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By Ralph Connor

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CHAPTER I

ONLY A MISSIONARY

High upon a rock, poised like a bird for flight, stark naked, his satin skin shining like gold and silver in the rising sun, stood a youth, tall, slim of body, not fully developed but with muscles promising, in their faultless, gently swelling outline, strength and suppleness to an unusual degree. Gazing down into the pool formed by an eddy of the river twenty feet below him, he stood as if calculating the distance, his profile turned toward the man who had just emerged from the bushes and was standing on the sandy strand of the river, paddle in hand, looking up at him with an expression of wonder and delight in his eyes.

“Ye gods, what a picture!” said the man to himself.

Noiselessly, as if fearing to send the youth off in flight, he laid his paddle on the sand, hurriedly felt in his pockets, and swore to himself vigorously when he could find no sketch book there.

“What a pose! What an Apollo!” he muttered.

The sunlight glistening on the beautiful white skin lay like pools of gold in the curving hollows of the perfectly modelled body, and ran like silver over the rounded swellings of the limbs. Instinct with life he seemed, something in his pose suggesting that he had either alighted from the golden, ambient air, or was about to commit himself to it. The man on the sand continued to gaze as if he were beholding a creature of another world.

“Oh, Lord! What lines!” he breathed.

Slowly the youth began to move his arms up to the horizontal, then to the perpendicular, reaching to the utmost of his height upon his toe tips, breathing deep the while. Smoothly, slowly, the muscles in legs and thighs, in back, in abdomen, in chest, responding to the exercise moved under the lustrous skin as if themselves were living things. Over and over again the action was repeated, the muscles and body moving in rhythmic harmony like some perfect mechanism running in a bath of oil.

“Ye gods of Greece!” breathed the man. “What is this thing I see? Flesh or spirit? Man or god?” Again he swore at himself for neglecting to bring his sketch book and pencil.

“Hello, father! Where are you?” A girl's voice rang out, high, clear, and near at hand.

“Good Lord!” said the man to himself, glancing up at the poised figure. “I must stop her.”

One startled glance the youth flung down upon him, another in the direction of the voice, then, like a white, gleaming arrow he shot down, and disappeared in the dark pool below.

With his eyes upon the water the man awaited his reappearing. A half minute, a full minute he waited, but in vain. Swiftly he ran toward the edge of the pool. There was no sign anywhere of the youth.

Ghastly pale and panting, the man ran, as far round the base of the rock as the water would allow him, seeking everywhere signs of the swimmer.

“Hello, father! Oh, there you are!” Breaking through the bushes, a girl ran to him.

“What is it, pater? You are ill. What is the matter?”

“Good heavens! he was there!” gasped the man, pointing to the high rock. “He plunged in there.” He pointed to the pool. “He hasn't come up. He is drowned.”

“Who? What are you saying? Wake up, father. Who was there?”

“A boy! A young man! He disappeared down there.”

“A young man? Was he—was he—dressed?” inquired the girl.

“Dressed? No. No.”

“Did he—did he—hear me—calling?”

“Of course he did. That's what startled him, I imagine. Poor boy! I fear he is gone.”

“Did he fall in, or did he dive?”

“He seemed to dive, but he has not come up. I fear he is gone.”

“Oh, nonsense, father,” said the girl. “I bet you he has swum round the bend. Just go over the rock and see.”

“God grant it!” said her father.

He dropped his paddle, ran up over the rock and down into the little dell on the other side that ran down to the water's edge. There he saw a tent, with all the accompaniments of a well ordered camp, and a man cooking breakfast on a small fire.

“Well, I'll be combusticated!” he said to himself, weakly holding to a little poplar tree.

“I say!” he cried, “where is he? Has he come in? Is he all right?”

“Who?” said the man at the fire.

“The boy on the rock.”

The man gazed at him astonished, then as if suddenly grasping his meaning, replied,

“Yes, he came in. He's dressing in the tent.”

“Well, I'll be condumbusticated!” said the man. “Say! what the devil does he mean by scaring people out of their senses in that way!”

The man at the fire stood gazing at him in an utterly bewildered way.

“If you will tell me exactly what you are after, I may be able to help you.”

The other drew slowly near the fire. He was still pale, and breathing quickly.

“Hello, dad, is breakfast ready?” came a cheery voice from the tent.

“Thank God, he is alive apparently,” said the man, sinking down on a log beside the fire. “You must pardon me, sir,” he said. “You see, I saw him take a header into the pool from that high rock over yonder, and he never came up again. I thought he was drowned.”

The man at the fire smiled.

“The young villain gave you a fright, did he? One of his usual tricks. Well, as his father, and more or less responsible for him, I offer the most humble apology. Have you had breakfast?”

“Yes. But why did he do such a thing?”

“Ask him. Here he comes.”

Out from the tent came the youth in shorts, the warm glow of his body showing through the filmy material.

“Hello!” he cried, backing toward the tent door. “You are the man with the paddle. Is there by any chance a lady with you, or did I hear a lady's voice over there? I assure you I got a deuce of a fright.”

“You gave me the supreme fright of my life, young man, I can tell you that.”

“But I surely heard a lady's voice,” said the youth.

“You did. It was my daughter's voice, and it was she who suggested that you had swum around the bend. And she sent me over here to investigate.”

“Oh, your daughter. Excuse me,” said the youth. “I shall be out in a few minutes.” He slid into the tent, and did not reappear.

The man remained chatting with the youth's father for a few minutes, then rising said,

“Well, I feel better. I confess this thing gave me something of a shock. But come round and see us before we go. We shall be leaving in an hour.”

The man at the fire promised to make the visit, and the other took his departure.

A few minutes later the youth reappeared.

“Is breakfast ready?” he cried. “My, but I'm hungry! But who is he, dad?”

“Sit down,” said his father, “and get your breakfast while it is hot.”

“But who is he, dad?” persisted the youth.

“Who is he?” said his father, dishing up the bacon. “An oil explorer, an artist, a capitalist, an American from Pittsburgh, the father of one child, a girl. Her mother is dead. Nineteen years old, athletic, modern type, college bred, 'boss of the show' (quotation). These are a few of the facts volunteered within the limited space of his visit.”

“What's he like, dad?”

“Like? Like an American.”

“Now, dad, don't allow your old British prejudices to run away with your judgment.”

“On the contrary, I am perfectly charmed. He is one of those Americans who capture you at once, educated, frank, open, with that peculiar charm that Britishers will not be able to develop for many generations. An American, but not of the unspeakable type. Not at all. You will like him.”

“I am sure I shall,” replied the youth. “I liked his voice and his face. I like the Americans. I met such nice chaps at college. So clever, and with

such a vocabulary.”

“Vocabulary? Well, I'm not too sure as to the vocabulary part of it.”

“Yes, such bright, pat, expressive slang, so fresh and in such variety. So different from your heavy British slang, in which everything approaching the superlative must be one of three things, 'ripping,' with very distinct articulation on the double p, or 'top hole,' or 'awfully jolly.' More recently, I believe, a fourth variation is allowed in 'priceless.'

“Ah, my boy, you have unconsciously uttered a most searching criticism on your American friends. Don't you know that a vocabulary rich in slang is poverty stricken in forceful and well chosen English? The wealth of the one is the poverty of the other.”

“Where is he going?” enquired the boy.

“Out by way of Edmonton, Calgary, Moose Jaw, Minneapolis, so on to Pittsburgh. Partner with him, young lawyer, expert in mines, unmarried. He is coming back in a couple of months or so for a big hunt. Wants us to join him. Really extraordinary, when you come to think of it, how much information he was able to convey in such a short space of time. Marvellous gift of expression!”

“What did you say, dad?”

“Say? Oh, as to his invitation! Why, I believe I accepted, my boy. It seemed as if I could do nothing else. It's a way he has.”

“Is—is the daughter to be along?”

“Let me see. What did he say? Really, I don't know. But I should judge that it would be entirely as she wished. She is—”

“Boss of the show, eh?”

“Exactly. Most vivid phrase, eh?”

“Very. And no doubt aptly descriptive of the fact.”

In half an hour the breakfast was finished, and the elder man got his pipe a-going.

“Now, dad, you had better go along and make your call, while I get things together here.”

“What! You not going! No, no, that won't do, my boy. It was about you they were concerned. You were the occasion of the acquaintanceship. Besides, meeting in the wilderness this way we can't do that sort of thing, you know.”

“Well, dad, frankly, I am quite terrified of the young lady. Suppose she should start bossing us. We should both be quite helpless.”

“Oh, nonsense, boy! Come along. Get your hat.”

“All right, I'll come. On your head be the consequences, dad. No. I don't need a hat. Fortunately I put on a clean shirt. Will I do, dad? You know I'm 'scairt stiff,' as Harry Hobbs would say.”

His father looked him over, but there was nothing critical in his glance. Pride and love filled his eyes as they ran over his son's face and figure. And small wonder! The youth was good to look upon. A shade under six feet he stood, straight and slim, strength and supple grace in every move of his body. His face was beautiful with the beauty of features, clean cut and strong, but more with the beauty of a clear, candid soul. He seemed to radiate an atmosphere of cheery good nature and unspoiled simplicity. He was two years past his majority, yet he carried the air of a youth of eighteen, in which shyness and fearlessness looked out from his deep blue eyes. It was well that he wore no hat to hide the mass of rich brown hair that waved back from his forehead.

“You'll do, boy,” said his father, in a voice whose rigid evenness of tone revealed the emotion it sought to conceal. “You'll take all the shine from me, you young beggar,” he added in a tone of gruff banter, “but there was a time—”

“WAS a time, dad? IS, and don't tell me you don't know it. I always feel like a school kid in any company when you're about.

'When the sun comes out
All the little stars run in,'”

he sang from a late music hall effusion. “Why, just come here and look at yourself,” and the boy's eyes dwelt with affectionate pride upon his father.

It was easy to see where the boy got his perfect form. Not so tall as his son, he was more firmly knit, and with a kind of dainty neatness in his appearance which suggested the beau in earlier days. But there was nothing of weakness about the erect, trim figure. A second glance discovered a depth of chest, a thickness of shoulder and of thigh, and a

general development of muscle such as a ring champion might show; and, indeed, it was his achievements in the ring rather than in the class lists that won for Dick Dunbar in his college days his highest fame. And though his fifty years had slowed somewhat the speed of foot and hand, the eye was as sure as ever, and but little of the natural force was abated which once had made him the glory of the Cambridge sporting youth, and which even yet could test his son's mettle in a fast bout.

On the sandy shore of the river below the eddy, they found the American and his party gathered, with their stuff ranged about them ready for the canoes.

“Ah, here you are, sir,” said the American, advancing hat in hand. “And this is your son, the young rascal who came mighty near giving me heart failure this morning. By the way, I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name.”

“My name is Richard Dunbar, and this is my son Barry.”

“My name is Osborne Howland, of Pittsburgh, and this is my daughter Paula. In bloomers, as you see, but nevertheless my daughter. Meet also my friend and partner, Mr. Cornwall Brand.”

The party exchanged greetings, and spent some moments giving utterance to those platitudes which are so useful in such circumstances, a sort of mental marking time preparatory to further mutual acquaintance.

The girl possessed that striking, dashing kind of brunette beauty that goes with good health, good living, and abundance of outdoor exercise. She carried herself with that air of assured self-confidence that comes as the result of a somewhat wide experience of men, women and things. She quite evidently scorned the conventions, as her garb, being quite masculine, her speech being outspoken and decorated with the newest and most ingenious slang, her whole manner being frankly impulsive, loudly proclaimed.

But Barry liked her at once, and made no pretence of concealing his liking. To her father, also, he was immediately drawn. As to Cornwall Brand, between whom and the girl there seemed to exist a sort of understanding, he was not so sure.

For half an hour or so they stood by the river exchanging their experiences in these northern wilds, and their views upon life in the wilderness and upon things in general. By a little skilful managing the girl got the young man away from the others, and then proceeded to dissect and classify him.

Through the open woods along the river bank they wandered, pausing here and there to admire the view, until they came to an overhanging bank at the entrance to a somewhat deep gorge, through which the river foamed to the boiling rapids below. It was indeed a beautiful scene. The banks of the river were covered with every variety of shrub and tree, except where the black rocks broke through; between the banks the dark river raged and fretted itself into a foam against its rocky barriers; over them arched the sky, a perfect blue.

“What a lovely view!” exclaimed the girl, seating herself upon the edge of the bank. “Now,” she said, “tell me about yourself. You gave my pater a fearful fright this morning. He was quite paralysed when I came on him.”

“I am very sorry,” said the youth, “but I had no intention—”

“I know. I told him not to worry,” replied the girl. “I knew you would be all right.”

“And how, pray?” said the young man, blushing at the memory of his startling appearance upon that rock.

“I knew that any fellow who could take that dive wouldn't likely let himself drown. I guessed, too, that if you heard me hoot—”

“I did,” said the youth.

“You sure would get slippy right away.”

“I did.”

“I guess you were pretty well startled yourself, weren't you?” said the girl, pursuing the subject with cool persistence.

“Rather,” said the young man, blushing more violently, and wishing she would change the subject. “You are going out?” he enquired.

“Yes.”

“To-day?”

“Now—right away.”

“Too bad,” he said, his disappointment evident in his tone.

“When are you going out? But who are you, anyway?” asked the girl.

“You have to tell me that.”

“My life story, so to speak?”

She nodded.

“It's very short and simple, like the annals of the poor,” he replied. “From England in infancy, on a ranch in northern Alberta for ten years, a puny little wretch I was, terribly bothered with asthma, then”—the boy hesitated a moment—“my mother died, father moved to Edmonton, lived there for five years, thence to Wapiti, away northwest of Edmonton, our present home, prepared for college by my father, university course in Winnipeg, graduated in theology a year ago, now the missionary in charge of Wapiti and the surrounding district.”

“A preacher!” said the girl, her face and her tone showing her disappointment only too plainly.

“Not much of a preacher, I fear,” said the young man with a smile. “A missionary, rather. That's my story.”

She noticed with some chagrin that he did not ask for hers.

“What are you doing here?” she enquired.

He hesitated a moment or two.

“Dad and I always take a trip into the wilds every summer.” Then he added after a few moments' pause, “But of course we have other business on hand up here.”

“Business? Up here?”

“Yes. Dad has some.” He made as if to continue, but changed his mind and fell into silence, leaving her piqued by his reserve and by his apparent indifference to the things concerning herself. She did not know that he was eagerly hoping that she would supply this information.

At length he ventured, “Must you go away to-day?”

“I don't suppose there's any 'must' about it.”

“Why not stay?”

“Why should I?”

“Oh, it would be jolly,” he cried. “You see, we could—explore about here—and,”—he ended rather lamely,—“it's a lovely country.”

“We've seen a lot of it. It IS lovely,” she said, her eyes upon his face as if appraising him. “I should like to know you better,” she added, with sudden and characteristic frankness, “so I think we will stay. But you will have to be awfully good to me.”

“Why, of course,” he cried. “That's splendid! Perfectly jolly!”

“Then we had better find father and tell him. Come along,” she ordered, and led the way back to the camp.

The young man followed her, wondering at her, and giving slight heed to the chatter she flung over her shoulder at him as she strode along through the bushes.

“What's the matter with you?” she cried, facing round upon him. “You were thinking about me, I know. Confess, now.”

“I was,” he acknowledged, smiling at her.

“What were you thinking? Tell me,” she insisted.

“I was thinking—” He paused.

“Go on!” she cried.

“I was thinking of what your father said about you.”

“My father? About me? What did he say? To you?”

“No. To dad.”

“What was it? Tell me. I must know.” She was very imperious in her manner. The youth only smiled at her.

“Go on!” she said impatiently.

“I think possibly your father was right,” he replied, “when he said you 'boss the show.'”

“Oh, that's what he said, eh? Well, I guess he's about right.”

“But you don't really?”

“Don't what? 'Boss the show'? Well, I boss my own show, at any rate. Don't you?”

“Don't I what, exactly? Boss the show? Well, I don't think we have any 'show,' and I don't believe we have any 'boss.' Dad and I just talk things over, you see.”

“But,” she insisted, “some one in the last analysis must decide. Your menage, no matter how simple, must have a head. It is a law of the universe itself, and it is the law of mankind. You see, I have done some political economy.”

“And yet,” said the young man, “you say you run your own show?”

“Exactly. Every social organism must have a head, but every individual in the organism must live its own free life. That is true democracy. But of course you don't understand democracy, you Canadians.”

“Aha! There you are! You Americans are the most insular of all the great peoples of the world. You know nothing of other people. You know only your own history and not even that correctly, your own geography, and your own political science. You know nothing of Canada. You don't know, for instance, that the purest form of democracy on this American continent lies outside the bounds of the U. S. A.”

“In Canada?” she asked scornfully. “By the way, how many Canadians are there?”

“Yes, I know. We are a small people,” he said quietly, “but no more real democracy exists anywhere in the world than in this country of mine. We are a small people, but,” he said, with a sweep of his hand toward the west and the north, “the future is with us. The day is coming when along this waterway great cities shall be, with factories and humming industries. These plains, these flowing hills will be the home of millions of men, and in my lifetime, too.”

His eyes began to glow, his face to shine with a rare and fascinating beauty.

“Do you know the statistics of your country? Do you know that during the last twenty years the rate of Canada's growth was three times greater than ever in the history of the United States? You are a great commercial nation, but do you know that the per capita rate of Canada's trade to-day is many times that of the United States? You are a great agricultural people, but do you know that three-quarters of the wheat land on this continent is Canadian, and that before many years you will be coming to Canada for your wheat, yes, and for your flour? Do you see that river? Do you know that Canada is the richest country in the world in water power? And more than that, in the things essential to national greatness,—not these things that you can see, these material things,” he said, sweeping his hand contemptuously toward the horizon, “but in such things as educational standards, in administration of justice, in the customs of a liberty loving people, in religious privileges, in everything that goes to make character and morale, Canada has already laid the foundations of a great nation.”

He stopped short, abashed, the glow fading from his face, the light from his eyes.

“Forgive me,” he said, with a little laugh. “I am a first class ass. I fear I was blowing like a fog horn. But when you touch Canada you release something in me.”

While he was speaking her eyes never left his face. “Go on!” she said, in a voice of suppressed emotion, “go on. I love to hear you.”

Her wonted poise was gone; she was obviously stirred with deep emotion.

“Go on!” she commanded, laying her hand upon his arm. “Don't stop. Tell me more about—about Canada, about anything,” she added impatiently.

A warm, eager light filled her eyes. She was biting her lips to still their tremor.

“There's plenty to tell about Canada,” he said, “but not now. What started me? Oh, democracy. Yes, it was you that began it. Democracy? After all, it is worth while that the people who are one day to fill this wide land should be truly democratic, truly free, and truly great.”

Once more the light began to burn in his eyes and in his face.

“Ah, to have a hand in that!”

“And you,” she said in a low voice, “you with all that in you, are only a preacher.”

“A missionary,” he corrected.

“Well, a missionary. Only a missionary.”

Disappointment and scorn were all too evident in her voice.

“ONLY a missionary. Ah, if I could only be one. A missionary! With a mission and a message to my people! If only I had the gift of tongues, of flaming, burning, illuminating speech, of heart-compelling speech! To tell my people how to make this country truly great and truly free, how to keep it free from the sordid things, the cruel things, the unjust, the unclean, the loathsome things that have debased and degraded the older nations, that are debasing and degrading even your young, great nation. Ah, to be a missionary with a tongue of fire, with a message of light! A

missionary to my people to help them to high and worthy living, to help them to God! ONLY a missionary! What would you have me? A money-maker?”

He turned swiftly upon her, a magnetic, compelling personality. From the furious scorn in his voice and in his flaming face she visibly shrank, almost as if he had struck her.

“No!” she breathed. “Nothing else. Only a missionary.”

Silent she stood, as if still under the spell of his words, her eyes devouring his face.

“How your mother would have loved you, would have been proud of you,” she said in a low tone. “Is—is there no one else to—to rejoice in you?” she asked shyly, but eagerly.

He laughed aloud. “There's dad, dear old dad.”

“And no one else?” Still with shy, eager eyes she held him.

“Oh, heaps,” he cried, still laughing.

She smiled upon him, a slightly uncertain smile, and yet as if his answer somehow satisfied her.

“Good-bye,” she said impulsively, offering her hand.

“But you are not going! You're staying a few days!” he gasped.

“No, we're going. We're going right away. Goodbye,” she said. “I don't want those others to see. Goodbye. Oh, it's been a wonderful morning! And,—and—a friend is a wonderful discovery.”

Her hand held his in a strong, warm grasp, but her eyes searched his face as if seeking something she greatly desired.

“Good-bye. I am sorry you are going,” he said, simply. “I want to know you better.”

“Do you?” she cried, with a sudden eagerness in her voice and manner. Then, “No. You would be disappointed. I am not of your world. But you shall see me again,” she added, as if taking a new resolve. “We are coming back on a big hunt, and you and your father are to join us. Won't you?”

“Dad said we should,” said the youth, smiling at the remembrance.

“And you?” she said, with a touch of impatience.

“If things can so arrange themselves—my work, I mean, and dad's.”

“But, do you want to? Do you really want to?” she asked. “I wish I knew. I hate not to understand people. You are hard to know. I don't know you. But you will come?”

“I think so,” said the young man. “Of course a fellow's work comes first, you know.”

“Work?” she cried. “Your work? Oh, your missionary work. Oh, yes, yes. I should like to see you at it. Come, let us go.”

Mr. Cornwall Brand they found in a fever of impatience. He had the trip scheduled to a time table, and he hated to be forced to change his plans. His impatience showed itself in snappy commands and inquiries to his Indian guides, who, however, merely grunted replies. They knew their job and did it without command or advice, and with complete indifference to anything the white man might have to say. To Paula the only change in his manner was an excess of politeness.

Her father, however, met her with remonstrances.

“Why, Paula, my dear, you have kept us waiting.”

“What's the rush, pater?” she enquired, coolly.

“Why, my dear, we are already behind our schedule, and you know Cornwall hates that,” he said in a low voice.

“Cornwall!” said Paula, in a loud voice of unmistakable ill temper. “Does Cornwall run this outfit?”

“My dear Paula!” again remonstrated her father.

She turned to him impatiently, with an angry word at her lips, caught upon Barry's face a look of surprise, paused midway in her passion, then moved slowly toward him.

“Well,” she asked, in an even, cold voice, “what do you think about it? And anyway,” she dropped her voice so that none heard but himself, “why should you halt me? Who are you, to give me pause this way?”

“Only a missionary,” he answered, in an equally low tone, but with a smile gentle, almost wistful on his face.

As with a flash the wrathful cloud vanished.

“A missionary,” she replied softly. “God knows I need one.”

“You do,” he said emphatically, and still he smiled.

“Come, Paula,” called Cornwall Brand. “We are all waiting.”

Her face hardened at his words.

“Good-bye,” she said to Barry. “I am coming back again to—to your wonderful Canada.”

“Of course you are,” said Barry, heartily. “They all do.”

He went with her to the canoe, steadied her as she took her place, and stood watching till the bend in the river shut them from view.

“Nice people,” said his father. “Very fine, jolly girl.”

“Yes, isn't she?” replied his son.

“Handsome, too,” said his father, glancing keenly at him.

“Is she? Yes, I think so. Yes, indeed, very,” he added, as if pondering the matter. “When do we move, dad?”

A look of relief crossed the father's face.

“This afternoon, I think. We have only a few days now. We shall run up Buffalo Creek into the Foothills for some trout. It will be a little stiff, but you are fit enough now, aren't you, Barry?” His voice was tinged with anxiety.

“Fit for anything, dad, thanks to you.”

“Not to me, Barry. To yourself largely.”

“No,” said the boy, throwing his arm round his father's shoulder, “thanks to you, dear old dad,—and to God.”

CHAPTER II

ON THE RED PINE TRAIL

On the Red Pine trail two men were driving in a buckboard drawn by a pair of half-broken pinto bronchos. The outfit was a rather ramshackle affair, and the driver was like his outfit. Stewart Duff was a rancher, once a “remittance man,” but since his marriage three years ago he had learned self-reliance and was disciplining himself in self-restraint. A big, lean man he was, his thick shoulders and large, hairy muscular hands suggesting great physical strength, his swarthy face, heavy features, coarse black hair, keen dark eyes, deepset under shaggy brows, suggesting force of character with a possibility of brutality in passion. Yet when he smiled his heavy face was not unkindly, indeed the smile gave it a kind of rugged attractiveness. He was past his first youth, and on his face were the marks of the stormy way by which he had come.

He drove his jibing bronchos with steady hands. No light touch was his upon the reins, and the bronchos' wild plunging met with a check from those muscular hands of such iron rigidity as to fling them back helpless and amazed upon their hocks.

His companion was his opposite in physical appearance, and in those features and lines that so unmistakably reveal the nature and character within. Short and stout, inclined indeed to fat, to his great distress, his thick-set figure indicated strength without agility, solidity without resilience. He had a pleasant, open face, with a kindly, twinkling blue eye that goes with a merry heart, with a genial, sunny soul. But there was in the blue eye and in the open face, for all the twinkles and the smiles, a certain alert shrewdness that proclaimed the keen man of business, and in the clean cut lips lay the suggestion of resolute strength. A likable man he was, with an infinite capacity for humour, but with a bedrock of unyielding determination in him that always surprised those who judged him lightly.

The men were friends, and had been comrades more or less during those pioneer days that followed their arrival in the country from Scotland some dozen years ago. Often they had fallen out with each other, for Duff was stormy of temper and had a habit of letting himself swing out upon its gusts of passion, reckless of consequences; but he was ever the one to offer amends and to seek renewal of good relations. He had few friends, and so he clung the more closely to those he had. At such times the other would wait in cool, good-tempered but determined aloofness for his friend's return.

“You can chew your cud till you're cool again,” he would say when the outbreak would arise. But invariably their differences were composed and their friendship remained unbroken.

The men sat in the buckboard, leaning forward with hunched shoulders, swaying easily to the pitching of the vehicle as it rattled along the trail which, especially where it passed over the round topped ridges, was thickly strewn with stones. Before them, now on the trail and now ranging wide over the prairie, ran a beautiful black and white English setter.

“Great dog that, Sandy,” said Duff. “I could have had a dozen birds this afternoon. A wonderful nose, and steady as a rock.”

“A good dog, Stewart,” assented Sandy, but with slight interest.

“There ain't another like him in this western country,” said the owner of the dog with emphasis.

“Oh, I don't know about that. There are some very good dogs around here, Stewart,” replied Sandy lightly.

“But I know. And that's why I'm saying there ain't his like in this western country, and that's as true as your name is Sandy Bayne.”

“Well, my name is Sandy Bayne, all right, but how did he come out at the Calgary trials?”

“Aw, those damned gawks! They don't know a good dog from a he-goat! They don't know what a dog is for, or how to use him.”

“Oh, now, Stewart,” said Sandy, “I guess Willocks knows a dog when he sees one.”

“Willocks!” said his friend with scorn. “There's where you're wrong. Do you know why he cut Slipper out of the Blue Ribbon? Because he wouldn't range a mile away. Darned old fool! What's the good of a point a mile away! Keeps you running over the whole creation, makes you lose time, tires yourself and tires your dog; and more than that, in nine cases out of ten you lose your bird. Give me a close ranger. He cleans up as he goes, keeps your game right at your hand, and gets you all the sport there is.”

“Who beat you, Stewart, in the trials?”

“That bitch of Snider's.”

“Man! Stewart, that's a beautiful bitch! I know her well. She's a beautiful bitch!” Sandy began to show enthusiasm.

“Oh, there you go! That's just what those fool judges said. 'Beautiful dog! Beautiful dog!' Suppose she is! Looks ain't everything. They're something, but the question is, does she get the birds? Now, Slipper there got three birds to her one. Got 'em within range, too.”

“Ah, but Stewart, yon's a good bitch,” said Sandy.

“Look here!” cried his friend, “I have bred more dogs in the old country than those men ever saw in their lives.”

“That may be, Stewart, but yon's a good bitch,” persisted Sandy.

For a mile more they discussed the merits of Slipper and of his rivals, Sandy with his semi-humorous chaff extracting quiet amusement from his friend's wrath, and the latter, though suspecting that he was being drawn, unable to restrain his passionate championship of his dog.

At length Sandy, wearying of the discussion, caught sight of a figure far before them on the trail.

“Who is that walking along there?” he enquired.

Together they ran over the names of all who in this horse country were unfortunate enough to be doomed to a pedestrian form of locomotion.

“Guess it's the preacher,” said Duff finally, whose eyes were like a hawk's.

“He's been out at my place Sunday afternoon,” said Sandy, “but I haven't met him myself. What sort is he?”

“Don't ask me. I sometimes go with the madame to church, but generally I fall asleep. He's no alarm clock.”

“Then you can't tell what sort of a preacher he is,” said Sandy with a twinkle in his eye. “You can't hear much when you are asleep.”

“I hear enough to know that he's no good as a preacher. I hear they're going to fire him.”

“I tell you what it is, Stewart,” said Sandy, “I don't believe you would know a good sermon if you heard one.”

“What's that you say? I've heard the best preachers in the country that breeds preachers, in the country where preachers grow like the berries on the bramble bushes. I know preaching, and I like good preaching, too.”

“Oh, come off, Stewart! You may be a good judge of dogs, but I'm blowed if I am going to take you as a judge of preachers.”

“The same qualities in all of them, dogs, horses, preachers,” insisted Duff.

“How do you make that out?”

“Well, take a horse. He must be a good-looker. This preacher is a good-looker, all right, but looks ain't everything. Must be quick at the start, must have good action, good style, staying power, and good at the finish. Most preachers never know when to finish, and that's the way with this man.”

“Are you going to take him up?” inquired Sandy, for they were now close upon the man walking before them.

“Oh, I guess not,” replied Duff. “I haven't much use for him.”

“Say, what's the matter with him? He looks rather puffed out,” said Sandy. “Better take him up.”

“All right,” replied Duff, pulling up his bronchos. “Good day. Will you have a ride? Mr. Barry Dunbar, my friend Mr. Bayne.”

“Glad to meet you, Mr. Bayne,” said Barry, who was pale and panting hard. “Thanks for the lift. The truth—is—I'm rather—done up. A touch of asthma—the first—in five years. An old trouble of mine.”

“Get up here,” said Sandy. “There's room for three in the seat.”

“No—thank you,—I should—crowd you,—all right behind here. Beastly business—this asthma. Worse when—the pollen—from the plants—is floating—about—so they say. I don't know—nobody does—I fancy.” They drove on, bumping over the stones, Barry gradually getting back his wind. The talk of the men in the front seat had fallen again on dogs, Stewart maintaining with ever increasing vehemence his expert knowledge of dogs, of hunting dogs, and very especially of setter hunting dogs; his friend, while granting his knowledge of dogs in general, questioning the unprejudiced nature of his judgment as far as Slipper was concerned.

As Duff's declarations grew in violence they became more and more elaborately decorated with profanity. In the full tide of their conversation a quiet voice broke in:

“Too many 'damns.'”

“What!” exclaimed Duff.

“I beg your pardon!” said Sandy.

“Too many 'damns,'” said Barry, looking quietly at Duff.

“Dams? Where?” said Duff, looking about.

“Beaver dams, do you mean?” enquired Sandy. “I don't see any.”

“Too many 'damns,'” reiterated Barry. “You don't need them. You really don't need them, you know, and besides, they are not right. Profanity is quite useless, and it's wicked.”

“Well, I'll be damned!” said Stewart in a low voice to his friend. “He means us.”

“And quite right, too,” said Sandy solemnly. “You know your English is rotten bad. Yes, sir,” he continued, turning round to Barry, “I quite agree with you. My friend is quite unnecessarily free in his speech.”

“Yes, but you are just the same, you know,” said Barry. “Not quite so many, but then you are not quite so excited.”

“Got you there, old sport,” grunted Duff, highly amused at Sandy's discomfiture. But to Barry he said, “I guess it's our own business how we express ourselves.”

“Yes, it is, but, pardon me, not entirely so. There are others in the world, you know, and you must consider others. The habit is a bad habit, a rotten habit, and quite useless—silly, indeed.”

Duff turned his back upon him. Sandy, giving his friend a nudge, burst into a loud laugh.

“You are right, sir,” he said, turning to Barry. “You are quite right.”

At this point Slipper created a diversion.

“Hello!” said Duff. “Say! Look at him!” He pointed to the dog. “Ain't he a picture!”

A hundred yards away stood Slipper, rigid, every muscle, every hair taut, one foot arrested in air.

“I'll just get those,” said Duff, slipping out of the buckboard and drawing the gun from beneath the seat. “Steady, old boy, steady! Hold the lines, Sandy.”

He moved quickly toward the dog who, quivering with that mysterious instinct found in the hunting dog, still held the point with taut muscles, nose and tail in line.

“Hello!” Barry called out. “It isn't the season yet for chicken. I say, Mr. Duff,” he shouted, “it isn't the chicken season, you know.”

“Better leave him alone,” said Sandy.

“But it isn't the season yet! It is against the law!” protested Barry indignantly.

Meantime Stewart Duff was closing up cautiously behind Slipper.

“Forward, old boy! Ste-e-e-ady! Forward!” The dog refused to move. “Forward, Slipper!”

Still the dog remained rigid, as if nailed to the ground.

“On, Slipper!”

Slowly the dog turned his head with infinite caution half round toward his master, as if in protest.

“Hello, there!” shouted Barry, “you know—”

Just as he called there was on all sides a great whirring of wings. A dozen chicken flew up from under Duff's feet. Bang! Bang! went his gun.

“Missed, as I'm a sinner!” exclaimed Sandy. “I thought he was a better shot than that.”

Back came Duff striding wide toward the buckboard. Fifty yards away he shouted:

“Say! what the devil do you mean calling like that at a man when he's on the point of shooting!” His face was black with anger. He looked ready to strike. Barry looked at him steadily.

“But, I was just reminding you that it was not the season for chicken yet,” he said in the tone of a man prepared to reason the matter.

“What's that got to do with it! And anyway, whose business is it what I do but my own?”

“But it's against the law!”

“Oh, blank the law! Besides—”

“Besides it isn't—well, you know, it isn't quite sporting to shoot out of season.” Barry's manner was as if dealing with a fractious child.

Duff, speechless with his passion, looked at him as if not quite sure what form his vengeance should take.

“He's quite right, Stewart,” said his friend Sandy, who was hugely enjoying himself. “You know well enough you are down on the farmer chaps who go pot hunting before season. It's rotten sport, you know.”

“Oh, hell! Will you shut up! Can't I shoot over my dog when he points? I'm not out shooting. If I want to give my dog a little experience an odd bird or two don't matter. Besides, what the—”

“Oh, come on, Stewart! Get in, and get a move on! You know you are in the wrong. But I thought you were a better shot than that,” added Sandy.

His remark diverted Duff's rage.

“Better shot!” he stormed. “Who could shoot with a—a—a—” he was feeling round helplessly for a properly effective word,—“with a fellow yelling at you?” he concluded lamely. “I'd have had a brace of them if it hadn't been for him.”

“In that case,” said Barry coolly, “I saved you from the law.”

“Saved me from the law! What the devil do you mean, anyway?” said Stewart. “If I want to pick up a bird who's to hinder me? And what's the law got to do with it?”

“Well, you know, I'm not sure but it might have been my duty to report you. I feel that all who break the game laws should be reported. It is the only way to stop the lawless destruction of the game.”

Barry spoke in a voice of quiet deliberation, as if pondering the proper action in the premises.

“Quite right, too,” said Sandy gravely, but with a twinkle in his blue eye. “They ought to be reported. I have no use for those poachers.”

Duff made no reply. His rage and disgust, mingled with the sense of his being in the wrong, held him silent. No man in the whole country was harder upon the game poachers than he, but to be held up in his action and to be threatened with the law by this young preacher, whom he rather despised anyway, seemed to paralyse his mental activities. It did not help his self-control that he was aware that his friend was having his fun of him.

At this moment, fortunately for the harmony of the party, their attention was arrested by the appearance of a motor car driven at a furious rate along the trail, and which almost before they were aware came honking upon them. With a wild lurch the bronchos hurled themselves from the trail, upsetting the buckboard and spilling its load.

Duff, cumbered with his gun, which he had reloaded, allowed one of the reins to drop from his hands and the team went plunging about in a circle, but Barry, the first to get to his feet, rushed to the rescue, snatched the reins and held on till he had dragged the plunging bronchos to a halt.

The rage which had been boiling in Duff, and which with difficulty had been held within bounds, suddenly burst all bonds of control. With a fierce oath he picked up the gun which he had thrown aside in his struggle with the horses, and levelled it at the speeding motor car.

“For God's sake, Stewart, stop!” shouted Bayne, springing toward his friend.

Barry was nearer and quicker. The shot went off, but his hand had knocked up the gun.

“My God, Stewart! Are you clean crazy!” said Bayne, gripping him by the arm. “Do you know what you are doing? You are not fit to carry a gun!”

“I'd have bust his blanked tires for him, anyway!” blustered Duff, though his face and voice showed that he had received a shock.

“Yes, and you might have been a murderer by this time, and heading for the pen, but for Dunbar here. You owe him more than you can ever pay, you blanked fool!”

Duff made no reply, but busied himself with his horses. Nor did he speak again till everything was in readiness for the road.

“Get in,” he then said gruffly, and that was his last word until they drove into the village.

At the store he drew up.

“Thank you for the lift,” said Barry. “I should have had a tough job to get back in time.”

Duff grunted at him, and passed on into the store.

“I am very glad to have met you,” said Bayne, shaking hands warmly with him. “You have done us both a great service. He is my friend, you know.”

“I am afraid I have offended him, all the same. But you see I couldn't help it, could I?”

Bayne looked at his young, earnest face for a moment or two as if studying him, then said with a curious smile, “No, I don't believe you could have helped it.” And with that he passed into the store.

“What sort of a chap is that preacher of yours?” he asked of the storekeeper.

“I don't know; he ain't my church. Ask Innes there. He's a pillar.”

Bayne turned to a long, lean, hard-faced man leaning against the counter.

“My name is Bayne, from Red Pine, Mr. Innes. I am interested in knowing what sort of a chap your preacher is. He comes out to our section, but I never met him till to-day.”

“Oh, he's no that bad,” said Innes cautiously.

“Not worth a cent,” said a little, red headed man standing near. “He can't preach for sour apples.”

“I wadna just say that, Mr. Hayes,” said Innes.

“How do you know, Innes?” retorted Hayes. “You know you fall asleep before he gets rightly started.”

“I aye listen better with ma eyes shut.”

“Yes, and snore better, too, Mac,” said Hayes. “But I don't blame you. Most of them go to sleep anyway. That's the kind of preacher he is.”

“What sort of a chap is he? I mean what sort of man?”

“Well, for one thing, he's always buttin' in,” volunteered a square-built military looking man standing near. “If he'd stick to his gospel it wouldn't be so bad, but he's always pokin' his nose into everything.”

“But he's no that bad,” said Innes again, “and as for buttin' in, McFettridge, and preachin' the gospel, I doubt the country is a good deal the better for the buttin' in that him and his likes have done this past year. And besides, the bairns all like him.”

“Well, that's not a bad sign, Mr. Innes,” said Sandy Bayne, “and I'm not sure that I don't like him myself. But I guess he butts in, all right.”

“Oh, ay! he butts in,” agreed Innes, “but I'm no so sure that that's no a part of his job, too.”

CHAPTER III

A QUESTION OF CONSCIENCE

The Dunbars lived in a cottage on a back street, which had the distinction of being the only home on the street which possessed the adornment of a garden. A unique garden it was, too. Indeed, with the single exception of Judge Hepburn's garden, which was quite an elaborate affair, and which was said to have cost the Judge a “pile of money,” there was none to compare with it in the village of Wapiti.

Any garden on that bare, wind-swept prairie meant toil and infinite pains, but a garden like that of the Dunbars represented in addition something of genius. In conception, in design, and in execution the Dunbars' garden was something apart. Visitors were taken 'round to the back street to get a glimpse of the Dunbars' cottage and garden.

The garden was in two sections. That at the back of the cottage, sheltered by a high, close board fence covered with Virginia creeper, was given over to vegetables, and it was quite marvellous how, under Richard Dunbar's care, a quarter of an acre of ground could grow such enormous quantities of vegetables of all kinds. Next to the vegetable garden came the plot for small fruits—strawberries, raspberries, currants, of rare varieties.

The front garden was devoted to flowers. Here were to be found the old fashioned flowers dear to our grandmothers, and more particularly the old fashioned flowers native to English and Scottish soil. Between the two gardens a thick row of tall, splendid sunflowers made a stately hedge. Then came larkspur, peonies, stocks, and sweet-williams, verbenas and mignonette, with borders of lobelia and heliotrope. Along the fence were sweet peas, for which Alberta is famous.

But it was the part of the garden close about the front porch and verandah where the particular genius of Richard Dunbar showed itself. Here the flowers native to the prairie, the coulee, the canyon, were gathered; the early wind flower, the crowfoot and the buffalo bean, wild snowdrops and violets. Over trellises ran the tiny morning-glory, with vetch and trailing arbutus. A bed of wild roses grew to wonderful perfection. Later in the year would be seen the yellow and crimson lilies, daisies white and golden, and when other flowers had faded, golden rod and asters in gorgeous contrast. The approach to the door of the house was by a gravel walk bordered by these prairie flowers.

The house inside fulfilled the promise of the garden. The living room, simple in its plan, plain in its furnishing, revealed everywhere that touch in decorative adornment that spoke of the cultivated mind and refined taste. A group of rare etchings had their place over the mantel above a large, open fireplace. On the walls were to be seen really fine copies of the world's most famous pictures, and on the panels which ran 'round the walls were bits of pottery and china, relics of other days and of other homes.

But what was most likely to strike the eye of a stranger on entering the living room was the array of different kinds of musical instruments. At one end of the room stood a small upright piano, a 'cello held one corner, a guitar another; upon a table a cornet was deposited, and on the piano a violin case could be seen, while a banjo hung from a nail on the wall.

Near the fireplace a curiously carved pipe-rack hung, with some half dozen pipes of weird design, evidently the collection of years, while just under it a small table held the utensils sacred to the smoker.

When Barry entered he found the table set and everything in readiness for tea.

“Awfully sorry I'm too late to help you with tea, dad. I have had a long walk, and quite a deuce of a time getting home.”

“All right, boy. Glad you are here. The toast is ready, tea waiting to be infused. But what happened? No, don't begin telling me till you get yourself ready. But hurry, your meeting hour will be on in no time.”

“Right-o, dad! Shame to make a slavey of you in this way. I'll be out in a jiffy.”

He threw off his coat and vest, shirt and collar, took a pail of water to a big block in the little shed at the back, soused his head and shoulders in it with loud snorting and puffing, and emerged in a few minutes looking refreshed, clean and wholesome, his handsome face shining with vigorous health.

Together they stood at the table while the son said a few words of reverent grace.

“I'm ravenous, dad. What! Fried potatoes! Oh, you are a brick.”

“Tired, boy?”

“No. That reminds me of my thrilling tale, which I shall begin after my third slice of toast, and not before. You can occupy the precious minutes, dad, in telling me of your excitements in the office this afternoon.”

“Don't sniff at me. I had a few, though apparently you think it impossible in my humdrum grey life.”

“Good!” said Barry, his mouth full of toast. “Go on.”

“Young Neil Fraser is buying, or has just bought, the S.Q.R. ranch. Filed the transfer to-day.”

“Neil Fraser? He's in my tale, too. Bought the S.Q.R.? Where did he get the stuff?”

“Stuff?”

“Dough, the dirt, the wherewithal, in short the currency, dad.”

“Barry, you are ruining your English,” said his father.

“Yum-yum. Bully! Did you notice that, dad? I'm coming on, eh? One thing I almost pray about, that I might become expert in slinging the modern jaw hash. I'm appallingly correct in my forms of speech. But go on, dad. I'm throwing too much vocalisation myself. You were telling me about Neil Fraser. Give us the chorus now.”

“I don't like it, boy,” said his father, shaking his head, “and especially in a clergyman.”

“But that's where you are off, dad. The trouble is, when I come within range of any of my flock all my flip vocabulary absolutely vanishes, and I find myself talking like a professor of English or a maiden lady school ma'am of very certain age.”

“I don't like it, boy. Correct English is the only English for a gentleman.”

“I wonder,” said the lad. “But I don't want to worry you, dad.”

“Oh, as for me, that matters nothing at all, but I am thinking of you and of your profession, your standing.”

“I know that, dad. I sometimes wish you would think a little more about yourself. But what of Neil Fraser?”

“He has come into some money. He has bought the ranch.”

Barry's tone expressed doubtful approval. “Neil is a good sort, dad, awfully reckless, but I like him,” said Barry. “He is up and up with it all.”

“Now, what about your afternoon?” said his father.

“Well, to begin with, I had a dose of my old friend, the enemy.”

“Barry, you don't tell me! Your asthma!” His father sat back from the table gazing at him in dismay. “And I thought that was all done with.”

“So did I, dad. But it really didn't amount to much. Probably some stomach derangement, more likely some of that pollen which is floating around now. I passed through a beaver meadow where they were cutting hay, and away I went in a gale of sneezing, forty miles an hour. But I'm all right now, dad. I'm telling you the truth. You know I do.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” said his father, concern and relief mingling in his voice, “but you don't know how to take care of yourself, Barry. But go on with your tale.”

“Well, as I was panting along like a 'heavey horse,' as Harry Hobbs would say,—not really too bad, dad,—along comes that big rancher, Stewart Duff, driving his team of pinto bronchos, and with him a chap named Bayne, from Red Pine Creek. He turned out to be an awfully decent sort. And Duff's dog, Slipper, ranging on ahead, a beautiful setter.”

“Yes, I have seen him.”

They discussed for a few moments the beauties and points of Duff's Slipper, for both were keen sportsmen, and both were devoted to dogs. Then Barry went back to his tale and gave an account of what had happened during the ride home.

“You see Slipper ranging about got 'on point' and beautiful work it was, too. Out jumped Duff with his gun, ready to shoot, though, of course, he knew it was out of season and that he was breaking the law. Well, just as Slipper flushed the birds, I shouted to Duff that he was shooting out of season. He missed.”

“Oh, he was properly wrathful at my spoiling his shot,” cried the young man.

“I don't know that I blame him, Barry,” said his father thoughtfully. “It is an annoying thing to be shouted at with your gun on a bird, you know, extremely annoying.”

“But he was breaking the law, dad!” cried Barry indignantly.

“I know, I know. But after all—”

“But, dad, you can't sit there and tell me that you don't condemn him for shooting out of season. You know nothing makes you more furious than hearing about chaps who pot chicken out of season.”

“I know, I know, my boy.” The father was apparently quite distressed. “You are quite right, but—”

“Now, dad, I won't have it! You are not to tell me that I had no business to stop him if I could. Besides, the law is the law, and sport is sport.”

“I quite agree, Barry. Believe me, I quite agree. Yet all the same, a chap does hate to have his shot spoiled, and to shout at a fellow with his gun on a bird,—well, you'll excuse me, Barry, but it is hardly the sporting thing.”

“Sporting! Sporting!” said Barry. “I know that I hated to do it, but it was right. Besides talk about 'sporting'—what about shooting out of season?”

“Yes, yes. Well, we won't discuss it. Go on, Barry.”

“But I don't like it, dad. I don't like to think that you don't approve of what I do. It was a beastly hard thing to do, anyway. I had to make myself do it. It was my duty.” The young man sat looking anxiously at his father.

“Well, my boy,” said his father, “I may be wrong, but do you think you are always called upon to remonstrate with every law breaker? No, listen to me,” he continued hurriedly. “What I mean is, must you or any of us assume responsibility for every criminal in the land?”

Barry sat silent a moment, considering this proposition.

“I wish I knew, dad. You know, I have often said that to excuse myself after I have funked a thing, and let something go by without speaking up against it.”

“Funked it!”

“Yes. Funked standing up for the right thing, you know.”

“Funked it!” said his father again. “You wouldn't do that, Barry?”

“Oh, wouldn't I, though? I am afraid you don't know me very well, dad. However, I rather think I had started him up before that, you know. You won't like this either. But I may as well go through with it. You know, he was swearing and cursing most awfully, just in his ordinary talk you know, and that is a thing I can't stand, so I up and told him he was using too many 'damns.'”

“You did, eh?” In spite of himself the father could not keep the surprise out of his voice. “Well, that took some nerve, at any rate.”

“There you are again, dad! You think I had no right to speak. But somehow I can't help feeling I was right. For don't you see, it would have seemed a bit like lowering the flag to have kept silent.”

“Then for God's sake speak out, lad! I do not feel quite the same way as you, but it is what you think yourself that must guide you. But go on, go on.”

“Well, I assure you he was in a proper rage, and if it hadn't been for Bayne I believe he would have trimmed me to a peak, administered a fitting castigation, I mean.”

“He would, eh?” said the father with a grim smile. “I should like to see him try.”

“So should I, dad, if you were around. I think I see you—feint with the right, then left, right, left! bing! bang! bung! All over but the shiver, eh, dad? It would be sweet! But,” he added regretfully, “that's the very thing a fellow cannot do.”

“Cannot do? And why not, pray? It is what every fellow is in duty bound to do to a bully of that sort.”

“Yes, but to be quite fair, dad, you could hardly call Duff a bully. At least, he wasn't bullying me. As a matter of fact, I was bullying him. Oh, I think he had reason to be angry. When a chap undertakes to pull another chap up for law breaking, perhaps he should be prepared to take the consequences. But to go on. Bayne stepped in—awfully decent of him, too,—when just at that moment, as novelists say, with startling suddenness occurred an event that averted the impending calamity. Along came Neil Fraser, no less, in that new car of his, in a whirlwind of noise and dust, honking like a flock of wild geese. Well, you should have

seen those bronchos. One lurch, and we were on the ground, a beautiful upset, and the bronchos in an incipient runaway, fortunately checked by your humble servant. Duff, in a new and real rage this time, up with his gun and banged off both barrels after the motor car, by this time honking down the trail."

"By Jove! he deserved it," said the father. "Those motor fellows make me long to do murder at times."

"That's because you have no car, Dad, of course."

"Did he hit him, do you think?"

"No. My arm happened to fly up, the gun banged toward the zenith. Nothing doing!"

"Well, Barry, you do seem to have run foul of Mr. Duff."

"Three times, dad. But each time prevented him from breaking the law and doing himself and others injury. Would you have let him off this last time, dad?"

"No, no, boy. Human life has the first claim upon our care. You did quite right, quite right. Ungovernable fool he must be! Shouldn't be allowed to carry a gun."

"So Bayne declared," said Barry.

"Well, you have had quite an exciting afternoon. But finish your tea and get ready for the meeting. I will wash up."

"Not if I know it, dad. You take your saw-horse and do me a little Handel or Schubert. Do, please," entreated his son. "I want that before meeting more than anything else. I want a change of mood. I confess I am slightly rattled. My address is all prepared, but I must have atmosphere before I go into the meeting."

His father took the 'cello, and after a few moments spent in carefully tuning up, began with Handel's immortal Largo, then he wandered into the Adagio Movement in Haydn's third Sonata, from thence to Schubert's Impromptu in C Minor, after which he began the Serenade, when he was checked by his son.

"No, not that, dad, that's sickening. I consider that the most morally relaxing bit of music that I know. It frays the whole moral fibre. Give us one of Chopin's Ballades, or better still a bit of that posthumous Fantasie Impromptu, the largo movement. Ah! fine! fine!"

He flung his dish-cloth aside, ran to the piano and began an accompaniment to his father's playing.

"Now, dad, the Largo once more before we close." They did the Largo once and again, then springing from the piano Barry cried: "That Largo is a means of grace to me. There could be no better preparation for a religious meeting than that. If you would only come in and play for them, it would do them much more good than all my preaching."

"If you would only take your music seriously, Barry," replied his father, somewhat sadly, "you would become a good player, perhaps even a great player."

"And then what, dad?"

His father waved him aside, putting up his 'cello.

"No use going into that again, boy."

"Well, I couldn't have been a great player, at any rate, dad."

"Perhaps not, boy, perhaps not," said his father. "Great players are very rare. But it is time for your meeting."

"So it is, dad. Awfully sorry I didn't finish up those dishes. Let them go till I return. I wish you would, dad, and come along with me." His voice had a wistful note in it.

"Not to-night, boy, I think. We will have some talk after. You will only be an hour, you know."

"All right, dad," said Barry. "Some time you may come." He could not hide the wistful regret of his tone.

"Perhaps I shall, boy," replied his father.

It was the one point upon which there was a lack of perfect harmony between father and son. When the boy went to college it was with the intention of entering the profession of law, for which his father had been reading in his young manhood when the lure of Canada and her broad, free acres caught him, and he had abandoned the law and with his wife and baby boy had emigrated to become a land owner in the great Canadian west.

Alas! death, that rude spoiler of so many plans, broke in upon the sanctity and perfect peace of that happy ranch home and ravished it of its treasure, leaving a broken hearted man and a little boy, orphaned and

sickly, to be cared for. The ranch was sold, the rancher moved to the city of Edmonton, thence in a few years to a little village some twenty-five miles nearer to the Foothills, where he became the Registrar and Homestead Inspector for the district.

Here he had lived ever since, training the torn tendrils of his heart about the lad, till peace came back again, though never the perfect joy of the earlier days. Every May Day the two were wont to go upon an expedition many miles into the Foothills, to a little, sunny spot, where a strong, palisaded enclosure held a little grave. So little it looked, and so lonely amid the great hills. There, not in an abandonment of grief, but in loving and grateful remembrance of her whose dust the little grave now held, of what she had been to them, and had done for them, they spent the day, returning to take up again with hearts solemn, tender and chastened, the daily routine of life.

That his son should grow to take up the profession of law had been the father's dream, but during his university course the boy had come under the compelling influence of a spiritual awakening that swept him into a world filled with new impressions and other desires. Obeying what he felt to be an imperative call, the boy chose the church as his profession, and after completing his theological course in the city of Winnipeg, and spending a year in study in Germany, while still a mere youth he had been appointed as missionary to the district of which his own village was the centre.

But though widely separate from each other in the matter of religion, there were many points of contact between them. They were both men of the great out-of-doors, and under his father's inspiration and direction the boy had come to love athletic exercises of all kinds. They were both music-mad, the father having had in early youth a thorough musical education, the boy possessing musical talent of a high order. Such training as was his he had received from his father, but it was confined to one single instrument, the violin. To this instrument, upon which his father had received the tuition of a really excellent master, the son devoted long hours of study and practice during his boyhood years, and his attainments were such as to give promise of something more than an amateur's mastery of his instrument. His college work, however, interfered with his music, and to his father's great disappointment and regret he was forced to lay aside his study of the violin. On the piano, however, the boy developed an extraordinary power of improvisation and of sight reading, and while his technique was faulty his insight, his power of interpretation were far in excess of many artists who were his superiors in musical knowledge and power of execution. Many were the hours the father and son spent together through the long evenings of the western winter, and among the many bonds that held them in close comradeship, none was stronger than their common devotion to music.

Long after his son had departed to his meeting the father sat dreaming over his 'cello, wandering among the familiar bits from the old masters as fancy led him, nor was he aware of the lapse of time till his son returned.

“Hello! Nine-thirty?” he exclaimed, looking at his watch. “You have given them an extra dose to-night.”

“Business meeting afterwards, which didn't come off after all,” said his son. “Postponed till next Sunday.” With this curt announcement, and without further comment he sat down at his desk.

But after a few moments he rose quickly, saying, “Let us do some real work, dad.”

He took up his violin. His father, who was used to his moods, without question or remark proceeded to tune up. An hour's hard practice followed, without word from either except as regarded the work in hand.

“I feel better now, dad,” said the young man when they had finished. “And now for a round with you.”

“But what about your wind, boy? I don't like that asthma of yours this afternoon.”

“I am quite all right. It's quite gone. I feel sure it was the pollen from the beaver meadow.”

They cleared back the table and chairs from the centre of the room, stripped to their shirts, put on the gloves and went at each other with vim. Their style was similar, for the father had taught the son all he knew, except that the father's was the fighting and the son's the sparring style. To-night the roles appeared to be reversed, the son pressing hard at the in-fighting, the father trusting to his foot work and countering with the light touch of a man making points.

“You ARE boring in, aren't you?” said the father, stopping a fierce

rally.

“You are not playing up, dad,” said his son. “I don't feel like soft work to-night. Come to me!”

“As you say,” replied the father, and for the next five minutes Barry had no reason to complain of soft work, for his father went after him with all the fight that was in him, so that in spite of a vigorous defence the son was forced to take refuge in a runaway game.

“Now you're going!” shouted the son, making a fierce counter with his right to a hard driven left, which he side-stepped. It was a fatal exposure. Like the dart of a snake the right hand hook got him below the jaw, and he was hurled breathless on the couch at the side of the room.

“Got you now!” said his father.

“Not quite yet,” cried Barry. Like a cat he was on his feet, breathing deep breaths, dodging about, fighting for time.

“Enough!” cried his father, putting down his hands.

“Play up!” shouted Barry, who was rapidly recovering his wind. “No soft work. Watch out!”

Again the father was on guard, while Barry, who seemed to have drawn upon some secret source of strength, came at him with a whirlwind attack, feinting, jabbing, swinging, hooking, till finally he landed a short half arm on the jaw, which staggered his father against the wall.

“Pax!” cried the young man. “I have all I want.”

“Great!” said his father. “I believe you could fight, boy, if you were forced to.”

In the shed they sluiced each other with pails of water, had a rub down and got into their dressing gowns.

“I feel fine, now, dad, and ready for anything,” said Barry, glowing with his exercise and his tub. “I was feeling like a quitter. I guess that asthma got at my nerve. But I believe I will see it through some way.”

“Yes?” said his father, and waited.

“Yes. They were talking blue ruin in there to-night. Finances are behind, congregation is running down, therefore the preacher is a failure.”

“Well, lad, remember this,” said his father, “never let your liver decide any course of action for you. Some good stiff work, a turn with the gloves, for instance, is the best preparation I know for any important decision. A man cannot decide wisely when he feels grubby. Your asthma this afternoon is a symptom of liver.”

“It is humiliating to a creature endowed with conscience and intellect to discover how small a part these play at times in his decisions. The ancients were not far wrong who made the liver the seat of the emotions.”

“Well,” said his father, “it is a good thing to remember that most of our bad hours come from our livers. So the preacher is a failure? Who said so?”

“Oh, a number of them, principally Hayes.”

“Thank God, and go to sleep,” said his father. “If Hayes were pleased with my preaching I should greatly suspect my call to the ministry.”

“But seriously, I am certainly not a great preacher, and perhaps not a preacher at all. They say I have no 'pep,' which with some of them appears to be the distinctive and altogether necessary characteristic of a popular preacher.”

“What said Innes?” enquired his father.

“Did you ever hear Innes say much? From his silence one would judge that he must possess the accumulated wisdom of the ages.”

“When he does talk, however, he generally says something. What was his contribution?”

“'Ah, weel,' said the silent one, 'Ah doot he's no a Spurgeon, not yet a Billy Sunday, but ye'll hardly be expectin' thae fowk at Wapiti for nine hundred dollars a year.' Then, bless his old heart, he added, 'But the bairns tak to him like ducks to water, so you'd better bide a bit.' So they decided to 'bide a bit' till next Sunday. Dad, at first I wanted to throw their job in their faces, only I always know that it is the old Adam in me that feels like that, so I decided to 'bide a bit' too.”

“It is a poor job, after all, my boy,” said his father. “It's no gentleman's job the way it is carried on in this country. To think of your being at the bidding of a creature like Hayes!”

He could have said no better word. The boy's face cleared like the

sudden shining of the sun after rain. He lifted his head and said,

“Thank God, not at his bidding, dad. 'One is your Master,'” he quoted. “But after all, Hayes has something good in him. Do you know, I rather like him. He's—”

“Oh, come now, we'll drop it right there,” said his father, in a disgusted tone. “When you come to finding something to like in that rat, I surrender.”

“Who knows?” said the boy, as if to himself. “Poor Hayes. He may be quite a wonderful man, considering all things, his heredity and his environment. What would I have been, dad, but for you?”

His father grunted, pulled hard at his pipe, coughed a bit, then looked his son straight in the face, saying, “God knows what any of us owe to our past.” He fell into silence. His mind was far away, following his heart to the palisaded plot of ground among the Foothills and the little grave there in which he had covered from his sight her that had been the inspiration to his best and finest things, and his defence against the things low and base that had once hounded his soul, howling hard upon his trail.

