched restraining arms, called out heartily, with a strong Southern accent, "Right you are, doctor, perfectly right!" and continued to run faster than ever. Which typically *Midi* phrase and action was seized upon by those gallant French hearts for the laugh which is the Gallic coquetry in the face of danger.

But even they could not smile at what they next saw. At four o'clock that afternoon began the spectacle, awful to French eyes, of regiments of *chasseurs* fleeing toward the rear.

"So inconceivable was this to me, that I repeated, '*Chasseurs! Retreating!*'"

Dr. Girard-Mangin closed her eyes a moment as if she saw them again. "Oh, yes, retreating—and no wonder! All their equipment gone, no guns, no ammunition, no grenades, no bayonets—their bare fists, and those bleeding, for weapons. Many of them were naked, yes, literally naked, except for their leather cartridge belts. Everything made of cloth had been blown from their bodies by the air-pressure from exploding shells. Many of them were horribly wounded, although they were staggering along. I remember one man, whose wounds we dressed, who came reeling up to the hospital, holding his hand to his face, and when he took his hand down most of his face came with it. Oh, yes, they were retreating, those who had enough life left to walk. And they told us that Verdun was lost, that no human power could resist that thrust."

All that night, and all the next day and all the next night, such men poured

through and past the hospital and during all that time there was no cessation in the intolerable, maddening din of the artillery. When you ask Dr. Girard-Mangin how she lived through those days and nights, she tells you steadily, “Oh, that was not the worst. We could still work. And we did. More than eighteen thousand wounded passed through the hospital that week. We had too much to do to think of anything else. It seemed as though all the men in the world were wounded and pouring in on us.”

On Wednesday afternoon, the tide of men changed in character somewhat, and this meant that the end was near. In place of *chasseurs* and the ordinary *poilus*, quantities of brown Moroccans, those who fight at the very front, came fleeing back, horribly wounded, most of them, yelling wild prayers to Allah, clutching at themselves like children and howling like wild beasts—impossible to understand or to make understand. And yet, somehow, the hospital staff, staggering with fatigue themselves, ministered to them, too, until—this was where they all touched bottom—until, on Wednesday night, the electricity suddenly gave out and, in the twinkling of an eye, blackness fell on the great wards, shaken by the incessant infernal screaming rush of the shells overhead, by the thunder of the cannon, and filled with the shrieks of the agonizing wild men from Africa. Blackness like the end of the world.

Messengers were sent hastily to grope their way down to the nearest village for candles. But they returned empty-handed. Long before that the soldiers had carried off all the supply of candles.

“What did you do, all that night?”

Dr. Girard-Mangin makes no light pretense of belittling the experience.

“It was awful beyond anything imaginable,” she tells you gravely. “The worst thing that can happen to a doctor had come—to be in the midst of suffering and not to be able to lift a finger to help. All that we could do was to give them water to drink. We could feel our way to the water-pitchers. The rest of the time we could only sit, helpless, listen to the shells and to the wounded men groaning, and wait for dawn.”

Yes, it is a small, delicately fashioned woman, like you, like me, who lived through those days and those nights, and came through them morally and physically intact, into an even greater usefulness. It will not be a bad thing to remember her the next time we feel “tired” in our ordinary round of small

efforts.

On the next day came the order to evacuate the hospital, bitter proof of the German success. Dr. Girard-Mangin began sending off her sick men in relays of four in the only ambulance at her disposal. They were taken down to the nearest little branch railroad, there put on the train, and sent—nobody knew where, anywhere out of the range of German guns.

All day Thursday the evacuation went on. By Thursday evening there were left only nine men in her ward, men practically dying, far gone with intestinal hemorrhages, too ill to move. Dr. Girard-Mangin spent another black night beside her dying men, moving from one to another in the intense obscurity, raising her voice above the thunder of the artillery to comfort them, to give them what small help she could without a light. On Friday all the hospital staff, with a few exceptions, was to leave. The hospital buildings and equipment were to be left in the charge of a non-com and two privates; and the men too ill to transport were to be left with one doctor and two aides. The rule in the French Sanitary Service for that case is that the youngest doctor stays with the sick. Dr. Girard-Mangin was the youngest doctor.

But at this, the good head-doctor, who had daughters of his own in Paris, cried out that there was a limit, that he would never forgive any man who left a daughter of his alone in such a position, alone with dying men, alone under fire, alone to face the *Boches*. No, no Frenchman could be expected to do that.

Dr. Girard-Mangin appealed over his head to the military authority in command, for permission to do her duty as it fell to her. "I have not failed in my services so far. It is not just to force me to fail now."

The military ruling was that the usual rule would hold. The little woman doctor stayed in danger, and the men went back to the rear. The parting was a moving one; those comrades of hers who had seen her working by their sides for so many months took her in their arms and wept openly as they bade her good-by.

If you venture to ask her what were her own emotions at this moment, she tells you with a shudder, "Oh, sorrow, black, black sorrow for France. We all thought, you know, that Verdun had fallen, that the Germans had pierced the line. No one knew how far they had gone. It was an awful moment." Apparently she did not think of herself at all.

All day Friday, she was there with her stricken men and with two aides. Friday night she lay beside them in the dark. On Saturday the man left in charge of the hospital buildings went mad from the nervous tension—they expected almost from hour to hour to see the Germans appear—and from the hellish noise of the artillery.

I find myself cold as I try to think what another black night meant in those conditions. Dr. Girard-Mangin passed it and emerged into another dawn.

On Sunday morning the General in command of that region, amazed to find that any one was still there, sent peremptory orders that the premises must be evacuated entirely, dying men and all. They would certainly be killed if they were kept there. And more, there was no longer anything to give them to eat. This was a military order and so overrode the rulings of the Sanitary Service. Dr. Girard-Mangin prepared to evacuate. She had at her disposition a small *camion* in which she put the four men best able to be carried, and her own ambulance in which she packed the five worst cases, crosswise of the vehicle. To try to give them some security against the inevitable jolting, she bound them tightly over and over to their stretchers. Then, with her little medicine-kit, she got in beside them and told her chauffeur to take them to Clermont-en-Argonne, and not by the safer route taken by the *ravitaillement* convoys, because her sick men could never live through the length of that trip, but by the shorter road, leading along directly back of the front.

“I wonder that he was willing to take that dangerous route,” you say.

“I didn’t ask his opinion about it,” says Dr. Girard-Mangin with a ring of iron in her voice.

So began a wild ride of forty-three kilometers, constantly under fire, with five men at the point of death. The chauffeur dodged between the bursting shells, the woman in the car watched her sick men closely and kept them up with hypodermics of stimulants—which are not administered by a shaking hand!

You ask respectfully, looking at the white scar on her cheek, “It was then, during that ride, that you were wounded, wasn’t it?”

She nods, hastily, indifferently, and says, “And when we finally reached Clermont-en-Argonne, my sick men were no better off, for I found the hospital absolutely swamped with wounded. I said I was there with five mortally sick

men from Verdun, and they answered, ‘If they were all Generals we could not take them in. You are mad, Madame, to bring *sick* men here.’ So we went on ten kilometers further to a little village called Froidos, where my face-wound was dressed and where finally I was able to leave my men, all alive still, in good hands.”

“They didn’t live to get well, did they?” you ask.

At this question, she has a moment of stupefaction before the picture of your total incomprehension of what she has been talking about; she has a moment’s retrospective stare back into that seething caldron which was the battle of Verdun; she opens her mouth to cry out on your lack of imagination; and she ends by saying quietly, almost with pity for your ignorance, “Oh, I never saw or heard of those men again. There was a great deal too much else to be done at that time.”

Have you lost track of time and place in that adventure of hers? It is not surprising. She was then in the little village of Froidos, on the afternoon of Sunday, February 27th, almost exactly a week after the battle began—and after almost exactly a week of unbelievable horror—after four nights spent without a light in a great hospital full of wounded men—after a ride of nearly fifty kilometers constantly under fire, with mortally sick men. And she now turned, like a good soldier who has accomplished the task set him, to report at headquarters for another.

Her headquarters, the *Direction du Service Sanitaire* was at Bar-le-Duc. Without a moment’s rest or delay, she set out for Bar-le-Duc, she and her chauffeur, half-blind with lack of sleep. They arrived there at midnight. She reported herself at the hospital, so large that in normal times it holds three thousand wounded. “I have just brought in the last of the sick from the military hospital at Verdun,” she said, to explain her presence. They were astounded to hear that any one had been there so lately. Every one had thought that certainly the Germans were there by that time.

