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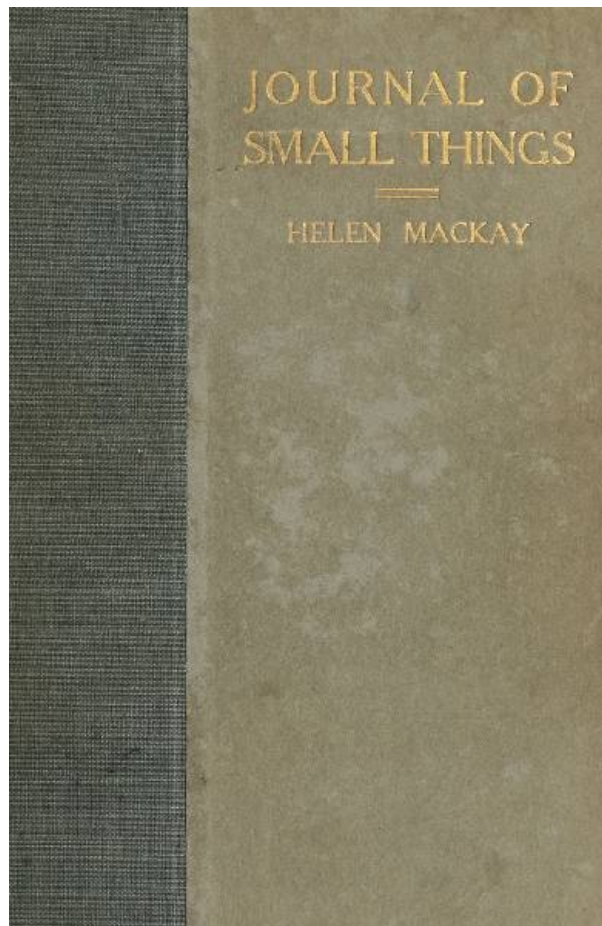
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JOURNAL OF SMALL THINGS

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*Other Books by Helen Mackay*

Accidentals  
Stories for Pictures  
The Cobweb Cloak  
Half Loaves  
Houses of Glass  
London one November

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## JOURNAL OF SMALL THINGS

BY  
HELEN MACKAY



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DUFFIELD AND COMPANY  
1917

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FOR  
MARGARET

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### PREFACE

Those who have read Mrs. Mackay's book, which she entitled *Accidentals*, will know exactly what to expect from her new book, *Journal of Small Things*. Like the early one it consists of a series of little sketches more or less in the form of a diary, vignettes taken from a very individual angle of vision, pictures in which the hand of the painter moves with exquisite fineness. They are singularly graceful, very delicate and also very pathetic, these random memories of a sympathetic friend of France, who describes what she saw during the opening stages of the war in Paris and in provincial towns. The precise quality of them is that they are extremely individual and intimately concerned with little things—episodes half observed, half forgotten, which cluster round a big tragedy. The author's mind is bent on the record of such little things as might escape some observer's notice, but which to her give all the salt and savour to her experiences.

Listen to this. "I want to make notes of things, not of the great things that are happening, but of

the little things. I want to feel especially all the little everyday dear accustomed things, to take hold of the moods of them, and gather up their memories, to be put away and kept, and turned back to from always afterwards. It is as if they were things soon to be gone away out of the world and never to be again."

Wherever she moves, Mrs. Mackay carries with her this exquisite sensitiveness to things which we might rashly call insignificant or unessential, and it adds immensely to the poignancy of her sketches and to the truth of her record. How valuable is her method we can judge from another extract concerned with "The River." "I know why the river goes so slowly, lingering as much as ever she can, and a little sadly. It is because just here she leaves behind her youth and wildness of great mountains, her mood of snows and rocks, cascade and woods and high rough pastures, cow-bells and mountain-horn. Going down into the classic countries, infinitely old, those deep, rich countries, she pauses here, between the high clear lift and lilt and thrill of mountain music and the cadenced melody of Provence."

The figures of the narrative are for the most part only outlined against this background of vividly remembered things. But however faint the tracery, the character clearly emerges. Whether it be Madame Marthe, or the apache girl Alice, or Claire, or the old Curé who was going to preach a fierce sermon until his eyes fell upon the pathetic upward look of his congregation, and especially of Madelon, and then forgot all his harsh words—from beginning to end the various figures live and move before our eyes. The record is sad of course; it could not be otherwise than full of a keen pathos almost unrelieved. But there is never any false sentiment nor any touch of the vulgar or commonplace. Mrs. Mackay's book is the work of a sincere and genuine artist.

W. L. COURTNEY.

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## PART I

### From a House on a Road to Paris

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From a House on a Road to Paris

**Sunday, July 26th, 1914**

When we came back from Mass, up from the village by the rue du Château and through the park and the garden, the yesterday's papers were arrived from Paris.

I delayed down in the parterres, it was so beautiful. There had been rain, and the sunshine was golden and thick on all the wet sweet things, the earth of the paths, the box edges, the clipped yews, the grass of the lawns, the roses and heliotrope and petunias in the stately garden beds.

There is a certain smell in old formal gardens, that seems to me always to mean France. It is like the stab of an arrow. I feel it, swiftly, in my heart, and stop and hold my breath, and say, "This is France."

The news in the papers was strange.

We thought we would go to the village, to the Place, and feel what the village felt.

We went along the terrace and around between the south tower and the moat to the entrance court, and across the moat bridge, where the watch-dogs were chained one on either side, to the green court, and out of the big wrought-iron, vine-covered gates, to the Place aux Armes.

All the village was there in its Sunday dress, under the lime trees.

The swallows were flying, high about the Dungeon Tower and low across the big old grassy cobbles of the Place. They were crying their strange little cry. I thought, "They are calling for storm." And yet the sky was blue and gold behind the Dungeon Tower.

We went to get the papers in the little dark shop that smells of spices and beeswax and shoe leather.

I asked: What did Monsieur Créty think of the chances of war?

He shrugged his old shoulders, and said he had some fine fresh chocolate and nougat out from Paris.

We went back and read the papers and ate the chocolates and nougat on the terrace.

A host of little white butterflies kept clouding over the terrace steps, between the pots of roses and heliotrope.

There was a great brief thunderstorm while we were at lunch, and then the sun came out.

We motored through the wet sunshiny country, softly dipped and softly lifted, blue-green forest and wide ripe harvest fields, blue and purple and crimson beet fields, long low brown and rust-red towns with square church towers, Sunday people out in the doorways, and swallows always flying low and crying.

[1]

[2]

[3]

[4]

[5]

We had tea in Soissons, at Maurizi's, and went to the cathedral, where the offices were over, and to the pastrycook's, Monsieur Pigot's, to buy some cherry tarts.

Home by the long straight road between the poplars.

It was so cold suddenly that one imagined autumn. There was a wind come up, and some yellow leaves were flying with it.

After dinner we had a fire lighted in the tiled room. The heat brought out all the sweetness of the roses in the blue bowls, and the flames sent lovely lights and shadows to play along the old stone walls.

I do not think I would be afraid if it were not for my dreams.

Every night I have dreamed of galloping horses and thunder—or cannon, I don't know which—and of blood, dripping and dripping down the château stairs. I see the blood in red pools on the worn old grey stones of the stairs, and in black stains on the new carpet. Some of the nights I have stayed up, walking the floor of my room that I might not sleep and dream so horribly.

[6]

## Monday, July 27th

The papers make things look better; we think it cannot be, cannot possibly be.

But I am always afraid, because of my dreams. My dreams have been very bad all night.

I was in the potager most of the morning, working hard.

In the afternoon some neighbors came to tea. They came from quite far, motoring across the forests, and none of them had known the house.

I loved showing them the old place that is not mine, the colours that are faded and worn till they have become beautiful, the things that by much belonging together are fallen into harmony.

I do not believe that the people of these old houses can love them quite as hopelessly as strangers do.

There is a certain special peculiar château smell, that trails down long galleries, and lingers on the stairs, that lurks in far corners of the rooms, and abides in all the cupboards, and behind the tapestries, and in the big carved chests, that clings to wood and waxed floors and stone, and stirs along the heavy sombre walls, and that means France, like the smell of old gardens of box and yew. It stabs one—always the arrowy perfume—and makes one feel France with an odd intensity. From a far way off one would be homesick remembering it.

[7]

We had Monsieur Pigot's tarts for tea, and sat for a long time about the dining-room table, talking of how afraid we had been of war, yesterday.

We went up into the Dungeon Tower and down into the souterrains, and then all along the rampart walls.

I love the way the little town crowds up close to the ramparts, the cobbled grass-grown streets, the roofs all softened and coloured by ages and weathers.

A child laughed down in the street; a woman called to it; there was a scamper of little feet, and the two of them were laughing together.

Off beyond the roofs we could see the blonde of the ripe grain fields, and the purple of the forests.

I had so intensely a sense of its all being for the last time. I said to Manon, "It can't last, it is too beautiful."

[8]

## Tuesday, July 28th

One feels, in all these days, as if there were a great storm coming up. I keep thinking all of the time, there is a great storm coming up. That is an absurd thing to make note of, as if it had some strange meaning, as if it were not just that in all these days, really, always there is a storm coming up.

I never have known such storms, nor yet such sunsets. The sunsets are like the reflection of great battlefields beyond the world. One is frightened because of the sunsets, more than because of the storms. Every day while the sun shines there is the rumble of thunder about all the horizon. It is like the cannon of my dreams. All the time, while the sun shines, great thunder-clouds are gathering upon the horizon, mounting up from the horizon, white and yellow, and purple and black. The sunshine is heavy, and thick; you do not know if the sky is dark blue or purple, and at sunset the dark cloud-shapes threaten and menace.

Whatever one does, one has the feeling of doing it before the storm, in the teeth of the storm. When the storm does come, with its crashing and blinding, it brings no relief. It is as if these midsummer storms meant something for which the whole world waited.

[9]

And that feeling of the end of things grows always stronger. There is no reason. Nobody, here at least, troubles about war.

This morning we were caught by a wonderful thunderstorm out in the fields.

Now from the terrace we are watching the sunset, all of thunder-clouds, purple and blue and black, and of fire.

Three of the white peacocks have come up to tea with us, under the big cedar.

### Wednesday, July 29th, late of the night

I went up to Paris. I thought if I could feel how Paris felt to-day, I would know if the menace is real. Here one knows nothing.

There is sunshine and rain, and the fields are white to the harvest, the heat hangs over the long white roads, and the shade of the forests is grateful.

The people of the little town go about their ways; their sabots clatter on the cobbles, and their voices have part with the shrilling of cigale and the call of the swallows. The children out of school, at noon and at sunset, play in the Place aux Armes, and the women come there to market in the mornings, under the limes, and after work the men lounge there against the moat wall. [10]

But since Sunday I have so strange a feeling, a sense of its being the end of things. The end of—I don't know what. I want to make notes of things, not of the great things that are happening, but of the little things. I want to feel especially all the little everyday dear accustomed things, to take hold of the moods of them, and gather up their memories, to be put away and kept, and turned back to always afterwards.

I want to make notes of the sweetness of my room to wake to, all the garden coming in through the drawn blinds.

I want to put away and keep my memory of the fragrance of the garden, and its little voices, bird and bee and grasshopper and cricket and stirring leaf. I want to remember things I saw from my window—the terrace with its grey stone mossy parapet; the steps between the pots of heliotrope and roses; the parterres, the old vague statues, the crouching sphynxes—beautiful because they are broken and deep in roses—the trimmed yews, the paths and box borders and formal beds of flowers; the wall of trees around; the glimpses through the trees of the town's stained, blurred roofs, and of grain fields and the forests. [11]

I want to remember the little clover leaf table for my breakfast tray, the bowl of sweet-peas, the taste of the raspberries.

I want to remember the Long Gallery, the château smell in it; the clear green stir of the limes in the entrance court under its windows; the stairs that I kept dreaming about, with the dark Spanish pictures hung along them, and the armour on their turnings.

I want to remember the bird's nest in the lantern over the entrance door, and the begonias in the beds along the wall; the big dogs dragging at their chains to come and meet me, the huge tumbling puppy, the gardener's babies, Thérèse and Robert, bringing Thérèse's new rag doll to show me.

I started, motoring, only about 10 o'clock for Paris.

It was market day in the Place; there were the rust-red and burnt-umber awnings and the women's blue aprons and clattering sabots.

There were many magpies in the road. "Une pie, tant pis; deux pies, tant mieux," and one must bow nine times to each of them.

The country was dim and blue in the gauze lights of the morning. The road was empty between the poplar trees. It was good to see the peasants at work in the fields, and the life of the villages going its way in the morning streets. [12]

I tried to get the papers in Compiègne, but they were not yet come.

There were many soldiers about.

It was the road through Senlis and Chantilly.

The trainers had the race-horses out at exercise in the misty forest roads.

I thought, "There *can't* be war."

Luzarches and Ecoeu, and St. Denis and then Paris.

I got out of the car on the boulevards. There were many people out and I went with the swing of the crowd up and down. It was good to be in the swing of a crowd. People hurried and people dallied; people stood and looked into shop windows; people sat and sipped things on café terraces; people pushed and elbowed; people stopped and stood where they were, reading the noon papers; strangers spoke to one another, if the swing of the crowd threw them for an instant together; everybody looked at one another with a queer new sudden need of each the other, and they all felt, more or less, one thing together.

After a while I went to my own home.

I thought I had never seen the Place de la Concorde more beautiful, oval and white, or crossed the bridge with a deeper sense of going home. [13]

My own little Place was very quiet, all the big houses closed; nobody left but the sentinels before the Palace and the concierges in their doorways with their cats and canaries.

Our concierges and I were more glad even than usual to see one another. Old Boudet in his habitual shirt-sleeves, feeling, evidently, particularly socialistic, was yet quite tolerant of me; and sweet, slow, fat, very respectable mother Boudet, whose gentleness always seems begging one to

excuse shirt-sleeves and politics, was so ready to cry that I kissed her.

Our rooms were sad, things moved back and covered over, blinds closed. I did not stay long in those rooms.

I did not try to see any one. It was not people I had wanted, only Paris. I started back early.

I want to remember all the things of the way back into the country; every thing of the fields, red warm ploughed earth and fresh-cut grass and tall clover; every thing of the forests, lights and mists and shadows, depths of moss and fern; every thing of the villages, stone stairways and hearth fires, the pot-au-feu, cows and people's living.

At Compiègne I stopped in the Grand' Place to read the news scrawled in chalk on the blackboard before the Mairie. [14]

A sense of things that were happening came to me less from the words on the bulletin than from the faces of the people in the crowd before it.

### Thursday, July 30th

Early in the morning a friend of mine telephoned from her people's château across the two forests, to tell me that her husband was arranging for her to take the babies to-morrow up to Paris.

He said that in '70 the Germans had come that way, by the grand old historic road, down upon Paris. The château had then passed through dreadful times. If there were war he would have to go out on the first day. He would have his babies then far off from the danger he did not, of course, believe in.

She told me all he said. She thought it was a great bother. Would we come over that afternoon to tea?

I picked sweet-peas and raspberries down by the well, and wrote a lot of letters in my north-tower room.

That her husband felt like that about it, filled me with a sense of disaster—like the thunder and red I kept dreaming of. [15]

We motored over after lunch, through the soft, vague, intimate country that has no especial beauty and that is so beautiful.

Some one called to us from the children's wing. It was "Miss," and she said, "No one will come to the door; go straight in, Madame is there. We are leaving, now, in five minutes."

The children's mother stood half-way down the long white gallery.

She looked very small and young.

She said, "He won't let us wait till to-morrow. He has telephoned. We are going now, in five minutes."

Down the long white length of the gallery, we saw the children's grandmother in the billiard-room, sitting against the big south window.

She had the little baby in her arms, and the two bigger ones stood close against her.

I went to her.

She said, "You see, I am minding the babies."

She said that just because one had to say something and not cry.

We went away quickly.

Wide misty fields under another red war sunset. I thought, how one felt war in the sunset.

As we went, dusk came, gathering, deepening, very soft and kind. The fields and sky were darkly blue. There was a clear edge of the world, between the fields and the sky. And over the edge of the world there was a slim little new white moon. [16]

There was a small clear singing of field birds in the dusk, and there were bats abroad, and swallows.

### Friday, July 31st

The beggars came as usual to the château for their Friday morning sous. There were the usual dozen of them; old men, and women with babies, and old women, and Margotte, the girl who was *innocente*, with her nodding head and hands that would never keep still. They came out of their holes in the marble quarries, and from nobody knew quite where, according to their long custom. All that was just as usual. But they were not as usual.

They were angry because Venus and Olga, the great Danes of the moat bridge, barked at them. Venus and Olga always barked at them, but the beggars never had been angry before. Before, they had been, always, apologetic and conciliatory. [17]

An old woman with wild white hair screamed at the butler who came with the sous, and a young woman with a baby in her arms and two babies hiding in her skirts, shook her fist at the château windows. There was a sound of growling, snarling voices, more ugly than the dogs' barking, in

the court of the lime trees.

I went out to talk with the beggars. I was afraid of them, ridiculously and terribly, as one is afraid of things in dreams. That especially terrible fear which belongs to dreams, exaggerated, absurd, seemed to be fallen, suddenly, somehow, upon everything.

I was afraid of the wild white hair of the old woman in the shawl, and of Margotte's twitching, clutching, crazy hands.

I do not want to write about this day. I will always try not to remember it.

After dinner we walked in the garden and along the rampart walls. We went to feed the rabbits. How absurd to be heartbroken because it may be the last time that we ever shall feed cabbage-leaves to the rabbits!

Now, writing in the north-tower room, I feel a strange commotion in the village. How wide-awake the village is, so late! There are footsteps going up and down the streets, up and down, and voices, under the ramparts. The sound of footsteps and voices is strange in the night. Why are the people going up and down like that? Of what are they talking? There is the sound of a drum. [18]

The sound of the drum comes across the moat, past the Dungeon Tower, through the lime trees of the entrance court, along the dim halls and corridors.

The drumming stops.

A man's voice takes up the reading out, very loud, of something, to the hush that has fallen on footsteps and voices.

### **Saturday, August 1st**

This has been the day of waiting. Everywhere, every one waited.

In the Place aux Armes people stood and waited. The men waited to be told what to do. The women waited, each one of them staying close to her man. The children hung on to their fathers' hands.

In all the little towns along the road to Paris it was like that.

In the larger towns there was much movement of soldiers about in the streets. All the red képis were covered with blue. I wondered why. [19]

The fields were empty. The work of the fields was left, flung down. The scythe lay in the sweep it had only half cut.

From Louvres already the men were gone. Only women and old people and children were left, in the length of the long street.

At the porte de La Chapelle we and a hay-cart going into Paris, and a small poor funeral coming out to the cemetery of St. Ouen, were all blocked together. The gendarmes were questioning the peasant of the hay-cart, who stood in his blue blouse at the head of a big sleepy white horse, and answered sulkily. One of the croquemorts told us that the order for general mobilization was posted up on the walls of Paris. I stared at his shiny top hat and black gloves that were too long in the fingers, and tried to realize what it meant.

The streets of our quarter are empty, and more strange than the streets and the boulevards we came through, where crowds were swaying up and down.

Madame Boudet and I were afraid to go across and read the words of the white oblong placard that is pasted up on the wall of the Palace. [20]

### **Paris, Sunday, August 2nd**

First day of the mobilization, the state of siege is declared throughout France.

Already the many gardens of this old quarter are deep in the colours and odours and melancholy of autumn, and give autumn's fatefulness and foreboding to all the streets and rooms. I thought when I waked to it, has this sense of autumn always meant the end of many more things than summer?

With one's coffee to read—

First day of the mobilization, the state of war is declared throughout France.

How silent this Paris is, this special part of Paris, of houses that close proud heavy doors upon all they feel, of streets withdrawn from thronging and demonstration.

In my room it is like waking to the silence that is beyond the end of the world.

So this is one way war begins, not with shouting and singing, but with a great silence. [21]

### **Monday, August 3rd**

They go. They all go. There is nothing I can say of it. I can only feel it, as they go.

I, I am a stranger, I have no part in it. I have no right to agony and pride.

I went and sat on a bench in the Cour la Reine, where already the leaves are falling.



One of my friends came and met me there, and we sat on the bench together, where the yellow leaves fell slowly. We never talked at all.

Her husband had gone the night before.

She said, "I am so glad that it is *now*, when my boy is just a baby." She said, "I have prayed, and prayed, all these days, if it has got to be, let it be now, when my son is just a baby."

### **Tuesday, August 4th**

Other people will write beautiful things of it—it is so beautiful.

How beautiful it is, this going forth of all that is young and gay and fearless, of all that means our ideal and our faith, without singing and shouting, to battle.

There are no grand words, they only go.

And none of the women cry, till afterwards.

[22]

You see them laughing as they help their boys carry the bundles.

And you see them coming home through the streets afterwards, each one alone and proud, crying quite noiselessly.

Sometimes the people who feel things most, remember only the smallest things.

There was an old woman with a push-cart full of pears, this morning, in the rue Boissy d'Anglas, who ran and ran as fast as she could, panting, out of breath, to give her pears, all of them, to the blue boys of an infantry regiment passing with their blankets and knapsacks.

I remember that, and that it was a beautiful blue-and-gold day, with a flaming, thundering sunset.

### **Wednesday, August 5th**

I keep thinking back over those last days of peace, that were so precious, and nobody knew.

The Sunday that was to be the last, what memories has it given the women to treasure, the men to carry away with them? Memories of such small absurd things have become sacred, or become terrible. The men may lose those memories in their great spaces of battle, but the women must stay with them in the rooms.

[23]

Against the great background of these days it is queer what small absurd things stand out. The greatest days of all the world—and how terribly worried we are that Louis has gone off without his little package of twenty-four hours' provision, the bread and chocolate and little flask. It was ready for him and on the table in the hall, and every one forgot it; and he was gone, and there it was, a ridiculous thing to sob over.

Those women who did not cry at the station, what absurd things they sobbed over, afterwards, at home—his golf sticks in the corner, his untidy writing-table, the clothes, all sorts, he had left flung about the room. How many of them will remember always that second pair of boots he had to take with him, that simply couldn't be got, that had to be hunted over Paris for, desperately, as if of utmost importance, all his last day? However could she have got through that last day if it had not been that she must keep up because of the boots?

In the afternoon, at the Rond Point of the Champs Elysées, my fiacre was held up for the passing of a regiment on its way to some station. A woman and a little boy were marching along beside one of the men, going with him just as far as they might go. The woman had no hat, and the sun was very hot. Her hair was tumbled across her eyes. The little boy was holding tight to the edge of his father's long blue coat.

[24]

### **Thursday, August 6th**

Poor little Charlotte's baby was born to-day, the day after its father went out. And it is dead. A boy—and he had so wanted it to be a boy.

### **Friday, August 7th**

To-day I went with a friend of mine to Notre Dame des Victoires, where she prayed. All those starry lights, and all that dusk of kneeling, beseeching people.

### **Saturday, August 8th**

In the afternoon went with Chantal to the Gare d'Orsay, then to the Austerlitz, and the Lyon, trying to find a way for her and the babies to go home to the Vaucluse.

People are camped out about the stations; all the streets are full of them, waiting to get places in the line before the ticket windows.

[25]

Foulques came to dine. It is his last night. He goes out to-morrow. He was very quiet. I have never seen him quiet like that before. Last night, down in the country, he had got through with all the good-byes—Claire, and his home, and the little son; I suppose there was nothing left for him to feel.

Old Madame Boudet has a letter from her son, who went on Tuesday. She is very happy because he says his next letter will be from Berlin. She is a little anxious because he speaks no German. Father Boudet forgets that he is socialist and anti-militarist, because he is so proud that his son should be a soldier of France. His shirt-sleeves are no longer symbolic, they mean just that, for thinking of the hero, he has no time to think of his coat.

### **Sunday, August 9th**

Mimi's birthday: cake with six candles, and the little girl from upstairs come with her Miss to tea.

### **Monday, August 10th**

[26]

There is a sort of dreadful comfort in knowing that their going off is over.

They are gone.

The women saw them off, helped them hurry their things together—those bundles, boots, something to eat in the train. Every one had laughed.

The last things are over—the last night, when he slept so well and she watched; the last sitting down at the table together; the last standing together in the room; his last look around it, and her last seeing of him there; the going out at the door.

The last going out of the door together. There was the bundle to carry, and to laugh over. Everybody's motor had been taken, everybody's chauffeur was gone with all the other husbands and sons. Omnibuses and taxis were gone. The metro was not running, nor the tram. How to get to the station—such confusion, and such laughing over it.

The station, somehow. And the crowd—such a crowd. And all the crowd was just one man going off, and one woman who could bear it.

There had been just one bearing of it, and then it was over.

How silent Paris is!

[27]

It is one of those hot veiled days, when everything is tensely strung, high pitched, and yet nothing seems to be quite real.

The leaves are falling in the Tuileries Gardens. I remembered, crossing there, that this is the anniversary day of a fallen kingdom.

The little Dauphin shuffled his feet through the fallen leaves as he went to the burial service of kingdoms, across the garden, in the old riding academy.

I imagine his loving the sound of the dead leaves about his feet, as I used to love it when I was a child.

The sense of autumn and the end of things is heavy upon Paris.

All the news is good. It is just the sadness of autumn—

Les sanglots longs  
des violons  
de l'automne.