The son, knowing his mood, sat in silence with him, then rising suddenly he sat himself on the arm of his father's chair, threw his arm around his shoulder and said, “Dear old dad! Good old boy you are, too. Good stuff! What would I have been but for you? A puny, puling, wretched little crock, afraid of anything that could spit at me. Do you remember the old gander? I was near my eternal damnation that day.”

“But you won out, my boy,” said his father in a croaking voice, putting his arm round his son.

“Yes, because you made me stick it, just as you have often made me stick it since. May God forget me if I ever forget what you have done for me. Shall we read now?”

He took the big Bible from its place upon the table, and turning the leaves read aloud from the teachings of the world's greatest Master. It was the parable of the talents.

“Rather hard on the failure,” he said as he closed the book.

“No, not the failure,” said his father, “the slacker, the quitter. It is nature's law. There is no place in God's universe for a quitter.”

“You are right, dad,” said Barry. “Good-night.”

He kissed his father, as he had ever done since his earliest infancy. Their prayers were said in private, the son, clergyman though he was, could never bring himself to offer to lead the devotions of him at whose knee he had kneeled every night of his life, as a boy, for his evening prayer.

“Good-night, boy,” said his father, holding him by the hand for a moment or so. “We do not know what is before us, defeat, loss, suffering. That part is not in our hands altogether, but the shame of the quitter never need, and never shall be ours.”

The little man stepped into his bedroom with his shoulders squared and his head erect.

“By Jove! He's no quitter,” said his son to himself, as his eyes followed him. “When he quits he'll be dead. God keep me from shaming him!”

CHAPTER IV

REJECTED

The hour for the church service had not quite arrived, but already a number of wagons, buckboards and buggies had driven up and deposited their loads at the church door. The women had passed into the church, where the Sunday School was already in session; the men waited outside, driven by the heat of the July sun and the hotter July wind into the shade of the church building.

Through the church windows came the droning of voices, with now and then a staccato rapping out of commands heard above the droning.

“That's Hayes,” said a sturdy young chap, brown as an Indian, lolling upon the grass. “He likes to be bossing something.”

“That's so, Ewen,” replied a smaller man, with a fish-like face, his mouth and nose running into a single feature.

“I guess he's doin' his best, Nathan Pilley,” answered another man, stout and stocky, with bushy side whiskers flanking around a rubicund face, out of which stared two prominent blue eyes.

“Oh, I reckon he is, Mr. Boggs. I have no word agin Hayes,” replied Nathan Pilley, a North Ontario man, who, abandoning a rocky farm in Muskoka, had strayed to this far west country in search of better fortune. “I have no word agin Mr. Hayes, Mr. Boggs,” he reiterated. “In fact, I think he ought to be highly commended for his beneficent work.”

“But he does like to hear himself giving out orders, all the same,” persisted the young man addressed as Ewen.

“Yes, he seems to sorter enjoy that, too, Ewen,” agreed Nathan, who was never known to oppose any man's opinion.

“He's doin' his best,” insisted Mr. Boggs, rather sullenly.

“Yes, he is that, Mr. Boggs, he is that,” said Nathan.

“But he likes to be the big toad in the puddle,” said Ewen.

“Well, he certainly seems to, he does indeed, Ewen.”

Clear over the droning there arose at this point another sound, a chorus of childish laughter.

“That's the preacher's class,” said Boggs. “Quare sort o' Sunday School where the kids carry on like that.”

“Seems rather peculiar,” agreed Nathan, “peculiar in Sunday School, it does.”

“What's the matter with young Pickles?” enquired Ewen.

The eyes of the company, following the pointing finger, fell upon young Pickles standing at the window of the little vestry to the church, and looking in. He was apparently convulsed with laughter, with his hand hard upon his mouth and nose as a kind of silencer.

“Do you know what's the matter with him, Pat?” continued Ewen.

Pat McCann, the faithful friend and shadow of young Pickles, after studying the attitude and motions of his friend, gave answer:

“It's the preacher, I guess. He's kiddin' the kids inside. He's some kidder, too,” he said, moving to take his place beside his friend.

“What's he doing anyway?” said Ewen. “I'm going to see.”

Gradually a little company gathered behind young Pickles and Pat McCann. The window commanded a view of the room, yet in such a way that the group were unobserved by the speaker.

“Say, you ought to seen him do the camel a minute ago,” whispered Pickles.

In the little vestry room were packed some twenty children of all ages and sizes, with a number of grownups who had joined the class in charge of some of its younger members. There was, for instance, Mrs. Innes, with the two youngest of her numerous progeny pillowed against her yielding and billowy person; and Mrs. Stewart Duff, an infant of only a few weeks upon her knee accounting sufficiently for the paleness of her sweet face, and two or three other women with their small children filling the bench that ran along the wall.

“Say! look at Harry Hobbs,” said Pat McCann to his friend.

Upon the stove, which in summer was relegated to the corner of the room, sat Harry Hobbs, a man of any age from his appearance, thin and wiry, with keen, darting eyes, which now, however, were fastened upon the preacher. All other eyes were, too. Even the smallest of the children seated on the front bench were gazing with mouths wide open, as if fascinated, upon the preacher who, moving up and down with quick, lithe steps, was telling them a story. A wonderful story, too, it seemed, the wonder of it apparent in the riveted eyes and fixed faces. It was the immortal story, matchless in the language, of Joseph, the Hebrew shepherd boy, who, sold into slavery by his brethren, became prime minister of the mighty empire of Egypt. The voice tone of the minister, now clear and high, now low and soft, vibrating like the deeper notes of the 'cello, was made for story telling. Changing with every changing emotion, it formed an exquisite medium to the hearts of the listeners for the exquisite music of the tale.

The story was approaching its climactic denouement; the rapturous moment of the younger brother's revealing was at hand; Judah, the older brother, was now holding the centre of the stage and making that thrilling appeal, than which nothing more moving is to be found in our English speech. The preacher's voice was throbbing with all the pathos of the tale. Motionless, the little group hung hard upon the story-teller, when the door opened quickly, a red head appeared, a rasping voice broke in:

“Your class report, Mr. Dunbar, please. We're waiting for it.”

A sigh of disappointment and regret swept the room.

“Oh, darn the little woodpecker!” said Ewen from the outside, in a disgusted tone. “That's the way with Hayes. He thinks he's the whole works, and that he never can get in wrong.”

The spell was broken, never to be renewed. The story hurried to its close, but the great climax failed of its proper effect.

“He's a hummer, ain't he?” exclaimed young Pickles to his friend, Pat McCann.

“Some hummer, and then some!” replied Pat.

“I'm goin' in,” said Pickles.

“Aw, what for? He ain't no good preachin' to them folks. By gum! I think he's scared of 'em.”

But Pickles persisted, and followed with the men and boys who lounged lazily into the church, from which the Sunday School had now been dismissed.

It appeared that the judgment of Pat McCann upon the merits of the preacher would be echoed by the majority of the congregation present. While the service was conducted in proper form and in reverent spirit, the sermon was marked by that most unpardonable sin of which sermons can be guilty; it was dull. Solid enough in matter, thoughtful beyond the average, it was delivered in a style appallingly wooden, with an utter absence of that arresting, dramatic power that the preacher had shown in his children's class.

The appearance of the congregation was, as ever, a reflection of the sermon. The heat of the day, the reaction from the long week in the open air, the quiet monotony of the well modulated voice rising and falling in regular cadence in what is supposed by so many preachers to be the tone suitable for any sacred office, produced an overwhelmingly somnolent effect. Many of them slept, some frankly and openly, others under cover of shading hands, bowed heads, or other subterfuges. Others again spent the whole of the period of the sermon, except for some delicious moments of surreptitious sleep, in a painful but altogether commendable struggle against the insidious influence of the god of slumber.

Among the latter was Mrs. Innes, whose loyalty to her minister, which was as much a part of her as her breathing, contended in a vigorous fight against her much too solid flesh. It was a certain aid to wakefulness that her two children, deep in audible slumber, kept her in a state of active concern lest their inert and rotund little masses of slippery flesh should elude her grasp, and wreck the proprieties of the hour by flopping on the floor. There was also a further sleep deterrent in the fact that immediately before her sat Mr. McFettridge, whose usually erect form, yielding to the soporific influences of the environment, showed a tendency gradually to sag into an attitude, relaxed and formless, which suggested sleep. This, to the lady behind him, partook of the nature of an affront to her minister. Consequently she considered it her duty to arouse the snoozing McFettridge with a vigorous poke in the small of the back.

The effect was instantaneously apparent. As if her insistent finger had touched a button and released an electric current, Mr. McFettridge's sagging form shot convulsively into rigidity, and impinging violently upon the peacefully slumbering Mr. Boggs on the extreme end of the bench, toppled him over into the aisle.

The astonished Boggs, finding himself thus deposited upon the floor, and beholding the irate face of Mr. McFettridge glooming down upon him, and fancying him to be the cause of his present humiliating position, sprang to his feet, swung a violent blow upon Mr. Fettridge's ear, exclaiming sotto voce:

“Take that, will you! And mind your own business! You were sleeping yourself, anyway!”

Before the astonished and enraged Mr. McFettridge could gather his wits sufficiently for action, there rang over the astonished congregation a peal of boyish laughter. It was from the minister. A few irrepressible youngsters joined in the laugh; the rest of the congregation, however, were held rigid in the grip of a shocked amazement.

“Oh, I say! do forgive me, Mr. McFettridge!” cried the young man at the desk. “It was quite involuntary, I assure you.” Then, quickly recovering himself, he added, “And now we shall conclude the service by singing the seventy-ninth hymn.”

Before the last verse was sung he reminded the audience of the

congregational meeting immediately following, and without further comment the service was brought to a close.

A number of the congregation, among them Barry's father, departed.

“Sit down, Neil,” said Mrs. Innes to Neil Fraser. “You'll be wanted I doot.” And Neil, protesting that he knew nothing about church business, sat down.

At the back of the church were gathered Harry Hobbs, young Pickles, and others of the less important attendants of the church, who had been induced to remain by the rumour of a “scrap.”

By a fatal mischance, the pliant Nathan Pilley was elected chairman. This gentleman was obsessed by the notion that he possessed in a high degree the two qualities which he considered essential to the harmonious and expeditious conduct of a public meeting, namely, an invincible determination to agree with every speaker, and an equally invincible determination to get motions passed.

In a rambling and aimless speech, Mr. Pilley set forth in a somewhat general way the steps leading up to this meeting, and then called upon Mr. Innes, the chairman of the Board of Management, to state more specifically the object for which it was called.

Mr. Innes, who was incurably averse to voluble speech, whether public or private, arose and said, in rolling Doric:

“Weel, Mr. Chair-r-man, there's no much to be done. We're behind a few hundred dollars, but if some one will go about wi' a bit paper, nae doot the ar-rear-rs wad soon be made up, and everything wad be ar-richt.”

“Exactly,” said Mr. Pilley pleasantly. “Now will some one offer a motion?”

Thereupon Mr. Hayes was instantly upon his feet, and in a voice thin and rasping exclaimed:

“Mr. Chairman, there's business to be done, and we are here to do it, and we're not going to be rushed through in this way.”

“Exactly, Mr. Hayes, exactly,” said Mr. Pilley. “We must give these matters the fullest consideration.”

Then followed a silence.

“Perhaps Mr. Hayes—” continued the chairman, looking appealingly at that gentleman.

“Well, Mr. Chairman,” said Mr. Hayes, with an appeased but slightly injured air, “it is not my place to set forth the cause of this meeting being called. If the chairman of the board would do his duty”—here he glared at the unconscious Mr. Innes—“he would set before it the things that have made this meeting necessary, and that call for drastic action.”

“Hear! Hear!” cried Mr. Boggs.

“Exactly so,” acquiesced the chairman. “Please continue, Mr. Hayes.”

Mr. Hayes continued: “The situation briefly is this: We are almost hopelessly in debt, and—”

“How much?” enquired Neil Fraser, briskly interrupting.

“Seven hundred dollars,” replied Mr. Hayes, “and further—”

“Five hundred dollars,” said Mr. Innes.

“I have examined the treasurer's books,” said Mr. Hayes in the calmly triumphant tone of one sure of his position, “and I find the amount to be seven hundred dollars, and therefore—”

“Five hundred dollars,” repeated Mr. Innes, gazing into space.

“Seven hundred dollars, I say,” snapped Mr. Hayes.

“Five hundred dollars,” reiterated Mr. Innes, without further comment.

“I say I have examined the books. The arrears are seven hundred dollars.”

“Five hundred dollars,” said Mr. Innes calmly.

The youngsters at the back snickered.

“Go to it!” said Harry Hobbs, under his breath.

Even the minister, who was sitting immediately behind Harry, could not restrain a smile.

“Mr. Chairman,” cried Mr. Hayes, indignantly, “I appeal against this interruption. I assert—”

“Where's the treasurer?” said Neil Fraser. “What's the use of this chewin' the rag?”

“Ah! Exactly so,” said the chairman, greatly relieved. “Mr. Boggs—Perhaps Mr. Boggs will enlighten us.”

Mr. Boggs arose with ponderous deliberation.

“Mr. Chairman,” he said, “in one sense Mr. Hayes is right when he states the arrears to be seven hundred dollars—”

“Five hundred dollars A'm tellin' ye,” said Mr. Innes with the first sign of feeling he had shown.

“And Mr. Innes is also right,” continued Mr. Boggs, ignoring the interruption, “when he makes the arrears five hundred dollars, the two hundred dollars difference being the quarterly revenue now due.”

“Next week,” said Mr. Innes, reverting to his wonted calm.

“Exactly so,” said the chairman, rubbing his hands amiably; “so that the seven hundred dollars we now owe—”

This was too much even for the imperturbable Mr. Innes.

He arose in his place, moved out into the aisle, advanced toward the platform, and with arm outstretched, exclaimed in wrathful tones:

“Mon, did ye no hear me tellin' ye? I want nae mon to mak' me a le-ear.”

At this point Mr. Stewart Duff, who had come to convey his wife home, and had got tired waiting for her outside, entered the church.

“Oh, get on with the business,” said Neil Fraser, who, although enjoying the scene, was becoming anxious for his dinner. “The question what's to be done with the five hundred dollars' arrears. I say, let's make it up right here. I am willing to give—”

“No, Mr. Chairman,” shouted Mr. Hayes, who was notoriously averse to parting with his money, and was especially fearful of a public subscription.

“There is something more than mere arrears—much more—”

“Ay, there is,” emphatically declared Mr. McFettridge, rising straight and stiff. “I'm for plain speakin'. The finances is not the worst about this congregation. The congregation has fallen off. Other churches in this village has good congregations. Why shouldn't we? The truth is, Mr. Chairman,”—Mr. McFettridge's voice rolled deep and sonorous over the audience—“we want a popular preacher—a preacher that draws—a preacher with some pep.”

“Hear! hear!” cried Mr. Boggs. “Pep's what we want. That's it—pep.”

“Pep,” echoed the chairman. “Exactly so, pep.”

“More than that,” continued Mr. McFettridge, “we want a minister that's a good mixer—one that stands in with the boys.”

“Hear! Hear!” cried Mr. Boggs again.

“A mixer! Exactly!” agreed the chairman. “A mixer!” nodding pleasantly at Mr. Boggs.

“And another thing I will say,” continued Mr. McFettridge, “now that I am on my feet. We want a preacher that will stick to his job—that will preach the gospel and not go meddlin' with other matters—with politics and such like.”

“Or prohibition,” shouted Harry Hobbs from the rear, to the undiluted joy of the youngsters in his vicinity.

The minister shook his head at him.

“Yes, prohibition,” answered Mr. McFettridge, facing toward the rear of the church defiantly. “Let him stick to his preaching the gospel; I believe the time has come for a change and I'm prepared to make a motion that we ask our minister to resign, and that motion I now make.”

“Second the motion,” cried Mr. Boggs promptly.

“You have heard the motion,” said the chairman, with business-like promptitude. “Are you ready for the question?”

“Question,” said Mr. Hayes, after a few moments' silence, broken by the shuffling of some members in their seats, and by the audible whispering of Mrs. Innes, evidently exhorting her husband to action.

“Then all those in favour of the motion will please—”

Then from behind the organ a little voice piped up, “Does this mean, Mr. Chairman, that we lose our minister?”

It was Miss Quigg, a lady whose years no gallantry could set below forty, for her appearance indicated that she was long past the bloom of her youth. She was thin, almost to the point of frailness, with sharp, delicately cut features; but the little chin was firm, and a flash of the brown eyes revealed a fiery soul within. Miss Quigg was the milliner and dressmaker of the village, and was herself a walking model of her own exquisite taste in clothes and hats. It was only her failing health that had driven her to abandon a much larger sphere than her present position offered, but even here her fame was such as to draw to her little shop customers from the villages round about for many miles.

“Does this mean, sir, that Mr. Dunbar will leave us?” she repeated.

“Well,—yes, madam—that is, Miss, I suppose, in a way—practically it would amount to that.”

“Will you tell me yes or no, please,” Miss Quigg's neat little figure was all a-quiver to the tips of her hat plumes.

“Well,” said the chairman, squirming under the unpleasant experience of being forced to a definite answer, “I suppose,—yes.”

Miss Quigg turned from the squirming and smiling Mr. Pilley in contempt.

“Then,” she said, “I say no. And I believe there are many here who would say no—and men, too.” The wealth of indignation and contemptuous scorn infused into the word by which the difference in sex of the human species was indicated, made those unhappy individuals glance shamefacedly at each other—“only they are too timid, the creatures! or too indifferent.”

Again there was an exchange of furtive glances and smiles and an uneasy shifting of position on the part of “the creatures.”

“But if you give them time, Mr. Chairman, I believe they will perhaps get up courage enough to speak.”

Miss Quigg sat down in her place behind the organ, disappearing quite from view except for the tips of her plumes, whose rapid and rhythmic vibrations were eloquent of the beating of her gallant little heart.

“Exactly so,” said the chairman, in confused but hearty acquiescence. “Perhaps some one will say something.”

Then Mr. Innes, forced to a change of position by the physical discomfort caused by his wife's prodding, rose and said,

“I dinna see the need o' any change. Mr. Dunbar is no a great preacher, but Ah doot he does his best. And the bairns all like him.”

Then the congregation had a thrill. In the back seat rose Harry Hobbs.

“I'm near forty years old,” he cried, in a high nasal tone that indicated a state of extreme nervous tension, “and I never spoke in meetin' before. I ain't had no use for churches and preachers, and I guess they hadn't no use for me. You folks all know me. I've been in this burg for near eight years, and I was a drinkin', swearin', fightin' cuss. This preacher came into the barn one day when I was freezin' to death after a big spree. He tuk me home with him and kep' me there for two weeks, settin' up nights with me, too. Let me be,” he said impatiently to Barry, who was trying to pull him down to his seat. “I'm agoin' to speak this time if it kills me. Many a time I done him dirt sence then, but he stuck to me, and never quit till he got me turned 'round. I was goin' straight to hell; he says I'm goin' to heaven now.” Here he laughed with a touch of scorn. “I dunno. But, by gum! if you fire him and do him dirt, I don't know what'll become of me, but I guess I'll go straight to hell again.”

“No, Harry, no you won't. You'll keep right on, Harry, straight to heaven.” It was the preacher's voice, full of cheery confidence.

Mrs. Innes was audibly sniffling; Mrs. Stewart Duff wiping her eyes. It was doubtless this sight that brought her husband to his feet.

“I don't quite know what the trouble is here,” he said. “I understand there are arrears. I heard some criticism of the minister's preaching. I can't say I care much for it myself, but I want to say right here that there are other things wanted in a minister, and this young fellow has got some of them. If he stays, he gets my money; if he doesn't, no one else does. I'll make you gentlemen who are kicking about finances a sporting proposition. I'm willing to double my subscription, if any other ten men will cover my ante.”

“I'll call you,” said Neil Fraser, “and I'll raise you one.”

“I'm willing to meet Mr. Duff and Mr. Fraser,” said Miss Quigg, rising from behind her organ with a triumphant smile on her face.

“I ain't got much money,” said Harry Hobbs, “but I'll go you just half what I earn if you'll meet me on that proposition.”

“Ah may say,” said Mr. Innes, yielding to his wife's vigorous vocal and physical incitations, “A'm prepair-r-ed to mak' a substantial increase in my subscreeption—that is, if necessary,” he added cautiously.

Then Barry came forward from the back of the church and stood before the platform. After looking them over for a few moments in silence, he said, in a voice clear, quiet, but with a ring in it that made it echo in every heart:

“Had it not been for these last speeches, it would have been unnecessary to allow the motion to go before you. I could not have remained where I am not wanted. But now I am puzzled, I confess, I am

really puzzled to know what to do. I am not a great preacher, I know, but then there are worse. I don't, at least I think I don't, talk nonsense. And I am not what Mr. McFettridge calls a 'good mixer.' On the other hand, I think Mr. Innes is right when he says the bairns like me; at least, it would break"—he paused, his lip quivering, then he went on quietly—"it would be very hard to think they didn't."

"They do that, then," said Mrs. Innes, emphatically.

"So you see, it is really very difficult to know what to do. I would hate to go away, but it might be right to go away. I suggest you let me have a week to think it over. Can you wait that long?"

His handsome, boyish face, alight with a fine glow of earnestness and sincerity, made irresistible appeal to all but those who for personal reasons were opposed to him.

"You see," he continued, in a tone of voice deliberative and quite detached, "there are a number of things to think about. Those arrears, for instance, are hardly my fault—at least, not altogether. I was looking over the treasurer's books the other day, and I was surprised to find how many had apparently quite forgotten to pay their church subscription. It is no doubt just an oversight. For instance," he added, in the confidential tone of one imparting interesting and valuable information, "you will be surprised to learn, Mr. Duff, that you are twenty-five dollars behind in your payments."

At this Neil Fraser threw back his head with a loud laugh. "Touche!" he said, in a joyous undertone.

The minister looked at him in surprise, and went on, "And while Mr. Innes and Miss Quigg are both paid up in full, Mr. Hayes has apparently neglected to pay his last quarter."

"Hit him again," murmured Harry Hobbs, while Mr. Hayes rose in virtuous indignation.

"I protest, Mr. Chairman!" he cried, "against these personalities."

"Oh, you quite mistake me, Mr. Hayes," said the preacher, "these are not personalities. I am simply showing how easy it is for arrears to arise, and that it may not be my fault at all. Of course, it may be right for me to resign. I don't know about that yet, but I want to be very sure. It would be easier to resign, but I don't want to be a quitter."

"I move we adjourn," said Neil Fraser.

"I second the motion," said Stewart Duff. The motion was carried, and the meeting adjourned.

At the door the minister stood shaking hands with all as they passed out, making no distinction in the heartiness with which he greeted all his parishioners. To Miss Quigg, however, he said, "Thank you. You were splendidly plucky."

"Nonsense!" cried the little lady, the colour flaming in her faded cheeks. "But," she added hastily, "you did that beautifully, and he deserved it, the little beast!"

"Solar plexus!" said Neil Fraser, who was immediately behind Miss Quigg.

The minister glanced from one to the other in perplexity, as they passed out of the door.

"But, you know, I was only—"

"Oh, yes, we know," cried Miss Quigg. "But if those men would only take hold! Oh, those men!" She turned upon Neil Fraser and shook her head at him violently.

"I know, Miss Quigg. We are a hopeless and helpless lot. But we're going to reform."

"You need to, badly," she said. "But you need some one to reform you. Look at Mr. Duff there, how vastly improved he is," and she waved her hand to that gentleman, who was driving away with his wife in their buckboard.

"He is a perfect dear," sighed Mrs. Duff, as she bowed to the minister. "And you, too, Stewart," she added, giving his arm a little squeeze, "you said just the right thing when those horrid people were going to turn him out."

"Say! Your preacher isn't so bad after all," said her husband. "Wasn't that a neat one for old Hayes?"

"He rather got you, though, Stewart."

"Yes, he did, by Jove! Not the first time, either, he's done it. But I must look after that. Say, he's the limit for freshness though. Or is it freshness? I'm not quite sure."

"Will he stay with us?" said his wife. "I really do hope he will."

“Guess he'll stay all right. He won't give up his job,” said her husband.

But next week proved Mr. Duff a poor prophet, for the minister after the service informed his people that he had come to the conclusion that another man might get better results as minister of the congregation; he had therefore handed in his resignation to the Presbytery.

It was a shock to them all, but he adhered to his resolution in spite of tearful lamentations from the women, wide-eyed amazement and dismay from the bairns of the congregation, and indignation, loudly expressed, from Neil Fraser and Stewart Duff, and others of their kind.

“Well,” said Miss Quigg, struggling with indignant tears, as she was passing out of the church, “you won't see Harry Hobbs in this church again, nor me, either.”

“Oh, yes, Miss Quigg, Harry has promised me that he will stick by the church, and that he will be there every Sunday. And so will you, dear Miss Quigg. I know you. You will do what is right.”

But that little lady, with her head very erect and a red spot burning in each faded cheek, passed out of the church saying nothing, the plumes on her jaunty little hat quivering defiance and wrath against “those men, who had so little spunk as to allow a little beast like Hayes to run them.”

CHAPTER V

THE WAR DRUM CALLS

“Well, dad,” said Barry next evening as they were sitting in the garden after tea, “I feel something like Mohammed's coffin, detached from earth but not yet ascended into heaven. It's unpleasant to be out of a job. I confess I shall always cherish a more intelligent sympathy henceforth for the great unemployed. But cheer up, dad! You are taking this thing much too seriously. The world is wide, and there is something waiting me that I can do better than any one else.”

But the father had little to say. He felt bitterly the humiliation to which his son had been subjected.

Barry refused to see the humiliation.

“Why should I not resign if I decide it is my duty so to do? And why, on the other hand, should not they have the right to terminate my engagement with them when they so desire? That's democratic government.”

“But good Lord, Barry!” burst out his father, with quite an unusual display of feeling; “to think that a gentleman should hold his position at the whim of such whippersnappers as Hayes, Boggs et hoc genus omne. And more than that, that I should have to accept as my minister a man who would be the choice of cattle like that.”

“After all, dad, we are ruled by majorities in this age and in this country. That is at once the glory and the danger of democratic government. There is no better way discovered as yet. And besides, I couldn't go on here, dad, preaching Sunday after Sunday to people who I felt were all the time saying, 'He's no good'; to people, in short, who could not profit by my preaching.”

“Because it had no pep, eh?” said his father with bitter scorn.

“Do you know, dad, I believe that's what is wrong with my preaching: it hasn't got pep. What pep is, only the initiated know. But the long and the short of this thing is, it is the people that must be satisfied. It is they who have to stand your preaching, they who pay the piper. But cheer up, dad, I have no fear for the future.”

“Nor have I, my boy, not the slightest. I hope you did not think for a moment, my son,” he added with some dignity, “that I was in doubt about your future.”

“No, no, dad. We both feel a little sore naturally, but the future is all right.”

“True, my dear boy, true. I was forgetting myself. As you say, the world is wide and your place is waiting.”

“Hello! here comes my friend, Mr. Duff,” said Barry in a low voice. “He was ready to throw Mr. McFettridge out of the meeting yesterday, body and bones. Awfully funny, if it hadn't been in church. Wonder what he wants! Seems in a bit of a hurry.”

But hurry or not, it was a full hour before Mr. Duff introduced his business. As he entered the garden he stood gazing about him in amazed wonder and delight, and that hour was spent in company with Mr. Dunbar, exploring the garden, Barry following behind lost in amazement at the new phase of character displayed by their visitor.

“I have not had such a delightful evening, Mr. Dunbar, for years,” said Duff, when they had finished making the round of the garden. “I have heard about your garden, but I had no idea that it held such a wealth and variety of treasures. I had something of a garden myself in the old country, but here there is no time apparently for anything but cattle and horses and money. But if you would allow me I should greatly like to have the pleasure of bringing Mrs. Duff to see your beautiful garden.”

Mr. Duff was assured that the Dunbars would have the greatest pleasure in receiving Mrs. Duff.

“Do bring her,” said Barry, “and we can have a little music, too. She is musical, I know. I hear her sing in church.”

“Music! Why, she loves it. But she dropped her music when she came here; there seemed to be no time, no time, no time. I wonder sometimes —Well, I must get at my business. It is this letter that brings me. It is from an American whom you know, at least, he knows you, a Mr. Osborne Howland of Pittsburgh.”

Mr. Dunbar nodded.

“He is planning a big trip up the Peace River country prospecting for oil and mines, and later hunting. He says you and your son engaged to accompany him, and he asks me to complete arrangements with you. I am getting Jim Knight to look after the outfit. You know Jim, perhaps. He runs the Lone Pine ranch. Fine chap he is. Knows all about the hunting business. Takes a party into the mountains every year. He'll take Tom Fielding with him. I don't know Fielding, but Knight does. Mr. Howland says there will be three of their party. Far too many, but that's his business. I myself am rather anxious to look after some oil deposits, and this will be a good chance. What do you say?”

Father and son looked at each other.

“It would be fine, if we could manage it,” said Mr. Dunbar, “but my work is so pressing just now. A great many are coming in, and I am alone in the office at present. When does he propose to start?”

“In six weeks' time. I hope you can come, Mr. Dunbar. I couldn't have said so yesterday, but I can now. Any man with a garden like this, the product of his own planning and working, is worth knowing. So I do hope you can both come. By the way, Knight wants a camp hand, a kind of roustabout, who can cook—a handy man, you know.”

“I have him,” said Barry. “Harry Hobbs.”

“Hobbs? Boozes a bit, doesn't he?”

“Not now. Hasn't for six months. He's a new man. I can guarantee him.”

“You can, eh? Well, my experience is once a boozer always a boozer.”

“Oh,” said Barry, “Hobbs is different. He is a member of our church, you know.”

“No, I didn't know. But I don't know that that makes much difference anyway,” said Duff with a laugh. “I don't mean to be offensive,” he added.

“It does to Hobbs, he's a Christian man now. I mean a real Christian, Mr. Duff.”

“Well, I suppose there is such a thing. In fact, I've known one or two, but—well, if you guarantee him I'll take him.”

“I will guarantee him,” said Barry.

“Let me have your answer to-morrow,” said Duff as he bade them good-night.

The Dunbars discussed the matter far into the night. It was clearly impossible for Mr. Dunbar to leave his work, and the only question was whether or not Barry should make one of the party. Barry greatly disliked the idea of leaving his father during the hot summer months, as he said, “to slave away at his desk, and to slop away in his bachelor diggings.” He raised many objections, but one consideration seemed to settle things for the Dunbars. To them a promise was a promise.

“If I remember aright, Barry, we promised that we should join their party on this expedition.”

“Yes,” added Barry quickly, “if our work permitted it.”

“Exactly,” said his father. “My work prevents me, your work does not.”

Hence it came that by the end of August Barry found himself in the far

northern wilds of the Peace River country, a hundred miles or so from Edmonton, attached to a prospecting-hunting party of which Mr. Osborne Howland was the nominal head, but of which the “boss” was undoubtedly his handsome, athletic and impetuous daughter Paula. The party had not been on the trail for more than a week before every member was moving at her command, and apparently glad to do so.

The party were camped by a rushing river at the foot of a falls. Below the falls the river made a wide eddy, then swept down in a turbulent rapid for some miles. The landing was a smooth and shelving rock that pitched somewhat steeply into the river.

The unfortunate Harry, who after the day's march had exchanged his heavy marching boots with their clinging hobnails for shoes more comfortable but with less clinging qualities, in making preparation for the evening meal made his way down this shelving rock of water. No sooner had he filled his pail than his foot slipped from under him, and in an instant the pail and himself were in the swiftly flowing river.

His cry startled the camp.

“Hello!” shouted Duff, with a great laugh. “Harry is in the drink! I never knew he was so fond of water as all that. You've got to swim for it now, old boy.”

“Throw him something,” said Knight.

Past them ran Barry, throwing off coat and vest.

“He can't swim,” he cried, tearing at his boots. “Throw him a line, some one.” He ran down to the water's edge, plunged in, and swam toward the unfortunate Harry, who, splashing wildly, was being carried rapidly into the rough water.

“Oh, father, he will be drowned!” cried Paula, rushing toward a canoe which was drawn up on the shore. Before any one could reach her she had pushed it out and was steering over the boiling current in Barry's wake. But after a few strokes of her paddle she found herself driven far out into the current and away from the struggling men. Paula had had sufficient experience with a canoe to handle it with considerable ease in smooth water and under ordinary conditions, but in the swirl of this rough and swift water the canoe took the management of its course out of her hands, and she had all she could do to keep afloat.

“For God's sake, men, get her!” cried Brand. “She will be drowned before our eyes.”

“Come on, Tom,” cried Jim Knight, swinging another canoe into the water. A glance he gave at the girl, another at the struggling men, for by this time Barry could be seen struggling with the drowning Hobbs.

“Get in, Tom,” ordered Knight, taking the stern. “We will get the men first. The girl is all right in the meantime.”

“Get the girl!” commanded Brand. “For God's sake go for the girl,” he entreated in a frenzy of distress.

“No,” said Knight, “the men first. She's all right.”

“Here,” said Duff to Brand, pushing out the remaining canoe, “get into the bow, and stop howling. Those men are in danger of being drowned, but Knight will get them. We'll go for the girl.”

It took but a few minutes for Knight and Fielding, who knew their craft thoroughly and how to get the best out of her in just such an emergency, to draw up upon Harry and his rescuer.

“Say, they are fighting hard,” said Fielding. “That bloody little fool is choking the life out of Dunbar. My God! they are out of sight!”

“Go on,” roared Knight. “Keep your eyes on the spot, and for Heaven's sake, paddle!”

“They are up again! One of them is. It's Barry. The other is gone. No, by Jove! he's got him! Hold on, Barry, we're coming,” yelled Tom. “Stick to it, old boy!”

Swiftly the canoe sped toward the drowning men.

“They are gone this time for sure,” cried Tom, as the canoe shot over the spot where the men had last been seen.

“Not much!” said Knight, as reaching out of the stern he gripped Barry by the hair. “Hold hard, Barry,” he said quietly. “No monkey work now or you'll drown us all.” Immediately Barry ceased struggling.

“Don't try to get in, Barry. We'll have to tow you ashore.”

“All right, Jim,” he said between his sobbing breaths. “Only—hurry up —I've got him—here.”

Knight reached down carefully, lifted Barry till his hand touched the gunwale of the canoe.

“Not too hard, Barry,” he said. “I'll ease you round to the stern. Steady, boy, steady. Don't dump us.”

“All right—Jim—but—he's under the water—here.”

“Oh, never mind him. We'll get him all right. Can you hold on now?” said Knight.

“Yes—I think so.”

“Now, for God's sake, Tom, edge her into the shore. See that little eddy there? Swing into that! You'll do it all right. Good man!”

By this time Knight was able to get Harry's head above water.

In a few minutes they had reached the shore, and were working hard over Harry's unconscious body, leaving Barry lying on the sand to recover his strength. A long fight was necessary to bring the life back into Harry, by which time Barry was sufficiently recovered to sit up.

“Stay where you are, Barry, until we get this man back to camp,” ordered Knight. “We'll light a bit of a fire for you.”

“I'm warm enough,” said Barry.

“Warm enough? You may be, but you will be better with a fire, and you lie beside it till we get you. Don't move now.”

“There's the other canoes coming,” said Fielding. “They'll make shore a little lower down. They're all right. Say, she's handling that canoe like a man!”

“Who?” said Barry.

“Why, Miss Howland,” said Fielding. “She was out after you like a shot. She's a plucky one!”

Barry was on his feet in an instant, watching anxiously the progress of the canoes, which were being slowly edged across the river in a long incline toward the shore.

“They'll make it, all right,” said Knight, after observing them for a time. “Don't you worry. Just lie down by the fire. We'll be back in a jiffy.”

In an hour they were all safely back in camp, and sufficiently recovered to discover the humorous points in the episode. But they were all familiar enough with the treacherous possibilities of rough and rapid water to know that for Hobbs and his deliverer at least, there had been some serious moments during their fierce struggle in the river.

“Another minute would have done,” said Fielding to his friend, as they sat over the fire after supper.

“A half a minute would have been just as good,” said Knight. “I got Barry by the hair under water. He was at his last kick, you bet! And that rat,” he added, smiling good naturedly at Harry, “was dragging him down for the last time.”

“I didn't know nothin' about it,” said poor Harry, who was lying stretched out by the fire, still very weak and miserable. “I didn't know nothin' about it, or you bet I woudn't ha' done it. I didn't know nothin' after he got me.”

“After you got him, you mean,” said Fielding.

“I guess that's right,” said Harry, “but I wouldn't ha' got him if he hadn't ha' got me first.”

They all joined in the discussion of the event except Paula, who sat distrait and silent, gazing into the fire, and Barry, who lay, drowsy and relaxed, on a blanket not far from her side.

“You ought to go to bed,” said Paula at length in a low voice to him. “You need a good night's sleep.”

“I'm too tired to sleep,” said Barry. “I feel rather rotten, in fact. I ought to feel very grateful, but somehow I just feel rotten.”

“Can one be grateful and feel rotten at the same time?” said Paula, making talk.

“Behold me,” replied Barry. “I know I am grateful, but I do feel rotten. I don't think I have even thanked you for risking your life for me,” he added, turning toward her.

“Risking my life? Nonsense! I paddled 'round in the canoe for a bit, till two strong men came to tow me in, and would have, if I had allowed them. Thank the boys, who got you in time.” She shuddered as she spoke.

“I do thank them, and I do feel grateful to them,” said Barry. “It was rather a near thing. You see, I let him grip me. I choked him off my arms, but he slid down to my thigh, and I could not kick him off. Had to practically drown him. Even then he hung on.”

“Oh, don't speak about it,” she said with a shudder, covering her face with her hands. “It was too awful, and it might have been the end of

you.” Her voice broke a little.

“No, not an end,” answered Barry, in a quiet voice. “Not the end by a long way, not by a very long way.”

“What do you mean? Oh, you are thinking of immortality, and all that,” said Paula. “It's a chilly, ghostly subject. It makes me shiver. I get little comfort out of it.”

“Ghostly it is, if you mean a thing of spirits,” said Barry, “but chilly! Why chilly?” Then he added to himself in an undertone: “I wonder! I wonder! I wish sometimes I knew more.”

“Sometimes?” cried Paula. “Always!” she added passionately. “It's a dreadful business to me. To be suddenly snatched out of the light and the warmth, away from the touch of warm fingers and the sight of dear faces! Ah, I dread it! I loathe the thought of it. I hate it!”

“And yet,” mused Barry, “somehow I cannot forget that out there somewhere there is One, kindly, genial, true,—like my dad. How good he has been to me—my dad, I mean, and that Other, too, has been good. Somehow I think of them together. Yes, I am grateful to Him.”

“Oh, God, you mean,” said Paula, a little impatiently.

“Yes, to God. He saved me to-day. 'Saved,' I say. It is a queer way to speak, after all. What I really ought to say is that God thought it best that I should camp 'round here for a bit longer before moving in nearer.”

“Nearer?”

“Yes, into the nearer circle. Life moves 'round a centre, in outer and inner circles. This is the outer circle. Nearer in there, it is kindlier, with better light and clearer vision. 'We shall know even as we are known.'” Barry mused on, as if communing with himself.

“But when you move in,” said Paula, and there was no mistaking the earnestness of her tone, “you break touch with those you love here.”

“I don't know about that,” answered Barry quickly.

“Oh, yes you do. You are out of all this,—all this,” she swept her hand at the world around her, “this good old world, all your joy and happiness, all you love. Oh, that's the worst of it; you give up your love. I hate it!” she concluded with vehemence sudden and fierce, as she shook her fist towards the stars.

“Give up your love?” said Barry. “Not I! Not one good, honest affection do I mean to give up, nor shall I.”

“Oh, nonsense! Don't be religious. Just be honest,” said Paula, in a low, intense voice. “Let me speak to you. Suppose I—I love a man with all my soul and body—and body, mind you, and he goes out, or goes in, as you say. No matter, he goes out of my life. I lose him, he is not here. I cannot feel and respond to his love. I cannot feel his strong arms about me. My God!” Her voice came with increasing vehemence. “I want his arms. I want him as he is. I want his body—I cannot love a ghost. No! no!” she added in a low, hopeless voice. “When he goes out I lose him, and lose him as mine forever. Oh, what do I care for your spirit love! The old Greeks were right. They are shades—shades, mere shades beyond the river. I don't want a shade. I want a man, a strong, warm-hearted, brave man. Yes, a good man, a man with a soul. But a MAN, not a SOUL. My God!” she moaned, “how terrible it all is! And it came so near to us to-day. But I should not be saying this to you, played out as you are. I am going to bed. Good-night.”

She put out her hand and gripped his in warm, strong, muscular fingers. “Thank God, yes God, if you like, you are still—still in this outer circle,”—she broke into a laugh, but there was little mirth in her laughter—“this good old outer circle, yet awhile.”

“Yes,” said Barry simply but very earnestly, “thank God. It is a good world. But with all my soul I believe there is a better, and all that is best in love and life we shall take with us. Good-night,” he added, “and thank you, at least for the will and the attempt to save my life.”

“Sleep well,” she said.

“I hope so,” he replied, “but I doubt it.”

His doubts, it turned out, were justified, for soon after midnight Mr. Howland was aroused by Harry Hobbs in a terror of excitement.

“Will you come to Mr. Dunbar, sir?” he cried. “I think he is dying.”

“Dying?” Mr. Howland was out of his cot immediately and at Barry's side. He found him fighting for breath, his eyes starting from his head, a look of infinite distress on his face.

“My dear boy, what is it? Hobbs says you are dying.”

“That con-con-founded—fool—shouldn't have—called you. I forbade—him,” gasped Barry.

“But, my dear boy, what is the matter? Are you in pain?”

“No, no,—it's—nothing—only an old—friend come back—for a call,—a brief one—let us—hope. It's only asthma. Looks bad—feels worse—but really—not at all dangerous.”

“What can be done, my boy?” asked Mr. Howland, greatly relieved, as are most laymen, when the trouble can be named. It is upon the terror inspired by the unknown that the medical profession lives.

“Tell Harry—to make—a hot drink,” said Barry, but Harry had already forestalled the request, and appeared with a steaming bowl. “This will—help. Now—go to—bed, Mr. Howland. Do, please.—You distress—me by remaining—there. Harry will—look after me. Good-night.”

Next morning Barry appeared at breakfast a little washed out in appearance, but quite bright and announcing himself fit for anything.

The incident, however, was a determining factor in changing the party's plans. Already they were behind their time schedule, to Mr. Cornwall Brand's disgust. The party was too large and too heavily encumbered with impedimenta for swift travel. Besides, as Paula said, “Why rush? Are we not doing the Peace River Country? We are out for a good time and we are having it.” Paula was not interested in mines and oil. She did not announce just what special interest was hers. She was “having a good time” and that was reason enough for leisurely travel. In consequence their provisions had run low.

It was decided to send forward a scouting party to the Hudson's Bay Post some thirty miles further on to restock their commissariat. Accordingly Knight and Fielding were despatched on this mission, the rest of the party remaining in camp.

“A lazy day or two in camp is what we all need,” said Mr. Howland. “I confess I am quite used up myself, and therefore I know you must all feel much the same.”

On the fourth day the scouting party appeared.

“There's war!” cried Knight as he touched land. He flung out a bundle of papers for Mr. Howland.

“War!” The word came back in tones as varied as those who uttered it.

“War!” said Mr. Howland. “Between whom?”

“Every one, pretty much,” said Knight. “Germany, France, Russia, Austria, Servia, Belgium, and Britain.”

“Britain!” said Barry and Duff at the same moment.

“Britain,” answered Knight solemnly.

The men stood stock still, looking at each other with awed faces.

“War!” again said Barry. “With Germany!” He turned abruptly away from the group and said, “I am going.”

“Going! Going where?” said Mr. Howland.

“To the war,” said Barry quietly.

“To the war! You? A clergyman?” said Mr. Howland.

“You? You going?” cried Paula. At the pain in her voice her father and Brand turned and looked at her. Disturbed by what he saw, her father began an excited appeal to Barry.

“Why, my dear sir, it would surely be most unusual for a man like you to go to war,” he began, and for quite ten minutes he proceeded to set forth in fluent and excited speech a number of reasons why the idea of Barry's going to war was absurd and preposterous to him. It must be confessed that Barry was the only one of the men who appeared to give much heed to him. They seemed to be dazed by the stupendous fact that had been announced to them, and to be adjusting themselves to that fact.

When he had finished his lengthy and excited speech Brand took up the discourse.

“Of course you don't think of going immediately,” he said. “We have this expedition in hand.”

The men made no reply. Indeed, they hardly seemed to hear him.

“You don't mean to say,” continued Brand with a touch of indignation in his voice, addressing Duff, the recognised leader of the party, “that you would break your engagement with this party, Mr. Duff?”

Duff glanced at him, then looked away in silence, studying the horizon. The world was to him and to them all a new world within the last few minutes.

His silence appeared to enrage Brand. He turned to Barry.

“Do you mean to tell me, sir, that you approve of this? Do you consider it right and fair that these men should break their engagement with us?

We have gone to great expense, we have extremely important interests at stake in this exploration."

Barry stood looking at him in silence, as if trying to take in exactly what he meant, then in a low and awed tone he said:

"It is war! War with Germany!"

"We cannot help that," cried Brand. "What difference can this war make to you here a hundred miles from civilisation? These men are pledged to us."

"Their first pledge is to their country, sir," said Barry gravely.

"But why should you, a Canadian, take part in this war?" argued Mr. Howland. "Surely this is England's war."

Then Barry appeared to awake as from a dream.

"Yes, it is England's war, it is Britain's war, and when Britain is at war my country is at war, and when my country is at war I ought to be there."

"God in heaven!" shouted Duff, striking him on the back, "you have said it! My country is at war, and I must be there. As God hears me, I am off to-day—now."

"Me, too!" said Knight with a shout.

"I'm going with you, sir," said little Harry Hobbs, ranging himself beside Barry.

"Count me in," said Tom Fielding quietly. "I have a wife and three kids, but—"

"My God!" gasped Duff. "My wife." His face went white. He had not yet fully adjusted himself to the fact of war.

"Why, of course," said Mr. Howland, "you married men won't be called upon. You must be reasonable. For instance you, Mr. Duff, cannot leave your wife."

But Duff had recovered himself.

"My wife, sir? My wife would despise me if I stayed up here. Sir, my wife will buckle on my belt and spurs and send me off to the war," cried Duff in a voice that shook as he spoke.

With a single stride Barry was at his side, offering both his hands.

"Thank God for men like you! And in my soul I believe the Empire has millions of them."

"Does your Empire demand that you desert those you have pledged yourself to?" enquired Brand in a sneering tone.

"Oh, Cornwall!" exclaimed Paula, "how can you?"

"Why, Brand," said Mr. Howland, "that is unworthy of you."

"We will see you into safety, sir," said Duff, swinging round upon Brand, "either to the Hudson's Bay Company's post, where you can get Indians, or back to Edmonton, but not one step further on this expedition do I go."

"Nor I," said Knight.

"Nor I," said Fielding.

"Nor I," said Barry.

"Nor I," said Harry Hobbs.

"You are quite right, sir," said Mr. Howland, turning to Barry. "I apologise to you, sir, to all of you Canadians. I am ashamed to confess that I did not at first get the full meaning of this terrific thing that has befallen your Empire. Were it the U.S.A. that was in a war of this kind, hell itself would not keep me from going to her aid. Nor you either, Brand. Yes, you are right. Go to your war. God go with you."

He shook hands solemnly with them one by one. "I only wish to God that my country were with you, too, in this thing," he said when he had performed this function.

"Father," cried Paula, "do you think for one minute that Uncle Sam won't be in this? You put it down," she said, swinging 'round upon Barry, "where it will jump at you some day: We will be with you in this scrap for all we are worth."

"And now for the march," said Barry, who seemed almost to assume command. Then removing his hat and lifting high his hand, he said in a voice thrilling with solemn reverence, "God grant victory to the right! God save the king!"

Instinctively the men took off their hats and stood with bared and bent heads, as if sharing in a solemn ritual. They stood with millions upon millions of their kin in the old mother lands, and scattered wide upon the seas, stood with many millions more of peoples and nations, pledging to

this same cause of right, life and love and all they held dear, and with hearts open to that all-searching eye, praying that same prayer, “God grant victory to the right. Amen and amen. We ask no other.”

Then they faced to their hundred miles' trek en route to the war.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEN OF THE NORTH

“Fifty miles—not too bad, boy, not too bad for a one day's go. We'll camp right here at the portage. How is it, Knight?”

“Good place, Duff, right on that point. Good wood, good landing. Besides there's a deuce of a portage beyond, which we can do after supper to-night. How do you feel, Barry?” asked Knight. “Hard day, eh?”

“Feeling fit, a little tired, of course, but good for another ten miles,” answered Barry.

“That's the stuff,” replied Knight, looking at him keenly, “but, see here, you must ease up on the carrying. You haven't quite got over that ducking of yours.”

“I'm fit enough,” answered Barry, rather more curtly than his wont.

They brought the canoes up to the landing, and with the speed of long practice unloaded them, and drew them upon the shore.

Knight approached Duff, and, pointing toward Barry, said quietly:

“I guess we'll have to ease him up a bit. That fight, you know, took it out of him, and he always jumps for the biggest pack. We'd better hold him back to-morrow a bit.”

“Can't hold back any one,” said Duff, with an oath. “We've got to make it to-morrow night. There's the devil of a trip before us. That big marsh portage is a heartbreaker, and there must be a dozen or fifteen of them awaiting us, and we're going to get through—at least, I am.”

“All right,” said Knight, with a quick flash of temper. “I'll stay with you, only I thought we might ease him a bit.”

“I'm telling you, we're going to get through,” said Duff, with another oath.

“You needn't tell me, Duff,” said Knight. “Keep your shirt on.”

“On or off, wet or dry, sink or swim, we're going to make that train to-morrow, Knight. That's all about it.”

Then Knight let himself go.

“See here, Duff. Do you want to go on to-night? If you do, hell and blazes, say the word and I'm with you.”

His face was white as he spoke. He seized a tump-line, swung the pack upon his head, and set off across the portage.

“Come on, boys,” he yelled. “We're going through to-night.”

“Oh, hold up, Knight!” said Duff. “What the hell's eating you? We'll grub first anyway.”

“No,” said Knight. “The next rapid is a bad bit of water, and if we're going through to-night, I want that bit behind me, before it gets too dark. So come along!”

“Oh, cut it out, Knight,” said Duff, in a gruff but conciliatory tone. “We'll camp right here.”

“It's all the same to me,” said Knight, flinging his pack down. “When you want to go on, say the word. You won't have to ask me twice.”

Duff looked over the six feet of bone and sinew and muscle of the young rancher, made as if to answer, paused a moment, changed his mind, and said more quietly:

“Don't be an ass, Knight. I'm not trying to hang your shirt on a tree.”

“You know damned well you can't,” said Knight, who was still white with passion.

“Oh, come off,” replied Duff. “Anyway, I don't see what young Dunbar is to you. We must get through to-morrow night. The overseas contingent is camping at Valcartier, according to these papers and whatever happens I am going with that contingent.”

Knight made no reply. He was a little ashamed of his temper. But during the past two days he had chafed under the rasp of Duff's tongue and his overbearing manner. He resented too his total disregard of

Barry's weariness, for in spite of his sheer grit, the pace was wearing the boy down.

“We ought to reach the railroad by six to-morrow,” said Duff, renewing the conversation, and anxious to appease his comrade. “There's a late train, but if we catch the six we shall make home in good time. Hello, what's this coming?”

At his words they all turned and looked in the direction in which he pointed.

Down a stream, which at this point came tumbling into theirs in a dangerous looking rapid, came a canoe with a man in the centre guiding it as only an expert could.

“By Jove! He can't make that drop,” said Knight, walking down toward the landing.

They all stood watching the canoe which, at the moment, hung poised upon the brink of the rapid like a bird for flight. Even as Knight spoke the canoe entered the first smooth pitch at the top. Two long, swallow-like sweeps, then she plunged into the foam, to appear a moment later fighting her way through the mass of crowding, crested waves, which, like white-fanged wolves upon a doe, seemed to be hurling themselves upon her, intent upon bearing her down to destruction.

“By the living, jumping Jemima!” said Fielding, in an awe-stricken tone, “she's gone!”

“She's through!” cried Knight.

“Great Jehoshaphat!” said Fielding. “He's a bird!”

With a flip or two of his paddle, the stranger shot his canoe across the stream, and floated quietly to the landing.

Barry ran down to meet him.

“I say, that was beautifully done,” he cried, taking the nose of the canoe while the man stepped ashore and stood a moment looking back at the water.

“A leetle more to the left would have been better, I think. She took some water,” he remarked in a slow voice, as if to himself.

He was a strange-looking creature. He might have stepped out of one of Fenimore Cooper's novels. Indeed, as Barry's eyes travelled up and down his long, bony, stooping, slouching figure, his mind leaped at once to the Pathfinder.

“Come far?” asked Duff, approaching the stranger.

“Quite a bit,” he answered, in a quiet, courteous voice, pausing a moment in his work.

“Going out?” enquired Duff.

“Not yet,” he said. “Going up the country first to The Post.”

“Ah, we have just come down from there,” said Duff. “We started yesterday morning,” he added, evidently hoping to surprise the man.

“Yes,” he answered in a quiet tone of approval. “Nice little run! Nice little run! Bit of a hurry, I guess,” he ventured apologetically.

“You bet your life, we just are. This damned war makes a man feel like as if the devil was after him,” said Duff.

“War!” The man looked blankly at him. “Who's fightin'?”

“Why, haven't you heard? It's been going on for a month. We heard only three days ago as we were going further up the country. It knocked our plans endways, and here we are chasing ourselves to get out.”

“War!” said the man again. “Who's fightin'? Uncle Sam after them Mexicans?”

“No. Mexicans, hell!” exclaimed Duff. “Germany and Britain.”

“Britain!” The slouching shoulders lost their droop. “Britain!” he said, straightening himself up. “What's she been doin' to Germany?”

“What's Germany been doing to her, and to Belgium, and to Servia, and to France?” answered Duff, in a wrathful voice. “She's been raising hell all around. You haven't seen the papers, eh? I have them all here.”

The stranger seemed dazed by the news. He made no reply, but getting out his frying-pan and tea-pail, his only utensils, he set about preparing his evening meal.

“I say,” said Duff, “won't you eat with us? We're just about ready. We'll be glad to have you.”

The man hesitated a perceptible moment. In the wilds men do not always accept invitations to eat. Food is sometimes worth more than its weight in gold.

“I guess I will, if you've lots of stuff,” he said at length.

“We've lots of grub, and we expect to be home by tomorrow night anyway, if things go all right. You are very welcome.”

The man laid down his frying-pan and tea-pail, and walked with Duff toward his camp.

“Are you goin'?” he enquired.

“Going?”

“To the war. Guess some of our Canadian boys will be goin' likely, eh?”

“Going,” cried Duff. “You bet your life I'm going. But, come on. We'll talk as we eat. And we can't stay long, either.”

Duff introduced the party.

“My name's McCuaig,” said the stranger.

“Scotch, I guess?” enquired Duff.

“My father came out with The Company. I was born up north. Never been much out, but I read the papers,” he added quickly, as if to correct any misapprehension as to his knowledge of the world and its affairs. “My father always got the Times and the Spectator, and I've continued the habit.”

“Any one who reads the Times and the Spectator,” said Barry, “can claim to be a fairly well-read man. My father takes the Spectator, too.”

As they sat down to supper, he noticed that McCuaig took off his old grey felt and crossed himself before beginning toast.

As a matter of courtesy, Barry had always been asked to say grace before meals while with the Howland party. This custom, however, had been discontinued upon this trip. They had no time for meals. They had “just grabbed their grub and run,” as Harry Hobbs said.

While they ate, Duff kept a full tide of conversation going in regard to the causes of the war and its progress, as reported in the papers. Barry noticed that McCuaig's comments, though few, revealed a unique knowledge of European political affairs during the last quarter of a century. He noticed too that his manners at the table were those of a gentleman.

After supper they packed their stuff over the long portage, leaving their tent and sleeping gear, with their food, however, to be taken in the morning. For a long time they sat over the fire, Barry reading, for McCuaig's benefit, the newspaper accounts of the Belgian atrocities, the story of the smashing drive of the German hosts, and the retreat of the British army from Mons.

“What,” exclaimed McCuaig, “the British soldiers goin' back! Runnin' away from them Germans!”

“Well, the Germans are only about ten to one, not only in men but in guns, and in this war it's guns that count. Guns can wipe out an army of heroes as easily as an army of cowards,” said Duff.

“And them women and children,” said McCuaig. “Are they killing them still?”

“You're just right, they are,” replied Duff, “and will till we stop them.”

McCuaig's eyes were glowing with a deep inner light. They were wonderful eyes, quick, darting, straight-looking and fearless, the eyes of a man who owes his life to his vigilance and his courage.

Before turning in for the night, Barry went to the river's edge, and stood looking up at the stars holding their steadfast watch over the turbulent and tossing waters below.

“Quiet, ain't they?” said a voice at his shoulder.

“Why, you startled me, Mr. McCuaig; I never heard you step.”

McCuaig laughed his quiet laugh.

“Got to move quietly in this country,” he said, “if you are going to keep alive.”

A moment or so he stood by Barry's side, looking up with him at the stars.

“No fuss, up there,” he said, interpreting Barry's mood and attitude. “Not like that there pitchin', tossin', threatenin' water.”

“No,” said Barry, “but though they look quiet, I suppose if we could really see, there is a most terrific whirling of millions of stars up there, going at the rate of thousands of miles a minute.”

“Millions of 'em, and all whirlin' about,” said McCuaig in an awe-stricken voice. “It's a wonder they don't hit.”

“They don't hit because they each keep their own orbit,” said Barry, “and they obey the laws of their existence.”

“Orbut,” enquired McCuaig. “What's that?”

“The trail that each star follows,” said Barry.

“I see,” said McCuaig, “each one keeps its own trail, its own orbut, and so there's peace up there. And I guess there'd be peace down here if folks did the same thing. It's when a man gets out of his own orbut and into another fellow's that the scrap begins. I guess that's where Germany's got wrong.”

“Something like that,” replied Barry.

“And sometimes,” continued McCuaig, his eyes upon the stars, “when a little one comes up against a big one, he gets busted, eh?”

Barry nodded.

“And a big one, when he comes up against a bigger one gets pretty badly jarred, eh?”

“I suppose so,” said Barry.

“That's what's goin' to happen to Germany,” said McCuaig.

“Germany's a very powerful nation,” said Barry. “The most powerful military nation in the world.”

“What!” said McCuaig. “Bigger than Britain?”

“Britain has two or three hundred thousand men in her army; Germany has seven millions or more, with seventy millions of people behind them, organised for war. Of course, Britain has her navy, but then Germany has the next biggest in the world. Oh, it's going to be a terrific war.”

“I say,” said McCuaig, putting his hand on Barry's shoulder. “You don't think it will bother us any to lick her?”

“It will be the most terrible of all Britain's wars,” replied Barry. “It will take every ounce of Britain's strength.”

“You don't tell me!” exclaimed McCuaig, as if struck by an entirely new idea. “Say, are you really anxious, young man?”

“I am terribly anxious,” replied Barry. “I know Germany a little. I spent a year there. She is a mighty nation, and she is ready for war.”

“She is, eh!” replied McCuaig thoughtfully. He wandered off to the fire without further word, where, rolling himself in his blanket and scorning the place in the tent offered him by Duff, he made himself comfortable for the night.

At the break of day Duff was awakened by the smell of something frying. Over the fire bent McCuaig, busy preparing a breakfast of tea, bacon and bannocks, together with thick slices of fat pork.

Breakfast was eaten in haste. The day's work was before them, and there was no time for talk. In a very few minutes they stood ready for their trip across the portage.

With them stood McCuaig. His blanket roll containing his grub, with frying-pan and tea-pail attached, lay at his feet; his rifle beside it.

For a moment or two he stood looking back up the stream by which, last night, he had come. Then he began tying his paddles to the canoe thwarts in preparation for packing it across the portage.

As he was tying on the second paddle, Duff's eye fell on him.

“What's up, McCuaig?” he said. “Aren't you going up to the Post?”

“No, I guess I ain't goin' up no more,” replied McCuaig slowly.

“What do you mean? You aren't going back home?”