“Please, is there a place where I may sleep a few hours?” she said.

But there was no place, not one. The great hospital was crowded to the last inch of its space with wounded—halls, passageways, aisles, even the stairs had wounded on them. Finally some one gave her a blanket and she lay down on the

floor in the little office of the head-doctor and slept till morning—five or six hours. Then she went out into the town to try to find a lodging. Not one to be had, the town being as full as the hospital. She had not taken her clothes off, naturally, nor her shoes.

“Oh, then I did feel tired,” she says. “That morning, for the first time, I knew how tired I was, as I went dragging myself from door to door, begging for a room and a bed. It was because I was no longer working, you see. As long as you have work to do, you can go on.”

At last a poor woman took pity on her, said that she and her daughter would sleep together on one narrow bed, and let her have the other one.

“I was so glad, so glad,” says Dr. Girard-Mangin, “to know I was to have a real bed! I was like a child. When you are as tired as that, you don’t think of anything but the simple elementals—lying down, being warm, having something to eat—all your fine, civilized ideas are swept away.”

She went back toward the hospital to get what few things she had been able to bring with her, and there she saw her chauffeur waving a paper toward her. “We are to be off at once,” he said, and showed her an order to leave Bar-le-Duc without delay, taking two nurses with them, and to go with all speed to the hospital at Vadelaincourt. They were crowded with wounded there.

“Then, at once, my tiredness went away,” she says. “It only lasted while I thought of getting a bed. When I knew we were going into action once more, I was myself again.”

By two o’clock that afternoon—this was Monday—they were *en route* for the hospital, the doctor on the seat by the chauffeur, the two nurses, hysterical with fear over the shells, weeping inside.

“What a terrible, tragic, inspiring trip that was!” she exclaims, and almost for the only time during her quietly told narration her voice quivers, her eyes suffuse. “We were going against the tide of fresh reserves, rushing out to the front—mile after mile, facing those strongly marching ranks of splendid young Frenchmen, all going out to suffer the unimaginable horrors from which I had just come. I could not bear to look into those eager, ardent faces. I was so proud of them, so yearning over them! And they were so full of spirit, hurrying forward to the supreme sacrifice. They shouted out to us again and again, ‘The battle isn’t over

yet, is it? Will we get there in time?’ They laughed light-heartedly, the younger ones, when they saw me and called out, ‘Oh, the women are fighting out there, too, are they?’ Wave after wave of them, rank on rank, the best of my country, marching out to death.”

They were delayed by an accident to a tire, being instantly—as is the rule on military roads, always crammed to the last inch—lifted bodily into a neighboring field for repairs. No stationing for repairs is allowed on a road where every one is incessantly in movement. While the repairs were being made, the car sank deeper and deeper into the mud, and it was a Herculean undertaking to get it back in the main thoroughfare. As usual, a crowd of good-natured *poilus* managed this, heaving together with the hearty good-will to which all drivers of American ambulances can testify.

Delayed by this, it was nearly midnight when they drew near their destination. The chauffeur turned off the main road into a smaller one, a short cut to the hospital, and sank at once in mud up to his hubs. From twelve o’clock that night till half-past five in the morning, they labored to make the few kilometers which separated them from Vadelaincourt. Once the chauffeur, hearing in the dark the rush of water against the car, announced that he was sure that the river had burst its banks, that they had missed the bridge and were now in the main current. Dr. Girard-Mangin got down to investigate and found herself knee-deep in mud so liquid that its sound had deceived the chauffeur. They toiled on, the nurses inside the car wringing their hands.

By the time it was faintly dawn they arrived at the hospital, where the hard-worked head-doctor, distracted with the rush of wounded, cried out upon her for being a woman, but told her for Heaven’s sake to stay and help. The nurses were taken in and set to work, where at once they forgot themselves and their fears. But again there was no place for the new doctor to sleep, the hospital being overflowing with human wreckage. She did what all ambulance people hate to do, she went back to the reeking ambulance, laid herself on a stretcher, wet boots and all, drew up about her the typhoid-soaked blankets of her ex-patients, and instantly fell asleep. The chauffeur had the preferable place of sleeping under the car, on another stretcher.

She had no more than closed her eyes, when came a loud, imperious pounding on the car, “Get up quickly. The *médecin-en-chef* sends for you at once; terrible lot of wounded just brought in; every hand needed.”

She went back through the mud to the hospital, had a cup of hot coffee and—detail eloquent of the confusion and disorganization of that feverish week—some plum-cake! By what freak of *ravitaillement* there was only plum-cake, she never knew.

Then she put on her operating-apron and cap. She went into the operating-room at half-past seven in the morning. She operated steadily, without stopping, for more than five hours. At one o'clock she felt giddy and her legs failed her. She sat down flat on the floor, leaning back against the wall. "Here it comes!" she said to herself, fighting the faintness which dissolved all her members, "Here comes womanishness!"

But it did not come. She sat thus, setting her teeth and tightening her will until she conquered it. A new relay of doctors came in. She staggered off, had more coffee, a piece of chocolate and another piece of plum-cake! And was told that she would be "off duty" till eight that evening. Where could she go to rest? Nowhere. Snow lay on the fields, mud was deep in the roads. There was not a bed empty.

"I sat down in a corner, in a chair, quite a comfortable chair," she tells you, "and took down my hair and brushed and braided it. You know how much that rests you!"

Now, Dr. Girard-Mangin is the last person in the world over whom to sentimentalize, and I swore before beginning to write about her that I would try not to do it. But I can not restrain myself from asking you here if you do not feel with me like both laughing and crying at the inimitable, homely femininity of that familiar gesture, at the picture of that shining little warrior-figure, returning in that abomination of desolation to the simple action of a sheltered woman's everyday home life?

Then she went to sleep, there in the "quite comfortable" chair, with her shoes unlaced but still on her feet. "I had lost my other pair somewhere along the route," she explains, "and I didn't dare to take those off because I knew I could never get them on again if I did."

There followed twenty days of this terrific routine, steady work in the operating-room with intervals of seven hours' "rest," with nowhere to go to rest. "But the food got better almost at once," she says, in explanation of her having lived through it. "We couldn't have gotten along on plum-cake, of course!"

For nine of those twenty days, she never took off her shoes at all, and the foot was frozen there which now she drags a little in walking.

On March 23rd, a month after the battle of Verdun had begun, the *médecin-chef-inspecteur* came to Vadelaincourt, went through the usual motions of stupefaction to find a woman doctor there, decided—rather late—that it was no place for a woman, and sent her to Châlons. For six months thereafter, she was in the Somme, near Ypres, working specially among the tubercular soldiers, but also taking her full share of military surgery. “Just the usual service at the front, nothing of special interest,” she says with military brevity, baffling your interest, and leaving you to find out from other sources that she was wounded again in June of that year.

On the 11th of October, 1916, a remarkable and noteworthy event took place. For once a Governmental action was taken with intelligence. The Government, wishing to institute a special course of training for military nurses at the front, called to its organization and direction, not somebody’s relation-in-law, not a politician’s protégée, but the woman in France best fitted to undertake the work. Such an action on the part of any Government is worthy of note!

The hospital which had been built for charitable purposes on the Rue Desnouettes was loaned to the Government. What was needed for its head was some one who knew all about what training was essential for nursing service at the front. Any good military doctor could have done this part. Also some one was needed who knew all about what is the life of a woman at the front. Any good nurse of military experience could have seen to this. Also there was needed a person with experience in organization, with the capacity to keep a big enterprise in smooth and regular running. Any good business man could have managed this. Furthermore there was needed a person with magnetism who could inspire the women passing through the school with enthusiasm, with ardor, with devotion—I needn’t go on, I think. You must have seen that only one person combined all these qualifications, and she is the one now at the head of the hospital-school.

Dr. Girard-Mangin received a call summoning her back to that “work at the rear” which is such a trial for those who have known the glory of direct service at the front.