I went to meet Chantal in the Cour la Reine.

We sat on the top of the river wall. No boats passed along the river, and few people passed under the slowly falling leaves.

We were very alone with Paris.

An old shabby man came by, reading an evening paper as he walked slowly. We asked him what the news was. He stopped and stood by the wall with us and read good news to us. He said, "I fought through '70. It was just so in '70."

[28]

Chantal said to me, "How dreadful to be old! The night of the first big victory, let's get somebody to take us out with the crowd on the boulevards."

### **Tuesday, August 11th**

Eliane let me come to-day, for the first time since her boy went, on the Tuesday. She has changed so, one can scarcely believe it, in just these few days. She does not look young any more. How badly he would feel; he always loved his pretty little mother to look young. He loved it when people took her for his sister, and how delighted he was that time she went to see him when he was in barracks, and the captain was shocked. She is no more young and pretty and she does not care.

Her eyes looked as if they never could cry again. She told me that the last night she had listened outside his door, and when she was quite sure he was asleep, she crept in, and groped for a chair at the foot of his bed, and sat there, not seeing him, just knowing him near, all night long while he slept. She went quietly out of the room before he waked, when the light began to show the oblong of the windows—she did not want him to know that she had watched. She said he slept the whole night long, never stirring, and that she had known she must not cry, for fear of waking him. She thought something had happened in that night to her throat and to her eyes, so that she

[29]

could never have tears any more.

## Arras, August 16th

It was a heavy grey day, very still. People were telling one another that all the news was good. The first German flag taken had been brought to Paris: one could go that day to the Ministry of War to see it. I wished I could have waited in Paris over a day to go to see it. I thought, it will be the first thing I do, to go to see it, when I come back next week.

It was interesting to think that we went around by Arras because British troops were detraining at Amiens.

It was all of it splendid, and one was proud and eager.

But the fields of France frightened me. They looked stricken. They lay under the soft, grey, close-pressing hours, so strangely empty. Everywhere the fields lay empty. The fields were ripe with harvest. The wheat was burnt amber, and fallen by its own heaviness. The wide swathes lay low along the ground, like the ground-swell of tired seas. The harvest was left, abandoned. Sometimes one saw troops moving along the white roads. [30]

The towns had an odd stir of troops in the streets.

At Arras, coming into the town, we saw that droves of cattle had been herded into a big enclosure, and that soldiers were guarding them. We saw tents pitched in the fields. It was Sunday. The women of Arras were out in their Sunday dresses. They seemed all to have come down to the railroad to watch the trains pass and to have brought all the children. There were only very old or very young men, except the soldiers. There were many soldiers. All their képis were covered with blue. They were come with the others to watch the trains pass.

In the deep cut beyond the station it seemed as if the whole town were come out to sit on the banks and just look.

They were like children, I thought, not understanding, helpless, waiting for something that was going to happen. [31]

## London, September

The night Ian went out was pretty bad. There were several other officers with him, and their wives and mothers and sisters and children all came to see them off.

Every one knew quite well what it meant, and every one pretended not to know.

I had come to feel, like the rest of them, that one has simply got to pretend.

We all pretended as hard as we could that it was splendid.

There was a woman on the platform who must have been crazy, I think.

She did not belong to any one going out. She was one of those dreadful things you see in London, with a big hat heaped with feathers, and draggled tails of hair. I think she had a red dress.

She came up to us under the windows of the train, and stood nodding her dreadful feathers and waving her dreadful hands and calling things out.

She called out, "Oh, it's all very fine now, you laugh now—but you won't laugh long. You won't laugh out there. And who of you'll come back and laugh, my pretty boys, my gay boys?" [32]

Nobody dared take notice of her. If any one of us had taken notice of her, nobody could have borne it. There seemed to be no guard about to stop her, and not one of us dared admit that she was there.

"My pretty boys, my gay boys," she kept calling out, "you laugh now, my poor boys, but you won't laugh long."

There were some little Frenchmen, cooks, I think, or waiters, from some smart hôtel, going to join the colours. They were in a third-class carriage next to the carriage of the British officers.

They heard the woman calling out like that. They were little pasty-faced cooks or waiters.

But they began to sing. They began to sing the Marseillaise to drown the woman's voice out.

They did it just for us, our men going out, there on the platform.

Our men began to whistle it and hum it and stamp it. And we tried to.

The crazy woman called out those terrible things, that were so true.

And our men and the little Frenchmen sang and whistled and stamped. And so did we.

And the train went out like that.

## Paris, end of September

I have come home for six days. "I am here," I keep saying to myself, "I am here, at home," as if I could not believe it.

And those homeless people, that they begged for at all the stations where the train stopped on our way, those driven, herded people, stupid from horror they have passed through, helpless, in [33]

my home I keep imagining them. Where the train stopped in the dark at half-lit stations, people of the Red Cross came asking help, "Pour nos blessés, pour nos réfugiés."

Somehow, in my little rooms, it is the refugees I see the more plainly. There is the young woman with the wheelbarrow, and the old woman, the grandmother, with the baby, the young man carrying the old man on his shoulders, the little brother and sister with the bundle. I see them toiling down the white road, turning back wild looks toward the smoke of their home. They had to leave the cow, but the old dog followed them. I see them in some strange place. They can go no farther. They do not care where they are, or what happens to them. They have looked upon the end of all that they had ever known.

Once, when the train stopped at a very small station, where one could smell the fields all close about and sweet, there was a woman's voice pleading; one heard her, as she came from door to door, along the train, in the dark, "For our homeless; we have thousands and thousands of homeless——" Her voice trailed on in the dark. [34]

I was coming home. Until the boat lay against the quay I had not let myself believe that I was coming home. It was after sunset. The heaped-up town at the edge of the sea, with its old roofs and chimneys, was black, in a livid, cold, desolate sky, that made one think of the dead. The fields of France were dark as we came through them. The towns had few lights, one felt them to be in grief, and lonely. In each town there was the same pleading at the windows of the train, "Pour nos blessés, pour nos réfugiés." We came in the small hours to Paris.

The broken-down fiacre dragged through scarcely lit streets that were all empty, and across the great Place, where nothing stirred, and over the bridge of the river, that was as lonely as a river of the wilderness. And then there was my home, where I must dream, all the nights, of homeless people, thousands and thousands of homeless people. [35]

### **London, November**

I go to the little Soho church of Our Lady of France, to just stay there, not praying or anything.

I go just to be with a people who are far from their country in her great need.

Most of them are very humble people. There is a smell of poverty always in the little dark church. They are people to whom "home" can mean only some small poor place and things, a thatched cabin, a vineyard, a mansarde over a cobbled street.

They kneel in the little dark church and sing—

Sauvez, sauvez la France  
Au nom du Sacré Cœur—

while alien feet tread hearts down into the stains and bruises of the roads between shattered poplar trees and thatched roofs burning.

### **Paris, just before Christmas**

I try not to write. The only things worth saying are the things I do not know how to say.

Every morning people take up the day like a burden. They carry its weight of dread along the hours, down the length of them to the end. Night comes at last, and they can lay the burden down, perhaps, for a little. [36]

When it is over they will look back and know how beautiful this winter was, and what high places they had sight of from the strange far journeyings of the days.

When it is over they will know that it was good to work so hard, to give all, to be tired when night came.

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## **PART II**

### **Small Town Far Off**

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Small Town Far Off [37]

**Monday, August 2nd, 1915**

We thought we had to get away. But there is no getting away. One feels it almost more in the country and in the little towns than in Paris, where life, somehow or other, keeps on. [38]

The country stands so empty.

The men are gone. They are gone from the cornfields and vineyards and pastures. They are gone from thatched roofs and tiled roofs. From wide white poplar-bordered roads, and steep cobbled streets, and hill paths that are like the beds of mountain torrents, from the wide way of the river, [39]

and from all the little ways of the streams.

The women are left, and the old people, and the children. The oxen are left. The war has taken the horses and the mules.

The great tawny oxen are beautiful, dragging the plough through the red fields, or the load of brushwood or green rushes along the Roman road.

The women trudge beside the oxen.

[40]

The old people had thought that they were come to the time of resting, at the long end of it. They had thought to rest, at last, in their doorways. But here they are, out in the fields of their sons and their sons' sons, at work, only vaguely understanding why.

### **The Town**

The town is the colour of honey and burnt bread, its walls and gates and roofs, its castle and tower and the tall tower of the cathedral.

The tower, a tall campanile, makes one think of Italy, as do the open stone loggia, and garlands and trellises of vines.

Sometimes I think the town speaks to me in Italian. I try to understand, and then I know that it is not Italian, nor yet quite Latin, but the grand old tongue of the illumined pages of its princes' Mass books. And then again it speaks to me in the patois its shepherd saints spoke.

### **The Saint**

The vines and fields come close about the town that for so long has counted its years by vintages; the good year of the purple grapes, the poor year of the white grapes.

The town has had its part in many wars, but that was long ago.

[41]

It has a patron saint, a shepherd boy, who saved it in three wars, miraculously. But it does not ask him for help in this war. He is too intimate and near. The town is too used to asking him that the spring rains may not wash the vines, that a frost may not come to hurt them, that a malady may not take the grapes.

The mountains shadow the town, with shadows less blue than they themselves are, and scarcely more intangible than they are, as one looks up to them.

The river passes quietly below the town, slowly along the wide, still valley.

### **The River**

I know why the river goes so slowly, lingering as much as ever she can, and a little sadly.

It is because just here she leaves behind her youth and wildness of great mountains, her mood of snows and rocks, cascade and woods and high rough pastures, cow-bells and mountain-horn. Going down into the classic countries, infinitely old, those deep, rich countries, she passes here, between the high clear lift and lilt and thrill of mountain music and the cadenced melody of Provence.

[42]

### **The old Estampe**

There is an old print in the library of the castle, that shows the town, her hill become a mighty mountain, the river a terrific flood, the castle guns emitting huge neat clouds of smoke upon the army of Savoy. You see the army of Savoy, in plumes and velvet cloaks, withdrawing upon prancing steeds, and the lords of the town issuing forth from the Roman gate with bugles and banners.

They were gorgeous, gallant little wars that the sons of the town rode out to in those days.

### **The Dépôt d'Éclopés**

I

The dépôt d'éclopés is just beyond the town, on the Roman road. The building was once the Convent of the Poor Claires. When the Sisters were sent away it was used as Communal Schools. There is a great plane tree outside the door in the yellow wall, and a bench in the shade. There is room for seven éclopés to sit crowded together on the bench. They bring out some chairs also.

All day long, and every day, as many of the éclopés as can get about, and do not mind that the road see them, and can find space in the shade of the plane tree, sit there, and look up and down the sunshine and the dust.

[43]

Some of them have one leg, and some of them have one arm. There is one of them who is packed into a short box on wheels. He sits up straight in the box, and he can run it about with his hands on the wheels. There is another in such a little cart, but that one has to lie on his back, and cannot manage the wheels himself. There is one who lies on a long stretcher, that they fix on two hurdles. There are two who are blind. The two blind men sit, and stare and stare.

Looking to the right, from the dépôt d'éclopés, you see the Roman gate of the town and remains

of the ancient walls, and the old poor golden roof, heaped up about the square golden tower of the cathedral. The many ages have been so golden and slow upon the town that their sunshine has soaked into it. It is saturated with the sunshine of the ages and become quite golden. You imagine it in dark winter weather glowing with a gold of its own. To the left, from the gate of the dépôt d'éclopés, the road leads between poplars and vineyards and cornfields to the mountains. The mountains stand very still, one against the other, one behind the other. They also are golden, having retained ages and ages of sunshine. They stand splendid, cut out of gold roughly, shadowed with purple and blue.

[44]

I often go and stay with the éclopés at the gate, they like to have anybody come. It was a long time before I dared go in at the gate.

Inside the gate there is a courtyard that was once the nuns' garden, with their well in the middle of it and their fruit trees trained along the walls. And there, there move about all day, or keep to the shadow, of first the east wall, then the west, those of the éclopés whom the road must not see.

Some of them look up at you when you come in. But most of them turn away from you.

The two blind men at the gate who stare and stare, they cannot see the golden town or the golden mountains. They cannot see the compassion and the kindness that there is for them in the faces of all those who look upon them.

But these men in the courtyard, however will they learn to bear, down all their lives, the looks that there will be for them in the most kind, compassionate faces?

## II

There are not ever enough chairs under the plane tree. There are more éclopés than there are chairs. How they laugh! They think it very droll to see a man who has only his left leg and a man who has only his right leg sharing a chair.

[45]

The men who have no legs say that that is not nearly so bad as having no arms. They say that the men with no arms are ashamed to be seen, like the men wounded in the face. They say that the men with no arms will never come out even to the gate.

## III

They never will let you stand. It is a dreadful thing to do, to take one of their chairs. But they like to talk to a stranger.

All of them, except the man whose spine has been hurt, love to talk.

The man whose spine has been hurt lies all day, the days he can be brought out, on a stretcher, never stirring. He never speaks except to say one thing. He is very young. He looks as if he were made of wax.

He keeps saying, "How long the days are at this season!"

He will ask, over and over again, "What time is it?" and say, "Only eleven o'clock?" Or, "Only three o'clock?"

And then always, "How long the days are at this season!"

## IV

[46]

They are taking out for a walk those of the éclopés who are fit for it. There must be nearly a hundred of them. In every possible sort of patched, discoloured uniform, here they come hopping and hobbling along. They have more crutches and canes than feet among the lot of them.

One of the men who has no legs goes so fast on his wooden stump and his crutches that everybody stops to look, and all the éclopés laugh, and the people stopping to look, laugh, and he laughs more than any of them.

If things are tragic enough, they are funny. I have come to know that, with the éclopés at the gate. And inside the gate, with those of the éclopés who keep back against the walls, I have come to know that the only safety of life is death.

# The Cathedral

## I

The Place de la Cathédrale is full of hot red sunset, taken and held there, like wine in the chalice of old golden walls. The old golden walls of the houses that once were palaces lift up the shape of a cup to the wine of the sunset, a vessel of silence and slow time.

Now every night at sunset the bells of the Cathedral are ringing, and people are coming into the Place from the St. Réal and the rue Croix d'Or and the tunnel street, under the first stories of the Palais du Maréchal, that is called the rue Petite Lanterne.

[47]

They are coming to the Cathedral for the prayers and canticles for France.

There are women and old people and children and soldiers, fine straight young chasseurs alpins from the garrison, like chamois hunters, with béret and mountain-horn, and wounded soldiers from the hospitals, and from the dépôt d'éclopés, with crutches and canes and white bandages.

The swallows are flying low back and forth across the cobbles of the Place and crying.

Behind the tower of the Cathedral, the great purple mass of the mountains stands out against the

sunset. The smell of the mountains, of vineyards and cows and cool waters, comes down to the smells of the town's living in the Place.

## II

Inside the church there are no lights, except of so much of sunset as comes in under the low arches, and of the red lamp, and of the candles, burning for Our Lady of Victories, and for the new Saint Jeanne d'Arc. Among the dusky figures, very still, in the church, you see white things. Sometimes it is the white cap of an old crone and sometimes it is a white bandage. [48]

## III

The church smells like a hospital. There is no more the smell of incense in the church, that used to linger there from office to office through the years. You wonder if really ever the church smelled of incense and wax candles. The smell of hospital has so come to belong there.

## Americans

He did not seem so very ill. He had not that look of being made of wax. And he talked all the time. Most of them die so silently.

He lay in the bright ward and talked all of the time.

He had enlisted in the Foreign Legion and fought since the beginning, and was wounded last week in the Argonne.

He wanted me to sit beside him and listen. I hated the things he said.

He said he was a fool, they all were fools, and they all knew it now. He said there was no glory. They had thought that war was glorious. And it was hideous; sardine tins and broken bottles, mud or dust, never a green thing left to live. There was no enemy. Just guns. When a man fell, nobody had hit him, only a gun. If he was dead, lucky for him. When they were wounded they made noises like animals. It killed you to pick them up. He said they "went sorter every which way" in your hands. If they fell between the trenches you couldn't get to them. It seemed as if they'd never die. Sometimes they made noises like wolves and sometimes like cats. That was the worst, the noises like cats. You never knew if it weren't cruel to throw them bread. If you threw them bread, they lived and lived. The trenches were full of rats. The rats came and ate your boots and straps and things while you slept. The smells were "something fierce." "Gee, what fools we were," he said. [49]

He picked at the bedclothes and grinned at me and said, "Say, kid, ain't you homesick for back over across the Duck Pond?"

I said, "Oh, no, no."

I looked out of the window to the sky of France that never has failed me of dreams, and I said, "No, no, no."

Oh, why did I? Why didn't I pretend for him that I was homesick too?

## An Altar

[50]

From the narrow deep old street you turn in under an arch to a vaulted passage that is always dark and cold. It looks into a court that once was very proud. Now a wholesale wine merchant has heaped his tuns one upon another in one corner, and in another corner a carpenter has his saws and benches and great logs of mountain oak and pine. There are the smells of wine and fresh-cut wood together with the smell of stones and ages in the court.

The houses about the court still keep something of their "grand air." They are of all the colours that time in the south gives to stones, saffron and amber and gold, as if the stone were soft for the sunshine to sink into.

On the left of the court there is a wide high door under an escutcheon.

The sound of the bronze knocker is very stately.

The wine merchant has a blackbird that whistles all day in its osier cage, and the children of the carpenter are always laughing and calling, as they play with the fresh curled wood shavings.

But everybody seems to stop and listen when you lift the bronze knocker.

A lame man-servant comes to open the door. He fought through '70 with his master and was wounded at Sedan, where his master was killed. [51]

There is a wide stone stairway, with a wrought-iron railing, and with walls discoloured where the tapestries have been taken away.

The tapestries are gone also from the corridor, and from the room to which the man-servant opens the door.

The old portraits are left in the walls of that room, and the exquisite wood-carving of the time of the Sun King, but the three or four chairs and the table on the right by the great carved hearth, are such as one would find at the Bazar of the Nouvelles Galeries.

The room is empty, except for these chairs and the table, and the little altar.

The long side of the room, opposite the door, has four tall windows that look across a garden,

with untrimmed yew-trees and box edges, over green paths, tangles of grass and flowers, to what used to be conventual buildings and the nuns' orchard.

The little altar is at the end of the room on the left as you come in, facing the windows.

There is a statue of Notre Dame des Victoires and a statue of Saint Jeanne d'Arc, and there is the Cross between them. There are two seven-branched old bronze candlesticks. The altar is spread with "a fine white cloth."

On the floor before it is laid something covered with the flag of the Republic.

[52]

I know what it is that the flag covers.

She had showed it to me.

One day, I don't know why, she took me there and lifted the flag, and showed me a heap of toys.

She said, "They were babies when they died." "They died;" she said, "the two of them in one week together, of a fever. It was in the year that we called, till now, the 'Terrible Year.' It was in the month of the battle in which their father was killed." She said, "Look at the wooden soldiers of my babies, the Hussars and the Imperial Guards. How long ago! And this was a little model of the cannon of those days. Look at the bigger one's musket and the little one's trumpet and drum. And the little uniforms of the Empire I had made for them, and they were so proud of—My sons, to whom it was not given to die for France."

## Hospital

One long side of the hospital looks from its rows of windows to vineyards and the mountains. The smell of burning brushwood comes in, to the smell of the hospital.

Through all the vineyards these days they are burning the refuse of the vines. The smoke stays among the vines, lingering heavily. The purple smoke and the red and purple wine colours of the vines, and the purple mists of the distances, gathered away into the purple shadows of the mountains, make one think at twilight of the music of a violin, or of a flute.

[53]

The Number 18 is very bad. He does not know any one any more. He lies against a heap of cushions, his knees drawn up almost to his chin, his eyes wide open all the time, his hands picking at the covers.

The boy in the next bed keeps saying, "If my mother were here, she would know what to do. If my mother were here, she would save him."

There is a boy who wants some grapes. His whole body is shot to pieces. They do not dare give him even a sip of water. He keeps begging and begging for grapes. Very shortly the hillside under the windows will be heavy and purple with grapes.

There is a boy who talks about riding over everything. He keeps saying, "We rode right over them, we rode right over them."

There is another who keeps crying, "Oh, no, not that! Oh, no, not that!"

There is the petit père, who is getting smaller and smaller. When they are dying, they seem always to get smaller and smaller. He had a bullet through one lung, but it was out and he was getting well. Only, he caught cold.

[54]

He is from the north. His wife and his two little girls are somewhere in the country from which no news comes. He has had no news of them since he left them and went away to war, on the second day.

He used to talk of them all the time, and worry terribly.

But now he cannot talk at all, and he does not worry any more. He smiles quite happily and has no more grief.

When they do the dressings of Number 26 he crams his handkerchief into his mouth so that he may not scream. He shivers and trembles and the tears roll down his cheeks, very big tears. But he never makes a sound.

Number 15 is not a boy at all, but just a little sick thing. He is so very little in his bed. He is like a sparrow—the skeleton of a sparrow.

I feed him crumbs of bread, and sips of water, as if he were a sparrow.

How one loves a thing one has fed with a teaspoon.

I do not like No. 30. I am always so afraid that I shall in some way show how I dislike him. It is hateful of me, but I cannot like him. He screams at his dressings, and he is fat, and he sends out and buys cheeses and eats them.

[55]

The little Zouave is better again. That is the most dreadful thing, that it is so long. He takes so long to die. The days when he is better are the most cruel days.

To-day in the middle of the morning, he was beckoning to me with a feeble little thin brown hand.

I went over and bent down, for he can only whisper.

He said, "I said good morning to you when you first came in, and you did not know."

Number 4 is not going to die. The shade of death is gone from his young face.



He is going to lie for a long time on a rubber cushion that has a tube hanging down, quite long, like a tail.

Every day, for a long time, at the dressings I shall have to pull back the sheets and blankets and take away the hoop, and see that thing that used to be a big fine man lying quite helpless and of so strange a shape upon the rubber cushion with the tail.

## The Omelet

[56]

The vine was red on the white old soft wall.

It was very beautiful. There were masses of purple asters under the red vine, against the wall. There was a bowl of purple asters on the table between the carafes of red and white wine.

We had an omelet and bread and butter and raspberries, and water, very beautiful in the thick greenish glasses.

Under the yellow boughs of the lime tree we could see the misty valley and the mountains.

The table had a red-and-white cloth.

The little old thin brown woman who served us wanted to talk all the time with us. She wanted to talk about the omelet; she had made it and was very proud of it. She wanted to talk about the war and to talk about her son.

She said that there had been some horrible, strange mistake and that people thought that he was dead. She had had a paper from the Ministry of War telling her he was dead. It was very strange. She had had a letter also from the Aumonier, telling her he was dead. But, of course, she knew.

She said he would come home, and be so sorry she had had such dreadful news, and so glad that she had not believed it.

They would laugh together. He had beautiful white teeth, she said, and his eyes screwed tight up when he laughed. [57]

She told us how she and he would laugh together.

## Gentilhommière

The road, up through the vineyards and pastures and fields of maize and of buckwheat, was like the bed of a mountain torrent, all tossed down, and grey and stony, between the poplars. In other years it had been a well enough kept little road, but in this year there was no one to care for it. And surely it had been a mountain torrent, in the spring's last melting of snows and in the heavy rains of the summer. Who was there left to mend it? Or who, indeed, to travel it?

We climbed it slowly in the golden autumn afternoon.

The poplar trees that bordered it were almost bare, the rains and winds of this most dreadful year had dismantled them already. They were tall slim candles, tipped with yellow flame. They were candles lit in sunshine, too early, before candle-light time. [58]

Autumn was come too soon.

The vines had failed. And yet no one had ever seen the colour of the vines so beautiful.

The road climbs up and up through the vineyards.

The house stands on a ridge, among chestnut trees that were turned already golden and brown, high against the high wall of the mountains.

The mountains were of the colours of the vintage, purple and topaz and red.

The clouds made snow peaks high behind the mountains.

The house has a heap of steep, old, uneven blue-tiled roofs. Its walls are as yellow as the corn. There is a long terrace before it, with a stone balustrade, worn and soft, and a pigeon tower at one end of the terrace, and the tower of a great dark yew tree at the other end.

I thought what a withdrawn little place it was, held quite apart, like a thing treasured and feared for.

The road passes under the pigeon-tower end of the terrace, and round into a courtyard that the farm and service houses close in on two sides.

The courtyard smelled of clover and of cows. Multitudes of white pigeons fluttered about the old thatched roofs of the grange, where the hay was stored in the gable, and corn hung drying in golden festoons, and the dust of the threshing floor was deeply fragrant. The wine vats smelled of grapes. And odours of lavender and wild thyme came close down from the mountain side. [59]

The entrance door stood open, across the grass and cobbles of the court, to whosoever might trouble to go in.

There was a great chestnut tree on either side of the door, and the ground about the door was strewn with brown burrs and golden leaves.

A little old peasant woman, who must surely have been the Nounou long ago, came to the door, in sabots and the white stiff winged cap of the country.

She said that Madame had gone down to the black wheat fields.

The waxed, black, shining stairs came straight down into the red-tiled hall.

Across the hall there was a fine carved and painted room, that lay all along the length of the terrace. That room was closed because of the war. "Madame had it closed," explained the little old nurse, "since the day when Monsieur Xaxa went."