“No. My old shack will do without me for a while, I guess.—Say,” he continued, facing around upon Duff and looking him squarely in the face, “this young chap says”—putting his hand upon Barry's shoulder —“Britain is going to have a hell of a time licking Germany back into her own orbut. Them papers said last night that Canada was going in strong. Do you think she could use a fellow like me?”

A silence fell upon the group of men.

“What! Do you mean it, McCuaig?” said Duff at length.

The man turned his thin, eagle face toward the speaker, a light in his eyes.

“Why, ain't you goin'? Ain't every one goin' that can? If a fellow stood on one side while his country was fightin', where would he live when it's all over? He read out of the papers that them Germans were shootin' women and children. So—” his face began to work, “am I goin' to stand by and ask some one else to make 'em quit? No, by God!”

The men stood watching his face, curiously twisted and quivering. Then without a word Duff seized his pack, and swung into the trail, every man following him in his order. Without pausing, except for a brief half hour at noon, and another later in the day for eating, they pressed the trail, running what rapids they could and portaging the others, until in

the early evening they saw, far away, a dirty blur on the skyline.

“Hurrah!” yelled Fielding. “Good old firebus, waiting for us.”

“Somebody run ahead and hold her,” said Duff.

Barry flung his pack down and started away.

“Come back here, Barry,” cried Knight. “You're not fit. You're all in.”

“That's right, too,” said McCuaig. “I guess I'll go.”

And off he set with the long, shuffling, tireless trot with which, for a hundred years, the “runners of the woods” have packed their loads and tracked their game in the wilds of northwestern Canada.

CHAPTER VII

BARRICADES AND BAYONETS

The city of Edmonton was in an uproar, its streets thronged with excited men, ranchers and cowboys from the ranches, lumberjacks from the foothill camps, men from the mines, trappers with lean, hard faces, in weird garb, from the north.

The news from the front was ominous. Belgium was a smoking waste. Her skies were black with the burning of her towns, villages and homesteads, her soil red with the blood of her old men, her women and children. The French armies, driven back in rout from the Belgian frontier, were being pounded to death by the German hordes. Fortresses hitherto considered impregnable were tumbling like ninepins before the terrible smashing of Austrian and German sixteen-inch guns. Already von Kluck with his four hundred thousand of conquering warriors was at the gates of Paris.

Most ominous of all, the British army, that gallant, little sacrificial army, of a scant seventy-five thousand men, holding like a bulldog to the flank of von Bulow's mighty army, fifty times as strong, threatened by von Kluck on the left flank and by von Housen on the right, was slowing down the German advance, but was itself being slowly ground into the bloody dust of the northern and eastern roads of Northern and Eastern France.

Black days these were for the men of British blood. Was the world to see something new in war? Were Germans to overcome men of the race of Nelson, and Wellington and Colin Campbell?

At home, hundreds of thousands were battering at the recruiting offices. In the Dominions of the Empire overseas it was the same. In Canada a hundred thousand men were demanding a place in the first Canadian contingent of thirty-five thousand, now almost ready to sail. General Sam at Ottawa was being snowed under by entreating, insistent, cajoling, threatening telegrams. Already northern Alberta had sent two thousand men. The rumour in Edmonton ran that there were only a few places left to be filled in the north Alberta quota. For these few places hundreds of men were fighting in the streets.

Alighting from their train, Duff and his men stood amazed, aghast, gazing upon the scene before them. Duff climbed a wagon wheel and surveyed the crowd packing the street in front of the bulletin boards.

“No use, this way, boys. We'll have to go around. Come on.”

They went on. Up side streets and lanes, through back yards and shops they went until at length they emerged within a hundred yards of the recruiting office.

Duff called his men about him.

“Boys, we'll have to bluff them,” he said. “You're a party of recruits that Col. Kavanagh expects. You've been sent for. I'm bringing you in under orders. Look as much like soldiers as you can, and bore in like hell. Come on!”

They began to bore. At once there was an uproar, punctuated with vociferous and varied profanity.

Duff proved himself an effective leader.

“Here, let me pass,” he shouted into the backs of men's heads. “I'm on duty here. I must get through to Colonel Kavanagh. Keep up there, men; keep your line! Stand back, please! Make way!”

His huge bulk, distorted face and his loud and authoritative voice startled men into temporary submission, and before they could recover

themselves he and his little company of hard-boring men were through.

Twenty-five yards from the recruiting office a side rush of the crowd caught them.

“They've smashed the barricades,” a boy from a telegraph pole called out.

Duff and his men fought to hold their places, but they became conscious of a steady pressure backwards.

“What's doing now, boy?” shouted Duff to the urchin clinging to the telegraph pole.

“The fusileers—they are sticking their bayonets into them.”

Before the line of bayonets the crowd retreated slowly, but Duff and his company held their ground, allowing the crowd to ebb past them, until they found themselves against the line of bayonets.

“Let me through here, sergeant, with my party,” said Duff. “I'm under orders of Colonel Kavanagh.”

The sergeant, an old British army man, looked them over.

“Have you an order, sir—a written order, I mean?”

“No,” said Duff. “I haven't, but the colonel expects us. He is waiting for me now.”

“Sorry, sir,” replied the sergeant, “my orders are to let no one through without a written pass.”

Duff argued, stormed, threatened, swore; but to no purpose. The N. C. O. knew his job.

“Send a note in,” suggested Barry in Duff's ear.

“Good idea,” replied Duff, and wrote hurriedly.

“Here, take this through to your colonel,” he said, passing the note to the sergeant.

Almost immediately Colonel Kavanagh came out and greeted Duff warmly.

“Where in this wide creation have you been, Duff?” he exclaimed. “I've wanted you terribly.”

“Here I am now, then,” answered Duff. “Six of us. We're going with you.”

“It can't be done,” said the colonel. “I have only twenty places left; every one promised ten times over.”

“That makes it easy, Kavanagh. You can give six of them to us.”

“Duff, it simply can't be done. You know I'd give it to you if I could. I've wires from Ottawa backing up a hundred applicants, actually ordering me to put them on. No! It's no use,” continued the colonel, holding up his hand. “Look here, I'll give you a pointer. We have got word to-day that there's to be a second contingent. Neil Fraser is out there in your district, Wapiti, raising a company of two hundred and fifty men. We have stripped that country bare already, so he's up against it. He wants Wapiti men, he says. They are no better than any other, but he thinks they are. You get out there to-night, Duff, and get in on that thing. You will get a commission, too. Now hike! Hike! Go! Honest to God, Duff, I want you with my battalion, and if I can work it afterwards, I'll get you exchanged, but your only chance now is Wapiti. Go, for God's sake, go quick!”

“What do you say, boys?” asked Duff, wheeling upon his men.

“I say, go!” said Knight.

In this decision they all agreed.

“Go it is,” said Duff. “Right about turn. Good luck, Kavanagh, damn you. I see you have got a good sergeant there.”

“Who? McDowell? None better. You couldn't beat him, eh?” said the colonel with a grin.

The sergeant stood at attention, with a wooden face.

“He's the kind of man they want in the front lines,” said Duff. “The devil himself couldn't break through where he is.”

“That's why I have him. Good luck. Good-bye!”

Throughout the night they marched, now and then receiving a lift from a ranch wagon, and in the grey of the morning, weary, hungry, but resolute for a place in the Wapiti company, they made the village.

Early as it was, Barry found his father astir, with breakfast in readiness.

“Hello, boy!” cried his father running to him with outstretched hands.

“Hello, dad!” answered Barry. His father threw a searching glance over his son's face as he shook his hand warmly.

“Not a word, Barry, until you eat. Not a word. Go get ready for your bath. I'll have it for you in a minute. No, not one word. Quick. March. That is the only word these days. As you eat I'll give you the news.”

Resolutely he refused to talk until he saw his son begin upon his breakfast. Then he poured forth a stream of news. The whole country was aflame with war enthusiasm. Alberta had offered half a million bushels of oats for the imperial army, and a thousand horses or more. The Calgary district had recruited two thousand men, the Edmonton district as many more. All over Canada, from Vancouver to Halifax, it was the same.

From the Wapiti district twenty-six ranchers, furnishing their own horses, had already gone. Ewen Innes was in Edmonton. His brother Malcolm was in uniform, too, and his young brother Jim was keen to enlist. Neil Fraser was busy raising a company of Wapiti men. Young Pickles and McCann had joined up as buglers.

And so the stream flowed, Barry listening with grave face but making no response.

“And I'm glad you're back, my boy. I'm glad you're back,” said his father, clapping him on the shoulder.

The rest of the meal was eaten in silence. They were having each his own thoughts, and for the first time in their life together, they kept their thoughts to themselves.

“You're going to your office, Dad,” said Barry, when they had cleared away, and set the house in order.

“No, the office is closed, and will be for some time, I imagine. I'm busy with Neil Fraser. I'm acting paymaster, quartermaster, recruiting sergeant, and half a dozen other things.”

“I'll go down with you,” said Barry, as his father rose to go.

His father came back to him, put his hands on his shoulders, and said:

“Barry, I want you to go to bed.”

“Nonsense, dad. I'm all right. I'm going downtown with you.”

“Barry,” said his father, “we have hard times before us, and you must be fit. I ask you to go to bed and sleep there this forenoon. You're half asleep now. This afternoon we shall face up to our job.”

His father's voice was quietly authoritative and Barry yielded.

“All right, dad. I'll do as you say, and this afternoon—well, we'll see.”

At the noonday meal they were conscious of a mutual restraint. For the first time in their lives they were not opening to each other their innermost souls. The experience was as distressing as it was unusual. The father, as if in dread of silence, was obviously exerting himself to keep a stream of talk flowing. Barry was listening with a face very grave and very unlike the bright and buoyant face he usually carried. They avoided each other's eyes, and paid little heed to their food.

At length Barry pushed back his chair.

“Will you excuse me, dad,” he said. “I think I shall step out a moment into the garden.”

“Do, Barry,” said his father, in obvious relief. “You are fagged out, my boy.”

“Thanks, dad. I am a bit played out.”

“And take it easy this afternoon, Barry. To-night you will tell me about your trip, and—and—we'll have a talk.”

“Good old dad!” said Barry. “You do understand a chap. See you later, then,” he called back as he passed through the door.

His father sat gazing before him for some moments with a deep shadow on his face.

“There is something wrong with that boy,” he said to himself. “I wish I knew what it was.”

He set his house in order, moving heavily as if a sudden weight of years had fallen upon his shoulders, and took his way slowly down the street.

“I wonder what it is,” he mused, refusing to give form to a horrible thought that hovered like a spectre about the windows of his soul.

The first glance at his son's face at the time of the evening meal made his heart sing within him.

“He's all right again! He's all right!” he said to himself jubilantly.

“Hello, dad,” cried Barry, as his father entered the room. “Supper's just ready. How do you feel, eh?”

“Better, my boy—first rate, I mean. I'm properly hungry. You're rested,

I can see."

"I'm all right, dad! I'm all right!" cried Barry, in his old cheery way. "Dad, I want to apologise to you. I wasn't myself to-day, but now I'm all right again. Dad, I've joined up. I'm a soldier now," he said with a smile on his face, but with anxious eyes turned on his father.

"Joined up!" echoed his father. "Barry, you have enlisted! Thank God, my boy. I feared—I thought—No, damned if I did!" he added, with such an unusual burst of passion that Barry could only gaze at him with astonishment.

"Forgive me, my boy," he said, coming forward with outstretched hand. "For a moment I confess I thought—" Again he paused, apparently unable to continue.

"You thought, dad," cried Barry, "and—forgive me, dad—I thought too. I ought to have known you better."

"And I, you, my son."

They shook hands with each other in an ecstasy of jubilation.

"My God, I'm glad that's through," said the older man. "We were both fools, Barry, but thank God that horror is past. Now tell me all about everything—your trip, your plans. Let's have a good talk as we always do."

"Come on then, dad," cried Barry. "Let's have an eat first. By Jove, I feel a thousand years younger. I go to the M. O. to-morrow for an examination."

"He is quite unusually severe in his interpretation of the regulations, I understand," said his father. "He is turning men down right and left. He knows, of course, that there are plenty to choose from. But there is no fear of your fitness, Barry."

"Not much," said Barry, with a gay laugh.

Never had they spent a happier evening together. True, the spectre of war would thrust itself upon them, but they faced it as men—with a full appreciation of its solemn reality, but without fear, and with a quiet determination to make whatever sacrifice might be demanded of them. The perfect understanding that had always marked their intercourse with each other was restored. The intolerable burden of mutual uncertainty in regard to each other's attitude toward the war was lifted. All shadows that lay between them were gone. Nothing else really mattered.

The day following, Barry received a rude shock. The M. O., after an examination, to his amazement and dismay, pronounced him physically unfit for service.

"And why, pray?" cried his father indignantly, when Barry announced the astounding report. "Is the man a fool? I understood that he was strict. But you! unfit! It is preposterous. Unfit! how?"

"Heart murmur," said Barry. "Sets it down to asthma. You remember I told you I had a rotten attack after my experience last week in the river. He suggested that I apply for a position in an ambulance corps, and he is giving me a letter to Colonel Sidleigh at Edmonton. I am going to-morrow to Edmonton to see Sidleigh, and besides I have some church business to attend to. I must call upon my superintendent. You remember I made an application to him for another mission field."

He found Colonel Sidleigh courteously willing to accept his application, the answer to which, he was informed, he might expect in a fortnight; and so went with a comparatively light heart to his interview with his superintendent.

The interview, however, turned out not entirely as he had expected. He went with an idea of surrendering his appointment. His superintendent made him an offer of another and greater.

"So they turned you down," said the superintendent. "Well, I consider it most providential. You have applied for a position on the ambulance corps. As fine as is that service, and as splendid as are its possibilities, I offer you something much finer, and I will even say much more important to our army and to our cause. We are in need of men for the Chaplain Service, and for this service we demand the picked men of our church. The appointments that have been made already are some of them most unsuitable, some, I regret to say, scandalous. Let me tell you, sir, of an experience in Winnipeg only last week. It was, my fortune to fall in with the commanding officer of a Saskatchewan unit. I found him in a rage against the church and all its officials. His chaplain had become so hilarious at the mess that he was quite unable to carry on."

"Hilarious?" inquired Barry.

"Hilarious, sir. Yes, plain drunk. Think of it. Think of the crime! the

shame of it! A man charged with the responsibility of the souls of these men going to war—possibly to their death—drunk, in their presence! A man standing for God and the great eternal verities, incapacitated before them! I took the matter up with Ottawa, and I have this satisfaction at least, that I believe that no such appointment will ever be made again. That chaplain, I may say too, has been dismissed. I have here, sir, a mission field suitable to your ability and experience. I shall not offer it to you. I am offering you the position of chaplain in one of our Alberta battalions."

Barry stood before him, dumb with dismay.

"Of course, I want to go to the war," he said at length, "but I am sure, sir, I am not the man for the position you offer me."

"Sir," said the superintendent, "I have taken the liberty of sending in your name. Time was an element. Appointments were being rapidly made, and I was extremely anxious that you should go with this battalion. I confess to a selfish interest. My own boy, Duncan, has enlisted in that unit, and many of our finest young men with him. I assumed the responsibility of asking for your appointment. I must urge you solemnly to consider the matter before you decline."

Eloquently Barry pleaded his unfitness, instancing his failure as a preacher in his last field.

"I am not a preacher," he protested. "I am not a 'mixer.' They all say so. I shall be impossible as a chaplain."

"Young man," said the superintendent, a note of sternness in his voice, "you know not what transformations in character this war will work. Would I were twenty years younger," he added passionately, "twenty years sounder. Think of the opportunity to stand for God among your men, to point them the way of duty, and fit them for it, to bring them comfort, when they need comfort sorely, to bring them peace, when they most need peace."

Barry came away from the interview more disturbed than he had ever been in his life. After he had returned to his hotel, a message from his superintendent recalled him.

"I have a bit of work to do," he said, "in which I need your help. I wish you to join me in a visitation of some of the military camps in this district. We start this evening."

There was nothing for it but to obey his superintendent's orders. The two weeks' experience with his chief gave Barry a new view and a new estimate of the chaplain's work. As he came into closer touch with camp life and its conditions, he began to see how great was the soldier's need of such moral and spiritual support as a chaplain might be able to render. He was exposed to subtle and powerful temptations. He was deprived of the wonted restraints imposed by convention, by environment, by family ties. The reactions from the exhaustion of physical training, from the monotonous routine of military discipline, from loneliness and homesickness were such as to call for that warm, sympathetic, brotherly aid, and for the uplifting spiritual inspiration that it is a chaplain's privilege to offer. But in proportion as the service took on a nobler and loftier aspect, was Barry conscious to a corresponding degree of his own unfitness for the work.

When he returned to the city, he found no definite information awaiting him in regard to a place in the ambulance corps. He returned home in an unhappy and uncertain frame of mind.

But under the drive of war, events were moving rapidly in Barry's life. He arrived late in the afternoon, and proceeding to the military H.Q., he found neither his father nor Captain Neil Fraser in the office.

"Gone out for the afternoon, sir," was the word from the orderly in charge.

Wandering about the village, he saw in a field at its outskirts, a squad of recruits doing military evolutions and physical drill. As he drew near he was arrested by the short, snappy tones of the N. C. O. in charge.

"That chap knows his job," he said to himself, "and looks like his job, too," he added, as his eyes rested upon the neat, upright, soldier-like figure.

Captain Neil he found observing the drill from a distance.

"What do you think of that?" he called out to Barry, as the latter came within hailing distance. "What do you think of my sergeant?"

"Fine," replied Barry. "Where did you get him?"

"What? Look at him!"

"I am. Pretty natty sergeant he makes, too."

“Let's go out there, and I'll introduce him.”

As they crossed the parade ground, the sergeant dropped his military tone and proceeded to explain in his ordinary voice some details in connection with the drill. Barry, catching the sound of his voice, stopped short.

“You don't mean it, Captain Neil! Not dad, is it?”

“Nobody else,” said Captain Neil. “Wait a minute. Wait and let's watch him at his work.”

For some time they stood observing the work of the new sergeant. Barry was filled with amazement and delight.

“What do you think of him?” inquired Captain Neil.

But Barry made no reply.

“My company sergeant major got drunk,” continued Captain Neil. “I had no one to take the drill. I asked your father to take it. He nearly swept us off our feet. In consequence, there he stands, my company sergeant major, and let me tell you, he will be the regimental sergeant major before many weeks have passed, or I'm a German.”

“But his age,” inquired Barry, still in a maze of astonishment.

“Oh, that's all right. You don't want them too young. I assured the authorities that he was of proper military age, telling them, at the same time, that I must have him. He's a wonder, and the men just adore him.”

“I don't wonder at that,” said Barry.

Together they moved over to the squad. The sergeant, observing his officer, called his men smartly to attention, and greeted the captain with a very snappy salute.

“Sergeant major, let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. Barry Dunbar,” said Captain Neil with a grin.

“I say, dad,” said Barry, still unable to associate his father with this N. C. O. in uniform who stood before him. “I say, dad, where did you get all that military stuff?”

“I'm very rusty, my boy, very rusty! I hope to brush up, though. The men are improving, I think, sir.”

“I'm sure of it,” said Captain Neil. “How is that wild man from Athabasca doing?”

“He is finding it hard work, sir, I'm afraid. He finds it difficult to connect up this drill business with the business of war. He wants to go right off and kill Germans. But he is making an effort to put up with me.”

“And you, with him, eh, sergeant major? But turn them loose. They have done enough for to-day, and I know your son wants to take you off with him, and get you to explain how you go into the army.”

The explanation came as they were walking home together.

“You see, boy, I felt keenly your disappointment in being rejected from the fighting forces of the country. I felt too that our family ought to be represented in the fighting line, so when Captain Fraser found himself in need of a drill sergeant, I could hardly refuse. I would have liked to have consulted you, my boy, but—”

“Not at all, dad; you did perfectly right. It was just fine of you. I'm as proud as Punch. I only wish I could go with you. I'd like to be in your squad. But never mind, I've two jobs open to me now, and I sorely need your advice.”

Together they talked over the superintendent's offer of the position of chaplain.

“I can't see myself a chaplain, dad. The position calls for an older man, a man of wider experience. Many of these men would be almost twice my age. Now the superintendent himself would be the man for the job. You ought to see him at his work with the soldiers. I really can't think I'm fit.”

In this opinion his father rather concurred.

“An older man would be better, Barry—a man of more experience would be of more service, and, yet I don't know. One thing I am sure of, if you accept the position, I believe you will fill it worthily. After all, in every department, this war is a young man's job.”

“Of course,” said Barry. “If I went as chaplain, it would be in your unit, dad, and that would be altogether glorious.”

“I do hope so. But we must not allow that, however, to influence our decision,” replied his father.

“I know, I know!” hurriedly agreed Barry. “I trust I would not be unduly influenced by personal considerations.”

This hope, however, was rudely dashed by an unexpected call for a draft of recruits from Captain Neil's company that came through from

Colonel Kavanagh to replace a draft suddenly dispatched to make up to strength another western regiment. Attached to the call there was a specific request, which amounted to a demand for the sergeant major, for whose special qualifications as physical and military instructor there was apparently serious need in Colonel Kavanagh's regiment.

With great reluctance, and with the expenditure of considerable profanity, Captain Neil Fraser dispatched his draft and agreed to the surrender of his sergeant major.

The change came as a shock to both Barry and his father. For some days they had indulged the hope that they would both be attached to the same military unit, and unconsciously this had been weighing with Barry in his consideration of his probable appointment as chaplain.

The disappointment of their hope was the more bitter when it was announced that Colonel Kavanagh's battalion was warned for immediate service overseas, and the further announcement that in all probability the new battalion, to which the Wapiti company would be attached, might not be dispatched until some time in the spring.

“But you may catch us up in England, Barry,” said his father, when Barry was deploring their ill luck. “No one knows what our movements will be. I do wish, however, that your position were definitely settled.”

The decision in this matter came quickly, and was, without his will or desire, materially hastened by Barry himself.

Colonel Kavanagh's battalion being under orders to depart within ten days, a final Church Parade was ordered, at which only soldiers and their kin were permitted to be present. The preacher for the day falling ill from an overweight of war work, and Barry being in the city with nothing to do, the duty of preaching at this Parade Service was suddenly thrust upon him.

To his own amazement and to that of his father, Barry accepted without any fear or hesitation this duty which in other circumstances would have overwhelmed him with dismay. But to Barry the occasion was of such surpassing magnitude and importance that all personal considerations were obliterated.

The war, with its horrors, its losses, its overwhelming sacrifice, its vast and eternal issues, was the single fact that filled his mind. It was this that delivered him from that nervous self-consciousness, the preacher's curse, that paralyses the mental activities, chills the passions, and cloggs the imagination, so that his sermon becomes a lifeless repetition of words, previously prepared, correct, even beautiful, it may be in form, logical in argument, sound in philosophy, but dead, dull and impotent, bereft of the fire that kindles the powers of the soul, the emotion that urges to action, the imagination that lures to high endeavour.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

The voice, clear, vibrant, melodious, arrested with its first word the eyes and hearts of his hearers, and so held them to the end. With the earnest voice there was the fascination of a face alight with a noble beauty, eyes glowing as with lambent flame.

A second time he read the appealing words, then paused and allowed his eyes to wander quietly over the congregation. They represented to him in that hour the manhood and womanhood of his country. Sincerely, with no attempt at rhetoric and with no employment of any of its tricks, he began his sermon.

“This war,” he said, “is a conflict of ideals eternally opposed. Our ambitious and ruthless enemy has made the issue and has determined the method of settlement. It is a war of souls, but the method of settlement is not that of reason but that of force—a force that finds expression through your bodies. Therefore the appeal of the Apostle Paul, this old-world hero, to the men of his time reaches down to us in this day, and at this crisis of the world's history. Offer your bodies—these living bodies—these sacred bodies—offer them in sacrifice to God.”

There was little discussion of the causes of the war. What need? They knew that this war was neither of their desiring nor of their making. There was no attempt to incite hatred or revenge. There was little reference to the horrors of war, to its griefs, its dreadful agonies, its irreparable losses.

From the first word he lifted his audience to the high plane of sacrament and sacrifice. They were called upon to offer upon the altar of the world's freedom all that they held dear in life—yea, life itself! It was the ancient sacrifice that the noblest of the race had always been called upon to make. In giving themselves to this cause they were giving

themselves to their country. They were offering themselves to God. In simple diction, and in clear flowing speech, the sermon proceeded without pause or stumbling to the end. The preacher closed with an appeal to the soldiers present to make this sacrifice of theirs at once worthy and complete. These bodies of theirs were sacred and were devoted to this cause. It was their duty to keep them clean and fit.

For a few brief moments, he turned to the others present at the service —the fathers, mothers, wives and sweethearts of the soldiers, and reminded them in tones thrilling with tenderness and sympathy that though not privileged to share in the soldiers' service in the front lines, none the less might they share in this sacrifice, by patient endurance of the separation and loss, by a cheerful submission to trial, and by continual remembrance in prayer to Almighty God of the sacred cause and its defenders they might help to bring this cause to victory.

In the brief prayer that followed the sermon, in words tender, simple, heart-moving, he led the people in solemn dedication of themselves, soul and body, to their country, to their cause, to their God.

The effect of the sermon and prayer was overpowering. There were no tears, but men walked out with heads more erect, because of the exaltation of spirit which was theirs. And women, fearful of the coming hour of parting, felt their hearts grow strong within them with the thought that they were voluntarily sending their men away. Upon the whole congregation lay a new and solemn sense of duty, a new and uplifting sense of privilege in making the sacrifice of all that they counted precious for this holy cause.

It was the sermon that brought the decision in the matter of Barry's appointment.

“What do you think of that, Colonel Kavanagh?” asked Captain Neil Fraser, who came in for the service.

“A very fine sermon! A very notable sermon!” said the colonel. “Who is he?”

“He is my own minister,” said Captain Neil, “and he gave me, to-day, the surprise of my life. I didn't know it was in him. I understand there is a chance of his being our chaplain. He is Sergeant Dunbar's son.”

“I wish to Heaven we could take him with us! What about it, Fraser? We've got the father, why not the son, too? They'd both like it.”

“I say, Colonel, for Heaven's sake, have a heart. I hated to surrender my company sergeant major. I don't think I ought to be asked to surrender our chaplain.”

“All right, Fraser, so be it. But you have got a wonderful chaplain in that boy. What a face! What a voice! And that's the kind of a spirit we want in our men.”

That very afternoon, Captain Neil went straight away to Colonel Leighton, the officer commanding the new regiment to which Captain Neil's company belonged. To the colonel he gave an enthusiastic report of the sermon, with Colonel Kavanagh's judgment thereon.

“I would suggest, sir, that you wire Ottawa on the matter,” he urged. “If Colonel Kavanagh thought he had a chance, he would not hesitate. We really ought to get this fixed. I assure you he's a find.”

“Go to it, then, Fraser. I'm rather interested to see your earnest desire for a chaplain. The Lord knows you need one! Go up to Headquarters and use my name. Say what you like.”

Thus it came that the following day Barry was informed by wire of his appointment as chaplain of the new regiment of Alberta rangers.

“It's at least a relief to have the matter settled,” said his father, to whom Barry brought his wire. “Barry, I'm glad of the opportunity to tell you that since yesterday, my mind has undergone considerable change. I am not sure but that you have found your place and your work in the war.”

“No, dad,” answered Barry, “I wasn't responsible for that sermon yesterday. The war was very near and very real to me. Those boys were looking up at me, and you were there, dad. You drew that sermon stuff out of me.”

“If once, why not again? At any rate, it greatly rejoiced me to know that it was there in you. I don't say I was proud of you, my boy. I was proud of you, but that is not the word that I should like to use. I was profoundly grateful that I was privileged to hear a sermon like that from a son of mine. Now, Barry,” continued his father, “this is our last day together for some months, perhaps forever,” he added in a low tone.

“Don't, daddy, don't,” cried Barry, “I can't bear to think of that to-day.”

“All right, Barry, but why not? It is really far better that we should face

all the possibilities. But now that we have this day—and what a perfect day it is—for our last day together, what shall we do with it?”

“I know, dad—I think you would wish that we take our ride into the foothills to-day.”

“It was in my mind, my boy. I hesitated to suggest it. So let us go.”

It was one of those rare November days that only Alberta knows, mellow with the warm sun, and yet with a nip in it that suggested the coming frost, without a ripple of the wind that almost constantly sweeps the Alberta ranges. In the blue sky hung motionless, like white ships at sea, bits of cloud. The long grass, brown, yellow and green in a hundred shades, lay like a carpet over the rolling hills and wide spreading valleys, reaching up on every side to the horizon, except toward the west, where it faded into the blue of the foothills at the bases of the mighty Rockies.

Up the long trail, resilient to their horses' feet, they cantered where the going was good, or picked their way with slow and careful tread where the rocky ridges jutted through the black soil.

They made no effort to repulse the thought that this was their last day together, nor did they seek to banish the fact of the war. With calm courage and hope they faced the facts of their environment, seeking to aid each other in readjusting their lives to those facts. They were resolutely cheerful. The day was not to be spoiled with tears and lamentations. Already each in his own place and time had made his sacrifice of a comradeship that was far dearer than life. The agony of that hour, each had borne in silence and alone. No shadow should fall across this sunny day.

By the side of the grave, in its little palisaded enclosure, they lingered, the father recalling the days of his earlier manhood, which had been brightened by a love whose fragrance he had cherished and shared with his son through their years together, Barry listening with reverent attention and tender sympathy.

“I had always planned that I too should be laid here, Barry,” said his father, as they prepared to take their departure, “but do you know, boy, this war has made many changes in me and this is one. It seems to me a very little thing where my body lies, if it be offered, as you were saying so beautifully yesterday, in sacrifice to our cause.”

Barry could only nod his head in reply. He was deeply moved.

“You are young, Barry,” said his father, noting his emotion, “and life is very dear to you, my boy.”

“No, dad, no! Not life,” said Barry brokenly. “Not life, only you, dad. I just want you, and, oh dad!” continued the boy, losing hold of himself and making no effort to check or hide the tears that ran down his face, “if one of us is to go in this war,—as is likely enough,—I only want that the other should be there at the time. It would be—terribly—lonely—dad—to go out myself—without you. Or to have you go out—alone.—We have always been together—and you have been—so very good to me, dad. I can't help this, dad,—I try—but I am not strong enough—I'm not holding back from the sacrifice, dad,” hurrying his words,—“No, no, not that, but perhaps you understand.”

For answer, his father put both his arms around his son, drew his head down to his breast, as if he had been a child.

“There, there, laddie,” he said, patting him on the shoulder, “I know, I know! Oh God, how I know. We have lived together very closely, without a shadow ever between us, and my prayer, since this war began, has been that in death, if it had to be, we might be together, and, Barry, somehow I believe God will give us that.”

“Good old dad, good old boy! What a brick you are! I couldn't help that, dad. Forgive me for being a baby, and spoiling the day—”

“Forgive you, boy,” still with his arms around his son, “Barry, I love you for it. You've never brought me one sorrow nor will you. To-day and every day I thank God for you, my son.”

They rode back through the evening toward the camp. By the time they arrived there, the sun had sunk behind the mountains, and the quiet stars were riding serenely above the broken, floating clouds, and in their hearts was peace.

CHAPTER VIII

A QUESTION OF NERVE

“Gentlemen, may I introduce Captain Dunbar, your sky-pilot, padre, chaplain, anything you like? They say he's a devil of a good preacher. The Lord knows you need one.”

So Barry's commanding officer introduced him to the mess.

He bowed in different directions to the group of officers who, in the ante-room of the mess, were having a pre-prandial cocktail. Barry found a place near the foot of the table and for a few minutes sat silent, getting his bearings.

Some of the officers were known to him. He had met the commanding officer, Colonel Leighton, a typical, burly Englishman, the owner of an Alberta horse ranch, who, well to do to begin with, had made money during his five years in the country. He had the reputation of being a sporting man, of easy morality, fond of his glass and of good living. He owed his present position, partly to political influence, and partly to his previous military experience in the South African war. His popularity with his officers was due largely to his easy discipline, and to the absence of that rigidity of manner which is supposed to go with high military command, and which civilians are wont to find so irksome.

Barry had also met Major Bustead, the Senior Major of the Battalion, and President of the mess, an eastern Canadian, with no military experience whatever, but with abounding energy and ambition; the close friend and boon companion of Colonel Leighton, he naturally had become his second in command. Barry was especially delighted to observe Major Bayne, whom he had not seen since his first meeting with him some months ago on the Red Pine Trail. Captain Neil Fraser and Lieutenant Stewart Duff were the only officers about the table whom he recognised, except that, among the junior lieutenants, he caught the face of young Duncan Cameron, the oldest son of his superintendent, and a fine, clean-looking young fellow he appeared.

Altogether Barry was strongly attracted by the clean, strong faces about him. He would surely soon find good friends among them, and he only hoped he might be able to be of some service to them.

The young fellow on his right introduced himself as Captain Hopeton. He was a young English public school boy, who, though a failure as a rancher, had proved an immense success in the social circles of the city. Because of this, and also of his family connections “at home,” he had been appointed to a Civil Service position. A rather bored manner and a supercilious air spoiled what would otherwise have been a handsome and attractive face.

After a single remark about the “beastly bore” of military duty, Hopeton ignored Barry, giving such attention as he had to spare from his dinner to a man across the table, with whom, apparently, he had shared some rather exciting social experiences in the city.

For the first half hour of the meal, the conversation was of the most trivial nature, and was to Barry supremely uninteresting. “Shop talk” was strictly taboo, and also all reference to the war. The thin stream of conversation that trickled from lip to lip ran the gamut of sport, spiced somewhat highly with society scandal which, even in that little city, appeared to flourish.

To Barry it was as if he were in a strange land and among people of a strange tongue. Of sport, as understood by these young chaps, he knew little, and of scandal he was entirely innocent; so much so that many of the references that excited the most merriment were to him utterly obscure. After some attempts to introduce topics of conversation which he thought might be of mutual interest, but which had fallen quite flat, Barry gave up, and sat silent with a desolating sense of loneliness growing upon his spirit.

“After the port,” when smoking was permitted, he was offered a cigarette by Hopeton, and surprised that young man mightily by saying that he never smoked. This surprise, it is to be feared, deepened into disgust when, a few moments later, he declined a drink from Hopeton's whisky bottle, which a servant brought him.

Liquors were not provided at the mess, but officers were permitted to order what they desired.

As the bottles circulated, tongues were loosened. There was nothing foul in the talk, but more and more profanity, with frequent apology to the chaplain, began to decorate the conversation. Conscious of a deepening disgust with his environment, and of an overwhelming sense of isolation, Barry cast vainly about for a means of escape. Of military etiquette he was ignorant; hence he could only wait in deepening disgust

for the O. C. to give the signal to rise. How long he could have endured is doubtful, but release came in a startling, and, to most of the members of the mess, a truly horrifying manner.

In one of those strange silences that fall upon even the noisiest of companies, Colonel Leighton, under the influence of a somewhat liberal indulgence in his whisky bottle, began the relation of a tale of very doubtful flavour. In the midst of the laughter that followed the tale, Barry rose to his feet, his face white and his eyes aflame, and in a voice vibrating with passion, said:

“May I be excused, sir?”

“Why, certainly,” said the colonel pleasantly, adding after a moment's hesitation, “is there anything wrong, Dunbar? Are you ill?”

“No, sir.” Barry's voice had the resonant quality of a cello string. “I mean, yes, sir,” he corrected. “I am ill. The atmosphere surrounding such a tale is nauseating to me.”

In the horrified silence that followed his remark, he walked out from the room. Upon his ears, as he stood in the ante-room, trembling with the violence of his passion, a burst of laughter fell. A sudden wrath like a hot flame swept his body. He wheeled in his tracks, tore open the door, and with head high and face set, strode to his place at the table and sat down.

Astonishment beyond all words held the company in tense stillness. From Barry's face they looked toward the colonel, who, too dumfounded for speech or action, sat gazing at his chaplain. Then from the end of the table a few places down from Barry, a voice was heard.

“Feel better, Dunbar?” The cool, clear voice cut through the tense silence like the zip of a sword.

“I do, thank you, sir,” looking him straight in the eye.

“The fresh air, doubtless,” continued the cool voice. “I always find myself that even a whiff of fresh air is a very effective antidote for threatening vertigo. I remember once—” continued the speaker, dropping into a conversational tone, and leaning across the table slightly toward Barry, “I was in the room with a company of men—” And the speaker entered upon a long and none too interesting relation of an experience of his, the point of which no one grasped, but the effect of which every one welcomed with the profoundest relief. He was the regimental medical officer, a tall, slight man, with a keen eye, a pleasant face crowned by a topknot of flaming hair, and with a little dab of hair of like colour upon his upper lip, which he fondly cherished, as an important item in his military equipment.

“Say, the old doc is a lifesaver, sure enough,” said a young subaltern, answering to the name of “Sally,” colloquial for Salford, as he stood amid a circle of officers gathered in the smoking room a few minutes later. “A lifesaver,” repeated Sally, with emphasis. “He can have me for his laboratory collection after I'm through.”

“He is one sure singing bird,” said another sub, a stout, overgrown boy by the name of Booth. “The nerve of him,” added Booth in admiration.

“Nerve!” echoed a young captain, “but what about the pilot's nerve?”

“Sui generis, Train, I should say,” drawled Hopeton.

“Suey, who did you say?” inquired Sally. “What's her second name? But let me tell you I could have fallen on his neck and burst into tears of gratitude. For me,” continued Sally, glancing about the room, “I don't hold with that dirt stuff at mess. It isn't necessary.”

“Beastly bad form,” said Hopeton, “but, good Lord! Your Commanding Officer, Sally! There's such a thing as discipline, you know.”

“What extraordinary thing is it that Sally knows?” inquired Major Bustead, who lounged up to the group.

“We were discussing the padre's break, Major, which for my part,” drawled Hopeton, “I consider rotten discipline.”

“Discipline!” snorted the major. “By Gad, it was a piece of the most damnable cheek I have ever heard at a mess table. He ought to be sent to Coventry. I only hope the O. C. will get him exchanged.”

The major made no effort to subdue his voice, which was plainly audible throughout the room.

“Hush, for God's sake,” warned Captain Train, as Barry entered the door. “Here he is.”

But Barry had caught the major's words. For a moment he stood irresolute; then walked quietly toward the group.

“I couldn't help hearing you, Major Bustead,” he said, in a voice pleasant and under perfect control. “I gather you were referring to me.”

“I was, sir,” said the major defiantly.

“And why should I be sent to Coventry, or exchanged, may I ask?” Barry's voice was that of an interested outsider.

“Because,” stuttered the Major, “I consider, sir, that—that—you have been guilty of a piece of damnable impertinence toward your Commanding Officer. I never heard anything like it in my life. Infernal cheek, I call it, sir.”

While the major was speaking, Barry stood listening with an air of respectful attention.

“I wonder!” he said, after a moment's thought. “If I thought I had been impertinent, I should at once apologise. But, sir, do you think it is part of my duty to allow any man, even my Commanding Officer, to—pardon the disgusting metaphor, it is not so disgusting as the action complained of—to spit in my soup, and take it without protest? Do you, sir?”

“I—you—” The major grew very red in the face. “You need to learn your place in this battalion, sir.”

“I do,” said Barry, still preserving his quiet voice and manner. “I want to learn—I am really anxious to learn it. Do you mind answering my question?” His tone was that of a man who is earnestly but quite respectfully seeking information from a superior officer.

“Your question, sir?” stuttered the major, “your—your—question. Damn your question, and yourself too.”

The major turned abruptly away. Barry heard him quite unmoved, stood looking after him in silence a moment or two, then, shaking his head, with a puzzled expression on his face, moved slowly away from the group.

“Oh, my aunt Caroline,” breathed Sally into his friend Hopeton's ear, resting heavily meanwhile against his shoulder. “What a score! What a score!”

“A bull, begad! a clean bull!” murmured Hopeton, supporting his friend out of the room as he added, “A little fresh air, as a preventative of vertigo, as the old doc says, eh, Sally.”

“Good Lord, is he just a plain ass, or what?” inquired young Booth, his eye following Barry down the room.

“Ass! A mule, I should say. And one with a good lot of kick in him,” replied Captain Train. “I don't know that I care for that kind of an animal, though.”

Before many hours had passed, the whole battalion had received with undiluted joy an account of the incident, for though the Commanding Officer was popular with his men, to have him called down at his own mess by one of his own officers was an event too thrilling to give anything but unalloyed delight to those who had to suffer in silence similar indignities at the hands of their officers.

A notable exception in the battalion, however, was Sergeant Major McFetteridge, who, because of his military experience, and of his reputation as a disciplinarian, had been recently transferred to the battalion. To the sergeant major this act of Barry's was but another and more flagrant example of his fondness for “buttin' in,” and the sergeant major let it be known that he strongly condemned the chaplain for what he declared was an unheard of breach of military discipline.

Of course there were others who openly approved, and who admired the chaplain's “nerve in standing up to the old man.” In their opinion he was entirely justified in what he had said. The O. C. had insulted him, and every officer at the mess, by his off-colour story, but on the whole the general result of the incident was that Barry's life became more and more one of isolation from both officers and men. For this reason and because of a haunting sense of failure the months of training preceding the battalion's departure for England were for Barry one long and almost uninterrupted misery. It seemed impossible to establish any point of contact with either the officers or the men. In their athletics, in their social gatherings, in their reading, he was quietly ignored and made to feel that he was in no way necessary. An impalpable but very real barrier prevented his near approach to those whom he was so eager to serve.

This unexpressed opposition was quickened into active hostility by the chaplain's uncompromising attitude on the liquor question. By the army regulations, the battalion canteen was dry, but in spite of this many, both of the officers and the men, freely indulged in the use of intoxicating drink. The effect upon discipline was, of course, deplorable, and in his public addresses as well as private conversation, Barry constantly denounced these demoralising habits, winning thereby the violent dislike of those especially affected, and the latent hostility of the majority of the

men who agreed with the sergeant major in resenting the chaplain's “buttin' in.”

It was, therefore, with unspeakable joy that Barry learned that the battalion was warned for overseas service. Any change in his lot would be an improvement, for he was convinced that he had reached the limit of wretchedness in the exercise of his duty as chaplain of the battalion.

In this conviction, however, he was mistaken. On shipboard, he discovered that there were still depths of misery which he was called upon to plumb. Assigned to a miserable stateroom in an uncomfortable part of the ship, he suffered horribly from seasickness, and for the first half of the voyage lay foodless and spiritless in his bunk, indifferent to his environment or to his fate. His sole friend was his batman, Harry Hobbs, but, of course, he could not confide to Harry the misery of his body, or the deeper misery of his soul.

It was Harry, however, that brought relief, for it was he that called the M. O. to his officer's bedside. The M. O. was shocked to find the chaplain in a state of extreme physical weakness, and mental depression. At once, he gave orders that Barry should be removed to his own stateroom, which was large and airy and open to the sea breezes. The effect was immediately apparent, for the change of room, and more especially the touch of human sympathy, did much to restore Barry to his normal health and spirits. A friendship sprang up between the M. O. and the chaplain. With this friendship a new interest came into Barry's life, and with surprising rapidity he regained both his physical and mental tone.

The doctor took him resolutely in hand, pressed him to take his part in the daily physical drill, induced him to share the daily programme of sports, and, best of all, discovering a violin on board, insisted on his taking a place on the musical programme rendered nightly in the salon. As might be expected, his violin won him friends among all of the music lovers on board ship, and life for Barry began once more to be bearable.

Returning strength, however, recalled him to the performance of his duties as chaplain, and straightway in the exercise of what he considered his duty, he came into conflict with no less a personage than the sergeant major himself. The trouble arose over his batman, Harry Hobbs.

Harry was a man who, in his youthful days, had been a diligent patron of the London music halls, and in consequence had become himself an amateur entertainer of very considerable ability. His sailor's hornpipes, Irish jigs, his old English North-country ballads and his coster songs were an unending joy to his comrades. Their gratitude and admiration took forms that proved poor Harry's undoing, and besides some of them took an unholy joy in sending the chaplain's batman to his officer incapable of service.

Barry's indignation and grief were beyond words. He dealt faithfully with the erring Hobbs, as his minister, as his officer, as chaplain, but the downward drag of his environment proved too great for his batman's powers of resistance. Once and again Barry sought the aid of the sergeant major to rescue Harry from his downward course, but the old sergeant major was unimpressed with the account of Harry's lapses.

“Is your batman unfit for duty, sir?” he inquired.

“Yes, he is, often,” said Barry indignantly.

“Did you report him, sir?” inquired the sergeant major.

“No, I did not.”

“Then, sir, I am afraid that until you do your duty I can do nothing,” answered the sergeant major, with suave respect.

“If you did your duty,” Barry was moved to say, “then Hobbs would not need to be reported. The regulations governing that canteen should prevent these frequent examples of drunkenness, which are a disgrace to the battalion.”

“Do I understand, sir,” inquired the sergeant major, with quiet respect, “that you are accusing me of a failure in duty?”

“I am saying that if the regulations were observed my batman and others would not be so frequently drunk, and the enforcing of these regulations, I understand, is a part of your duty.”

“Then, sir,” replied the sergeant major, “perhaps I had better report myself to the Commanding Officer.”

“You can please yourself,” said Barry, shortly, as he turned away.

“Very good, sir,” replied the sergeant major. “I shall report myself at once.”

The day following, the chaplain received an order to appear before the O. C. in the orderly room.

“Captain Dunbar, I understand that you are making a charge against Sergeant Major McFetteridge,” was Colonel Leighton's greeting.

“I am making no charge against any one, sir,” replied Barry quietly.

“What do you say to that, Sergeant Major McFetteridge?”

In reply, the sergeant major gave a full and fair statement of the passage between the chaplain and himself the day before.

“Is this correct, Captain Dunbar?” asked the O. C.

“Substantially correct, sir, except that the sergeant major is here on his own suggestion, and on no order of mine.”

“Then I understand that you withdraw your charge against the sergeant major.”

“I withdraw nothing, sir. I had no intention of laying a charge, and I have laid no charge against the sergeant major; but at the same time I have no hesitation in saying that the regulations governing the canteen are not observed, and, as I understand that the responsibility for enforcing these regulations is in the sergeant major's hands, in that sense I consider that he has failed in his duty.”

But the sergeant major was too old a soldier to be caught napping. He had his witnesses ready at hand to testify that the canteen was conducted according to regulations, and that if the chaplain's batman or any others took more liquor than they should, neither the corporal in charge of the canteen nor the sergeant major was to be blamed.

“All I can say, sir,” replied Barry, “is that soldiers are frequently drunk on this ship, and I myself have seen them when the worse for liquor going into the canteen.”

“And did you report these men to their officers or to me, Captain Dunbar, or did you report the corporal in charge of the canteen?”

“No, sir, I did not.”

“Then sir, do you know that you have been guilty of serious neglect of duty?” said the colonel sternly.

“Do I understand, sir, that it is my duty to report to you every man I see the worse for liquor on this ship?”

“Most certainly,” replied the colonel, emphatically. “Every breach of discipline must be reported.”

“I understood, sir, that an officer had a certain amount of discretion in a matter of this kind.”

“Where did you get that notion?” inquired the colonel. “Let me tell you that you are wrong. Discretionary powers lie solely with me.”

“Then, sir, I am to understand that I must report every man whom I see the worse for liquor?”

“Certainly, sir.”

“And every officer, as well, sir?”

The colonel hesitated a moment, fumbled with his papers, and then blurted out:

“Certainly, sir. And let me say, Captain Dunbar, that an officer, especially an officer in your position, ought to be very careful in making a charge against a N. C. O., more particularly the sergeant major of his battalion. Nothing is more calculated to drag down discipline. The case is dismissed.”

“Sir,” said Barry, maintaining his place before the table. “May I ask one question?”

“The case is dismissed, Captain Dunbar. What do you want?” asked the colonel brusquely.

“I want to be quite clear as to my duty, in the future, sir. Do I understand that if any man or officer is found under the influence of liquor, anywhere in this ship, and at any hour of the day or night, he is to be reported at once to the orderly room, even though that officer should be, say, even the adjutant or yourself?” Barry said, gazing up at the colonel with a face in which earnestness and candour were equally blended.

The colonel gazed back at him with a face in which rage and perplexity were equally apparent. For some moments, he was speechless, while the whole orderly room held its breath.

“I mean—that you—you understand—of course,” stuttered the colonel, “that an officer must use common sense. He must be damned sure of what he says, in other words,” said the colonel, rushing his speech.

“But, sir,” continued Barry.

“Oh, go to the devil, sir,” roared the colonel. “The case is dismissed.”

Barry saluted and left the room.

“Is the man an infernal and condemned fool, or what is the matter with him?” exclaimed the colonel, turning to his adjutant in a helpless appeal, while the orderly room struggled with its grins.

“The devil only knows,” said Major Bustead. “He beats me. He is an interfering and impertinent ass, in my opinion, but what else he is, I don't know.”

It is fair to say that the sergeant major bore the chaplain no grudge for his part in the affair. The whole battalion, however, soon became possessed of the tale, adorned and expanded to an unrecognisable extent, and revelled in ecstasy over the discomfort of the C. O. The consensus of opinion was that on the whole the sergeant major had come off with premier honours, and as between the “old man” and the “Sky Pilot,” as Barry was coming to be called, it was about an even break. As for the Pilot, he remained more than ever a mystery, and on the whole, the battalion was inclined to leave him alone.

The chaplain, however, had partially, at least, achieved his aim, in that the regulations governing the canteen were more strictly enforced, to the vast improvement of discipline generally, and to the immense advantage of Harry Hobbs in particular.

Soon after this, another event occurred which aided materially in bringing about this same result, and which also led to a modification of opinion in the battalion in regard to their chaplain.

To the civilian soldier the punctilio of military etiquette is frequently not only a bore, but at times takes on the appearance of wilful insult which no grown man should be expected to tolerate. To the civilian soldier born and brought up in wide spaces of the far Northwest this is especially the case.

It is not surprising, therefore, that McCuaig, fresh from his thirty-five years of life in the Athabasca wilds, should find the routine of military discipline extremely irksome and the niceties of military etiquette as from a private to an officer not only foolish but degrading both to officer and man. Under the patient shepherding of Barry's father, he had endured much without protest or complaint, but, with the advent of Sergeant Major McFetteridge, with his rigid military discipline and his strict insistence upon etiquette, McCuaig passed into a new atmosphere. To the freeborn and freebred recruit from the Athabasca plains, the stiff and somewhat exaggerated military bearing of the sergeant major was at first a source of quiet amusement, later of perplexity, and finally of annoyance. For McFetteridge and his minutiae of military discipline McCuaig held only contempt. To him, the whole business was a piece of silly nonsense unworthy of serious men.

It was inevitable that the sergeant major should sooner or later discover this opinion in Private McCuaig, and that he should consider the holding of this opinion as a tendency toward insubordination. It was also inevitable that the sergeant major should order a course of special fatigues calculated to subdue the spirit of the insubordinate private.

It took McCuaig some days to discover that in these frequent fatigues and special duties, he was undergoing punishment, but once made, the discovery wrought in him a cold and silent rage, which drove him to an undue and quite unwonted devotion to the canteen, which in turn transformed the reserved, self-controlled man of the wilds into a demonstrative, disorderly and quarrelsome “rookie” aching for trouble.

Under these circumstances, an outburst was inevitable. Corporal Ferry, in charge of the canteen, furnished the occasion.

“No more for you, McCuaig. You've got more aboard now than you can carry.”

To the injury of being denied another beer was added the insult of suggesting his inability to carry what he had. This to a man of McCuaig's experience in every bar and camp and roadhouse from Edmonton to the Arctic circle, was not to be endured.

He leaned over the improvised bar, until his face almost touched the corporal's.

“What?” he ejaculated, but in the single expletive there darted out such concentrated fury, that the little corporal sprang back as from a striking snake.

“You can't have any more beer, McCuaig,” said the corporal, from a safe distance.

“Watch me, sonny!” replied McCuaig.

With a single sweep of his hand, he snatched two bottles from the ledge behind the corporal's head. Holding one aloft, he knocked the top

off the other, drank its contents slowly and smashed the empty bottle at the spot where the corporal's head had been; knocked the top off the second bottle and was proceeding to drink it, in a more or less leisurely fashion.

“Private Timms! Private Mulligan!” shouted Corporal Ferry, reappearing from beneath the counter. “Arrest that man!”

“Wait, sonny; give me a chance,” cried McCuaig, in a wild, high, singsong voice. Lifting his bottle to his lips, he continued to drink slowly, keeping his eye upon the two privates, who were considering the best method of carrying out their orders.

“There, sonny, fill that up again,” cried McCuaig, good-naturedly, when he had finished his drink, tossing the second bottle at the head of the corporal, who, being on the alert, again made a successful disappearance.

“Now, then, boys, come on,” said McCuaig, backing toward the wall, and dropping his hands to his hips. With a curse of disappointment that he found himself without his usual weapons of defence, McCuaig raised a shout, sprang into the air, cracked his heels together in a double rap, and swinging his arms around his head, yelled:

“Come on, my boys! I'm hungry, I am! Meat! Meat! Meat!”

With each “meat,” his white teeth came together with a snap like that of a hungry wolf. Such was the beastly ferocity in his face and posture that both Private Timms and Private Mulligan, themselves men of more than average strength, paused and looked at the corporal for further orders.

“Arrest that man,” said the corporal again, preserving at the same time an attitude that revealed a complete readiness for swift disappearance. “Private McTavish,” he added, calling upon a tall Highlander who was gazing with admiring eyes upon the raging McCuaig, “assist Private Timms and Private Mulligan in arresting that man.”

“Why don't you come yourself, sonny?” inquired McCuaig. With a swift sidestep and a swifter swoop of his long arm, he reached for the corporal, who once more found safety in swift disappearance.

At that instant, the Highlander, seeing his opportunity, flung himself upon McCuaig, and winding his arms around him, hung to him grimly, crying out:

“Get hold of his legs! Queeck! Will you?”

When the sergeant major, attracted by the unwonted uproar, appeared upon the scene, there was a man on every one of McQuaig's limbs, and another one astride his stomach. “Heavin' like sawlogs shootin' a rapid,” as Private Corbin, a lumberjack from the Eau Claire, was later heard to remark.

“What is he like now?” inquired the colonel, after listening to the sergeant major's report of the Homeric combat.

“He is in a compartment in the hold, sir, and raging like one demented. He very nearly did for Major Bustead, smashing at him with a scantling that he ripped from the ship's timbers, sir. He still has the scantling, sir.”

“Let him cool off all night,” said the Commanding Officer, after consultation with the adjutant.

Barry, who with difficulty had restrained himself during the sergeant major's report, slipped from the room, found the M. O., to whom he detailed the story and dragged him off to visit the raging McCuaig.

They found a corporal on guard outside.

“I would not open the door, sir. He is really dangerous.”

“Oh, rot!” replied the M. O. “Open up the door!”

“Excuse me, sir,” said the corporal, “it is not safe. At present, he is clean crazy. He is off his nut entirely.”

The M. O. stood listening at the door. From within came moaning sounds as from a suffering beast.

“That man is suffering. Open the door!” ordered the M. O. peremptorily.

The corporal, with great reluctance, unlocked the padlock, shot back the bolt, and then stood away from the door.

“It is the medical officer, McCuaig,” said the doctor, opening the door slightly.

Bang! Crash! came the scantling upon the door jamb, shattering it to pieces. The whole guard flung themselves against the door, shoved it shut, and shot the bolt.

“I warned you, sir,” said the panting corporal. “Better leave him until

morning. He's a regular devil!”

“He is no more a devil than you are, corporal,” said Barry, in a loud, clear voice. “He is one of the best men in the battalion. More than that, he is my friend, and if he spends the night there, I spend it with him.”

So saying, and before any one could stop him, Barry shot back the bolt, opened the door, and with his torchlight flashing before him, stepped inside.

“Hello, McCuaig,” he called, in a quiet, clear voice, “where are you? It's Dunbar, you know.”

He drew the door shut after him. The corporal was for following him, but the M. O. interposed.

“Stop out!” he ordered. “Stay where you are! You have done enough mischief already.”

“But, sir, he'll kill him!”

“This is my case,” said the M. O. sharply. “Fall back all of you, out of sight!”

Together they stood listening in awestruck silence, expecting every moment to hear sounds of conflict, and cries for help, but all they heard was the cool, even flow of a quiet voice, and after some minutes had passed, the sound of moans, mingled with a terrible sobbing.

The M. O., moving toward the corporal and his guard, said in a low tone:

“Take your men down the passage and keep them there until I call for you.”

“Sir,” began the corporal.

“Will you obey my orders?” said the M. O. “I'm in command here! Go!”

Without further words, the corporal moved his men away.

Half an hour later, the sergeant major, going his rounds, received a rude shock. In the passage leading to McCuaig's compartment, he met four men, bearing on a stretcher toward the sick bay a long silent form.

“Who have you got there, corporal?” he inquired in a tone of kindly interest.

“McCuaig, sir.”

“McCuaig?” roared the sergeant major. “And who—”

“Medical officer's orders.”

“Silence there,” said a sharp voice in the rear. “Carry on, men.”

And past the astonished sergeant major, the procession filed with the medical officer and the chaplain at its tail end.

After the sergeant major had made his report to the O. C., as was his duty, the M. O. was sent for. What took place at that interview was never divulged to the mess, but it was known that whereas the conversation began in very loud tones by the Officer Commanding, it ended half an hour later with the M. O. being shown out of the room by the colonel himself, who was heard to remark:

“A very fine bit of work. Tell him I want to see him when he has a few minutes, and thank you, doctor, thank you!”

“Who does the old man want to see?” inquired Sally, who, with Hopeton and Booth, happened to be passing.

“The chaplain,” snapped the M. O., going on his way.

“The chaplain? By Jove, he's a queer one, eh?”

The M. O. turned sharply back, and coming very close to Sally, said in a wrathful voice:

“A queer one? Yes, a queer one! But if some of you damned young idiots that sniff at him had just half his guts, you'd be twice the men you are.—Shut up, Hopeton! Listen to me—” and in words of fiery rage that ran close to tears, he recounted his experience of the last hour.

“By Jove! Doc, some guts, eh?” said Sally in a low tone, as he moved away.

CHAPTER IX

SUBMARINES, BULLPUPS, AND OTHER THINGS

A long, weird blast from the fog horn, followed by two short, sharp toots, recalled Barry from his morning dream.

“Fog,” he grumbled, and turned over to re-capture the enchantment of the Athabasca rapids, and his dancing canoe.

Overhead there sounded the trampling of feet.

“Submarines, doc,” he shouted and leaped to the floor broad awake.

“What's the row?” murmured the M. O., who was a heavy sleeper.

For answer, Barry ripped the clothes from the doctor's bed.

“Submarines, doc,” he shouted again, and buckling on his Sam Brown, and seizing his lifebelt, he stood ready to go.

“What! your boots off, doc?”

In the orders of the day before had been an announcement that officers and men were to sleep fully dressed.

“Oh, the devil!” exclaimed the doctor, hunting through his bedclothes in desperation. “I can't sleep in my boots. Where's my tunic? Go on, old fellow, I'll follow you.”

Barry held his tunic for him.

“Here you are! Wake up, doc! And here's your Sam Brown.”

Barry dropped to lace the doctor's boots, while the latter was buckling on the rest of his equipment.

“All right,” cried the doctor, rushing from the room and leaving his lifebelt behind him.

Barry caught up the lifebelt and followed.

“Your lifebelt, doc,” he said, as they passed up the companion way.

“Oh, I'm a peach of a soldier,” said the doctor, struggling into his lifebelt, and swearing deeply the while.

“Stop swearing, doc! It's a waste of energy.”

“Oh, go to hell!”

“No, I prefer Heaven, if I must leave this ship, but for the present, I believe I'm needed here, and so are you, doc. Look there!”

The doctor glanced out upon the deck.

“By Jove! You're right, old man, we are needed and badly. I say, old chap,” he said, pausing for a moment to turn to Barry, “you are a dear old thing, aren't you?”

The deck was a mass of soldiers struggling, swearing, fighting their way to their various stations. Officers, half dressed and half awake, were rushing hither and thither, seeking their units, swearing at the men and shouting meaningless orders. Over all the stentorian voice of the sergeant major was vainly trying to make itself understood.

In the confusion the cry was raised: “We're torpedoed! We're going down!”

There was a great rush for the nearest boats. Men flung discipline to the winds and began fighting for a chance of their lives. It was a terrific and humiliating scene.