This meant drudgery for her, long hours of attention to uninteresting but important details, work with a very mixed class of intelligences—the women in her courses of study vary from peasant girls to officers' widows; bending her quick intelligence to cope with sloth and dullness. It meant, worst of all and hardest of all, living again in the midst of petty bickerings, little personal jealousies, mean ambitions. Nothing is more startling for those who “come back from the front” than to find the world at the rear still going on with its tiny quarrels and disputes, still industriously raking in its muck-heap. And nothing more eloquently paints our average, ordinary life than the intense moral depression which attends the return to it of those who have for a time escaped from it to a rougher, more dangerous, and more self-forgetful atmosphere.

For me, no part of Dr. Girard-Mangin's usefulness is more dramatic than the undramatic phase of it in which she is now faithfully toiling. Her coolness under fire, her steadiness under overwhelming responsibilities, her astonishing physical endurance do not thrill me more than this prompt, disciplined ability to take up civilian life again and quiet, civilian duties.

She has organized the hospital ingeniously along original lines, as a perfect reproduction of what the nurses will encounter at the front: a series of barracks, a ward to each shed, with the nurse's little sleeping-cubicle at the end with its rough but sufficient sanitary arrangements. Another unit is given over to the operating-room and its appendages, the sterilizing-room, anesthetic-room, etc. Another is the administrative building, and contains the offices of the *médecin-en-chef*, the head-nurse, the pharmacy, the bacteriological laboratory. At one side are very simple but wholesome sleeping quarters and study-rooms for the fifty and more nurses who pass through the school every three months. For Dr. Girard-Mangin only takes them in hand when they have already completed a course of training in ordinary hospitals. Even then she weeds out rigorously, in the middle of the short, intensive, concentrated course, those who do not show the necessary physical, mental, and moral qualities to fit them for the grave responsibilities they will have at the front, for nurses from this hospital go out to direct and run the field hospitals, not merely to be nurses there.

The work for the doctor at the head is a “grind,” nothing less, monotonous, like all teaching—an ever-reiterated repetition of the same thing—no glory, no change, no bright face of danger. The clear brown eyes face it as coolly, as undaunted, as they faced bursting shells, or maddened soldiers. The clear-thinking brain sees its vital importance to the country as well as it saw the more picturesque need for staying with sick men under fire. The well-tempered will

picturesque need for staying with sick men under me. The well-tempered will keep lassitude and fatigue at bay, keeps the whole highly strung, highly developed organism patiently, steadily, enduringly at work for France.

There, my fellow-citizens in America, there is a citizen to envy, to imitate!

LOURDES

From the Ends of the Earth they come—Old and Young, the Lamé and the Blind—to Ask for the Blessing.

Afternoon. There was not a vacant place left in the long line of waiting sick, so that at the last, when a little, white-faced blind boy with dreadful horny growths on his eyes, was handed over the heads of the crowd, he seemed to have come too late.

His mother's voice rose anxiously, in reiterated piteous demands to the stretcher-carriers to make a place for him, any place, where he could receive the blessing, for it was the day of the greatest pilgrimage of the year, when twenty-five thousand people sang and prayed together for the cure of the sick, when the Host was carried in solemn procession to bless them, lying in long lines up and down the broad esplanade.

"Oh, for the love of God, find a place for him!" she implored, in so strained a voice of entreaty that the crowd, dense as it was, gave way a little and allowed her to press forward, back of the wheeled chairs of the cripples. The stretcher-carrier who had taken the child in his arms hesitated, looking about him for a vacant spot. He glanced at a wounded soldier, rigid on his litter, his face as white as it would be in his coffin; and then turned to a child stricken with a disease of the bones which paralyzed his legs and made of his hands only twisted, shapeless stumps, but which still permitted him to sit in one of the wheeled chairs. His little withered body did not half fill it, and it was there beside him that the attendant decided to put down the blind boy.

His mother gave a long sigh of intense feeling and between the closely packed bodies of the crowd strained forward to be near him.

"I'm here, darling, I'm here," she said in a voice of concentrated tenderness.

The blind boy turned his hanging head a little, toward the sound of her voice and stretched back a thin, waxy-white hand. She managed to touch it for an instant, but then said, "Not now, darling. You mustn't turn back toward Mother. You must join your hands and pray to be cured, pray for the blessing. You must repeat whatever the priest says."

For at that moment the powerfully built, bearded priest, with the eyes of fire and the thrown-back head of born command, strode down the center of the great open place and stood looking intently about him at the lines of the white-faced sick, and the immense throngs of pilgrims back of them. He raised his hands suddenly in a vivid gesture, and cried in a trumpet-like voice, like a captain leading forward a charge, "Brothers, pray! Pray for our sick. With all your soul, with all the strength of your body and mind, pray God for our sick!"

He paused a moment. Every eye was on him.

The blind boy held his face lowered meekly as blind children often do, as sensitive children who know themselves unsightly always do. His thin, white neck was bent like that of a victim awaiting the blow, but he put his little pale fingers together and, turning for a moment, tried to show to his mother that they were in the attitude of prayer. She whispered, "Yes, yes, darling, that is right. But not toward me. Toward where the blessing is coming, so that you may be cured."

"Lord save us! Lord God save us, for we perish!" prayed the priest in a loud clear voice of exaltation; and after him all the multitude cried it aloud, in a great murmur like the voice of a forest, or of the sea.

The blind boy's lips moved with the rest, but his little face was clouded and anxious. He whispered to the crippled child beside him:

"Are you blind, too, or can you see?"

"I can see," said the other, "but I have never walked."

"Then you must show me where I must put my hands so that they will be toward the blessing," begged the blind child.

The other took the thin, transparent fingers between his twisted stumps, and directed them toward the priest, thrillingly upright, aspiring visibly toward the sky. "There, you must keep them turned toward the priest now," he said with an accent of certainty. "Later on it will be toward the procession as it moves along, and then at the last toward the church."

"You must tell me when to change them," said the blind boy.

He stretched out his joined hands farther in the direction indicated by his

He stretched out his joined hands farther in the direction indicated by his companion and repeated with the others, after the priest, his little voice lost in the great upward rush of the supplications of the thousands around him, "Lord! Lord! Our sole trust is in Thee!"

The priest's voice soared into a glorious note of song, in which the multitude joined, their eyes on him, their faces solemn in expectation. The priest sang a line, the multitude chanted a response; the man's voice ran out again, yearning, beseeching, the voice of the multitude rose thousand-fold in answer. The earth seemed to shake in unison, the low-hanging, heavy gray clouds to send back the sound. The chanting, imploring, impassioned voice of the throng seemed more alive than its multitudinous bodies, rapt into utter stillness.

"Is it thus that I should hold my hands?" whispered the blind boy after a time.

"No, now the procession has just come into the other end of the square," said the crippled child. With an effort he leaned, took the little white fingers again, and pointed them another way.

"So?" asked the blind child humbly.

"Yes, so," answered the other. He tried to put his own shapeless stumps together in the attitude of prayer and began to sing with the pilgrims now defiling before them in endless lines, "Praise! All praise to Thee! Praise, all praise to Thee, Lord God!" The pilgrims were passing by, now, in single file, each with his long white taper, burning yellow in the gray light of the gray day. Their voices were loud and personal, each one as he passed being heard for an instant alone.

"Glory! Glory to Thee!" they all sang the propitiatory words together, over and over, a hundred times repeated—the old wrinkled peasants in their blouses; the elegant officers in their well-cut uniforms; the stout elderly merchants; the thin, weedy boys; the white-faced, shaven priests; the black men from Senegal with bushy, woolly hair; the tall, fair-haired man from England; the occasional soldier on leave in his shapeless, faded, blue-gray uniform. Above all their voices rose the silver bugle-like call of the priest, burning, devouring in its ardor, "Brothers! Brothers! with all your souls, now. GLORY BE TO THEE! Oh, Lord, save us, for we perish! Lord, our trust is in Thee. Praised be Thy name!"

With each clamorous exhortation, repeated clamorously by all those imploring voices, he lifted the multitude up another step toward the great moment of awe and faith. The tears were streaming down the faces of many of the women in the

crowd. The little boy's mother sobbed loudly, and prayed with all her might.

The march past of the innumerable men, the incessant flickering passage of their pale-yellow lights, the never-ending procession of their pale, anxious faces, became an obsession. It seemed that every one, everywhere in the world, was marching together, singing and praying, hoping against hope for a miracle.

“Isn't it time to change my hands?” asked the little blind boy desperately. “I have heard so *many* people pass. I am very, very tired.”