In the dining-room there was a big table pushed back to the wall, with many chairs crowded out of the way against it. The old nurse said, "We do not use this room, now that Monsieur Xaxa is gone." [60]

She would show us the kitchen with its red-brick tiles, and dark, great beams, and earthen jars and coppers, and its old stone hearth, like an altar.

She said, "Nothing is kept as beautifully as it should be. Madame and I are quite alone."

She would have us go up the shining stairs. "You must see the room of Monsieur l'Abbé," she said, "it is all ready for him. He comes to-night. We have been for days and days getting his room and all the house, prepared for him."

There were purple and white asters in bowls and vases. The floor of the room shone like a golden floor. The old green shadowy mirror reflected the room as if it were a dream room, into which one might pass, just stepping through the tarnished lovely frame. The bed was covered with a very fine ancient green-and-white striped brocade. On the bed, under the crucifix and the Holy Water basin and the spray of box, there were laid out Monsieur l'Abbé's soutane and his soft hat with the tassel. His embroidered worsted slippers stood on the golden floor beside the bed.

"He is Madame's eldest son," said the old nurse, "and he is a great and wonderful saint. A great and wonderful saint." [61]

"But," she said, as we went out of his room to the stairs, "it was always Monsieur Xaxa that Madame loved best."

As we went down the stairs she added, "He was a wild boy, but we adored him. He was always wild, not like Monsieur l'Abbé. But how we adored him!"

She said, "I thought Madame would die the day he went away. But yet it is he who is dead, since seven months, and Madame and I, we live."

## Château

The gates stand open. Some one has broken open the gates. Or perhaps no one had troubled to close them.

The porter's lodge, under the limes, is empty.

The avenue of ancient, stately lime trees that leads to the château, is overgrown, in this one year, deep with grass and moss. The trees, that have not been trimmed, shade it too darkly. The leaves of the lime-trees are falling. In another year it would seem strange if the leaves fell so, before the end of August; but in this year no death seems strange. The dead leaves lie deep in the avenue.

At the end of the avenue the château stands, helplessly. Through long times and much history, its towers commanded the valley and the great road of the river. Its name rang in high councils, and its banners knew the winds of many wars. [62]

Again its sons went out to battle. They were three of them. They went, just more than a year ago, three gay young chasseurs alpins. They are all three of them dead, on the field of honour.

The little aged orange trees are all dead in their green tubs in the courtyard. The ivy has grown across the great barred entrance door. The lantern over the door is full of swallows' nests.

The old Monsieur and the old Madame are gone away. How could they have lived on in the house that was not to be for their sons?

We asked many people in the village, but no one knew where they had gone.

## Shopping

### I

In the library of the Octagon I found some little etchings of these old streets and courtyards and allées murées, steep roofs and balconies and open loggie, carved windows and doorways, corners and turnings, done beautifully by someone who had surely understood them. He had known how the smell of old wood and stone strikes out from certain shadows and stabs you in the heart; and the sudden sharp loneliness you feel because of dead leaves driven against the tower stairs. [63]

The librarian said, "He was indeed an artist."

The librarian was very old. He wore a little black skull cap and a grey muffler about his throat. He was bent quite over, and could see what I had taken only when he held the things close to his eyes. His hands were twisted like old brown fagots, and they trembled and fumbled as he held the etchings, one after the other, close to his eyes.

"We were very proud of him," said the librarian, "he was of this town. He would have given the town fame throughout the world. His right arm is shot away. And he is so young."

He kept on repeating that while he tied up my etchings.

"He is so young," kept saying the librarian, who is so old.

## II

As I was leaving the antiquity shop in the rue Basse du Château, standing a minute at the door with the antiquary's pretty young wife and the two fat babies, there came along the street four fantassins, two of them limping, one with his arm in a sling, carrying a funeral wreath between them. [64]

It was made of zinc palms and laurels, and the tricolour was laid across it.

We stood, not saying anything.

The fantassins passed, going up toward the ramparts of the Porte du Midi and the cemetery, carrying their comrade's wreath and the flag.

The antiquary's little young wife was crying.

She said, "I have a letter to-day from my husband. I have a letter every ten days. He also is a fantassin. He is in the Argonne." She threw back her head that the tears might stay back in her eyes, and said, "He was very well when he wrote. He wrote that he was very well, and that I was not to be afraid."

## III

I went to scold the old woman of the fruit shop because she never remembers my apricots.

The fruit shop in the rue des Ramparts is a low stone doorway, hung with scarlet peppers and dried golden corn and yellow gourds, and onions that are of opal and amethyst and pearl; and heaped about with cabbages and lettuce and tomatoes and the few fruits of the season, blackberries and plums and apricots. [65]

The old woman sits in the doorway. She wears the white winged cap and a blue apron and a brown silk fringed shawl and a big gold cross on a gold chain. Her husband was killed in '70. She has no son. Her daughter's three big sons were very kind to her. They are all three of them chasseurs alpins. From one there has been no news since eleven months ago.

She was sitting perfectly still in her place, her hands lying together, hard-worked and tired, on her blue apron. She was looking straight ahead of her and did not see me at all.

I stood and looked at her, and did not speak and saw far-off things, and turned and went away.

## Mountains

### I

The inn, up in the rough stony town of the high mountains, was forlorn enough. There were some dogs and chickens about the door of it, in the wet street.

The woman who came to the door of the inn was one of those thin, dark pale, quiet women about whom there is always something sympathetic and sad. She said, she feared the inn could do us little honour; we must forgive, because of the war. [66]

The stone hall was narrow and cold, the stairs went straight up from the farther end of it, and two doors opened from it on either side of it.

The woman took our wraps, and put them down on a table that there was by the entrance door.

Before the door to the right, down by the stairs, there was a small, fat, blonde baby standing, a little round-headed boy baby, in a black blouse, knocking on the door and crying and calling "Georgeot." He did not turn to look at us at all, but went on always knocking and crying.

The woman said, "You see, we never expect any one now, but if Monsieur and Madame will be indulgent—this is the dining-room, Madame," she opened one of the doors on the left, and went ahead of us into the dark room, and groped to the window to throw back the blinds.

We went to one of the bare tables, and she arranged it for us, not talking to us any more. And after a while fetched us potatoes and cheese, and sour bread and red wine which tasted of the roots and stems of vines.

Whenever she left the door a little open behind her, we could hear the baby in the hall sobbing and calling for "Georgeot." We asked her, "But the poor little soul, what is the matter that he calls like that?" [67]

She told us it was his father he was calling. She said he had been hearing her call his father "Georgeot." His father had been home for six days' leave, and was gone back just this morning. "You understand," she said, "my husband had not seen his baby in eleven months, and he had him every minute in his arms; and since he is gone the baby will not go away from his door, or stop calling for him."

She did not seem to want to talk any more about it, and we pretended to find our lunch most excellent.

When we went out into the hall again she had picked the baby up, and was standing with him in her arms, there by his father's door. She patted his yellow head down against her shoulder, but he still went on crying for "Georgeot."

It was raining hard out in the grey street.

In a shop under a vaulting, that the crook of a shepherd Saint had blessed through hundreds of years, I bought a queer sort of woolly beast for the baby.

But the baby did not care for it at all.

## II

[68]

Going on yet higher up into the mountains, we met a dreary little funeral, coming down under umbrellas. The coffin, under a black cloth, was pushed along in a two-wheeled cart by a woman and a very old man. Some women and two or three old people followed, and some children and dogs.

It was not the funeral of a soldier, only of some one uselessly dead.

## III

Rain, sunshine, wet black rock, great blue and black and purple clouds, clear azure spaces, snows, lifted drifted crests of snow, like waves arrested—all this as we went up, and up, with a rainbow like a bridge across the valley we were leaving behind us.

Up and up and up, into the young joy of the mountains, young as at the beginning of the world, joyous above all things. What do they care, the great mountains? They stand quite still, and all things pass. They lift their heads, and do not even know.

A baby cried because its father was gone away to war. Its mother did not cry at all.

A stranger came by and cried, not because of those especial people, but because of the world.

A little funeral straggled down the hill in the rain.

[69]

None of it mattered.

I thought, we went up high above all griefs.

Some children and a woman, from a hut up in the snow, came to beg of us.

I thought, for what did they need to beg, they, who had the everlasting snows? I thought, how absurd to beg for bread to live, in a place where death would be so pure and clear, would ring out so joyously. I thought, how nice it is that all the roads of life lead up to death. And that death, however come to, is so high a thing.

It was terribly cold. The snow was over us and under us, as the clouds were.

## IV

In the round basin circled with snows, the ancient hospice—that is no more a hospice, from which its old possessors have been driven away—stands white, beside the white road, in the close-cropped pasture. The sheep and tawny rough cattle were the only things that stirred. The smoke of the hospice chimneys stayed quite motionless in the golden air.

The air rang like a golden bell.

The music of the cow-bells was no more distinct a music than that of just the golden ringing of the air.

They lighted a fire in the stove of the long white refectory, and we had tea and bread and butter and honey beside it.

[70]

There were no guests in the hospice. The little white stone rooms, that used to be the monks' cells, had floors of red-brick tiles and thick walls, and each cell had one deep narrow window.

The woman who built our fires, and fetched our tea, and showed us to our little white stone rooms, was not old, but looked very old and sad. She had a red knitted shawl and big gold earrings, and big brown dumb eyes.

We went out into the music of the sunset, every mountain peak was singing. It was utterly still, except for the sheep-bells and cow-bells. The silence was a great music, joyous and grave.

## V

I am sitting up in bed, writing by the light of two candles; it is a golden light, in the pure white moonlight that fills the cell.

The slit of a window opposite the bed is wide open, and the moonlight floods in.

I am so cold, I have put on my big travelling coat.

The moonlit air tastes of mountain tops. The stillness is immense in the small room. All the silences of the world are in the room.

I cannot see the moon, nor the snow peaks; only the sky of sheer moonlight, and a dark dim mountain, looming.

[71]

I am so glad to be awake and cold.

## VI

While I was writing, something happened. An ugly sound broke the spell. Some one was coming to the hospice. There was the sound of a motor-bicycle, from a long way off, coming through the stillness. There was the calling of its horn and then it was at the door.

I heard the door open, and a cry of delight; and a man's young voice, joyous, high-keyed, intense, and a woman's voice, laughing and sobbing.

I saw the sun come up out of the snow, I saw all the marvellous things that there are between darkness and dawn.

I had made myself stay awake the whole night through, to not lose one minute of the mountains. The mountains were mine, from sunset through the dusk and the dark and the moonlight, to the dark again, and through that other so different dusk that is before the dawn, to the sun's great silent rising, and the full glory of the day.

It was the son of the woman of the gold ear-rings and the red shawl, who had come home in the night, unexpected, for six days' leave.

He was out in the morning pastures, a tall lean mountain boy, with gleaming white teeth, and brown eyes like his mother's, but laughing, and with absurd dimples in his brown young face.

His mother was out with him in the dawn, the red shawl over her head, keeping close beside him as he went swinging across the pastures, her short step almost running by his long step.

### The Little Maître d'Hotel

Our little worried grey butler is gone.

His class has been called out, the class of Quatre-vingt-douze.

It appears he was only forty-three.

I had thought he was sixty at least. It must be because he has been anxious all his life that he seems so old.

He was terribly worried and anxious when he talked to me, the night before he went, about the old father and mother he must leave. He would be going probably only somewhere back of the lines to guard a bridge or a railway, but for him it meant—who knows what darkly, helplessly imagined things? He talked a great deal in a high-pitched voice—standing there, very white in his proper livery—of bayonet attacks, of the coal he had managed to get in for the old people, of dying for France, and of his mother's rheumatism, and of the cow they had had to sell.

### The Garage

There are twelve convalescents installed after a fashion in the garage half-way down the field path. They are so nearly well that they can make up their beds and sweep out their rooms and wash at the pump and go down to eat at the canteen of the hospital Sainte Barbe. They go to the Clinique there every second or third or fourth day. An orderly comes up from there once in a while with clean linen for them. And that is all they need be troubled about. They are quite comfortable and very forlorn.

They spend their days hanging out of the windows of the loft over the garage or sitting about the big board table of the space underneath, where the motors used to be kept.

Most of them are men from cities who do not know what to do with the country, and the three or four who are country boys know so well what to do with vines and fields, that the vines and fields they may not labour, so close about them here, only worry them. They are the men who get most cross and quarrelsome over the games of cards at the board table.

They all quarrel more or less. Sometimes I wonder, how can men who are so splendid, so simply, steadily, dumbly splendid, who have been through so much, seen death so close, and life so close, quarrel like this over nothing at all. But most times I understand.

The crickets trill all the hot noons in the grass, and the droning of the bees sounds very hot. Like clouds of white butterflies drift over the path, make little drifting butterfly shadows on the path. There is a most wonderful smell of clover in the heat. Down under the fields there are heaped together the crowded old rust-red and burnt umber and golden roofs of the town. And all away beyond there is the valley, opened out, long road and river, to high, far distances of mountains and snows.

I go and sit with my friends about the big board table, in the place where the motors used to be kept. I play cards with my friends, the twelve convalescents. I play badly, for I hate cards, but they like to have a guest. They try to arrange the game so that I may win. They want me to win; they think that I will enjoy it better. If they knew how bored I am they would be dreadfully upset. I wish I loved cards and could play well, to please them.

Towards evening they are certain to be cross with one another.

One after the other they will soon be going back to the Front, all of them. There is not one of them who will go unwillingly. They have been there, they know what it is, but there is not one who will grumble when he goes back, or fail when he faces *that* again. Every one of them, when he goes back, will say the same thing. "Of course I must go back, all the comrades are there." "Tous les copains sont là-bas." But in the meantime they quarrel.

From the doors of the garage, wide, one sees the sunset among the mountains. The bats flit across and the owls call. The dusk comes, velvet-thick and soft, with smells of fields and vineyards and of the town's hearth fires, and with the myriad voices of cigale and frog and sleepy

bird, and with the small life noises of the town. Gathering up, and folding in, the night comes.

There is electric light in the garage that my friends are very proud of indeed. A huge naked bulb dangles from a cord over the table where we sit playing cards. [76]

## Francine

The son of Francine is home on leave.

Francine comes every day to help in the kitchen. She was scrubbing the kitchen's grey stone flags when her son came.

He came swinging up the path between the wheat and poppies and cornflowers. He came up the terrace steps, in his leggings and his béret, a fine young diable bleu.

Francine came, running, wiping her red hands in her apron, suddenly beautiful and very proud.

## Railway Station, The Days of the 25th

The trains of wounded arrive almost always at dawn, the late autumn dawn.

The lamps of the station are still burning, but grow pale.

Beyond the open platform, across the tracks, you can see that dawn has come to the sky, behind the mountains.

There is a star in the midst of the dawn, Hesper, star of both the twilights, very big and bright and near, like a lamp. [77]

It is very cold.

In the pale light of the dawn and the pale light of the station lamps they wait for the train of wounded to come in.

The Red Cross has a canteen at the station in what used to be the buffet. But these men will be past need of coffee and soup.

The cart of the buffet, that used to be pushed along the trains with breakfasts under the carriage windows, is heaped now, in these days, with very strange things. There is need of these things, always. There is this, and that, that cannot wait.

The doctors from the Lycée Prince Victor, now the big military hospital, are there by the chariot. They stand waiting and talking together. They turn up their coat collars and sink their hands in their pockets and stamp their feet in the cold of the dawn.

The orderlies wait with their stretchers, back against the wall, under the gay posters of places where people used to go to be amused.

The Red Cross nurses keep back in the canteen, where it is warmer.

The train is late. It has been from three to six hours late each one of these dreadful mornings. [78]

Everything has been ready since long, long ago, in the deepest dark of the night.

If only there are enough blankets.

The train is terribly, terribly late.

## New Ones

It was for this that they evacuated last week all who could possibly be moved, to fill the wards with other broken things. They gathered up all the broken things that had lain here so long, and sent them away. And now the wards are full of other broken things.

The old ones had grown accustomed to the rooms. They had suffered and been unhappy in these rooms, and when they had to go away they did not want to go. They had nothing left but the place and people of their suffering, and they found, when they had to go, that they loved the place and the people they had grown so used to. They seemed to be afraid to go away. To all the weariness was added this new weariness.

And now the wards are full of new ones.

The new ones lie very still.

## Deaths

It is quite simple.

If it can be that the priest comes, it is very well. All that the priest does is beautiful. The feet and hands, the eyes, the lips have sinned, and the touch of forgiveness upon them is exquisite. It is exquisite, that last entering in of the Divine Body to the body that is dying. But if for any reason no priest comes, if no one cares or troubles to ask for him, or if there is no time, God is most surely there and understands. And one is comforted to find that there is no need to fear for them, as they die.

They die so quietly. I am glad to know how quiet a thing it is to die.

There was only one who was not quiet.

They bound ice about his head, and then he did not shriek and fling himself about any more, but lay quite quietly until he died.

### **Another Winter, Thursday, October 7th**

When the rain had gone over, in the late afternoon, and the clouds were lifted and drifted a little, we saw that there was snow on all the near mountains, through the pines, upon the pastures. [80]

The cold wet street was full of excited swallows. Here was the cold. The cold was come too soon. They never yet had gone south so early.

Dear me, dear me—where would they stop the night?

Up under all the old shaggy rusty eaves, that reach out over the narrow streets, hundreds and hundreds of swallows were crowding each other in and out of sheltered places, such a fluttering and twittering. Under thatch and tiles, along the ledges of fine proud old stone windows, and of wine-red wooden balconies, they pushed and crowded each other, and in and out of the brown clayey nests that summer had abandoned.

People in the streets stopped to watch, laughing a little.

People in the cold, wet streets stopped to watch the swallows, women and old people and children.

"They have seen the snow on the mountains," said the people to one another, laughing a little.

And then always, every one said, each to the other, the same thing.

The one thought of all of them together, "Another winter."

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## **PART III**

 [81]

### **Paris**

 [82]

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#### **Monday, October 11th**

 [83]

I was thinking all night in the train—how can I look at them, how can I speak to them in their depth of grief? I was thinking—when the old woman comes to open the door, what can I say to her? When the old man comes to take my big dressing-case and my little dressing-case, and my strap of books, how can I face him? Their son is dead.

The son of our concierge is dead. "Mort au Champ d'Honneur."

They were so proud of him. They did so worship him. He was such a clever boy that he had gone beyond anything they had ever imagined. If you just in passing saw him with them, you thought he did not belong to them at all. You thought he was a gentleman who was waiting a minute for some reason, there in the loge. But you would have known, if you had had time for it, how he worshipped them and was proud of them; they had worked so hard, his little fat slow sweet mother in the neat black dress, and his little stumpy cross father, who made it a point to come to the door in his shirt sleeves. [84]

In those wonderful first days the son of our concierge went away.

It was on Tuesday, the second day, in the afternoon, about five o'clock. He had to be at the Gare d'Austerlitz at seven, and getting there was difficult.

I think that day was the most cruel and most wonderful of all. I shall always remember how hot it was, and how the leaves were fallen in the garden.

They told me how it seemed as if he really could not go. He kept starting, and coming back; and starting, and coming back. He hugged his little fat old mother, in her neat black dress; and hugged her, and had to turn back to hug her again. His father was going with him, to help carry the bundles. He was in his shirt sleeves. He kept blowing and blowing his nose. His mother had said she would not come to the door. But she did come to the door. She had said she would not stand to watch him go. But she did, crying and smiling and waving to him. He got to the street corner four different times. And three of the times he came back, to hug her just once again.

And he is killed. [85]

There will be the little stumpy father in his shirt sleeves, and the little, so very respectable mother, fat and slow.

How can I look at them? What can I say to them?

They must open the door for us, and pay the taxi, and carry up our things.

How can I tell them that I kneel before their sorrow as if it were a throne?

#### **Same day, 11th of October**

The first thing to do was to go up to my neighbour's queer big kitchen—up on the roofs—because there were eleven little soldiers at supper, to whom, though I have not been here to see them until now, I must say good-bye. It is the last day of their leave, they will be off to-morrow.

Always my permissionnaires eat with my neighbour's permissionnaires together in the kitchen on the roof. They are always men from the invaded countries, who have nowhere to go for their leave.

Before, they have always been men who had been in hospitals and were sent to us for their sick-leave; but these are little young boys, the Classe Seize, just from their dépôts, with a few days of leave before their beginning of battle. The oldest of them is nineteen. [86]

You go up to the kitchen by a little twisted stairway, like the stairway of a tower. On three sides of the kitchen there are charming blue mansarde roofs and black crooked chimney-pots, and on the fourth side there are the treetops of an old garden. When the leaves are fallen, one can look down from the kitchen terrace, through the branches of the trees, and see all the design of the garden, paths and lawns, statues and massifs and the big central basin, as in the ground plan, drawn so long ago.

To-night the fallen leaves in the sunset made the garden a place all of amber. One looked down into an amber glow. And all the roofs and treetops of the quarter, and the two tall towers of Sainte Clotilde, seemed translucent; for the gold of the sunset to shine through.

The kitchen has a floor of polished red brick tiles and shines with beautiful copper pots.

Eleven little soldiers were just finishing their coffee at the table with the red cloth.

What babies they are. And how alike they look, all of them. It is absurd. Eleven round close-cropped heads; eleven round rosy peasant faces; eleven pairs of round clear eager questioning eyes; eleven straight young figures, with stiff gestures, in bleu d'horizon. [87]

Classe Seize, eighteen years, nineteen years, twenty years. It has become the age to die.

## **Tuesday, October 12th The Chocolates**

I went to get some chocolates at a little shop near the hospital.

The woman of the shop counted me out the heap of chocolates one by one in their silver paper.

She was a thin pale little woman with the sort of blue eyes that are always sad. Her eyes looked as if they had cried and cried, in her worn faded little face. She had the little woollen cape of the quarter around her shoulders and her pale hair was rather grey.

While she was counting the chocolates the postman came. He brought a big square yellow envelope addressed in that special writing, surely, of a little soldier, and with the franchise militaire.

I thought—It is a letter from her son.

She took it, thanking the postman, and put it down on the table and went on counting out the chocolates. [88]

"But, Madame," I said, "are you not going to read your letter?"

She turned and I saw that she was crying.

"It is from my son," she said.

She began putting the chocolates in handfuls into a paper bag.

She said, "This morning I had a notice from the Mairie that he is killed."

## **The Goldfish and the Watch**

On a table in the window there was an opal-blue bowl full of water, with purple iris floating in it, and little bright goldfish, four of them, glinting through it.

Some one had given it that day to the children.

René, the eldest boy, stood by the table watching the goldfish, not thinking of his father at all.

There were minutes in the days when he did not think of his father.

But afterwards it was always the same thing.

He never told any one, because he was seven years old and very shy. No one would have understood. And it was dreadful to him when people did not understand.

It was about his father's watch. [89]

On one thick, hot, velvet-black night, his father had come into his room and waked him with a sudden switching on of the light, and said, "Hop up, old chap, you've got to go and tell your mother to stop crying."

"But, father, why? Will she not stop when you tell her?"

"It is because of me that she cries. I have got to go away."

"Oh, father, why have you got to go away?"



"Because there is war, René. I have got to go and fight. And you have got to stay and look after your mother. Quick now; go to her and say, 'I'm here.'"

"But, father——"

"Here's my watch for you, old chap, and the chain, you see. Mind you take care of it. Don't let it run down. I want to find it right to the minute when I come back. And I want to find your mother well, not crying—and you, my brave little man, taking care of everything for me."

"Like the watch, father?"

"Yes, like the watch."

So he had to take simply terrible care of his father's watch.

If it ran down, if he let it run down, what in the world would not happen?

The battles might be lost to France. His mother might die. And then whatever could he say to his father? [90]

In the days he used to hurry home from everything, to the watch. And in the nights he used to sit up in bed to listen for its ticking. He would stay awake for hours in the nights, afraid it might stop and he not know. Often in the nights he would cry from the tiredness of having to keep awake and listen. But in the days he would forget the watch, sometimes, for a little.

To-day he was happy because of the goldfish.

### **Hospital, Friday, October 15th**

Just these days the people of several of the men have been coming from far to see them.

Way off, in some little town of Brittany or the Béarn, or Provence, there had arrived word that the soldier this or that had been wounded thus or so, and was at the hospital. Upon months and months of waiting in dreadful, helpless ignorance, the shock had come as a relief almost.

But how strange and terrible a thing the journey was to people who could understand so little what they must do. Where to go, what to do. Perhaps they were people who had never ventured beyond the town where the diligence stopped, who never had taken a train. They did not know what the Champagne meant. They did not know where Paris was. The departure was a tremendous thing. A tearing up of roots and cutting with a knife. Then the journey, confused and terrifying. Then the great city, and the great hospital. [91]

There is a moment when it seems as if it were a stranger, the boy lying there, in the bed that is one of such a long row of beds. His people stand, a little dazed, down by the door. The long ward, the two long rows of beds against its walls, the stretcher-beds down the middle of it; and all those boys who lie so still—how strange it seems to them! And their boy, who does not wave his hand or shout to them, who scarcely lifts his head—his smile has changed, has come to be quite a different smile.

### **Hospital, Sunday, October 17th Number 24**

Number twenty-four is dying. I am very glad. It is much better for him that he should die. But it takes so long. It is terrible that it should take so long to die. [92]

He calls me, "Ma petite dame."

"My little lady, what time is it?"

Strange, how they ask that, so many of them, when they are dying.

There is a clock on the wall opposite his bed. They tell me that for three weeks he has not been able to see it. He says the room is full of mist.