Suddenly, over the tumult, was heard a loud, ringing laugh.

“Oh, I say, Duff! Not that way! Not that way!”

Again came the ringing laugh.

Immediately a silence fell upon the struggling crowd, and for a moment they stood looking inquiringly at each other. That moment of silence was seized by the sergeant major. Like a trumpet his sonorous voice rang out steady and clear.

“Fall in, men! Boat quarters! Silence there!”

He followed this with sharp, intelligible commands to his N. C. O.'s. Like magic, order fell upon the turbulent, struggling crowd.

“Stand steady, you there!” roared the sergeant major, who having got control of his men, began to indulge himself in a few telling and descriptive adjectives.

In less than two minutes, the men were standing steady as a rock and the panic was passed.

“Who was it that laughed up there in that stampede?” inquired the O. C., when the officers were gathered about him in the orderly room.

“I think it was the Sky Pilot, sir—the chaplain, sir,” said Lieutenant Stewart Duff.

“Was it you that laughed, Captain Dunbar?” asked the colonel, turning upon Barry.

“Perhaps I did, sir. I'm sorry if—”

“Sorry!” exclaimed the colonel. “Dammit, sir, you saved the situation

for us all. Who told you it was a false alarm?”

“No one, sir. I didn't know it was a false alarm. I was looking at Lieutenant Duff—” He checked himself promptly. “I mean, sir—well, it seemed a good place to laugh, so I just let it come.”

The colonel's eyes rested with curious inquiry upon the serene face of the chaplain, with its glowing eyes and candid expression. “A good place for a laugh? It was a damned good place for a laugh, and gentlemen, I thank God I have one officer who finds in the face of sudden danger a good place for a laugh. And now I have something to say to you.”

The O. C.'s remarks did not improve the officers' opinion of themselves, and they slunk out of the room—no other word properly describes the cowed and shamed appearance of that company of men—they slunk out of the room. They had failed to play the part of British officers in the face of sudden peril.

In his speech to the men, the C. O. made only a single reference to the incident, but that reference bit deep.

“Men, I am thoroughly ashamed and disappointed. You acted, not like soldiers, but like a herd of steers. The difference between a herd of steers and a battalion of soldiers, in the face of sudden danger, is only this:—the steers break blindly for God knows where, and end piled up over a cut bank; soldiers stand steady listening for the word of command.”

If the O. C. handled the men with a light hand, the sergeant major did not. His tongue rasped them to the raw. No one knows a soldier as does his N. C. O., and no N. C. O. is qualified to set forth the soldier's characteristics with the intimate knowledge and adequate fluency of the sergeant major. One by one he peeled from their shivering souls the various layers of their moral cuticle, until they stood, in their own and in each other's eyes, objects of commiseration.

“There's just one thing more I wad like ta say to ye.” The sergeant major's tendency to Doric was more noticeable in his moments of deeper feeling, “but it's something for you lads to give heed ta. When ye were scrammlin' up yonder, like a lot o' mavericks at a brandin', and yowlin' like a bunch o' coyotes, there was one man in the regiment who could laugh. There's lots o' animals that the Almighty made can yowl, but there's only one can laugh, and that's a mon. For God's sake, men, when ye're in a tight place, try a laugh.”

For some weeks after this event the chaplain was known throughout the battalion as “the man that can laugh,” and certain it is that from that day there existed between the M. O. and the chaplain a new bond of friendship.

As the ship advanced deeper into the submarine zone, the sole topic of thought and of conversation came to be the convoy. Where was that convoy anyway? While the daylight lasted, a thousand pairs of eyes swept the horizon, and the intervening spaces of tossing, blue-grey water, for the sight of a sinister periscope, or for the smudge of a friendly cruiser, and when night fell, a thousand pairs of ears listened with strained intentness for the impact of the deadly torpedo or for the signal of the protecting convoy.

While still a day and a night out from land, Barry awoke in the dim light of a misty morning, and proceeded to the deck for his constitutional. There he fell in with Captain Neil Fraser and Captain Hopeton pacing up and down.

“Come along, Pilot!” said Captain Neil, heartily, between whom and the chaplain during the last few days a cordial friendship had sprung up. “We're looking for submarines. This is the place and the time for Fritz, if he is going to get us at all.”

Arm in arm they made the circle of the deck. The mist, lying like a bank upon the sea, shifted the horizon to within a thousand yards of the ship.

“I wish I knew just what lies behind that bank there,” said Captain Hopeton, pointing over the bow.

For some moments they stood, peering idly into the mist.

“By Jove, there IS something there,” said Barry, who had a hawk's eye.

“You've got 'em too, eh,” laughed Hopeton. “I've had 'em for the last forty-eight hours. I've been 'seein' things' all night.”

“But there is,” insisted Barry, pointing over the port bow.

“What is it like?” asked Captain Neil, while Hopeton ran for his glass.

“I'll tell you what it's like—exactly like the eye of an oyster in its pulp. And, by Jove, there's another!” added Barry excitedly.

“I can't see anything,” said Captain Neil.

“But I can,” insisted Barry. “Look there, Hopeton!”

Hopeton fixed his glass upon the mist, where Barry pointed.

“You're right! There is something, and there are two of them.”

“Give the Pilot the glass, Hopeton,” said Neil. “He's got a good eye.”

“There are two ships, boys, as I'm a sinner, but what they are, I don't know,” cried Barry in a voice tense with excitement. “Here, Neil, take the glass. You know about ships.”

Long and earnestly, Captain Neil held the glass in the direction indicated.

“Boys, by all that's holy, they're destroyers,” he said at length in a low voice.

Even as they gazed, the two black dots rapidly took shape, growing out of the mist into two sea monsters, all head and shoulders, boring through the seas, each flinging high a huge comb of white spray, and with an indescribable suggestion of arrogant, resistless power, bearing down upon the ship at furious speed.

“Destroyers!” shouted Captain Neil, in a voice that rang through the ship. “By gad, destroyers!”

There was no question of friend or foe; only Great Britain's navy rode over those seas immune.

Upon every hand the word was caught up and passed along. In a marvellously short space of time, the rails, the boats, the rigging, all the points of vantage were thronged with men, roaring, waving, cheering, like mad.

With undiminished speed, each enveloped in its cloud of spray, the destroyers came, one on each side, rushed foaming past, swept in a circle around the ship and took their stations alongside, riding quietly at half speed like bulldogs tugging at a leash.

“Great heavens, what a sight!” At the croak in Hopeton's voice, the others turned and looked at him.

“You've got it too, eh!” said Captain Neil, clearing his own throat.

“I've got something, God knows!” answered Hopeton, wiping his eyes.

“I, too,” said Barry, swallowing the proverbial lump. “Those little—little —”

“Bulldogs,” suggested Hopeton.

“Bulldog pups,” said Captain Neil.

“That's it,” said Barry. “That's what they are, little bulldog pups, got me by the throat all right.”

“Me, too, by gad!” said Captain Neil. “I should have howled out loud in another minute.”

“Listen to the boys!” cried Barry.

From end to end of the ship rose one continuous roar, “Good old Navy! Good old John Bull!” while Hopeton, openly abandoning the traditional reserve and self-control supposed to be a characteristic of the English public school boy, climbed upon the rail and, hanging by a stanchion with one hand, and with the other frantically waving his cap over his head, continued to shout:

“England! England! England forever!”

Then above the cheering cries was heard the battalion band, and from a thousand throats in solemn chant there rose the Empire's national anthem, “God Save the King.”

That night they steamed into old Plymouth town, and the following morning were anchored safe at Devonport dock. Strict orders held the officers and men on board ship until arrangements for debarkation should be completed, but to Barry and the doctor, the Commanding Officer gave shore leave for an hour.

“And I would suggest,” he said, “that you go and have a talk with that old boy walking up and down the dock there. Yarn to him about Canada, he's wild to know about it.”

The old naval officer was indeed “wild to know about Canada,” so that the greater part of their shore leave was spent in answering his questions, and eager though he was to explore the old historic town, before Barry knew it, he was in the full tide of a glowing description of his own Province of Alberta, extolling its great ranches, its sweeping valleys, its immense resources.

“And to think you are all British out there,” exclaimed the old salt.

“We're all British, of course,” replied Barry, “but not all from Britain.”

“I know, I know,” said the officer, “but that only makes it more wonderful.”

“Wonderful! Why, why should it be wonderful?”

“Yes, wonderful. Oh, you Canadians,” cried the old salt, impulsively stretching out his hand to Barry. “You Canadians!”

Surprised, Barry glanced at his face. Those hard blue eyes were brimming with tears; the leatherlike skin was working curiously about the mouth.

“Why, sir, I don't quite understand what you mean,” said Barry.

“No, and you never will. Think of it, rushing three thousand miles—”

“Five thousand for some of us,” interrupted Barry.

“Fancy that! Rushing five thousand miles in this way, to help old mother England, and all of your own free will. We didn't ask it of you. Though, by heaven, we're grateful for it. I find it difficult, sir, to speak quietly of this.”

Not until that moment had Barry caught the British point of view. To him, as to all Canadians, it had only been a perfectly reasonable and natural thing that when the Empire was threatened, they should spring into the fight. They saw nothing heroic in that. They were doing their simple duty.

“But think of the wonder of it,” said the naval officer again, “that Canada should feel in that way its response to the call of the blood.”

The old man's lips were still quivering.

“That is true, sir,” said the M. O., joining in the talk, “but there is something more. Frankly, my opinion is that the biggest thing, sir, with some of us in Canada, is not that the motherland was in need of help, though, of course, we all feel that, but that the freedom of the world is threatened, and that Canada, as one of the free nations of the world, must do her part in its defence.”

“A fine spirit,” said the old gentleman.

“This fight,” continued the M. O., “is ours, you see, as well as yours, and we hate a bully.”

The old salt swore a great oath, and said:

“You are pups of the old breed, and you run true to type. I'm glad to know you, gentlemen,” he continued, shaking them warmly by the hand.

After they had gone a few steps he called Barry back to him.

“That's my card, sir. I should like you to come to see me in London sometime when you are on leave.”

Barry glanced at the card and read, “Commander Howard Vincent, R. N. R.”

“It was very decent of the old boy,” he said to the Commanding Officer afterwards, when recounting the interview. “I don't suppose I'll ever use the card, but I do think he really meant it.”

“Meant it,” exclaimed the Commanding Officer. “Why, Dunbar, I'm an old country man, and I know. Make no mistake. These people, and especially these naval people, do not throw their cards loosely about. You will undoubtedly hear from him.”

“It's not likely,” replied Barry, “but the old gentleman is great stuff, all right.”

During the long, sunny spring day, their dinky little train whisked them briskly through the sweet and restful beauty of the English southern counties. To these men, however, from the wide sunbaked, windswept plains of western Canada, the English landscape suggested a dainty picture, done in soft greys and greens, with here and there a vivid splash of colour, where the rich red soil broke through the green. But its tiny fields set off with hedges, and lines of trees, its little, clean-swept villages, with their picturesque church spires, its parks with deer that actually stood still to look at you, its splendid manor houses, and, at rare intervals, its turreted castles, gave these men, fresh from the raw, unmeasured and unmade west, a sense of unreality. To them it seemed a toy landscape for children to play with, but, as they passed through the big towns and cities with their tall, clustering chimneys, their crowding populations, with unmistakable evidences of great wealth, their shipping, where the harbours bit into the red coast line, there began to waken in them the thought that this tiny England, so beautifully finished, and so neatly adorned, was something mightier than they had ever known.

In these tiny fields, in these clean swept villages, in these manor houses, in these castles, in factory and in shipyard, were struck deep the roots of an England whose greatness they had never yet guessed.

The next afternoon brought them to the great military camp at

Shorncliffe, in a misty rain, hungry, for their rations had been exhausted early in the day, weary from ship and train travel, and eager to get their feet once again on mother earth.

At the little station they were kept waiting in a pouring rain for something to happen, they knew not what. The R. T. O., a young Imperial officer, blase with his ten months of war in England, had some occult reason for delaying their departure. So, while the night grew every moment wetter and darker, the men sat on their kit-bags or found such shelter as they could in the tiny station, or in the lee of the “goods trains” blocking the railroad tracks, growing more indignant and more disgusted with the British high command, the war in general, and registering with increasing intensity vows of vengeance against the Kaiser, who, in the last analysis, they considered responsible for their misery.

At length the “brass hat” for whom they had been waiting appeared upon the scene, not in the slightest degree apologetic, but very businesslike, and with a highly emphasised military manner. After a little conversation between the brass hat and their Commanding Officer, the latter gave the command and off they set in the darkness for their first route march on English soil.

Through muddy roads and lanes, over fields, slushy and sodden, up hill and down dale, they plodded steadily along. At the rear of the column marched Barry with the M. O.

Long before they reached their destination, their conversation had given out, the M. O. sucking sullenly at his pipe, the bowl upside down. The rear end of the column was very frayed and straggling. Why it is that a perfectly fit company will invariably fray out if placed at the rear of a marching column, no military expert has quite succeeded in satisfactorily explaining.

As he tramped along in the dark by the side of the road, the M. O. stumbled over a soldier sitting upon the soggy bank.

“Who are you?” he inquired shortly.

“Corporal Thom, sir.”

“What's the matter with you?”

“I'm all in, sir. I've been sick all day, sir.”

“Why didn't you report sick, then? Can't you get on?”

“I don't think so, sir. Not for a while, at least.”

“Have you any pain, any nausea?”

“No, sir, I'm just all in.”

“Do you know our route?”

“Yes, sir, I've got the turns down.”

“Well, come along then when you can. I'll send back a waggon later, but don't wait for that.”

“Yes, sir,” said Corporal Thom.

“Come on, Dunbar! We'll send a waggon back for these stragglers. There will be a good many of them before long.”

“You go on, doc. I'll come later,” said Barry. “I'll catch up to you.”

But the M. O., at the various halts, waited in vain for the chaplain to appear.

On arriving at the camp, after a long struggle, he succeeded in sending back an Army Service waggon to bring in the stragglers, but just as the waggon was about to leave, he heard coming up the road, a party stepping out briskly to the music of their own whistling. In the rear of the party marched the chaplain, laden down with one man's rifle and another man's kit-bag.

“They're all here, sir,” said Corporal Thom to the M. O., with a distinct note of triumph in his voice. “All here, sir,” he repeated, as he observed the sergeant major standing at the doctor's side.

“Well done, corporal,” said the sergeant major. “You brought 'em all in? That means that no man has fallen out on our first march in this country.”

The corporal made no reply, but later on, he explained the matter to the sergeant major.

“It's that Sky Pilot of ours, sir,” he said. “Blowed if he'd let us fall out.”

“Kept you marching, eh?”

“No, it's his chocolate and his jaw, but more his jaw than his chocolate. He's got lots of both. I was all in. I'd been sick all day in the train. Couldn't eat a bite. Well, the first thing, he gives me a cake of his chocolate. Then he sets himself down in the mud beside me, and me

wishin' all the time he'd go on and leave me for the waggon to pick up. Then he gives me a cigarette, and then he begins to talk."

"Talk, what about?"

"Damned if I know, but the first thing I knew I was tellin' him about the broncho bustin',—that's my job, you know—and how I won out from Nigger Jake in the Calgary Stampede, until I was that stuck on myself that I said: 'Well, sir, we'd better get a move on,' and up he gets with my kit-bag on his back. By and by, we picks up another lame duck and then another, feedin' 'em with chocolate and slingin' his jaw, and when we was at the limit, he halts us outside one of them stone shacks and knocks at the door. 'No soldiers here,' snaps the red-headed angel, shuttin' the door right in his face. Then he opens the door and steps right in where she could see him, and starts to talk to her, and us listening out in the rain. Say! In fifteen minutes we was all standin' up to a feed of coffee and buns, and then he gets Harry Hobbs whistlin' and singin', and derned if we couldn't have marched to Berlin. Say! He's a good one, ain't no quitter, and he won't let nobody else be a quitter."

And thus it came that with Corporal Thom and his derelicts the chaplain marched into a new place in the esteem of the men of his battalion, and of its sergeant major.

But of this, of course, Barry had no knowledge. He knew that he had made some little progress into the confidence of both officers and men in his battalion. He had made, too, some firm friendships which had relieved, to a certain extent, the sense of isolation and loneliness that had made his first months with the battalion so appalling. But there still remained the sense of failure inasfar as his specific duty as chaplain was concerned.

The experiences of the first weeks in England only served to deepen in him the conviction that his influence on the men against the evils which were their especial snare was as the wind against the incoming tide, beating in from the North Sea. He could make a ripple, a certain amount of fussy noise, but the tide of temptation rolled steadily onward, unchecked in its flow.

The old temptations to profanity, drink and lust, that had haunted the soldiers' steps at home, were found to be lying in wait for them here and in aggravated form. True, in the mess and in his presence among the men there was less profanity than there had been at the first, but it filled him with a kind of rage to feel that this change was due to no sense of the evil of the habit, but solely to an unwillingness to give offence to one whom many of them were coming to regard with respect and some even with affection.

"I hate that," he said to the M. O., to whom he would occasionally unburden his soul. "You'd think I was a kind of policeman over their morals."

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about that," said the M. O., to whom the habit of profanity was a very venial sin. "You ought to be mighty glad that your presence does act as a kind of moral prophylactic. And it does, I assure you. I confess that since I have come to be associated with you, I am conscious of a very real, and at times, distressing limitation of my vocabulary. I may not be more virtuous, but certainly I am more respectable."

This sentiment, however, brought little comfort to the chaplain.

"I am not a policeman," he protested, "and I am not going to play policeman to these men. I notice them shut up when I come around, but I know quite well that they turn themselves loose when I pass on, and that they feel much more comfortable. I am not and will not be their policeman."

"What then would you be?" inquired the M. O.

Barry pondered this question for some time.

"To tell the truth," he said, at length, "I confess, I don't quite know. I wish I did, doc, on my soul. One thing I do know, the men are no better here in their morals than they were at home."

"Better? They are worse, by Jove!" exclaimed the M. O. "Look at the daily crime-sheet! Look at that daily orderly room parade. It's something fierce, and it's getting worse."

"The wet canteen?" inquired Barry, who had lost prestige with some in the battalion by reason of the strenuous fight he had made against its introduction since coming to England. Not that the men cared so much for their liquor, but they resented the idea that they were denied privileges enjoyed by other battalions.

"The wet canteen?" echoed the doctor. "No, you know I opposed, as

you did, the introduction of the wet canteen, although not upon the same grounds. I regard it as a perfect nuisance in camp. It is the centre of every disorder, it is subversive of discipline; it materially increases my sick parade. But it is not the wet canteen that is chiefly responsible for the growing crime-sheet and orderly room parade. It is those damned—I don't apologise—”

“Please don't. Say it again!” exclaimed Barry fervently.

“Those damned pubs,” continued the M. O., “stuck at every crossroads in this country. They're the cause of ninety per cent. of the drunkenness in our army, and more than that, I want to give you another bit of information that came out at our M. O. conference this week, namely that these pubs account for ninety per cent. of our tent hospital cases.”

“Ninety per cent., doctor? That's surely high.”

“I would have said so, but I am giving you the unanimous verdict of the twenty-six medical officers at the conference. Cut out the damned beer—and you know I take my share of it—cut out the beer and ninety per cent. of the venereal disease goes. With me it is not a question of morality but of efficiency.” Here the M. O. sprang from his chair and began to pace the hut. “This is the one thing in this army business that makes me wild. We come over here to fight—these boys are willing to fight—and by gad they will fight! They go out for a walk, they have a few beers together, their inhibitory powers are paralysed, opportunity comes their way, and they wake up a little later diseased. God in heaven! I love this dear old England, and I would die for her if need be, but may God Almighty damn her public houses, and all the infernal and vicious customs which they nourish.”

“Thank you, doctor, go right on,” said Barry. “I was at the tent hospital this week for the first time. Ever since, I have been wanting to say what you have said just now. But what did your M. O. conference do about it?”

“What could we do? The Home Office blocks the way. Well, I've got that off my stomach, and I feel better,” added the M. O., with a slight laugh.

“But, doc, I want to say this,” said Barry. “I don't believe that the percentage of men who go in for this sort of thing is large. I've been making inquiries from our chaplains and they all agree that we have a mighty fine and clean body of men in our Canadian army.”

“Right you are! Of course, it is only a small percentage, a very small percentage—a much smaller percentage than in our civilian population at home. But small as it is, it is just that much too many. Hell and blazes! These men are soldiers. They have left their homes, and their folks, to fight. Their people—their people are the best in our land. There's that young Pentland. A finer young chap never threw a leg over a broncho. He's in that tent hospital to-night. I know his mother. Three sons she has given. Oh, damn it all,” the doctor's voice broke at this point. “I can't speak quietly. Their mothers have given them up, to death, if need be, but not to this rotten, damnable disease. Look here, Pilot!” The doctor pointed a shaking and accusing finger at Barry. “You have often spoken against this thing, but next time you break loose, give them merry hell over it. You can't make it too hot.”

Long Barry sat silent overborne by the fury of the doctor's passionate indictment.

“Cheer up, old chap!” said the doctor, when his wrath had somewhat subsided. “We'll lick the Kaiser and beat the devil yet.”

“But, doctor, what can I do?” implored Barry. “That's part of my job, surely. Part of the job of the chaplain service, I mean. Oh, that is the ghastly tragedy of this work of mine. Somehow I can't get at it. These evils exist. I can speak against them and make enemies, but the things go on just as before.”

“Don't you believe it, Pilot, not quite as before. Behold how you have already checked my profanity. Even the old man has pretty much cut it out at mess. You don't know where they would have been but for you. Cheer up! Our wings may not be visible but, on the other hand, there are no signs of horns and hoofs.”

“Doctor, one thing I'll do,” cried Barry, with a sudden inspiration “We've a meeting of the chaplains' corps to-morrow. I'll give them your speech.”

“Expurgated edition, I hope,” said the M. O.

“No, I'll put in every damn I can remember, and, if need be, a few more.”

“Lord, I'd like to be there, old boy!” said the doctor, fervently.

Barry was as good as his word. At the meeting of the chaplains' corps,

the time was mainly taken up in routine business, dealing with arrangements for religious services at the various camps within the area.

At the close of the meeting, however, one of the chaplains rose and announced that he had a matter to bring to the attention of the corps—a matter of the highest importance, which demanded their immediate and serious attention, and which they dared not any longer ignore. It was the matter of venereal disease in our Canadian army.

His statistics and illustrative incidents gripped hard the hearts of the men present. He closed with a demand that steps be taken that day to deal with the situation. The Canadian people had entrusted them with the care of their boys' souls. “Their souls,” he cried. “I say our first duty is to their bodies. I am not saying the percentage is large. It is not as large as in the civilian population at home. But why any? We must care for these men's bodies. They fight with their bodies.”

His last sentence struck Barry to the heart. It recalled his own sermon, spoken in Edmonton to his father's battalion. Immediately he was on his feet, and without preface or apology, reproduced as far as he was able the M. O.'s speech of the previous night, and that without expurgation.

There was but little discussion. There was but one opinion. It was resolved to call a joint meeting of the chaplains and medical officers to decide upon a course of action.

As Barry was leaving the meeting, the senior chaplain, an old Anglican clergyman, with a saintly face and a smile that set one's tenderest emotions astir, came to him, and putting his hand affectionately upon his shoulder, said:

“And how is your work going, my dear fellow?”

It was to Barry as if his father's hand were upon his shoulder, and before he was aware he was pouring out the miserable story of his own sad failure as a chaplain.

“Poor boy! Poor boy!” the old gentleman kept saying. “I know how you feel. Just so, just so!”

When Barry had finished relieving his heart of the burden that had so long lain upon it, the old gentleman took him by the hand and said:

“My dear fellow, remember they are far from home. These boys need their mothers. They sorely need their mothers! And, my boy, they need God. And they need you. Good-bye!”

Barry came away with a warm feeling in his heart, and in it a new purpose and resolve. No longer would he be a policeman to his men. He would try to forget their faults, and to remember only how sorely they needed their mothers and their God, and that they needed him, too.

He found the camp thrilling with great news, glorious news. The day so long awaited had come. The battalion was under orders for France. At that very moment there was an officers' meeting in the orderly room.

As Barry entered the room, the O. C. was closing his speech.

Barry was immediately conscious of a new tone, a new spirit, in the colonel's words. He spoke with a new sense of responsibility, and what more than anything else arrested Barry's attention, with a new sense of brotherhood toward his officers.

“In closing what I have to say, gentlemen, let me make a confession. I am not satisfied with the battalion, nor with my officers. I am not satisfied with myself. I remember being indignant at the report sent in by the inspecting officer concerning this battalion. I thought he was unfair and unduly severe. I believe I said so. Gentlemen, I was wrong. Since that time I have seen work in some regiments of the Imperial Service, and especially, I have seen the work on the front line. I think I know now what discipline means. Discipline, gentlemen, is the thing that saves an army from disaster. Some things we must cut out absolutely. Whatever unfits for service must go. I saw a soldier, a Canadian soldier, shot at the front for being intoxicated. I pray God, I may never see the like again. At this point, I wish to express my appreciation of the work of our chaplain, who I am glad to see has just come in. He has stood for the right thing among us, and has materially helped in the discipline and efficiency of this battalion. Gentlemen, you have your orders. Let there be no failure. Obedience is demanded, not excuses. Gentlemen, carry on!”

Barry hurried away to his hut. The words of his colonel had lifted him out of his despair. He had not then so desperately failed. His colonel had found something in him to approve. And France was before him! There was still a chance for service. The boys would need him there.

CHAPTER X

FRANCE

“France, sunny France!” The tone carried concentrated bitterness and disgust. “One cursed fraud after another in this war.”

“Cheer up!” said Barry. “There's worse to come—perhaps better. This rain is beastly, but the clouds will pass, and the sun will shine again, for in spite of the rain this IS 'sunny France.' There's a little homily for you,” said Barry, “and for myself as well, for I assure you this combination of mal de mer and sleet makes one feel rotten.”

“Everything is rotten,” grumbled Duff, gazing gloomily through the drizzling rain at the rugged outline of wharves that marked the Boulogne docks.

“Look at this,” cried Duff, sweeping his hand toward the deck. “You would think this stuff was shot out of the blower of a threshing machine—soldier's baggage, kits, quartermaster's stores—and this is a military organisation. Good Lord!”

“Lieutenant Duff! Is Lieutenant Duff here?” It was the O. C.'s voice.

“Yes, sir,” said Duff, going forward and saluting.

“Mr. Duff, I wish you to take charge of the Transport for the present. Lieutenant Bonner is quite useless—helpless, I mean. You will find Sergeant Mackay a reliable man. Sorry I couldn't give you longer notice. I think, however, you are the man for the job.”

“I'll do my best, sir,” said Duff, saluting, as the O. C. turned away.

“What did I tell you, Duff?” said Barry. “You certainly are in for it, and you have my sympathy.”

“Sympathy! Don't you worry about me,” said Duff. “This is just the kind of thing I like. I haven't run a gang of navvies in the Crow's Nest Pass for nothing. You watch my smoke. But, one word, Pilot! When you see me bearing down, full steam ahead, give me room! I'll make this go or bust something.” Then in a burst of confidence, he took Barry by the arm, and added in a low voice: “And if I live, Pilot, I'll be running something in this war bigger than the Transport of a battalion before I'm done.”

Barry let his eyes run over the powerful figure, the rugged, passionate face, lit up now with gleaming eyes, and said:

“I believe you, Duff. Meantime, I'll watch your smoke.”

“Do!” replied Duff with superb self-confidence. And it was worth while during the next hour to watch Duff evolve order out of chaos. First of all he put into his men and into his sergeant the fear of death. But he did more than that. He breathed into them something of his own spirit of invincible determination. He had them springing at his snappy orders with an eagerness that was in itself the larger half of obedience, and as they obeyed they became conscious that they were working under the direction of a brain that had a perfected plan of action, and that held its details firmly in its grasp.

Not only did Duff show himself a master of organisation and control, but in a critical moment he himself leaped into the breach, and did the thing that balked his men. Did a heavy transport wagon jamb at the gangway, holding up the traffic, with a spring, Duff was at the wheel. A heave of his mighty shoulders, and the wagon went roaring down the gangway. Did a horse, stupid with terror, from its unusual surroundings, balk, Duff had a “twitch” on its upper lip, and before it knew what awful thing had gripped it, the horse was lifted clear out of its tracks, and was on its way to the dock.

Before he had cleared the ship, Duff had a circle of admirers about him, gazing as if at a circus.

“An energetic officer you have there,” said the brass hat standing beside the colonel.

“A new man. This is his first time on the transport,” replied the colonel.

“Quite remarkable! Quite remarkable!” exclaimed the brass hat. “That unloading must have been done in record time, and in spite of quite unusual conditions.”

The boat being clear and the loads made up, Duff approached the Commanding Officer.

“All ready, sir,” he announced. “Shall we move off? I should like to get a start. The roads will be almost impassable, I'm afraid.”

“Do you know the route?” asked the Commanding Officer.

“Yes, sir, I have it here.”

“All right, go ahead, Duff. A mighty good piece of work you have done there.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Duff, saluting and turning away.

“Move off, there,” he shouted to the leading team.

The driver started the team but they slipped, plunged and fell heavily. Duff was at their heads before any other man could move.

“Get hold here, men,” he yelled. “Take hold of that horse. What are you afraid of?” he cried to a groom who was gingerly approaching the struggling animal. “Now then, all together!”

When he had the team on their feet again, he said to the grooms standing at their heads, “Jump up on the horses' backs; that will help the them to hold their footing.”

There was some slight hesitation on the part of the grooms.

“Come on!” he roared, and striding to the horse nearest him, he flung himself upon its back.

A groom mounted the other, and once more a start was made, but they had not gone more than a few steps, when the groom's horse fell heavily, and rolled over on its side, pinning the unfortunate man beneath him.

There was a shriek of agony. In an instant Duff was off his horse and at the head of the fallen animal.

“Medical officer here!” he shouted. “Now then, two of you men. One of you pull out that man while we lift.”

The horse's head and shoulders were lifted clear, and the injured man was pulled out of danger.

“Take him out of the way, please, doctor,” said Duff, to the M. O., who was examining the groom.

“Sergeant!”

His sergeant literally sprang to his side.

“Get me a dozen bags,” he said.

“Bags, sir? I don't know where—”

“Bags,” repeated Duff savagely. “Canvas, anything to wrap around these horses' feet.”

The sergeant without further words plunged into the darkness, returning almost immediately with half a dozen bags.

“Thanks, sergeant; that's the way to move. Now get some more!”

Under Duff's directions the bags were tied about the feet of the horses, thus enabling them to hold their footing, and the transport moved off in the darkness.

Returning from the disposing of the injured man, the M. O. found Barry shivering with the cold, and weak from his recent attack of seasickness.

“There will be no end of a sick parade to-morrow morning, and you'll be one of them,” grumbled the M. O. “If they don't move them out of here soon they'll take them away in ambulances. There are a hundred men at this moment fit to go to hospital, but the O. C. won't hear of it.”

“Doc, they ought to have something hot. The kitchens are left behind, I understand. Let me have a couple of your men, and let me see what I can do.”

“It's no use, I've tried all the hotels about here. They're full up.”

“No harm trying, doc,” said Barry, and off he went.

But he found the hotels full up, as the doctor had said. After much inquiry, he found his way to the Y. M. C. A. A cheerful but sleepy secretary, half dead with the fatigue of a heavy day ministering to soldiers “going up the line,” could offer him no help at all.

“Do you mean to say that there is no place in this town,” said Barry desperately, “where a sick man can get a dish of coffee?”

“Sick man!” cried the secretary. “Why, certainly! Why not try the R. A. M. C.? They've a hospital half a mile up the street. They will certainly help you out. I'll come with you.”

“No, you don't,” said Barry. “You go back to bed. I'll find the place.”

Half a mile up the street, as the secretary had said, Barry came upon the flaring lantern of the R. A. M. C., at the entrance to a huge warehouse, the gate of which stood wide open.

Entering the courtyard, Barry found a group of men about a blazing fire.

“May I see the officer in charge?” he asked, approaching the group.

The men glanced at his rank badges.

“Yes, sir,” said a sergeant, clicking his heels smartly. “Can I do anything for you, sir?”

“Thank you,” said Barry, and told him his wants.

“We have plenty of biscuits,” said the sergeant, “and coffee, too. You are welcome to all you can carry, but I don't see how we can do any more for you. But would you like to see the officer in charge, sir?”

“Thank you,” said Barry, and together they passed into another room.

But the officer was engaged elsewhere. While they were discussing the matter, a door opened, and a young girl dressed in the uniform of a V. A. D. (Voluntary Aid Detachment) appeared.

“What is it, sergeant?” she inquired, in a soft but rather tired voice.

The sergeant explained, while she listened with mild interest. Then Barry took up the tale, and proceeded to dilate upon the wretched condition of his comrades, out in the icy rain. But his story moved the V. A. D. not at all. She had seen too much of the real misery and horrors of war. Barry began to feel discouraged, and indeed a little ashamed of himself.

“You see, we have just come over,” he said in an apologetic tone, “and we don't know much about war yet.”

“You are Canadians?” cried the girl, a new interest dawning in her eyes. As she came into the light, Barry noticed that they were brown, and that they were very lustrous.

“I love the Canadians,” she exclaimed. “My brother was a liaison artillery officer at Ypres; with them, at the time of the gas, you know. He liked them immensely.” Her voice was soft and sad.

Unconsciously Barry let his eyes fall to the black band on her arm.

“He was with the Canadians, too, when he was killed at Armentieres, three months ago.”

“Killed!” exclaimed Barry. “Oh, I am so sorry for you.”

“I had two brothers,” she went on, in her gentle even tone. “One was killed at Landrecies, on the retreat from Mons, you know.”

“No,” said Barry, “I'm afraid I don't know about it. Tell me!”

“It was a great fight,” said the girl. “Oh, a splendid fight!” A ring came into her voice and a little colour into her cheek. “They tried to rush our men, but they couldn't. My oldest brother was there in charge of a machine gun section. The machine guns did wonderful work. The colonel came to tell us about it. He said it was very fine.” There was no sign of tears in her eyes, nor tremor in her voice, only tenderness and pride.

“And your mother is alone now?” inquired Barry.

“Oh, we gave up our house to the government for a hospital. You see, father was in munitions. He's too old for active service, and mother is matron in the hospital. She was very unwilling that I should come over here. She said I was far too young, but of course that's quite nonsense. So you see, we are all in it.”

“It is perfectly amazing,” said Barry. “You British women are wonderful!”

The brown eyes opened a little wider.

“Wonderful? Why, what else could we do? But the Canadians! I think they're wonderful, coming all this way to fight.”

“I can't see that,” said Barry. “That's what that old naval boy at Devonport said, but I can't see that it's anything wonderful that we should fight for our Empire.”

“Devonport! A naval officer!” The girl lost her calm. She became excited. “What was his name?”

“I have his card here,” said Barry, taking out his pocket book and handing her the card.

“My uncle!” she cried. “Why, how perfectly splendid!” offering Barry her hand. “Why, we're really introduced. Then you're the man that Uncle Howard—” She stopped abruptly, a flush on her cheek. Then she turned to the N. C. O. “Yes, sergeant, that will do,” as the man brought half a dozen large biscuit cans and as many large bottles of prepared coffee.

As Barry's eyes fell upon the biscuit cans an idea came to him.

“Will these cans hold water?” he inquired.

“Yes, sir,” replied the sergeant.

“Then, we're fixed,” cried Barry, in high delight. “This is perfectly fine.”

“What do you mean?” asked the girl.

“We'll dump the biscuits, and boil the coffee in the cans. I haven't

camped on the Athabasca for nothing. Now we're all right and I suppose we must go."

The V. A. D. hesitated a moment, then she took the sergeant to one side, and entered into earnest and persuasive talk with him.

"It's against regulations, miss," Barry heard him say, "and besides, you know, we're expecting a hospital train any minute, and every car will be needed."

"Then I'll take my own car," she said. "It's all ready and has the chains on, sergeant, I think."

"Yes, it's quite ready, but you will get me into trouble, miss."

"Then, I'll get you out again. Load those things in, while I run and change—I'm going to drive you out to your camp," she said to Barry as she hurried away.

The sergeant shook his head as he looked after her.

"She's a thoroughbred, sir," he said. "We jump when she asks us for anything. She's a real blooded one; not like some, sir—like some of them fullrigged ones. They keep 'er 'oppin'."

"Fullrigged ones?" inquired Barry.

"Them nurses, I mean, sir. They loves to 'awe them—them young 'Vaddies,' as we call them—V. A. D., you know, sir. They keeps 'em a 'oppin' proper—scrubbin' floors, runnin' messages, but Miss Vincent, she mostly drives a car."

While the sergeant was dilating upon the virtues and excellences of the young V. A. D., his men ran out her car, and packed into it the biscuit tins and coffee. By the time the sergeant was ready she was back, dressed in a chauffeur's uniform.

Barry had thought her charming in her V. A. D. dress, but in her uniform she was bewitching. He noticed that her hair clustered in tiny ringlets about her natty little cap, in quite a maddening way. One vagrant curl over her ear had a particular fascination for his eyes. He felt it ought to be tucked in just a shade. He was conscious of an almost irresistible desire to do the tucking in. What would happen if—

"Well, are you ready?" inquired the girl in a quick, businesslike tone.

"What? Oh, yes," said Barry, recalled to the business of the moment.

During the drive the girl gave her whole attention to her wheel, as indeed was necessary, for the road was dangerously slippery, and she drove without lights through the black night. Barry kept up an endless stream of talk, set going by her command, as she took her place at the wheel. "Now tell me about Canada. I can listen, but I can't talk."

In the full tide of his most eloquent passages, Barry found himself growing incoherent at times, for his mind was in a state of oscillation between the wonderful and lustrous qualities of the brown eyes that he remembered flashing upon him in the light of the fire, and that maddening little curl over the girl's ear.

In an unbelievably short time, so it seemed to him, they came upon the rear of a marching column.

"These are your men, I fancy," she said, "and this will be your camp on the left; I know it well. I've often been here."

She swung the car off the road into an open field, set out with tents, and brought the car to a stop beside an old ruined factory.

"This, I believe, will be the best place for your purpose," she said, and sprang from her seat, and ran to the ruin, flashing her torchlight before her. "Here you are," she said. "This will be just the thing."

Barry followed her a few steps down into the long, stone-flagged cellar.

"Splendid! This is the very thing," he cried enthusiastically. "You are really the most wonderful person."

"Now get your stuff in here," she ordered. "But what will you do for wood? There is always water," she added, "in some tanks further on. Come, I'll show you."

Barry followed her in growing amazement and admiration at her prompt efficiency.

"Now then, there are your tanks," she said. "As for wood, I don't know what you will do, but there is a garden paling a little further on, and, of course—"

"Don't worry about that," said Barry.

"I won't," with a gay laugh; "I know you Canadians, you see."

Together they returned to the car.

Before she mounted to her seat she turned to Barry, and offered him her hand and said: "I think it is perfectly ripping that we were

introduced in this way. Though I don't know your name yet," she added shyly.

"Awfully stupid of me," said Barry, and he gave her his name, adding that of the regiment, and his rank.

"Good-bye, then," she said, climbing into her car, and starting her engine.

"But," said Barry, "I must see you safely back."

She laughed a scornful but, as Barry thought, a most delicious little laugh.

"Nonsense! We don't do that sort of thing here, you know. We're on our own."

A little silence fell between them.

"When does your battalion march?" she asked abruptly.

"Perhaps to-morrow. I don't know."

"If you do go then," she said, with again that little touch of shyness, "I suppose I won't see you again."

"See you again," exclaimed Barry, his tone indicating that the possibility of such a calamity was unthinkable, "why, of course I shall see you again. I must see you again—I—I—I just must see you again."

"Good night, then," she said in a soft, hurried voice, throwing in her clutch.

Barry stood listening in the dark to the hum of her engine, growing more faint every moment.

"Some girl, eh?" said a voice. At his side he saw Harry Hobbs. Barry turned sharply upon him.

"Now then, Hobbs, some wood and we will get a fire going and look lively! And, Hobbs, I believe there's a fence about fifty yards down there, which you might find useful. Now move. Quick!" Unconsciously he tried to reproduce, in uttering the last word, Duff's tone and manner. The effect was evident immediately.

Hobbs without further words departed in the darkness. Again Barry stood listening to the hum of the engine, until he could no longer hear it in the noise and confusion of the camp, but in his heart Harry's words made music.

"Some girl, eh?"

As he stood there in the darkness, hearing that music in his heart, a voice broke in, swearing hard and deep oaths. It was the M. O.

"Hello, doc, my boy; come here," cried Barry.

The M. O. approached. He was in a state of rage that rendered coherent speech impossible.

"Oh, quit it, doc. Let me show you something."

He led him into the ruin, where his spoils were cached.

"Biscuits, my boy, and coffee. Hold on! Listen! I'm going to get a fire going here and in twenty minutes there'll be six cans of fragrant delicious coffee, boiling hot."

"Why, how the—"

"Doc, don't talk! Listen to me! You round up your sick men, and bring them quietly over here. I don't know how many I can supply, but at least, I think, a hundred."

"Why, how the devil—?"

"Go on; I haven't time to talk to you. Get busy!"

Working by flashlight, the men cut open the tins, dumped the biscuits on a blanket spread in a corner of the cellar, while Barry made preparations for a fire.

"Here, Hobbs, you punch two holes in these cans, just an inch from the top."

Soon the fire was blazing cheerily. In its light Barry was searching through the ruin.

"By Jove," he shouted, "the very thing. Just made for us."

He pulled out a long steel rod from a heap of rubbish and ran with it to the fire.

"Here, boys, punch a hole in this wall. Now then, for the cans. String them on this rod."

In twenty minutes the coffee was ready.

"How is it?" he inquired anxiously, handing a mess tin full to one of his men.

The boy tasted it.

“Like mother made,” he said, with a grin. “Gee, but it's good.”

At that moment the doctor appeared at the cellar door.

“I say, old chap,” he said, “there will be a riot here in fifteen minutes. That coffee smells the whole camp.”

“Bring 'em along, doc. The sick chaps first. By Jove, here's the sergeant major himself.”

“What's all this?” inquired the sergeant major in his gruffest voice. “Who's responsible for this fire?”

“Coffee, sergeant major?” answered Barry, handing him a tin full.

“But what—?”

“Drink it first, sergeant major.”

The sergeant major took the mess tin and tasted the coffee.

“Well, this IS fine,” he declared, “and it's what the boys want. But this fire is against orders, sir. I ought to have it put out.”

“You will have it put out over my dead body, sergeant major,” cried the M. O.

“And mine,” added Barry.

“By gad, we'll chance the zeps, sir,” said the sergeant major. “This freezin' rain will kill more men than a bomb. Bring in your men, sir,” he added to the M. O. “But I must see the O. C.”

The sergeant major's devotion to military discipline was struggling hard with his humanity, which, under his rugged exterior, beat warm in his heart.

“Why bother with the O. C.?” said the M. D.

“But I must see him,” insisted the sergeant major.

He had not far to go to attain his purpose.

“Hello! What the devil is this?” exclaimed a loud voice at the door.

“By gad, it's the old man himself,” muttered the M. O. to Barry. “Now look out for ructions.”

In came the O. C., followed by a brass hat. Barry went forward with a steaming tin of coffee.

“Sorry our china hasn't arrived yet, sir,” he said cheerfully, “but the coffee isn't bad, the boys say.”

“Why, it's you, Dunbar,” said the colonel, peering into his face, and shaking the rain drops from his coat. “I might have guessed that you'd be in it. Where there's any trouble,” he continued, turning to the brass hat at his side, “you may be quite sure that the Pilot or the M. O. here will be in it. By Jove, this coffee goes to the right spot. Have a cup, major?” he said as Barry brought a second tin.

“It's against regulations, you know,” said the major, taking the mess tin gingerly. “Fires are quite forbidden. Air raids, and that sort of thing, don't you know.”

“Oh, hang it all, major,” cried the O. C. “The coffee is fine, and my men will be a lot better for it. This camp of yours, anyway, is no place for human beings, and especially for men straight off the boat. As for me, I'm devilish glad to get this coffee. Give me another tin, Pilot.”

“It's quite irregular,” murmured the major, still drinking his coffee. “It's quite irregular! But I see the door is fairly well guarded against light, and perhaps—”

“I think we'll just carry on,” said the colonel. “If there is any trouble, I'll assume the responsibility for it. Thank you, Pilot. Just keep guard on the light here, sergeant major.”

“All right, sir. Very good, sir, we will hang up a blanket.”

Meanwhile the news had spread throughout the camp, and before many minutes had passed the cellar was jammed with a crowd of men that reached through the door and out into the night. The crowd was becoming noisy and there was danger of confusion. Then the pilot climbed up on a heap of rubbish and made a little speech.

“Men,” he called out, “this coffee is intended first of all for the sick men in this battalion. Those sick men must first be cared for. After that we shall distribute the coffee as far as it will go. There is plenty of water outside, and I think I have plenty of coffee. Sergeant major, I suggest that you round up these men in some sort of order.”

A few sharp words of command from the sergeant major brought order out of confusion, and for two hours there filed through the cellar a continuous stream of men, each bringing an empty mess tin, and carrying it away full of hot and fragrant coffee.

By the time the men had been supplied the officers were finished with

their duties, and having got word of the Pilot's coffee stall, came crowding in. One and all they were vociferous in their praise of the chaplain, voting him a “good fellow” and a “life-saver” of the highest order. But it was felt by all that Corporal Thom expressed the general consensus of opinion to his friend Timms. “That Pilot of ours,” he declared, “runs a little to the narrow gauge, but in that last round up he was telling us about last Sunday there won't be the goat run for him. It's him for the baa baas, sure enough.”

And though in the vernacular the corporal's words did not sound quite reverent, it was agreed that they expressed in an entirely satisfactory manner the general opinion of the battalion.

An hour later, wearied as he was, Barry crawled into his icy blankets, but with a warmer feeling in his heart than he had known since he joined the battalion. But before he had gone to sleep, there came into his mind a thought that brought him up wide awake. He had quite forgotten all about his duty as chaplain. “What a chance you had there,” insisted his chaplain's conscience, “for a word that would really hearten your men. This is their first night in France. To-morrow they march up to danger and death. What a chance! And you missed it.”

Barry was too weary to discuss the matter further, but as he fell asleep he said to himself, “At any rate, the boys are feeling a lot better,” and in spite of his sense of failure, that thought brought him no small comfort.

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW MESSAGE

“I think,” said Barry, to the M. O., “I really ought to ride down to the R. A. M. C. hospital, and tell them how the boys enjoyed the coffee last night.” His face was slightly flushed, but the flush might have been due to the fact that he had been busily engaged in tying up the thongs of his bed-roll, an awkward job at times.

“Sure thing,” agreed the M. O. heartily. “Indeed it's absolutely essential, and say, old chap, you might tell her how I enjoyed my coffee. She will be glad to hear about me.”

Barry heaved his bed-roll at the doctor and departed.

At the R. A. M. C. Hospital the Officer Commanding, to whom he had sent in his card, gave him a cordial greeting.

“I am glad to know you, sir. We have quite a lot of your chaps here now and then, and fine fellows they seem to be. We expect a hospital train this morning, and I understand there are some Canadians among them. Rather a bad go a few days ago at St. Eloi. Heavy casualty list. Clearing stations all crowded, and so they are sending a lot down the line.”

“Canadians?” asked Barry, thinking of his father. “You have not heard what unit, sir?”

“No, we only get the numbers and the character of the casualties and that sort of thing. Well, I must be off. Would you care to look around?”

“Thank you, no. We are also on the march. I simply came to tell you how very greatly our men appreciated your help last night.”

“Oh, that's perfectly all right. Glad the sergeant had sense enough to do the right thing.”

Barry hesitated.

“May I see—ah—the sergeant?”

“The sergeant? Why, certainly, but it's not necessary at all.”

The sergeant was called and duly thanked. The R. A. M. C. officer was obviously anxious to be rid of his visitor and to get off to his duty.

Still Barry lingered.

“There was also a young lady, sir, last night,” he said at length.

“A young lady?”

“Sister Vincent, sir,” interjected the sergeant. “She ran them up to the camp in her car, sir. The ambulances and cars were all under orders.”

“Ah! Ran you up to the camp, eh?”

“Yes, she ran us up with the biscuits and coffee. It was awfully kind of her.”

“Ah!—Um!—Very good! Very good! Sergeant, call her,” said the O. C. abruptly.

“I'm afraid she'd be asleep now, sir. She was on night duty, sir.”

“Oh, then,” said Barry, “please don't disturb her. I wouldn't think of it. If you will be kind enough, sir, to convey the thanks of the men and of myself to her.”

“Surely, surely! Well, I really must be going. Goodbye! Good luck!”

He turned to his motor car. “I won't forget, sir,” he said to Barry. “Oh, I'll be sure to tell her,” he added with a significant smile.

As Barry was mounting his horse, the strains of the battalion band were heard floating down the street. He drew up his horse beside the entrance and waited. Down the winding hill they came, tall, lean, hard-looking men, striding with the free, easy swing of the men of the foothills. Barry felt his heart fill with pride in his comrades.

“By Jove,” he said to himself, “the boys are all right.”

“Fine body of men, sir,” said the sergeant, who with his comrades had gathered about the gateway.

“Not too bad, eh, sergeant?” said Barry, with modest pride.

“Sir,” said the sergeant in a low voice, “the young lady is up at the window to your left.”

“Sergeant, you're a brick! Thank you,” said Barry. He turned in his saddle, and saw above him a window filled with smiling nurses looking down at the marching column, and among them his friend of the night before. Her face was turned away from him, and her eyes were upon the column, eagerly searching the ranks of the marching men.

“Sergeant,” said Barry, “your Commanding Officer is a very busy man, and has a great many things to occupy his attention. Don't you think it is quite possible that that message of mine might escape his memory, and don't you think it would be really more satisfactory if I could deliver that message in person?”

The sergeant tilted his hat over one eye, and scratched his head.

“Well, sir, the Commanding Officer does 'ave a lot of things to think about, and though he doesn't often forget, he might. Besides, I really think the young lady would like to know just how the coffee went.”

“Sergeant, you are a man of discernment. I'll just wait here until the battalion passes.”

He moved his horse a few steps out from the gateway, and swung him around so that he stood facing the window. The movement caught the attention of the V. A. D. in the window. She glanced down, saw him, and, leaning far out, waved her hand in eager greeting and with a smile of warm friendliness.

He had only time to wave his hand in reply, when the head of the column drew opposite the gateway, forcing him to turn his back to the window and stand at salute.

The Commanding Officer acknowledged the salute, glanced up at the window, waved his hand to the group of nurses there gathered, then glanced back at Barry, with a smile full of meaning, and rode on.

After the band had passed the entrance, it ceased playing, and the men, catching sight of Barry and the smiling group at the window above him, broke softly into a rather suggestive music hall ditty, at that time popular with the soldiers:

“Hello! Hello! Who's your lady friend;
Who's the little blossom by your side;
I saw you, with a girl or two,
Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! I'm surprised at you.”

Down the length of the column the refrain passed, gradually gaining in strength and volume, until by the time the rear came opposite the entrance, the men were shouting with wide open throats:

“Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! I'm surprised at you.”

with a growing emphasis and meaning upon every successive “Oh!”

Barry's face was aflame and his heart hot with furious indignation. She was not that kind of a girl. She would be humiliated before her associates. He glanced up at the window but she was gone. The battalion marched on but Barry still remained, his eyes following the swinging column, his face still flaming, and his heart hot with indignation.

“Good morning, Captain Dunbar!”

He swung off his horse, and there smiling at him with warm friendliness was the little V. A. D.

“I'm awfully sorry,” began Barry, thinking of the impudent song of his

comrades. “I mean I'm very glad to see you. I just ran in to tell you how splendidly the coffee went last night. There are a hundred fellows marching along there that are fine and fit just because of your kindness, and I'm here to give you their thanks.”

Barry felt that he was cutting a rather poor figure. His words came haltingly and stumblingly. The suggestive music hall ditty was still in his mind.

“What a splendid band you have,” she said, “and how splendidly the men sing.”

“Sing!” cried Barry indignantly. “Oh, yes, they do sing rather well, don't they?” he added, greatly relieved. “I have only a minute,” he added hurriedly, “but I wanted to see you again, and I wonder if I may drop you a little note now and then, just to—well, hang it all—just to keep in touch with you. I don't want you to quite forget me.”

“Oh, I won't forget you,” she said. The brown eyes looked straight at him. “You see, after all, my uncle knows you so well. Indeed, he told me about you. You see, we really are friends, in a way, aren't we?”

“We are indeed, and you are awfully good. Goodbye!”

“Goodbye,” she said, “and if I leave here soon, I promise to let you know.”

And Barry rode away, his heart in such a turmoil as he had never known. In his ears lingered the music of that soft voice, and his eyes saw a bewildering complexity of dancing ringlets and lustrous glances, until he drew up at the rear of the column and found himself riding once more beside his friend, the M. O.

“Congratulations, old man,” said the doctor. “She's a blossom, all right. Cheer up; you may find her bending over your white face some day, holding your hand, or smoothing your brow, in the approved V. A. D. manner.”

“Oh, shut up, doc,” said Barry with quite unusual curtness. “She's not that kind of a girl.”

“Ah, who knows!” said the doctor. “Who knows!”

At the railway station, the battalion was halted, awaiting the making up of their train, the departure of which was delayed by the incoming hospital train from up the line. They had not long to wait.

“Here she is, boys!” called out a soldier. And into the station slowly rolled that hospital train, with its freight of wounded men, mutilated, maimed, broken. Its windows were crowded with faces, white as their swathings, worn, spent, deep-lined, from which looked forth eyes, indifferent, staring, but undaunted and indomitable.

Gradually, with stately movement, as befitted its noble burden, the train came to rest immediately opposite the battalion. With grave, fascinated, horror-stricken faces the men of the battalion stood rigid and voiceless gazing at that deeply moving spectacle. Before their eyes were being paraded the tragic, pathetic remnants of a gallant regiment, which but a few weeks before had stood where they now stood, vital with life, tingling with courage. At their country's bidding they had ascended that Holy Mount of Sacrifice, to offer upon the altar of the world's freedom their bodies as a living sacrifice unto God, holy and acceptable. Now, their offering being made, they were being borne back helpless, bruised, shattered but unconquered and eternally glorious.

Silently the two companies gazed at each other across the intervening space. Then from the window of the train a soldier thrust a bandaged head and bandaged arm.

“Hello there, Canada!” he cried, waving the arm. Instantly, as if he had touched a hidden spring, from the battalion's thousand throats there broke a roar of cheers that seemed to rock the rafters of the station building.

Again, again, and yet again! As if they could never exhaust the burden of their swelling emotions, they roared forth their cheers, waving caps and rifles high in the air, while down their cheeks poured, unheeded and unhindered, a rain of tears.

“Canada! Canada! Canada!” they cried. “Oh, you Canadians! Alberta! Alberta!”

Feebly came the answering cheers, awkwardly waved the bandaged hands and arms.

Then the battalion broke ranks and flinging rifles and kitbags to the ground, they rushed across the tracks, eager to bring their tribute of pride and love to their brothers from their own country, far across the sea.

“Malcolm! Hello, Malcolm!” cried a voice from a window of the train, as the noise had somewhat subsided. “Hey, Malcolm, here you are!” cried a wounded man, raising himself from his cot to the window.

Malcolm Innes turned, scanned the train, then rushed across the tracks to the window and clung fast to it.

It was his brother, Ewen.

“Is it yourself, Ewen, and are you hurted bad?” cried the boy, all unconscious of his breaking voice and falling tears. They clung together for some little time in silence.

“Are you much hurted, Ewen? Tell me the God's truth,” again said Malcolm.

“Not much,” said Ewen. “True as death, I'm tellin' you. My arm is broke, that's all. We had a bad time of it, but, man, we gave them hell, you bet. Oh, it was great!”

Then again the silence fell between them. There seemed to be nothing to say.

“Here, stand back there! You must get back, you know, men!”

An N. C. O. of the R. A. M. C. tried to push Malcolm back from the window.

“Here, you go to hell,” cried Malcolm fiercely. “It's my brother I've got.”

The N. C. O., widely experienced in these tragic scenes, hesitated a moment. An officer, coming up behind him, with a single glance took in the situation.

“My boy,” he said kindly, placing his hand on Malcolm's arm, “we want to get these poor chaps as soon as possible where they will be comfortable.”

Malcolm sprang back at once, saluting.

“Yes, sir,” he said. “Certainly, sir.” And backing across the tracks, stood looking across at the window from which his brother, wearied with his effort, had disappeared.

Meantime the R. A. M. C. were busy with their work. With marvellous rapidity and speed the train was unloaded of its pathetic freight, the carrying cases into ambulances and the walking cases into cars and wagons.

“Good-bye, Mac,” called a voice as a car was driving off. It was Ewen again. The wounded man spoke to the driver, who immediately pulled up and swung over to the platform where Malcolm was standing.

“Oh, are you sure, Ewen, you are goin' to be all right? Man, you look awful white.”

“All right, Mac. You bet I will. It's only my arm,” said Ewen, his brave, bright words in pathetic contrast to his white face.

At this point Barry came rushing along.

“Why, Ewen! My poor fellow!” he cried, throwing his arm about the wounded man's shoulder. “What is it?”

“My arm, sir,” said the boy, adding some words in a low tone. “But I'm all right,” he said brightly. “You'll write my mother, sir, and tell her? You'll know what to say.”

“Surely I will. You'll be all right, old boy, God bless you! Good luck, Ewen!”

Then leaning over the boy, he added in a low voice, “Remember you are not all alone. God is with you. You won't forget that!”

“I won't, sir. I know it well,” said Ewen earnestly.

Most of the stretcher cases had been hurried away. Only a few of the more seriously wounded remained. As Barry turned away from the car, he saw the medical officer and sergeant major approaching him.

“A terrible business,” said Barry, in a horror-stricken voice. “Splendid chaps. How plucky they are!”

The M. O. made no reply, but coming close to Barry, he put his arm through his, the sergeant major taking him by the other arm.

“I say, Barry, old chap,” said the M. O. in a grave voice, calling him for the first time by his first name. “There is some one here that you know well.”

“Some one I know,” said Barry, standing still and looking from one to the other.

“Ay, sir. Some one we all know and greatly respect,” replied the sergeant major.

“Not—not—oh, not my father!”

The M. O. nodded.

“Bad, doctor? Not dying, doctor?” His face was white even in spite of his tan. His hands closed about the doctor's arm in a grip that reached to the bone.

“No, not dying, Barry, but in a bad way, I fear.”

“Take me,” muttered Barry, in a dazed way, and they moved together rapidly across the platform.

“Wait a moment, doctor,” said Barry, breathing hard.

They stood still, a silent and sympathetic group of soldiers about them. Barry turned from them, walked a few steps, his clasped hands writhing before him, then stood with his face uplifted to the sky for a few moments.

“All right, doctor, I'll follow,” he said, coming quietly back. “Will he know me?”

“Sure thing, sir,” said the sergeant major cheerily. “He was asking for you.”

On a stretcher, waiting to be lifted into the ambulance, he found his father, lying white and still.

“Dad!” cried Barry, dropping to his knees beside him. He put his arms around him on the stretcher, and kissed him on both cheeks and on the lips. They all drew back from the stretcher and turned their backs upon the two.

“Barry, my boy. Thank the good God! I feared I would not see you. It's all right now. Everything is all right now. I can't put my arms around you, boy. I haven't any left.”

Barry's shudder shook the stretcher.

“Dad, dad, oh, dad!” he whispered, over and over again.

“It's all right,” whispered his father. “We must not forget we're soldiers. Help me to keep up, boy. I'm not very strong.”

That pitiful word did for Barry what nothing else could do. He lifted his head, stood up and drew a deep breath.

“Sure thing, dad,” he said, in a clear, steady voice. “I mustn't keep you.”

He motioned to the bearers. Then suddenly recollecting that his duty would call him away from his father, he turned to the M. O., an agony of supplication in his voice.

“Oh, doctor, must I leave him here?” he asked in a low tone.

Just then an orderly came running up to him, and, saluting, said:

“Sir, the Commanding Officer says you are to remain behind with your father—till—till—”

“Until you are sent for,” said the M. O. “I will see to that.”

“Where's the Commanding Officer?” cried Barry, starting forward.