“No, it is not yet time to change,” said the other, leaning forward to look down the esplanade. “The procession with the Host goes very slowly because it stops before each sick person. They are not near yet.”

“My hands are very tired,” murmured the little blind boy, faintly. But he held his hands out still, praying with the others, as the priest directed them. “Lord help us, for we perish. Lord! Thou alone canst save us! Lord, say but one word and we are healed. Lord, say but one word. But one word, oh, Lord!”

He held his strengthless hands out as he was told, groping helplessly for the blessing he so sorely needed; his blind eyes turned docilely in the direction indicated to him; he repeated meekly in his feeble little voice whatever words he was told to say—and all around him thousands and thousands of other helpless, docile, suffering human beings in similar plight, did the same, desperately, their faces groping up toward the sky, their joined hands imploring, “Lord save us, or we perish!”

The pilgrims filed past continually, their eyes staringly fixed on the feeble light of their tapers, their voices torn out of their bodies by the ever-deepening fervor and hope of the shouted, passionate commands of the priest, calling, “Brothers! With all your soul pray for our sick! Lord, say but one word and they are healed! But one word, oh, Lord!”

“The blessing is very long in coming,” faltered the blind boy timidly, his face even whiter than at the beginning, his lips blue.

The pilgrims passed constantly, the heavy tramp of their feet shaking the chair on which sat the little paralyzed boy and the blind child, their hands outstretched. The men's voices were hoarse and deep now, trembling with fatigue and emotion.

The perspiration streamed down the face of the priest as in piercing tones he exhorted the multitudes, "Brothers, with all your soul, pray! *Pray!*"

Presently, because he was a weak, sick little child, and because the blessing was so long in coming, the little blind boy fell asleep, his head on the shoulder of the paralyzed child.

Then all the care and anxiety and humiliation and sorrow left his little white face. It was perfect in a perfect peace.

The blessing had come.

Evening.

Scattered all over the vast stretch of the esplanade, thousands of little lights flickered and moved about in the rainy darkness, all that could be seen of the immense multitude gathering for the evening procession. The top of the great, horseshoe-shaped, marble, inclined plane up which they were later to defile, was so high above the ground that not a sound reached there of all those human voices talking together in the dark, calling to each other, as people tried to find their friends in the obscurity, and to form groups that they might march together. The little lights they held were only slightly sheltered from the gusts of wind-driven rain by cheap paper shades and they flickered and flared up, and many were extinguished. Although many went out and were lighted again only once more to have the wind puff them into blackness, the number of lighted ones grew fabulously as the crowd assembled. The little yellow spots of life spread further and further, till around the foot of the huge inclined plane was an ocean of lights, heaving formlessly, with a futile, aimless motion like the sea, humanity lost in the darkness.

Then a faint murmur came up through the rain and darkness. Speaking voices are not heard far, but voices raised in song have wings. The crowd was beginning to sing.

It was also beginning to take shape. From the foot of the inclined plane out into the black esplanade, streamed two long files of light, purposeful, with the sharp, forward-piercing line of the arrow. The procession was beginning to form.

The murmur rose into a chant as the crowd, hearing the first notes, took it up,

singing as they fell into line. The first of the lights advanced up the ascent toward the top, which was blazing with light from the illuminated front of the lofty church. Far, far behind, stretching twice around the immense esplanade and disappearing into the distant blackness of the endless avenue, the flickering lights were now in two lines, moving forward steadily.

The sound of voices grew louder, the advancing files were visible now, masses intensely black against the night.

The wind roared, the rain beat down. The voices suddenly rang out clear and vibrant, high above the confused roar of the singing multitudes below.

Then the glimmering blur of the faces in the reflected light of the candles shone through the rain; each dim figure, in a momentary transfiguration, was resplendent in the flare of light from the church, the voices shouted loud and strong, drowning out in their instant's glory of individual life the hoarse chant of the vast crowd below. Then each figure passed forward out of the light and began to descend the inclined plane on the other side, going singing down into the blackness.

There were so many singing now that, although they all sang the same chant over and over, a chant in which recurs constantly the acclaiming shout of "Hail! Hail!" they were not singing in tune together nor even in time, nor even often the same words at the same time.

As the groups passed, each one was singing in its own fashion on a different key from those gone before and those following them. When this was too apparent, they sometimes stopped, listened, caught the note from the pilgrims nearest to them, and burst out again, this time in harmony. But for the most part they listened only to their own voices and to those of their friends, and sang lustily in a hearty discordance.—and so vast was the throng and so simple the joyful air they chanted, that from that monstrous discordance rose a strange and wonderful harmony like no other music in the world, with a deep pulsation longer than that of any other music, beating time, beating true.

They passed, shouting out loudly the confident words of their song; the young faces often laughing gaily in the shaking light of their candles, stopping to light the blown-out flames at the candles of their friends; the older people tramping forward resolutely, singing, often not noting that their one light had been blown

out and that they were walking in darkness—no, not walking in darkness, because of the infinite number of lights about them, carried by their fellows; the young girls' eyes glistening through the rain as they gazed upward toward the circle of white light at the top of the ascent; the old men's eyes turned downward on the darkness to which they would descend; the occasional priest-leader beating time, marshaling the lines; the occasional children holding to their parents' hands, their eyes blank and trustful, fixed on their candles, their pure lips incessantly shaping the joyful acclaiming shout of "Hail! Hail!"

Sometimes a group lagged behind, either because of the carelessness of the young people in it, or the fatigue of the old people, and there was almost a break in the line of lights. But always as they approached the moment of transfiguration, the ones who were behind hurried forward shufflingly to keep the line intact. The line was always intact.

The rain beat down on them, but they sang loudly and joyously, rejoicing in singing together; the wind tore at their garments and puffed at their frail, unprotected lights. Many went out. But there were always enough lights left in each group to light those of the others—if they wished.

Last of all I saw a strong young man whose light had been extinguished, holding out his lifeless candle to that of an old, poor, bent woman who, patiently, patiently, offered him her tiny, living flame.

SOME CONFUSED IMPRESSIONS

(Near Château-Thierry, July, 1918)

They were detraining in dense brown crowds at what had been the station before German guns had knocked it into a shapeless heap of tumbled bricks; they were pouring in on foot along the road from the west; and when I made my way along the main street to the river, I found another khaki-clad line leaving the little town, marching heavily, unrhythmically and strongly out across the narrow, temporary wooden bridge, laid hastily across the massive stone pillars which were all that remained of the old bridge.

An old, white-capped woman, who had been one of my neighbors in the days before the little town had known German guns or American soldiers, called out to me: “Oh, Madame! See them! Isn’t it wonderful! Just look at them! All day like that, all night like that. Are there any people left in America? And are all your people so big, so fine?”

“Where are they going?” I asked her, taking refuge for a moment in her doorway.

“To the front directly, the poor boys. They’ll be fighting in two hours—do you hear the big guns off there banging away? And they so good, like nice big boys! Their poor mothers!”

I addressed myself in English to a soldier loitering near, watching the troops pass, “So they are going to the front, these boys?” After a stare of intense surprise, a broad smile broke over his face. He came closer. “No, ma’am,” he said, looking at me hard. “No, these are the Alabama boys just coming back from the front. They’ve been fighting steady for five days.” He added: “My, it seems good to talk to an American woman. I haven’t seen one for four months!”

“Where are you from?” I asked him.

“Just from the Champagne front, with the Third Division. Two of our regiments out there were—” He began pouring out exact, detailed military information which I would not have dreamed of asking him. The simple-hearted open confidence of the American soldier was startling and alarming to one who had

for long breathed the thick air of universal suspicion. I stopped his fluent statement of which was his regiment, where they had been, what their losses had been, where they were going. “No, no, I mean where are you from in the States?” I raised my voice to make myself heard above the sudden thunder of a convoy of munition-camions passing by and filling the narrow street from side to side.

“Oh, from Kansas City, Missouri. It’s just eight months and seven days since I last saw the old town.” (Thus does a mother count the very days of the little new life of her child.)

“And how do you like France?”

“Oh, it’s all right, I guess. The climate’s not so bad. And the towns would be well enough if they’d clean up their manure-piles better.”

“And the people, how do you get on with them?”

The camions had passed and the street was again filled with American infantry, trudging forward with an air of resolute endurance.