He says, "My little lady, can you see the clock?"

I always answer, "No, I cannot see the clock."

He says, "You cannot see it because of the mist."

And I say, "I cannot see it, because of the mist."

### **La Mort d'un Civil**

The old Monsieur is dying. He has been dying for days and days and days. He is dying at a time when death is very cheap. Every one is dying. The youth of the whole world is being taken away. What does it matter at all that an old man, who has no part in the war, is taken away? Who, except his elderly maiden daughter, has time to care?

Cousine Gertrude is very kind. She comes every evening, after the hospital, and stays for two hours, sitting in the room, knitting grey socks, while his daughter rests a little. [93]

Her boy François, aged twenty-one, went out on the first day. He has been all the time in the trenches, except for one leave of six days. He is in the trenches now, in Champagne.

The man dying here has everything that is possible done for him. He has the best that can be had of doctors and nurses.

These boys in the trenches one dares not think of how it may be with them.

His daughter is very brave. She never cries. She remembers that Cousine Gertrude would like a cup of tea.

She knows that the son of Cousine Gertrude is young and beautiful.

Death, in these days, is young and beautiful.

And her father is old. His death is only a dreary thing.

She understands that even people as good as Cousine Gertrude must grudge it its place in the world.

## Canal

[94]

In all the mornings and nights, going to the hospital and coming back from it, I love my canals. The canals of Venice, of Holland, rivers and great waterfalls and fountains and the waterways of kings' gardens, that people travel far to find beautiful, are beautiful for all the world. But my canal is beautiful for just me.

Its narrow stone-bound curve is hung over by uncared-for plane-trees, and by ragged, jagged, rickety, crooked houses, that lilt and tilt and lean together and over, dingy and dark. The rough cobbled quays have small traffic now, the litter of the canal's old life is gone from them. They are quiet, with no more rough calling and shouting of carters, and turmoil of hoofs and wheels. Sometimes, but rarely, a slow heavy flat canal boat is towed and poled along, through the locks and under the high black bridges. But most times the slow tawny water flows unbroken.

The tawny leaves of the plane-trees are fallen, and lie on the cobbles and in the water. The stems and branches of the plane-trees have black reflections in the water, with the reflections of crazy roofs and chimney-pots, and of tatters and rags of colour from windows and walls.

Sometimes in the mornings, these October mornings of sardius and topaz and sapphire, I find myself singing as I walk along the edge of my canal. It is so difficult not to be happy. [95]

## Hospital

My hospital was, all of it, built in the time that means lovely things of red-brick and grey stone and blue gables. The courtyards are paved with huge ancient cobbles, and there are grass plots that are green and wet, and big trees and bushes whose leaves are falling slowly in blue stillness.

There are more than two thousand sick in my hospital, six hundred wounded of the war, one hundred and fifty of them in our service.

I love to write "my" hospital and "our" service.

## Madame Marthe Hospital, Tuesday, October 19th

Things had been very bad all day. When night came it seemed dreadful to go away and leave so much suffering. I thought of the night, with fever and that special helplessness which belongs to the night. [96]

I would have been so glad to stay the night out with the ward.

I said that to Madame Marthe, as we left together.

She said, "But why?"

She always has a cold and wears a little blue woollen cape over her blouse and apron. When she leaves the hospital she pins up the two black ribbon streamers of her cap of the tri-couleurs and wraps her arms around in the blue woollen cape. She looks very small and cold and poor.

"Why?" she asked.

The hospital is her world and she is thankful for every minute she can get away from it.

I leave my world to come to it.

I was ashamed to say to her, "It is for my own comfort I want to stay, to make myself imagine that I really am needed."

## Hospital Things They Say

Perhaps in other, different kinds of hospitals, hospitals of the little good sisters, or of ladies of the Red Cross, hospitals of beautiful influences, one could not love the men so much. In hospitals where the beautiful things of the Faith, prayers and tenderness and peace, are all around about the pain and death; and there are words for praise of courage and sacrifice, and words for sympathy and for hope, and words for high ideals; where it is as poets and painters and all people have always imagined it, perhaps one could not get quite this understanding of things that are not said, or come in so rough and vivid a way, upon unimagined things. [97]

One loves to think of the wounded soldier with the nun beside him, and of the lady of the great

world tending the peasant hero. One loves to hear of the men saying, "C'est pour la France."

Here there are no pictures I would dare call beautiful. It is crude and raw. And things are not said. When there is not too much suffering, it is rough. And when the suffering is great, it is all very dumb.

Here there is no one who knows how to word things. The men do not know, and the nurses do not know how to tell them. They all only just go on.

The nurses are poor women, of the people. They come, each one of them, from her own small desperate struggle for life, each from her own crushing deadening small miseries and cares, without any help of dream and vision, callously—one, just looking on, might think—to their work in the hospital. To the great magnificent suffering, each one of them comes dulled and hardened by some small sordid helpless suffering of her own. Everything has always been a struggle, and this is just part of it. They work on every day, and all day long, with no one to put into words for them, devotion and sacrifice. No one here speaks of those things, or thinks of them, or even knows. [98]

When I see my little Madame Marthe, my chief, so very tired, I say to her, "You work so hard." And she always says, shrugging her thin round shoulders, "Qu'est-ce que vous voulez, i' faut b'en. Nous sommes là pour ça." If I dared to tell the patronne, who is intelligent to bitterness, that I admired this she did or that, she would say, "What of it, we are paid for that."

Odd how often it is the same thing that people say.

When I ask of a man with the Croix de Guerre what he did to win it, he always says, "Je n'ai fait que comme les autres."

A man going back does not say to us here that he is glad to have his life to offer again for his country. But he says that thing which makes me catch my breath with pride in him. "Je veux b'en. Tous les copains sont là." [99]

They go off like that, to those places of death that they know already, wherein they have seen things we dare not imagine, and all they say about it is that all the copains are there.

There are not many of my ward who go back, ours are the very badly wounded, the men who are out of it.

The men have done all that they could do. Every one of them did all that he could do, and kept on doing it as long as he could. And when he could do no more, why then he was out of it, and it was for others to take up and go on with. He himself was done with it. He would rather not talk about it. It had been so bad that he does not want to talk about it. He does not want to think about it any more.

He would rather talk about things that used to happen "dans le pays," about the vines or the corn, or the fishing boat with oars or with sails, and "la vieille" and "les petiots."

"It is pretty bad?" I say, perhaps, to this one or that one, when I see how he is suffering.

I have never heard one of them say, "C'est pour la France."

But what they always, always say, all of them, is a thing I think very beautiful. [100]

"You suffer much, my child?"

"Pas trop, Madame."

Always it is, "Not too much."

But sometimes it is too much, and they cannot bear it.

And when I look at the bed that used to be his, I think of him lying there trying to smile and to say that his suffering was not too much.

And the new man in the bed says those same words, as if it were a little formula always an answer to the question I cannot help asking.

"You suffer much?"

"Not too much, Madame."

Sometimes they say, "Ca va aller mieux."

"Ca ne va pas, mon petit?"

"Ca va aller mieux."

There is only one thing that is like the things one reads of. It is that the men, when they are very, very bad, always, always call for their mothers.

I remember reading that somewhere, and thinking it was just something somebody had thought pretty to write.

But it is one of the most true and simple and beautiful things that there can be in the world.

It is strange too. When they suffer desperately, they keep saying, "My mother, my poor mother," as if it were she who suffered. They seem to be grieving for her, not for themselves. [101]

When they are frightened they call for her. Some of them are frightened of taking chloroform. They have fought and not been afraid, they would not be afraid to die, but chloroform is different.

Joseph opens the double doors of the ward and pushes the stretcher cart in and calls the number

this or that.

He is all ready and waiting.

Joseph lifts him from the bed to the cart. I double a pillow under his head and wrap the blanket over, and follow.

The doors at the other side of the hall are closed, and I run ahead to open them, and shut them behind again after the cart.

If I can make an excuse I go down the corridor and wait also at the door of the operating room. I know the men hate to wait there alone. Sometimes there is very long to wait. And Joseph has to go to do other things.

Sometimes the door of the operating room is ajar, and one can see in a little, and that is horrible. People go in and out, the doctors, and Madame Laure, fetching and carrying things. The stretcher of the man who has been taken in is left pulled back against the wall, by that of the man who is waiting his turn. I stand very close to my cart and pat the blankets. [102]

The men like to have one wait with them. There is a thing many of them say. It is a dull thing, and touching, as sometimes dull things are. They will say, over and over, "If you were not here, I should be alone. If you were not here, I should be alone."

But when the doctors come, with the chloroform, it is only of his mother the man thinks. He says, "Oh, maman! Oh, maman!" and keeps all the time saying it till he sleeps.

The adjutant, the new Number 12, says that you can hear them calling maman all the time when they lie wounded between the trenches, wounded and one cannot get to them to pick them up. He says it is the last word they call before they are still.

### **The Patronne**

I take off my cloak and blue veil in the patronne's room.

The patronne is usually sitting at her desk. Sometimes she says good morning to me, and sometimes she doesn't.

She used to be fille de salle in this hospital, she used to clean these stairs and corridors; then she rose to be infirmière in the ward where I work now, and then panseuse. She is a huge gaunt raw-boned sorrel-coloured woman, who looks like a war-horse. She is so alive and quick that you feel her personality stronger than anything in the hospital, than anything, you think, anywhere. I have seen her seem stronger than death—driving death away. [103]

When Number 17 was so very ill, I think it was she who drove death away from his bed. She worked and swore, and worked and swore. It was hideous. I laugh when I remember. Afterwards I found her outside in the corridor, sitting on the bench. He was going to get well. I cried; and she swore at me till I laughed.

Big red blotches come out on her arms when she is excited, and get purple when she is tired. If you visit the hospital, you do not know what to think of her. But if you work there you admire her, and are proud when she speaks to you kindly. It is an illumined day if by chance she says to you, "Bon jour, ma crotte."

### **Madame Marthe Again**

I don't know at all how it happens that a little white mouse of a woman of the people, who has worked and worked all her life, and never been cared for by anybody, should have beautiful hands. But Madame Marthe has beautiful hands. Her hands are small and quick and absolutely sure. They tremble when things are bad, but in spite of that they are certain and sure. They never make a mistake. And they are not afraid of anything.

Sometimes my hands are afraid to touch things, and then I am ashamed. Sometimes I pretend not to see things that are fallen on the floor, and when she picks them up, I am so ashamed.

If my two hands were poisoned so that they had to be cut off, it would not make any difference. But what would the ward do if anything happened to the hands of Madame Marthe?

### **The Ward—All Souls' Day**

There are twenty-eight beds against the walls of the ward and ten stretcher-beds down the middle of its long clear bright length. Between the beds there is no room to push the dressing cart about, it stands close up against the apparatus of dressings. [105]

There are some things that make stains on the whiteness of the ward. When I am away from it, I see those things standing out against the whiteness.

There is the blue of the sublimé in the glass tank of the dressing cart, and there is the green of the liqueur de Labarague in the big jar on the apparatus.

Sometimes there will be the light blue of a képi or the dark blue of a béret against the wall, hung on the knob at the top of a bed, or the red of a Zouave's cap.

There are the black squares of the slates over the beds. I can see, as if from any distance, the words scrawled in chalk on the slates: "Amp. de la cuisse gauche et de la jambe droite au dessous

du genou." "Amp. du bras droit à l'épaule," and three "Xs" for the hemorrhages. "Plaie pénétrante poumon gauche, Op. 20 IX." "Brûlures gaz enflammé visage poitrine deux bras." "Eclat d'obus dans le ventre." "11 éclats d'obus côté gauche." And on and on like that, up one side of the ward and down the other.

Besides the black slates there are the placards, pale yellow, printed and written over that something may be known about the man on the bed.

And there are the pale yellow temperature charts, with the dreadful lines of fever that zigzag up and down. [106]

There is exactly room between the beds for the night-tables; the chairs have been put all out into the corridors and heaped up against the wall opposite the lift. Madame Bayle is annoyed because they are in the way when the linen comes up. They are to be sent to the attics as soon as any one has time to see to it. But now no one has time.

### **Hospital, Thursday, November 11th**

The sparrows were all talking together in the trees of the great central court of the hospital.

I met Madame Bayle as usual in the first court. We almost always meet there, as I arrive and she is crossing to the store-house on the other side of the entrance. Usually we stop and stand a minute, listening to the conversation of the sparrows.

Madame Bayle is the chief of the linen-room of our pavilion. She is a dreadful fat shining shuffling person, who hates me because I wear white shoes. Also because once I made her unlock the linen-room for me to take out some things I thought were mine, and the things were not mine, and she was angry with me. She is always trying to get me into trouble to pay me back. But we both love the birds in the courtyard. When we meet in the courts these days we say to one another, "Voilà nos pauvres petits pierrots!" and are friends for a moment. [107]

This morning I ran past. I was afraid if I stopped she might give me news of my ward.

The buildings of the second court have not been militarised. It is the pavilion of the defective children. None of the children were out in the court this morning. The lights in their rooms were still burning, it was so dark a morning; I could see some of the children making up the rows of little cots, and some of them clearing away the bowls and pitchers from the long table. There are some who always sit with their hands in their laps and their heads hanging. They have dreadful little faces. Some of the children can do lessons a little, and some of them seem quite bright, and play always the same game, hands around in a ring, in a corner of the refectory.

The third court is for the wounded of our service. The recreation-room and various offices and kitchens open on to it, and the windows of the two storeys of wards look over it.

The lift was down, and Cordier called to me; but I ran past, and up the two flights of stairs, away from him as from Madame Bayle. [108]

Cordier had been given charge of the lift. He is one of the wounded in the face. It is not his eyes. It is the lower part of his face. They are beginning to take off some of the bandages. He did not mind so much while the bandages quite hid it. But now he minds dreadfully. This morning I hated dreadfully the sounds he made calling to me. They say he will never be able to speak distinctly again. I was afraid he would be hurt because I ran by. But I would have known from his eyes if what I had dreaded had happened in my ward.

I took off my things in the patronne's bureau, and went across the passage to the door of the ward where I help every day with the surgical dressings.

It is always strange to open the door of the ward when one first comes on. So much may have happened in the night.

I stood outside the door. The door has glass panes that are washed over with white paint so one cannot see through. There are places where the paint has not held at the edges, and one can stoop and look in.

I could not see the bed of Number 29 from there, but I would know from the look of the men in the ward. [109]

As I stooped, the patronne came out from the chief's bureau.

I heard her step and turned.

She said, "He is very bad. If they amputate he will probably die of the shock. It will have to be the left leg too, at the thigh. It is you who must tell him. If they do not do it he will die of poisoning certainly."

She stamped her foot at me and said, "Now don't look like that. You've got to tell him. He will take it better from you." The blotches of her arms were very purple. She said, "They are going to do it this morning. Go and tell him." Then she went back into the chief's bureau.

I went into the ward. I still could not see the Number 29 because of the hoop, like a little tent, that keeps the weight of the blankets from his legs.

Madame Marthe, the panseuse, was not in the ward. The infirmière, Madame Alice, was cleaning the night-tables down by the other door.

Every one called, "Bonjour, Madame; bonjour, Madame!"

"Bonjour, les embusqués!"

That is our great joke, that they are all embusqués.

I went across to Number 29 and looked at him over the hoop.

[110]

He was lying with his eyes wide open. They are like the eyes of deer and oxen. He is a very big man, very ugly, with an old scar over half of his face. Such an ugly, funny face; the shadow of death has no right to be upon such a ridiculous face. His face was made for making people laugh. He always kept the whole ward laughing. He used to make me laugh in the midst of his horrible pansements. No matter what he suffered, he never used to make a sound. I almost cannot bear it when they suffer silently. If they scream, I really don't care much. He used to try to wink at me to make me laugh.

I knew this about him, that his people are woodcutters in the mountains between the valleys of the Maurienne and the Tarentaise. I do not know why he went away to strange new countries. He must be thirty-five years old. In wildernesses he heard of the war three months after it began. He was wounded seven months ago, and was sent from hospital to hospital, getting always worse. He is not the sort of creature to be in a hospital. He looks absurd in a bed. He used to tell me of throwing one's blanket over a heap of pine boughs and sweet fern. He had much fever, and he would tell me about the clear, cool, perfect water of a certain forest spring.

[111]

I thought, standing there, how he would be wanting to drag himself into some hole of rocks and great tree-trunks, where no one saw.

The clock was striking eight. They would not begin to operate before ten. He would have to think of it for two hours, lying there. He looked at me very steadily. I thought, "It is I who must tell him, it is I who must tell him." He tried to wink at me, and then he shut his eyes. I thought, "I will wait a little."

I went to the apparatus in the middle of the ward and began to get things ready for the panseuse.

I tried to talk to the men in the beds near, the 9, Barbet, whose fever had gone down nicely; and 10, the pepère, who has had his right hand amputated; and 6 and 7 opposite, who are both young and gay and getting well fast. But I could not talk.

He is only one of thousands and thousands. In the hospitals, in the dreadful fields, along the roads, they are dying.

Those of the men who could sit up and use their hands were folding compresses.

Twenty-one started a song and some of the others took it up. They sing softly, many of them have very nice voices.

Père Mathurin  
N'a pas de chaussons!  
Il en aura;  
Il n'en aura pas.  
Roulons-le, Père Mathurin,  
Roulons-le  
Jusqu'à demain!

[112]

I got everything ready on the dressing-table. I kept all the time looking at the clock. Every few minutes I passed where I could see Number 29. He lay always with his eyes shut. Madame Alice had finished her cleaning and had gone to tidy up. Madame Marthe would come back and we would have to begin the dressings.

Dans une brouette  
Père Mathurin  
Roulons-le  
Jusqu'à demain.

When I was unrolling the big cotton, I felt sure, suddenly, that 29 was waiting for me. It was odd, for I could not see him round the hoop; I went to him.

His eyes were open and he tried to say something. His mouth was black with fever.

I leaned down close.

I was thinking, "I've got to tell him."

But he said, "Don't worry, I know."

I stood there and I did not say anything. I did not even look at him. I looked quite away out of the windows to the treetops and the blue roofs and the wet close sky.

[113]

He lay perfectly still, and I just stood there.

The men went on singing—

Père Mathurin,  
Il en aura,  
Il n'en aura pas——

Madame Marthe had come in and was going about her work. She did not call me. It was nice of her not to call me.

She is quick and very clever and nervous and bad-tempered. She is rather horrid for me usually, but to-day she has been so nice that I shall always remember.

She went on with the dressings. I stood quite silently by the bed of 29.

After a while the chief came in with the patronne and all the doctors. They came to Number 29 Madame Marthe came, and I left her with them. They talked for a few minutes with her and then went out.

I helped her get him ready, and then Joseph came with the stretcher.

I went with him down the corridor to wait at the door of the operating room. They give the chloroform usually at the door. It seemed dreadfully long.

I said, "You don't mind my waiting with you, do you? I'd like to."

[114]

It was such a silly thing to say that he tried to laugh at me.

I thought they would give him the chloroform here at the door of the operating room and that I would run when he was once under. But they threw open the doors, and wheeled the stretcher cart in, and called to me to help lift him to the table. And then to help with this, with that, quickly. And I stayed and helped through it all. They thought he was going to die there on the table. Afterwards I realized how horrible it had been. When we got back to the ward, the patronne was there with Madame Marthe.

The patronne is a wonderful nurse. If any one can get a man through it, she can. She is dreadful. She screams from one end of the ward to the other and stamps her foot, and uses hideous words. But she can storm a man back into life. And suddenly all the rage will be a coaxing, and you know that she cares about it. "J'ai cela dans la peau," she says.

She shouted the "cinq lettres" at me, "What are you staring at? Get on with your work. He's through that, and he's not going to die."

[115]

## **Number 14 Sunday, December 5th**

The mother of little 14, Louis, has come to see him.

When I came into the ward this morning, I was frightened to see that there were people about the bed of little Louis.

I don't know why we always call him little Louis, for he is a great long boy as he lies there in his bed; he must have stood splendidly tall and strong before.

But it was only that Madame Marthe and Madame Alice were standing there, talking with a tall fine woman, who wore the black shawl and small black ribbon cap of the country of Arles. The shawl and the cap gave to the mother of little Louis that special dignity the peasant costume always gives, oddly touching in the lonely city and in this huge strange house of grief.

She was sitting quietly by the bed of little Louis in the corner, talking to him and smiling, and talking to the nurses.

Little Louis was smiling with big tears rolling down his cheeks.

Madame Alice had the pail of dirty water on the floor beside her and stood leaning on the handle of her mop. She is a big well-built woman, handsome and sullen. She is sullen even when she does kind things. You would not believe that she was kind. She had her skirt pinned up to her knees and wore the huge wooden sabots she always puts on when she scrubs the floors.

[116]

Madame Marthe stood cleaning her nails with the pansement scissors. She had not yet put on her cap with the black streamers and the ribbon of three colours. She has great coils of pale hair.

Once she said to me, "I suppose you wear a hat in the street?" I said, "Usually." And she said, "I would not wear a hat if I went to see a king."

She and Madame Alice and the mother of little Louis were all laughing together over our especial joke, that Louis will be very wicked as soon as he is a little better, and will make us great trouble in the ward.

Louis' father died two months ago, and Louis does not know. He is so ill that he cannot be allowed to know. His mother had to answer all his questions about home, and explain that his father had not been able to come because it was lambing time. She had to smile, and make it seem that everything was going well in the house that little Louis would never see again. She had to make it seem as if the patronne had not told her that little Louis was dying.

[117]

He would have liked to have had her left alone with him. But she was grateful when one or another of us found a minute to come and stand there and smile also.

## **Monday, December 6th**

In the cold, rainy, windy early morning there was a regiment of infantry, with all its camping things, battle things, marching across the Place de la Bastille, going out.

Long blue coat and blue-covered képi, blanket rolled up in a big wheel, knapsack and cartridge-belt, flask and drinking-cup, bayonet and gun.

And each man had a bit of mimosa or a few violets or a little tight hard winter rosebud buttoned into his coat, or stuck in his képi, or in the muzzle of his gun.

I think most of one smart young officer, who had three roses in his hand. They were not the sad

little roses that the south sends to the winter streets of Paris, but great full hothouse crimson roses.

He carried his roses in his left hand, held a little before him, that nothing might touch them, stiffly, and looked straight ahead of him as he marched. [118]

A woman, standing beside me to watch them go, said to me, "They are so young."

She had a grey shawl over her head.

The band passed. I do not know what it was playing.

The woman and I stood together to watch those boys go away.

### **Madame Alice Thursday, December 9th**

These last days Madame Alice has been even more sullen than usual. She arrives in the morning, they tell me—she arrives at six and I am never there to see—with a long face, and will say good day to nobody, and grumbles because somebody's handkerchief, or somebody's bag of raffia grasses, or somebody's package of letters, had fallen from his night-table to litter her floor. She grumbles about "pigs," and bangs things.

When I arrive I find her still grumbling and banging. [119]

This morning she was washing the face of the new 25. She washed his poor face very gently, no hands in the world could have been kinder or more careful than hers, or more delicate of touch, though they are big and red, but she was grumbling all the time.

I said, "Good morning," and she hunched one shoulder.

Madame Marthe came in and said that I had better go and fetch my boiled water before somebody else emptied the boiler.

When I was coming back with it from the office, Madame Alice was standing by the window at the turn of the passage. She had put her pail down on the floor, with 25's soap and things thrown down beside it. She stood with one arm against the window-pane and her face buried in the crook of her elbow.

I said, "Oh, Madame Alice, are you ill, Madame Alice?"

She hunched her shoulder. I put my big pitcher down by her pail on the floor, and patted her shoulder and said, "Please, oh, please."

She said, not turning or raising her head, "They've taken him to the children's hospital—Jeanjean, my little boy, you know; he has been very ill all the week. A neighbour said, five days ago, she would take him to the Clinique, there is no hour when I can get away from here to take him. It was the neighbour who looked after him the day they sent him home from school because he was sick. She is very good, but she has not much time. She has got her work. She did not know how ill he was. I told her, the first day, to take him to the Clinique, but that day she had no time. She did not tell me. She told me that at the Clinique they said it was nothing. She told me that every day. For five days she did not take him. I only saw him in the nights, you know. Oh, it is horrible when you can only see them at night." [120]

She stopped a minute and was sobbing, but without making any noise. She rubbed the tears out of her eyes against the back of her hand, and went on. It was odd to hear her talk so much, like that—she whom I only knew as sullen and silent.

"It is nearly eight at night when I get home," said she, "and I have to leave soon after five in the morning. I was up with him all the nights, and I was so frightened all the days. Oh, these days here!"

She stood always with her back turned, and I could only stand there, patting her shoulder. It was queer how such big sobs made no noise at all. [121]

She said, "The neighbour got frightened yesterday, and took him to the Clinique, and they said it was spinal-meningitis, and sent him then, at once, to the children's hospital. When I got home he was gone. It was night, they would not have let me see him at the hospital. This morning I had to come here. But I shall get off at noon and go to him for an hour."

She shook herself and jerked away from me.

"Now do you see?" she said, "now do you see?"

And without saying what it was she meant she took up her pail, and 25's little bundle of things, and went on along the corridor.

### **Saturday, December 11th**

To-day I have been seeing the little old curé of Jadis-sur-Marne. I found out, after all this time, where he was; and went and sat with him for an hour, in a pleasant sunny room of the house where they take care of him. He did not know me at first, but afterwards he seemed quite pleased. I want to tell this story of him.