“He has gone off somewheres, sir. He was sorry he couldn't come himself, but he was called away. He sent that message to you.”

“Doctor, will you remember to thank the Commanding Officer for me?” he said briefly, and turned to follow his father into the ambulance, which he discovered to be in charge of his friend, the sergeant of the R. A. M. C.

At the hospital he was received with every mark of solicitous care. He was made to feel that he was among friends.

“How long, doctor?” he asked, after the doctor had finished his examination.

“Not long, I'm afraid. A few hours, perhaps a day. He will not suffer though,” said the doctor. “But,” he added, taking Barry by the arm, “he is very weak, remember, and must not be excited.”

“I know, doctor,” said Barry, quietly. “I won't worry him.”

Through the morning Barry sat by his father's cot, giving him, under the directions of the nurse, such stimulants as he needed, now and then speaking a quiet, cheery word.

Often his father opened his eyes and smiled at him.

“Good to see you there, my boy. That was my only grief. I feared I might not see you again. Thank the good God that he allowed me to see you.”

“He is good, dad, isn't He? Good to me; good to us both.”

“Yes, He is good,” said his father, and fell asleep. For almost two hours he slept, a sleep of exhaustion, due to the terrific strain of the past forty-eight hours, and woke refreshed, calm and strong.

“You are a lot better, dad,” said Barry. “I believe you are going to pull

through, eh!”

“A lot better, Barry,” said his father, “but, my boy, we are soldiers, you and I. I shall not be long, but remember, we are soldiers.”

“All right, dad. I'll try to play the game.”

“That's the word, Barry. We must play the game, and by God's grace we will, you and I—our last game together.”

Through the afternoon they talked, between intervals of sleep, resolved each to help the other in playing to the end, in the manner of British soldiers, that last, great game.

They talked, of course, of home and their happy days together, going far back into the earlier years of struggle on the ranch.

“Hard days, Barry, they were, but your mother never failed me. Wonderful courage she had, and if we were all right, you and I, Barry, she was always happy. Do you remember her?”

“Yes, dad, quite well. I remember her smiling always.”

“Smiling, my God! Smiling through those days. Yes, that's the way she played the game, and that's the only way, boy.”

“Yes, dad,” said Barry, and his smile was brighter than ever, but his knuckles showed white where he gripped the chair.

The nurse came and went, wondering at their bright faces and their cheery voices. They kept their minds upon the old happy days. They recalled their canoe trips, their hunting experiences, dwelling mostly upon the humorous incidents, playing the game. Of the war they spoke little; not at all of what was to be after—the past, the golden, happy past, rich in love and in comradeship, that was their one theme.

As night fell, the father grew weary, and his periods of sleep grew longer, but ever as he woke he found his son's face smiling down upon him.

“Good boy, Barry,” he said once, with an understanding look and an answering smile. “Don't try too hard, my boy.”

“It's all right, dad. I assure you it's all right. You know it is.”

“I know, I know, my boy,” he said, and fell asleep again.

As the midnight hour drew on, Barry's head, from sheer weariness, sunk upon his breast. In his sleep he became aware of some one near him. He sat up, dazed and stupid from his exhaustion and his grief, and found a nurse at his side.

“Take this,” she said softly. “You will need it.” She set a tray at his side.

“Oh, thank you, no!” he said. “I can't eat. I can't touch anything.”

“You need it,” said the nurse. “You must take it, for his sake, you know. He will need you.”

Her voice aroused him. He glanced at her face.

“Oh, it's you!” he cried.

It was the little V. A. D.

“Don't rise,” she said, putting her hand on his shoulder, and pointing to his father. “Drink this first.” She handed him an eggnog. “Now take your tea.” There was a quiet authority about her that compelled obedience. He ate in silence while she stood beside him. He was too weary and too sick at heart to talk, but he gradually became aware that the overpowering sense of loneliness that had been with him all day was gone.

When he had finished his slight meal, he whispered to her:

“I wish I could thank you, but I can't. I did need it. You have helped me greatly.”

“You are better now,” she said softly. “It's very, very hard for you, so far from home, and from all your friends.”

“There is no one else,” said Barry simply. “We have no one but just ourselves.”

At this point his father opened his eyes bright and very wide-awake.

The V. A. D. began to gather up the tea things. Barry put out his hand and touched her arm.

“Dad, this is your night nurse. She was very kind to me last night, and again to-night. This is Miss Vincent.”

The brightness of the V. A. D.'s smile outshone his own.

“I'm not a real nurse,” she said. “I'm only a V. A. D., you know. They use me to wash the floors and dishes, and for all sorts of odd jobs. To-night they are shorthanded, and have put me on this duty.”

While she was speaking, she continued to smile, a smile of radiant

cheer and courage.

The wounded man listened gravely to her, his eyes searching her face, her eyes, her very soul, it seemed to her. In spite of her experience and her self-control, she felt her face flushing under his searching gaze.

“My dear,” he said at length, “I am glad to meet you. You are a good and brave girl, I know.” His eyes fell upon the black band upon her arm. “I see you are wearing the badge of heroism. My dear, pardon me, you have the same look—Barry, she has your dear mother's look, not so beautiful—you will forgive me, my dear—but the same look. She thinks of others and she has courage to suffer. My dear, I cannot take your hands in mine,”—he glanced with a pathetic smile at his bandaged arms, but with a swift movement of indescribable grace the girl stooped and kissed him on the forehead.

“Barry,” he said, turning to his son, “that was a fine courtesy. I count it an honour to have known you, Miss Vincent.”

He paused a moment or two, his searching eyes still upon her face.

“You will befriend my boy, after—after—”

“I will try my best, sir,” said the girl, the colour deepening in her cheeks the while. “Good night, sir,” she said. “I shall be near at hand if I am wanted.”

“Barry,” said his father, after the girl had gone, “that is a very charming and a very superior young lady, one you will be glad to know.”

“Yes, dad, I am sure she is,” said Barry, and then he told his father of the events of the previous night.

For some moments after he had finished his father lay with his eyes shut, and quite still, and Barry, thinking he slept, sat watching, his eyes intent upon the face he loved best in all the world.

But his father was not asleep.

“Yes, Barry,” he said, “she is like your dear mother, and now,” he added hurriedly, “I hope you will not think I am taking a liberty—”

“Oh, dad, I implore you!” said Barry.

“Barry, I would like to speak to you about your work.”

Barry shook his head sadly.

“I'm not much good, dad,” he said, “but I'm not going to quit,” he added quickly, noting a shadow on his father's face.

“Barry, I'm going to say something to you which I do hope will not hurt you. I know the common soldier better than you do, boy. Our Canadian soldiers do not like to be rebuked, criticised or even watched too closely. Forgive me this, my boy.”

“Oh, dad, please tell me all that is in your heart!”

“Thank you, Barry. They don't like the chaplain to be a censor over their words.”

“I loathe it,” said Barry passionately.

“Believe me, they are good chaps in their hearts. They swear and all that, but that is merely a habit or a mere expression of high emotion. You ought to hear them as they 'go over.' Barry, let all that pass and remember that these boys are giving their lives—their lives, Barry, for right, for conscience, and ultimately, though it may be unconsciously, for God. Barry, a man that is giving his life for God may say what he likes. Don't be too hard on them, but recall to mind, Barry, that when they go up the line they feel terribly lonely and terribly afraid, and that is a truly awful experience.”

He paused a moment or two, and then lowered his voice and continued: “Barry, you won't be ashamed of me. I was terribly afraid, myself.”

Barry choked back a convulsive sob.

“You, dad, you!” He laughed scornfully.

“I didn't run, Barry, thank God! But the boys—my boys—they are only lads, many of them—lonely and afraid—and they must go on. They must go on. Oh, Barry, in that hour they need some one to go with them. They need God.”

His son was listening with his heart in his eyes. He was getting a new view of the soldier and of the soldier's needs.

“Unhappily,” continued his father, “God is at best a shadowy being, to many of them a stranger, to some a terror. Barry,” he said, “they need some one to tell them the truth about God. It's not fair to God, you know.” Here again his father paused and then said very humbly: “I think I may say, Barry, I know God now, as I did not before. And you helped me, boy, to know him.”

“Oh, dad,” cried Barry, passionately. “Not I! I don't know Him at all!”

“Let me tell you how you helped me, Barry. Before I went up the last time, I wanted—”

He paused abruptly, his face working and his lip quivering.

“Forgive me, my boy. I'm a little weak.”

A few moments of silence and then he continued quietly:

“I wanted you, Barry.”

The boy's hands were writhing under his knees, but his face and eyes were quite steady.

“I was terribly lonely. I thought of that strange, dear bond that held us together, and then like a flash out of the sky came those great words: 'Like as a father pitieth his children,' and oh, boy, boy! It came to me then that as I feel toward my boy God feels toward me. Barry, listen—” His voice fell to a whisper. “I am God's son, as you are mine. There was no more fear, and I was not nearly so lonely. Tell the boys—tell the boys the truth about God.”

He lay a long time silent, with his eyes closed, and as Barry watched he saw two tears fall down the white cheeks. It was to him a terrible sight. Never, not even at his mother's grave, had he seen his father's tears. It was more than he could endure. He put his face down beside his father's on the pillow.

“Dad, I understand,” he whispered. “I know now what God is like. He is like you, dad. He gave himself for us, as you, dad, have given yourself all these years for me.”

He was sobbing, but very quietly.

“Forgive me, dad; I'm not crying. I'm just thinking about God and you. Oh, dad, you are both wonderful! Wonderful!”

“Barry, my boy, tell them. Don't worry yourself about them. Just tell them about God. He is responsible for them, not you.”

“Oh, I will, dad; I promise you I will. I've been all wrong, but I'll tell them. I'll tell them.”

“Thank God, my boy,” said his father, with a deep sigh. “Now I'm tired. Say 'Our Father.'”

Together they whispered those greatest of words in human speech, those words that have bound heaven to earth in yearning and in hope for these two thousand years.

“Don't move, Barry,” whispered his father. “I like you there.”

With their faces thus together they fell asleep.

Barry was awakened by his father's voice, clear and strong.

“Are you there, Barry?” it said.

“Here, dad, right here!”

“Good boy. Good boy. You won't leave me, Barry. I mean you don't need to go?”

“No, dad, I'll never leave you.”

“Good boy,” again murmured his father softly. “Always a good boy, always, always—”

He was breathing heavily, long deep breaths.

“Lift me up, Barry,” he said.

Barry sat on the bed, put his arm around his father's shoulders, and lifted him up.

“That's better—hold me closer, Barry—You won't hurt me—Oh, it's good—to feel—your arms—strong arms—Barry.”

“You made them strong, dad,” said Barry, in a clear, steady voice.

The father nestled his head upon his son's shoulder.

“Barry,” he said in the low tone of one giving a confidence, “don't ever forget—to thank God—for these eighteen years—together—You saved me—from despair—eighteen years ago—when she went away—you know—and you have been—all the world to me—my son—”

“And you to me, dad,” said his son in the same steady tone.

“I've tried all my life—to make you know—how I love you—but somehow I couldn't—”

“But I knew, dad,” said Barry. “All my life I have known.”

“Really?” asked his father. “I—wonder—I don't think—you quite know—Ah—my boy—my boy—You don't—know—you—can't. Barry,” he said, “I think—I'm going out—I'm going—out—no, in—your word—my boy—in—eh—Barry?”

“Yes, dad,” said his son. “Going in. The inner circle, you know.”

“The—inner—circle—” echoed his father. “Warmth—light—love—Now—I think—I'll sleep—Good night—Barry—Oh—my boy,—you—don't quite—know—Kiss me—Barry—”

Barry kissed him on the lips.

“So—Good—night—”

A deep breath he took; another—Barry waited for the next, but there was not another.

He laid his father down and looked into his quiet face, touched even now with the noble stateliness of death. He put his arms about the unresponsive form, and his face to the cheek still warm.

“Dad, oh, dad,” he whispered. “Do you know—do you know—Oh, God, tell him how I love him. Tell him! Tell him! I never could.”

The little V. A. D. came softly and stood looking from a distance. Then coming to the bedside, she laid her hand upon the head and then the heart of the dead man. Then she drew back, and beckoning to an orderly, they placed a screen about the cot. She let her eyes rest for a moment or two upon the kneeling boy, then went softly away.

Death was to her an all too familiar thing. She had often seen it unmoved, but to-night, as she walked away, the brown eyes could not hold their tears.

CHAPTER XII

A MAN OF GOD

Barry was standing beside his father's grave, in a little plot in the Boulogne cemetery set apart for British officers. They had, one by one, gone away and left him until, alone, he stood looking down on the simple wooden cross on which were recorded the name, age, and unit of the soldier with the date of his death, and underneath the simple legend, eloquent of heroic sacrifice, “Died of wounds received in action.”

Throughout the simple, beautiful burial service he had not been acutely conscious of grief. Even now he wondered that he could shed no tears. Rather did an exultant emotion fill his soul as he looked around upon the little British plot, with its rows of crosses, and he was chiefly conscious of a solemn, tender pride that he was permitted to share that glorious offering which his Empire was making for the saving of the world. But, in this moment, as he stood there alone close to his father's grave, and surrounded by those examples of high courage and devotion, he became aware of a mighty change wrought in him during these last three days. He had experienced a veritable emancipation of soul. He was as if he had been born anew.

The old sense of failure in his work, the feeling of unfitness for it, and the old dread of it, had been lifted out of his soul, and not only was he a new man, but he felt himself to be charged with a new mission, because he had a new message for his men. No longer did he conceive himself as a moral policeman or religious censor, whose main duty it was to stand in judgment over the faults and sins of the men of his battalion. No more would the burden of his message be a stern denunciation of these faults and sins. Standing there to-day, he could only wonder at his former blindness and stupidity and pride.

“Who am I,” he said in bitter self-humiliation, “that I should judge my comrades? How little I knew myself.”

“A man of God,” his superintendent had said in his last letter to him. Yes, truly a man of God! A MAN not God! A MAN not to sit in God's place in judgment upon his fellow sinners, but to show them God, their Father.

Barry thought of the frequent rebukes he had administered to the officers and men for what he considered to be their sins. He groaned aloud.

“God will forgive me, I know,” he said. “But will they?”

He tried to recall what the burden of his message to his battalion had been during these past months, but to him there came no clear and distinct memory of aught but warnings and denunciations, with reference to what he judged to be faulty in their conduct. To-day it seemed to him both sad and terrible.

How had he so failed and so misconceived the Master's plain teaching? He moved among sinners all His days, not with denunciations in His

heart or voice, but only with pity and love.

“Be not anxious,” He had said. “Consider the birds of the air. Not one of them falleth to the ground without your Father. How much more precious are you than the birds.”

What a message for men going up to face the terrors and perils of the front line. “Be not anxious!”

“I was afraid,” his father had said to him. That to him was inconceivable. That that gallant spirit should know terror seemed to him impossible. Yet even he had said, “I was afraid.” And for the loneliness, what a message he now had. In their loneliness men cried out for the presence of a friend, and the Master had said:

“When ye pray, pray to your Father. Your Father knoweth. When ye pray, say, 'Our Father'!” And he had missed all this. What a mess he had made of his work! How sadly misread his Master's teaching and misinterpreted his Master's spirit!

Barry looked down upon the grave at his feet.

“But you knew, dad, you knew!” he whispered.

For the first time since he had become a chaplain, he thought of his work with gratitude and eagerness. He longed to see his men again. He had something to tell them. It was this: that God to them was like their fathers, their mothers, their brothers, their friends; only infinitely more loving, and without their faults.

With his head high and his feet light upon the earth, he returned to the R. A. M. C. Hospital, where he found Harry Hobbs, with his handbag and a letter from his O. C.

“Take a few days off,” said the O. C. “We all sympathise with you. We miss you and shall be glad to see you, but take a few days now for yourself.”

Barry was greatly touched, but he had only one desire now, and that was to return to his unit. His batman brought him also an order from the Assistant Director of Chaplain Service bidding him report at the earliest moment.

At Headquarters he learned that the A. D. C. S. had been in Boulogne, but had gone to Etaples, some thirty or forty miles distant, to visit the large hospitals there. He determined that to-morrow he would go to Etaples and report, after which he would proceed to his battalion.

That evening, he visited the men in the hospital, coming upon many Canadians whose joy in seeing a chaplain from their own country touched Barry to the heart. He took their messages which he promised to transmit to their folks at home, and left with them something of the serene and exultant peace that filled his own soul.

From Ewen Innes and others of the Wapiti draft, he learned something of his father's work and place in their battalion. Soldiers are not eloquent in speech, but mostly in silence. Their words halted when they came to speak of their sergeant major's soldierly qualities,—for his father had become the sergeant major of the battalion—his patience, his skill, his courage.

“He knew his job, sir,” said one of them. “He was always onto it.”

“It was his care of his men that we thought most of,” said Ewen, who continued to relate incidents that had come under his own observation of this characteristic, tears the while flowing down his cheeks.

“He never thought of himself, sir. It was our comfort first. He was far more than our sergeant major. He watched us like a father; that's what he did.”

As Barry listened to the soldiers telling of his father in broken words, and with flowing tears, he almost wondered at them for their tears and wondered at himself that he had none. Tears seemed to be so much out of place in telling such a tale as that.

The train for Etaples leaving at an unearthly hour in the morning, Barry went to take farewell of the V. A. D. the night before.

“That is an awfully early hour,” she said, “and, oh, such a wretched train.” There was in her voice an almost maternal solicitude for his comfort.

“That's nothing,” said Barry. “When I see you here at your unending work, it makes me feel more and more like a slacker.”

“Wait for me here a moment,” she said, and hurried away to return shortly in such a glow of excitement as even her wonted calm and self-restraint could not quite hide.

“I'm going to drive you to Etaples to-morrow in my car. I know the matron and some of the nurses in the American hospital there.”

“You don't mean it,” said Barry, “but are you sure it's not a terrible bore for you? I am much afraid that I have been a nuisance to you, and you have been so very, very good to me.”

“A bore!” she cried, and the brown eyes were wide open in surprise. “A bore, and you a Canadian! Why, you are one of my brothers' friends, and besides you seem to me a friend of our family. My uncle Howard, you know, told me all about you. Besides,” she added in a voice of great gentleness, “you remember, I promised.”

Barry caught her hand.

“I wish I could tell you all I feel about it, but somehow I can't get the words.”

She allowed her hand to remain in his for a moment or two; then withdrawing it, said hurriedly, with a slight colour showing in her cheeks:

“I think I understand.” Then changing her tone abruptly, and dropping into the business-like manner of a V. A. D., she said, “So, we'll go to-morrow. It will be a splendid run, if the day is fine. We had better start by nine o'clock to give us a long day.” Then, as if forgetting she was a V. A. D., she added with a little catch in her voice, “Oh, I shall love it!”

The day proved to be fine,—one of those golden days of spring that have given to the land its name of “sunny France.” It was a day for life and youth and hope. A day on which war seemed more than ever a cruel outrage upon humanity. But across the sunniest days, across the shining face of France, and across their spirits, too, the war cast its black shadow. They both, however, seemed to have resolved that for that day at least they would turn their eyes from that shadow and let them rest only where the sun was shining.

The V. A. D. with her mind intent upon her wheel could only contribute, as her share in the conversation, descriptive and somewhat desultory comments upon points of interest along the way. Barry, because it harmonised with his mood, talked about his father and all their years together but ever without obtrusion of his grief. The experiences of the past three days, which they had shared, seemed to have established between them a sense of mutual confidence and comradeship such as in ordinary circumstances would have demanded years of companionship to effect. This sense of sympathy and of perfect understanding on the part of the girl at his side, together with the fascinating charm of her beauty, and her sweetness, was to Barry's stricken heart like a healing balm to an aching wound.

They were in sight of Etaples before Barry imagined they could have made more than half the journey.

“Etaples, so soon! It cannot be!”

“But it is,” said the girl, throwing a bright smile at him, “and that's the hospital, on the hill yonder, where the flag is flying.”

“Why,” exclaimed Barry, “that's the American flag! What's the American flag doing there?”

“It's flying over an American hospital,” said the V. A. D. “I think it's such a beautiful flag. In the breeze, it seems to me the most beautiful of all the flags. The stripes seem to flow out from the stars. Of course,” she added hurriedly, “the Union Jack with all its historic meaning and its mingled crosses, is splendidly glorious and is more decorative, but I always think, when I see those floating stripes, that the Americans have the most beautiful flag.”

“I admit,” said Barry, “it's a beautiful flag, but—well, I'm a Britisher, I suppose, and see it with British eyes. But why is that flag flying here in France? How do the authorities allow that? It's a neutral flag—awfully neutral, too.”

“I understand they have permission from the French authorities to fly that flag over every American institution in France. And you know,” continued the girl with rising enthusiasm, “if they are neutral, they have immensely helped us, too, haven't they?—in munitions and that sort of thing.”

“That's true enough,” agreed Barry, “and it's all the more wonderful when you think of the millions of Germans that they have in their country. I heard a very fine thing, not long ago, from a friend of mine. A Pittsburgh oil man about to close a deal, with a traveller, with millions in it, suddenly discovered that his oil was to go to the Germans. At once the deal was off, and, though the price was considerably raised, there was, in his own words, 'Nothing 'doing!' 'No stuff of mine,' he said, 'shall go to help an enemy of the Anglo-Saxon race.' That's the way I believe the real Americans feel.”

“This is a wonderful hospital,” said the V. A. D. “Whenever I see it, I somehow feel my heart grow warm to the American people for the splendid way in which they have helped poor France, for, you know, in the first months of the war, the French hospitals were perfectly ghastly.”

“I know, I know!” cried Barry. “And the Canadians, too, have chipped in a bit. We have a Canadian hospital in Paris, for the French, and others are being organised.”

They turned in at the gate and found themselves in a beautiful quadrangle, set out with grass plots and flowers and cement walks. The building itself, an ancient royal palace, had been enlarged by means of sun-parlours and porches which gave it an air of wonderful cheeriness and brightness.

“I will run in and see if any of my friends are about,” said the V. A. D. “Wait here for me. Unless you care to come in,” she added.

“No, I will wait here. I don't just feel like meeting strangers but, if there are Canadians in the hospital, I should like to see them. And perhaps you can discover where my chief can be found, if you don't mind.”

Hardly had she passed within the door, when another car came swiftly to the gate and drew up a little in front of Barry's. A girl leaped from the wheel and with a spring in her step, which spoke of a bounding vitality, ran up the steps.

What thought caught her it is difficult to say, but on the topmost step she spun around and looked straight into Barry's eyes.

“Paula!” he shouted, and was out of the car and at the foot of the steps, with hand outstretched, when, with a single touch of her foot to the steps, she was at him, with both hands reaching for his.

“Barry, oh, Barry! It can't be you!” she panted. Her face went red, then white, then red again. “Oh, it's better than a drink to see you. Whence, how, why, whither? Oh, never mind answering,” she went on. “It's enough to see you.”

A step behind her diverted her attention from Barry. Barry ran up the steps, and taking the V. A. D. by the hand, led her down.

“I want you to meet a friend of mine,” he said and introduced Paula.

Paula's eyes, keen as a knife-point, were upon the V. A. D.'s face.

“I'm glad to know you,” she said frankly, offering her hand. “Principally,” she added, with a little laugh, “because you know Barry.”

The V. A. D. bowed with the slight reserve characteristic of her, and took Paula's hand.

“I, too, am pleased,” she said, “to meet a friend of Captain Dunbar.” Then she added with increased cordiality, “and I'm glad to meet an American in France. I know your matron, and some of the nurses.”

“Good!” cried Paula. “Now, then, you'll both of you take lunch with me.”

The V. A. D. demurred.

“Of course you will,” cried Paula. “Oh, Barry, I'm just ready to die from seeing you again. Come along!” she cried, impulsively, catching the V. A. D. by the arm. “Come along and park your buzzwagon here beside mine.”

She ran to her car, sprang in and whirled it into place before the V. A. D. had hers well started.

Barry waited where they had left him. The sudden appearing of Paula had stirred within him depths of feeling that almost overpowered him. His mind was far away in Athabasca, once more he was seeing the dark pool, the swiftly flowing water, the campfire, and his father bending over it. His heart was quivering as if a hand had been rudely thrust into a raw wound in it.

The V. A. D. held Paula a few moments beside her car, speaking quickly and earnestly. When they rejoined Barry, Paula's eyes were soft with unshed tears, and her voice was very gentle.

“I know, Barry,” she said. “Miss Vincent just told me. Oh, what terrible changes this war brings to us all. We see so many sad things here every day. It's terribly sad for you, Barry.”

“Yes, it is sad, Paula, and it is going to be lonely. You have brought back to me that bright day on the Athabasca. But,” he added earnestly, “after all, in this war everything personal is so small. Besides, he was so splendid, you know, and the boys told me he played the game up there right to the end. So I'm not going to shame him; at least, I'm trying not to.”

But bright as was Barry's smile, Paula caught the quivering of his lips,

and turned quickly away from him.

After a moment or two of silence, she cried, with her old impulsiveness, “Now you will both lunch with me. I'm the quartermaster of this outfit, and have a small parlour of my own. We shall have a lovely, cosy time, just Miss Vincent, you and myself together.”

“But,” replied the V. A. D., “I have just arranged with the matron to lunch with her.”

“Oh, rubbish! I'll cut that out, all right. What's the use of being quartermaster if I can't arrange a lunch party to suit myself?”

Still the V. A. D. demurred. With her, breaking an engagement for lunch was a serious affair—was indeed taking a liberty which no English girl would think of doing.

“Oh, that's nonsense!” cried Paula. “I'll make it perfectly all right. Look here,” she cried, wheeling upon the V. A. D., “you Britishers are so terribly correct. I'll show you a little shirtsleeve diplomacy. Besides, if you don't come in on this you can have the matron, and I'll take Barry,” she said with a threatening smile. “Watch me!” she added, as she ran away.

“What a splendid girl!” said the V. A. D. “And that captivating American way she has. Perfectly ripping, I call it. I do hope we shall be friends.”

In a short time Paula came rushing back into the room, announcing triumphantly that arrangements had been made according to her programme, with the matron in hearty accord.

“And she sends her love,” she said to the V. A. D. “She would not have you on any account miss this party. She is desperately grieved that she cannot accept my invitation to join us. Of course, I knew the old dear couldn't. And we are to meet her afterwards.”

The little lunch party was, on the whole, a success. To the conversation Paula contributed the larger part, Barry doing his best to second her. But in spite of his heroic efforts, his mind would escape him, far away to the sunny Athabasca plains, and the gleaming river and the smooth slipping canoe, and then with swift transition to the little British plot in the cemetery at Boulogne.

At such times, Paula, reading his face, would momentarily falter in her gay talk, only to begin again with renewed vivacity. On one topic, however, she had no difficulty in holding Barry's attention. It was when she told of the organising and despatching of the American Red Cross units to France, and more especially of her own unit, organised and financed by her father.

“I am awfully sorry he is not here to-day. He would have loved to have seen you again, Barry.”

“And I to have seen him,” said Barry. “He is a big man, and it is fine of him to do this thing. It's just like the big, generous-hearted Americans—they are so unstinted in their sympathies, and they back them up for all they are worth.”

“And how efficient they are,” added the V. A. D. in warm admiration. “This hospital, you know,” turning to Barry, “is perfectly wonderful. Its equipment! Its appliances! I have often heard our O. C. speak in the most rapturous envy of the Etaples American Red Cross unit.”

“And why should not it be?” cried Paula. “It's a question of money after all. We are not at war. We put in a few little hospitals here in France. We have more money thrown at us than we can use. And you talk about efficiency,” she added, turning to the V. A. D. “Good Lord! My pater has just come back from London, where he was rubbering around with lords and dukes and things in a disgustingly un-American way I told him, and now he raves from morning until night over the efficiency of the British. He's been allowed to see some of their munition works, you know. I simply had to declaim the American Declaration of Independence to him three times a day to revive his drooping Democratic sentiments, and I had to sew Old Glory on to his pajamas so that he might dream proper American dreams. No, to tell you the truth,” here Paula's voice took a deeper note, “every last American of us here in France is hot with humiliation and rage at his country's attitude,—monkeying with those baby-killing, woman-raping devils.”

As she ended, her voice shook with passion, her cheeks were pale, and in her eyes shone two bright tears. Impulsively the V. A. D. rose from her place, ran around to Paula, and putting her arm around her neck, said:

“Oh, I do thank you, and I love you for your words,” while Barry stood at attention, as if in the presence of his superior officer. “I salute you,” he said with grave earnestness. “You worthily represent your brave and

generous people.”

“Oh, darn it all!” cried Paula, brushing away her tears. “I'm a fool, but you don't know how we Americans feel—real Americans, I mean, not the yellow hyphenated breed.”

After lunch, Barry went to look up his chief, the assistant director of chaplain service, while Paula took charge of the V. A. D., saying:

“Run away, Barry, and see your Brass Hat. I'll show Miss Vincent how a quartermaster's department of a real hospital should be run.”

His hour with the A. D. C. S. was a most stimulating experience for Barry. He found himself at once in touch with not an official thinking in terms of military regulations and etiquette, but a soldier and a man. For the A. D. C. S. was both. Through all the terrible days at Ypres, where the Canadians, in that welter of gas and fire and blood, had won their imperishable fame as fighting men, he had been with them, sharing their dangers and ministering to their wants with his brother officers of the fighting line. Physically an unimpressive figure, small and slight, yet he seemed charged with concentrated energy waiting release.

As Barry listened to his words coming forth in snappy, jerking phrases, he was fascinated by the bulldog jaw and piercing eyes of the little man. In brief, comprehensive, vigorous sentences, he set forth his ideals for the chaplain service in the Canadian army.

“Three things,” he said, “I tell my men, should mark the Canadian chaplain service. The first, Unity—unity among themselves, unity with the other departments of the army. Two words describe our chaplains—Christian and Canadians. I am an Anglican myself, but on this side of the channel there are no Anglican, no Presbyterian, no Methodist chaplains, only Christian and Canadian chaplains. I have had to fight for this with high officials both in the army and in the church. I have won out, and while I'm here this will be maintained. The second thing is Spirituality. The Chaplain must be a Christian man, living in touch with the Divine—alive toward God. Third, Humanity. He must be 'touched with the feeling of our infirmity,' sharing the experiences of the men, getting to know their feelings, their fears, their loneliness, their misery, their anxieties, and God knows they have their anxieties for themselves and for their folks at home.”

As Barry listened, he heard again his father's voice. “They need you. They are afraid. They are lonely. They need God.”

“And remember,” said the A. D. C. S., as he rose to close the interview, “that I am at your back. If you have any difficulty, let me know. If you are wrong, I promise to tell you. If you are right, I'll back you up. Now, let us go and look over the hospital. There are some of our fellows there. If you feel like saying anything in the convalescent ward, all right, but don't let it worry you.”

As they went through the wards, Barry could not but notice how the faces of the patients brightened as his chief approached, and how their eyes followed him after he had passed.

They moved slowly through those long corridors, sanctified by the sufferings and griefs and hidden tears of homesick and homelonging men, to many of whom it seemed that the best of life was past.

When they had gone the length of the convalescent ward, the A. D. C. S. turned and, after getting permission of the medical superintendent, briefly introduced Barry to the wounded men, as “a man from the wild and woolly Canadian west, on his way up the line, and therefore competent to tell us about the war, and especially when it will end.”

Beside them stood a piano, and on it lay a violin in its open case. Barry took up the violin, fingered its strings in an absent-minded way, and said:

“I don't know anything about the war, men, but I do know when it will end, and that is when we lick those Huns good and plenty, as our American friends would say,” bowing to the doctor at his side. “I'm an awfully poor speaker, boys,” he continued in a confidential tone, “but I can make this thing talk a bit.”

Without further preface he began to play. He had not held a violin in his hands since he had played with his father at home. Unconsciously his fingers wandered into the familiar notes of Handel's Largo. He found the violin to possess an exceptionally rich and pure quality of tone.

As he began to play, a door opened behind them, admitting Paula, the V. A. D. and two or three young doctors, who took their places in the corner about the piano.

“Do you know this?” whispered Paula to the V. A. D., as she caught the strains of the Largo.

“Yes. I used to play it with my brother.”

“Go to it, then,” said Paula.

But the V. A. D. hesitated.

“Go on! Look at the boys, and look at his face.”

The V. A. D. glanced about the room at the lines of pale and patient faces, which, in spite of the marks of pain, were so pathetically and resolutely bright. Then she glanced at Barry's face. He had forgotten all about his surroundings, and his face was illumined with the light from those hidden lamps that burn deep in the soul of genius, a light enriched and warmed by the glow of a heart in sympathy with its kind.

In obedience to Paula's command and a little push upon her shoulder, the V. A. D. sat down at the piano and touched the notes softly, feeling for the key, then fell in with the violin.

At the first note, Barry turned sharply about and as she found her key and began to follow, he stepped back to her side. Immediately, from his instrument, there seemed to flow a richer, fuller stream of melody. From the solemn and stately harmonies of the Largo, he passed to those old familiar airs, that never die and never lose their power over the human heart—“Annie Laurie” and “Ben Bolt,” and thence to a rollicking French chanson, which rather bowled over his accompanist, but only for the first time though, for she had the rare gift of improvisation, and sympathetic accompaniment.

Then with a full arm bowing, he swept them into the fiercely majestic strains of the “Marseillaise,” bringing the blue-coated orderlies about the door, and such patients as could stand, and the group about the piano to rigid attention. From the “Marseillaise” it was easy to pass into the noble simplicity of his own national song, “Oh, Canada!” where again his accompanist was quite able to follow, and thence to the Empire's National Anthem, which had for a hundred years or more lifted to their feet British soldiers and sailors the world over.

As he drew his bow over the last chord, Paula stepped to his side, and whispered in his ear:

“Where's America in this thing?”

Without an instant's break in the music, he dropped into a whimsical and really humorous rendering of “Yankee Doodle.” Quickly the V. A. D. moved from the stool, caught Paula and thrust her into the vacant place. Then together the violin and piano rattled into a fantastic and brilliant variation of that famous and trifling air. Again, with a sudden change of mood, Barry swung into that old song of the homesick plantation negro, “The Suwanee River”—a simple enough air, but under the manipulations of a master lending itself to an interpretation of the deep and tender emotions which in that room and in that company of French, British, Canadian, American folk were throbbing in a common longing for the old home and the “old folks at home.” Before he had played the air once through, the grey-haired American doctor was openly wiping his eyes, and his colleagues looking away from each other, ashamed of the tears that did them only honour.

Paula's flushed face and flashing eyes were eloquent of her deep emotion, while at her side the V. A. D. stood quiet, controlled, but with a glow of tender feeling shining in her face and in her soft brown eyes.

Not long did Barry linger amid those deeps of emotion, but straightening his figure to its full height, and throwing up his head, he, in full octaves, played the opening bars of what has come to be known as America's national anthem, “The Star Spangled Banner.”

Instantly the A. D. C. S., the orderlies about the door, the wounded French, British and Canadian soldiers that could stand, sprang to attention and so remained while the violin, with its piano accompaniment, throbbed forth the sonorous chords. With the last bar, Barry dropped his bow to his side, but held the violin still at his chin. Not one of that company moved, but stood with their eyes fastened upon his face. After a moment's pause, he quietly lifted his bow again, and on the silence, still throbbing to the strains of that triumphant martial air, there stole out pure, sweet, as from some ethereal source, the long drawn, trembling notes of that old sacred melody, which, sounding over men and women in their hours of terror and anguish and despair, has lifted them to peace and comfort and hope—“Nearer, My God, to Thee.”

The tension which had held the company was relaxed, the wounded men sank to their seats, the A. D. C. S. removed his hat, which, according to military regulations, he had worn to this moment. On all sides, heads dropped in an attitude of reverence, and so continued until Barry had drawn the last deep, vibrating note to a close.

When he had laid his violin in its case, the old American doctor came forward, with his hand extended.

“Let me, as an American and a Christian, thank you, sir,” he said.

One by one the group of Americans came to shake hands with him, the last being Paula, who held his hand a moment and said softly:

“Thank you, Barry. I believe all that stuff now. I have learned it here.”

The last of all to come was the V. A. D. Shyly, with a smile radiant through her tears, she offered her hand, saying: “Thank you! He would have liked that, I know.”

“Captain Dunbar, where's your own violin?” The abrupt tone of the A. D. C. S. startled them all.

“At home, sir. I didn't think a chaplain would need one.”

“Whose violin in this?” asked the A. D. C. S. in his brusque manner.

“I rather think this is mine,” said one of the doctors.

“Will you sell it? I'll buy it from you, at any price you say. I want it for him.”

“You can't buy it, colonel,” said the doctor. “It's his now. I never knew it had all that heart stuff in it.”

He took up the violin, and handed it to Barry. But Barry drew back in astonishment. Then the old doctor came forward.

“No, Travis,” he said, “we'll do better than that. What did your fiddle cost?”

“A hundred and fifty dollars, I think.”

“Travis, this company of Americans, representing their country here in France, as a token of their sympathy with the allies and their sacred cause, and of gratitude to you, sir,” bowing to Barry, “will buy this instrument and present it to this young man, on condition that he repeat in similar circumstances the service he has rendered this afternoon. Am I right?” he asked, looking about him.

“You bet you are! Right you are!” said the doctors.

“Oh, doctor, you are a dear old thing!” exclaimed Paula.

Barry stood holding the instrument in his hand, unable to find his voice. The A. D. C. S. came to his aid.

“In the name of my chaplain, and in the name of thousands of Canadian soldiers to whom I promise you he will bring the blessing that he has brought us this afternoon, I thank you for this very beautiful and very characteristic American act.”

“Well,” said the old doctor, “I don't know how you folks feel, but I feel as if I had been to church.”

“Now, sir,” said the A. D. C. S. to Barry, in his military tone, “I am organising a company of musicians who will go through our camps and help the boys as you have helped us to-day. I would like you to be one of them. What do you say?”

“Oh, sir,” exclaimed Barry hastily, laying the violin upon the piano and standing back from it, “don't make that an order, sir. I want to stay with my men.”

His face was quivering with deep emotion. The A. D. C. S. looked into the quivering face.

“All right, Dunbar,” he said, with a little laugh, and putting his hand on Barry's shoulder. “I guess you are all right.”

“Some boy! What?” said the American doctor. “Here I think you had better take your fiddle along,” handing Barry the violin. “It doesn't belong to any one in this bunch.”

The burst of laughter that followed, all out of proportion to the humour of the remark, revealed the tensity of the strain through which they had passed.

Through the little town of Etaples they drove together in almost complete silence, until they had emerged into the country, lying spread out about them in all the tender beauty of the soft spring evening. As the car moved through the sweet silence of the open fields, the V. A. D. said softly:

“Oh, Captain Dunbar, I—”

“My name is Barry,” he said gently.

A quick flush came into the beautiful face and a soft light to the brown eyes, as she answered:

“And mine is Phyllis.” Then she hurried to add, “I was going to say that you helped me this afternoon as nothing has since my dear brothers went.”

“Thank you, Phyllis. What you have been to me through all these days, I wish I could tell, but I can't find words.”

Then they rode together in silence that was more eloquent than any words of theirs could be. At length Barry burst forth enthusiastically:

“Those Americans! What a beautiful and gracious act of kindness that was to me.”

“Oh,” replied Phyllis, with answering enthusiasm, “aren't they fine! That was perfectly ripping of them.”

CHAPTER XIII

INTENSIVE TRAINING

Barry's return to the battalion was like a coming home. In the mess there was no demonstration of sympathy with him in his loss, but the officers took occasion to drop in casually with an interesting bit of news, seeking to express, more or less awkwardly, by their presence what they found it impossible to express in actual words.

It was to Barry an experience as new as it was delightful. Hitherto, as far as any real fellowship was concerned he had lived a life of comparative isolation among his fellow officers, and while they were careful to preserve the conventions and courtesies imposed by their mutual relations, he had ever been made to feel that in that circle he was an outsider.

Among the officers who came to call upon him, none surprised him more than did Major Bayne. While that officer had always been careful to maintain an attitude toward him, at once correct and civil, there had never been any approach to friendliness. As a matter of fact, Major Bayne was too entirely occupied with his own interests to have either the leisure or the inclination for anything but a casual concern for the chaplain and his affairs. That was not to be wondered at. Life in the army, notwithstanding all its loyalties and its fine unselfishnesses, is, in some of its phases, a brutally self-centred form of existence. Its routine consists in the continual performance of “duties” under an authority ruthless in its exactions and relentless in its penalties. Only after months of experience of its iron rigidity does the civilian, accustomed as he is to self-determination, with a somewhat easygoing regard for the conventions of his community, arrive at the state of mind in which unconsciously and as a matter of second nature he estimates the quality of the most trivial act by its relation to the standard set by the Military High Command. Like a spectre does that solemn, impalpable, often perfectly unreasonable omniscient and omnipotent entity lurk in the shadow ready to reach out a clutching hand, and for some infraction of regulations, wilful or inadvertent, hale the luckless and shivering defaulter to judgment. It therefore behooves a man to take heed to himself and to his ways, for, with the best intention, he may discover that he has been guilty of an infraction, not of a regulation found in K. R. & O., with which he has painfully made himself familiar and which he has diligently exercised himself to observe, but of one of those seventeen hundred and sixty-nine “instructions” and “informations” which from time to time have appeared in those sacred writings known as Army, Divisional, Brigade, or Battalion Orders.

In consequence, an officer with a conscience toward his duty, or an ambition for promotion, gives himself so completely to the business of “watching his step” that only by a definite exercise of his altruistic faculties can he indulge himself in the commendable civilian luxury of caring for his neighbour.

And so it came about that Major Bayne, possessing in a large measure the quality of “canniness” characteristic of his race—a quality which for the benefit of the uninitiated Saxon it may be necessary to define as being a judicious blending of shrewdness and caution,—and being as well, again after the manner of his race, ambitious for his own advancement, and, furthermore, being a man of conscience, had been so entirely engrossed in the absorbing business of “watching his step” that he had paid slight heed to the affairs of any other officer, and least of all to those of the chaplain, whose functions in the battalion he had regarded, it must be confessed, as more or less formal, if not merely decorative.

But, in spite of all this, in the major the biggest thing was his heart, which, however, true to his race type again, he kept stored in the deepest recesses of his system. To “touch” the major's “heart” was an

operation of more than ordinary difficulty. It was that very thing, however, which the letter to the battalion Commanding Officer from the A. D. C. S. had achieved. The effect of this letter upon the members of the mess, and most especially upon the junior major in regard to their relation to their chaplain, was revolutionary. Hence the major's visit to Barry upon the evening of his return.

It was with an unusually cordial handshake that he greeted the chaplain.

“We are glad to have you back with us, Captain Dunbar,” he said. “We missed you, and we have discovered that we need you. Things have been moving while you were away. This battalion is undergoing a transformation. The O. C. is tightening down the screws of discipline. He sees, and we all are beginning to see, that we are up against a different proposition from what we had imagined, and right here, Captain Dunbar, I want to say for myself, and I believe for the rest of the boys, that we have not given you a square deal.”

His attitude and his words astounded Barry.

“Don't say that, major,” he said, in a voice husky with emotion. “Don't say that. I have been all wrong. I am not going to talk about it, but I am awfully glad to get a second chance.”

“If you need a second chance, Pilot,” said the major, for the first time using the friendly western sobriquet, “believe me, you'll get it.”

The major sat down, pulled out his pipe, and began to impart some interesting bits of news.

“Things are moving rather swiftly with us these days. There are many changes taking place. Duff has gone permanently to the transport, and is in the way for a captaincy. Hopeton has gone for a machine gun course. Sally is to be company commander in his place. Booth takes charge of the bombers. Your friend, Sergeant Knight, is slated for a commission. He is doing awfully well with the signallers, and, by the way, there is something I want to show you to-morrow, something quite unique and remarkable, our new instructor in bayonet fighting. Do you know we were rather stuck on our bayonet fighting, but he has made the boys feel that they didn't know anything about bayonet fighting, or, for that matter, about anything else. I think you will enjoy him. The boys are all up on their toes. There is nothing like the scream of a live shell 'coming in' to speed up the training.”

When the major had departed, he left Barry in a maze of wonder and gratitude. That the battalion were glad to have him back, that all the old feeling of latent hostility of which he had been conscious was gone, and that they felt that they really needed him stirred in his heart a profound sense of humility and gratitude.

Late as it was he felt he must go out for a stroll about the camp just to see the men and give them greeting.

Wherever he went he was greeted with a new respect and a new cordiality. It was as if he had passed through some mystic initiation ceremony and had been admitted into a magic circle of comradeship with the common soldier, than which no privilege is more dearly coveted by the officers, from the colonel himself to the youngest sub, and which is indeed, in the last analysis, the sine qua non of effective leadership.

As Barry was passing the sergeants' mess-room the door opened and there came out Sergeant Major McFetteridge himself, with two others of the mess.

“Good evening, sergeant major,” said Barry quietly passing on his way.

“Good evening, sir,” said the sergeant major with his usual stiff salute. “Oh, it's you, sir,” he cried as the light fell upon Barry's face. “We're glad to see you back, sir.”

“Thank you, sergeant major,” replied Barry, offering his hand, “and I'm glad to be back with you all again.”

“Thank you, sir. I assure you we're glad to have you. Won't you come in, sir? The boys will all want to see you,” and so saying the sergeant major threw wide open the door.

Nowhere is class privilege more appreciated and more jealously guarded than in the sergeants' mess. It is the most enclusive of all military circles. Realising this, Barry was glad to accept the invitation. The hut was filled with sergeants in easy deshabille, smoking, lounging, playing various games.

“The chaplain, boys,” announced the sergeant major, and instantly every man was on his feet, and at attention.

“It's all right, boys,” said the sergeant major. “The chaplain has just dropped in for a minute for a friendly call, and we want you to feel, sir,”

he added, for the sergeant major loved a little ceremonial, “that we respectfully sympathise with you in your loss, and that we consider ourselves honoured by your presence here tonight.”

Barry was so deeply touched by the unexpected warmth of their welcome, and by the reference to his recent sorrow, that he could not trust himself to speak. Without a word he passed around the group, shaking hands with each man in turn. By the time he had finished the round, he had his voice in control, and said:

“Sergeant major, this is very kind of you. I thank you for this welcome, and I am grateful for your sympathy.” He hesitated a moment or two; then, as if he heard his father's voice, “Tell them! Tell them! They don't know Him,” he added: “And, sergeant major, if you will allow me, I have something I want to say to all the men when I get a chance. I cannot say it all to-night to the sergeants, but this much I would like to say: That since I saw you, I believe I have got a new idea of my work in the battalion. I got it from a sergeant major whose men told me that he was a fine soldier and a brave man, and more than that, that he was 'like a father to them.' That, sergeant major, was my own father. From him I learned that my job was not to jump on men for their faults, but to help men to know God, who is our Father in Heaven, and, men, I think if I can do this, I shall count myself happy, for He is worth knowing, and we all need Him.”

His words gripped them hard. Then he added, “Before I say 'good night,' may I have the privilege of leading you to Him in words that you have all learned at your mother's knee?” Then simply he spoke the words of that immortal prayer, the men joining in low and reverent voices.

After the prayer, he quietly said, “Good night!” and was passing out of the hut. He had not got to the door, however, when the sergeant major's voice arrested him.

“Sir, on behalf of the sergeants, I thank you for coming in and I thank you for your words. You have done us all good.”

The following morning, a sergeant from a neighbouring battalion, visiting the transport lines, and observing Barry passing along with Major Bayne on the battalion parade ground, took occasion to remark:

“That is your padre, ain't it? He checks you fellows up rather short, don't he?”

“Yes, that is our padre, or Pilot, as we like to call him,” was Sergeant Mackay's answer, “but I want to tell you that he can just check us up until our heads touch the crupper, and it's nobody's damned business but our own.”

“Well, you needn't get so blasted hot over it. I ain't said nothing against your padre that I haven't heard from your own fellows.”

“That's all right, sergeant. That was before we got to the war. I'm not huntin' for any trouble with anybody, but if any one wants to start up anything with any one, sergeant, in this battalion, he knows how to do it.”

And this came to be recognised as an article in the creed of the sergeant's mess.

The bayonet-fighting squad were engaged in some preliminary drill of the more ordinary kind when Major Bayne and the chaplain arrived on the ground.

“We'll just watch the little beggar a while from here and go up later,” said the major.

As Barry watched the drill sergeant on his job, it seemed to him that he had never seen a soldier work before. In figure, in pose, in action there was a perfection about him that awakened at once admiration and envy. Below the average height, yet not insignificant, erect, without exaggeration, precise in movement without angularity, swift in action without haste, he was indeed a joy to behold.

“Now, did you ever see anything like that?” enquired the major, after their eyes had followed the evolutions of the drill sergeant for a time.

“Never,” said Barry, “nor do I hope to again. He is a—I was going to say dream, but he's no dream. He's much too wide awake for that. He's a poem; that's what he is.”

Back and forth, about and around, stepped the little drill sergeant, a finished example of precise, graceful movement. He was explaining in clean cut, and evidently memorised speech the details of the movements he wished executed, but through his more formal and memorised vocabulary his native cockney would occasionally erupt, adding vastly to the pungency and picturesqueness of his speech.

“He knows we are here all right,” said the major, “but he would not let

on if it were King George himself. I'll bet you a month's pay, though, that we can't get one foot beyond what he considers the saluting point before he comes to attention, and as for his salute, there is nothing like it in the whole Canadian army. Talk about a poem, his salute has Shakespeare faded. Now he's going to move them off. Watch and listen!”

“Ye-a-ou-w!” came the long-drawn cry, fiercely threatening, representing in English speech the word “squad.” Then followed an expletive, “Yun!” which for explosive quality made a rifle crack seem a drawl, and which appeared to release in the men a hidden spring drawn to its utmost tension. The slack and sagging line leaped into a rigid unit, of breathless, motionless humanity.

“Aw-e-ou-aw!” a prolonged vocalisation, expressive of an infinite and gentle pity, and interpreted to the initiated ear to mean “As you were!” released the rigid line to its former sagging state.

“N-a-w then,” said the voice in a semi-undertone, slow and tense, “this ain't no arter dinner bloomin' siester. A little snap—ple—ease!” The last word in a sharply rising inflection, tightening up the spring again for the explosive “Ye-a-ou-w—yun!” (Squad attention.) “Aw-e-ou-r—yun!!! Aw-e-ou-r—yun!!!”

Without warning came the commands, repeating “As you were!” “Attention!” He walked up and down before the rigid line, looking them over and remarking casually,

“Might be a little worse,” adding as an afterthought, “per-haps!” After which, with a sharp right turn, and a quick march, he himself leading with a step of clean-cut, easy grace, he moved them to the bayonet-fighting ground.

“By Jove!” breathed Barry. “Did you ever imagine anything like that?”

“The result of ten years in the regular army,” said the major.

“It's almost worth it,” answered Barry.

Arriving at the bayonet-fighting ground, the little sergeant major put the squad through their manual as if they had been recruits, to a running comment of biting pleasantries. After bringing them to attention, he walked slowly down the line, then back again, and remarked after due deliberation:

“I have seen worse—not often—” Then, in a tone of resignation, he gave the order:

“Stan-a-yeh!!!”

The men “stood at ease,” and then “stood easy.”

“Now, then,” said the major, “we'll steal in on him, if we can.” They moved forward toward the little sergeant major, who remained studying the opposite horizon in calm abstraction until their toes had reached a certain line, when, like the crack of a whip, there came once more the long-drawn cry with its explosive termination:

“Ye-a-ou-w!—Yun!!!” with the result that the line was again thrown into instantaneous, breathless and motionless rigidity.

Toward the advancing officers the sergeant major threw himself into a salute with one smooth, unbroken movement of indescribable grace and finish.

“Good morning, sergeant major,” said Major Bayne. “Captain Dunbar, this is Sergeant Major Hackett.”

Again came the salute, with a barely perceptible diminution of snap, as befitted a less formal occasion.

“Sergeant major,” said Barry, “I would give a great deal to be able to do that.”

“Wot's that, sir?” enquired the sergeant major.

“That salute of yours.”

“Quite easy wen you knaow 'ow!” permitting himself a slight smile.

“You are doing some bayonet-fighting, I see, sergeant major,” said Major Bayne.

“Yes, sir, goin' to do a bit, sir,” replied the sergeant major.

“Very well, carry on!”

And the sergeant major “carried on,” putting into his work and into his every movement and utterance an unbelievable amount of concentrated and even vicious energy.

On the bayonet-fighting ground, the first line of the enemy was represented by sacks stuffed with straw, hung upon a frame, the second by stuffed sacks deposited on the parapet of a trench. In bayonet-fighting the three points demanding special emphasis are the “guarding” of the enemy's attack, a swift bayonet thrust and an equally swift recovery,

each operation, whether in case of a living enemy or in the stuffed effigy, being attended with considerable difficulty. Barry was much interested in the psychological element introduced into the exercises by the drill master.

“You must halways keep in mind that the henemy is before you. It's important that you should visualise your foe. The henemy is hever before you. Anything be-ind a British soldier won't trouble anybody, and you are to remember that hit's either you or 'im.”

In moments of rapid action the sergeant major evidently had difficulty with his aspirates.

“The suspended sacks before you represent the henemy. You are to treat 'em so.”

Having got his line within striking distance of the swinging sacks, the exercise was directed by two commands, “On guard!” and “Point!” the first of which was supposed to knock off the enemy's thrust, and the second to drive the bayonet home into his vitals, after which, without command, there must be a swift recovery.

“Naw then, Hn-gah!—Pint!!!”

For some moments, in response to these orders, the squad practised “guarding” and “pointing,” not, however, to the complete satisfaction of the sergeant.

“Naw, then, number five, stick it hinto 'im. Ye ain't 'andin' a lidy an unbreller!”

Another attempt by number five being still suggestive of the amenities proper to a social function, the sergeant major stepped up to the overgentle soldier.

“Naw, then,” he said, “hobserve! There's my henemy. See 'is hugly mug. Hn-gah! Pint!!!”

At the words of command, the sergeant major threw himself into his guard and attacked with such appalling ferocity as must have paralysed an ordinary foe, sending his bayonet clean through to his guard, and recovering it with a clean, swift movement.

Having secured a fairly satisfactory thrust, the sergeant major devoted his attention to the recovery of the bayonet.

“Fetch it hout!” he cried fiercely. “There's another man comin'. Fetch it hout! Ye may fetch 'is spinial column with it. No matter, 'e won't need it.”

The final act in this gruesome drama was the attack upon the second line represented by the sacks lying upon the parapet of the trench beyond. The completed action thus included the guard, thrust, recovery, the leap forward past the swinging line of sacks, and a second thrust at the figure prone upon the parapet, with a second recovery of the weapon, this second recovery being effected by stamping the foot upon the transfixed effigy, and jerking back the bayonet with a violent upward movement.

This last recovery appeared to cause number five again some difficulty.

“Now then, number five, put a little aight (hate) into it. Stamp your bleedin' 'obnyles (hobnails) on his fice, and fetch it hout! This wye!” As he took the rifle from number five, the sergeant major's face seemed to be transformed into a living embodiment of envenomed hate, his attack, thrust, recovery, gathering in intensity until with unimaginable fury he leaped upon the prostrate figure, drove his bayonet through to the hilt, stamped his hobnails upon the transfixed enemy, jerked his weapon out, and stood quivering, ready for any foe that dared to approach. The savage ferocity of his face, the fierce energy in his every movement, culminating in that last vicious leap and stamp, altogether constituted such a dramatic and realistic representation of actual fighting that the whole line burst into a very unsoldierly but very hearty applause, which, however, the sergeant major immediately and sternly checked.

“What do you think of that?” enquired the major. “Isn't he a scream?”

“He is perfectly magnificent,” said Barry, “and, after all, he is right in his psychology. There is no possibility of training men to fight, without putting the 'aight into it!'”

CHAPTER XIV

A TOUCH OF WAR

The period of intensive training was drawing to a close. The finishing touches in the various departments that had come to be considered necessary in modern warfare had been given. With the “putting on the lacquer” the fighting spirit of the men had been sharpened to its keenest edge. They were all waiting impatiently for the order to “go up.” The motives underlying that ardour of spirit varied with the temperament, disposition and education of the soldier. There were those who were eager to “go up” to prove themselves in that deadly struggle where their fellow Canadians had already won their right to stand as comrades in arms with the most famous fighting battalions of the British army. Others, again, there were in whose heart burned a deep passion to get into grips with those hellish fiends whose cruelties, practised upon defenceless women and children in that very district where they were camped, and upon wounded Canadians, had stirred Canada from Vancouver to Halifax with a desire for revenge.

But, with the great majority there was little of the desire either for military glory or for revenge. Their country had laid upon them a duty for the discharge of which they had been preparing themselves for many months, and that duty they were ready to perform. More than that, they were eager to get at it and get done with it, no matter at what cost. With all this, too, there was an underlying curiosity as to what the thing would be like “up there.” Far down below all their feelings there lay an unanswered interrogation which no man dared to put to his comrade, and which indeed few men put to themselves. That interrogation was: “How shall I stand up under the test?”

The camp was overrun with rumours from returning battalions of the appalling horrors of the front line. Ever since that fateful 22nd of April, 1915, that day of tragedy and of glory for the Canadian army, and for the Canadian people, the Ypres salient, the point of honour on the western front from Dixmude to Verdun, had been given into the keeping of the Canadian army. During those long and terrible months, in the face of a continued bombardment and of successive counter-attacks, with the line growing thinner, week by week, hacked up by woefully inadequate artillery, the Canadian army had held on with the grim tenacity of death itself. There was nothing that they could do but hold on. To push the salient deeper into the enemy lines would only emphasise the difficulty and danger of their position. The role assigned them was that of simply holding steady with what ultimate objective in view no one seemed to know.

Week by week, and month after month, the Canadian battalions had moved up into the salient, had done their “tours,” building up their obliterated parapets, digging out their choked-up water-courses, revetting their crumbling trenches, and rebuilding their flimsy dugouts, and then returning to their reserve lines, always leaving behind them in hastily dug graves over the parados of their trenches, or in the little improvised cemeteries by Hooge, or Maple Copse or Hill 60, a few more of their comrades, and ever sending down the line their maimed and broken to be refitted for war or discharged again to civilian life. It was altogether a ghastly business, a kind of warfare calling for an endurance of the finest temper and a courage of the highest quality.

From this grim and endless test of endurance, the Canadians had discovered a form of relief known as a “trench raid,” a special development of trench warfare which later came to be adopted by their comrades of the French and British armies. It was a form of sport, grim enough, deadly enough, greatly enjoyed by the Canadian soldiers; and the battalion which had successfully pulled off a trench raid always returned to its lines in a state of high exaltation. They had been able to give Fritz a little of what they had been receiving during these weary months.

While the battalion waited with ever-growing impatience for the order that would send them “up the line,” a group of officers was gathered in the senior major's hut for the purpose of studying in detail some photographs, secured by our aircraft, of the enemy trenches immediately opposite their own sector of the front line. They had finished their study, and were engaged in the diverting and pleasant exercise of ragging each other. The particular subject of that discussion was their various sprinting abilities, and the comparative usefulness of various kinds of funk-holes as a protection against “J.J.s” (Jack Johnsons), “whizzbangs,” or the uncertain and wobbling “minniewafers.”

Seldom had Barry found occasion to call upon Major Bustead, with whom he had been unable to establish anything more than purely formal relations. A message, however, from the orderly room to Lieutenant Cameron, which he undertook to deliver, brought him to the senior

major's hut.

“Come in, padre,” said the major, who of late had become more genial, “and tell us the best kind of a funk-hole for a 'minniewafer.'”

“The deepest and the closest for me, major, I should say,” said Barry, “from what I have heard of those uncertain and wobbling beasts.”

“I understand that chaplains do not accompany their battalions to the front line, but stay back at the casualty clearing stations,” suggested the major. “Wise old birds, they are, too.” The major had an unpleasant laugh.

“I suppose they go where they are ordered, sir,” replied Barry, “but if you will excuse me, I have here a chit for Lieutenant Cameron, sir, which has just come in,” and Barry handed Cameron his message.

“Will you allow me, sir?” said Cameron.

“Certainly, go on, read it,” said the major.

Cameron read the message, and on his face there appeared a grave and anxious look.

“It's from the casualty clearing station, sir. One of our chaps from Edmonton is there dangerously wounded, and wants to see me. I'd like to go, sir, if I might.”

“Oh, certainly. I'll make it all right with the O. C. Get a horse from the transport. Which casualty clearing station is it?”

Cameron looked at his message.