“Well enough, they don’t cheat you. I forgot and left a fifty-franc bill lying on the table of a house where I’d bought some eggs, and the next morning the woman sent her little girl over to camp to give it back. Real poor-appearing folk they were, too. But I’ve had enough. I want to get home. Uncle Sam’s good enough for me. I want to hurry up and win the war and beat it back to God’s country.”

He fell away before the sudden assault on me of an old, old man and his old wife, with the dirt, the hunted look, the crumpled clothes, the desperate eyes of refugees: “Madame, Madame, help us! We cannot make them understand, the Americans! We want to go back to Villers-le-Petit. We want to see what is left of our house and garden. We want to start in to repair the house—and our potatoes must be dug.”

I had passed that morning through what was left of their village. For a moment I saw their old, tired, anxious faces dimly as though across the long stretch of shattered heaps of masonry. I answered evasively, “But you know they are not allowing civilian population to go back as yet. All this region is still shelled. It’s far too dangerous.”

They gave together an exclamation of impatience as though over the futilities of children's talk. "But, Madame, if we do not care about the danger. We never cared! We would not have left, ever, if the soldiers had not taken us away in camions—our garden and vineyard just at the time when they needed attention every hour. Well, we will not wait for permission; we will go back anyhow. The American soldiers are not bad, are they, Madame? They would surely not fire on an old man and his wife going back to their homes? If Madame would only write on a piece of paper that we only want to go back to our home to take care of it —"

Their quavering old voices came to me indistinctly through the steady thudding advance of all those feet, come from so far, on so great, so high, so perilous a mission; come so far, many of them, to meet death more than half-way—the poor, old, cramped people before me, blind and deaf to the immensity of the earthquake, seeing nothing but that the comfort of their own lives was in danger. I had a nervous revulsion of feeling and broke the news to them more abruptly than I would have thought possible a moment before. "There is nothing left to Villers-de-Petit. There is nothing left to go back to."

Well, they were not so cramped, so blind, so small, my poor old people. They took the news standing, and after the first clutch at each other's wrinkled hands, after the first paling of their already ashy faces, they did not flinch.

"But the crops, Madame. The vineyards. Are they all gone, too?"

"No, very little damage done there. Everything was kept, of course, intact for camouflage, and the retreat was so rapid there was not enough time for destruction."

"Then we will still go back, Madame. We have brought the things for spraying the vineyards as far as here. Surely we can get them to Villers-de-Petit, it is so near now. We can sleep on the ground, anywhere. In another week, you see, Madame, it will be too late to spray. We have enough for ours and our neighbors, too. We can save them if we go *now*. If Madame would only write on a piece of paper in their language that—"

So I did it. I tore a fly-leaf out of a book lying in the heap of rubbish before the ruins of a bombarded house (it was a treatise on Bach's chorales by the French organist Widor!) and wrote, "These are two brave old people, inhabitants of Villers-de-Petit, who wish to go back there to work under shell-fire to save what

they can of their own and their neighbors' crops. Theirs is the spirit that is keeping France alive."

"It probably won't do you a bit of good," I said, "but there it is for what it is worth."

"Oh, once the American soldiers know what we want, they will let us pass, we know." They went off trustfully, holding my foolish "pass" in their hands.

I turned from them to find another young American soldier standing near me. "How do you do?" I said, smiling at him.

He gave a great start of amazement at the sound of my American accent. "Well, how do you like being in France?" I asked him.

"Gee! Are you really an American woman?" he said incredulously, his young face lighting up as though he saw a member of his own family. "I haven't talked to one in so *long*! Why yes, I like France fine. It's the loveliest country to look at, isn't it? I didn't know any country could be kept up so, like a garden. How do they *do* it without any men left? They must be awfully fine people. I wish I could talk to them some."

"Who are these soldiers going through to-day?" I asked. "Are they going out to the front line trenches, or coming back? I've been told both things."

He answered with perfect certainty and precision: "Neither. They are Second Division troops, from Ohio mostly, just out of their French training-camp, going up to hold the reserve line. They never have been in action yet."

Our attention was distracted to the inside of a fruit-shop across the street, a group of American soldiers struggling with the sign-language, a flushed, tired, distracted woman shopkeeper volubly unable to conceive that men with all their senses could not understand her native tongue. I went across to interpret. One of the soldiers in a strong Southern accent said, "Oh golly, yes, if you *would* do the talkin' fo' us. We cyan't make out whetheh we've paid heh or not, and we wondelh if she'd 'low us to sit heah and eat ouh fruit."

From the Frenchwoman, "Oh, Madame, please what *is* it they want now? I have shown them everything in sight. How strange that they can't understand the simplest language!"

The little misunderstanding was soon cleared away. I lingered by the counter. “How do you like our American troops, Madame?” I asked. “Very well, very much indeed, if only they could talk. They don’t do any harm. They are good to the children. They are certainly as brave as men can be. But there is one thing about them I don’t understand. They overpay you, often, more than you ask—won’t take change—and yet if you leave things open, as we always do, in front of the shop, they just put their hands in and steal as they go by. I have lost a great deal in that way. If they have so much money, why do they steal?”

I contemplated making, and gave it up as too difficult, a short disquisition on the peculiarities of the American orchard-robbing tradition with its ramifications, and instead sat down at the table with the Americans, who gave me the greeting always repeated, “Great Scott! its good to talk to an American woman!”

A fresh-faced, splendidly built lad, looked up from the first bite of his melon, crying: “Yes suh, a cantaloupe, a’ honest-to-the-Lawd cantaloupe! I neveh thought they’d *heahd* of such a thing in France.”

They explained to me, all talking at once, pouring out unasked military information till my hair rose up scandalized, that this was their first experience with semi-normal civilian life in France because they belonged to the troops from Georgia, volunteers, that they had been in the front-line trenches at exactly such a place for precisely so many weeks where such and such things happened, and before that at such another place, where they were so many strong, etc., etc.

“So we neveh saw real sto’s to buy things till we struck this town. And when I saw a cantaloupe I mighty nigh dropped daid! I don’t reckon I’m likely to run into a watermelon, am I? I suahly would have to be ca’ied back to camp on a stretcheh if I did!” He laughed out, a boy’s cloudless laughter. “But say, what do you-all think? I paid fo’ty-five cents for this slice, yes, ma’am, fo’ty-five cents for a *slice*, and back home in Geo’gia you pay a nickel for the biggest one in the sto’!” He buried his face in the yellow fruit.

The house began to shake to the ponderous passage of artillery. The boys in khaki turned their stag-like heads toward the street, glanced at the motley-colored, mule-drawn guns and pronounced expertly, “The 43rd, Heavy Artillery, going out to Nolepieds, the fellows from Illinois. They’ve just been up in the Verdun sector and are coming down to reinforce the 102nd.”

For the first time the idea crossed my head that possibly their mania for pouring out military information to the first comer might not be so fatal to necessary secrecy as it seemed. I rather pitied the spy who might attempt to make coherent profit out of their candor. “How do you like being in France?” I asked the boy who was devouring the melon.

He looked up, his eyes kindling, “Well, I was plumb crazy to get heah and now I’m heah I like it mo’ even than I ’lowed I would.” I looked at his fresh, unlined boy’s cheeks, his clear, bright boy’s eyes, and felt a great wave of pity. “You haven’t been in active service yet,” I surmised.

Unconsciously, gayly, he flung my pity back in my face, “You bet yo’ life I have. We’ve just come from the Champagne front, and the sehvice we saw theah was suah active, how about it, boys?”

They all burst out again in rapid, high-keyed, excited voices, longing above everything else for a listener, leaning forward over the table toward me, their healthy faces flushed with their ardor, talking hurriedly because there was so much to say, their tense young voices a staccato clatter of words which brought to me in jerks, horribly familiar war-pictures, barrage-fires meeting, advancing over dead comrades, hideous hand-to-hand combats—all chanted in those eager young voices.

I felt the heavy pain at the back of the head which presages a wave of mortal war-sickness.

In a pause, I asked, perhaps rather faintly, “And you like it? You are not ever homesick?”

The boy with the melon spoke for them all. He stretched out his long arms, his hands clenched to knotty masses of muscles; he set his jaw, his blue eyes were like steel, his beautiful young face was all aflame. “Oh, you just get to *love* it!” he cried, shaking with the intensity of his feeling. “You just *love* it! Why, I *neveh* want to go home! I want to stay over heah and go right on killin’ *Boches* all my life!”