One Sunday, months and months and ages and ages and ages ago, Monsieur le Curé of Jadis-sur-Marne, began his discourse in a wrath righteous indeed. It was the Sunday that nobody knew was [122]



to be the last Sunday of peace.

"My dear brethren," began Monsieur le Curé, in his most angry voice. He snapped the words out, "Mes chers frères," as if each word were a little sharp stone shot out of a sling to sting the upturned faces of his listeners. "My dear brethren," he began in righteous wrath, and stopped short.

He stood in a bar of dust and sun motes, up in the old black carved pulpit, against the grey stone pillar. Then he was a round, jolly, rosy, busy old little curé, who got into a temper only reluctantly, after much goading.

His church was old and beautiful and quite large. There were twenty-one people in it: ten in the château chapel, opposite the pulpit, Madame la Marquise and Mademoiselle and two guests in the great red-velvet chairs, and six of the servants in the benches behind them; old Ernestine, the curé's bonne, in her round white cap, erect, determined to stop awake; another white cap or two, here and there, and Père Pate's black skull-cap; two secularized sisters from the Ecole Libre, awkward in their black hats and jackets; three little wriggling girls whom they had managed to capture and retain on the bench between them; some small boys down by the door; and Madelon, the twelve-year-old daughter of the château gardener, who forsook the château pew that she might sit nearer to Monsieur le Curé. [123]

Madelon sat twisted round in her chair to look straight up at him and adore, her hands in their Sunday gloves clasped intensely upon her blueprint lap.

It was cool in the church after the last day's rain, and dark, except where bars of sunshine and dancing sun motes struck across, and where the altar candles were little stars.

One heard the chickens cackling in the curé's garden, and the locusts shrilling close at the windows in the acacia trees of the cemetery, and the children calling and laughing in the street.

"My dear brothers," began Monsieur le Curé, looking down into the round blue eyes of Madelon.

He clutched the edge of the pulpit in both hands and leaned forward. It was indeed tremendously that he was going to scold. He had a right to scold. All night, in his little brown room, under the snores of old Ernestine, he had been working himself up to the pitch for it.

Next Sunday was the Fête of the Patronage. The Grand Vicaire was to come, all the way from Meaux. Madame la Marquise was to present a banner. [124]

The children romped in the street. The women put on hats and went and stood and gossiped in the market-place. The men went fishing; the boys went fishing.

Every Sunday it was the same thing.

In a high temper, Monsieur le Curé began, "My dear brothers," and stopped short.

He let go of the pulpit edge and stood straight and looked over the heads of the twenty-one of them. All the light there was in the deep old church seemed to be upon his face.

When he looked down at his people, it was with a lovely shining of kindness. It was as if, suddenly, he realized how he loved them. He loved them too much to scold.

"My dear brothers," he said. All the words became little kind caresses. They were small humble words, poor little words, simple, like his listeners. They seemed to have the touch of many little wings across the faces lifted up, or to fall like showers of blossom petals.

One day, only so little a time afterwards, Monsieur le Curé stood among a heap of charred things and broken, blackened stones.

This is what used to be the pillar of the pulpit, and under all that, at the end there, must be buried the altar, with the cross and the candles that used to be stars. There are things that are burned, all black and charred, and things that are twisted. The curé cannot make out what they are. He had not known that there was iron in the church. Queer iron things are twisted and tortured. The new bright window he had thought so beautiful is all broken, the reds and blues and yellows sparkle among the stones. [125]

There are men's boots. What are men's boots doing here, sticking up straight out of the ruins of altars?

They are the boots of the dead men. Those things among the stones are dead men. You go to see what the boots are doing here, and you find that the blue-and-red heaps are dead men.

How they sink into the earth! They are trying to get back into the earth, whence they came. They came from it and are trying to get back, as fast as they can, into it.

This was once a church. And once upon a time, ages and ages ago, or only some days and days ago, Monsieur le Curé stood against the pillar and began to scold.

The women used to stand and gossip in the market-place; the children used to romp in the cobbled street; the men used to go fishing.

The graveyard about this heap of stones, that once was a church, is a strange place, full of trampled straw, and of long heaps of red and blue, that end in boots. The walls of the graveyard are everywhere pierced with holes, that often those long heaps lie under. Monsieur le Curé does not know why the straw is there. [126]

And so Monsieur le Curé has become a little mad.

In one of those days, it seems, he came across Madelon sitting against a wall, quite dead. It was

in the rue du Château. Much of the wall was fallen down, but just where Madelon sat the bit of it standing was radiant with roses. Madelon sat on the grass against the wall, her legs stuck straight out, her hands on the grass, her head hanging forward, tangled hair over her staring eyes, and her mouth wide open.

The curé says he does not know what it was that happened to Madelon.

By the fire, in a bright room, Monsieur le Curé talked to me of the church that Sunday morning, and made me see it; and made me see, as if I stood there that other day with him, the broken things, and black, twisted things, and the things that the earth was taking back. He talked quietly, even of Madelon, and said he was so glad that, that last time, God had not let him scold.

### **The last Sunday of Peace: Remembering July 26th, 1914**

[127]

When they came back from Mass, up through the château woods and the park and across the gardens, Anne Marie and Raoul walked together, and Anne Marie knew how happy she was.

She had been happy every day of her eighteen years, but that day she realized it.

Before she was quite awake she had been happy because of birds and church bells and sunshine and the fragrances of the garden. Snuggled down in the pillows that smelled of rose petals, she was happy because of her new white dress and the poppy hat. And as she waked she had known that she was happy apart from all those things, those lovely accustomed things, and far, far beyond them, because of Raoul. Because Raoul would be waking there, under the same roof. Because he would be waiting for her when she went down the stairs in the white dress and poppy hat.

He had been waiting at the foot of the stairs. He had had a huge box of white orchids sent out for her from Paris.

He had gone to Mass with her and his mother, and her mother. She had sat three chairs away from him in the dusk of the château chapel. [128]

After Mass the two mothers walked ahead together, and she and Raoul followed close behind, more nearly alone together than they had ever been before.

He talked all the time; and she dimpled and blushed and was happy, and knew that she was happy, but could not say a word.

They went slowly through the woods, where there were quantities of orange toadstools after the rain, and all the birds were singing; and along the avenues of the park, and across the stiff gardens.

Anne Marie's father was out on the terrace. He was walking up and down the terrace and gesturing very strangely all by himself as he walked.

Across the sunny spaces of lawn and gravel, box border and clipped yew and flowers, the château was all sunlit, its steep blue roofs and old soft yellow walls.

Anne Marie's father came down the terrace steps to meet her mother and Raoul's mother, and, as they stood together he seemed to be telling them something.

Anne Marie thought how odd of him to gesture like that. Suddenly a wonderful idea and daring came to Anne Marie. She stopped and stood still there in the little gravel path, between the box edges and beds of roses and heliotrope and petunias that were so sweet in the sunshine. She found herself possessed of a great courage. She would stand there, and Raoul would stand there, and they would be quiet, quite alone together. And she would dare to talk to him. She would dare to tell him things. There were so many things for her to tell and ask. Everything of life and of loving. She thought the droning of the bees was a hot and golden sound. It was the greatest, happiest, most wonderful moment of all her life. [129]

But Raoul said, "Shall we not go on, Anne Marie; there is something the matter, shall we not go on and see what it is?"

His mother had turned around where she stood at the top of the steps and was looking at Raoul.

The grey stone flags of the terrace were scattered over with all the Paris papers, that Anne Marie's father must have thrown down, and trampled on as he walked up and down the terrace.

He said to Raoul, coming up the steps, "Well, this time it is certain. Whatever they try to show, every word in the papers means it. It will be inside the week, it is I who tell you."

"Raoul, Raoul," said Raoul's mother, very white. [130]

But Raoul, up the steps in two bounds, did not hear her. "If only it may be! How we've hoped it! Oh, sir, do you really think it?"

Anne Marie's mother had put her parasol and Mass book down on the broad stone balustrade of the terrace. She stooped over and took up one of the papers that lay on the flags.

"It can't be," she said, reading. She spread the paper out on the top of the balustrade and stood pulling off her gloves as she read. "It can't be," she said again, pulling off first one soft grey glove and then the other.

"It can't be," said Raoul's mother, always looking at Raoul.

Anne Marie's father, beginning to pace the terrace again, said, "It will be, it will be!"

Raoul said, "It's got to be," standing very straight and looking at nobody.

Anne Marie thought, oh dear, oh dear, now they will talk and talk; and she had so wanted Raoul to stay with her down in the garden.

## **Cantine, Christmas**

[131]

All the babies seem to me to be blonde and of exactly the same size and quite square, about one year old, square, and very adorable. I never can remember which are the boys and which the girls.

The mothers come from, we don't know where; and are, we don't know what.

Last year there was written on a card and posted on the wall by the door, a thing that I think rather beautiful—

"Toute femme enciente, ou qui nourrit son enfant, peut venir tous les jours prendre ici ses repas de midi et du soir, sans craindre aucune question."

They came, at noon and at dusk, sick, ugly, stupid things, twice a day like that, from two hundred and fifty to three hundred of them. Bearing the children of soldiers, the children that will be France, they came without need of more than making each of them her X in the book on the shelf by the door.

There is not room for more than forty-five at a time at the tables in the room that used to be a butcher's shop. They had to wait in turn outside in the street.

Outside in the ugly, forlorn street they waited, an ugly, forlorn line, in wind or rain.

[132]

They all seemed frightened, not of the things that there really were to fear, like sickness and poverty and war, but of just opening the door and coming in and making their mark in the book, and finding places at the tables.

They would have the door always kept shut. The steam of the soup was thick and horrid, always, in the room. I hate the smell of the poor. I hated those deformed, bedraggled, dulled women, as I served their soup. I hated them, because they would have the door kept shut. But I loved them, because their children would be France.

This year we keep Christmas for the babies.

It is odd how beautiful any woman is with a baby in her arms. Especially if she has only a shawl to wrap around herself and the baby, where it lies in the hollow of her arm. The faded, stained, worn shawl, drawn close about her head, falls in long lines down over her shoulders, and is gathered up in new folds around the nestling baby, the little soft shape of it, the little head, round, against her throat.

Like that each one of the women makes you think of a beautiful, wonderful thing.

[133]

## **Perfectly Well**

The patronne was standing by the bed of little 10.

I said, "It does not go well, little 10?"

He said, "Not too well, madame." His poor face was twitching, and his poor hands on the sheet.

The patronne said to me, "He has given us a bad night, that sort of a horror there." She stood with her hands purple on her broad hips and looked at him, and said, "Espèce d'horreur, veux-tu finir de nous en m——"

He laughed and I laughed.

It is dreadful, but I can bear it better like that. The little good sisters of other, different hospitals, the ladies of the Red Cross, the calm and tenderness and prayers, how strange it would seem.

Little 10 laughed.

"Oh, you laugh!" said the patronne, "and all the trouble you make us! Wait till you are well!" She said, "Attends que tu sois guéri, et je te f——trais un coup sur le citron."

Madame Marthe came with the hypodermic syringe and tubes and glasses in a basin. Her hands were trembling. I love her when her hands tremble.

The patronne said to me, "He is off for another little party of billiards."

[134]

That meant another operation.

I said, "You don't mind, little 10?"

He said, "Not too much, madame."

I said, "You'll be better to-morrow."

He said, "I'll be better to-morrow."

"Name of God," said the patronne, "of course he'll be better to-morrow."

Next day, when I tried not to cry because his bed was empty, she said to me, "It was no lie: he is better, isn't he?"

## Hospital, New Year's Day, 1916

What made me dreadfully want to cry was that they all, every one of them, wished me good health—little Louis, who is dying, and all the rest of them.

### The Apache Baby—Wednesday, January 5th—Cantine

They telephoned from the cantine that the baby of the girl Alice was dead at the hospital, and that the funeral was to be from there that afternoon at three o'clock, and that Alice wanted me to come. [135]

Mademoiselle Renée, the économe, who telephoned, said it was the apache girl with the ear-rings.

I don't know why she wanted me to come to the funeral of her baby. Of the nearly three hundred women who came twice every day to the cantine, she had never been especially my friend. Her baby had been a sick little thing, and I had been touched by her wild love of it. It had no father, she told me. We never ask questions at the cantine, but she had been pleased to tell me that. She had said she was glad, because, so, it was all her own. She had rocked it as she held it wrapped in the folds of her red shawl, and shaken her long bright ear-rings, laughing down at it, over her bowl of soup. And now it is dead.

Claire came to me. We had just time, if we took a taxi, to get to the hospital, stopping on the way for some flowers. It was raining more or less, and very dark.

At the hospital they sent us round to the back, to a sort of shed opening on a street that was being built up, or had been torn down, I don't know which, desolate in the rain.

In the room of the shed there were two families in black, two mothers with dingy crape veils, and two dead babies in unpainted pine boxes that were open. [136]

The baby in the box on the right was quite big, the size of the most expensive doll one could get for a rich little girl at Christmas. There was a quite fine white tin wreath on the floor, tilted up against the pine box. The family of the bigger baby was quite numerous, half a dozen women, an old man, and several children. They all had shoes, and several of the women had umbrellas, and one of them had a hat.

In the smaller box was the baby of Alice, very, very small and pinched and blue, even more small and pinched and blue than when she used to bring it to the cantine. The family of Alice consisted of a small boy with bare feet and no hat, a small girl with a queer coloured skirt and felt slippers and a bit of black crape over her red hair, and a boy of perhaps seventeen, also in felt slippers, with his coat collar turned up and a muffler round his chin and his cap dragged down over his eyes. Alice had a hat and a crape veil and a black coat and skirt, and down-trodden, shapeless shoes much too big for her.

There was a small bunch of violets in the pine box with the baby.

We put our roses down on the floor at the foot of the box. [137]

Both babies had on the little white slips that the hospital gives.

The family of the bigger baby, and the brother and sister of Alice, stared at us.

The mother of the bigger baby stood leaning against the wall, her head against the whitewash, her two hands over her eyes. She was making a queer little noise through her teeth. She kept it up all the time we were in the shed, a sort of hissing. She never once uncovered her eyes.

Alice was standing close, close beside her baby in the pine box, just looking down at it. She never took her eyes from it. She is a tall, straight girl, but she was bent over, as if she were feeble and old. Her veil was pushed back from her face. It had been wet, and the black had run over her face. But it must have been the rain, for she was not crying at all. All the time in the shed she never moved or cried at all.

Her little brother and sister stood back as if they were afraid of her.

Claire and I waited near the door of the shed.

For a long time we waited like that.

Then two croquemorts came, in their shining black clothes. One of them had a sort of hammer in his hand.

They went to the box of the bigger baby, and one of them picked up the cover of the box and put it on, and the other began to drive the nails in. [138]

When he drove the first nail in, the woman with her eyes covered so she could not see him, heard, and knew what it was, and began to shriek. With her hands over her eyes she stood against the wall and shrieked.

The croquemort drove in all the nails, and the woman kept on shrieking.

Then the other croquemort put the tin wreath on the lid of the box, and then both of them came over to our baby.

Alice had been just looking and looking at her baby. When the men came, and one of them took up the lid of the box from the floor, and the other stood with his hammer, she gathered herself up as if she would spring upon the men who would take her little dead thing from her and put it

away for ever. I thought she would fight over it, quite mad. The little brother and sister stood away from her, shivering.

But what she did was to stoop and take up our roses from where they lay on the floor, and put them into the pine box with the baby. She put them all in about the baby, covering it with them. She hid it away under roses and then stood close, close to it, while the croquemort drove the nails in, all the nails, one by one. [139]

Then one of the croquemorts took up the box of the bigger baby and carried it out of the shed and put it, with the tin wreath on the top of it, into a hearse that there was waiting on the left of the door. And the other croquemort took up the box of Alice's baby and carried it out, and put it into a hearse that was waiting on the right of the door.

The family of the bigger baby followed away, after the hearse and one of the croquemorts, toward the depths of the city, two of the women leading the baby's mother, who still kept her hands over her eyes, but was not shrieking any more, only sobbing. I know no more of them after that.

Alice went out of the door alone, and turned to the right, after the hearse in which was her dead child.

Our croquemort would have gone ahead of her, but she would not let him pass. She would not have him between her and her baby. She kept close, close to the hearse, almost touching it, all the way.

The croquemort walked behind her, and the brothers and sister walked behind him, and Claire and I at the end of it.

We went through, a tangle of poor streets, narrow and crowded. People drew back out of our way; some of them crossed themselves, and all of them were silent for an instant as the apache baby passed. [140]

We went through wide, forlorn streets of coal yards and warehouses and factories. The carters and labourers in those streets stopped to look at us and make the sign of the Cross, for the baby passing.

We went over the canal bridge and the railroad bridges, and along desolate streets of the outskirts, all in the rain.

We went by barracks, where many blue coats, going about their duties, or standing idly about, drew up to salute the baby in its poor little unpainted rough box.

At the fortifications many blue coats were digging trenches, and they all looked up and stopped their work to salute the baby.

Twice we met groups of blue coats marching along the muddy empty roads, and both times the officer halted his men to salute the apache baby going by.

The bigger brother walked like a true apache, slouching and slinking along, shoulders hunched up, head sunk down, face hidden between his muffler and the peak of his cap. The smaller brother and the sister slouched too. But Alice walked quite straight, her head up, close, close to her child. [141]

So we came to the cemetery, in at the gates, and along a street of little marble houses, to a field where there were only wooden and black iron crosses, and to a hole that was dug in the red wet earth.

There was a man waiting for us by the hole. He helped the croquemort to take the box out of the hearse and put it in the hole.

Alice stood close, close to the edge, looking down into the grave.

The rest of us stood together behind her.

The croquemort gave her a little spade, and told her what to do with it.

Then she stooped down and dug up a spadeful of earth and threw it into the hole where they had put the box.

Each of us went in turn to give earth to earth, and then it was over.

Alice stood close, close to the edge of the hole, and looked and looked down into it.

The croquemort said something to Alice, but she did not move. He then spoke to the bigger brother, who shuffled up to Alice and tugged at her sleeve.

But still she did not move.

The smaller brother began to cry. [142]

Then the sister went to Alice and pulled at her other sleeve.

"Take her away," the croquemort said to me.

I said, "Dear, we must go."

Without looking at me, she said, "I—I stay here." She stood close, close to the hole and looked at the little pine box, and said again, quite quietly, "I stay here."

I said, "You cannot stay," stupidly, as if we were discussing any ordinary coming or going.

Her little sister, pulling at her skirt, said, "Say then, ask thou the lady to let thee go to supper at the cantine."

"The cantine is for those who have babies," Alice answered. Then she looked at me for the first time, her great wild eyes, in her face that was stained and streaked where the black from the wet crape had run.

### **Gégène's Croix de Guerre, One Thursday**

When Gégène went to the Invalides to receive his Croix de Guerre, in the great Court of Honour, there was no one to go with him except Madame Marthe and me.

Gégène belongs to nobody. He is an "enfant de l'Assistance Publique." There is nobody nearer to him than the peasants he was hired out to work for, somewhere down in Brittany. [143]

I do not know whether or not they were kind to him, whether or not they cared about his going off to war, or would take interest in the honours he has won. We know nothing but what the Assistance knows about him; and he himself can tell us nothing, for he cannot speak at all. His wound was in the head; he has been trepanned twice. He may live a long time, he is such a strong young boy, but he will never be able to speak. His right side is stiffened, he cannot use that hand, and the foot drags. Except for that, and not being able to speak, he is quite well.

Nobody knows how much he understands of it all, or what he thinks and feels. Sometimes he looks very sad. His boyish face, refined by pain, haunts me when I am away from the hospital. But sometimes he seems quite content, happy to be just well housed and fed and petted by us. We do not know what will become of him when he can no longer stay in the hospital.

Madame Marthe says, "What would you have? he is not the only one."

But she is very kind to him, and when she has a half-day's leave she often takes him out with her, for a little treat. [144]

She and I hurried through the dressings this morning and had everything done, our cylinders sent to the sterilization, the apparatus in order, the ward quite neat, in time to go and have lunch, the three of us together, in a big café of the Boulevards.

Gégène was too excited to eat, and so was little Madame Marthe, in her cap of the "Ville de Paris" and her blue woollen shawl. She had to leave it for me to cut up Gégène's chicken and pour his red wine for him.

It rained; the crowd in the Place des Invalides stood under dripping umbrellas.

In the Court of Honour the arcades were packed with wet people, and out in the great central space there was no shelter but umbrellas for the poor great splendid heroes like Gégène.

There they all stood together, those who could stand, in all the pride and tragedy of their crutches and their bandages—one little blinded officer with his head cocked sideways like a bird's. And those who could not stand had chairs and benches; two or three were there on stretchers.

There was a group of women in deep mourning,—some of them with children—who had come to receive the decorations of their dead husbands or sons. [145]

There were the great men of the General Staff,—maybe the Minister of War, maybe the President, maybe the Generalissimo himself—with all their high officers around them, already arrived, near the entrance, astir with preparation.

Out in the centre of the Court, grouped almost motionlessly, were the men who waited to receive their honours.

We could see our Gégène, standing up very tall and straight among them.

"Isn't he nice?" I said to Madame Marthe, "Isn't he nice?"

But Madame Marthe was crying—funny little tears, and her nose very red. "Oh!" she said, "Oh, what will happen when that man with the gold braid comes to Gégène? He will speak to Gégène, and Gégène cannot answer! He will hold out his hand to Gégène, and Gégène will not be able to take it!"

We clutched each other in panic, and then the music broke out into all the splendour of the Marseillaise.

### **Empty Memories**

[146]

Seventeen months after the day when he went out for the first time, he was killed beside his mitrailleuse.

He had been home in the meanwhile twice on leave, and there had been nothing changed. He had won many honours, and she supposed the other woman had been proud of him. For herself she had seen him very little and always pleasantly. She was glad now that it had been only pleasantly.

But it was the day of that first August, the day of his first going, that one day, that one hour, she kept living again and again through. It kept being present with her, curiously.

He had arrived—he had telegraphed—about four of the afternoon, she did not know from where. He would have to leave again before five o'clock. She knew, of course, with whom he had been. She thought, waiting for him, what an irony that it should be like this, after all the bitterness, he was coming back to her, and to the old house of his people, in the street of many gardens.

She thought it would be awkward for them both. What could they say to one another?

She wondered if it had been terrible to him to leave the other woman. Probably the other woman was beautiful. All those women were beautiful. She thought, perhaps that other woman loved him and cared what happened to him. [147]

Her two little boys were playing in the room.

The great closed rooms, to which she had brought them back hurriedly from the seaside, fascinated them.

The bigger little one, in his sailor suit with the huge collar was saying, "That's the old witch's cave, Toto, in the snow mountain."

The smaller one, with the curls and the Russian blouse, said, "Oh, Zizi!"

"Yes; and, Toto, that big lump is the giant, sleeping."

"Oh, Zizi!"

Then their father came.

The little boys hung back and stared at him; they never had known him really well.

Their mother stood up and went to meet him, across the wide room. "You've had a horrid journey," she said.

"I've been fifty hours in the train," he answered. "Hallo, small boys, there!"

"Toto," said Zizi, "he's going to be a soldier!"

"Oh, Zizi!" said Toto.

The bigger boy came over to his father. "I know a chap," he said, "it's the son of a friend of mademoiselle's, whose father is dead and cannot be a soldier." [148]

"Poor chap," said his father.

His wife said, "Old Denis has got your things together. All the other men-servants are gone. He has put you something to eat on the dining-room table."

He said, "Will you come with me, do you mind? I've things to say to you, and there is so little time."

But when they sat together at one corner of the big shining table, he did not seem to know what to say. He tried to eat, but it seemed as if he could not eat. He pushed the plate away and leaned his elbows on the table and his head in his hands.

She thought she would like to do something for him, but did not know what to do. Again she said, "It must have been dreadful in the train."

"It was wonderful," he said. Then, sitting still with his face hidden, he went on: "We were singing all the time. Wherever the train stopped people gave us flowers; the whole train was full of flowers, you know. They were most of them boys of the young classes in the train. We sang the most absurd things—nursery rhymes, and old canons, 'Frères Jacques' and 'Cœur de Lise,' and those, you know. What is the one about 'Papa Lapin'? None of us could remember the one about 'Papa Lapin,' you know." [149]

"I don't know," she replied. It had always annoyed her, his trick of saying, "You know." She sat playing with something on the table.

He said again, "The whole train was full of flowers. 'Papa Lapin,' 'Papa Lapin'—how irritating, you know, when one can't remember."

He sat up suddenly erect, and said, "You'll take the boys and go down to the old place and look after things. It has always bored you, but after all it is for Zizi. And be good to my mother, will you, though you don't like her—she, she remembers '70. And I've not been of much use to her. I've not been of much use to you, nor to any one." He stopped short.

It was odd that suddenly she, who never had thought much about him, or felt things at all about him, should have known this thing. She had known as she sat there with him, alone in the dining-room, by the untouched things on the table, that he never would come back. He was one of those who never come back.