“Menin Mill, sir.”

“Menin Mill! By gad, I thought it was Brandthoek, but Menin Mill, good Lord, that's a different proposition. That's way beyond Ypres, you know. Right up on the line. You can't take a horse there. Do you think you ought to go up at all?”

“I think I should like to go, sir,” replied Cameron. “I know the chap well. Went to school and college with him.”

“Then,” said the major, “you had better hurry up and attach yourself to one of the transports going in. You will barely be in time.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Cameron, and left the room.

Barry went out with him. “Who is it, Cameron?” he said. “Do I know him?”

“I don't know, sir, whether you do or not. It's young McPherson of Edmonton, an awfully decent chap, and my very best friend.”

“May I go up with you, Duncan? I know Colonel Tait and Captain Gregg, who are at the Mill, I understand.”

“I would be awfully glad if you would, but I hardly liked to ask you. It hasn't the reputation of being a very healthy place, I hear.”

“All right, Cameron. I'm going up,” said Barry.

Upon enquiry they found that they were too late for the transports, and again the question arose as to whether, in view of the major's order, they should make the attempt by themselves.

“It was not really an order, I think, sir,” said Cameron. “It was more in the way of a suggestion. I think I'll go. The note said, 'dangerously wounded,' and he sent for me.”

“All right,” said Barry, “we'll go on, and we'll almost certainly pick up some one who will be able to direct us to the Mill.”

Their road, which took them to Vlammertinghe, led through level fields, lying waste and desolate with rank, overgrowing weeds. As they approached that historic village, they saw on every hand the cruel marks of war. On either side of the road were roofless and shattered cottages, grown around with nettles and briars. Among these ruins, as they found on a later day, were the old garden flowers, pansies and daisies, bravely trying to hold their own. Among the rank weeds was to be seen the half-hidden debris of broken farm gear. Here and there stood the ruins of what had been a thrifty homestead, with its stone-flagged courtyard, around which clustered its stables. Now nettles and briars grew around the broken walls and shattered, staring windows. At rare intervals, a great house appeared, with pretentious gateway, and grass-grown drive winding up between stately and mutilated trees. Over the whole countryside hung a melancholy and weird desolation, cottages, homesteads, fields, the very trees crying aloud to high heaven for pity and vengeance.

At Vlammertinghe, itself, the church tower still stood whole, but the church itself was wrecked, as were most of the village shops and dwellings. In the village was to be seen no living thing except some soldiers, who in the broken cellars were making their bivouacs. The

village stood deserted of its inhabitants, ever since the terrific onslaught of the Huns, on the 22nd of April, 1915, which had driven them forth from their homes, a panic-stricken, terror-hunted crowd of old men, women and little babes, while over them broke, with a continuous and appalling roar, a pitiless rain of shells.

At the cross-roads stood a mounted officer, directing the traffic, which here tended to congestion. As they entered the village, the sentry halted them to enquire as to their bona fides. Having satisfied him, they enquired their way to the Menin Mill.

“Menin!” The rising inflection of the sentry's voice expressed a mild surprise. “The old Mill! Are you going there?”

“Yes,” said Barry, answering his inflection. “Why not?”

“Well, sir, you know, it's rather a bad road. Warm bit of country up there, but—” He shrugged his shoulders in quite a French manner as if to say it was no business of his. “If you are going to Menin, you keep this road straight through past Wipers past the Cloth Hall, out by the Menin Gate. A hot place, that, sir. Then straight on, taking the right incline for about a mile and a half. You will see a big cemetery on your left. The Mill stands near a big school on your right. But why not drop into the dressing station, here, sir, right here in this old mill, which stands at the cross-roads? You may catch an ambulance going straight up to the Mill.”

“Thank you very much,” said Barry. “We'll do that very thing.”

“Good luck, sir,” said the sentry, saluting.

They found an ambulance about to start, and asked for a lift.

“All right, sir,” said the driver, “but you'd better step in and ask the officer.”

They passed into a large and high-vaulted stone building, which in peace days had been a mill. The old-fashioned, massive machinery was still standing intact. Obtaining permission from the officer, they took their places beside the driver of the ambulance, and were soon on their way.

It was already growing dark, but, although the surface of the stone pave was frequently broken with shell-holes, the ambulance, dodging round the holes, rushed without pause along at a high rate of speed.

“You don't use your lights?” asked Barry.

“No, not lately, sir,” said the driver. “That's the newest order,” he added in a tone of disgust.

The road lay between double rows of once noble trees, centuries old, with the first delicate green of spring softening their bare outlines. Now, splintered, twisted, broken, their wounds showing white in the darkening light through the delicate green, they stood silently eloquent of the terrific force of the H. E. shell.

As they went speeding along the shell-marked road they came upon a huge trunk of a mighty elm, broken clear from its stump, lying partially cross their track, which soldiers were already busy clearing away. Without an instant's pause, the driver wheeled his car off the 'pave', crashed through the broken treetops, and continued on his way.

Barry looked upon the huge trunk with amazement.

“Did a single shell break that tree off like that?” he asked.

“You bet,” was the reply, “and all these you see along here. It's the great transport road for our front line, and the boches shell it regularly. Here comes one now,” he added, casually.

There was a soft woolly “whoof” far away, a high, thin whine, as from a vicious insect overhead, with every fractional second coming nearer and yet nearer, ever deepening in tone, ever increasing in volume, until, like an express train, with an overwhelming sense of speed and power, and with an appalling roar, it crashed upon them. In the field on their left, there leaped fifty yards into the air a huge mass of earth and smoke. Then a stunning detonation.

Insensibly Barry and Cameron both crouched down in the car, but the driver held his wheel, without the apparent quiver of a muscle.

“There'll be three more, presently, I guess,” he said, putting on full speed.

His guess proved right. Again that distant woolly “whoof,” the long-drawn whine, deepening to a scream, the appalling roar and crash, and a second shell fell in the road behind them.

“Two,” said the driver coolly. “There will be a couple more.”

Again and yet again, each time the terror growing deeper in their souls, came the two other shells, but they fell far behind.

“Oh, Fritzie,” remonstrated the driver, “that's rotten bad work. You'll

have to do better than that."

Again and again, in groups of four, the shells came roaring in, but the car had passed out of that particular zone of danger, and sped safely on its way.

"Do you have this sort of thing every night?" enquired Barry.

"Oh, no," cheerfully replied the driver. "Fritzie makes a lot better practice than that, at times. Do you see this?" He put his finger upon a triangular hole a few inches above his head. "I got that last week. We don't mind so much going up, but it's rather annoying when you're bringing down your load of wounded."

As they approached Ypres, the road became more and more congested, until at length they had to thread their way between two continuous streams of traffic up and down, consisting of marching battalions, transports, artillery wagons, ambulances, with now and then a motor or a big gun.

About a mile from the city, they came to a large red brick building, with pretentious towers and surrounded by a high brick wall.

"An asylum," explained the driver. "Now used as a dressing station. We'll just run in for orders."

At what seemed to Barry reckless speed, he whirled in between the brick posts, and turned into a courtyard, on one side of which he parked his ambulance.

"Better come inside, sir," said the driver. "They sometimes throw a few in here, seeing it's a hospital."

They passed down the wide stairs, the centre of which had been converted into a gangway for the passage of wheeled stretchers, into a large basement, with concrete floors and massive pillars, lit by flaring gasjets. Along the sides of the outer room were rows of wounded soldiers, their bandaged heads and arms no whiter than their faces, a patient and pathetic group, waiting without complaint for an ambulance to carry them down the line.

In an inner and operating room, Barry found two or three medical officers, with assistants and orderlies, intent upon their work. While waiting there for their driver, they heard overhead again that ominous and terrifying whine, this time, however, not long drawn, but coming in with terrific speed, and ending with a sharp and shattering crash. Again and again and again, with hardly a second between, there came the shells. It seemed to Barry as if every crash was fair upon the roof of the building, but no man either of the medical attendants or of the waiting wounded paid the slightest heed.

At length there came a crash that seemed to break within the very room in which they were gathered. The lights flickered, some of them went out, there was a sound as if a tower had crashed down upon the roof. Dust and smoke filled the room.

"Light up that gas," said the Officer Commanding. An orderly sprang to obey. The gasjets were once more lighted and the work went on.

"Rather near, wasn't that one?" asked Barry of a wounded man at his side.

"Yes," he replied casually, "they got a piece that time," and again he sunk into apathetic silence.

In a few moments the driver had obtained his orders and was ready to set forth.

"Better wait a bit," said the sergeant at the door, "until their Evening Hate is over."

"Oh, that's all right," said the driver. "I guess Fritz is pretty well through. They are rather crowded there at the mill, and I guess we'll go on."

In his heart, Barry earnestly hoped that the sergeant would interpose with a more definite command, but, inasmuch as the bombardment had apparently ceased, and as if it were all in a day's work, the driver, buttoning up his coat, said:

"We'll go, sir, if you are ready."

A few minutes' run brought them to the gate of the ruined city. As the car felt its way through the ghostly town, Barry was only vaguely conscious in the darkness of its ghostly skeletonlike ruins. Fifteen minutes brought them to the Menin gate.

"Sounds rather hot out there," remarked the driver. "Well, Fritzie, I guess we won't join your party this time. We prefer to wait, if you don't mind, really."

He ran the car into the lee of the ramparts, by the side of the gateway,

waited there half an hour or so, until the “Evening Hate” was past; then onward again to the Menin Mill.

They lifted the blanket covering the sandbagged entrance, passed through a dark corridor and came into a cellar, lit by lanterns, swinging from the roof, and by candles everywhere upon ledges or upon improvised candlesticks.

No sooner had they come into the light, than Barry saw across the room his friend, Dr. Gregg, his coat off, and his shirtsleeves rolled to his elbows.

“Hello, Dunbar,” said the doctor, coming forward. “I guess I won't shake hands just now. Sit down. Won't you have a cup of coffee? Jim,” turning to an orderly, “give Captain Dunbar a cup of coffee.”

Barry presented Cameron to his friend, and together they sat down and waited. When the doctor was through with his patient, he came and sat down with them.

“We came up to see a young chap named McPherson. I think you sent a note down about him to-day.”

“McPherson,” said the doctor. “I don't remember, but I will see.”

He turned to a desk and turning over the pages of a record, apparently found the name, and returned to Barry.

“I am sorry to say that McPherson died this afternoon,” he said.

“Dead,” said Barry. He turned to Cameron. “I'm awfully sorry, Duncan.”

“Was there anybody with him?” he enquired of the doctor. “He was Lieutenant Cameron's very close friend, and college companion.”

“Oh, awfully sorry,” replied the doctor. “Yes, I think Captain Winter, the chaplain of the —th, was with him at the last. He's not here just now. I can tell you where to get him. To-morrow is his day here.”

“Is—is—is his body still here?” enquired Cameron, after a few moments' silence.

“Yes, it's in the next room. Do you want to see it? He was pretty badly smashed up, I'm afraid.”

“I think I should like to see him,” said Cameron. “I know his people, you see, and I would like to tell them that I saw him.”

“Oh, all right,” said the doctor. He called an orderly.

“Come this way, sir,” said the orderly.

Together they followed the orderly into the next room, apparently a storehouse for grain. There lying upon the floor they saw three silent shapes, wrapped in grey blankets.

“This is Mcpherson, sir,” said the orderly, looking at the card attached to the blanket.

He stooped, drew down the blanket from the face and stepped back. In civil life, both Barry and Cameron had seen the faces of the dead, but only in the coffin, after having been prepared for burial by those whose office it is to soften by their art death's grim austerities.

Cameron gave one swift glance at the shapeless, bloody mass, out of which stared up at him wide-open glassy eyes.

“Oh, my God, my God!” he gasped, gripping Barry by the arm, and staggering back as if he had received a blow. He turned to the door as if to make his escape, but Barry, himself white and shaken, held him firmly.

“Steady, old boy,” he said. “Steady, Duncan!”

“Oh, let me go! Let me get out of here!”

“Duncan, there are a lot of wounded chaps out there.”

The boy—he was only nineteen—was halted at the word, stood motionless and then muttered:

“You are right, sir. I was forgetting.”

“And, Duncan, remember,” said Barry, in a quiet and solemn voice, “there's more than that to McPherson. That fine young chap whom you knew and loved is not that poor and battered piece of clay. Your friend has escaped from death and all its horrors.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” whispered Cameron, still shaking. “We'll go out now, sir. I'll be all right. I assure you I'm all right.”

They passed out into the dressing-room again, where the wounded were continuing to arrive. Cameron was for departing at once, but Barry held him back, unwilling that the lad should be driven away beaten and unnerved by what he had seen.

“I say, Duncan, let's see some of these boys. We can perhaps cheer

them up a bit. They need it badly enough, God knows."

"All right," muttered Cameron, sitting down upon a bench in the shadow. They waited there till Dr. Gregg came along.

"Hello, Dunbar, you are looking seedy. Feeling rotten, eh?" said the doctor, eying him critically for a few moments.

"Oh, I'm all right," said Barry. "The truth is, I've just been in there with young Cameron. Rather a ghastly sight. Cameron's badly knocked up. Can you do anything for him?"

"Sure thing," said the doctor cheerfully. "Stay right there where you are. I'll bring you something in a moment or two. Now sit right there, do you hear? Don't move."

In a few moments he returned, bringing hot coffee for them both.

"There," he said in a cheerful matter-of-fact voice, "drink that."

Barry gulped it down, Cameron taking his more slowly, and with evident distaste. The doctor continued to converse with them in tones of cheerful and, as Barry thought, of almost careless indifference.

"Now, I must leave you," said the doctor. "I see there's a case of shell shock. We didn't know how to handle that for a while. The British R. A. M. C. for some months declined to recognise it as requiring treatment at all. You might care to look at this chap. Poor devil!"

Barry had been looking at the man ever since he had come into the room, supported by two of his comrades. He was indeed an object of pity. Of splendid physique, six feet and powerfully built, with the fine intelligent face of an educated man, he stood there white, twitching in every muscle, in a state of complete nerve-collapse.

Colonel Tait, who had been observing him keenly ever since his entering the room, now approached him, greeted him with a cheerful "Hello!" took him by the hand and felt his pulse.

"How are you, old chap? Feeling a little better than you were, aren't you?"

"Yes—doc—tor. Rather—rotten—though—Be all right—to-morrow—"

"Sure you will! Still a little rest won't do you any harm. We'll send you down for a couple of weeks, and then you will be fit enough to have another go at the boche."

So saying he turned him over to an assistant, and went on with his work. At this point Cameron, from whose eyes the look of horror had not yet faded, leaned over to Barry and whispered:

"Let's get out of this. For Heaven's sake, this thing is getting me." He glanced at Barry. "What, are you ill, too?"

"Ill," answered Barry between his clenched teeth. "Ill? No, why should I be ill? Look at these boys. I see myself ill. By Jove!" he added under his breath, "here's another shell shock. Sit down, Cameron!" His voice took on a sterner tone. "Sit down. Don't be an ass!"

Once more Colonel Tait took in hand the shell-shock man. This second was a stretcher case. The man was very violent, requiring two men to hold him on his stretcher.

"Oh, let him go! Let him go!" said Colonel Tait. "What's wrong with you?" he said to the man. "Have you any wounds?"

"No, sir," chattered the man miserably. "Shell—shock,—sir. Buried—twice—by a shell. Oh! Ah!"

The colonel had a few moments' conversation with Gregg, who came over to where Barry was sitting and said:

"I say, Dunbar, watch this case. You will see some fun."

"Fun," echoed Barry, shaken and indignant. "Not much fun for that poor chap."

"Stand up," said the colonel sharply.

The man stood up without much apparent difficulty.

"Ah!" said the colonel. "Shell shock. Bad case, too." His voice was kind and sympathetic. He gripped the man by the arm and ran his hand down his spine until he came to the small of his back.

"Pain there, eh?" he said, giving the man a poke.

"Yes, yes! Ouw! Doctor. Awful."

"Thought so," said the doctor. "Bad case! Poor chap! A curious feeling in the legs, eh?"

The man nodded vigorously, still twitching violently and making animal moanings.

Still pursuing his investigations and continuing to sympathise with his patient, the doctor enquired as to other symptoms, to all of which the

patient promptly confessed. When the examination was completed, the doctor gave his man a hearty slap on the back and said:

“You're all right, my boy. Go treat yourself to a cup of cocoa, and a good, thick slice of bread and raspberry jam—raspberry, remember—and to-morrow you can report to your battalion medical officer.”

“What!” exclaimed the man. “Doctor, I can't go up again. I'm not fit to go up.”

“Oh, yes, you can, my boy. You'll be in good fighting trim to-morrow. You'll see! You'll see! Come back here some day, perhaps, with a V. C.”

Thereupon the man began to swear violently.

“Here, none of that,” said the doctor sharply, “or up you go to-night.”

A grin ran around the dressing station, in which none joined more heartily than the first shell-shock man, waiting to be conveyed down the line.

“They don't get by the old man often, nowadays,” was Dr. Gregg's comment.

“You don't often get cases like this, though, do you?” enquired Barry.

“Not often. We have passed through this dressing station some thousands of cases, and we may have had eight or ten malingerers. But this is not all sham. There is a strong mixture of hysteria and suggestion with the sham. A chap with a highly organised temperament gets buried by a shell. That is a terrific nerve shock. He sees two or three chaps blown to bits. Another nerve shock. Now he has heard about shell shock as a result of a similar experience. Immediately the suggestion begins to work and the man discovers in himself the well known symptoms of genuine shell shock, and, begad! I don't wonder. What we have just given him is part of the treatment for hysteria—a little nerve tonic. A good sleep may put him all right by to-morrow morning. The chances are, however, that the O. C. will send him down for a few days' rest and change. If so, the chap will be as happy as a clam. The boys will rag him half to death down there, so that he will be keen to get back again, and the chances are may get his V. C. Oh, we all get scared stiff,” laughed Gregg. “We are none of us proud about here. That hero stuff that you read about in the home papers, we don't know much about. We just 'carry on'.”

“By Jove, Gregg! That's all right, but to just 'carry on' in this business, it seems to me, calls for some pretty fine hero stuff.”

“Well, we don't call it so,” said Gregg. “Now I'll see about your ambulance. I believe there's one about ready to go. I think I can find a place for you and your friend, and it will save you a long walk.”

They came away from the old mill with mingled feelings. Barry had to a certain extent recovered from his shock, and had himself somewhat firmly in hand. Cameron was still silent and obviously shaken.

It was grey dawn when they arrived at the camp, physically weary, nervously exhausted, and sick at heart. Barry wakened Hobbs, who greeted them with the news that the battalion was under orders to go up that night. By his own state Barry was able to gauge that of his friend Cameron. The experiences of the last ten hours had been like nothing in his previous life. The desolation wrought by war upon the face of the country, upon the bodies of men, upon their souls, had sickened and unnerved him; and this he remembered was an experience of only a brief ten hours. He was conscious of a profound self-distrust and humiliation, as he thought of those other men, those medical officers, with their orderlies, the ambulance drivers, those wounded soldiers. How could they endure this horror, day in and day out, for weeks and for months? In a few hours he would have to meet his fellow officers and the men. They could not fail to read in his face all this that he carried in his heart.

By his grey, haggard face he knew that the same horror and fear had gone deep into his friend's soul. There came to him the sudden thought that Cameron, too, must meet his fellow officers, and must endure their searching chaff, and that he would reveal himself to his undoing; for no man can ever live down in his battalion the whisper that he is a “quitter.” That very night Cameron would be forced to lead up his platoon into the front line, and must lead them step by step over that same Vlammertinghe road, where the transports were nightly shelled. In the presence of any danger soever, he must not falter. When the shells would begin to fall, he knew well how the eyes of his men would turn to their leader and search his very soul to see of what quality he was. Far better a man should die than falter. He had not failed to notice the startled look in Cameron's eyes when Hobbs blurted out his news. Some way must be found for the bracing up of the nerve, the steadying of the courage of his friend.

“Come in with me, Cameron,” he said, standing at the door of his hut. “I'm dead beat and so are you. We'll have coffee and some grub, and then sleep for a couple of hours until reveille.”

Cameron hesitated. The thing he most longed for at that moment was to be alone.

“Come on!” insisted Barry. “Hobbs will have a fire going, and hot coffee in ten minutes. Come on, old chap. I want you to.”

He threw his arm around Cameron's shoulder and dragged him in. The boy dropped onto Barry's cot, and, as he was, boots and coat on, was asleep before the coffee was ready. His boyish face, with its haggard look, struck pity to Barry's heart, and recalled his father's words, “These boys need their mothers.” If ever a lad needed his mother, it was young Cameron, and just in that hour.

He woke the boy up, gave him his coffee, had Hobbs remove his boots, made him undress and covered him up in his blankets. Then, taking his own coffee, he lay down on Hobbs' bed.

“Harry,” he said, “give us every minute of sleep you can. Wake us just one-half hour before reveille with coffee and everything else good you can rustle, and, Harry, waken me before Mr. Cameron.”

When he lay down to sleep he made an amazing discovery—that his own horror and fear and self-distrust had entirely passed away. He felt himself quite prepared to “carry on.” How had this thing come to pass? His physical recuperation by means of coffee and food? This doubtless in part, but only in part. In his concern for his friend he had forgotten himself, and in forgetting himself he had forgotten his fear. It was an amazing discovery.

“Thank the good God,” he said. “He never forgets a fellow, and I won't forget that.”

He woke to find Hobbs at his side, with coffee, toast and bacon, and on the floor beside his cot his tub awaiting him—the tub being a rubber receptacle exactly eighteen inches in diameter.

He hurried through his dressing, and his breakfast, all the while Cameron lying like a dead man, and with almost a dead man's face.

Barry hated to waken him, but reveille was but a bare thirty minutes off, and he had an experiment to work upon his friend.

“Bring the coffee, Harry. Not the bacon, yet,” he ordered.

“Hello, Cameron, old boy! Wake up.”

Cameron rolled over with a groan and opened his eyes, still dull and heavy with sleep.

“Here you are. Pipe this down your tunnel and look lively, too. You have got thirty minutes—twenty-five, really—to reveille, and you have your toilet to perform—shave, massage, manicure and all the rest—so go to it. Here's your tub. You can't get into it, but soap yourself over, and Hobbs will sluice you with a pail or two outside.”

“Why all this Spartan stuff? It's awfully cold. I think I'll content myself with a nose rub this morning.”

“Get out of bed, and be quick about it,” commanded Barry, “unless you'd rather take your tub where you are.”

So saying he jerked the clothes clear off the cot, threatening Cameron with the tub. Cameron sprang up, stripped, soaped himself over, groaning and shivering the while; then stood outside in the open, while Hobbs administered the order of the bath, and after a vigorous rub, came in glowing.

“By jingo! That's bully! It's a pity a fellow can't always feel just how bully it is before he takes it.”

“Na-a-w then! a little snap!” ordered Barry, in attempted imitation of the inimitable Sergeant Major Hackett. “A little speed, ple-ease! That's better. I've seen worse—not often!”

And so he rattled on through Cameron's dressing and shaving operations.

“Now then, 'Obbs, a little Delmonico 'ere. Shove this bacon against your fice, Cameron.”

“What about yours, sir?” said Cameron, as he sat down to the luxuries which somehow Hobbs had “rustled.”

“Had it, you slacker.” Then with a swift change of voice and manner he added: “Listen to me, Cameron. I'm going to have my prayers. You won't bother me any, and if you don't mind I'll do them out loud. Don't you stop eating, though. Hobbs, stop your wandering around there and sit down and listen.” Barry took his Bible.

“Cameron,” he said, “one comfort in reading the Bible to a chap with a

father like yours is that you know all about the thing already—context, historical references and theological teaching—therefore, no need of comment. Also you have a good imagination to see things. Turn on the juice while I read. Hobbs, you waken up, too."

Then he began to read the vivid words which picture as in miniature etchings the life stories of the heroes of Faith who in their day held their generation steady and pointed the way to duty and victory. As he read his face became alight, his dark eyes glowed, his voice thrilled under the noble passion of the words he read. Then he came to this stately peroration:

"And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon," and so on through the list of heroes, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (of whom the world was not worthy). Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Both reader and hearers were swept along upon the tide of dramatic passion. They were themselves a part of the great and eternal conflict there pictured; they, too, were called upon to endure the cross.

Cameron had forgotten his breakfast, and with his kindling eyes fastened upon the reader's face, was listening to the noble music of the thrilling words.

Barry closed his book and laid it down.

"Great, eh! Wonderful company! All the finest and the best of the war's heroes are in it. Now, then, prayer—" He dropped on his knees, Cameron and Hobbs following his example.

It was a prayer chiefly of thanksgiving for those who in their day and in the face of anguish and terror and death had kept the faith; of thanksgiving, too, for all who in this present day of sacrifice in the home land and of sacrifice upon the field of battle were keeping that same faith for the Empire and for this same sacred cause of humanity. The prayer closed with a simple petition that they in the battalion might be found worthy of a humble place in that great company.

As they were repeating together the prayer "Our Father," the notes of the reveille sounded shrilly over the camp.

"Go out, Hobbs, for a minute," said Barry after they had risen from their prayer. He knew well that Cameron would want a few minutes with him alone.

"Sir," said the boy, and his voice was quiet and steady, "I'm not going to try to thank you, but I believe I can 'carry on' now."

"You bet you can," said Barry, gripping his hand. "You bet you can! It's the point of view after all, old man, isn't it? For ourselves it doesn't matter, but we have got to think of the boys, and we have got to stay with the game."

Eighteen hours later the relief was completed, and the battalion was in its place in the line, all but the sentries asleep in their flimsy dugouts and behind their rotten parapets.

An hour later, Barry, who was sleeping with the M. O. in the regimental aid post, was wakened from a dead sleep by the M. O.

"There's something doing out there," he said. "Listen!"

There was a quick succession of sharp explosions.

"Bombs!" said the M. O.

The explosions were followed by the rat-tat-tat—tat-tat—tat-tat-tat of the machine guns. Instantly they were both on their feet and out in the trench.

"I guess Fritzie is trying to put something over on us, being our first night," said the M. O. "I'll get my boys out."

He ran to the adjoining dugout, where his corporal and stretcher bearers were sleeping, roused them and sent them up the trench. There was the sound of subdued voices and of quick marching feet along the communication trench a few yards away. They stood together listening for a few minutes.

"I'm going," said Barry, hurrying off in the direction of the sound. "Come on."

"Captain Dunbar," called the M. O. sharply, "my place is here, and I think this is where you will be most useful as well. They will bring the

wounded to us right here.”

In a few minutes all was still again, except for the machine guns, which still kept up their incessant tattoo.

The M. O. was correct in his forecast. In a few minutes down the communication trench came a wounded man walking, jubilant in spite of his wounds.

“Fritzie tried to put one over on us,” he exclaimed, while the doctor was dabbing with iodine and tying up his wounded arm, “but I think he's got another guess coming. You ought to have seen our officer,” he added. “The first one in the bunch to be 'at 'em.' With a bayonet, too, mind you. Grabbed one from a private as he ran past, and bombs bursting like hell all around. Beg pardon, sir,” he added, turning to Barry. “He's some kid, poor chap. He's got his, I guess.”

“Who is he?” asked the M. O.

“Lieutenant Cameron, sir.”

“Cameron!” cried Barry. “Where is he?”

“They are carrying the stretcher cases right down to the dressing station, I hear,” said the man.

“I'm going, doc,” said Barry, and was off at a run.

At the casualty clearing station there was no excitement, the doctors and orderlies “carrying on” as usual, receiving the wounded, dressing their wounds, sending them down with the smoothness and despatch characteristic of their department.

“Cameron?” said the doctor in answer to Barry's question. “Why certainly, I'll show you.” And he led him to Cameron's cot.

“Well, old chap,” said the doctor cheerily, “we're going to send you down in a minute or two. Now don't talk.”

Cameron's eyes welcomed Barry.

“Dear old boy,” said Barry, dropping on his knees beside him. “I'm awfully sorry.”

“It's all right,” whispered Cameron. “They—never—knew.—You'll write dad—and tell him—I kept—” The voice trailed off into silence. The morphia was doing its merciful work.

“Kept the faith,” said Barry.

“Yes,” whispered Cameron with a smile, faint but exultant.

“Good old boy,” whispered Barry.

“Yes, I—kept—I kept—”

The bearers came to carry out the stretcher.

“Will he recover?” whispered Barry to the doctor.

“Recover? Surest thing you know,” said the doctor in a loud cheery voice. “We can't spare this kind of stuff, you know.”

And again Barry leaned over the stretcher and said, patting Cameron on the shoulder:

“Good old boy. You make us proud of you. You kept the faith.”

CHAPTER XV

THINNING RANKS

“Three months in that hell-hole of the salient have made their mark on this battalion,” said Transport Sergeant Mackay.

“Yes, there's quite a lot of these round the first line and back about here,” replied the pioneer sergeant, who was putting the finishing touches upon some crosses, that were to be sent up the line that night.

“That's so, Fatty. Whose is that cross you are finishing?”

“That's Lieutenant Salford's, a fine young officer he was, too. Always had a smile. The deeper the mud the more Sally smiled. And this here is Lieutenant Booth's. There's a chap now that picked up wonderful. Two months ago everybody thought he was a big soft slob, and those bombers say that he was all, right. And here's the M. O.'s. Poor old doc! There was a man, now, if there ever was one. He wasn't afraid of nothing. He would go walking about with a smile when a bombardment was on, and in that last big show the other day, they say him and the chaplain—there's another peach—they 'carried on' wonderful. I wasn't around there at the time, but the boys at the dressing station told me that them

two worked back and forward getting out the wounded, I think they had about thirty injured up at that time, as if it was a kind of er summer shower that was falling, let alone H. E.'s and whizzbangs, and then after they got the last man out, the M. O. went in with some stretcher bearers, just lookin' around before he left, and a shell came and got 'em all, and they say it was about the last shell that was throwed. And that's where poor Harry Hobbs got his, too. The Pilot went out just a minute before, and when he came back that's what he saw. They say he was terrible cut up over the M. O. Funny thing, the M. O.'s face was just as quiet as if he had gone to sleep, but the rest of the boys, well you could hardly get 'em together, and the Pilot walkin' up and down there lookin' like a lost man. We buried 'em right there by Maple Copse. I want to tell you, sergeant, that that's the hardest job I ever done in this war. The Pilot, he broke right down in the middle of the service. It must have been hard for him. I've been with him now at every funeral and he stands up to his work like a man. He takes it kind of cheery almost, but when we was puttin' down the M. O. and poor Harry, the Pilot just couldn't appear to stand it. I cried like a baby, and you ought to have seen the crowd, the O. C. and the adjutant and the pioneers, and they are all pretty hardened up by this time. They have done enough plantin' anyhow. They just all went to pieces. The shells was goin' overhead among the trees, something awful, but nobody minded more than if they had been pea-shooters. First time I ever seen the Pilot break, and I have been with him ever since the first one we buried, and that was big Jim Berry. A sniper got him. You don't remember? I guess you don't see much or get much of the news back here."

"Back here!" exclaimed Sergeant Mackay. "What do you mean, 'back here'? Don't I have to go up every night with the transport, and through that barridge, too. This aint no 'safety first' job."

"I know, sergeant. I'm not sayin' you ain't at war. Believe me, I'd rather be up front than to go up round Hell Fire Corner and come back by the Menin Gate every night like you fellows. I ain't sayin' nothing about that, but you don't see things that I see, and you don't get the news same as I do. Now, about Jim Berry, you know, he was goin' to do some snipin' in place of McCuaig, who went to the machine gun company."

"McCuaig, in the machine gun company! I never heard that."

"Well, that's what I'm sayin'," said Sergeant Matthews, "you don't get some of the chances to get news down here, same as me. You see, when we're sewin' up the boys and fixin' 'em up like, and when we're fixin' up the graves and puttin' on the crosses, you get kind of thinkin' about things, and kind of lonesome, and so the boys keep telling the news to cheer themselves up, and that's how I heard about McCuaig. You see, McCuaig was snipin' the first tour, and he's a killer, you bet, and he had only cut three natches in his rifle. The boys say he had got four of the Huns, but he had only put down three natches on his rifle to be sure, and after he seen the machine gun work, stoppin' a raid, he comes to the officer, and says he, givin' him his rifle: 'Say, this is all right for sport, but it ain't good enough for killin' these devils. I'd like to get on to your gang, if I can,' and they put him right onto the machine gun. Say, he's sleepin' with that Lewis gun ever since. Just pets it like a baby. What was I tellin' you? Oh, yes, about McCuaig and Jim Berry. Well, he took McCuaig's place snipin' and a good sniper he was too. He used to hunt, you know, up in the mountains with Jim Knight every fall. Well, he started out snipin' the day after McCuaig quit, and McCuaig gave him his rifle too, and took him up to the 'hide.' Well, big Jim was always a careless cuss, you know. He gets his eye on the hole, sightin' his rifle, and McCuaig was watchin' through one of them new things—"

"Perry's scope."

"Yes, that's it, Paris cope. Them French is mighty smart fellows, you bet. When along walks a Hun. 'There he comes!' sings out McCuaig. 'Didn't see him until he got past,' says Jim, pretty mad, because Jim hated to show that he'd got 'buck fever,' or something, and waited for the next. 'Here he comes!' says McCuaig, again. 'Bang!' goes Jim. 'I've got him,' he shouts, hoppin' up to get a good look, when McCuaig grabs him and jerks him down, swearin' somethin' awful, and tellin' him he wasn't shootin' no mountain goats. 'Oh shaw!' says Jim. 'They can't get me.' 'You keep your head down, Jim,' said McCuaig. That's the very last words he said to him, just as he was leavin' him. He wasn't down the next day when bang! goes Jim's rifle, and again up he jumps to see what he'd got, when ping! goes a Boche bullet right through his head. You know McCuaig was real mad, and he stood quiet at that hole for three hours. Then he got Corporal Thom to shove up a hat on a rifle, when ping! comes the bullet and bang! goes Jim's rifle. 'Guess he won't shoot

no more, unless there's shootin' in hell,' says he, and makes another natch. Say, the boys all felt bad about Jim and so did the Pilot. Well, we had to plant him that night, as we was goin' out next day. It was out beyond the Loop. You don't know where that is, I guess."

"Of course, I do," asserted Mackay indignantly. "I've been all around that front line. What are you givin' us!"

"Oh, you have, eh! Well, I wouldn't unless I had to, you bet. It's no place for a man with a waist line like mine. Well, as I was sayin', that cemetery was right out in the open, right under observation, and exposed to machine guns, snipers, whizbangs, all the hull bloody lot of 'em. Wasn't no place for a cemetery anyway, I say. I'm not after any bomb proof job but a cemetery should be—"

"Should be a quiet and retired spot," suggested one of the transport boys.

"Yes. What's the use of getting livin' men shot up when they're buryin' dead men, I want to know. Not saying anything about the officers that's always round, and the chaplain. I say a cemetery should be somewhere out of sight, like Maple Copse; now, there's a good place, except that the roots make it hard diggin'. Up against a railway bank like that down at Zillebeck, by the Railway Dugouts, there's a lovely place."

"How would the Ramparts do, sergeant?" enquired another transport lad.

"Ramparts? You mean at Ypres? Yes," said the sergeant, with a grin, "but I'd hate to turn out the Brigade Headquarters Staff."

"Go on, sergeant."

"Well, as I was sayin', that's no place for a cemetery up there beyond the Loop, but I didn't know so much about it then, you bet. That's where we had to bury Jim. It was a awful black night, and of course, just as we got out to the trench to go 'overland' to the cemetery, them flares started up something awful. I don't know what they was lookin' for, but when they went up, I want to tell you, I felt about the size of a tree, and I wisht I was one. Well, Jim, you know, was pretty heavy, an awful heavy carry he was for the boys. I was tryin' to hurry 'em along, but that Pilot, he heads the procession, and on he goes at a funeral march pace. Now I believe in doin' things right. I've heard of some pioneers that hurries their job. I don't believe in that, but when you are going across the open on a dark night, with them flares going up, I say between flares is a good time to get a move on, but, no, that there Pilot, he just goes that pace and no more. I want to tell you the boys was nervous and the officers too. The O. C. and Major Bustead was there. I could see the major fussin' to get on. Well, we got Jim down all right, and just as the Pilot got started, darned if they didn't open up the biggest kind of a machine gun chorus you ever heard."

"What did you do, sergeant?"

"Me? Well, I started huggin' mud and saying all the good words I could think of. Even the O. C. got down on his knees, and the major, he near got into the grave, but that darned Pilot stood up there getting taller every minute, and goin' on with his prayer, and the boys sayin' 'Amen!' that loud and emphatic that I thought he'd take the hint and cut out somethin', but cut out nothin'! Seemed as if his memory was workin' over time, the way he kept a fetchin' up things that he could a easily forgot, and when he comes to the benediction, the whizbangs begin to come. Up goes his hand, the way they do. I thought to myself that that was a kind of unnecessary display. I looks up and there he was, more like a tree than ever. In fact, I says to myself—it's queer how you think things at times like that—darned if they won't think the darned fool is a tree, for nothin' but a darned tree would stand up in the flare light and look so much like a tree anyhow. I guess that's what saved him. He never moved until he was done, and then didn't he stay with us pioneers after the rest had gone until we filled up. Say, he's all right."

"You bet he's all right," said Sergeant Mackay, "and he's gettin' in his work with the boys."

"What do you mean, 'gettin' in his work'?" enquired the pioneer sergeant.

"Oh, well, you know," said Sergeant Mackay awkwardly, "he's makin' 'em think a lot different about things. I know he has 'em tied up all right in their language." And this was as near to a confession of faith as the sergeant cared to go.

"Oh, I can see a difference myself up the line," said the pioneer sergeant. "The boys used to get out of his way. He used to jump on 'em something fierce. You remember?"

“Huh-uh!”

“Well, they just love to have him drop in now and they tell him things. I saw Corporal Thom the other night showin' him his girl's picture, and the Pilot thought she was a fine girl too, and got her address down, and said he was going to write her and tell her what a fine chap the corporal was, and you ought to see Corporal Thom swell up until he 'most bust his tunic.”

“Oh, I know the corporal's dippy about the Pilot,” said Sergeant Mackay.

“Yes, and the officers, too,” said the pioneer sergeant. “There's Captain Duff. Well, you know what a holy terror he is.”

“He's all right,” said Sergeant Mackay stoutly. “He was my chief for about a month here, and he was the first one to get this transport licked into shape, you bet.”

“I'm not saying anything against Captain Duff, but he was a roughneck, you know well enough, and I guess he hadn't much use for the Pilot.”

“Oh, I know all about that,” said Sergeant Mackay. “The Pilot used to go up with us on the transport. It was awful hard on Captain Duff, handlin' the column and the mules and all the rest, to hold in when the Pilot was along. The captain, he had to come round now and then to the rear. There he would have a lovely time for a few minutes, with the Pilot safe up in front. But the Pilot calmed him down all right.”

“Yes, and there's that young Captain Fraser,” said the pioneer sergeant, with a note of enthusiasm in his monotonous voice. “There a soldier. He just loved fightin'. I remember the night he got his wound. It was on a raid of course. If there was a raid on, Captain Neil was sure to be there. He just about got his arm blown off, but they say he's goin' to be all right. I was at the regimental aid post when they fetched him in. Oh, he was a dirty mess, face all cut up, and his arm hangin', and not a word out of him until the Pilot comes along. Then he begins to chirp up and the Pilot starts jollyin' him along one minute and sayin' Psalms to him the next minute, and little prayers, and the boys around listenin', sometimes grinnin' and sometimes all choked up, but I'm awful glad Captain Neil is comin' round all right.”

By this time the pioneer sergeant had his crosses finished.

“Well,” he said, as he set the crosses against the wall, “there's three of the finest officers we ever had in this battalion. You take 'em up to-night when you go, sergeant.”

“We're not going up to-night. The boys are coming out this evening,” replied Sergeant Mackay.

“No? Is that so? I never heard that. Guess I'll have to go up with some other outfit. Comin' out this evening? Well, it's time they were. They've had one hell all the time, I hear, this tour.”

“Yes,” continued Sergeant Mackay, “and the highlanders are sending up their band to meet them and play them out. I call that a mighty fine thing to do. You know our own band had to go up with water and rations last night, and they can't get out until to-night. So the Highlanders' band —”

“Pretty good band, too, isn't it?”

“Best pipe band in the army,” said Sergeant Mackay with enthusiasm.

“Oh, a pipe band!” exclaimed the pioneer sergeant in a disappointed tone.

“Yes, a pipe band, what else?” enquired Sergeant Mackay truculently.

“Why don't they send up their real band, when they're doin' it, anyway?”

“What!” shouted Sergeant Mackay. “I'll tell you. For the same reason that they don't make you O. C. in this battalion, you damned fat lobster! There now, you've started me swearin' again, and I was quittin' it.”

Sergeant Mackay's wrath at the slur cast upon the pipe band, the only band, in his opinion, worthy of any real man's attention, was intensified by his lapse into his habit of profanity, which, out of deference to the Pilot, he for some weeks had been earnestly striving to hold in check.

“Oh well, Scotty, don't spoil your record for me. I guess a pipe band is all right for them that likes that kind of music. For me, I can't ever tell when they quit tunin' up and begin to play.”

Sergeant Mackay looked at him with darkening face, evidently uncertain as to what course he should adopt—whether to “turn himself loose” upon this benighted Englishman or to abandon him to his deserved condition of fatuous ignorance. He decided upon the latter course. In portentous silence he turned his back upon Fatty Matthews

and walked the whole length of the line to get a mule back over the rope. It took him some little time for the mule had his own mind about the manoeuvre and the sergeant was unwontedly deliberate and gentle with him. Then, the manoeuver executed, he walked slowly back to the pioneer sergeant and in restrained and carefully chosen speech addressed him.

“Look here, Fatty, I'm askin' you, don't you ever say things like that outside of these lines, for the sake of the regiment, you know. I'd really hate the other battalions to know we had got such—” He halted himself abruptly and then proceeded more quietly, “A man as you in this battalion. My God, Fatty, they'd think your brains had run down into your pants. I know they haven't, because I know you haven't any.” He took a fresh breath, and continued his address in a tone of patient remonstrance. “Why, man, don't you know that wherever the British Army has gone, its Highland regiments have cleared the way; and that when the pipes get playin' the devil himself couldn't hold them back?”

“I don't wonder,” said Fatty innocently. “They make a man feel like fightin' all right.”

Sergeant Mackay scanned his face narrowly, uncertain as to whether he should credit the pioneer sergeant with intelligence sufficient to produce a sarcasm.

“What I mean is,” exclaimed Fatty, seeking to appease the wrathful transport sergeant, “when you hear them pipes, you get so stirred up, you know, that you just feel like kullin' somebody.”

This apparently did not improve matters with Sergeant Mackay.

“Oh, darn it, you know what I mean!”

“No, Fatty,” said the sergeant solemnly. “I don't know what you mean, but I'll suggest this to you, Fatty. You go down to that Pete mule, down there at the end of the line and talk to him. I guess he'll understand you. I'm busy just now.”

“I don't see what you're so hot about,” said the pioneer sergeant in an aggravated voice, “but I'm going to see the boys come in anyway.”

When the distant sound of the pipes coming from the direction of the front line was heard in camp, men of the various transport lines and base units lined up to watch the battalion come in. For the rumour had run that they had had a bad go, that they had beaten back no less than three rather formidable raids of the enemy and had been badly cut up. More than that, by reason of the lack of reinforcements, they had had to do a double tour, so that they were returning from an experience of thirteen days, in what was indeed the veritable mouth of hell.

“I guess they are all pretty well all in,” said Sergeant Matthews, who, standing with his pioneers, had been carefully avoided by his friend Sergeant Mackay. That enthusiastic Scot had for the time being abandoned his transport, and was fraternising with the transport men of the Highlanders, with whom he was sure he would feel himself in more complete accord.

“Here they come, boys,” said a Scot, as the sound of the pipes grew louder. “There's a drummer for ye. Listen 'til that double roll, wull ye?”

“Ay, Danny, the boys will be shovin' out their chests and hitchin' their hips about something awful.”

“Ye may say that, Hec. Will ye look at young Angus on the big drum, man, but he has got the gr-rand style on him.”

“Ay, boys, they are the la-ads,” said Sergeant Mackay, yielding to the influence of his environment and casually dropping into the cadence of the Highlanders about him, which, during his ten years in the west, his tongue had well-nigh lost. “It's a very fine thing, your pipers are doing, playing our boys out in this way, and we won't be forgetting that in a hurry.”

“Why for no?” enquired Hec, in surprise. “It's the Highlanders themselves that love a bonny fighter.”

Down the road, between lines of silent men, came the pipers with waving kilts and flying tartans, swinging along in their long swaying stride, young Angus doing wonders on the big drum, with his whirling sticks, and every piper blowing his loudest, and marching his proudest. Behind them came the men of the battalion marching at attention, their colonel at their head, grave of face and steady. Behind the colonel marched Major Bayne, in place of the senior major, whom illness had prevented from accompanying the battalion on this last tour, no longer rotund and cheery as was his wont, but with face grey, serious and deep lined. After him at the head of A Company marched Captain Duff, his rugged, heavy face looking thinner and longer than its wont but even

fiercer than ever. With eyes that looked straight before then, heedless of the line of silent onlookers, the men marched on, something in their set, haggard faces forbidding applause. At the rear of the column marched the chaplain alone, and every one knew that he had left up in the Salient behind him his friend and comrade, the M. O., whose place in all other marching had been at his right hand. All knew too how during this last go, in the face of death in its most terrifying form, they had carried out their wounded comrades one by one until all were brought to safety. And all knew too, how the chaplain carried with him that day a sore and lonely heart for the loss of one who was more to him than batman, and who had become his loyal and devoted friend. The chaplain's face was gaunt and thin, with hollow cheeks, but for all that, it wore a look of serene detachment.

"Say, he looks awful tough," said a voice in Sergeant Mackay's ear.

Sergeant Mackay turned sharply around upon Fatty Matthews.

"Tough! Tough!" he exclaimed, with a choke in his voice. "You're a damned liar, that's what you are. He looks fine. He looks fine," he added again furiously. "He looks as if hell itself couldn't scare him."

In the sergeant's eyes strange lights were glistening.

"Yes, you're right, sergeant," said Fatty Matthews humbly. "You're right, and that's where he's been, too, I guess."

Bravely and gallantly, with the historic and immortal "Cock o' the North" shrilling out on the evening air, the pipers played them on to the battalion parade ground, where they halted, silent still and with that strange air of detached indifference still upon them. They had been through hell. Nothing else could surprise them. All else, indeed, seemed paltry.

Briefly, but with heart-reaching words, the colonel thanked the pipers for what he called "an act of fine and brotherly courtesy." Then turning to his men, he spoke a few words before dismissal.

"Men, you have passed through a long and hard time of testing. You have not failed. I am not going to praise you, but I want you to know that I am proud of you. Proud to be your commanding officer. I know that whatever is before us, you will show the same spirit of endurance and courage.

"We have lost this time twenty-nine men, eleven of them killed, and with these three very brave and very gallant officers, among them our medical officer, a very great loss to this battalion. These men did their duty to the last. We loved them. We shall miss them, but to-day we are proud of them. Let us give three cheers for our gallant dead."

With no joyous outburst, but with a note of fierce, strained determination, came the cheers. In spite of all he could do, Barry could not prevent a shudder as he heard the men about him cheering for those whom he had so recently seen lying, some of them sorely mutilated, in their grey blankets.

"Now, men," concluded the O. C., "we must 'carry on.' You will have a couple of hours in which to clean up and have supper, and then we shall have to-night a cinema show, to which I hope you will all come, and which I hope you will all greatly enjoy."

The colonel's little speeches, as a rule, elicited appreciative cheers, but this afternoon there was only a grave silence. After dismissal, the men went to their huts and were soon busy giving themselves a "high mark scrub" preliminary to the hot bath and "jungle hunt" in which they would indulge themselves to-morrow.

As Barry was moving off the parade ground, the junior major caught up to him, and took him by the arm and said:

"I have sent around my batman to your hut. He will look after you until I can pick out a man from the new draft. We all know how you feel about Hobbs, old man."

"Thank you, major," said Barry quietly. "I appreciate that."

"You will be around to-night," continued the major.

"No, I think not. I have a lot of things to do. All those letters to write." Barry shuddered as he spoke. For nothing in all his ministerial experience was to him a more exhausting and heartbreaking task than the writing of these letters to the relatives and friends of his dead comrades.

"I think you had better come," said the major earnestly. "I know the O. C. would like it, and the boys would like it too."

"Do you think so?" said Barry. "Then I'll be there."

"Good man," said Major Bayne, patting him on the shoulder. "That's

the stuff we like in this battalion."

Barry found his hut in order, his things out for airing, his tub ready, and supper in preparation.

"Thanks, Monroe," he said to Major Bayne's batman, as he passed into his hut.

As he entered his hut and closed the door, for the first time there swept over his soul an appalling and desolating sense of loneliness. It was his first moment of quiet, his first leisure to think of himself for almost two weeks. With the loss of his batman there had been snapped the last link with that old home life of his, now so remote but all the dearer for that. It came to him that while he remained a soldier, this was to be his continual experience. Upon his return from every tour new gaps would stare at him. Up in the lines they did not so terribly obtrude themselves, but back here in rest billets they thrust themselves upon him like hideous mutilations upon a well loved face. He could hardly force himself to remove his muddy, filthy clothes. He would gladly have laid himself down upon his cot just as he was, and given himself up to the luxury of his grief and loneliness, until sleep should come, but his life as a soldier had taught him something. These months of discipline, and especially these last months of companionship with his battalion through the terrible experiences of war, had wrought into the very fibre of his life a sense of unity with and responsibility for his comrades. His every emotion of loss, of grief, of heart-sickness carried with it the immediate suggestion and remembrance that his comrades too were passing through a like experience, and this was his salvation. Weary, sick, desolate as he felt himself in this hour, he remembered that many of his comrades were as he, weary, and sick and desolate. He wondered how the major's batman felt.

"Well, Monroe," he said with an attempt at a voice of cheer, "pretty tough go this time."

"Yes, sir, very tough," said Monroe. "I lost my chum this time," he added after a few moments' silence.

"Poor chap," said Barry. "I'm awfully sorry for you. It's hard to leave a friend up there."

"It is that, sir," replied Monroe, and then he added hurriedly but with hesitation, "and if you will pardon me, sir, we all know it's awful tough for you. The boys all feel for you, sir, believe me."

The unexpected touch of sympathy was too much for Barry's self-control. A rush of warm tears came to his eyes and choked his voice. For some minutes he busied himself with his undressing, but Monroe continued speaking.

"Yes, sir, the Wapiti bunch is getting pretty small. Corporal Thom was with me—"

"Corporal Thom!" cried Barry. "Was Corporal Thom your chum?"

"Yes, sir, for six years we was on the Bar U. M. together. We was awful close friends. He was a good chum."

"Corporal Thom!" exclaimed Barry again; "he was your chum! He was a great friend of mine too. You have indeed suffered a great loss."

"He thought a lot of you, sir," said Monroe. "He has often talked to me about you."

"But what a splendid death!" cried Barry. "Perfectly glorious!"

"I didn't hear, sir," said Monroe; "I came down three days ago, and only heard that a bomb got him."

"Oh, splendid," said Barry. "Nothing finer in the war. Let me tell you about it. There was an enemy raid coming up. The corporal had got wind of it and called his men out. They rushed into the front line bay. Just as they got there, eight or ten of them, a live bomb fell hissing among them. They all rushed to one end of the bay, but the corporal kicked the bomb to the other end, and then threw himself on top of it. He was blown to pieces, but no one else was hurt."

During the recital of this tale, Monroe stood looking at Barry and when he had finished his eyes were shining with tears.

"Ay, sir, he was a man, sir," he said at length.

"Yes, you have said it, Monroe. He was a man, just a common man, but uncommonly like God, for He did the same thing. He gave Himself for us."

Monroe turned away to his work in silence.

"Monroe," said Barry, calling him back, "look here, lad, it would not be right for us to grieve too much for Corporal Thom. We ought to be thankful for him and proud of him, should we not?"

“Yes, sir, I know, sir, but,” he added while his lip trembled, “you hate to lose your chum.”

Only under compulsion of his conscience did Barry go to the cinema show that night, which in this camp was run under the chaplain service and by a chaplain. He knew what the thing would be like. His whole soul shrunk from the silly, melodramatic films which he knew would constitute the programme as from a nauseating dose of medicine. The billboard announced a double header, a trite and, especially to Canadians, a ridiculous representation of the experiences of John Bull and his wife and pretty daughter as immigrants to the Canadian Northwest, which was to be followed by the immortal Charlie Chaplin.

The cinema hut was jammed—the whole battalion, now much reduced in numbers, officers and men being present, and with them the men of the base units and transports of other battalions. It was in some senses an unusual gathering. There was an entire absence of the wonted chaff and uproarious horseplay; instead a grave and almost bored air rested upon the men's faces. The appalling experiences of the past thirteen days seemed to dwarf all other things in comparison. They had been in the presence of the Big Thing; all else seemed petty; they had been looking into death's cold eyes; after that other sights seemed trivial. Many of them carried sore hearts for their comrades with whom they had at other times foregathered in just such circumstances as these, but nevermore again.

It was the custom in the battalion, as the officers came into such gatherings as this, to receive them with a ripple of applause, but to-night there was silence. Barry arrived late. When he appeared there fell upon the men a hush, and then as he moved toward the front seats reserved for the officers, the men began to rise until the whole battalion was standing silent and motionless, and so remained until he had found a seat. It was Major Bayne who called his attention to this unusual demonstration, which was reserved only for great occasions and for nothing less than a battalion commander.

“They are saluting you, Pilot,” said Major Bayne in a whisper, himself standing with the other officers.

Barry quickly lifted his eyes, saw the men standing, with all eyes directed toward him, slowly looked over the rows of faces, smiled a bright but slightly wavering smile, turned and saluted the Commanding Officer, and sat down all trembling and shaken by this most touching tribute of sympathy and affection.

The show began with some pictures of great allied leaders which excited a mild interest and drew some perfunctory applause. Then came the tragic comedy of John Bull's experiences as an immigrant, when just as the interest began to deepen, the machine blew up, and the pictures were off for the night.

Ordinarily such a contretemps would have been by no means fatal to the evening's enjoyment, for in the battalion there was no lack of musical and other talent, and an impromptu entertainment was easily possible. Ordinarily, too, in such an emergency there would at once have arisen a demand for the chaplain, who had come to be recognised as a great standby in times of need such as this. To-night, however, everything seemed changed. The mild suggestion of one of the men that the chaplain should take the piano was promptly discouraged by the dissenting growls of the others present. They knew well how their chaplain was feeling.

“What shall we do?” asked Major Bayne of Barry.

“Get Coleman to the piano. He is a perfect wizard,” suggested Barry, indicating a young lieutenant who had come to the battalion with the recent draft, and who had done some accompaniments for Barry's violin playing.

Lieutenant Coleman, on being called for, went to the piano, and began to play. He was indeed a wizard as Barry had said, with a genius for ragtime and popular music hall ditties, and possessed also of the further gift of improvisation that made his services invaluable on just such an occasion as this.

From one popular air to another he wandered, each executed with greater brilliance than the last, but he failed to excite anything more than a mild interest and approval. The old songs which on other occasions had been wont to let loose the song birds of the battalion seemed to have lost their power. It was not gloom, but a settled and immovable apathy which apparently nothing could break.

“This is going awfully slow,” said Major Bayne to Barry. “I wish something could be done.”

“The boys are tired out,” answered Barry, himself weary and sick of the performance and longing more than anything else for solitude and his cot.

The Commanding Officer came over and sat beside them. He was obviously worried and uneasy.

“I don't like this,” he said to the major. “Coleman is doing his best, and is doing mighty well, but there is no heart in the boys, and it isn't entirely due to physical weakness. I wish we could start something that would wake them up before they leave. They would sleep much better.”

“The Pilot here can do it,” said Major Bayne in an undertone, “but I rather hate to ask him for he is pretty much all in.”

They sat a little while longer listening to the men's half hearted drawling of “The Tulip and the Rose.”

“This won't do,” said the O. C. abruptly. “Get Dunbar over here.”

“Dunbar,” said the O. C. when Barry had come to him. “This thing is as dull as ditchwater. I want to get the boys started up a bit. They are hopelessly dull. Look at their eyes. Do you know what they are seeing?”

“Yes, sir,” said Barry, “they are seeing what they have been looking at for the last thirteen days.”

“You are right, Dunbar, and that's what I want them to forget. Now I know you don't feel very fit, and I hate to ask you, but I believe you can do something for the men with that violin of yours. What do you say?”

“I have already sent a man for it,” said Major Bayne. “I knew he'd do it, and his violin lies there under the piano.”

Without announcement or preface Barry walked straight to the stage where Coleman, having miserably failed to strike fire with “The Tulip and the Rose,” was grinding out, with great diligence and conscientious energy, “Irish Eyes.” Barry picked up his violin from the floor, mounted the stage, laid his violin on the piano, then he took his place behind the pianist and, bending over him, reached down, caught him under the legs and while still in full tide of his performance, lifted him squarely off the stool and deposited him upon a chair at one side of the stage. Then, ignoring the amazed look upon Coleman's face, he proceeded gravely to tune his violin to the piano. The act itself, the cool neatness with which it was performed, the astonished face of the outraged pianist, all together created a situation excessively funny. The effect upon the audience was first one of surprise, then of unalloyed delight. Immediately every man in the hall was wide awake, and as the humour of the situation grew upon them, they began to cheer in quite a lively manner.

When Barry put his violin to his chin they cheered again, for often had he bewitched them with the magic of his instrument.

Before he began to play, he glanced over his shoulder at the discomfited Coleman and remarked in an undertone, perfectly audible throughout the hall, “Now we'll have some music.”

Again the audience went off in a perfect storm of delighted cheers, which were renewed from time to time as Barry would turn looking with a grave face upon the still amazed Coleman, not yet quite recovered from his first astonishment.

When quiet was finally restored, Barry began to play. For his opening number he made a daring choice. It was the intricate but altogether tuneful Ballade and Polonaise by Vieuxtemps. Throughout the somewhat lengthy number he held his audience fixed under the mastery of his art. It was a triumph immediate and complete. When he had finished the last brilliant movement of the Polonaise, the men burst again into enthusiastic cheering, moved not only by the music but more by the spirit of their chaplain, which they could not fail to understand and appreciate.

He had already achieved what the O. C. had desired, but he was not yet done with them. Having finished his classical selection, which he was quite well aware Coleman could not touch, he turned to the latter and gravely motioned him to the piano stool. Coleman hesitated, not knowing quite what would be demanded of him.

“Come on, Coleman, be a sport,” shouted a young officer, the audience joining once more in encouraging cheers.

Still Coleman hesitated. One never knew just what vagary the chaplain might put on. Failing to move him by imploring gesture, Barry finally approached him, and with elaborate, courteous formality, offered him his hand, and finally conducted him to the piano stool. Again the delighted audience went into a roar of cheers.

From that moment, and for a full hour, Barry had them at his will, now listening spellbound to some simple old heart song, now beating hand

and foot to a reel, now roaring to the limit of their lung power some old and well-loved popular air.

“Ain't he a bird?” said the major to the Commanding Officer.

“He's fine,” assented the Commanding Officer with a great sigh. “I can't tell you what a burden he has lifted from me. It's worth a week's rest to the men, and, poor chaps, they need it.” Lowering his voice, he leaned over to the major and said, “We may be going up again to-morrow night.”

“To-morrow night, colonel!” exclaimed the major, aghast.

“Not a word, but I have exceedingly grave news. The front line is driven in. One of the battalions holding is completely wiped out.”

“Wiped out? Good God, and where are the enemy?”

“As far as I can hear, although I haven't the particulars, they have broken through from Hooge to Hill 60, are through Sanctuary Wood, and down to Maple Copse. Two relief battalions have gone up and are holding. The chances are we shall have to go to back them up to-morrow evening. It's hard on the boys, for they have come through a long and bitter experience, but not a word of this, major, to any one. We shall let them have their rest to-night. That's why I was so anxious about this entertainment. That's why I am particularly grateful to that Pilot of ours. He is a wonder, and by the look of him he is about all in. He is staying magnificently with the game. And now, major, I am going to do something that will please him immensely. At least I think it will.”