At this I felt sicker, stricken with the collective remorse over the war which belongs to the older generation. I said good-bye to them and left them to their child-like ecstasy over their peaches and melons.

The artillery had passed. The street was again solidly filled with dusty, heavily laden young men in khaki, tramping silently and resolutely forward, their brown steel casques, shaped like antique Greek shepherd hats, giving to their rounded young faces a curious air of classic rusticity.

An older man, with a stern, rough, plain face stood near me. “How do you do?” I asked. “Can you tell me which troops these are and where they are going?” I wondered what confident and uninformed answer I would receive this time.

Showing no surprise at my speech, he answered, “I don’t know who they be. You don’t never know anything but your own regiment. The kids always think they do. They’ll tell you this and they’ll tell you that, but the truth is we don’t know no more than Ann—not even where we are ourselves, nor where we’re going, most of the time.”

His accent made me say: “I wonder if you are not from my part of the country. I live in Vermont, when I’m at home.”

“I’m from Maine,” he said soberly, “a farmer, over draft age of course. But it looked to me like a kind o’ mean trick to make the boys do it all for us, so I come along, too.” He added, as if in partial explanation, “One of my uncles was with John Brown at Harper’s Ferry.”

“How do you like it, now you’re here?” I asked.

He looked at me heavily. “Like it? It’s hell!” he said.

“Have you been in active service?” I used my usual cowardly evasive phrase.

“Yes, ma’am, I’ve killed some of ’em,” he answered me with brutal, courageous directness. He looked down at his hands as he spoke, big, calloused farmer’s hands, crooked by holding the plough-handles. As plainly as he saw it there, I saw the blood on them, too. His stern, dark, middle-aged face glowered down solemnly on those strong farmer’s hands. “It’s dirty work, but it’s got to be done,” he said, gravely, “and I ain’t a-going to dodge my share of it.”

A very dark-eyed, gracefully-built young soldier came loitering by now, and stopped near us, ostensibly to look at the passing troops, but evidently in order to share in the phenomenon of a talk in English with an American woman. I took him into the conversation with the usual query, “How do you do, and how do

you like being in France?”

He answered with a strong Italian accent, and I dived into a dusty mental corner to bring out my half-forgotten Italian. In a moment we were talking like old friends. He had been born in Italy, yes, but brought up in Waterbury, Connecticut. His grandfather had been one of Garibaldi's Thousand, so of course he had joined the American army and come to France among the first.

“Well, there are more than a Thousand of you this time,” I said, looking at the endless procession defiling before us.

“*Si, signora*, but it is a part of the same war. We are here to go on with what the Thousand began.”

Yes, that was true, John Brown's soul and Garibaldi's, and those of how many other fierce old fighting lovers of freedom were marching on there before my eyes, carried like invisible banners by all those strong young arms.

An elderly woman in well-brushed dowdy black came down the street toward us, an expression of care on her face. When she saw me she said, “Well, I've found you. They said you were in town to-day. Won't you come back to the house with me? Something important. I'm terribly troubled with some American officers—oh, the war!”

I went, apprehensive of trouble, and found her house (save for a total absence of window-glass) in its customary speckless and shining order. She took me upstairs to what had been a bedroom and was now an office in the Quartermaster's department. It was filled with packing-case improvised desks and with serious-faced, youngish American officers who, in their astonishment at seeing me, forgot to take their long black cigars out of their mouths.

“There!” said the woman-with-a-grievance, pointing to the floor. “Just look at that. Just *look!* I tell them and I *tell* them, not to put their horrid boxes on the floor but to keep them on the linoleum, but they are so stupid, they can't understand language that any child could take in! And they drag those boxes just full of nails all over the floor. I'm *sick* of them and their scratches!”

A big gun boomed solemnly off on the horizon as accompaniment to this speech.

I explained in a neutral tone to the officers looking expectantly at me, what was

at issue. I made no comment. None was needed evidently, for they said with a gravity which I found lovable that they would endeavor to be more careful about the floor, that indeed they had not understood what their landlady had been trying to tell them. I gave her their assurance and she went away satisfied.

As the door closed on her, they broke into broad grins and pungent exclamations. "Well, how about that! Wouldn't that get you? With the town bombarded every night, to think the old lady was working herself up to a froth about her floor-varnish! And we thinking that every French person is breaking his heart over the invaded regions!"

One of them said, "I never thought of it before, but I bet you my Aunt Selina would do just that! I just bet if her town was bombarded she'd go right on shooin' the flies out of her kitchen and mopping up her pantry floor with skim-milk. Why, the French are just like anybody, aren't they? Just like our own folks!"

"They are," I assured him, "so exactly like our own folks, like everybody's own folks that it's quite impossible to tell the difference."

When I went away, the owner of the house was sweeping the garden-path clear of broken-glass. "This bombardment is such a nuisance!" she said disapprovingly. "I'd like to know what the place would be like if I didn't stay to look after it."

I looked at her enviously, securely shut away as she was by the rigid littleness of her outlook from any blighting comprehension of what was going on about her. But then, I reflected, there are instants when the comprehension of what is going on is not blighting. No, on the whole I did not envy her.

Outside the gate I fell in at once with a group of American soldiers. It was impossible to take a step in any direction in the town without doing this. After the invariable expressions of surprise and pleasure over seeing an American woman, came the invariable burst of eager narration of where they had been and what had been happening to them. They seemed to me touchingly like children, who have had an absorbing, exciting adventure and must tumble it all out to the first person they meet. Their haste, their speaking all at once, gave me only an incoherent idea of what they wished to say. I caught odd phrases, disconnected sentences, glimpses through pin-holes.

“... ..”

“One of the fellows, a conscript, that came to fill a vacant place in our lines, ne was only over in France two weeks, and it was his first time in a trench. He landed there at six o’clock in the evening, and just like I’m telling you, at a quarter past six a shell up and exploded and buried him right where he stood. Yes, ma’am, you certainly do see some very peculiar things in this war.”

From another, “We took the whole lot of ’em prisoners, and passed ’em back to the rear, but out of the fifteen we took, eight died of sudden heart-disease before they got back to the prisoners’ camp.” (I tried not to believe this, but the fact that it was told with a laugh and received with a laugh reminded me gruesomely that we are the nation that permits lynching of helpless men by the mob.)

From another, “Some of the fellows say they think about the *Lusitania* when they go after the *Boche*. I don’t have to come down as far as that. Belgium’s plenty good enough a whetstone for *my* bayonet.” (This reminded me with a thrill that we are the nation that has always ultimately risen in defense of the defenseless.)

From another, “One of our own darkies went up to one of these here Senegalese and began talking United States to him. Of course the other darkey talked back in French, and ours said, ‘Why, you pore thing! You be’n over heah so long you dun forgot yo’ motheh-tongue!’”

From another, “Oh, I can’t stand the French! They make me tired! And their jabber! I seen some of ’em talk it so fast they couldn’t even understand each other! Honest, I did.”

From another, “There’s something that sort of *takes* me about the life over here. I’m not going to be in any hurry to go back to the States and hustle my head off, after the war’s over.”

From another, “Not for mine. Me for Chicago the day after the *Boches* are licked.”

They were swept away by a counter-current somewhere in the khaki ebb and flow about us, and I found myself with a start next to a *poilu*, yes a real *poilu* with a faded horizon-blue uniform and a domed, battered, blue French casque, such a *poilu* as had filled the town when I had lived there.

“Well,” I said to him, “things have changed here. The town’s khaki now.” He

looked at me out of bright brown eyes, smiled, and entered into conversation. We talked, of course, of the American soldier, one of whom came up and stood at my elbow. When I stopped to speak to him, “Gee!” he said, “I wish I could rip it off like that. I can say ‘combien’ and ‘trop cher,’ but there I stick. Say, what does the Frenchman say about us? Now, since that little Belleau-wood business I guess they see we know a thing or two ourselves about how to run a war! They’re all right, of course; mighty fine soldiers, but Lord! you’d know by the way any one of them does business, as if he’s all day for it, that they couldn’t run a war *fast*, the way it ought to be run, the way we’re going to run it, now we’re here.”