## Hospital

Often I am sad because I cannot worry enough about the 11, Charles. I forget him even when I am in the ward. His is the bed I see first when I look through the holes of the paint in the glass-topped door, opposite, away at the far end of the ward. There he has been, always, every day, through all the endless months since the Marne, propped up against a table board and two pillows and a sheet of black rubber. He breathes always more and more painfully, and coughs always more and more. The fever lines on his chart zigzag up and down, in long dreadful points. He has become very cross and exacting. He scolds us in little feeble gasps, with little feeble gestures. He is twenty-one years old, and has very long eyelashes. [150]

Yesterday when I went to say good-bye to him at the end of the day he was crying there in his corner, quietly, all by himself. His long eyelashes were all wet. I said, "Oh, little Charles, oh, little Charles!" and kept saying it over and over, and had nothing else in all the world to say. I patted his hands, that always lie both of them together upon the strap which is fastened round the bar at

the foot of the bed, by which he is sometimes able to pull himself up.

His hands are white and thin and crooked, like the roots of things that belong in the earth; while I patted his hands I was thinking that they did not seem to belong in the light and air at all. [151]

This morning I thought, "How absurd to have brought him a little pot of cream!" A little pot of cream for a man who is dying.

### **Hautiquet**

Hautiquet has gone back to the front. He would not let them tell me he was going. I never saw him to say good-bye. Last night, I said, as usual, "Bon soir, tout le monde, au revoir à demain!" And Hautiquet said with the rest, "A demain, Madame." He left a little package to be given to me after he was gone.

He was one of the older ones. He had been ill in the first winter with rheumatism and pleurisy. He went back and fought all summer, and all through the Champagne, and till Christmas. Then he got rheumatism again, this time in his eyes. He has been nearly blind since then, here in the hospital.

He was a clumsy peasant who never talked much. And of what he did say I could only understand about half. I did not know that he thought about me at all.

But in the little package he left for me there was an aluminum heart, made out of the aluminum from a shell. Madame Marthe says he had been nearly all the time working at it, because he had clumsy hands and could scarcely see. He had had much trouble getting the shape right. He had cut my initials on one side of it and his on the other, crookedly, because he was so nearly blind. [152]

### **Jean Fernand**

He had curly yellow hair and big blue eyes. He got well terribly fast. I was wishing all the time that he would take longer about it. He was so young.

His eyes were so blue, and round, and had seen all the horrors of the great retreat. The look of those things had stayed in his round young blue eyes.

He told me he was afraid of going back, but that he was glad to go because "tous les copains sont là." He said he couldn't bear to think of them there, when he was safe out of it. "It is as if they were fighting for me," he said, "and being wounded for me, and dying."

I don't know why I write of him in the past tense, for I have always the most amusing letters from him, from there. He is near Verdun. This morning I got from him a little snapshot a copain had made of him, down on all-fours in the bottom of his trench feeding a baby pig out of a bottle. [153]

### **Wednesday, February 9th Post Card**

Boinet is very happy to-day. He has news of his people at last. Since he left them in the first days, all through these months and months, it has been as if they had been simply swept away out of the world.

Everything that Boinet loved was swept away by the great black wave of the war. Into what depth of the end of all things all his life has been swept away! He has been imagining and imagining. He says, all the time in the trenches he was tortured by imagining things that might have happened to his three little sisters. Boinet is twenty-two, and the three sisters were younger than he, and beautiful, he says. Odd, how one speaks always in the past tense of people whom the war has taken into its dark spaces. Boinet tells how he loved his mother, as if it were a thing of another life.

And here is his post card saying that they are all quite well, and signed by every one of them. [154]

For nearly a year Boinet has been in the hospital, Number 16. He has troubled about his horrible burns scarcely at all, but we have thought he would go mad torturing himself with imagining things that might have happened to his people.

By means of an agency here, and the Mairie at Tourcoing, it was possible, at last, for his people to send him a post card of six lines.

It came this morning; I have had to read it to him about fifty times over.

It says that they are all very well, and for him to give news of Pierre, the husband of his sister Josette, and it is signed with all their dear, dear names, Père, Mère, Josette, Marie, Cloton.

Only it was sad, for Boinet knows that the husband of poor little Josette, married that last July was killed long ago in one of the first battles of the war.

### **The New 25**

He is of Morocco, brown and very lonely, and always shivering with cold. He speaks scarcely any French. His great dark eyes look to one with all the sadness of the eyes of animals that are dumb. Nobody understands him. He smiles up at us, with his beautiful white teeth and his big dumb eyes, and does not understand what we are saying. He makes me little magic-lanterns out of [155]



orange rinds, and tells me long stories about them, of which I understand not a word.

Once when I went back, just for an afternoon's visit to the hospital, I was wearing a bright blue silk scarf, and he took it and held it and cried over it, and would not give it back to me. I cannot imagine of what it reminded him, why he cried, or why he loved it.

He has three tiny little wooden dolls, scarcely bigger than almonds and wonderfully carved, that he never will let us touch. Madame Marthe thinks that they are strange gods of his; but I think they represent three children, far away, in lands where skies are blue, like my scarf.

He is only slightly wounded; very soon he will have to unwrap himself from my big white woollen shawl, and go away again to battles.

And I suppose I shall never know anything more about him.

## Marketing

[156]

He was standing half turned away from the others, the fat old woman in the woollen knitted shawl and a girl with a pretty brown bare head. He was holding a big market basket very carefully in both hands. I thought there was something odd about the careful way he held it and the way he stood, his head turned to one side and hanging a bit.

The old woman and the girl were talking very much about the cabbages, with the woman of the push-cart, also old and also wearing a knitted woollen shawl.

In the stir and noise of the street market the way the tall broad young soldier stood so still and silent did seem odd. And he was holding the basket with such very great care.

There was a live white goose in the basket. It kept stretching its long neck up over the rim of the basket and peering about, opening and shutting its yellow bill and hissing at people.

When the old woman and the girl had finished their discussion and selected their cabbage, they pushed the cabbage into the market basket along with the goose, and all the time the soldier held the basket carefully.

Then the old woman put her arm through one of his arms, and the girl put her arm through the other. As he turned to go where they would take him, I saw that he was blind; the wound had healed, but it was as if his eyes were closed. He very carefully let go the basket with one hand, and with the other hand, the girl's rather impatient touch on his elbow, he made a salute to where he thought the woman of the push-cart was standing, and then the old woman and the girl led him away with the basket.

[157]

## Hospital

The wards of "our" floor get always all the light there is. When there is sunlight it all comes in and picks the dust motes up and sets them dancing, down steep slants and ladders. When there is wind it sobs and sings along the wards and corridors. The rain makes wide sweeps of the great windows, and mists press very close against them and get into the wards and drift there. When there was snow, in these few days the rooms were all full of its whiteness. Almost it was as if its silence were there, and its peace.

## Saturday, March 5th

[158]

The night was full of great bells booming, Verdun, Verdun, Verdun. And yet there were no bells.

I never saw a darker morning come to Paris. The darkness came into the room, thick and wet and cold.

I had my breakfast by firelight.

The crows are back already in the garden; the bare black treetops were full of them this dark morning, and not one of them stirred or made a sound.

The lamps of the trams were lighted, and the lamps of the streets and quays and bridges.

The river is very high, the trees of the margins stand drowning.

The snow of these last days has stayed on in places, as yellow as fog and smoke.

In the old great beautiful courtyards of the hospital the snow is quite deep, on the roofs and ledges of red brick and grey stone, and on the huge square old cobbles, and on the black tracery of trees and bushes and of the vines along the walls.

The buds, that were soft and green last week, are black now; I was afraid to go and touch them and find them frozen hard.

The blackbird was singing. He has been back for nine days. It was dreadful in the dark and cold to hear him singing. How terrible all lovely things are become!

[159]

## Same day

In the half dark I came home along the canal. In these nights, coming home from the hospital, I have learned always more and more that the canal is beautiful, curving down between its old poor black tumbling houses, under its black bridges.

To-night the few lights of the quays and of windows fell into the water of the canal, just odds and ends of gold.

I stopped and stood and looked.

It had been a bad day in my ward.

I thought, how beautiful ugly things are become!

### **Saturday night before Easter**

The cool wet fresh smells of the garden, and of all the gardens of the quarter, come in at my wide window. It is almost midnight, the rain has stopped, and it is not cold any more. Sometimes the crows talk together from the top of the trees where their nests are, above the old low roofs my window looks across. There has been for days now, in all the rain and cold, a drift of green about the trees, the fine green mesh of a veil that seems to float, it is so bright and frail, about the black wintry tree-trunks and boughs and branches. The blackbirds came back last week to the garden.

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But it is only to-night that one can believe in spring.

In the wet sky, over the roofs and chimneys, and the treetops, there are some stars that hang as big and near as lamps. At dawn perhaps the nightingale will be singing.

### **Easter Day**

It is wonderful that spring should come on Easter Day.

One waked—and lo, winter was over and passed. There was a moment, in waking, of not being able to believe at all in unhappiness.

The nightingale was singing, the sun was coming up out of the filmy leaves of the garden, the bells of all the churches were pouring out Easter.

The river was misty in the early morning, under the sunshine, mauve and opal and blue. The trees of the quays, in their fragile leaf, seemed to drift in the mist and sunshine. I could not tell if the trees were gold or green in the Tuileries gardens. They were quite golden against the long purple mass of the Louvre, and quite golden up the river, where there is an especially bright blur of them under the purple towers and gable of Notre Dame.

[161]

The Halles were full of country and spring.

My own poor ugly canal had colours and lines of spring about it; its dingy, dark old houses were lifted into a sky so lovely that they seemed to have become quite lovely too, and its water, under the poor bridges, was full of gold and blue and purple and deep shining.

All the birds were singing in the great courtyards of the hospital, and all the opening buds sang too, and the green, green grass in its close bindings of stone.

Cordier—his face again bandaged, for he has been worse of late—tried to tell me something. I could make out, Nouveaux, Verdun, chez vous, très grands blessés," and then there was to open the door upon the ward's new tragedies and glories.

[162]

### **Frogs**

She, his mother, wished he wouldn't be so sweet. It was what she had longed for since he was a little boy, an indifferent, cold little child, and dreamed of. It made it difficult for her not to break down. And how dreary that would be for him, who was so glad to come home.

Always he had been very bored at home. He never since he was at all grown-up—he was twenty-one—had stayed an hour more than was necessary in the old dark sad castle. Now he had six days, just six days, for his own, to do with whatever he chose, away from those places of death, and it seemed that there was nothing he wanted but the old dull things that always before had so bored him.

She had been coming up from the village in the soft wet April afternoon, by the wide central avenue of the parterres between the little clipped yew trees, when he came out to the terrace. She had an instant's sick terror of thinking he was killed, and that this was her vision of him. But he was calling to her, and laughing. She had stopped, and stood quite still, and he had come eagerly, running down the steps to her.

They had six days together.

Often she had thought of the old strong castle that it was a place meant for great things to happen in, glories and disasters. Small things were of no matter in it. There had been no room bright and light enough for a little child to be gay in. Her baby's room had had stone walls and a high carved ceiling and windows four feet deep. If ever he had laughed and shouted, his little voice had been lost among old echoes. How could any child not have been afraid of the shadows that trailed and lurked along the corridors and upon the stairs.

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She specially remembered her little son standing with Miss on the top of the terrace steps, under the great Watch Tower, never running to meet her as she came up through the garden, the shadow of the stern old house prisoning him, like some dark spell, in his little white sailor dress.

Now, he had come to meet her eagerly, as she had so used to wish he would.

In the six days he was all the things to her that she had ever dreamed of. He was her little boy who needed her. He had wild gay moments, when his gaiety swept her along, and moments that needed her comforting.

Then it was their last day together, a softly raining day.

In the morning they went for a long tramp through their own woods and on into the forest, deeper and deeper. All the forest ways were full of wet blue hyacinths and songs of thrushes. The little rain made music in the April branches, and the wet smells were as incense in the forest aisles. When they came home he was hungry. Nothing would do but that they should go down to the village to the Place de l'Eglise and get spice bread and barley sugar from old Madame Champenot, as he had used to do when he was a small boy to whom his mother gave five sous for being good. [164]

They must go down the terrace steps and along the avenue to the Queen's Bosquet, where the old statues stood together dressed in ivy, and through the little stern gate in the rampart walls, and across the moat by the new bridge, that was so old, to the Place of the church.

Thatched roofs and tiled roofs were touched with spring wherever moss and lichen clung to them, green and grey and yellow.

He had gone into the little shop, and she had waited outside, not able to talk to any one.

The great Watch Tower of the castle, and the low square grey tower of the church, and all the crooked old tall black chimney-pots seemed to swim in the blue of the sky.

Waiting there she felt that the coming of spring was sad almost past bearing. She thought, soon the frogs in the castle moats would be singing their lonesome song. [165]

Afterwards they went round to the stables, from which all the horses were gone, and he was sad to think how long he had forgotten his little old pony, scarcely bigger than a dog.

In the afternoon he must go everywhere about the house, to all the old rooms and corridors and stairways, that he never before had known he loved. She must go with him, through the great dim attics, and up the tower stairs, and out on to the battlements, to the sunset; down into the great stone-vaulted kitchens, and the cellars that had been dungeons. They went laughingly at first. But afterwards they did not laugh any more. It had come to have the sacredness of a pilgrimage, their small journeying.

He talked quite gaily while they were at dinner in the long dining-hall under the minstrel's gallery.

But when they went to her little study afterwards together, they both were very silent.

There was a fire burning, but all the windows were open.

And as they sat there, almost silently together, they heard the first frogs singing in the castle moat. He laughed, and would have her tell him the story of the Frog Princess, that he never had cared for her to tell him when he was a little boy. [166]

She knew that she would never listen to the frogs again without remembering that night.

She wondered if the memory would become an agony to her. It seemed to her strange that, caring so much, she could not know.

### **Thursday, April 27th**

Under the walls of St. Germain des Prés, and the chestnut trees in their spring misty leaf of amber and topaz and ruby, a vendor of, I don't know what, had set up a little booth and shaded it with an indigo blue bit of canvas. The shade was deep purple under the blue canvas, and brass and bronze and copper and rust-red things had vague shapes in the shadow.

It was so beautiful that I was happy for all of a minute, passing in the tram on my way to the canteen.

### **The Boy with Almond Eyes**

[167]

They tell me that when they suffer I make little growling noises in my throat. They laugh and say, "Now the little Madame is angry!"

I am angry, I am furious. I am furious against suffering. I hate suffering.

If they scream I do not mind so much, but when they suffer silently, it is terrible.

Once the ward doctor thought I was going to cry.

I was holding the stump of a boy's leg while they dressed it. The leg had been cut off at the Front, hurriedly, anyhow, and the nerves left exposed.

The boy shuddered and quivered all over, and would not make a sound, and grew rigid with pain, stiff, and quite cold, and never made a sound.

The doctor, with the probe in his rubber-gloved hands, looked at me, and said, "You are going to cry! You must not cry before the wounded, it unnerves them."

And then I heard myself growling, with dreadful big words of the patronne's smothered under the

growls.

And the little boy laughed out, through everything, just like a mischievous bad little boy.

[168]

### **Monday, May 1st**

To-day is so beautiful, many people must have been happy for a moment just in waking. It is so difficult not to be happy. It is such a wonderful thing to open one's blinds to a sunshiny May morning. And then there has to be the next moment.

### **May 3rd**

In other years also the spring was sad. There was always that exquisite lovely poignant sadness of spring.

These days are too beautiful. It seems as if one could not bear them.

I think it is because so much beauty makes one want happiness.

One cannot understand, in such loveliness, why one is not happy.

Something is asked of us that we cannot answer.

I remember Roselyne's saying, long before there was war, one sunset, down by the sea in the south—

"So much happiness would be needed to fill the beauty of the day."

[169]

### **May 4th**

Yet perhaps in this cruel year spring is less cruel. Not to be happy is, in this year, the inevitable thing. One is less lonely in each his own special lack of happiness. And each one may think he would be happy, perfectly, if only there were no war.

### **Hospital, Friday, May 5th**

They have taken away all my little soldiers. I did not know at all. I came just as usual, and did not notice any unusual confusion. I heard much noise as I ran up the stairs, but there is always noise in the corridors.

When I got to the top of the stairs, there was the last batch of them, in their patched faded old uniforms, with their crutches and bandages and their bundles, all packed into the lift that was just started down. I could not even see who they were.

Some one called "Madame, oh, Madame!"

I think it was Barbet, the little 4.

I turned to run down the stairs to catch them up at the bottom, as they would get out of the lift, but Madame Marthe came out of the patronne's room, with a huge jar, of I don't know what, in her arms, and called to me, "Quick, the new ones will be arriving. Fetch our sheets from Madame Bayle!"

[170]

Twenty-six beds and ten stretcher beds all left empty.

Every one is gone, except little Charles who is dying, and 14, whose arm has just been amputated. I don't know where they are gone. Some to the Maison Blanche and some to St. Maurice, some to their dépôts, some to country hospitals. The patronne has had no time to tell me where they are gone. When she has time she will have forgotten, and cannot trouble to look up the lists of them. Madame Marthe does not know. She does not care. She is used to it.

But I—I am not used to it. I have loved them. I had nursed them so long, and done so many odds and ends of things for them, silly things and tragic things. I had helped them to get well. Really and truly I had helped them to get well. I had been so happy to have helped them. And now I do not know what has become of them.

[171]

### **Hospital—Arrival, Saturday, 6th**

They are very tired. They want to be let alone. They do not care what happens to them, or to the little queer odds and ends of things in their bundles.

They were bathed in the admission room; Madame Marthe and Madame Alice were called there. Madame Madeline threw out their dirty torn clothes, and the boots of those who had boots, to Madame Bayle in the hall.

Madame Bayle made Joseph take all that away, and gave me each man's own little things to put on the night table of his bed, his képi and his béret, if it were not lost, a pipe, a tobacco pouch, perhaps a big nickel watch, some letters, the photograph of a girl or an old woman, a purse with a few sous in it. Several of them have medals, the Croix de Guerre and the military medal, and one had a chaplet that I had to hide under the photograph of an old woman in her best bonnet. "Number 9," says Madame Bayle, "Number 16, Number 8," and dumps the poor little handfuls of things into my apron.

"All your things are here," I say to the men, "look, Monsieur 8, I have put them so on the table. I will move the table to the other side because of your arm. Little Alpin, here is your béret hung on the knob at the top of the bed, waiting for you to go out into Paris. And you, my little one, here are your two medals, I pin them to the edge of your chart. How proud you must be!" [172]

But he does not care at all. He is a little young child, of the class 16. He has a round, boy face and big, round, blue eyes like a child's. He only wants to lie with his eyes shut. He is the number 3. His right leg is amputated, and his left foot is in plaster.

They are all men from Verdun, wounded eight or fifteen days ago, who have been moved from one to another hospital of the Front. They do not want to talk about it. They want to just lie still with their eyes closed—except the one who screams, the 24.

The 24 screams and screams. He also has had a leg amputated. He is perhaps twenty years old. He is a big blonde boy. He clutches the bars of the top of the bed with his two hands, and drags all his rigid weight upon his hands, and screams, with wide-open eyes that stare and stare.

Also the man wounded in the head, the Number 6, lies with his eyes wide staring open and like glass. He has a colonial medal that I do not know, and the Croix de Guerre. They do not yet know if he can speak or not. Madame Marthe told me while she was washing her hands at the chariot that he may live quite long. [173]

She said, "The chief is coming to see the wounds, we must cut all the dressings. Take your scissors, and begin to the right of the door."

### **The Chéchia, Monday, May 15th**

I suppose because to-day the sunshine is happy, Charles, the little 11, who has been in his bed in the corner since the days of the Marne, has taken a fancy to have all his things got ready for him in case he wants to go out. He says that any day now he may be wanting to go out.

He is of the *ler Zouaves*, and it is a red cap he must have, a *chéchia*. Nobody knows what became of his, it is so long since he had worn it. He never thought of it himself until to-day. But to-day he thinks of nothing else.

Number 10 and Number 12—new these last days—say he waked them up talking about it. When Madame Marthe came on at six o'clock he beckoned to her at the door, and when she came, he whispered—did she think he might ask the American for it?

He was very red when he asked me, and then very white, and his hands clasped and unclasped. [174]

Did I think I could have it to-morrow? Did I think I could have it this afternoon? And did I think that possibly, possibly I could get a tassel for it: a big lavender tassel that would hang down all at one side.

### **Monday, May 29th**

I went this afternoon to the Pré Catelan, for the first time in very long. I went in by the gate near the stone column.

There were quite a lot of motors waiting at the gate; it did not look war as it did last year. Last year, in May, the gates were always almost shut, and when people came they had to push through. Last year the little park was very empty. We used to wander as we pleased across the lawns and gather primroses that grew for nobody. But now there were people in the paths; especially Nounou with her broad ribbons and her campstool, and the baby, and Monsieur l'Abbé, playing blind man's buff with the bigger children.

Green lawns, bright as live green fire, the trees all in delicate misty leaf, light greens and dark greens and copper and amber and gold, filmy and drifting, as veils, about the trunks and boughs and branches. [175]

The flower-beds were full of hyacinths and forget-me-nots.

Never, never, surely has spring meant so much as in these two years of war.

All the birds of spring were singing. All of them. The grass of the lawns was full of little starry pink and white daisies.

By the little watercourse there was a bank of blue flowers. They were reflected in the water, very, very blue. I do not know what they were. They were of a much more intense blue than the *myosotis*. I did not go to see what they were; I thought they might be the blue flowers of happiness, and that it was better I did not go too near.

The hideous, huge restaurant is a hospital. The paths and the road to it, and the lawns and garden beds about it are corded off that people may not go and look. From the distance, you see vague, white shapes of things, and figures all in white, moving about inside the great plateglass windows!

What wonderful people used to sit at the tables, in those windows!

What is there now on the raised platform of the music? The music used to be so gay. Did people ever really dance there? [176]

How queer pain and grief seem to be, in this place that they have taken over. Was this really ever a place so gay and brilliant, that no other place of the world symbolized quite as fragile a thing?

## Thursday, June 1st

Verdun, Verdun, Verdun. The great bells, that are not really bells, are still ringing and ringing. One hears them ringing through the streets of Paris, up and down, all night long. Out in the country they must be ringing, and ringing across all the fields and forests, and through the hills, and along all the roads and rivers, and to all the edges of the land.

Even if they were dirges, tolling, they would yet always have been triumphant bells.

### The Queen: To her

A beautiful thing has happened in a beautiful hospital. Going to that hospital from mine, what seems most beautiful about it, and very strange, is its peace. It is so quiet. The little gentle nuns move softly and have sweet low voices. The women who work there are all of them women who choose to serve, and they serve lovingly. One feels there quietness and sympathy, and something that I think must be just the love of God. My hospital seems like a nightmare in that beautiful place.

[177]

One day there came to visit that beautiful hospital a very gentle lady, than whose story there is none more tragic in the whole world.

She is a queen who lives in exile. She has known every sorrow that a woman can know, and that a queen can know, every one. And she lives, with the memory of her sorrows, in exile.

She may come to France at times for visits of which few people are aware; and those are the times that are most nearly happy for her, for she loves France, and the France that knows her, that is so truly her own, loves her greatly.

The little soldiers of France might have been her soldiers. If they realized, how they would love to be her soldiers! What would it not mean to them to have such a queen to fight for?

The soldiers in the beautiful hospital were not told at first that it was a queen who came that day to see them. They only knew that it was a very lovely lady. She understood just how to talk to them, just how to look at them. They were men who had given everything they had to give for the country that she loved, that was indeed her country, and she loved them, every one of them, and her love for them was in her eyes and on her lips and in her voice. She had known so much of suffering that she could take the suffering of each man for her own to bear with him.

[178]

There was a man who was dying. He was not a beautiful young boy, but one of those older little soldiers who touch one's heart so. The thin, worn, stooping little soldier type who has his wife and the children and the old people to be anxious about while he serves his France. The bearded, anxious-eyed little soldier type who knows just what it all means, and who has the flame of the spirit of France shining in his always rather haggard eyes.

This little soldier was dying; there was no hope at all. He knew quite well. His wife and babies were far away and could not come to him. And he was glad of that, he wanted his wife to be spared all she might be spared of pain. He was glad she would not have to remember his suffering so. The nurse had promised to tell his wife always that he had not suffered at all. His nurse had promised him that she would always keep sight of his wife and the babies, and be sure that no harm came to the old people. She had comforted him in everything. And she, and the good little sisters, had so beautiful a faith in God, that he was sure they knew, and that it all would be quite well.

[179]

He had won his Croix de Guerre and Médaille Militaire; they had been sent, but the officer had not yet come from the President of the Republic to give them to him. It seemed very sad to the people of the hospital that his medals should not be given to him before he died. His nurse had been very troubled about it, and the chief doctor also. They had sent messages twice to the authorities, but no one had come.

Then, when the queen was there the nurse who herself was a great lady of the world, thought of a beautiful thing and asked the chief doctor if it could not be. That the queen should give his decorations to the man who was dying, and that they should tell him, and all the others, that it was the queen. She knew what pleasure it would give him. She knew it would be like a dream to him, a lovely dream thing to happen to him, just at the end. Of course, it would not be official, but what did that signify—now? The man was dying.

The doctor and the queen spoke together for a minute.

The queen had never cried for her own sorrows, but she had tears in her eyes then, and did not mind that every one saw.

[180]

When all of those people of the hospital who could come were assembled in the ward, the hospital staff, and all of the wounded who could walk or be carried, the doctor told them, very simply, his voice a little hoarse, that it was the Queen of — who was there among them, and that she was going to give his decorations to their comrade. A thrill passed through all the ward as the doctor's voice dropped into silence. No one spoke at all.