At a pause in the music, the O. C. arose and moved toward the stage. Barry at once stepped back to the rear. Standing before the men, the O. C. spoke briefly:

“I wish to thank in your name, men, our chaplain, and his assistant, Mr. Coleman, for the very delightful evening they have given us. I know how you feel by the way I feel myself. I need say no more, and now, seeing that we have missed our parade service for the last two Sundays, and as I should not like the chaplain to become rusty in his duty, I'm going to ask him to bring our very pleasant evening to a close with a little service such as he himself would suggest.”

Hardly were the words out of his mouth, when Barry took up his violin and said:

“Boys, did you have a good time to-night?”

“Yes, sir; you bet we had, sir.”

“Well, then, if you had, sing this,” and recited for them the first verses of the old hymn,

“Abide with me, fast falls the even tide.”

When they had sung the first verse, he said again:

“Now sing these words,” and once more he recited the stirring verse:

“I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless.”

When they had finished the verse, he said to them

“Shall we have another?”

“Go on, sir!” they said. “Sure thing!” “Finish it up!”

“Then,” said Barry, “sing these words”:

“I need Thy presence every passing hour,
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power.”

Then when he had finished the verse, he dropped the violin and, moving to the edge of the platform, said, in a voice vibrant with emotion:

“Don't sing these words, but say them as I play them for you.”

He then recited the moving words with which the old hymn closes:

“Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee,
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.”

“I want every one of you to say the words to himself as I play them.”

In long-drawn, tremulous notes he voiced the beautiful plea for aid in the hour of man's supreme need, which finds expression in the first two lines. Then, with his bow gripping the strings in a great sweeping crescendo, he poured forth in full strong chords the triumphant faith with which the hymn closes.

He laid his violin on the piano, stood quite a few moments looking upon them, then said:

“Men, listen to these great words. They might have been written for us, and for these days;” and he recited to them the words of the Hebrew

psalm, eloquent of courage in the face of a crumbling world:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her and that right early.

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved; he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Come, behold the words of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder: he burneth the chariot in the fire.

Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Then they followed him in the General Confession, and the Lord's prayer.

"Captain Dunbar," said the O. C., offering him his hand, "you have done for us to-night a greater thing than you know just now. You will understand better tomorrow. With all my heart I thank you on the men's behalf and on my own behalf, for I assure you I needed it as much as they did. I want to assure you, too, sir, that I received to-night the thing I needed."

"Thank you, sir," said Barry simply, too weary to utter another word, and staggered out, half dead with exhaustion.

Half an hour later, as he was leisurely undressing, and drinking the cup of cocoa which Monroe had prepared for him, a message summoned him to the orderly room. There he found Colonel Leighton with Major Bayne and the company commanders.

"I have a communication here for you, Captain Dunbar," said the O. C., "from your D. A. C. S.," and he passed him a little slip.

It was the announcement of his "leave."

"Well, what do you think of that?" said the O. C. "How does that suit you?"

"Well, sir," said Barry, uncertainty and hesitation in his voice, "I'd like the leave, all right, but can I conveniently be spared just now?"

"Most certainly," said the O. C., "and, what's more, I want you to go to-night. Can you get ready?"

"I suppose so, sir," said Barry, wearily.

"By Jove! listen to him," said the O. C. "He hates to leave us, doesn't he?" And they all laughed. "Now, Dunbar," he said, "no more posing. You catch the leave train to-night at Poperinghe. As a matter of fact, I think it starts somewhere about twelve."

"Thank you, sir," said Barry. "I think I can catch it."

"Then good luck!" said the O. C., rising from his chair. "Every one of us here would like to be in your place, but since it isn't himself, every man is glad that it should be you."

Still Barry hesitated.

"I really hate to leave you, sir, just now," he said. "I mean that," he added with a little nervous laugh.

"Oh, come on, Dunbar," said the O. C. in a voice whose gruffness might signify almost any emotion, but with a touch upon his shoulder that Barry knew meant comradeship. "Say good-bye to the boys here, and get out."

They had just finished the plan for the campaign of the next night, and every man in that little company knew that for him this might be his last "Good-bye" to the chaplain. It only added to the depth of their feeling that they knew that of all this Barry was unconscious. But, whether it was that unconsciously he had gathered something of the real significance of the situation, or whether it was that he himself had reached the limit of emotional control, as he passed from man to man, shaking hands in farewell, his lips refused to utter a single word, but in his eyes were unshed tears that spoke for him.

Major Bayne followed him to the door, and outside:

“Take my horse and Monroe with you, and good-bye, old man. All sorts of good luck. Remember that we all feel to-night that you are really one of us, and that we are better men because we have known you. Goodbye.”

Again Barry was conscious of that strange suggestion, almost of impending calamity.

“I hate to go, major,” he said. “I believe I'll wait.”

“Nonsense,” said the major impatiently. “Take your leave when you get your chance, and have a good time. You have earned it.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE PASSING OF McCUAIG

At Poperinghe the leave train was waiting in the station, and a little company of officers and men were having their papers examined preparatory to their securing transportation. Some of the officers were from his own brigade and were known to Barry.

“A big push on at the front, I hear,” said one of them to a friend.

“Yes, major,” said his friend. “They have been having a perfect hell of a time.”

“By the way, your men are going in to-morrow, I understand,” said the major, turning to Barry.

“I don't think so, major,” replied Barry. “We have just come out.”

“Oh, well, I had it from fairly good authority that they were going in to-morrow night.”

Barry hunted up Monroe, whom he found talking to a signaller of the battalion.

“Did you boys hear anything about the battalion going up to-morrow?”

“Yes, sir,” said the signaller promptly. “We had it over the wires. They are going in, all right, to-morrow night.”

Monroe kicked the signaller on the ankle.

“Did you hear anything about it, Monroe?” enquired Barry.

“No, sir. I don't believe these rumours at all. They are always flying about.”

“But you say you got it over the wires?” said Barry to the signaller.

“Yes, sir. That is, sir, of course, we get a lot of messages. Perhaps I'm mixed up,” said the signaller in very evident confusion.

“And you haven't heard anything, Monroe?” said Barry.

“No, sir, not a thing, and I think I would have heard if there had been any truth in it.”

Something in the childlike expression of innocence upon Monroe's face wakened Barry's suspicion.

“Look here, Monroe,” he said, “don't lie to me. Now, I'm talking to you as your chaplain. Tell me the truth. Have you heard of the battalion going in to-morrow?”

Under Barry's eye Monroe began to squirm.

“Well, sir, to tell you the truth, I did hear a rumour of that kind.”

“And you?” said Barry, turning upon the signaller, “tell me the truth.”

“Well, sir, it's just as I said. We had it over the wires. The battalion is going in.”

“Very well, get my stuff, Monroe,” said Barry, quietly. “I'm going back.”

“I beg your pardon, sir.”

“Do you hear me? Get my stuff; I'm not going out to-night.” Barry's tone admitted no further talk, and Monroe, swearing deeply at his friend the signaller and at his own stupidity, and especially at his own “lack of nerve to see his lie through,” hunted out Barry's baggage and stood ready for his officer to return.

“Hello, Dunbar,” said the major, as he saw Barry about to mount his horse. “What's up? Forgotten something? You'll surely miss your train.”

“I'm not going,” said Barry briefly, getting himself settled in his saddle.

“Not going!” exclaimed the major. “What do you mean? I thought you

were on leave."

"Changed my mind," said Barry cheerfully.

"I say, old man," said the major, "there may be nothing in what I told you about the push. Anyway, you know we cannot postpone our leave until all the fighting is over."

"Oh, that's all right," replied Barry. "There are lots of you combatant chaps in a battalion, but there is only one chaplain."

"Oh, hang it all," cried the major, "take your leave. Well," seeing that Barry paid no heed to his advice, "the best of luck, old man," he said, offering his hand. "I guess you're all right after all."

The exhilaration that had sustained Barry during the evening suddenly fled, leaving him flat in spirit and limp in body. What he wanted most of all was sleep, and morning was not so far away. He rode back to his hut, and, bidding Monroe let him sleep all day, he tumbled into bed and knew nothing until late in the afternoon. Monroe, too, had slept in, and, after rising, had been busy about the hut, so that he had no further information as to the battalion's movements. The chaplain's hut was some distance from Headquarters and from the battalion camp. Hence it came that while Barry was writing hard at his letters throughout the remainder of the afternoon, he was quite unaware of what was taking place. Monroe, however, returned about six o'clock to say that the battalion had been "standing to" all afternoon, but that the general feeling was that there would be no advance until late at night.

Glad of the opportunity to catch up with his correspondence, Barry paid little heed to the passing of time. His last letter was to the V. A. D., in which he poured out the bitterness of his disappointment that he was not even now on his way to Boulogne and to her, and expressing the hope that after this "show" was over, he would be granted leave, upon which happy event he would with all speed proceed to her. She had been speaking of a trip to England. Would it not be a very wise and proper proceeding that she should make her leave to synchronise with his? Now he must be off, and so with love to her, and with the hope that they might see London together—

Just then Monroe came with the startling news that the battalion had "moved up" hours ago.

"Which road?" enquired Barry, springing to his feet.

"Don't know, sir," replied Monroe, who had evidently his own opinion about matters. "But I met a padre," he continued, "who told me that there was a stream of wounded passing through the Brandhoek Clearing Station. He said they were very short-handed there, sir," and Monroe regarded his officer with anxious eyes.

"I hate to take you up there, Monroe," said Barry with a smile.

"Oh, that's all right, sir," said Monroe, hastily, "but I guess we'll have to hurry."

"I remember, Monroe, that your major and you would have sent me out of this, but you know well enough that there's only one place for me to-night, and the question is, where is the battalion—Ypres Barracks, Chateau Beige, Zillebeck, or where?"

"I enquired at the transports, sir," said Monroe, "and no one appeared to know. They moved out quietly and left no word behind."

"All right, we'll go up to Chateau Belge, and if they are not there, we'll make a shot at Zillebeck," said Barry. "We'll go right away. We don't need a lot of truck this trip."

It was a long and tiresome march, but Barry found himself remarkably fit, and already under the exhilaration of what was before him. At the Chateau Belge they found no word of their battalion, but they were informed that the shelling on the Kruisstraat road had been bad all afternoon, and was still going on. The Boches were paying particular attention indeed to the crossroads.

"All right," said Barry. "We'll go up and have a look at it, anyway."

A hundred yards further up the road they were held up by a sudden burst of H. E. shells, which fell in near proximity to the crossroads before them.

"Well, we'll just wait here a few minutes until we can time these things," said Barry, sitting down by the roadside.

As they were waiting there, three soldiers passed them at quick march.

"Better wait, boys," called Barry; "they are dropping quite a few shells at the crossroads."

"We are runners, sir," said one of them. "I guess we'll just take a chance, thank you, sir."

“All right, boys, if you think best,” replied Barry. “Good luck!”

“Thank you, sir,” they said, and set off at a smart pace.

While Barry sat listening to the sound of their footsteps upon the pavement, there came that terrific whine, followed by an appalling crash, as a H. E. shell landed full upon the road. Barry sprang to his feet. Three other shells followed in quick succession, then there came the sound of hurrying feet and a man appeared, bleeding horribly and gasping.

“Oh, my God! My God! They are gone! They are gone!”

“Sit down,” said Barry. “Now, where's your wound?”

“My arm, sir,” said the man.

Barry cut off the blood-soaked sleeve, ripped open his first aid dressing, and bound the wound up tightly. Then he put a tourniquet upon the arm above the wound.

“The other boys killed, you say?” he inquired.

“Yes, sir, blown to pieces. Oh, my God!” he groaned, shuddering. “My chum's whole head was blown off, and the other has his belly all torn up.”

“Now look here, old man,” said Barry, “you lie down here where you are, and keep perfectly still,” for the man was throwing himself about, more from shock than from pain. “We'll get you to the dressing station in a few minutes. Monroe, run and get the stretcher bearers, and I'll go and see how things are up yonder.”

He threw his coat over the wounded man, and set off at a run toward the crossroads. He found matters as the man had said, the two bodies lying in a dark patch of bloodsoaked dust, one with head quite blown off, and the other with abdomen horribly torn.

He hurried back to the wounded man, who had recovered somewhat from his shock and was now lying on his side quietly moaning. Barry got from him the names and units of the men who had been killed.

“I will drop a note to your mother, too, my boy,” he said, “and tell her about your wound.”

“Oh, sir,” said the boy quickly—he was only a boy after all—“don't tell her—at least, tell her I'm all right. I'll be all right, won't I?”

“Sure thing,” said Barry, “don't you fear. I won't alarm her, and I'll tell her what good stuff you are, boy.”

“All right, sir. Thank you, sir,” said the boy quietly.

“And I'll tell her, too, that you are not worrying a bit, and that you know that you are in the keeping of your Heavenly Father. How is that?”

“Yes, sir,” said the boy in a low voice. “I will be glad to have you tell her that. She taught me all that, sir. Poor mother, she'll worry though, I know,” he added with a little catch in his throat.

“Now you brace up,” said Barry firmly. “You have got off mighty well. You have got a nice little blighty there, and you are going to be all right. I'll give your mother the best report about you, so that she won't worry.”

“Oh, thank you,” said the boy, with fervent gratitude, “that will be fine. And you are right,” he added, a note of resolution coming into his voice. “I got off mighty well, and it's only my left arm, thank goodness. I'll brace up, sir, never fear,” he added between his teeth, choking back a groan.

Barry accompanied the stretcher-bearer back to the chateau and gave the man over into the care of the C. A. M. C.

“Can you put a squad on to digging a grave?” he inquired of the officer in charge. “If so, though I'm in an awful hurry, I'll stay to bury those poor chaps.”

“Sure thing, we can,” said the officer. “We'll do the very best we can to hurry it.”

In about an hour and a half Barry was on his way again. He dodged the shelling at the crossroads, and following a track across the open fields, arrived at the Zillebeck Bund without adventure.

Here to his relief he found the battalion. He made his way at once to Headquarters, and walked in upon a meeting of officers.

“Well, I'm—” exclaimed Colonel Leighton, checking himself hard, “who have we here! What in hell are you doing here, Pilot? I thought you would be safely in old Blighty by this time,” he added, shaking him warmly by the hand.

“Oh, you couldn't work that game on me, colonel,” said Barry cheerily, going round the group of men, who gave him an eager welcome. “You thought you had shipped me off, just as the fun was starting, but I got on to you.”

“Well, I'll be darned,” said Major Bayne. “How did you find out?”

Barry told him, adding, “You will have to train your man to lie more cheerfully.”

“That's what comes of a man's environment,” said the major, disgustedly. “I was always too truthful, anyway.”

“Well, sir,” said Barry, turning to the colonel. “I'm awfully glad to find you here. I was afraid I'd lost you.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said the colonel, “you have all got your orders. Does any one want to ask a question? Well, then, it's pretty simple after all. Two companies advance as far as Maple Copse, and gradually work up until they feel the enemy, then put in a block and hold against attack, at all costs. The other two companies are to follow up in support at Zillebeck Village. Later on, when our reserves come up, and when our guns return—I hear they are pushing them up rapidly—we are promised a go at those devils. Meantime we have got to hold on, but I expect the battalion will be pulled out very shortly.”

The flickering candles lit up the faces of the men crowding the dugout. They were elaborately careless and jolly, but their eyes belied their faces. Under the careless air there was a tense and stern look of expectation. They were all sportsmen, and had all experienced the anxious nervous thrill of the moments preceding a big contest. Once the ball was off, their nervousness would go, and they would be cool and wary, playing the game for all they had in them.

“Now, gentlemen,” said the colonel, as they prepared to leave the dugout, “before I let you go, there is one thing I want to say. It's a tradition of the British army that any soldier or officer who has lost his unit marches toward the sound of the guns. I am proud to-night that we have an example of that old tradition here. We left our chaplain behind, and he didn't know where his battalion had gone, but he moved toward the sound of the guns. That is what I would expect from any of you, gentlemen, but it's none the less gratifying to find one's expectations realised.”

Only his flaming face revealed Barry's emotion as the colonel was speaking.

“Now then, gentlemen, carry on, and the best of luck.”

“Sir,” said Barry, “what about a little prayer?”

“Fine,” said the colonel heartily, while round the room there ran a murmur of approval.

Barry pulled out his little Bible and read, not one of the “fighting psalms” but the tenderly exquisite words of the Shepherd's song. His voice was clear, steady and ringing with cheery confidence. His prayer was in the spirit of the psalm, breathing high courage and calm trust, even in the presence of the ultimate issue.

In a single sentence he commended his comrades to the keeping of the Eternal God of Truth and Justice and Mercy, asking that they might be found steadfast in their hour of testing and worthy of their country and their cause.

Together they joined in the Lord's prayer; then lifting over them his hands, he closed the little service with that ancient and beautiful formula of blessing, which for two thousand years has sent men out from the Holy Place of Meeting to face with hearts resolved whatever life might hold for them.

One by one, as they passed out the officers shook hands with Barry, thanking him for the service, and expressing their delight that he was with them again.

“What are we going to do with you, Pilot?” inquired the colonel.

“I thought I'd stick around with the boys,” said Barry.

“Well,” said the colonel, gravely, “of course, there's no use of your going up to the attack. You would only be in the way. You would be an embarrassment to the officers. That reminds me, there was a call from Menin Mill for you this afternoon. They are having an awful rush there. Our own R. A. P. will be in Zillebeck Village, and our Headquarters will be there.”

“I'll go there, sir, if you agree,” said Barry, and after some discussion the matter was so arranged.

In a ruined cellar in the village of Zillebeck, a mile and a half further in, the R. A. P. was established and there carried on during the desperate fighting of the next three days. Through this post a continuous stream of wounded passed, the stretcher cases all night, the walking cases all day and all night. In spite of its scenes of horror and suffering the R. A. P. was a cheery spot. The new M. O. was strange to his front

line business, but he was of the right stuff, cool, quick with his fingers, and undisturbed by the crashing of bursting shells. The stretcher bearers and even the wounded maintained an air of resolute cheeriness, that helped to make bearable what otherwise would have been a nightmare of unspeakable horror. Attached to the R. A. P. was an outer building wherein the wounded men were laid after treatment. Thither in a pause of his work, Barry would run to administer drinks, ease the strain of an awkward position, speak a word of cheer, say a prayer, or sing snatches of a hymn or psalm. There was little leisure for reflection, nor if there had been would he have indulged in reflection, knowing well that only thus could he maintain his self-control and “carry on.”

With each wounded man there came news of the progress of the fighting. The boys were holding splendidly, indeed were gradually eating into the enemy front. They brought weird stories of his comrades, incidents pathetic, humorous, heroic, according to the temperament of the narrator. But from more than one source came tales of Knight's machine gun section to which McCuaig was attached. Knight himself had been killed soon after entering the line, and about his men conflicting tales were told: they were holding a strong point, they were blown up, they had shifted their position, they were wiped out, they were still “carrying on.” McCuaig was the hero of every tale. He was having the time of his life. He had gone quite mad. He was for going “out and over” alone.

The first authentic account came with young Pickles, now a runner, who made his way hobbling to Headquarters with a message from A Company, and who reported that he had fallen in with McCuaig by the way, and by him had been commandeered to carry ammunition, under threat of instant death.

“Where did you see McCuaig first, Pickles?” Barry inquired, anxious to learn the truth about his friend.

“Way up Lover's Walk,” said young Pickles, who was in high spirits, “under a pile of brush and trees. I though it was a wildcat, or something moving and snarling—the light was kind of dim—and when I went up there was McCuaig. He was alone. Two or three men were lying near him, dead, I guess, and he was swearing, and talking to himself something fierce. I was scart stiff when he called me to him. I went over, and he says to me, 'Say, youngster,' just like that, 'you know where this walk used to drop down into the trench? Well, there's a lot of machine gun ammunition over there, all fixed up and ready. You go and bring it up here.' I tried to get out of it, sayin' I was bringing a 'hurry up' message down, but he turns his machine gun on me, and says, 'Young man, it's only a couple of hundred yards down there, and fairly good cover. They can't see you. Go and bring that stuff here. If you don't I'll blow you to hell just where you stand.' You bet I promised. I got that ammunition so quick. Oh, of course, he's crazy, all right,” said young Pickles, “but he is fighting like hell. I beg pardon, sir.”

“Doctor, I'm going after him,” said Barry. “He will stay there until he bleeds to death. He is my oldest friend.”

“All right, padre, if you say so,” said the M. O., “but it's a nasty job. I should not care for it.”

Barry knew the area thoroughly. He got from young Pickles an exact description of the location of the spot where McCuaig had last been seen, and with the returning stretcher bearers set off for the wood, which was about a thousand yards further on.

The communication trench leading up to the wood, which had been constructed with such care and of which the Canadians were so proud, had been blown up from end to end by the systematic and thorough bombardment of the three days before. The little party, therefore, were forced to make their way overland by the light of the star shells.

They reached the wood in safety. Barry looked about him in utter bewilderment. Every familiar feature of the landscape was utterly blotted out. The beautiful ambrosial wood itself, of heavy trees and thick tinder-brush, was a mat of tangled trunks, above which stood splintered stubs. Not a tree, not a branch, hardly a green leaf was left. Under that mat of fallen trunks were A and C Companies, somewhere, holding, blocking, feeling up toward the Hun.

The shells were whining overhead, going out and coming in, but mostly coming in. None, however, were falling on the wood because here friend and foe were lying almost within bayonet length of each other. Only an occasional burst from a machine gun broke the silence that hung over this place of desolation and death.

“That's the company Headquarters,” said the stretcher bearer,

pointing to what looked like a bear den, under some fallen trees. Barry pushed aside the blanket and poking his head in, found Duff and a young lieutenant working at a table by the light of a guttering candle.

“For the love of God, Pilot,” exclaimed Duff, springing up and gripping Barry's hand, “it's good to see you, but what are you doing here?”

“I came up for McCuaig,” said Barry, after a warm greeting to both.

“Oh, say, that's good. We have got him as far as the next dugout here, the old bear. I've been trying to get him out for half a day. There's a soldier for you! He's been potting Boches with his blessed machine gun, scouting from one hole to another for the last two days, and he's got a nasty wound. I'm awfully glad you have come.”

“How are things going, Duff?”

“We have got the ——s so that they can't move a foot, and we'll hold them, unless they bring up a lot of reserves.”

“By Jove! Duff, you boys are wonderful.”

“I say,” said Duff, brushing aside the compliment, “did young Pickles get through? That young devil is the limit. You'd have thought he was hunting coyotes.”

“Yes, he got through. Got a blighty though, I guess. It was he that told me about McCuaig.”

“Well, Pilot, old man,” said Duff, taking him by the arm, “get out! Get out! Don't waste time. There may be a break any minute. Get out of here.”

Duff was evidently in a fever of anxiety. “You had no right to come up here anyway; though, by Jove, I'm glad to see you.”

“What's the fuss, Duff?” said Barry. “Am I in any more danger than you? I say,” he continued, with tense enthusiasm, “do you realise, Duff, that as long as Canada lasts they will talk of what you are doing up here these days?”

“For Heaven's sake, Pilot, get out,” said Duff crossly. “You make me nervous. Besides, you have got to get that wounded man out, you know. Come along.”

He hustled Barry out and over to the neighbouring dugout, where they found McCuaig with his beloved machine gun still at his side. The wounded man was very pale, but extremely cheerful, smoking a cigarette.

“I'm glad to see you, sir,” he said quietly, reaching out his hand.

“Good old man,” said Barry, gripping his hand hard, “but you are a blamed old fool, you know.”

McCuaig made no reply, but there was a happy light on his face. Under Duff's compelling urging they got the wounded man on a stretcher and started on their long and painful carry.

“Now, boys,” warned Duff, “you are all right up here, except for machine guns, but don't take any chances further out. That's where the danger is. When the shells come, don't rush things. Take your time. Now, good-bye, Pilot, it's worth a lot to have seen you anyway.”

“Good-bye, old man,” said Barry, smiling at him. “You're the stuff. Good luck, old man. God keep you.”

Duff nodded, and waved him away. The return trip was made in comparative quiet.

“What do you think, doctor?” said Barry, after the M. O. had completed his examination.

“Oh, we'll pull him through all right,” said the M. O. “When did you get this, McCuaig?” he continued, touching a small wound over the kidney.

“Dunno, rightly. Guess I got it when we was blown up, yesterday.”

“Then why didn't you come in at once?” inquired the M. O. indignantly.

McCuaig looked at him in mild surprise.

“Why, they was all blown up, and there wasn't anybody to run the gun.”

The M. O. examined the wound more closely and shook his head at Barry.

“We won't touch that now. We'll just bandage it up. Are you feeling pretty comfortable?”

“Fine,” said McCuaig with cheerful satisfaction. “We held them up, I guess. They thought they was going to walk right over us. They was comin' with their packs on their backs. But the boys changed their minds for them, I guess.”

A reminiscent smile lingered upon the long, eaglelike face.

Half an hour later Barry found a minute to run into the adjoining room where the wounded lay.

“Anything you want, McCuaig?” he asked.

“A drink, if you ain't too busy, but I hate to take your time.”

“Oh, you go to thunder,” said Barry. “Take my time! What am I for? Any pain, Mac?”

“No, not much. I'm a little sleepy.”

Barry turned the flash-light on his face. He was startled to find it grey and drawn. He brought the M. O., who examined the wounded man's condition.

“No pain, eh, Mac?”

“No, sir,” said McCuaig cheerfully.

“All right, boy, just lie still,” said the M. O., beckoning Barry after him.

“He is going out,” he said when they reached the dressing room, “and he's going fast. That wound in the back has been bleeding a long time.”

“Oh, doctor, can't anything be done? You know he's got a remarkable constitution. Can't something be done?”

“There are times when a doctor wishes he had some other job,” said the M. O., “and this is one of them.”

“I say, doctor, will you get along without me for a while?” said Barry.

“Go on,” said the M. O., nodding to him.

Barry took a candle and went in beside his friend. As he sat there gazing upon the greying face, the wounded man opened his eyes.

“That you, Barry?” he asked with a quiet smile.

Barry started. Only in the very first weeks of their acquaintance had McCuaig called him by his first name, and never during the past months had he used anything but his rank title. Now all rank distinctions were obliterated. They were as man to man.

“Yes, Mac, it's me. Do you know what I was thinking about? I was thinking of the first time I saw you coming down that rapid in your canoe.”

“I remember well, Barry. I often think of it. It's a long time ago,” said McCuaig in his soft, slow voice. “I've never been sorry but once that I come, and that time it was my own fault, but I didn't understand the game.”

“You've made a great soldier, Mac. We are all proud of you,” said Barry, putting his hand upon McCuaig's. McCuaig's long thin fingers tightened upon Barry's hand.

“I think I'm going out,” he said, with his eyes on Barry's face. “What do you think?”

It was the time for truth telling.

“Oh, Mac, old man,” said Barry, putting his head down close to him to hide from him the rush of tears that came to his eyes, “I'm afraid you are, and I hate to have you go.”

“Why, Barry, you crying for me?” asked McCuaig in a kind of wonder. “Say, boy, I'm awful glad you feel that way. Somehow I don't feel quite so lonely now.”

“Oh, Mac, you are my oldest, my best friend in the battalion, in all the world,” said Barry.

“Oh, I just love to hear you say that, boy. Do you know I wanted to tell you how I felt about that time on the boat, you remember?” Barry nodded. “Barry, tell me, honest Injun, did I make good as a soldier?”

“The best ever,” said Barry. “They all say so, officers and men. I heard the colonel say so the other day.”

Again the smile came.

“Barry, it was you that done that for me. You showed me, and you done it so nice. I never forgot that, and I always wanted to tell you how I felt about it. Barry, you done a lot for me.”

“Oh, Mac, don't talk like that,” said Barry, trying to keep his voice steady. “I did so little and I wanted to do so much.”

“Say, I like to hear you. I'd like to stay a little longer just to be with you, Barry. I've watched you just like you was my own boy, and I've been awful proud of you, but I didn't like to say so.”

The uncovering of the great love of this simple, humble hearted man broke down Barry's self-control. He made no effort to check his falling tears.

“I'm getting—kind of weak, Barry,” whispered McCuaig. “I guess I won't be long, mebbe.”

His words recalled Barry's nerve.

“Mac, would you like me to say a prayer?” he asked. “Just as you feel about it, you know.”

“Yes—I would—but I ain't—your religion—you know—though—I like—awful well—the way—you talk about—Him.”

“I know you are R. C., Mac, but after all you know we have just the one Father in Heaven and the one Saviour.”

“Yes,—I know, Barry. It's all the same.”

Barry had a sudden inspiration.

“Wait, Mac, a minute,” he said.

He hurried out to the dressing room, seeking a crucifix, but could find none there.

“I'll run across to Headquarters,” he said.

“Say, there's a machine gun playing that street awful,” said the M. O.'s sergeant, “to say nothing of whizzbangs.”

“Oh, that's all right,” said Barry. “I'll make a dash for it.”

But at Headquarters he was no more successful. He went out into the garden in the rear of the R. A. P., and returned with two small twigs. The M. O. bound them together in the form of a cross. Barry took it and hastened to McCuaig's side.

The hurried breathing and sunken cheeks of the wounded man showed that the end was not far. As Barry knelt beside him, he opened his eyes. There was a look of distress upon his face, which Barry understood. God was near. And God was terrible. He wanted his priest.

“Barry,” he whispered, “I've not—been a good man. I haven't been—mean to anybody,—but I used—to swear—and fight, and—”

“Mac, listen to me. We're all the same,” said Barry, in a quiet, clear voice. “Suppose I'd injured you.”

“You wouldn't—Barry.”

“But suppose I did some real mean thing to you, and then came and said I was sorry, would you forgive me?”

“Would I—I'd never think—of anything—you did—to me, Barry.”

“Mac, that's the way your Father in Heaven feels to you. We have all done wrong, but He says, 'I will blot out all your sins.' You needn't fear to trust Him, Mac.”

“I guess—that's so, Barry—I guess that's—all right.”

“Yes, it's all right. Now I'll say a prayer. Look, Mac!”

He held up the little wooden cross before his eyes. A smile of joy and surprise transfigured the dying face.

“I see it!—I see—it!” he whispered, and made a movement with his lips. Barry laid the cross upon them, and with that symbol of the Divine love and of the Divine sacrifice pressed to the dying lips, he prayed in words such as a child might use.

For some time after the prayer McCuaig lay with his eyes shut, then with a sudden accession of strength, he opened them and looking up into Barry's eyes, said:

“Barry, I'm all right now. . . . You helped me again.”

The long thin hands, once of such iron strength, began to wander weakly over the blanket, until touching Barry's they closed upon it, and held it fast.

“I—won't—forget—you—ever—” he whispered. The nerveless fingers with difficulty lifted Barry's hand to the cold lips. “Good—bye—Bar—ry—” he said.

“Good-bye, dear old comrade. Good-bye, dear old friend,” said Barry in a clear quiet voice, gazing through his falling tears straight into the dying eyes.

“Good—night—” The whisper faded into silence. A quiet smile lay on the white face. The eyes closed, there was a little tired sigh, and the brave tender spirit passed on to join that noble company of immortals who abide in the Presence of the Eternal God of Truth and Love, and “go no more out forever,” because they are akin to Him.

In the sorely tortured graveyard, beside the little shell-wrecked Zillebeck church, in a hole made by an enemy shell, they laid McCuaig—a fitting resting place for one who had lived his days in the free wild spaces of the Canadian west, a fitting tomb for as gallant a soldier as Canada ever sent forth to war to make the world free.

That night the battalion was relieved. Worn, spent, but with spirit unbroken, they crawled out from under that matted mass of tangled

trunks, sending out their wounded before them, and leaving their buried dead behind them, to hold with other Canadian dead the line which from St. Julien, by Hooge, Sanctuary Wood, and Maple Copse, and Mount Sorel, and Hill 60, and on to St. Eloi, guards the way to Ypres and to the sea. To Canada every foot of her great domain, from sea to sea, is dear, but while time shall last Canada will hold dear as her own that bloodsoaked sacred soil which her dead battalions hold for Honour, Faith and Freedom.

CHAPTER XVII

LONDON LEAVE AND PHYLLIS

The leave train pulled into the Boulogne station exactly twenty-six hours late. As Barry stepped off the train he was met by the R. T. O., an old Imperial officer with a brisk and important military manner.

“You are the O. C. train, sir?” he inquired.

“I am, sir,” replied Barry, saluting.

“You have had a hard time, I understand,” said the R. T. O., drawing him off to one side and speaking in a low tone.

“Yes sir, we HAVE had a hard time,” replied Barry, “at least the men have. This is my report, sir.”

The R. T. O. took the document, opened it, glanced hurriedly through it.

“Ah,” he said, “ninety-seven casualties, thirteen fatal. Very bad. Six burned. This is truly terrible.”

“There were only two soldiers burned, sir,” replied Barry, “but it IS terrible, especially when you think that the men were going on leave and were supposed to have got quit of the danger zone.”

“Very, very terrible,” said the officer. “You ran off the track, I understand.”

“No, sir, it was a collision. There must have been gross carelessness, sir,” said Barry. “I trust there will be an investigation. I have taken the liberty to suggest that, sir, in my report.”

Barry's voice was stern.

“You need have no apprehension on that score, sir,” said the R. T. O., with his eyes still upon the report. “This is very clear and concise. I see you make no mention of your own services in connection with the affair, but others have. I have had a most flattering telegram from the officer commanding the R. A. M. C., as also from the Divisional Commander, mentioning your initiative and resourcefulness. I assure you this will not be forgotten. I understand you are a padre?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Barry, who was getting rather weary of the conversation.

“All I have to say, then, sir, is that the Canadian army must be rich in combatant officers for, if you will pardon me, it strikes me that there is a damned good combatant officer lost in you.”

“If I were a better padre,” replied Barry, “I would be content.”

“I fancy you have little ground for complaint on that score,” said the R. T. O., for the first time smiling at him.

“May I ask, sir,” replied Barry, “if my responsibility ends here?”

“Yes, unless you want to take charge of the boat.”

“I'd rather not, sir, if you please. How long before she sails?”

“About three hours. Have you anything to do?”

“I should like to visit the R. A. M. C. hospital. I should also like to phone the American hospital at Etaples.”

“Very well, you can easily do both. I will run you up in my car, if you care to wait a few moments until I put through some little matters here. Then if you will be good enough to join me at breakfast, I can drive you up afterwards to the hospital. This is my car. I think you had better step in and sit down; you look rather used up.”

“Will you allow me to speak to some of the men first, sir?”

“Oh, certainly. Do anything you like. There are your men.”

As Barry moved along the line of men drawn up on the platform, he was followed by a rising murmur of admiration, until, as he reached a

group of officers at the end, a little Tommy, an English cockney, lifting high his rifle, sang out:

“Naow then, lads, 'ere's to our O. D,” adding after the cheers, “'e's a bit ov ol raa-ght, 'e is!”

“Men,” said Barry, “I thank you for your cheers, but I thank you more for your splendid behaviour night before last. It was beyond praise. You couldn't save all your comrades, but you would willingly have given your lives to save them. That's the true spirit of the Empire. It's the spirit of Humanity. It's the spirit of God. If I were a combatant officer—”

“You'd be a good 'un, sir,” cried a voice.

“If I were a combatant officer, I should like to lead men like you into action.”

“We'd follow you to 'ell, sir,” shouted the little cockney.

“Oh, I hope not,” replied Barry. “I'm not going that way. May I say, in wishing you every good luck, that you are a credit to your country, and I can say nothing higher. I wish to thank the officers who so splendidly did their duty and gave such valuable service. Good luck to you, boys, and give my love to all at home.”

Again the men broke into cheers, and Barry, shaking hands with the officers, turned away toward the car. As he was entering the car, Sergeant Matthews came over to him.

“I want to thank you, sir, for getting me free of the R. A. M. C. up there. I feel rather bad, but since my wife is waiting to meet me in London, I was anxious to get through.”

“All right, sergeant,” replied Barry. “I'll get you to a hospital in London, when we arrive. You are not feeling too badly, I hope.”

“A little shook up, sir,” said the sergeant.

At the R. A. M. C. hospital a bitter disappointment awaited him. He found that the V. A. D. had departed for England, but just where no one seemed to know. In her last letter to him, received before the last tour in the trenches, she had mentioned the possibility of a visit to London, and had promised him further information before her departure, but no further word had he received.

His inquiry at Etaples was equally unproductive of result. Paula and her father had also gone to England. They had taken the V. A. D. with them, and their address was unknown. The matron of the hospital believed that they had planned a motor trip to Scotland, for they had carried Captain Neil Fraser off with them, and were planning a visit to his home. They expected to return in about three weeks.

By the bitterness of his disappointment, Barry realised how greatly he had counted on this meeting with his friends. Were it not for the hope of being able to discover them in England, he would have turned back up the line, there and then, and found among the only friends he had on this side of the ocean relief from the intolerable weight of loneliness that was bearing him down.

He walked out to the cemetery, and stood beside his father's grave. There for the first time it came over him that henceforth he must go all the way of his life without the sight of that face, without the touch of that hand on his shoulder, without the cheer of that voice. In floods his sense of loss swept his soul. It took all his manhood to refrain from throwing himself prone upon the little mound and yielding to the agony that flooded his soul, and that wrought in his heart physical pain. By a resolute act of will, he held himself erect. While he blamed and despised himself for his weakness, he was unable to shake it off. He did not know that his mental and emotional state was in large measure a physical reaction from the prolonged period of exhausting strain, his treble tour in the trenches, with its unrelieved sense of impending destruction, that its endless procession of broken, torn bodies, with its nights of sleepless activity, with its eternal struggle against depression, consequent upon the loss of his comrades, its eternal striving after cheeriness and more than all the shock of the train wreck, with its scenes of horror; all this had combined to reduce his physical powers of resistance to the point of utter exhaustion.

As he stood there in that cemetery with its rows of crosses, silently eloquent of heroism and of sacrifice, the spirit of the place seemed to breathe into him new life. As his eyes fell upon the cross bearing his father's name, he seemed to see again that erect and gallant figure, instinct with life and courage. There came to him the memory of a scene he had never forgotten. Again he was with his father in the little home cottage. How dear it had been to him then! How dear to him, today! Once more he felt the strong grip of his father's hand and heard his

father's voice:

“Good night, boy. We don't know what is before us, defeat, loss, suffering, that part is not in our hands altogether, but the shame of the quitter never need and never shall be ours.”

Unconsciously as if he were in the presence of a superior officer, he lifted his hand in salute, and with a sense of renewal of his vital energies he returned to the boat.

During the crossing his mind was chiefly occupied with the problem of discovering the whereabouts of the V. A. D. or his American friends. He had never learned her London address, if indeed she had one. He remembered that she had told him that her home had been turned into a hospital. He had some slight hope that he might be able to trace her by the aid of her uncle.

Arrived in London, his first duty was to see Sergeant Matthews, whose injuries in the wreck were apparently more serious than at first supposed, safely disposed in a hospital ambulance. Thereupon he proceeded to the Hotel Cecil, and set himself seriously to the solution of his problem. He was too weary for clear thinking and as the result of long, confused and very vexing cogitation, he resolved upon a letter to Commander Howard Vincent, R. N. R. This, after much labour, he succeeded in accomplishing. Thereafter, much too weary for food, he proceeded to his room, where he gave himself up to the unimaginable luxury of a bath in a clean tub, and with an unstinted supply of clean towels, after which riotous indulgence, he betook himself to bed. As he lay stretched between the smooth clean sheets, he found it impossible to recall a state of existence when clean sheets had been a nightly experience. The chief regret of these semi-unconscious moments preceding slumber was that sleep would rob him of this delicious sense of physical cleanness and well-being.

He was wakened by a knock at his door, followed by a hesitating apology for intrusion. Rejoicing in the luxury of his surroundings, and in the altogether satisfying discovery that he might sleep again, he turned over and once more was lost in profound slumber. A second time he was aroused by a mild but somewhat anxious inquiry as to his welfare.

“I want nothing, only a little more sleep,” and again luxuriating for a few moments in his clean sheets and his peaceful environment, he resigned himself to sleep, to waken with a comfortable sense of pleasant weariness, which gradually passed into a somewhat acute sense of hunger.

He decided, after due consideration, that he would plumb the depths of bliss, unmeasured and unknown, and have breakfast in bed. He went to the window and looked out upon the murky light of a London day. He decided that it was still early morning, and rang for the waiter. He was informed by that functionary that breakfast was impossible, but that if he desired he could be supplied with an early dinner.

“Dinner!” exclaimed Barry.

He looked at his watch, but found that he had neglected to wind it, and that consequently it had stopped.

“What time do you make it, waiter?”

“Half after six, sir.”

He decided that he would rise for dinner, 'phoned for a paper and his mail, and lay back between the sheets once more, striving to recapture that rapturous sense of welfare that had enwrapped him the night before. Luxuriating in this delightsome exercise, he glanced lazily at the heading of his paper, and then cried, as the paper boy was leaving the room,

“Hello! here, boy! what day is this?”

“Friday, sir,” said the boy, gazing at him in astonishment.

“Friday? Are you sure?”

“Yes, sir, Friday, sir. What does the paper say, sir?”

“Oh, yes, of course. All right.”

He had gone to bed on Wednesday night. He knew that because he remembered the date of his letter to Commander Howard Vincent, R. N. R. He made the astounding discovery that he had slept just forty-four hours. Then he made a second discovery and that was that of his precious eight days' leave, three were already gone.

After he had dined he inquired at the desk for his mail, and searched through the telegrams, but there was nothing for him.

Then he betook himself to the streets, aware that the spectre of loneliness was hard on his trail, and swiftly catching up with him.

London was roaring around him in the dark, like a jungle full of wild beasts, of whose shapes he could catch now and then horrid glimpses. Among all the millions in the city, he knew of no living soul to whom he could go for companionship, nor was there anything in form of amusement that specially invited him.

There was Grand Opera, of course, but from its associations with his father he knew that that would bring him only acute misery. Gladly would he have gone to the hospitals, but they would be shut against him at this hour. He bought an evening paper, and under a shaded lamp studied the amusement columns. Some of the Revues he knew to be simply tiresome, others disgusting. None of them appealed to him. Aimlessly he wandered along the streets, heedless of his direction, conscious now and then of an additional pang of wretchedness as he caught a glimpse now and then at a theatre door of young officers passing in with sweet faced girls on their arms.

At length in desperation he followed one such pair, and found himself listening to Cinderella. Its light and delicate fancy, its sweet pathos, its gentle humour lured him temporarily from his misery, but often there came back upon him the bitter memory of his comrades in their horrid environment of filth, danger and wretchedness.

He found some compensation in the thought that these officers beside him were like himself on leave, and while he envied them, he did not grudge them their delight in the play, and their obviously greater delight in their lovely companions beside them, but this again was neutralised by the bitter recollection of his own hard fate which denied him a like joy.

After the play he stood in the entrance hall, observing the crowd, indulging his sense of ill-usage at the hands of fate as he saw the officers lingering with many unnecessary touches over the cloaking of their fair partners, and as he caught the answering glances and smiles that rewarded their attentions.

His eyes followed the manoeuvrings of the painted ladies as they hovered about the doors, boldly busy with their profession. He understood as never before the nature of their lure and the overpowering subtlety of the temptation cast by them over the lonely soldier in London.

Close at his side he heard a voice:

“How do you like it, boy? Not bad, eh?”

“Awfully jolly, dad. It's perfectly fine of you.”

He turned and saw a grey-haired gentleman, with upright soldierly figure, and walking with him, arm in arm, a young officer, evidently his son. He followed them slowly to the door, and eager to share if he might the joy of their comradeship, he listened to their talk. Then as they disappeared into the darkness, sick at heart, he passed out of the door, stood a moment to get his bearings, and sauntered beyond the radius of the subdued light about the entrance, into the darkness further on.

He had gone but a few paces, and was standing beneath a shaded corner light, meditating the crossing of the roaring street, when he heard behind him an eager voice crying,

“Captain Dunbar! Captain Dunbar!”

Swiftly he turned, and saw in the dim light a dainty figure, opera coat flowing away from gleaming arms and shoulders, a face with its halo of gold brown hair, with soft brown eyes ashine and eager parted lips, a vision of fluttering, bewildering loveliness bearing down upon him with outstretched hands.

“What,” he gasped, “you! Oh, you darling!”

He reached for her, gathered her in his arms, drew her toward him, and before either he or she was aware of what he intended to do, kissed her parting lips.

“Oh, how dare you!” she cried, aghast, pushing him back from her, her face in a red flame. “Oh, I'm so glad. I was afraid I should lose you.”

Barry, appalled at his own temerity, his eyes taking in the sweet beauty of her lovely face, stood silent, trembling.

“Well, aren't you going to tell me you are glad to see me?” she cried, smiling up at him saucily.

“Phyllis,” he murmured, moving toward her.

“Stop,” she said, putting her hands out before her, as if to hold him off. “Remember where you are. I ought to be very angry, indeed.”

She drew him toward a dark wall.

“But you aren't angry, Phyllis. If you only knew how I have wanted you in this awful place. Oh, I have wanted you.”

She saw that he was white and still trembling.

“Have you, Barry?” she asked, gently. “Oh, you poor boy. I know you have been through horrible things. No, Barry, don't. You awful man,” for his hands were moving toward her again. “You must remember where you are. Look at all these people staring at us.”

“People,” he said, as if in a daze. “What difference do they make? Oh, Phyllis, you are so wonderfully lovely. I can't believe it's you, but it is, it is! I know your eyes. Are you glad to see me?” he asked shyly, his hungry eyes upon her face.

“Oh, Barry,” she whispered, the warm flush rising again in her cheeks, “can't you see? Can't you see? But what am I thinking about? Come and see mamma, and there's another dear friend and admirer of yours with her.”

“Who? Not Paula?”

“No, not Paula,” she said, with a subtle change in her voice. “Come and see!”

She took his arm and brought him back to a motor standing at the theatre entrance.

“Oh, mamma, I have had such a race,” she cried excitedly, “and I have captured him. Barry, my mother.”

Barry took the offered hand, and gazed earnestly into the sad brown eyes that searched his in return.

“And here's your friend,” said Phyllis.

“Hello, Pilot,” said a voice from a dark corner of the car.

“What, Neil! Oh, you boy,” he cried in an ecstasy, pushing both hands at him. “You dear old boy. How is the arm, eh? all right?”

“Oh! doing awfully well,” said Captain Neil. “And you?”

“Oh, never so well in all my life,” cried Barry. “Yet, to think of it, ten minutes ago, or when was it, I was in there a miserably homesick creature, envious of all the happy people about me, and now—”

While he was speaking, his eyes were on Mrs. Vincent's face, but his hand was holding fast to her daughter's arm. “Now it's a lovely old town, and full of dear people.”

“Where are you putting up?” asked Mrs. Vincent.

“The Cecil.”

“Let us drive you there then,” she said.

During the drive Barry sat silent for the most part, listening to Phyllis talking excitedly and eagerly beside him, answering at random the questions which came like rapid fire from them all, but planning meanwhile how he should prolong these moments of bliss.

“How about supper?” he cried, as they arrived in the courtyard of the hotel. “Come in. I want you to; you see I have so much to ask and so much to tell Captain Fraser here, and three of my days are gone already. Besides, I want you to awfully.”

Mrs. Vincent looked at his face, which for all its brightness was worn and deep-lined, and her compassionate motherly heart was stirred.

“Of course we'll come. We want to see you and to hear about your experiences.”

“Oh, bully!” cried Barry. “I shall always remember how good you are to me to-night.”

He was overflowing with excitement.

“Oh, this is great, Neil. It's like having a bit of the old battalion here to see you again.”

While waiting for their orders to be filled at the supper table, Captain Neil turned suddenly to Barry and said, “What's all this about a train wreck and the gallant O. C. train?”

“Yes, and this rescuing of men from burning cars,” exclaimed Phyllis.

“And knocking out insubordinates.”

“And being mentioned in despatches.”

“And receiving cheers at the station.”

“Now where did you get all that stuff?” inquired Barry.

“Why, all London is ringing with it,” said Captain Neil.

“Nonsense,” said Barry; “who's been stuffing you?”

“Well,” said Phyllis, “we came across your sergeant to-day in the hospital. Such a funny man.”

“Who? Fatty Matthews?” asked Barry, turning to Captain Neil.

“Yes, it was Fatty,” said Captain Neil, “and if you had your rights by his

account, you ought to be in command at this moment of an army corps at the very least. But you were O. C. leave train, were you not?”

“Yes, to my dismay I was made O. C., but I met a chap, Captain Courtney, a very decent fellow, my adjutant, and made him carry on.”

“My word, that was a stroke!”

“We had a wreck, a ghastly affair it was, though it might have been a lot worse. The R. A. M. C. people did magnificently, and the men behaved awfully well, so that we managed to get through.”

“And what about the O. C.?” inquired Captain Neil.

“Oh, nothing special. He just saw that the others carried on. Now tell me about you people. What have you been doing and what are you going to do?”

“Well, 'we're here, because we're here,'” chanted Captain Neil.

“And why didn't you send me word as to your movements?” said Barry. “What hours of agony you would have spared me!”

“But I did,” replied Phyllis. “I sent you our town address and told you everything.”

“Now isn't that rotten!” exclaimed Barry. “Never mind, I've found you, and now what's the programme?”

“Well,” cried Captain Neil with great enthusiasm, “we are all off to Edinburgh to-morrow, where we meet the Howlands, and then for a motor trip through the Highlands and to my ancestral home.”

Barry's face fell. “To-morrow?” he said blankly, with a quick look at Phyllis. “And you are all going?”

“Not I,” said Mrs. Vincent, “but why should you not join the party? You need just such a change. It would do you good.”

“Sure thing he will,” cried Captain Neil.

During the supper they had firmly resolved to taboo the war. They talked on all manner of subjects, chiefly of the proposed motor trip, but in spite of the ban their talk would hark back to the trenches. For Captain Neil must know how his comrades were faring, and how his company was carrying on, and Barry must tell him of their losses, and all of the great achievements wrought by the men of their battalion. And Barry because his own heart was full of all their splendid deeds let himself go. He told how Sally and Booth had met their last call, of the M. O. and his splendid work in rescuing the wounded.

“No word in all of this of the Pilot, I observe,” interjected Captain Neil.

“Oh, he just carried on!”

Then he told how at last the M. O. went out, and how on his face there was only peace. He had to tell of Corporal Thom, and how he gave himself for his comrades and how Cameron kept the faith, a long list of heroes he had to enumerate, of whom the world was not worthy, whose deeds are unknown to fame, but whose names are recorded in the books of God. And then reverently he told of McCuaig.

As Barry talked, his heart was far away from London. He was seeing again that line of mud bespattered men, patiently plodding up the communication trench. He was looking upon them sleeping with worn and weary faces, in rain and mudsoaked boots and puttees, down in their flimsy, dark dugouts. He was hearing again the heavy “crash” of the trench mortar, the earth shaking “crumph” of the high explosive, the swift rush of the whizbang. Before his eyes he saw a steady line of bayonets behind a crumbling wall, then a quick rush to meet the attack, bomb and rifle in hand. He saw the illumined face of his dying friend.

As he told his tale, his face was glowing, his eyes gleaming as with an inner fire.

“Oh, God's Mercy!” he cried, “they are men! They are men! Only God could make such men.”

“Yes, only God,” echoed Mrs. Vincent after a long pause. “They are God's men, and to God they go at last. Truly they are God's own men.”

While Barry was speaking, Phyllis, her hands tightly clasped, was leaning forward listening with glistening eyes and parted lips. Suddenly she rose, and went hurriedly to the door.

“Forgive me,” said Barry, turning to Mrs. Vincent. “I should not have talked about these things. It's Neil here that drew me out. It's his fault.”

In a few minutes Captain Neil arose and saying, “I'll see where Phyllis has gone,” went out at the same door.

“They are very great friends,” said Mrs. Vincent. “We are very fond of Captain Fraser. Indeed, he is like one of our family.”

“A fine, brave chap he is,” said Barry warmly, but with a queer chill at

his heart.

“Phyllis has made some very delightful friends in France. Those Americans at Etaples were very good to her,” and she continued to chat in her soft, gentle voice, to which Barry gave a courteous hearing but very casual replies. His heart and his ears were attentive for the returning footsteps of those who had so abruptly deserted them. While Mrs. Vincent was talking, an ugly question was thrusting itself upon his attention, demanding an answer. He could see—any one with eyes could see—that there was between Phyllis and his friend Captain Neil some understanding. Just what was between them Barry longed to know. It flashed upon him that upon the answer to that question his whole future hung, for if this girl was more than friend to Captain Neil, then the joy of life had for him been quenched. No motor trip for him to-morrow. He had had enough heart-wrenching to bear as it was without that. No! If between these two a closer relation than that of mere friendship existed, his way was clear. He would return to the trenches to-morrow.

“Oh, here you are, dear,” said Mrs. Vincent, as Phyllis and Captain Neil returned to the room. “You found the air too close, I fear.”

“No,” said Phyllis with simple sincerity, “it was Barry. I saw those men, and I could not bear it. I can't bear it now.” Her lips were still trembling, and her eyes were filled with tears.

“And yet,” said Barry, “when you were over there in the midst of it all, you never once weakened. That's the wonder of it. You just go on, doing what you must do. You haven't time to reflect, and it's God's mercy that it is so. Thank God we have our duty to do no matter what comes. Without that life would be unbearable.”

“Now, what about to-morrow?” said Captain Neil briskly, as Mrs. Vincent rose from the table. “We must settle that. What about it, Barry?”

“I don't know. Do you think I should go? It's your party and it's already made up.”

“Not quite,” said Phyllis, looking shyly at him. “You belong to the party more than any of us, you know.”

“Then what about Paula?” said Barry. “This is her party, is it not?”

Phyllis was silent.

“I think, Captain Dunbar,” said Mrs. Vincent, “if you would like it, you ought to go. You need something of the kind, and you will fit in admirably with the party, I am quite sure. To-day,” she added with a little laugh, “I was doubtful as to the propriety of these young people going off all the way to Edinburgh by themselves, but you know in these war times we do extraordinary things, but now if you join them, my scruples will be removed.”

“Some chaperon,” whispered Captain Neil audibly to Phyllis. Then he added briskly, “Well, then, that's settled. To-morrow at 8:37 we meet at King's Cross, 8:37, remember.”

But for Barry the matter was far from settled.

“I can't quite make up my mind to-night,” he said. “I shall be at King's Cross, however, in the morning at any rate.”

“But, Barry,” began Phyllis, protesting, “you must—I want—”

She ceased speaking abruptly, her face flushing and then going suddenly white.

“Oh, rot, old man,” said Captain Neil, impatiently, “you will come. Of course he'll come,” he added to Phyllis.

They moved together out of the room, Mrs. Vincent and Captain Neil leading the way.

“Oh, Barry, aren't you going?” said Phyllis in a low voice.

“How can I answer that?” he replied, almost in anger. “Do YOU ask me to go? Do YOU want me to go?”

“Of course, we all want you to go,” said the girl.

“Is that your answer?” His voice was tense; his face strained. “If that is all, Phyllis, I must say 'Good-bye' to-night. Why should I go with you? Why should I stay here in London? There's nothing for me here. The war is the only place—”

“Oh, Barry,” she said, her eyes bright with tears, “how unkindly, how terribly you talk.” Then with a swift change of mood she turned upon him. “What right have you to talk like that?” she cried in sudden wrath. “What have I done—what have we done to you?”

“Wait, Phyllis,” he cried desperately. “Oh, let them go on,” he added impatiently. “For Heaven's sake, is there no place about here where I can talk to you?” They were both pale and trembling. “I must talk to you to-night—now—at once.” He stood between her and the door. “Can't you

see I love you? I love you, do you hear? If you don't love me, why should I live?”

“Oh, Barry,” said the girl, in a hurried voice. “You must not talk like this. Come this way. I know this place.” She hurried out by a side door, down a corridor, and into a small parlour, with cosy corners, where they were alone.

“Now, Phyllis,” said Barry, facing her, with a settled fierceness in his voice and manner. “I am quite mad, I know, to love you, but I do. I can't help it any more than breathing. I have no right to tell you this, perhaps. I am nobody, and I have nothing to offer any girl. I see that now. Oh, I see that clearly now, but I never thought of that part of it before. I only loved you. How could I help it? I hardly knew myself until tonight. But I know now,” he added in a voice of triumph, the gloom lifting from his face, and the fierce light fading from his eyes. “Yes, I know now, Phyllis. I love you. I shall always love you. I love you and I am glad to love you. Nothing can take that from me.”

All this time she was standing before him, her face white, her lips parted, a look of wonder, almost of fear, in the brown eyes, so bravely holding his, her hands pressed hard upon her bosom, as if to stay its tumult.

“I have no right to say this to you,” said Barry again. “You belong to a great family. Perhaps you are rich. Great Heavens!” he groaned. “I never thought of that. You are beautiful. Many men will love you, great men and rich men will love you. You are so wonderful. Why, there's Captain Neil, he—”

“Captain Neil,” echoed Phyllis, with infinite scorn in her voice.

“Well, many men.”

“Many men,” she repeated, her lips beginning to tremble. “Oh, Barry, can't you see? You blind boy. There's only one man for me, Barry, and that's you, just you.” She came near to him, laid her hands upon his breast, her eyes looking into his.

“Phyllis,” he said, putting his arms round her, a great wonder in his voice. “It can't be true! Oh, it can't be true! Yet your eyes, your dear eyes say so. Phyllis, I do believe you love me.”

The little hands slid up around his neck; he drew her close.

“Phyllis, my dear, dear, love,” he whispered.

He felt her body suddenly relax, and as she leaned backwards in his arms, still clinging to him, he bent over her and his lips met hers in a long kiss.

CHAPTER XVIII

A WEDDING JOURNEY

“Just a moment, if you please, Paula. I should like to get down a few notes of this bit. Oh, what a view! Lake, moor, hills, mountains, village!”

Mr. Howland sprang from the car, sketchbook in hand, and ran forward to a jutting rock that commanded the wide valley, flanked by hills, in whose bosom lay a loch, shimmering in the morning light. The car drew up on the brow of a long and gently sloping incline, which the road followed until it disappeared in a turn at the village at the loch's end.

“Get the little church tower in, father, and a bit of the castle. I can see it from here,” said Paula, standing upon the motor seat.

“I shall try this further rock,” said her father. “Ah, here it is. Do come, all of you, and get this. Oh, what a perfectly glorious view!”

The little group gathered about him in silence, upon a little headland that overlooked the valley, and feasted upon the beauty that spread itself out before them, the undulating slope and shimmering loch, the wide moors and softly rounded hills, the dark green masses of ragged firs, and the great white Bens in the far distance, and below them, in the midst the human touch, in a nestling village with its Heaven-pointing spire.

“Hark!” said Paula.

From across the loch there floated up to them, soft and mellow as an angel's song, the sound of a bell.

Mr. Rowland dropped his sketchbook, took off his hat, and stood as if

in worship. The other men followed his example.

“Father,” said Paula, “let's go to church.”

“Hush,” said her father, putting up his hand, and so stood for some moments.

“Oh, Scotland, Scotland!” he cried, lifting his arms high above his head, “no wonder your children in exile weep for their native land.”

“And your men fight and die for you,” added Paula, glancing at Captain Neil.

“Thank you,” said Captain Neil, turning quickly away.

“Yes,” said Paula, “we shall go to church here, father.”

The church stood against a cluster of ancient firs, in the midst of its quiet graves, yew shaded here and there. Beside it stood the manse, within its sweet old garden, protected by a moss covered stone wall.

At its gate the minister stood, a dark man with silvering hair, of some sixty years, but still erect and with a noble, intellectual face.

“Let us speak to him,” said Paula, as they left their car.

With characteristic reserve, Barry and Neil shrank from greeting a stranger, but with fine and easy courtesy Mr. Howland bared his head, and went up to the minister.

“We heard your bell's invitation, sir,” he said, “and we came to worship with you.”

A grave smile touched the dark face.

“You rightly interpreted its message,” he said. “Let me repeat its welcome.”

“We are Americans, at least my daughter and I are,” said Mr. Howland, presenting Paula, a frank smile upon her beautiful face, “and this is her young friend from London, Miss Vincent, and these young officers are of the Canadian army.”

“Canadians!” exclaimed the minister, meeting them with both hands. “Oh, you are indeed welcome.”

“We are all in the war, sir, I would have you know,” added Mr. Howland.

The minister looked puzzled.

“Let me explain,” said Barry. “Mr. Rowland and his daughter are on leave from their own hospital which they have set up in France. Miss Vincent is from the base hospital in Boulogne.”

Like the sun breaking upon the loch in a dull day, a smile broke over the dark face. He threw the gate wide open.