I did not think it necessary to translate all of this to the bright-eyed little Frenchman on my other side, who began to talk as the American stopped. “You asked my opinion of the American troops, Madame. I will give it to you frankly. The first who came over, your regular army, the mercenaries, made a very bad impression indeed. All who have come since have made the best possible impression. They are really astonishingly courageous, and there could be no better, or more cordial comrades in the world. But oh! Madame, as far as they really know how to make modern war, they are children, just children! They make the mistakes we made four years ago. They have so much to learn of the technique of war, and they will lose so many men in learning it! It is sad to think of!”

I did not think it necessary to translate all this to the American who now shook hands with both of us and turned away. The Frenchman, too, after a look at the clock in the church-tower, made his compliments, saluted, and disappeared.

I walked forward and, coming to the church door, stepped inside. It was as though I had stepped into another world. I had found the only place in town where there were no soldiers. The great, gray, dim, vaulted interior was empty.

After the beat of the marching feet outside, after the shuffling to and fro of the innumerable men quartered in town, after the noisy shops crowded with khaki uniforms, after the incessant thunderous passage of the artillery and munitions-camions—the long, hushed quiet of the empty church rang loud in my ears. I wondered for just an instant if there could be any military regulation, forbidding our soldiers to enter the church; and even as I wondered, the door opened and a boy in khaki stepped in—one out of all those hordes. He crossed himself, took a rosary out of his pocket, knelt, and began his prayers.

Thirty-thousand soldiers were in that town that day. Whatever else we are, I reflected, we are not a people of mystics.

But then I remembered the American soldier who had said that Belgium was a good enough whetstone for his bayonet. I remembered the rough, gloomy farmer who did not want to shirk his share of the world's dirty work. Perhaps there are various kinds of mystics.

Once outside the church I turned to look up Madame Larconneur, the valiant market-gardener who had been one of my neighbors, a tired young war-widow, with two little children, whom I had watched toiling early and late, day and night, to keep intact the little property left her by her dead soldier husband. I had watched her, drawing from the soil of her big garden, wet quite literally by her sweat, the livelihood for her fatherless little girls. I wondered what the bombardment of the town had done to her and her small, priceless home.

I found the street, I found the other houses there, but where her little, painfully, well-kept house had stood was a heap of stones and rubble, and in the place of her long, carefully tended rows of beans and cabbages and potatoes, were shell-holes where the chalky barren subsoil streaked the surface, and where the fertile black earth, fruit of years of labor, was irrevocably buried out of sight. Before all this, in her poor, neat black, stood the war-widow with her children.

I sprang forward, horrified, the tears on my cheeks. "Oh, Madame Larconneur, how awful! How awful!" I cried, putting out both hands to her.

She turned a white, quiet face on me and smiled, a smile that made me feel infinitely humble. "My little girls are not hurt," she said, drawing them to her, "and as for all this—why, if it is a part of getting other people's homes restored to them"—her gesture said that the price was not too high.

The look in her sunken eyes took me for an instant up into a very high place of courage and steadfastness. For the first time that day, the knot in my throat stopped aching. I was proud to have her put her work-deformed hands in mine and to feel on my cheeks her sister's kiss.

It steadied me somewhat during the difficult next hour, when in the falling twilight I walked up and down between the long rows of raw earth, with the innumerable crosses, each with its new, bright American flag, fluttering in the sweet country air. I needed to recall that selfless courage, for my heart was

breaking with sorrow, with guilt-consciousness, with protest, as I stood there, thinking of our own little son, of the mothers of the boys who lay there.

A squad of soldiers were preparing graves for the next day. As they dug in the old, old soil of the cemetery to make a place for the new flesh come from so far to lie there forever, a strong odor of corruption and decay came up in puffs and drifted away down toward the little town lying below us, in its lovely green setting, still shaking rhythmically to the ponderous passage of the guns, of the troops, of the camions.

At one side were a few recent German graves, marked with black crosses and others, marked with stones, dating from the war of 1870, that other nightmare when all this smiling countryside was blood-soaked—and how many times before that!

Above me, dominating the cemetery, stood a great monument of white marble, holding up to all those graves the ironic inscription, “Love ye one another.”

The twilight fell more and more deeply, and became darkness. The dull, steady surge of the advancing troops grew louder. Night had come, night no longer used for rest after labor in the sunlight, night which must be used to hurry troops and more troops forward over roads shelled by day.

They passed by hundreds, by thousands, an endless, endless procession—horses, mules, camions, artillery, infantry, cavalry; obscure shadowy forms no longer in uniform, no longer from Illinois, or Georgia or Vermont, no longer even American; only human—young men, crowned with the splendor of their strength, going out gloriously through the darkness to sacrifice.

“IT IS RATHER FOR US TO BE HERE DEDICATED”

“It is rather for us to be here dedicated...”

Out in the wheat-field, golden under a golden sun, I came suddenly on the young American soldier, lying dead, his face turned toward the *Bois de Belleau*. He was the stillest thing in all the silent countryside, ghostly quiet after the four-days’ din of battle, now gone forward and thundering on the horizon. Compared to his stillness, the wheat-stalks, broken and trampled as they were, seemed quivering conscious life; the trees, although half-shattered by the shell-fire, fluttered their bright leaves, vividly alive; the weeds by the roadside vibrated in triumph. They were wounded, mutilated, disfigured, but they had survived. They were alive. Only the soldier had not survived.

All men go a long journey to meet their death, through many days and months and years. But he and his comrades had gone a longer than any man before them. They had passed through all those days and months and years; and more than that, across unending miles of those other wheat-fields in a far country and across the unending miles of the ocean they saw for the first time; but far more than that, they had crossed incalculable gulfs of traditions, of prejudice, of the tyranny of old, fixed ideas.

He had come a long journey, he had trod a new road, he was fighting a new fight, this soldier who had turned his back on the limitations of the past, who was making forward into the future with all the strength and faith of his young manhood, when he met his sudden destiny and lay down forever in a wheat-field of France.

There he lay in a blessed, blessed stillness, having done his best.

Being still alive, and so not permitted to lie down by him to rest, I left him, and returned to a great city, any great city—all great cities everywhere in the world being the same.

I stood before the door of a shop. I saw an old, thin, work-deformed woman cowering before a well-fed man with a brutal voice who stood over her, angrily

shouting at her that she had not sufficiently burnished the brass hinges of the great glass doors. With the rich abundance of the wheat-fields still golden before my eyes, I saw her cowering before him, all her sacred human dignity stripped from her by her need for food, by the fear of more hunger than even she could endure.

I saw a woman with a bloated, flabby body, strained together into a cohesion by steel bands, with a bloated, flabby face covered with red and white. Small glass-like pieces of white stone were thrust into the pierced flesh of her ears, gleamed on her protuberant bosom, on her puffed, useless fingers. With the roar of the distant battle still in my ears, I heard her saying, "The war is lasting too long! Lucette tells me that it's impossible for her to get the right shade of silk for my corset; the only coiffeur who understands my hair has been sent to the front; and I have not had a bonbon in ten days."

I saw a wretched, disinherited son of man, shaking with alcoholism, rotten with disease, livid with hunger, undone with hopelessness, flung on a bench like a ragged sack of old bones. Only the palsied trembling of his dirty hands showed that he lived. But with the awful odor of real death still in my nostrils, I perceived that he was alive, while the strong young soldier was dead.

I saw a man with a gross, pale countenance, with white fine linen and smooth black broad-cloth, who stepped confidently forward, not deigning to lift his eyes to the crowd about him, sure that they would give way before the costliness of his ring and pin.

In his soft, white hands he held a newly printed newspaper which, open at the news from the stock exchange, he read with an expression of eager rapacity. On his way stood a woman in all the fleshly radiance of her youth, with some of the holiness of youth still left on her painted mouth. She, looking at him hungrily, desperately, forced his eyes up to meet hers. With the glory of the dead soldier still in my soul, I saw the rapacity in his eyes change to lust, I saw an instant's sickness in hers go out, quenched by the bravado of despair.

Oh, American soldier, lying still in the wheat-field of France, did you come so far a journey to meet your death in order that all this might continue?

"Let us here highly resolve that all these dead shall not have died in vain...."

THE DAY OF GLORY

... if the armistice is signed, a salvo of cannon from the Invalides at eleven o'clock will announce the end of the war.