The little soldier who was to be so honoured turned his head and looked at the queen.

She was crying very much, but she smiled, and said to him, "You see, my little one, I cry because it is so great an honour for me that I may give his decorations to a soldier of France." She would not have him know that she cried because he was dying. She smiled down at him.

Then she took his papers from the doctor and read his citations out aloud, quite steadily, to all the ward.

She bent down over him and pinned the two medals on his poor nightshirt. "The honour is all mine," she said.

And then she took his head between her hands, as if he had been a child—as if he had been her own son who was so cruelly dead—and kissed his forehead. [181]

They say that royalty must go away out of the world. But how can any one say that who knows beautiful things? There is something so beautiful that belongs only to kingship, something of ideal and dream. It was there, in the hospital ward, when the great lady in the plain, almost poor, dress, her eyes full of tears, was honoured by the honour she might do a little soldier. Only a queen could have made it all seem so beautiful. Only a queen could have kissed a little soldier of the people, who really were her people, so quite as if he had been her child, or have made of kneeling by his bed for a minute quite so simple and proud and symbolic a thing.

The little soldier never said one word. His eyes followed her with the worship that is quite different from any other worship, the worship that can be given only to a queen.

Afterwards he said to his nurse—it was the only time he spoke, for in that night he died—"You will tell my wife, will you not? You will tell her all about my queen?"

## Questions and Answers [182]

The wounds in the road are kept filled up. As the road is wounded, every day, they fill the wounds up and smooth them over. Because, in case of an advance or a retreat, the way must be kept open and clear.

This I have been told, for I cannot go to see.

They tell me how the work of the fields goes on around the wounds of the fields. There is no need, of course, to tend the wounds of the fields. Sometimes in the ploughing the blade of the plough strikes against an unexploded shell that the grass had hidden, and the old horse is killed, or the yoke of oxen, and the old peasant.

Sometimes the soldiers, back at repose, help with the work of the fields.

I ask, are the larks singing over the fields? But, of course. And are there magpies in the road? Why, yes.

When a shell bursts in the fields, they say, it is scarcely frightful at all, the spaces are so wide. It seems far from you, and you think of it as just something of the world's—scream of wind, lightning, that strikes perhaps; not an enemy thing at all.

Do the bees drone on just the same in the clover? They say they are absurd things that I want to know. [183]

But I think of the clover growing tall and sweet about the little tilted wooden crosses, of which the fields are so full; and of the bees droning their golden, sleepy song, there, like that.

## The Dead Town

They say that the grass is growing everywhere in the empty streets of the town. The streets are kept cleared of the ruins of the houses that fall into them, and their wounds are carefully healed, like the wounds of the road. The stones of the broken houses are piled up quite neatly at the edge of the streets. There is no glass left of the windows of those houses that still stand—except for that—unhurt. Many of the houses are terribly hurt, the roof gone, great gaps in the walls.

I ask, do you see the paper of the walls in broken rooms? Are there pretty little wall-papers, with flowers and ribbons, that you see through the wounds of the houses? Are there left rags of curtain, tattered and rain-washed and faded, in some of the windows? Do you see people's little loved things, abandoned in the broken ruins, betrayed to strangers? [184]

They tell me that vines are grown across to bar the doors so long unopened, or the doors left so long open, sagging; and I suppose that there are cobwebs also.

They say that here and there you see a sign scrawled up over a door, or over the break in a wall, that says, "En cas de bombardement il y a ici une cave."

I ask, is the signboard of Monsieur Pigot's, the pastrycook, still hung out over his door?

## The Grass Road

You can keep on for a short distance beyond the town, on the other side of it. The great road leads on between its poplar trees, white and straight. Here it has been less wounded because the hills shelter it. The trees have not been hurt here; they lift their grey-green plumes, light and proud as ever, above the road.

I remember to ask: Is there much passing along the road, that terrible grey passing of war things? Do you see many blue troops along the road? They say: Oh, yes, of course, as far as the old octroi.

What is it like now at the octroi under the edge of the hill? [185]

Just beyond the octroi there is a barbed-wire entanglement across the road. No one can go farther. There are soldiers in the yellow little house of the octroi. The sentinel comes out.

They tell me that the road beyond the barbed-wire entanglement leads straight on, between the poplar trees, as far as any one can see, deep grown in grass. Nearly two years deep in grass. It is nearly two years since any one, yes, any one, has gone a step along that road.

They tell me a thing the sentinel said, that is a hideous thing. I do not know why I want to tell it. I know just how he said it, with bitterness and irony, but as if it were a thing of small matter that would be soon arranged for.

He said, "Just along there, about half-way as far as we can see, begins Germany."

## Fifteen Days

Just before the end of the world they were together at the château.

They thought it was to have been for the last time. There had been many things they needed to talk over and arrange together, and why not quietly. They were "done with passion, pain, and anger." They thought to bid one another good-bye when everything was arranged, wishing one another well, and go their different ways. [186]

There were no children, they were hurting no one. They had been hurting one another too long, for ten years—they were both still so young that it seemed to them half a lifetime—and now they thought they would never hurt one another any more. It was an immense relief to each of them to feel that it was over, quite over, dead and done with. But it was not over.

From the first moment of talk of war his one idea was to get himself taken for the army. When he was a boy, a fall in hunting had hurt his spine seriously; he had never been able to do his military service. The trouble had grown worse, and now, with his crooked back and halting step, there was nothing, exactly nothing, it seemed, he could do.

She stayed with him through those days of the utmost nervous tension. How could she leave him then? She understood him so well in his moods, now in despair, now hopeful, now in despair again; disgraced, he would say, worthless, ashamed before his peasants, before the castle servants, who were, all of them, going to join the colours; angry against everything, he had such need of her to tell it all to. He exhausted himself with hurried, futile journeys hither and yonder to find some one whose influence might get him "taken." He spent his nights walking the wide floors up and down, and writing letters to people he thought might "do something." But none of it was of any use. He worried himself ill. He fainted twice in one day, the day the papers told of the taking of the first German flag. It was a flaming white hot day in their country of the Aisne. [187]

There were days of the passing through of their own troops. For days the valley was one deep, endlessly drawn-out trail of dust, from which came unceasingly the turmoil of hoofs and wheels and men's shouting, the horns and rush of motors, bugle-calls, the hot beating of drums.

Night after night the village took in the men billeted upon it, lodged them somehow, fed them somehow. The château received the officers, and did what it could for them.

Those were days of great enthusiasm. Trains passed full of flowers, of men laughing and singing. Trainloads of great dust-coloured cannon passed, covered with flowers.

Claire started a canteen at the station, the little country station by the river, in the fields of August wheat and poppies. [188]

Those were exalted, wonderful days for her. She knew how agonizing they were for Rémy, and she felt about him very tenderly.

She was a beautiful, strong creature, her beauty and strength for years now had annoyed and been a grievance to him. But now he seemed to have need of her strength and quietness. She pitied him for what she meant to him in those days.

But when bad news came, everything changed for him.

There were so many things for him to do. He was maire of the village—the village counted on him, he was not useless any more. He had been really ill with grieving, but now that he was of use, he was as well as she had ever seen him before. All his small nervous ways fell from him; she did not understand him any more than if he had been a child grown up suddenly beyond her; but she was immensely pleased with him. She was so glad to be able to feel him stronger than she. It was very good to be able to turn to him now for help and comfort.

Her canteen at the station served trains that were full of wounded. Some of the wounded were so bad that they had to be taken out of the trains. She got a hospital arranged as well as she could in the château. For days it was so full that the wounded and dying lay on beds of straw on the floor of the great salons, not a scrap of linen in the château but was used for dressings and bandages. [189]

Then the refugees from the villages of the north and the east began to pour through, telling of ghastly things. And then came the troops in retreat.

The hospital had to be evacuated in dreadful haste. It was more dreadful than anything she had ever imagined. There was a day when the old town-crier went through the streets, beating a drum, and calling out the warning to evacuate. All the people who could do so fled. They fled, and left everything they possessed behind them.



It was said that when the troops were passed, the bridge at the bend of the river must be blown up after them, and so the village would be cut off and left to the enemy.

Rémy made the villagers give him the keys of their houses, and he put up a notice in the Grand' Place that any one wishing to enter the houses must apply for the keys to the château; he wrote the notice in German.

Claire was proud that he did not suggest that she should go away, that he took for granted she was at least as strong as he. [190]

The explosion of the blowing up of the old bridge was like the final note of all the things that used to be. The dust of the valley settled down for an hour, and things seemed strangely quiet.

All the people of the village who had not been able to get away came to the château, the very old people and the sick, and some women with babies, begging shelter for the night.

Three wounded men, whom it had been impossible to remove, were left behind in the great Salle des Miroirs. Claire was with them all night. The curé had stayed, and the sage-femme of the village had also remained to help her; the doctor and the chemist were both fled.

One of the men died in the night.

Another, who was delirious, kept singing all the time, "Auprès de ma Blonde."

It frightened Claire. There was a moment when she was uncontrollably afraid. She was afraid, not of the things that were coming to pass, but with a nightmare panic of the wounded man, singing, "Auprès de ma Blonde."

She could not bear it. She rushed in desperate panic to find Rémy.

It was in the moment before dawn; the birds in the garden and park were waking; the halls and stairs were still dark. She thought she never would find him; then she thought he must be in the kitchen, where the village people were huddled together. [191]

She found him there, talking to them quietly.

There was a girl who had St. Vitus dance; she sat by the big kitchen table, one of her hands, that would not keep still, thumping and thumping the table. Claire was afraid to go into the kitchen.

Rémy came out into the passage to her, and shut the kitchen door behind him.

The lamp was still burning in the passage.

She caught his hands; and suddenly she had buried her face in his shoulder and was crying.

"There, there," he said, patting her hair.

She sobbed, clinging to him.

"You have been so brave," he said, "poor child."

She could have cried for a long time with his arms around her.

But he said, "You must not let them find you like this, you know; they might think you were afraid."

They came, very shortly after.

There was a galloping of hoofs into the château courts, and a shouting.

Then came the mass of them, surging into the court, greenish-yellow, with their loud, snarling voices. [192]

Claire saw them from the windows over the court; Rémy had gone down to meet them.

She came down to the great central hall, not afraid any more. She had dressed carefully, and arranged her hair specially well. Tall and fine, she came slowly down the curving staircase, and stopped half-way to look on what was passing below.

The German officers seemed to her to be all gigantic creatures; Rémy looked more than ever small and frail among them. They were commanding, this way and that, roughly. Rémy stood silent, watching them. His look was so high and cool, so proud in the bitterness of the moment, that she drew herself up with pride in him.

The colonel was speaking with him, and moved toward the door of the Salle des Miroirs. Rémy stepped before him. "Not there," he said, "two men are dying in that room."

Claire came down into the hall and crossed between the officers and went to stand beside her husband. She was very proud to stand beside him. Something in her bearing seemed to carry weight with the officers; they drew back, less insistent before her, from the door of the Salle des Miroirs. [193]

Again and again, in the fifteen days that followed, she felt that same effect of her presence upon them, and knew that it was a help to Rémy.

In the fifteen days he and she had opportunity for very few words together, the Germans always watching them suspiciously.

All the days were full of confusion; Rémy was kept constantly about with the German officers to arrange for the billeting of the men in the village, the stabling of horses and motors, interpreting, explaining. No one but he could get the frightened people, the few there were of them remaining, to go back to their houses and do the things required of them. No one but he could protect them,

and at the same time see to it that they gave no offence. The least rousing of the Germans' anger would, he knew, have to be paid for dreadfully. Their demands were made at the point of the bayonet. They were angry because the bridge had been destroyed, and only Rémy's cool, quiet strength of insistence kept them from carrying out the threat to burn the village in reprisal. To hold his own, the while obeying as he must obey, yielding this point and that, submitting, and yet faithfully defending all that depended on him, was no easy matter of accomplishment. He must keep faith and dignity, and yet he must not give offence. [194]

There were very desperate moments when the Germans would be asking for information, about the telephones and telegraphs, and about the country, the roads, and the marble quarries, the rebuilding of the bridge. Such help he could not give them, and there were moments when his refusal to talk, like his refusal to take a cigarette, risked everything.

Claire came to have a special dread of the colonel's fat leather cigarette-case. Rémy must wave it aside saying, so that his meaning was quite clear and yet courteous, that he had given up smoking for the time. The little scene of it was repeated night after night.

At first the Germans would have him always stand up in their presence. They would send for him while they dined, and have him stand there while they questioned and commanded. Then they realized that it was his wish to stand, that few things would have been more hateful for him than to have sat down with them.

After that they would have him and Claire dine with them. They sent for Claire to come down to the dining-room, where they were already seated at table and Rémy was standing. She must sit on the colonel's right, and drink a glass of champagne with him. [195]

One of the officers called to her down the table, "There is yet left many a toast we can drink together, the brave and the fair!"

She thought that Rémy's fury would get the better of him, and she spoke quickly, before he could speak. She moved quickly between him and the colonel.

The colonel, sitting at the head of the table, under the portraits of generations of Rémy's people, glared up at her as she stood, very tall.

"You will do as I command you, madame," he said.

There seemed to be no escape. Desperately chancing it, she said, "But you will not stoop to command so idly. You know that we have no help but to obey you. Of what value could be forced obedience to you in so petty a thing? I know you will not command a thing so trivial and poor."

And he did not ask it of them.

Her days as well as Rémy's were crowded. The Germans required so many things, and there was no one left to serve them. She had only a few peasant servants to help her. The Germans demanded food, and there was scarcely anything to give them. Very little could be got in the emptied village; there was no more meat or bread. These people must eat, or they would become ugly. She must manage it somehow. She had to get the bakery started again, and make the villagers understand that they must give what they had in their little gardens, and their chickens and the rabbits. Old Jantot at the castle was quite unable to do the work of the kitchen-gardens and dairies. She worked hard helping him. [196]

All the day of the arrival of the Germans she had been pitching hay from the stable loft to make bedding for the men quartered there; she scarcely left her work that day, except to go to the funeral of the soldier who had died in the Salle des Miroirs.

The curé helped old Jantot to carry him, and she followed them out through the courts, and past the German guard.

The two other wounded men in the Salle des Miroirs died while the strange alien life of the château went on. Three or four people of the village were ill; one woman and her newly born child died; there was no one but Claire to help the sage-femme.

The Germans accused the old curé of signalling from the church tower. They took him into the market-place, with a rope tied round his neck, to hang him, they said, under the plane-tree by the fountain. Rémy stood by him, risking everything to make them delay a few minutes. [197]

Claire found the colonel; she never could remember what she said, how she pleaded. But the colonel said, "If we find these things true against him, then it will be your husband who will hang for it."

In one of the rare moments when they were alone together, Rémy said something which gave her more pleasure to hear than anything that had ever been told her before. He told her that but for her he did not think he could possibly endure it, that only her presence there, so brave and strong, the one thing left in the world, gave him strength to go on.

He had come up to her room, a small tower room she had withdrawn to when the Germans arrived. It was late in the evening, the room was almost dark, and she had lighted two candles on the little table, by the window, where she was having bread and soup on a tray. He had had scarcely anything to eat all day, and she made him share the soup and the bread. They laughed because he was really hungry. Cut off from the world, completely alone together in the most intense isolation, having no one, nothing, left, either of them, but each the other, in a world terrible beyond belief, they laughed together because he was so absurdly hungry. [198]

They knew nothing but what the Germans told them of things that were happening in the world.

How could they believe such things? They did not believe, and yet to hear them said!

Fifteen days passed, that they could not have lived through if there had not been so much for them to do in every moment, and if they had not had each of them the comfort and support of the other's presence. Fifteen days passed, of helplessness and dread, almost despair.

Then, in one day, something was changed for the Germans; there was no knowing what it was; their mood took on a new ugliness.

It was that day that some of the men hanged Claire's St. Bernard puppy. They hanged him on the terrace from the branch of the big chestnut tree and left him there. Claire came up through the park from the village and found him. They never knew why the men had done it; it seemed so small and useless a thing to have done.

For two days she and Rémy were kept as prisoners, allowed to leave their rooms only attended by a soldier, and not to go to the village at all. There seemed to be a great confusion and commotion in the village and in the castle, but no explanation was given them. [199]

Then, in one night, the Germans were gone.

Village and castle were left empty for scarcely a morning, and then came French troops, in hot pursuit from the victory of the Marne.

From the victory of the Marne—there had been a victory, a great victory! What a thing to hear, after their almost hopeless days! Hopelessness had been so black and close about them. And now it was lifted, dispersed, in a moment, by a word. Here come their own people crying victory. In their own tongue, their own men, dressed in blue, told them of victory.

Those things the Germans had said were not true. They had never believed, but now they knew. To think of looking into the faces of friends, of talking with friends! The humblest little soldier was a friend, the most wonderful of all things.

Rémy, who had all his life been distant and cold, was inexpressibly happy to wring a friend's hand, and sit with him, or pace the floor with him, and smoke with him.

What a pleasure to give all one had to friends!

How happy Claire was to help scrub and cook for friends!

It was a madness of relief and joy.

There was little time for thinking about it though. The new possession of the château was a desperately risky thing. [200]

But these were friends, to suffer with and die with, if need be. Nothing could be as terrible as in those past days of isolation among enemies. Among friends they met what came.

In a few hours death and destruction were upon everything. And then, day after day, day after day, the battle raged along the river and under the edge of the hills; the sound of the cannon grew to be a familiar part of the nights and days; the screech of a shell was no longer strange.

The Germans had withdrawn to the strongholds of the marble quarries, just above the village. The village was crossed by the two fires. The poor people were killed in their little houses.

Men who went up on the château roofs to reconnoitre, were brought back dead. An officer was killed by a shell on the terrace, under the big chestnut tree.

Claire had to leave her tower room, and next day it had fallen with all the roofs of the east wing of the castle. Two men were killed in the fall of the east wing roofs, and the chestnut tree of the terrace, that had shaded generations of pleasant dreaming, was struck down under falling of tiles and stone.

They established the staff of the Etat-Major for greater safety in the cellars. [201]

More than half the village was destroyed in those days. Claire and her husband lodged the homeless people as best they could in the dairy, the ground floor of the château was already crowded with the officers, and the stables and farm-buildings with the men.

For Rémy and Claire there was left one room, not too exposed, on the first floor.

From the window of it, together, one night, they watched the burning of a village over across the valley. It was a village of nearly all thatched roofs: it must have caught fire from the shells, and in that one night it was burnt to the ground.

As she and Rémy stood in the window, with nothing left about them but ruin and death, she remembered how, just before all this, they had thought they were come to the end of their life together; they had thought they were nothing to one another any more. And then suddenly they had come to be everything to each other. How could they either of them have borne it without the other?

Now their intense, their desperate solitude, together, was at an end. Others had come to share with them the burden of these things. There were others to whom they could turn now for comradeship. All of it was horrible, but now the world was again about them, life was opening its ways again. [202]

She wondered, standing there by him, if, when some day the dreadful sounds of war were ceased and there was given them a chance to take up what they might of life again and go on with it—would they go on with it together? She wondered if he knew of what she was thinking as they stood there side by side? They had now become used to feeling one another's thoughts.

She was thinking that surely, after this, whatever happened they would have to go on with it together? They had gone through too much together ever again to break away. She would not have it otherwise, oh, not for all the world would she have had it otherwise. But she was wondering, if the great need passed, and life became small again, would they be changed enough? Would all this they had gone through have given them greatness enough to face, down length of days, the little things together?

### **Hospital, Monday, June 12th**

We never see them well. As soon as they are better at all they send them downstairs to the convalescent ward, and from there they are marked for other hospitals, and in a day or two, one morning, I come to find them gone. The men who were evacuated at the beginning of Verdun did not even make the halt of the ward downstairs. And now those first Verdun men are gone, all but the very worst of them, to make place for men from, we don't know where. [203]

The boy with the almond-shaped eyes is one of those who are left. He was much better for days, and now he has gone down again. He is tuberculous, and that is why he never will get well. He lies sunk down in the bed, a very small heap with closed eyes and one cheek always bright red. His father and mother have come up from the country, from somewhere in Normandy; they sit together beside his bed and look at him. His mother wears a dress of the richest black silk, that must have been the gala dress of her family for two or three generations, and a cap of lace that the smartest lady in Paris would be proud of. His father wears a black satin Sunday smock, of which the yoke is embroidered wonderfully. They have dressed themselves in their very best to come and sit by their boy, who scarcely notices them.

I like to think how happily the new Number 4—we call them all new since Verdun began—went off, with his one leg. He will have a wooden stick leg and be able to get about splendidly in his meadows of the High Loire. To-day he showed me a little photograph of his wife, in close-bound muslin cap and folded neckerchief. Her face is like the face of the Madonna in the simple calm pure paintings of the old masters. I said, "She is perfectly beautiful." He said, "Oh, no, madame, she is only a peasant, and not young. It is not even a good photograph. And it is all cracked and rubbed, madame sees, because I have worn it all the time of the war, sewn in my coat." [204]

Little Charles is always left—poor little Charles, well used to the confusion of departures and arrivals.

As I was leaving to-day at noon, the mother and father of the boy with the almond-shaped eyes got up from beside his bed and stopped me. The father, who has almond-shaped eyes too, asked if they might have a word with me when no one could hear. Their gala finery made them the more pathetic, confused, and timid, strangers in such strange times and place.

We went out into the corridor, the three of us, and stood by the door of Madame Bayle's linen-room.

The father asked me, whispering, if I thought that the people of the hospital were fond of the boy? He said that he and the mother were obliged to go back that night to the farm, and did I think that these people they must leave their boy with were fond of him? [205]

### **Saturday, June 24th**

The boy with the almond-shaped eyes is dead. He died day before yesterday. I have been ill and not at the hospital these days, and I did not know. I went back to the hospital only this afternoon.

His father and mother arrived too late, this morning. They had had scarcely time to reach the farm in Normandy, when one of the house doctors, a kind man, wrote to tell them to come back. At the bureau they made a mistake in the address they gave the doctor, and his letter was returned to him in the post the day before the boy died. The doctor telegraphed then, but it was too late.

I do not know who told the father and mother when they came this morning. I do not know where they are to-day—this day so terrible for them in the great strange city. I would have liked to find them. Madame Marthe says they were surely allowed to go and see their boy, where he is, but not to stay with him. [206]

I think of them, peasant people, confused and strange in city streets, frightened, belonging to no one, terribly alone, with nowhere to go in their grief. Where are they gone in their grief? They, to whom nothing has ever been explained, who are so unable to tell or to ask.

### **Sunday, June 25th**

I was going to the chapel with my flowers, but I met Madame Marthe in the archway of our court, and she told me it was not there that I would find him. We went together around behind the chapel and past buildings that I had never seen before, of the immense world of the hospital. What a dreadful world in this June sunshiny morning!

A steep, dusty road goes up past outbuildings of the hospital, workshops, and yards, where there were some green things growing, and at the top there were a lot of our soldiers waiting at the door of a low, long house. My poor little hobbling, lopsided blue soldiers, with their bandages and slings and canes and crutches! I think they are so beautiful. [207]

The doors of the house were open. Up two steps, and there were the father and mother, in their black silk and satin, standing beside the boy. They were perfectly quiet. The strange thing about the grief one sees in these days, everywhere, is that always it is so perfectly quiet. The boy looked just as one had seen him so often, sleeping, with his almond eyes closed. Only there was no fever in his cheeks any more.

The black hearse came up the road with several croquemorts and eight Republican Guards; they had two crossed palms for the boy, and the flag to cover him, and the black wooden cross that was to mark his grave.

We followed down the road and across the courts and out of the hospital gates.

The Sunday morning market was busy and noisy outside in the street, but a silence seemed to form itself around us as we went between the barrows and booths of summer country things. Then we went along a wide avenue that was empty, where the sound of the wheels of the hearse and of the horses' hoofs seemed solemn and monotonous, and as if it were something that never would cease. The boy's father and mother trudged ahead sturdily, with the strong gait of peasants from the fields, and my wounded dragged along, already tired. It was a long way from the hospital to the church. [208]

There were many people in the street of the church, and on the church steps, and the church inside was crowded. It is the church of an irreligious quarter, but it was crowded.

A big Suisse with his mace led us along the aisle, through the throng of people who stood back from us, to the chapel of Our Lady, behind the high altar. Many of the Suisses of the churches of this quarter are gendarmes, needed because the roughs who come into the church would often make disturbance. The big Suisse had the air of a gendarme, ordering us.

But now the boy's mother and father were in a place they understood. There was no need to order them. They knew just what to do. They had been uncertain elsewhere, timid and bewildered, in the hospital, in the streets, but in the church they were at home.

The boy's mother motioned me into a chair behind hers. She and I were the only women: Madame Marthe had had to go back to her work in the ward. I knelt where she told me to kneel. The boy's father helped the wounded into the chairs across the chapel aisle from us, and took his place in front of them. In the aisle, between his father and mother, the boy had his four lighted tapers and his crossed palms and the flag of his country. [209]

The priest who said the office was old, and fumbled and murmured. I was glad that he was slow. It gave a longer time for the father and mother to rest and be comforted.

The Suisse was rather in a hurry at the end of it, perhaps there was another funeral waiting. He would have had us follow the priest out quickly.

But the boy's mother would stop to kneel by the boy for a little moment, there before the altar of the Blessed Virgin. The boy's father came and knelt also, on the floor of the aisle.