“In the name of my country, in this its dark hour, let me give you welcome,” and once more he shook them each by the hand. “We have still half an hour before worship,” he continued. “Pray do me the honour of entering my manse.”

They followed him up the shrubbery-flanked gravel walk to the door.

“Enter,” he said, going before them into the manse. “Jean! Jean!” he called.

“Yes, dear,” came a voice like the sound of a silver bell, and from another room issued a lady with a face of rare and delicate loveliness. Her soft, clinging black gown, with a touch of white at her throat, served to emphasise the sweet purity of her face, but cast over it a shade of sadness at once poignant and tender.

“My dear, this is Mrs. Robertson,” he said simply; “these friends, Americans and Canadians, are from the war.”

At that word she came to greet them, her face illumined by a smile inexpressibly sweet, but inexpressibly sad. “You are welcome, oh, very welcome,” she said, in a soft Scotch voice. “Come in and rest for a few moments.”

“Our young friend here, Captain Dunbar, is chaplain of a distinguished Canadian regiment.”

“They are all distinguished,” said the lady.

“A chaplain?” said the minister. “My dear sir, we should be grateful for a message for our people from the front—”

“Oh, yes, if you would,” added his wife.

“But,” protested. Barry, “I want to hear some one else preach. One gets very tired of one's own preaching, and besides I'm a very poor preacher.”

“I'll take that risk, but I will not press you,” said the minister courteously.

“Do, Barry,” said Paula in a low voice, but he shook his head.

“I see you have some soldier friends at the front,” said Mr. Rowland, pointing to a photograph on the mantel of a young officer in Highland dress.

“Our son, sir,” said the minister quietly.

“Our only son,” added his wife quietly. “He was in the Black Watch.” Her voice, with its peculiar bell-like quality, was full of pride and tenderness.

“Oh,” said Phyllis, turning to her with quick tears in her eyes and holding out her hand.

“Ah,” said the lady, “you too? Your brother?”

“My two brothers.”

“My dear child! My dear child!” said the minister's wife, kissing her. “Your mother was greatly privileged,” she added gently.

It was a deeply moving scene.

“Madam,” said Mr. Howland, wiping his eyes, “forgive me, but you mothers are the wonder of the war.”

“There are many of us in this glen, sir,” she replied. “We cannot give our lives, sir. We can only give what is dearer than our lives, our dear, dear sons, and, believe me, we don't grudge them.”

“Madam,” said Mr. Howland, “the whole world honours you and wonders at you.”

“Sir,” said Barry, obeying a quick impulse, “I cannot preach, but may I tell your people something about their boys and how splendid they are?”

“Thank you,” said the minister.

“Oh, would you?” cried his wife. “There are many there who feel only the loss and the sorrow. You can tell them something of its splendour.”

By this time in the eyes of all the visitors there were tears, but on the faces of the minister and his wife there was only the serene peace of those who within the sacred shrine of sacrifice have got a vision of its eternal glory.

“Barry,” said Paula, drawing him aside, “I love you for this, but do talk about something, or I shall surely cry. These people break my heart.”

“Oh, no,” said Barry, looking at them, “there are no tears there. They have been all the way through.”

“Like people, like priest!” The folk that gathered in the little church that morning were simple people of the glen, shepherds and cotters from the countryside, humble villagers. They were women for the most part, with old men and children. The girls were away at the munition plants, the young men at the war, fighting or lying under their little crosses or in their unknown and unmarked graves, on one of Britain's five battle fronts, or under the tossing waters of the Seven Seas where Britain's navy rides, guarding the world's freedom. Simple peasant folk they were, but with that look of grave and thoughtful steadfastness with which Scotland knows how to stamp her people.

The devotions were conducted by the minister with simple sincerity, and with a prophet's mystic touch and a prophet's vision of things invisible.

Barry made no attempt at a sermon. He yielded himself to the spirit of the place, the spirit of the manse and its people, whose serene fortitude under the burden of their sorrow had stirred him to his soul's depths. Their spirit recalled the spirit of his own father and the spirit of the men he had known in the trenches. He made a slight reference to the horrors of the war. He touched lightly upon the soldiers' trials but he told them tales of their endurance, their patience, their tenderness to the wounded, their comradeship, their readiness to sacrifice. Before he closed, he lifted them up to see the worth and splendour of it all and gave them a vision of the world's regeneration through the eternal mystery of the cross.

They listened with uplifted face, on which rested a quiet wonder, touched with that light that only falls where sacrifice and sacrament are joined. There were tears on many faces, but they fell quietly, without bitterness, without passion, without despair.

A woman with a grief worn face waited for him at the foot of the pulpit stairs, the minister's wife and Phyllis beside her.

“Mrs. Finlayson wishes to speak to you,” she said.

“Ay, ay! I jist want to say that you had the word for me the day. I see it better the noo. A'm mair content that ma mon sud be sleepin' oot yonder.” She held Barry's hand while she spoke, her tears falling on it, then kissed it and turned away.

“And this,” said the minister's wife, “is Mrs. Murray, who has given

three sons, and who has just sent her last son away this week."

"Three sons," echoed Barry, gazing at the strong face, beaten and brown with the winds and suns of fifty years, "and you sent away your last. Oh, I wonder at you. How could you?"

"A cudna haud him back wi' his three brithers lyin' oot there, and," she added, with a proud lift of her head, "and wudna."

It took some minutes for Barry to make his way through to the door. He wanted to greet them all. He had a feeling that he was there not in his own person but as a representative standing between two noble companies of martyrs, those who had gone forth to die, and those who had sent them.

"You have done us a great service to-day, sir," said the minister in bidding Barry good-bye.

"It was a privilege to do it," said Barry as he shook hands with the minister and his wife. "I shall tell the men about you and your people."

"My dear, my dear, is he your man?" asked the minister's wife as she held Phyllis' hand.

"He is," said Phyllis, glancing at Barry with shy pride.

"And he leaves you soon?"

"In two days," replied the girl, with a quick breath.

"Don't let him away till you give yourself wholly to him. Why not to-morrow? It's a mother's word."

"That's what I say," cried Paula impulsively, seeking to cover the girl's blushing confusion. "Neil," she added, turning to him, "I should love to be married in just such a dear little church as this."

"All right," said Neil. "I know another just like it, and I shall show it to you next week."

They wandered down by the loch's side. Passing a boat-renting establishment, Paula suddenly exclaimed,

"My Land of Liberty, look there, Barry!"

"What?"

"A canoe," she cried, running toward it. "A Canadian canoe!"

"A genuine Peterboro," he cried, following her. "Where did you get this?" he inquired, turning to the boatman.

"My boy brought it with him from Canada, sir. He is an engineer. I have his whole outfit in the house—tent, camp things and all. He is at the war himself."

"Oh, Barry, look at the dear thing. What does it make you think of?" She glanced at Barry's face and added quickly, "Oh, I know. Forgive me. I'm a fool!"

"Come along, Phyllis," said Barry, drawing her away with him. "I want to talk to you."

"We shall take lunch in half an hour, Barry," called Mr. Howland after him. "We're due at Pitlochry, you know, for dinner."

"All right, sir," said Barry. "We'll be on hand."

"I wonder if she's got the nerve," said Paula to Captain Neil as they stood looking after them.

"I wonder," said Captain Neil, looking at her. "Would you?"

"Would I," said Paula, with sudden shyness. "I—but you are not going away in two days."

"No, thank the good Lord," said Captain Neil, fervently, "but, Paula, I'll not forget."

At Pitlochry they found their mail awaiting them.

"A telegram for you, Barry," said Paula, who had assumed the duty of postman.

They all paused in examining their mail to watch Barry open his wire.

"Guess," he shouted, holding his telegram high.

"Oh, glory, I know!" exclaimed Paula. "Extended leave. How much?"

"'Oh, excellent young maid, how much elder art thou than thy looks!'"

"Oh, Barry!" exclaimed Phyllis. "How much?"

"Five days, five whole days."

"Humph! It's the least they could do. They might have made it ten," grumbled Paula.

"Mr. Howland, may I speak to you a moment?" Barry's look and voice were eloquent of resolve.

"Certainly, Barry. Immediately?"

"If you please, sir."

They retired to a corner, where Barry could be seen with ardent look and vehement gesture putting his proposition to Mr. Howland, whose face showed mingled pleasure and perplexity. The others waited patiently for the conference to end.

“Oh, pshaw!” said Paula, “Barry ought to know by this time that the pater simply can't make up his mind without me. I know what they are at.”

She moved over to them.

“Now, father, of course you will do as Barry wishes,” she declared. “Oh, I know what he wants. Now listen to me. Just wire Mrs. Vincent that everything is perfectly all right, that you can guarantee Barry, and that it's the sensible thing, the only thing to do under the circumstances. Oh, we'll have it in that dear little church. Splendid. Perfectly ripping! Eh, Phyllis? Come over here at once. Now, father, get busy on the wire. Why waste a perfectly good hour in just talking about it? What do you say, folks? How many say 'Ay'?”

Up went Barry's two hands, and with them Neil's and Paula's.

“What about you, miss?” asked Paula, turning wrathfully toward Phyllis.

Phyllis walked quietly to Barry's side.

“Barry,” she said, giving him her hand, “I have decided to be married to-morrow. I shall wire mamma.”

Barry answered her only with his eyes.

“By Jove!” said Paula, “you Britishers are the limit, for stolid, unemotional people. Here am I shouting my head off like a baseball fan, to get this thing put through, and you quietly walk up and announce that everything's fixed but the band.”

The wires to London that afternoon were kept busy, a message going to Mrs. Vincent from each member of the party, but it was felt that that from Phyllis to her mother was really all that was necessary.

“Dearest Mamma—Barry and I are to be married tomorrow. English law makes London impossible, as Barry has only five days. I am very happy, feeling sure you approve. Our dearest, dearest love.

“Phyllis.”

A long wire also went from Barry to Mr. Robertson, the minister of the little church, where they had spent such a delightful hour that morning, but this wire Barry showed to no one.

The bride's bouquet was from the manse garden, a shower of white roses, no purer and no sweeter than the bride herself. At the church door, the party stood shrinking from the moment of parting. At length Paula took matters in hand.

“As usual,” she said, “the heavy work falls to me. Dear Mrs. Robertson”—to the minister's wife—“goodbye. I shall always love you and your dear little church.”

She put her arms around the minister's wife and kissed her.

“Oh, we're going to see them off,” said that lady. “Lead the way, Captain Dunbar, please,” she added, with a bright smile, giving him a little push.

“Come, Phyllis,” said Barry offering his wife his arm, and they started off down the street toward the lake.

“Will you permit me?” said the minister, offering his arm to Paula, who in mystified silence took it without a word.

“May I have the pleasure?” said Mr. Howland, offering his arm to Mrs. Robertson.

“Come, Captain Fraser,” she said gaily, offering him the other arm.

“Just what is happening to me, I don't pretend to know,” said Paula, “but whatever it is, America is in this thing to the finish.”

Barry stopped at the boathouse landing. There, tied to the dock, floated the Canadian canoe, laden with tent and camp outfit, and with extra baskets provided from the manse.

“Oh, Barry, how wonderful! How perfectly wonderful!” cried Paula in an ecstasy of delight.

In that farewell there were tears and smiles, but more smiles than tears. The last to touch their hands was Paula. She managed to draw them apart from the others, with her eyes glistening with unaccustomed tears. “You deserve each other. Phyllis,” she whispered, alternately shaking and kissing her, “there was a day when I would have fought you for him, until Neil came. Barry, you dear boy, you may kiss me goodbye, and oh, may you both live forever.”

“Goodbye, dear Paula,” cried Phyllis. “You have been so lovely to me from the very first. I shall never, never forget you.”

“Goodbye, Paula,” said Barry, “dearest of all dear friends.”

She stooped to steady the canoe, while Phyllis stepped to her place in the bow.

“Goodbye to all of you. God love you and keep you all,” said Barry.

He took his paddle and stepped into the canoe, Paula still stooping over it to keep it steady.

“Dear, dear Barry,” she whispered, and for the first time her tears fell. “Goodbye! Goodbye!”

Together the little company stood watching them away, Phyllis in the bow, not paddling, sat with her face toward them, Barry swinging his paddle with graceful, powerful strokes, until just at a curve of the shore, where some birches overhung the water, he swung the canoe half round, and with paddle held Voyageur fashion in salute, they passed out of sight.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PILOT'S LAST PORT

The little Canadian army was done with The Salient. The British tradition established in the third month of the war, in that first terrific twenty-two days' fight by Ypres, that that deadly convex should be no thoroughfare to Calais for the Hun, was passed on with The Salient into Canadian hands in the early months of 1915. How the little Canadian army preserved the tradition and barred “the road-hog of Europe” from the channel coast for seventeen months, let history tell, and at what cost let the dead declare who lie in unmarked graves which, following the curving line of trenches from Langemarck through Hooge and Sanctuary Wood over Observation Ridge to St. Eloi, and the dead under those little crosses that crowd the cemeteries of The Salient and of the clearing stations in the rear, and the living as well, who through life will carry the burden of enfeebled and mutilated bodies.

For seventeen months the Canadians in shallow dugouts and behind flimsy trenches endured the maddening pounding of the Huns' guns, big and little, without the satisfaction of reprisal, except in raid or counter-attack, suffering the loss of two-thirds of their entire force, but still holding. Now at length came the welcome release. They were ordered to the Somme. Welcome not simply because of escape from an experience the most trying to which an army could be subjected, but welcome chiefly because there was a chance of fighting back.

They had no illusions about that great battle area of the south, echoes of whose titanic struggle had reached them, but they longed for a chance to get back at their foe. Besides, the Somme challenged their fighting spirit. That glorious assault of the first of July of the allied armies which flung them upon the scientifically prepared, embattled and entrenched “German Frontier,” with its fortified villages, its gun stuffed woods, its massed parks of artillery, and defended by highly disciplined and superbly organised soldiery, stirred them like a bugle call. For two years the master war-makers of the world had employed scientific knowledge, ingenuity and unlimited resources upon the construction of a system of defence by means of which they hoped to defy the world, and upon which when completed they displayed the vaunting challenge, “We are ready for you; come on!”

In that great conflict there was no element of surprise. It was a deliberate testing out of strength, physical and moral. For the first time in the war the British army stood upon something like even terms in manpower and in weight of metal, with, however, the immense handicap still resting upon it that it was the attacking force. The result settled forever the question of the fighting quality of the races. When the first day's fight was done, on a battle front of twenty miles the British armies had smashed a hole seven miles wide, while their gallant allies, fighting on an eight-mile front, had captured the whole line. In two weeks' time, the seven-mile hole was widened to ten. Fortified villages, entrenched redoubts, woods stuffed with guns, great and small, had gone down before that steady, relentless, crushing advance. The full significance of the Somme had not dawned as yet upon the world. The magnitude of the

achievement was not yet estimated, but already names hitherto unknown were flung up flaming into the world's sky in letters of eternal fire, Ovillers, Mametz Wood, Trones Wood, Langueval, Mouquet Farm, Deville Wood for the British, with twenty-one thousand prisoners, and Hardecourt, Dompierre, Becquin-Court, Bussu and Fay for the French allies, with thirty-one thousand prisoners.

On that line of carefully chosen and elaborately fortified defences, the proudest of Germany's supermen of war had been beaten at their own game by the civilian soldiers of “effete and luxury loving Britain,” and the republican armies of “decadent France,” and still the Homeric fight was raging. Foot by foot, yard by yard, the Hun was fighting to hold the line which should make good his insolent claim to the hegemony of the world. Step by step, yard by yard, that line was being torn from his bloody fingers. Into that sea of fire and blood, the Canadians were to plunge. They remembered Langemarck and Sanctuary Wood and St. Eloi, and were not unwilling to make the plunge. They thought of those long months in The Salient, when the ruthless Hun from his vantage ground of overwhelming superiority had poured his deadly hail from right flank, left flank, front and rear, upon them, holding, suffering, dying, day by day, month by month, and they were grimly jubilant over the chance which the Somme offered them of evening somewhat the score.

“We have something to hand Fritzie,” young Pickles was heard to remark when he had learned of the quality of the Somme fighting, “and I hope he'll like it, for he's got to take it.”

The battalion ranks, both officers and men, had once more been filled up. They had a brief fortnight's training in the new open fighting under barrage and then set off cheerfully for the “Big Game.” Ten days they marched and countermarched in the back country, keeping clear of those two mighty streams “up” and “down,” that flowed between ditches and hedges along the road that led to the great arena, and catching glimpses and echoes as they marched until, hard, fit, keen, they joined the “upstream” flowing toward Albert. That stream was made up of those various and multifarious elements that go to constitute, equip and maintain a modern army.

There were marching battalions, with their mounted officers, bearing names and insignia famous in the world's wars for two hundred years, and with them battalions who a few brief months ago were peaceful citizens, knowing nothing of war. There were transport columns, ammunition columns, artillery columns, with mounted escorts. There were big guns, on huge caterpillar trucks, shouldering the lighter traffic to the ditches, and little guns slipping meekly in their rear. There were motor lorries, honking and thundering their insistent way through dodging, escaping, cursing infantry, forty-six miles of them to a single army corps. There were strings of mules and horses with weirdly shaped burdens on their pack saddles. There were motor cars bearing “Brass Hats,” gentle looking individuals, excessively polite, yet somehow getting men to jump when they spoke, and everywhere ambulances, silent and swift moving, before whose approach the stream parted in recognition of the right of way of these messengers of mercy over all the enginery of war.

The “down stream” was much the same, with here and there differences. That stream flowed more swiftly. The battalions marched with more buoyant tread. They had done their part and without shame. They had met their foes and seen their backs. The trucks, transport and ammunition wagons were empty and coming with a rush. Only the ambulances moved more slowly. Carefully, with watchful avoidance of ruts and holes, which, in spite of the army of road-mending Huns, broke up the surface of the pavements these ambulances made their way. They must get through no matter what was held up.

And as they flowed these streams ever and anon broke their banks and flooded over in little eddies into villages and fields, there to tarry for a day and a night, only to be caught up again in either one of those resistless inevitable currents of war.

“Look before you, major,” said Barry, who was riding with the Headquarters Company at the head of the column, as often now at the invitation of the O. C.

The column was slowly climbing a long gentle sloping hill that reached its apex some two or three miles away. On either side, spread out over the fields, as far as the eye could reach, were military encampments, in tents, in huts and in the open. Infantry units, horse lines, motor truck parks, repair camps for motors and for guns, ammunition dumps with shells piled high, supply sheds bulging with their canvas-covered

contents, Red Cross huts and marquees, and Y. M. C. A. tents with their cues of waiting soldiers, getting “eats” and drinks, and comforts of various kinds. The whole countryside was one mighty encampment packed with munitions and supplies and thronging with horses, mules and men.

“This is war on the 'grand scale,'” said the O. C. dropping back beside them. “From the top of this hill we can see Albert and a part of the most famous battle-field of all time. We camp just outside of Albert on what is known as the 'brick field,' and in a couple of days more we shall be in it. Well,” he continued, with a glance over the column following, “the boys never were more fit.”

“And never more keen,” said the major. “They are right on their toes.”

“Major, I expect to meet the divisional commander down here, and I want you to be there. Captain Dunbar, you know him, I believe. He has asked especially that you should be there as well.”

“Yes, sir, I have met the General. To my mind he is an ideal soldier.”

“Yes, and an ideal officer,” said the O. C. “He knows his job and he is always fit and keen.”

At the top of the hill, a traffic officer, a young lieutenant from the Imperial forces, diverted the column from the road into a field.

“Why is this?” inquired the O. C.

“There's the answer, sir,” said the officer coolly.

There was a long drawn whine which rapidly grew into a shriek and an H. E. shell dropped fair in the road, a short distance in front.

“Oh, I see, you have some of these birds down in this country, too.”

“Yes, sir, this is their breeding ground,” said the young lieutenant.

Once more came the long whining shriek and the terrific blast of the H. E., this time closer.

“I would not delay, sir, if I were you,” said the young chap coolly, pulling out his cigarette case. “They get rather ugly at times.”

“What about you?” inquired the O. C. moving off.

“Part of my job, sir,” replied the youth, saluting.

“Well, good luck, boy,” said the O. C., trotting to the head of the column.

“Thank you, sir,” said the youth, turning to his job again.

They rode a hundred yards, when another shell came, there was a terrific explosion, apparently just at the spot where the young officer had been standing.

“By Jove! I'm afraid that's got him,” said the O. C.

“I'll go and see, sir,” said Barry, spurring his horse back to the spot.

“Come back here, Barry,” called the major. “Darn him for a fool! What's the use of that? That isn't his job,” he added angrily.

“He thinks it is, probably,” said the O. C.

Barry found a great hole in the road with the officer's horse lying disembowelled beside it, kicking in his death agony. There was no sign of his rider anywhere. Fortunately there was a gap in the column, so that no one else was near enough to be injured.

As Barry stood gazing about, a voice hailed him from the ditch, which was several feet deep.

“I say, sir,” said the voice, “I wouldn't just stay there. They generally send over four of 'em. That's only the third. I find this ditch very convenient, though somewhat mucky.”

Barry looked at him in astonishment. He was white and shaken, covered with mud, but trying to get his cigarette case open.

“I'd get off, sir, if I were you,” he said, “until the next one comes. Quick, sir, I hear it now.”

Barry needed no second invitation. He flung himself headlong into the ditch beside the young fellow, but the shell dropped into the field beyond.

“That's as near as I like 'em,” said the young officer, scraping the mud off his clothes. “My poor, old gee-gee got it though.” He drew his revolver and shot the wounded animal. “It's hard on the horses. You see, they can't dodge,” he added.

“I say, my boy,” said Barry, for the lieutenant was only a boy, “that was a near thing for you. What are you going to do now?”

“Oh, just carry on,” said the boy. “The relief will be along in a few hours. Beastly mess, eh?” he continued, but whether he referred to the disembowelled horse or the state of his own uniform, Barry could not

say.

“You are sure you are all right?” said Barry, as he shook hands with him. “I'm awfully glad you weren't hurt.”

“So am I,” said the boy heartily. “Awfully rotten to be potted out here playing a bally policeman, eh? What? Well, good luck, sir,” and Barry rode off to join his column with a deep admiration in his heart for the English school boy who, when war began, was probably a fifth form lad, in whose life the most dangerous episode would be a ball taken full off bat at point, or a low tackle on the Rugby field.

At Divisional Headquarters, they met the general, who after a conversation with the O. C. greeted Barry warmly.

“So you have gone and done it, young man. Well, I admire your nerve, and I congratulate you. I happen to know the family very well. As a matter of fact there is some remote connection, I believe. By the way, I have a communication from London for you,” he added, drawing Barry to one side, and giving him a little slip. “I happen to know about it,” he continued, while Barry was reading his telegram, “and say, if I can be of any assistance, I shall be very glad. It's a step up, you see. I have no doubt it can be put through quite easily and quickly, and I believe the step is coming to you.”

Barry stood with his eyes upon the dispatch. It was an offer of a hospital appointment at the base, and carried with it his majority.

“I have no doubt the missus will be pleased, eh?” said the general with a grin.

Barry pulled out a letter from his pocket, opened it and handed it to the general, pointing to a paragraph. The general took it and read,

“And Barry, dear, remember that though you have a wife now, your duty to your country is still your first duty. I would hate that any thought of me should make it harder for you to carry on.”

The general folded up the letter, put it slowly into its envelope, and handed it back to Barry.

“I know her,” he said simply. “I should expect nothing else from her. You are a lucky dog, but, of course,” he added, with a swift glance at Barry's face, “some one must take that job.”

“I fancy, sir, there are many for it, who are hardly fit for this work up here,” replied Barry quietly. “I think, sir, I'll just carry on where I am.”

“You are quite sure?” inquired the general. “Don't you want a day or two to think it over?”

“I am quite sure, sir,” said Barry, “I am quite sure that my wife would approve.”

“Very well, then,” said the general, “let me handle this for you, and let me say, sir, that I am proud to have you in my division.”

So saying, he gripped Barry's hand hard, and turned abruptly away to the others.

They rode to their camp in almost complete silence, except for a grunt or two from the O. C. who seemed in a grumpy mood.

When they arrived at Headquarters, the O. C. drew up his horse and turning to the major, said,

“I don't know just what to do with this Pilot of ours. He is a fool in some ways.”

“A darned fool, sir,” said the major emphatically.

“And,” continued the major, “I am selfish enough to say that I am damned glad—I won't apologise, Pilot—that he decided to stay with us. It would have been just a little harder to carry on if he had left us.”

“Yes,” growled the major, “but, oh, well, we have got to stick it I guess. The Pilot is a soldier all right.”

There was nothing further said about the matter, but next day as Barry walked about the camp, among the men, their eyes followed him as he passed, and every officer in the mess seemed to discover an errand that took him to Barry's tent.

Two days later the Canadians moved up into the line and took over from the Australians. They followed the Bapaume Road toward Pozieres, passing through a country which had seen the heaviest fighting in the war.

“This,” said the O. C., drawing aside from the road, and riding to a slightly rising ground, “is La Boiselle, or at least where it was, and that I fancy is the famous mine crater. Sixty thousand pounds of gun cotton blew up that hole.”

There was absolutely no sign of the village, the very foundations of the

houses, and the cellars having the appearance of a ploughed field.

“That was a desperate fight,” continued the O. C. “It was here that the Middlesex men made their great charge. Fifty men reported from the battalion when it was over. In that village they had a whole division fighting before they were through, Middlesex men, Royal Scots and Irish, for three days and three nights.”

As they rode along, the guns on either side began their evening chorus and from the far rear came the roaring rush of the H. E.'s like invisible express trains hurtling through the air. It was music to their ears, and they rode forward with a new feeling in their hearts, for there appeared to be almost no reply from the enemy guns.

The battalion took to the trenches at the crossing of the Pozieres Road, and so effective was the counter-battery work that they were able to settle down into their battle positions without casualties. The R. A. P. was in a deep German dug-out thirty feet below the surface, with double entrances and heavily timbered. It had been most elaborately prepared, planked on sides and floor, and fitted with electric lights. There were two main rooms, with a connecting corridor, leading to each entrance. They found an Australian medical officer in charge.

“These chaps were regular settlers, weren't they?” said Barry, after they had exchanged greetings.

“Yes, sir, they intended to sty, apparently,” said the Australian, in his slow drawl. “We found some letters on a wounded officer indicating their intention to remyn for the durytion, but we wanted the plyce—couldn't carry on without it in fact. It's quite a good plyce, too,” he added with a cheerful grin.

“Why, it's just bully,” said the M. O. “I am only sorry that we can't promise you as good in The Salient.”

“I hear it is rather rotten, eh, sir?” said the Australian.

“Not as bad as Gallipoli, though,” said Barry. “By Jove! You Australian chaps did magnificently down there. Must have been a perfect hell.”

“Oh, yes, quite hot for a while, but I fancy you Canydians didn't have any afternoon tea party in The Sylient, eh? My word, there was some fighting there. Oh, there it comes,” he added.

As he spoke a muffled explosion was heard, and the dug-out rocked, and the candles flickered.

“Can they get you down here?” inquired the M. O.

“I fancy a direct hit from a really big H. E. would disturb our little home, but nothing else would. Of course, a shell in the door wye would be a bit awkward, you knaow,” replied the Australian.

The night, however, passed quietly, and except for a few slightly wounded walking cases, there was little work to do. The Canadians decided that in coming to the Somme, they had made a most happy exchange.

A quiet day followed the night, but the whole battalion was keyed up with intense expectation for the attack which they knew was fixed for the night following. With expectation mingled curiosity. They knew all about raiding; that was their own specialty, but they were curious as to the new style of fighting which they knew to be awaiting them, the capturing, holding and consolidating of a line of enemy trenches.

Nightfall brought the opportunity to gratify their curiosity. For two hours before the attack, their guns put down the barrage to cover the front line of enemy trenches, and to dispose of his wire.

The M. O. and Barry, with the Australian and their whole staff, made their way to a ridge a few yards distant to see the show.

“Great Heaven, what is that?” inquired the M. O., pointing to what seemed to be a line of flickering watch fires upon the crest of a neighbouring rising ground.

“Guns! Ours,” said the Australian, surprised at the M. O.'s excitement.

“Guns! My Lord, guns, Barry,” shouted the M. O.

“Guns? And in the open! And on a hill! And wheel to wheel!” cried Barry. “Thank the good Lord I have lived to see this day. Look at the boys,” he added in a low tone, to the Australian beside him.

They glanced over their shoulders and saw two of the orderlies executing a fox-trot in the heavy shell-ploughed soil.

“What's the row?” inquired the Australian.

“Why, my dear chap,” replied the M. O., “don't you know we have never seen a gun in action in the open that way. Our guns operated only from holes and corners, from hedges and cellars. Otherwise they'd be spotted and knocked out in an hour.”

“Ow!” said the Australian, “our bird men attended to that the first dye of the fight. They sye there was a double line of observation balloons along the lines, ours and theirs up to the 30th of June. The next morning not a Boche balloon was to be seen. Our plynes put their eye out in a single afternoon. Since that time, we hold over them in the air. Ah! There are the heavies coming up now. The full chorus will be on in half a minute.”

A few seconds later, the truth of the Australian's prophecy was demonstrated. The full chorus was on. For two hours the barrage raged, and the din was such that they had to shout in each other's ears to be heard. The hilltops were ringed with darting tongues of red flame as though belched out by a thousand fabled dragons. It was as if the air above was filled with millions of invisible demons, whining, moaning, barking, shrieking in a fury of venomous hate, while at regular intervals came the express train roar of the twelve, fifteen and sixteen inch guns.

“It's almost worth while to have lived through those months in The Salient,” said Barry, “to get the full enjoyment of this experience. Well do I remember the day when our O. C. asked for 'retaliation,' and was told he could have six rounds, I think it was, or eight. Meanwhile our trenches and dug-cuts were going up in bloody mud.”

“I think we might as well go below,” said the Australian. “They will be coming in presently.”

But Barry and the M. O. remained long after the first coming in shells began to drop around. That barrage so long waited for, and so ardently desired, was worth some risk.

Soon the wounded began to arrive, and throughout the whole night, the M. O. and his staff were busy at their work. On the arrival of the zero hour, the barrage lifted.

“Well, good luck go with the boys,” said the Australian, fervently. “They are out and over now. We'll get some of them presently.”

Throughout the night, a stream of walking wounded kept flowing in. Jubilant, exultant in spite of their pain, they bore with them the joyful report that they had shifted the Hun from his trenches and his deep dug-outs, and were still advancing. Singing at the top of their voices, they came limping in, bloody and muddy, but wild with exultation and joy. The day long looked for by the Canadians had arrived. They were getting something of their own back.

The next day revealed the full extent of the achievement. The whole Canadian line had swept forward for over a thousand yards, had captured strong points, a fortified sunken road, the famous “sugar refinery” and, overrunning their objective, had captured the village of Courcelette, as well. It was a gallant little fight, and quite a notable achievement.

After two days the battalion was pulled out, having suffered comparatively slight losses, and more than ready to return when the opportunity should come.

The next three weeks were spent in minor operations, consolidating positions, repelling counter-attacks, and preparing for the real “big go,” in which the Canadians were to take their part in the advance of the whole allied line, after which the battalion was sent into reserve for a few days' respite.

The Canadian line was gradually wearing thin, but the spirit of those who survived was the spirit of the whole allied line,—the spirit that claimed victory and was not to be denied. As to the nature of the task awaiting them, however, they well knew that it was to be a fight in which the last ounce of resolution and only the last ounce would carry them through to their objective.

The experiences of the allies during the past months had wrought in them a settled conviction that victory was awaiting them, and a settled resolution that that victory they would secure at all cost soever.

At length the day arrived, a dull October day, overhung with rain clouds and thick with chill mist. On the parade ground the battalion was drawn up for the service which always preceded an attack.

The operations of the past month had reduced the battalion to about half its fighting strength. Only some five hundred men, with officers barely sufficient to direct their movements, looked back at Barry through the mist as he faced them for the service.

“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation,” he read. The psalm might have been written for the occasion.

“He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence: I shall not be moved.

“My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him.

“He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence: I shall not be moved.

“In God is my salvation, and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God.

“Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us.”

Barry made only a single comment upon the psalm, “Men, nothing can move God, and nothing can move those whose trust is in God. Remember God is to be trusted.”

The reading was followed by the General Confession, the Absolution and a brief extemporary prayer, concluding with the Lord's Prayer. As Barry was mounting his horse a runner brought him an order from his divisional chief, directing him to report at the casualty clearing station in Albert for immediate duty. He carried the order to the O. C.

“Look at this!” he stormed.

“Too bad! Too bad!” said the O. C. “Rotten luck for you.”

“Look here, sir,” said Barry, “I have always gone up with the battalion, and I think—”

“I fancy they are getting on to you, Dunbar. You know you have rather shirked the C. C. S. duty,” said the O. C. with a smile.

“Isn't there some way out of this? If I got a substitute—”

“A soldier obeys orders, Captain Dunbar,” said the O. C. gravely.

“Yes, sir, I know, but—”

“And he doesn't say 'but',” continued the O. C. “No, Barry,” he added in a kindly voice, “I have no responsibility or authority in this. I'd be glad to have you come up with us. We are going into the 'big thing' this time, I know, but perhaps it's just as well. You go your way and we'll go ours. I'd like to say this to you, however, my boy, you have been a great help to me with the men.”

His tone was grave but kind, and it sent to Barry's heart a chill of foreboding. “Good-bye, Barry,” he added, shaking hands with him.

“Good-bye, sir. Good luck, sir. May I say, sir,” said Barry, “that you have helped me immensely with my duty.”

“Do you say so, Barry?” said the O. C., a note of surprise in his voice. “I'm delighted to know that.”

“God keep you, sir,” said Barry earnestly.

“Thank you, sir. We are in His keeping, aren't we?” and turning in his saddle, he gave the order to advance.

Barry rode with the column to the very mouth of the communication trench running to Pozieres, dropping into step with each company commander for a time, and leaving each with a cheery word of farewell. At the mouth of the trench, he stood watching the men as they stepped down and out of his sight, giving them a word of good cheer and good luck as they passed, and receiving in return answering smiles and greetings. Then with eyes unseeing, he rode back to camp, heavy of heart, for he knew well that many of these faces he would see no more.

The zero hour was fixed for five a. m. the following morning. As the hour drew near, Barry at his work in the C. C. S., found in his heart the words of the psalm, “My soul wait thou only upon God . . . I shall not be moved.” That wounds and death were awaiting many of them he well knew, and his prayer was that they might meet the fate appointed them with unshaken faith and courage.

By seven o'clock the wounded began to arrive and an hour later the C. A. M. C. marquee was filled to overflowing with a cue of wounded men forming outside in the falling rain. The suffering in their pale and patient faces stirred in him a poignant sympathy. There was the chaplain service tent adjoining. He ran to find the chaplain in charge.

“Tell me,” he said, “may we use your marquee for wounded men?”

“Sure thing. It will never be used for a better purpose.”

Barry returned to the O. C. of the C. C. S.

“Why not direct that a part of this stream be sent to the adjoining tent for registration, and for anti-tetanus hypodermics? These poor chaps are standing out in the rain, chilled to the bone and ready to drop.”

“For Heaven's sake do it,” said the O. C. “We are really up against it here. Can you take that off my hands?”

“I'll try,” said Barry.

In a few minutes the congestion at the door of the marquee was relieved and the wounded men, to their own vast comfort, were

bestowed upon the benches and chairs in the chaplain service tent. But something further was necessary to their comfort.

“Draper,” said Barry to the chaplain in charge of the tent, “you see these men? They have had nothing to eat since last night. They have fought a battle, been wounded, and walked out some five miles or so, since then. It's eight o'clock now. What about it?”

“What about it?” exclaimed the chaplain. “You watch me!”

He ran to the Y. M. C. A. tent, enlisted the secretary's aid and in twenty minutes they together had transported to the chaplain service tent coffee and cocoa urns, and with an organised band of assistants were supplying the wounded with warming and comforting nourishment. Never had those splendid services more quickly and effectively justified their place in the army.

With the wounded came rumours, more or less fantastic, of disaster. Something terrible had befallen the whole Canadian line. It was difficult to get at the truth. As with all rumours, they contradicted each other and left the mind in a chaos of perplexity. The battalion had run into wire, where the machine guns had found it, the battalion was practically wiped out, it had found cover in a trench and was still holding on, the O. C. was wounded, the O. C. was killed, and with him every company commander.

Again and again, Barry sent men to the signals to learn the truth, but it was found impossible to get a message through. That an overwhelming disaster had befallen his battalion was abundantly evident from the numbers of wounded. With his heart growing numb with pain he struggled with his work. Gradually, he was forced to accept as true that a large proportion of the battalion were casualties, that the O. C. was wounded, possibly dying, that many of the officers had fallen and that the remainder were still holding a precarious position, and fighting for their lives.

“I shall not be moved,” he had read to them last night. The promise was being fulfilled in the men of his battalion. They could die at the wire or in the trench, but they could not be moved. While mechanically carrying on his work, his mind was with the fighting, dying remnant of his comrades. The O. C. of the C. C. S. passing on his rounds found Barry carrying on with tears blinding his eyes so that he could hardly see the figures he was entering in his record.

“Your men are having a hell of a time, I hear,” said the O. C. “I say, boy,” he added, glancing at Barry's haggard face, “let up for a while.”

“I'm all right, sir,” said Barry, through his teeth. “Excuse me, really I'm all right. It is a bit difficult to carry on when you know that your friends are being cut to pieces, but I'm all right, sir.”

“All right, my boy,” said the O. C., “we're up against it to-day. I'll come for you in a few minutes, and we'll have a bit to eat.”

Barry shook his head. He was too sick to eat, but the O. C. knew better than he just what he wanted. In a few minutes he returned with an assistant who took Barry's place.

“Come along, boy,” said the O. C. cheerfully. “We have got to feed the living that we may care for the wounded and dying.”

“You are quite right, sir,” said Barry. “I am ashamed of myself. I'll be fit in a few minutes.”

“Don't apologise for one moment,” said the colonel, “if you felt any less deeply than you do, you'd be something less than a man. We'll get into touch with the Divisional Headquarters, and try to get the facts.”

He had no sooner reached his private room than his signaller informed him that Divisional Headquarters had just been trying to get him. It took some time, however, to get the message through. Meantime, the Colonel was handling Barry with a wise and skillful touch. He made him eat and eat heartily, seeking to divert his mind in the meantime from the disaster that had befallen the battalion to the big issues at stake, and pointing out with resolute cheerfulness that the calamity that had befallen the battalion was only a temporary setback.

“We're winning, my boy, and we're paying the price,” he said.

At length signals got the D. H. Q. and called the colonel to the phone. After a few minutes' conversation, the O. C. called Barry.

“The general wants to speak to you, padre,” and Barry with an apprehensive heart went to the phone.

“Oh, that you, Captain Dunbar?” It was the general's voice and somehow it carried with it an atmosphere of calm and cheerful confidence. “How are you getting on?”

“Oh, sir, very well. We are terribly anxious, of course.”

“That's natural,” said the general quietly. “We have had rather a serious reverse. Your whole brigade met with wire, and I fear they suffered heavily. The men behaved with great steadiness and are still splendidly holding. We are, of course, making every effort to relieve them, and with good hope of success.”

“Have you heard of my O. C.?” inquired Barry.

“I fear rather bad news, Dunbar. Indeed, I fear he is seriously wounded. We have sent him straight on to Contay. Your officers have suffered quite severely.”

“Have you heard what the casualties are, sir?”

“Not exactly,” replied the General. “We shall not know until evening, but we must be prepared for a heavy loss. By the way, can you be spared from the casualty clearing station? I hear you are doing fine work there. If you can run up, I can send my car for you.”

“I'm afraid not, sir, just now. Perhaps later on in the afternoon.”

“Let me speak to Colonel James,” said the general.

The O. C. came to the phone.

“Yes, sir,” he said.—“Well, we are short handed just now.—He is really necessary at the present moment.—Yes, later on we'll send him up.—Very well, sir.—We are doing our best.”

The calm and confident bearing of his superior officer, made Barry ashamed of the unnerving emotion from which he had been suffering all morning. He returned to his work resolved to put aside all personal considerations. The thing in which they were engaged was vastly more important than the fate of any individual or of any battalion. Victory was necessary, was guaranteed, and was demanding its price. That price was being paid, and to that price every man must make his contribution.

Toward night the stream of wounded gradually grew less, and the O. C. sent Barry, in a returning ambulance, up to the Divisional Headquarters. The serenity with which the general received him did much to restore Barry's poise, which had been severely shaken by the strain of the night and day with the wounded in the casualty clearing station and by the heartracking agony he had suffered over the loss of his comrades.

“Come in, Dunbar,” said the general kindly. “Take a seat for a few minutes. Have a cigar. These you will find are good, I think.”

“Thank you, sir. I will take a cigarette, if I may,” said Barry, helping himself from a box on the table.

He had not been many minutes in the dug-out until he began to catch the reactions of the place. The spirit was one of controlled but concentrated energy. It was the spirit of the divisional commander, and it passed from him to the humblest orderly in the room. There was swiftness of action, alertness of mind, and with these a complete absence of hurry or confusion. Runners were continually arriving with urgent messages, phones insisting upon immediate answer, officers coming in with business of vast importance, but with no sign of flurry, the work of the Divisional Headquarters went swiftly and smoothly on.

At length there was a pause in the rush of calls upon the general's attention.

“Come in this way,” he said to Barry, and led him to a smaller room at the back of the dug-out.

“Very comfortable quarters these. They seem to have done themselves quite well, haven't they? It is most convenient, for we certainly should not have taken pains to construct such elaborate dug-outs as these we have fallen heir to. Find a seat, Dunbar. I have got the latest reports.” His voice was very gentle and very kindly. “Yes,” he continued, “we have had a bad night's work. Uncut wire and an enfilade from a redoubt which should have been blown up. The casualties are very heavy.”

“What are they?” Barry asked.

“Quite heavy, Dunbar, I'm afraid. Only some fifty have reported so far.”

“Fifty!” cried Barry. “Out of five hundred!”

“There will doubtless some more drop in,” added the general, “but we must be prepared for a heavy loss, far heavier, both in officers and men, than we can afford. The Battalion Headquarters was terribly wrecked by a succession of direct hits. Only a few of the staff escaped unhurt. Colonel Leighton was a fine officer. I had a great admiration, indeed, affection, for him. I know how you felt towards him, and he to you.”

The steadiness in his voice brought quiet, but the kindness in it brought strength, and comfort. Barry became suddenly aware of the crushing load of responsibility upon this gentle-voiced man. He was

eager to help.

“I wish I could help you, sir,” he said. “I am sure we are all ready to do our best.”

“I know that, Dunbar, and all are needed. Major Duff has gone out badly injured. The only officers remaining unhurt in the front line are Major Bayne and Captain Fraser, both of whom are splendidly carrying on. And you, too, have given great help to-day. Colonel James assures me that your initiative and resourcefulness were of the greatest service to him. Oh, by the way, a message came through in a letter the other day, that I should have sent you, but other things put it out of my mind, I am sorry to say.” He touched a bell. “You see I had to tell your wife, Dunbar, of your determination to stay by us,” he added with a smile. “Get me my private post-bag, please,” he said to the orderly. He selected a letter from a packet, opened it, and pointed to a page. Barry recognised the handwriting as his wife's. He read:

“I need not assure you it was none of my family's doing to get that appointment for Barry. I was not surprised that he declined it, but then you see I know Barry. He is at the place where I would want him to be.”

Barry kept his eyes steadily upon the words until he should be sure of his voice. His heart was thrilling with pride in the girl who had given herself to him. As the moments passed, he there and then vowed that by God's grace, he would not shame her nor belie her trust in him.

“Thank you, sir,” he said quietly, handing the letter back.

“Helps a bit, eh, what?” said the general. “We can't let our women down, can we?”

“No, sir,” said Barry. “Is there nothing I can do?” His voice was as steady and quiet as the general's.

“Oh, thank you, just the C. C. S., I fancy, at present.”

At that point the door opened, and the corps commander came in, wearing a very tired and anxious face.

“Bad business, general,” he said, with a single word of greeting and ignoring Barry.

“Yes, a very bad business, sir,” said the divisional commander, and Barry fancied he caught a new note in his voice, a note of sternness, almost of challenge.

“Seems that we missed that wire, eh, along here?” said the corps commander, putting his finger upon a map which lay on the table.

“We must have that patrolled very carefully, you know.” There was a note of criticism in his voice.

“Yes, sir,” replied the corps commander courteously. “I wasn't at all sure that the wire was cut, and so reported.”

“Ah!”

“This strong point should have been removed,” continued the divisional commander, putting his finger upon a point of junction. “That I asked to be done, but McDowell seems to have missed it.”

“Ah!”

“The enfilade got us from that point, of course.” There was no mistaking the implication in the general's words.

“Ah! You reported that, eh?”

“You will find it in my report, sir. My division has suffered very heavily from that strong point.”

The corps commander turned, and apparently observing Barry for the first time started and said,

“You are—”

“My friend, Captain Dunbar,” said the general.

“Ah, Captain Dunbar,” said the corps commander, obviously annoyed at his presence at the interview. “I trust Captain Dunbar is quite—”

“Captain Dunbar's reticence,” said the general with quiet courtesy, “can be entirely trusted. He has just been doing some fine work at the C. C. S.”

“Ah, yes. You are a padre, Dunbar? Oh, I remember to have heard about you. Very glad, indeed, to meet you, sir. Well, I must be off. We'll see to that strong point at once, general. Good-night—good-night, Dunbar.”

The general returned from seeing his visitor out. “Of course, we keep these things to ourselves.”

“Of course,” answered Barry.

“And now,” said the general with a kindly smile, “I have kept the good

news to the last. Your majority is coming through, and here is a letter which came in my care. Now, if you will excuse me, I'll leave you to take a bit of a rest. There's a cot, if you want to lie down. Then we'll have a bite to eat later."

"Oh, thank you very much," said Barry eagerly, taking the letter. "This is good news, indeed. My letters have been going astray somehow. I have not had one for a week."

"As long as that," said the general with uplifted brows.

One sentence in his letter made music in Barry's heart.

"And oh, my heart's beloved, God has been good to me and to you, for when the war is over, I hope there will be two of us to welcome daddy back." To which sentence Barry in his letter, written in immediate reply, said,

"Yes, dear, dear heart, God has been good to us, in that he has given us to each other, and to us both this wonderful new life to carry on when we are done."

When the general returned, he found Barry with his face on his arms and dead asleep.

"Poor chap," he said to his batman, "he is done up. Let him rest a bit."

They gave him an hour, after which they had their bite together.

"Now, general," said Barry, "I should like to run up to Battalion Headquarters. I might be of use there."

"That's quite all right," said the general. "You will be glad to know that that strong point has already been attended to. You didn't hear the row, did you?"

"No, sir."

"Well the relief is going in and your men will soon be out."

When Barry entered the Battalion Headquarters, he found only Major Bayne and Captain Neil, with a signaller and a couple of runners, completing the arrangements for the relief.

"You! Pilot!" exclaimed the major, as he gripped his hand. "Now what the devil brought you here?"

"Couldn't help it, major. Simply had to come. I have been trying to get you all day," said Barry.

"Awfully glad to see you, old chap," said Captain Neil, for the major was finding difficulty with his speech.

"How many left, major?" said Barry.

"Five officers and seventy men," said the major in a husky voice. "My God, how those boys stuck."

"I shall not be moved," quoted Barry.

"That's it! That's it!" said the major. "Not the devil himself, let alone the Huns, could move them back from that wire. What is it, Sergeant Matthews?" he inquired of the sergeant who came in at that moment. "Have you completed your work?"

Sergeant Matthews was pale, panting and exhausted. "Yes, sir," he said, "I think so. I didn't—I didn't—go quite the full length of the trench. The boys said there was no one up there."

"But, Sergeant Matthews," thundered the major, "your orders were to go to the very end of the trench. You know this battalion never goes out leaving its wounded behind."

"We had a full load, sir," said the sergeant, leaning against the wall.

"Well, you will have to go back," said the major, "and complete the job. Can you carry on?"

"Yes, sir, I think so, sir."

As he spoke Sergeant Matthews swayed along the wall and collapsed onto a bench.

"Give him a shot of rum," said the major curtly to a runner.

"Let me go, major. I'll take the party," said Barry eagerly. "The sergeant is all in. I've had an hour's sleep and a feed and I feel quite fit."

"Oh, nonsense, the sergeant will be all right soon," said the major impatiently.

"But, major, I should like to go. The sergeant is played out and I am perfectly fit. We can't take the risk of leaving wounded men up there in that trench. Besides, there's little danger now. The strong point is blown up, so the general told me before I left."

"No, Barry, I won't allow it. I won't take the chance," said the major. "My God, man! there are only five officers left. I have lost every friend I have got in the battalion, except Neil here and you. I'm damned if I'm

going to let you go out over No Man's Land."

"Steady, now, major," said Barry. "I'm going to take a walk to the end of that trench, just in case one of the boys should be there. Don't say no. It must be done and done carefully."

"All right, Barry," said the major, suddenly yielding. "Better take the sergeant with you. He knows the way, and I guess he's all right now."

The major and Captain Neil followed the party up the stairs and out into the trench. It was a beautiful starry night, and all was quiet now along the front.

"I don't like it," said the major, as he and Captain Neil stood together watching the party away. "I feel queer about it, Neil. I tell you I wish I hadn't let him go, but he is so darned stubborn about what he thinks is his duty."

"By Jove! Major, he always bucks me up somehow," said Captain Neil.

"Bucks us all up," said the major, and he turned to take up again the heavy burden of responsibility so suddenly and so terribly laid upon him. The relief had been completed, and the last N. C. O. had just reported "all clear." The Headquarters Company, now reduced to a poor half dozen, were standing ready to move, when the telephone rang.

"Yes, doctor," said the major, answering it. "Oh, my God! My God! Not that, doctor! Oh, God help us all! I'll be right down. It's the Pilot, Neil," he said, turning to his friend. "Just take charge, will you please. I must run."

Breathless he arrived at the R. A. P.

"Any chance, doctor?" he asked of the M. O. who was standing awaiting him at the door.

"Not the very least, major, and he only has a few minutes. He wants you."

"Now, may God help me," said the major standing quite still a moment or two. "How did he get it?" he asked of a stretcher bearer. "Do you know?"

"Yes, sir, we had just picked up the last man. Sergeant Matthews got a wound in the leg, and we had to carry him. Just as we started, they got to shelling pretty bad and we dropped into a hole. I looked over my shoulder and there was the Pilot, the chaplain, sir, I mean, with his body spread over Sergeant Matthews, to keep off the shrapnel. It was there he got it."

"Damn Sergeant Matthews," exclaimed the major, and passed on.

Barry was lying on a stretcher, very white and very still, but the smile with which he welcomed the major was very bright.

"Awfully sorry—for you,—old chap," he whispered. "Couldn't really—help—it—you know—we—got—them all—I'm—awfully—glad—to see you—just a minute—before—before—"

The major, by this time, was weeping quietly.

"You have—been—a good friend—to me—major—. We—have had—a good—time—together—. Say—goodbye—to—the boys—for—me—and——to to—Neil."

"Oh, Barry, boy," said the major, brokenly. "It's hard to have you go. You have helped us all."

Barry fumbled with weak fingers at his breast. The major opened his tunic thinking that he needed air.

"My—my—let-ter—" he whispered.

The major took the letter from his breast pocket, and put it in his hand. Barry held it a moment, then carried it to his lips.

"Now—that's—all—major," he whispered. "Tell—her—I—thank—God—for—her—and—for—the—other. Major—tell—the boys—that—God—is good—. Never—to be—afraid—but to—carry on—"

It was his last word, and there could be no better. "God is good. Never be afraid but carry on."

CHAPTER XX

"CARRY ON"

The next day but one they carried the Pilot to his grave in the little plot

outside the walled cemetery on the outskirts of the city of Albert. It had been arranged that only a small guard should follow to the grave. But this plan was changed. Sergeant Mackay, who was the only sergeant left after consulting “the boys,” came to Major Bayne.

“The boys feel bad, sir,” he said, “that they can't go with the Pilot, excuse me, sir, the chaplain.”

“Do they?” said the major. “We want to avoid congestion in the streets, and besides we don't want to expose the men. They are still shelling the city, you know.”

“I know, sir,” replied the sergeant. “The boys have heard the shells before, sir. And there's not so many of them that they will crowd the streets much.”

“Let them go, sergeant,” said the major, and Sergeant Mackay went back with the word to the men. “And I want you to look like soldiers,” said the sergeant, “for remember we are following a soldier to his grave.”

And look like soldiers they did with every button and bayonet shining, as they had never shone for battalion inspection.

They had passed through an experience which had left them dazed; they had marched deliberately into the mouth of hell and had come back stunned by what they had seen and heard, incapable of emotion. So they thought, till they learned that the Pilot had been killed. Then they knew that grief was still possible to them. With their grief mingled a kind of inexplicable wrath at the manner of his death.

“If it had been the O. C. now, or any one else but Fatty Matthews,” said Sergeant Mackay in disgust, expressing the general opinion. “It is an awful waste.”

Under the figure of the Virgin and Child, leaning out in pity and appeal over the shattered city, through marching battalions “going in” and “coming out,” the little pitiful remnant made its way, the band leading, the Brigade and Divisional Headquarters Staffs bringing up in the rear. The service was brief and simple, a brother chaplain reading at the major's suggestion the Psalm which Barry had read at his last Parade Service with the battalion.

At the conclusion of the service, the divisional commander stepped forward and said,

“May I offer the officers and men of this battalion my respectful sympathy with them in the loss of their chaplain? During these last weeks, I had come to know him well. Captain Dunbar was a chaplain in his brigade. He was more. He was a gallant officer, a brave soldier, a loyal-hearted Canadian. The morale of this division is higher to-day because he has been with us. He did his duty to his country, to his comrades, to his God. What more can we ask than this, for ourselves and for our comrades?”

Then there was a little pause and Major Bayne began to speak. At first his voice was husky and tremulous, but as he went on, it gathered strength and clearness. He reminded them how, when the chaplain came to them first, they did not understand him, nor treat him quite fairly, but how in these last months, he had carried the confidence, and the love, of every officer and man in the battalion.

“Were the Commanding Officer here to-day, he would tell, as I have often heard him tell, how greatly the chaplain had contributed to the discipline and to the morale of this battalion. He helped us all to be better soldiers and better men. He never shrank from danger. He never faltered in duty. He lived to help his comrades and to save a comrade he gave his life at last.”

The major paused, looked round upon the gallant remnant of a once splendid battalion, his lips quivering, his eyes running over with tears. But he pulled himself together, and continued with steady voice to the end.

“But not to say these things am I speaking to you today. I wish only to give you this last message from our Sky Pilot. This is the Pilot's last message: 'Tell the boys that God is good, and when they are afraid, to trust Him, and “carry on.”' And for myself, men, I want to say that he was the only man that showed me what God is like.”

In that company of men who had looked steadfastly into the face of death, there were no eyes without tears, many of them were openly weeping.

When the major had finished, the officers present, beginning with the divisional commander, came and stood at the head of the open grave for a single moment, then silently saluted and turned away. It was the duty

of Bugler Pat McCann to sound “The Last Post,” but poor Pat was too overcome with his sobbing at once to perform this last duty. Whereupon the runner Pickles, standing with rigid, stony face beside his chum, took the bugle from his hands and there sounded forth that most beautiful and most poignant of all musical sounds known to British soldiers the world over, “The Last Post,” ending with that last, high, long-drawn, heart-piercing note of farewell.

Then, because the war was yet to be won, they “carried on,” the battalion marching away to a merry tune.

Beside Barry's grave there still lingered three men, the divisional commander, Major Bayne, and Captain Neil.

“I am thinking of that little girl in London,” said the divisional commander, and for the first time his voice broke. The others waited, looking at him. “We will hold back this news for a couple of days, and I think, major, you ought to go and—”

“No, general!—My God, no! Don't ask me!” The major was profoundly agitated. “Send Neil, here. He knows her well, and his wife is her great friend.”

“Very well, major, I think that will be better,” said the general in his courteous, gentle voice. “You know her, Captain Fraser, and you can be better spared.”

And so it was arranged. Captain Neil telegraphed Paula to meet him at Boulogne, and together they made the journey to London, carrying with them sad and fearful hearts.

They found Phyllis in a little flat which her mother had taken. When she saw them her face went white, and her hands flew to her bosom. Speechless, and with a great fear in her wide-open brown eyes, she stood looking from one to the other, waiting for their message. Paula went to her and without a word put her arms round her, and held her close.

“I know, Paula,” she said, putting her gently away from her. “I know what you have to tell me. Barry is dead. My dear love is dead!” Her voice was tender, soft and low. “Don't fear to tell me, Neil,” she said. “See, I am quite steady.” She put out her hand that he might see that there was no tremour in it.

“Sit down, darling,” besought Paula, again winding her arms about her.

“No, no, let me stand, Paula dear. See, I am quite strong. Now tell me about it, Neil—all about it. You were his dear friend, you know.”

Her voice, so sweet, so soft, so perfectly controlled, helped Captain Neil with his task. It seemed an offence that he should intrude any exhibition of grief or emotion upon the serene calm of this young girl, standing so straight, so proud, and regarding him with such brave eyes.

Then Captain Neil told his tale. He began with the last service upon the Parade Ground before the battalion moved into action. He told of Barry's bitter disappointment, and of their relief that he was not allowed to accompany them to the front line. He told of Barry's long day at the casualty clearing station, and of his service to the wounded, and of how good the divisional commander had been to him that night.

“It was there he got your letter, Phyllis.”

“Oh, he got my letter. I'm so glad,” whispered the girl, with a quick breath and a sudden flushing of her pale cheeks. “He knew! He knew!”

“I have his letter in reply here,” said Captain Neil, handing it to her.

She took it in both her hands, kissed it tenderly, as if caressing a child, and put it in her bosom.

“Please go on,” she said, and Captain Neil took up his tale again. He told how the major tried to persuade him not to go out after the wounded that night.

“But, of course, he would go,” the girl said with a proud little smile, at which Captain Neil's self-control quite gave way, and he could only look at her piteously through his tears.

“Oh, I'm so sorry,” she said gently. “Can't you go on? I want to hear so much every bit, but if you can't—”

At which, Captain Neil gripped himself hard and went on, “and so he went out, and they searched the trench from end to end. They found one poor chap, whose leg was badly smashed—”

“Oh, I'm so glad they found him,” whispered Phyllis.

“Then Sergeant Matthews got his wound, and the shells began to fall. They took refuge in a shell hole, and there, while covering Fatty Matthews from the breaking shrapnel, Barry got his wound.”

Captain Neil was forced to pause again in the recital of his story. After a few minutes, he told of how they carried him to his grave, and laid him in the cemetery outside the city of Albert.

“The boys were all there. There were not many of them left,” he said.

“How many?” she asked.

“Seventy only, out of five hundred and four who went over the parapet two nights before.”

“Ah, poor, gallant boys! I love them, I love them all!” said the girl, clasping her hands together.

“They were all terribly broken up as they stood about the grave, and no wonder! No wonder! Then the divisional commander made a little speech, and then our own major gave them Barry's last message.”

“Tell me,” said the girl gently, as Captain Neil paused.

“It was this,” said Captain Neil. “'Tell the boys that God is good, and when they are afraid, to trust Him, and “carry on.”'”

“That was like him,” she said. “That was like Barry! Oh, Paula,” she cried, turning to her friend. “I'm so happy! It was a beautiful closing to a beautiful life. He was a beautiful boy, Paula, wasn't he? His body was beautiful, his soul was beautiful, his life was beautiful, and the ending, oh, was beautiful. Oh, Paula, God is good. I am so glad he gave Barry to me, and gave me to him. Oh, I'm so—happy—so—happy.” Her voice sank into a whisper. Then after a few moments of silence, with a little piteous cry, she suddenly broke forth, “But Paula! Paula! he is gone. I shall never see him again.”

Paula held her arms tightly about her, sobbing as if her own heart were broken, but Phyllis recovered herself quickly.

“No, no,” she said softly, as if counselling her own heart. “I must remember. 'God is good,' he said, and so, Paula, I must not be afraid. God was good to him. He will be good to me. He will be good to his child.” Her voice sank again into a whisper. She stood silent with eyes looking into the far distance. Then, in a clear, firm voice, she said, “I will not be afraid! God is good! I will 'carry on.'”

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