The clock hands crept slowly past ten and lagged intolerably thereafter. The rapid beating of your heart, telling off the minutes, brought eleven finally very near. Then the clock, your heart, all the world, seemed to stand still. The great moment was there. Would the announcing cannon speak? Such a terrible silence as the world kept during that supreme moment of suspense! It was the quintessence of all the moral torture of four nightmare years.

And then ... like a shock within your own body it came, the first solemn proclamation of the cannon, shaking the windows, the houses, the very sky, with its news. The war was over. The accursed guns had ceased tearing to pieces our husbands and our sons and our fathers.

Of all the hundreds of thousands of women who heard those guns, I think there was not one who did not feel instantly, scalding on her cheeks, the blessed tears—tears of joy! She had forgotten that there could be tears of joy. The horrible weight on the soul that had grown to be a part of life dissolved away in that assuaging flood; the horrible constriction around the heart loosened. We wept with all our might; we poured out once for all the old bitterness, the old horror. We felt sanity coming back, and faith and even hope, that forgotten possession of the old days.

When the first tears of deliverance had passed, and your knees had stopped shaking, and your heart no longer beat suffocatingly in your throat, why, then every one felt one common imperious desire, to leave the little cramping prison of his own walls, to escape out of the selfish circle of his own joy, and to mingle his thanksgiving with that of all his fellows, to make himself physically, as he felt spiritually, at one with rejoicing humanity.

And we all rushed out into the streets.

I think there never can have been such a day before, such a day of pure thanksgiving and joy for every one. For the emotion was so intense that, during the priceless hours of that first day, it admitted no other. Human hearts could

hold no more than that great gladness. The dreadful past, the terrible problems of the future, were not. We lived and drew our breath only in the knowledge that “firing had ceased at eleven o’clock that morning,” and that those who had fought as best they could for the Right had conquered. You saw everywhere supreme testimony to the nobility of the moment, women in black, with bits of bright-colored tricolor pinned on their long black veils, with at last a smile, the most wonderful of all smiles, in their dimmed eyes. They were marching with the others in the streets; every one was marching with every one else, arm in arm, singing:

*Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le Jour de Gloire est arrivé!*

The houses echoed to those words, repeated and repeated by every band of jubilant men and women and children who swept by, waving flags and shouting:

*Come, children of our country,
The Day of Glory is here!*

Every group had at its head a permissionnaire or two in field uniform who had been pounced upon as the visible emblem of victory, kissed, embraced, covered with flowers, and set in the front rank to carry the largest flag. Sometimes there walked beside these soldiers working women with sleeping babies in their arms, sometimes old men in frock coats with ribbons in their buttonholes, sometimes light-hearted, laughing little munition workers still in their black aprons, but with tricolored ribbons twisted in their hair, sometimes elegantly dressed ladies, sometimes women in long mourning veils, sometimes ragged old beggars, sometimes a cab filled with crippled soldiers waving their crutches—but all with the same face of steadfast, glowing jubilee. During those few blessed hours there was no bitterness, no evil arrogance, no revengeful fury. Any one who saw all that afternoon those thousands and thousands of human faces all shining with the same exaltation can never entirely despair of his fellows again, knowing them to be capable of that pure joy.

The Day of Glory has come.

The crowd seemed to be merely washing back and forth in surging waves of thanksgiving, up and down the streets aimlessly, carrying flowers to no purpose but to celebrate their happiness. But once you were in it, singing and marching with the others, you felt an invisible current bearing you steadily, irresistibly, in

one direction; and soon, as you marched, and grew nearer the unknown goal, you heard another shorter, more peremptory, rhythm mingling with the longer shout, repeated over and over:

*Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le Jour de Gloire est arrivé!*

Now people were beginning to shout: “To Strasbourg! To Strasbourg! To Strasbourg! To Strasbourg!” Then you knew that you were being swept along to the Place de la Concorde, to salute the statue of Strasbourg, freed from her forty years of mourning and slavery.

The crowd grew denser and denser as it approached that heart of Paris; and the denser it grew the higher flamed the great fire of rejoicing, mounting up almost visibly to the quiet gray skies:

*Come, children of our country,
The Day of Glory is here!*

“To Strasbourg! To Strasbourg! To Strasbourg!”

No evil epithets hurled at the defeated enemy, not one, not one in all those long hours of shouting out what was in the heart; no ugly effigies, no taunting cries, no mention even of the enemy—instead a fresh outburst of rejoicing at the encounter with a long procession of Belgians, marching arm in arm, carrying Belgian flags and pealing out like trumpets the noble Brabançonne! We made way for them with respectful admiration, we stopped our song to listen to theirs, we let them pass, waving our hats, our handkerchiefs, cheering them, pressing flowers upon them, snatching at their hands for a clasp as they went by, blessing them for their constancy and courage, sharing their relief till our hearts were like to burst!

We fell in behind them and at once had to separate again to allow the passage of a huge camion, bristling with American soldiers, heaped up in a great pyramid of brown. How every one cheered them, a different shout, with none of the poignant undercurrent of sympathy for pain that had greeted the Belgian exiles. These brave, lovable, boyish crusaders come from across the sea for a great ideal, who had been ready to give all, but who had been blessedly spared the last sacrifice—it was a rollicking shout which greeted them! They represented the

youth, the sunshine; they were loved and laughed at and acclaimed by the crowd as they passed, waving their caps, leaning over the side to shake the myriad hands stretched up to them, catching at the flowers flung at them, shouting out some song, perhaps a college cheer, judging by the professionally frantic gestures of a cheer leader, grinding his teeth and waving his arms wildly to exhort them to more volume of sound. Whatever it was, it was quite inaudible in the general uproar, the only coherent accent of which was the swelling cry repeated till it was like an elemental sound of nature.

The Day of Glory has arrived.

Now a group of English soldiers overtook us, carrying a great, red, glorious English flag, adding some hearty, inaudible marching song to the tumult. As they passed, a *poilu* in our band sprang forward, seized one of the Anglo-Saxons in his arms, and kissed him resoundingly on both cheeks. Then there was laughter, and shouts and handshakings and more embracing, and they too vanished away in the waves of the great river of humanity flowing steadily, rapidly toward the statue of the lost city whose loss had meant the triumph of unscrupulous force, whose restitution meant the righting of an old wrong in the name of justice. We were almost there now; the huge open *Place* opened out before us.

Now we had come into it, and our songs for an instant were cut short by one great cry of astonishment. As far as the eye could reach, the vast public square was black with the crowd, and brilliant with waving flags. A band up on the terrace of the Tuileries, stationed between the captured German airplanes, flashed in the air the yellow sheen of their innumerable brass instruments, evidently playing with all their souls, but not a sound of their music reached our ears, so deafening was the burst of shouting and singing as the crowd saw its goal, the high statue of the lost city, buried in heaped-up flowers and palms, a triumphant wreath of gold shadowing the eyes which so long had looked back to France from exile.

Ah, what an ovation we gave her! Then we shouted as we had not done before, the great primitive, inarticulate cry of rejoicing that bursts from the heart too full. We shook out our flags high over our heads, as we passed, we cast our flowers up on the pedestal, we were swept along by the current—we were the current ourselves!

At the base of the statue a group of white-haired Alsatians stood. men and

women, with quivering lips and trembling hands. Theirs was the honor to arrange the flowers which, tossed too hastily by the eager bearers, fell to the ground.

As they stooped for them, and reached high to find yet one more corner not covered with blooms, a splendid, fair-haired lad, sturdy and tall, with the field outfit of the French soldier heavy on his back, pushed his way through the crowd.

He had in his hand a little bouquet—white and red roses, and forget-me-nots. His eyes were fixed on the statue. He did not see the old men and women there to receive the flowers. He pressed past them and with his own young hands laid his humble offering at the feet of the recovered city. He looked up at the statue and his lips moved. He could not have been more unconscious if he had been entirely alone in an Alsatian forest. The expression of his beautiful young face was such that a hush of awe fell on those who saw him.

An old woman in black took his hand in hers and said: “You are from Alsace?”

“I escaped from Strasbourg to join the French army,” he said, “and all my family are there.” His eyes brimmed, his chin quivered.

The old woman had a noble gesture of self-forgetting humanity. She took him in her arms and kissed him on both cheeks. “You are my son,” she said.

They all crowded around him, taking his hand. “And my brother!” “And mine!” “And mine!”

The tears ran down their cheeks.

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