Two calm figures, they knelt there, the Suisse could not hurry them. Those who would have carried their boy away stood and waited. We stood back and waited. The stir up and down of people outside the chapel gates went on, and all the stirs of the church and the streets and the world.

The two calm figures knelt, for the moment they were, with their sorrow, at peace; not strangers here, but at home in the house of that which did not confuse or frighten them.

## The Stain

The maid, who had been Giselle's nurse so short a time ago, opened the library door and announced, unwillingly, one could see, "Madame la Marquise de St. Agnan, Madame la Comtesse."

Giselle, in her heavy mourning, stood up from the chair by the window. She did not go forward to meet Paule.

"It is sweet of you to see me," said Paule, crossing the room to her, slender and tall and lovely.

The baby-boy and girl who had been playing with some wooden toy soldiers on the floor in a corner, both scrambled up and trotted over to their mother.

Paule had never seen them before. She wanted to take them both in her arms and hold them tight. She thought she could never have let the boy go.

But Giselle said to the maid, "Honorine, please take the children to Miss."

They went out with the old woman, who closed the door.

"It was very sweet of you to let me come," repeated Paule, because she had to say something. It was harder than she had thought possible.

"I have seen no one at all," said Giselle. "But your letter—I don't know—I wondered——" [211]

They stood looking at one another. Of course, they did not touch one another's hands.

Suddenly the room seemed to swim about Paule, there was a surging in her ears. She said, "May I sit down?"

"But I beg you! I am sorry, I can't seem to think of things. Here in the window?"

Paule dragged the chair out of the light of the sunshiny June morning into the shadow of the curtain. She was wearing a heavy white lace veil, but she did not want to face the sunshine.

Giselle threw herself into the chair where she had been sitting before. Her crape and the traces of many tears upon her face only made her look the more pathetically young.

"You wondered," said Paule, "if my letter were true, really; if it were possible that I could honestly write like that of him?"

Giselle nodded her head, not speaking.

Paule saw that it would not have been possible for her to speak. She saw, what she had been sure she would see, that the younger woman was suffering intensely. She realized, more than ever what the thing meant to her Bernard's wife; how for her everything of her memory of him, the memory she was to keep with her all her life, depended on what she was to learn in this hour. All the memory she was to keep of her dead husband depended on it. That she might remember him with tenderness and solace and peace; or that it must be always with uncertainty and restlessness, and bitter thoughts. To be able to mourn him fully, fearlessly; or to go on always tormenting herself with doubt. It was of desperate importance to her. Paule saw that. She knew that the younger woman kept silent because she could not speak, not because of any realization she had of the advantage silence gave her.

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Giselle, silent, waited.

The older woman, braving the silence, took the thing up.

"You are going to believe what I tell you. I don't know why you should believe me, but you will. They all talk of it, but I am the only one who really knows. And I have got to tell you. The things they say are true, but with such a difference. I must make you understand the difference. Since the moment Dolly told me that you knew, I have known that I must make you understand. I cannot let you misunderstand him when he is dead."

She was holding her parasol across her knees, her hands in their soft tan gloves clutching the two ends of it very tight.

"It is rather terribly hard for me to tell you," she said, "harder even than for you to listen. Remember that, if I seem to go over it cruelly." She stopped, and Giselle nodded again.

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"I must go over it," Paule went on, speaking very fast now, "so that we can have it all clear between us. Don't you see? He came home here for six days' leave. He told you he had six days' leave. When he went, at the end of those six days, you thought it was back to the front he was gone. Then, *three days after he left you*, he was killed in a bayonet charge. And his colonel, and some of his friends, said, writing to you and to other people of him, that it was especially sad to think he had been killed the *very day he came back from his leave*. So you knew that his leave had been of eight days, that he had had two days' extra leave of which he had not told you, spent, you did not know where, or with whom. And then it happened Dolly spoke to you of seeing him with me in Evreux the *very day* before he was killed. And so you knew. She had spoken of it to lots of people—the way people always say, you know, 'and I saw him only the day before.' And so every one knew. And you knew. But I have got to make you understand."

She let go her parasol and, leaning forward into the sunshine, threw her veil back from her face with her two hands. "I will let you see how I have suffered," she said, "it is written for you in my face." She was glad to have the younger woman see how much of her beauty was gone. "And that I loved him. You know—I must let you know—that I loved him. I loved him when you were a little schoolroom girl. And he did love me then." She drew herself up with a sudden flaming of pride. "I will give myself the comfort of saying that he loved me before he knew you, Giselle." The flame died down instantly, and she leaned forward, almost beseechingly. The parasol had fallen to the floor. "But he never loved me afterwards. From the moment he saw you—I was with him at somebody's dance the first time he saw you—I knew that for me everything was finished. Everything was swept away by his love of you. You know that, don't you?"

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"I believed it then," said Giselle, speaking at last, "then, and all the time, in spite of all the things that people said, until this."

"There was one thing I never let go," Paule went on; "it was the pitying, protecting tenderness a man who is good like Bernard always continues to feel for the woman he once loved and who goes on loving him. I kept that alive, I kept him being sorry for me. There's reason enough in my life for any one to be sorry for me. And I kept him feeling that he must protect me, protect me from the blackness of sorrow that, I let him know always, there was in my heart."

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Giselle had turned from her, as if she could not look at her, and sat staring out of the window to the tops of the trees in the avenue. Her cheeks were burning, as if the shame of the miserable confession were her own.

"Do you not see, oh, do you not see?" begged the other woman.

There was a dreadful silence.

Paule took it up again. "And the last thing was the accumulation of the shame and misery of years. I wish I could make you see, a little, what it meant to me, that you might not quite despise me. I suppose there is no excuse. But it had been so dreadful, down there in the country, with my husband, as he is, you know, ill, needing me, hating me, wanting me every moment. And all these terrible months of war, nearly two years, never seeing Bernard, scarcely hearing of him. I made him come. I made him come by telling him that I was in desperate trouble, that if he did not come

I could not face it. I told him he must tell no one, not even you: that my trouble was a thing I must keep secret. Against his will, just by abuse of his kindness I made him give me those two days. I want you to quite, quite understand that it was only that I loved him, that he loved you. And that those two days were my theft of time he wanted to give all to you." [216]

"Oh, don't, don't!" cried Giselle, breaking into it. "You need not tell me any more." She covered her face with her hands, as if it were she who was ashamed.

"Some day you will wonder why I have told you," Paule said, "why any woman should so humiliate herself down to the dust. It is because you have the right to a beautiful memory of him. You must keep that beautiful memory of him for yourself and for his children. It belongs to you, and to his home, and to his children. Never doubt him, Giselle, and let your sorrow be a beautiful sorrow, because he loved you as you loved him, perfectly. And in death he is yours. That is all."

She stopped and picked up her parasol. It was a green parasol. She looked from its bright colour to Giselle's black dress. She shivered a little and stood up.

Giselle took her hands away from her eyes and stood up, too.

Paule would have turned and gone out of the room, but Giselle caught her hands and held her, and lifted up her young face from which the tortured look was gone. She was crying, but tenderly. [217]

For an instant it seemed as if Paule would have drawn away from her. But then she bent from her lovely height and kissed the younger woman. Then she went away.

Giselle did not go to the door with her. Old Honorine let her out of the apartment.

She went down the stairs and out into the avenue, where the leaves of the trees made large shadows.

As she walked very wearily, she did not know where, she was telling herself that it was over, that she had done what she could. She had made poor little Giselle believe her. She had given him to Giselle.

The avenue ahead of her seemed very, very long. She wondered if she would ever get to the end of it. Her thoughts seemed confused. She wondered what there was so cruel about Giselle's black dress and her own green parasol with the parrot handle. She would manage somehow to make the world believe that story she had told Giselle. She had given him to Giselle to mourn for. Perhaps that would wipe out some of it.

## From Verdun [218]

He was grown so used to his mud-hole, and the straw, and the mushrooms, and rats, that when he was come into the salon of the house in the Parc Monceau, and the butler he never had seen before had closed the door behind him saying, in odd French, that he would go and tell Madame la Comtesse, he just stood there in the middle of the room and laughed. He stood there, just as he had come out of the trenches, a most disreputable figure that once had been blue, and laughed to think that it was to this, all this, he really belonged. This was his house, and his wife would be coming in a moment into the room.

The room smelled of sandal-wood and amber. Things in it were of black lacquer and mauve velvet and dull gold. There were lots of books about on low tables, and Dolly's gold and amber cigarette things, and white roses, just the heads broken off, floating in flat bowls of smoky jade. How like Dolly to have cut off the long stems of the roses and their lovely thorns and leaves! He really must not laugh. There was one flame-red vase with a white spirit orchid in it.

Then Dolly came in, as fragile and pale and lovely as the orchid. It was ten months since he had seen her. How delightfully her hair was done, and her fingers, rose-tipped like sea-shells! She came to him, her flower-face lifted. [219]

He said, "Oh, my dear, I am so dirty."

Some one had followed her into the room, a woman in deep mourning. It was the little Juriac, Lisette de Juriac, and she was quite unchanged. Not even her heavy crape changed her. How was it possible that she was not changed? How could she still be beautiful?

She came forward saying, "I was here with Dolly; I could not go, and not see you. I must stop just a moment to speak to you."

He took her hand and held it, and did not know what to say to her. He was seeing again that which he had seen not six weeks ago. He had seen many men die horribly, horribly. But if he thought too much of how his friend, her husband, had died, kept too vividly, too long, seeing it, he would go mad. Why was she not gone mad? She had loved her husband, who had loved her. They had been happy together.

He had a sudden hatred of her because she was not gone mad. Because there was some becoming white thing about her face to soften the harshness of the crape, and because there were pearls around her throat; he had a crazy desire to take her, his two hands clutching her shoulders, and tell her how René died, tell her the horror, burnt, burnt, burnt, make her see what he could not stop seeing. Because of the white frill and the pearls, he wanted to make her see it and feel it, and go down crushed under the realization of it. He would have made her ugly, as suffering makes ugly. When she was ugly he would believe she suffered. He could not move or speak, for he would have seized her and told her. [220]

She was saying, "You were with him in the attack, you saw him fall, and you went back and tried to save him." She had her black gloves and parasol in her hand, and a little black bag, soft, like the gloves. She was trying to open the little black bag to get something out of it. She was beginning to cry.

Dolly, saying, "Poor dear, poor dear," took the gloves and parasol from her and found a scrap of a handkerchief for her in the bag. "Poor dear, poor dear." She put her arm around Lisette and patted her eyes with the tiny handkerchief. "Darling, it was a glorious death, you know, like that, in action, beautiful, the death he would have chosen. Jacques, tell her."

Tell her? He was trying not to tell her. He stood there looking at his friend's wife and trying not to tell her of the hands that had moved and moved, beating and beating the air. [221]

"Tell her how fearless he was," Dolly was saying, "and how proud she must be of him."

Oh, yes, there was that. He thought of the words they always use. He said, "He died for his country."

She was crying only a little, but with really piteous tears. He knew that after a while, when he was himself a little farther from it, he would be sorry for her. Her dimpled chin quivered and her throat throbbed under the pearls. She looked at him, her eyes big with tears, and, half sobbing, said, "You were with him just before the attack, the last to speak with him."

"Yes, we were together."

She was waiting for him to tell her something. But there was nothing to tell her. He had again that other craziness. Now he was afraid that he would laugh. They had been crouching behind a heap of dead men, in the terrible dusk of cannon smoke and the noise that never ceased. He remembered they had been eating something. There had risen a wild, strange shriek through the noise of the cannon, and they had leaped up, had shrieked, and been over the sandbags.

Lisette was waiting, and while he tried to think, she said, "Was he speaking of me? Were his last words for me?" [222]

"He was always thinking of you, I know, Lisette." That he could say eagerly, intensely—only why need she have it put into words? "You were his whole life, Lisette."

She lifted her head with a quite perfect gesture, and smiled, her eyes bright, the tears gone from them. "I was his whole life," she said, "and he died for his country." There was no more sob in her voice. She said, "He was so young and splendid, and he had always been so happy. He had so much to live for. He gave up so much with his life for his country. He leaves such a beautiful memory. I can say, 'His life was the woman who loved him, and for his country he died.' It is beautiful. That is the only comfort of it all, that it is beautiful." She broke off and began again, "I'm glad I saw you, Jacques, you have helped me, I'm so unhappy." She put the little handkerchief back in the bag, and took up her gloves and parasol. "Now I will leave you," she said. "Poor boy, you must be too tired to talk. How wonderful for Dolly to have you! Perhaps you will come with her to-morrow—they have persuaded me to lend my ballroom for just a little music for the blind. Dolly dear, you'll not fail me? You know I count on you to look after people. I am going to hide away in some little corner. Isn't it strange," she said to Jacques, "how life goes on?" [223]

Dolly and he went to the door with her. There was no one in the big hall.

Dolly said, "That man is really too stupid."

Lisette said, "You are lucky to have a man-servant at all."

"What a lovely sunset!" said Dolly in the open door.

"Yes," said Lisette, "isn't it?"

"Your car is there?"

"Yes; good-bye, Dolly darling; good-bye, Jacques, and thank you."

As they turned back from the door, Dolly said, "Poor little thing, isn't she lovely in her mourning?"

She put her arm through his as they went across the hall together. "I'm so glad to have you, Jacques," she said, "you can't imagine, and I'm so proud of you. You don't forget me there, Jacques; you love me just as you always did?"

He was thinking. Six days' leave, perhaps two days extended. In nine days Dolly might be wearing a little white frill inside a veil of heavy crape, and just her pearls. And she would say to people that he had been all her life, and that it was the death he would have chosen. And in six weeks she would let the salon be used for just a little music for the blind. [224]

"Do you know," she said as they went up the stairs together, "it was most beautiful, that thing Lisette said, her little summing up of it: 'His whole life was the woman who loved him, and for his country he died.' It made me think, you know, of Dante, those four lines of Pia dei Tolomei."

At the top of the stairs she turned to him, a step or two above him, standing higher than he. "Look at me, Jacques, and tell me I have not changed, and that you love me. What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing." He came up the steps and took her hands, and kissed the fingers of first one hand then the other. "These last weeks I have been always laughing; you must not mind. And, dear, I'm so glad you do your hair like that, and remember things from Dante, and play with the tips of roses, and that you do not understand."



## Sunday, July 2nd

Last night Paris streets heard the cannon of the great prelude. The breeze, that was fresh and sweet from the country, brought in the sound of the cannon. In the silence of the night the streets listened. It was a sound regular and even. If Time were a great clock the sound of its ticking would be like that, on and on. If there were one great pulse that beat for all the life of the world, its throb would be like that, unceasing, relentless. It seemed like something that had always been, that always would be. It seemed as if one were used to it, had always been accustomed to the burden of sound that, the whole night through, the sweet fresh breeze brought in to Paris, and would have to go on bearing it always. [225]

But when the city stopped listening, and took up its way again with the morning, the sound of the battle was lost in the small immediate sounds of the day's life.

In the trees I look to from my window, there was a great disturbance of birds, field birds and forest birds, driven into the city by the smoke and thunder that possess their land.

My hospital is almost empty. In all the wards there are waiting rows of empty beds, a nightshirt folded on each pillow. Rows of empty beds waiting—

## Monday, July 3rd

This is a dark day, the colour of battles, for battles are not of scarlet and gold, only dark.

It is as if the darkness of the day and the darkness of the smoke of battle are terribly mingled together.

## Tuesday, July 4th

The people who went to that church were proud, they were very proud of him, he had died so beautifully. Each one of them was proud to say, "He was my friend," or "I knew his people," or "I saw him once," or just, "He was an American." He had died for an ideal they all had sight of.

It was only a memorial service. There were only the two flags, the flag of France and the Stars and Stripes, in the aisle before the altar. He was lying somewhere inside the enemy lines, as he had fallen.

They of the air, they go so far; and if they fall, it is perhaps a little more sad and lonely because it may be where no one of their own can go to them. Perhaps the enemy have laid a wreath there on the place where he fell, as they do sometimes, those men of the air, to honour one another's memory. They say on the inscription of the wreaths sometimes: "To our enemy who died for his country." For this boy they would need to say another thing, "To our enemy who died for his ideal." I think that we, in the church, were not sorry, but were glad for him, that we were envying him—we who only live. [227]

## Invaded Town, Wednesday, July 5th

To-day I was shown a letter that came—I was not told by what means—from one of the invaded towns of the North. It was the letter of a girl who with her father kept an old book-shop in the Place de l'Eglise. It was written to her sister, married in Paris, from whom they had had no news since the war began, but to whom they had managed to get word through—I do not know how—once or twice.

The letter, received only yesterday, was dated January 16. It told of a thing that had been vaguely rumoured here, that the papers had not mentioned, and that had passed for the most part unbelieved. The girl supposed her sister would have heard, and would be terrified for them, and was anxious to let her know that they were safe. I imagine the girl with a smooth blonde head and grave blue eyes, and the father, thin and stooping, with delicate white features and white hair, and a black skull-cap. [228]

The letter began by saying that they were very well, and that the house was but slightly damaged. Aunt Emeline was with them, as her house was quite in ruins: she had been got out from behind the falling of the stair wall. It was impossible to go to the house of Cousine Thérèse, but she was safe with the children at the neighbour Payen's. The whole family had escaped miraculously. The girl said that in the midst of such terrible suffering they were ashamed to have suffered scarcely at all. It seemed as if they were not bearing their part of the sacrifice.

She had thought, that night, it was the house falling, and she had leaped out of bed, thinking she must go to her father. The shock had lasted ten seconds. She had had time to get in the dark half-way across the rocking floor, and to realize it was not only the house but the whole city that was rent and sundered. She had had time to think, "It must be an earthquake."

"That is what *they* tried, at first, to say it was," she wrote, "an earthquake. *But we know that it was an explosion brought about by one of us.* It was the Arsenal and the casemates of the eighteen bridges full of powder, between the three chief gates of the town, that were blown up. It was one of their most important dépôts of munitions, where they had stored enough powder and high explosives to feed their Northern army for ten months. No one knows who did it. They have posted up offers of high reward for any one who finds the author of what they now call 'the criminal accident.' [229]

"In all the towns of the North, where windows were broken and doors torn out of their frames, and where it was at first thought to be an earthquake, they have now put up posters on the walls, in their language and ours, demanding information about the 'criminal.'

"But even if there are some who know, not one will betray. Moreover, he is surely safe from betrayal, dead and buried somewhere under the ruins he himself caused for the sake of his country."

The letter went on to tell of the town so sacrificed: streets and quarters destroyed entirely, not a house anywhere but was more or less injured, the least harmed streets deep in broken glass and blocked with fallen tiles and stones. The whole town was become a place of homeless and wounded and dead. [230]

The young girl kept repeating that no one complained; it was for the sake of their country. The homeless people in the streets said to one another, "It is less than our soldiers suffer in the trenches."

She wrote of things she had seen in that night: a father carrying his boy, of perhaps fifteen years, in his arms, not believing he was dead; a woman they could not get near, under the ruins, alive, her child killed beside her; a woman gone mad, running in the streets, shrieking a man's name; another woman, running also, with her baby in her arms, begging every one she met to mend it, for its head had been cut off.

All the less unhappy people had taken in the homeless; of the inhabitants of all the ruined houses, by the next night less than fifty were left to the care of the town.

The girl wrote: "The people of the town are admirable, the homeless with the rest; we know that the sacrifice is for our country, and we make it gladly. The terrible suffering of the town is offered up for victory and peace."

She went on to tell of little things: "Your room we have given to a mother with three babies; I have Aunt Emeline with me, sleeping in father's room, for mine is not safe—the roof of the next house has fallen against its roof. Father sleeps in the room behind the shop, and in the shop we have found place to take in ten of the destitute. The shock threw most of the books out of their cases, and loosened the cases from the walls, so that we have had to prop them up. The books are heaped out of the way of the mattresses of the homeless. I thought father would worry about the books; you know, he has always felt them to be live things; but he has no thought for them. He is in the Place all day, trying to help clear away the glass and stones. The tower of the church has fallen all across the Place. All the windows in the town are broken, and there is no glass to be had for mending them. We live behind paper windows, in a gloom that does depress one." [231]

The letter went from one subject to another, nervously and rather confusedly. She told of immense blocks of stone, hurled from great distances into the streets; of the fronts of houses ripped out, and the stories dropped or sagging; of Aunt Emeline's poor little belongings all lost—the portrait of great-grandfather; how the enormous factories of — and — had served as a screen to protect the town, or else it had been destroyed completely; of one of the little homeless children in the book-shop who kept all the time saying her prayers, "Little Jesus, stay with us; little Jesus, stay with us," and how her name was Cecilette; of the bitter cold that made it all more cruel; and, always, how they were proud to offer up the sacrifice for their country. She sent her love, and her father's, always more and more tenderly. It seemed as if their love for Mariette, of whom they had no word, increased every day. She kept saying over and over how proud the town was, to have made the sacrifice; and what a brave thing for, perhaps, one man alone to have brought about. [232]

### **That Naughty Little Boy**

It was that naughty little boy who was killed, to whose funeral she went this morning in the church of St. Augustin. That naughty little boy—grown up, wandered far, always a "bad case," come home because there was war, and gone out with the rest—is dead magnificently.

He was shot down leading an attack upon the works of Thiaumont; they say his men would have followed him anywhere. Think of that naughty little boy, grown up to become a leader men were proud to follow unto death!

He used to pull her hair, and pinch her, and make faces to frighten her until she cried. His Miss never could manage him. His Miss and hers were friends, as were his mother and her mother, and she was obliged to play with him. She was terrified of him, but he had wonderful toys that she adored, especially the popgun and rocking-horses. Sometimes when he was being punished, she was left alone with his toys, and was happy. Sometimes he would be nice for a minute, and want to kiss and make up, and let her ride the big rocking-horse. [233]

She was remembering it all this morning in the church.

Through all the years between she had never seen him, and for her he was still the bad little boy. It was the big rocking-horse she was particularly remembering in the church.

There was a crowd in the church. There was a whole firmament of candles; the church was hung with flags, and full of flowers. The tricolour and the palms were laid upon his bier. And upon the bier also there was laid his blue cap and jacket, stained and faded and torn by shell, and his Croix de Guerre and Légion d'Honneur.

There were all his people in the church, mourning for him. For years none of them had seen him

or spoken of him. But now they were all come to do him honour. The world, that had turned a cold shoulder on him, was come to kneel beside his blue jacket and his medals. [234]

She remembered vaguely hearing something about some woman he had loved, and who had loved him, for whom he had been exiled. She wondered if that woman had been in the church, that woman who could have no place among his people. If she were there, it must have been in the dusk of some aisle chapel, apart and alone.

Naughty little boy, despair of every governess; mauvais sujet, who had erred so far out of the paths of his world; soldier of France, who fought and led and fell—there he had lain in state, honoured of all, under his flag and palms.

Now it is over, the bad and the good of it, and of all is left only the blue cap and jacket, and the medals of war.

### Little Mild Gentleman

The little mild gentleman of teacups and cakes—so useful when there were people who simply had to be asked—always ready to fill a place, considerate of old ladies—of course, they did not want him at the Front. He had rather bad lungs, or something, and was shortsighted at that; it was absurd of him even to try to get out—no army doctor would pass him. [235]

After months and months of effort, he at last succeeded in getting himself taken on for ammunition work and the making of poison gases.

Somebody met him the other day, strutting along in his blue coat and red trousers. Very hurried and important, he had yet to stop and tell all about it, his tea-party manner quite vanished away, his shortsighted eyes no longer mild.

"It is I who tell you," he said, "I who know well, there will not a single one of them be left alive within miles and miles of this new stuff we are making."

### Gossip

Since his death she has been nursing in a typhus hospital, somewhere just behind the lines. It is now more than ten months. No one has seen her, scarcely any one has heard from her. Some people say that she is doing "wonderful work" and some people say that it is all pose, and some people say that she has an affair with the chief doctor of the hospital, or is it with the maire of the town? No one has seen her, but every one says she has lost her looks. [236]

She used to be very pretty, and a great favourite in the world. She looked absurdly like her two babies.

The babies are at the château with their grandmother, his mother, who is an invalid—two lovely cherubs at the age of Russian blouses.

The house off the Avenue du Bois, that used to be one of the most charming in Paris, has been closed since the war.

He enlisted when the war broke out, as a common soldier of infantry. It certainly was chic of him, for he was réformé because of some grave enough trouble of the heart, and he might easily have kept out of it all, or have got something showy but not dangerous. However, he took a humble place, and his share of great hardship. He had been accustomed all his life to everything that belongs to wealth and rank, and his share of the burden must have been very heavy for him.

People said: How proud of him she must be. He had always been thought a little dull, a dear boy, but perhaps a little dull; one would not have dreamed he had it in him.

People said: They had always been such a devoted couple, an ideal young couple. How sad it would be if anything happened to him. [237]

In spite of the difficulties due to his being réformé, he got out at last to the Front. He was wounded only a short time after, not in any attack, or with any glory, but in bringing up the comrades' soup to the trenches. It was a shell wound in the thigh, not especially dangerous. He was invalided straight through to Paris, to one of the big city hospitals, and put, of course, in the ward with other common soldiers.

It was a moment of terrible crowding of the hospitals: doctors and nurses were overworked; there was necessarily much confusion. It was no one's fault, perhaps, only the inevitableness of things, that for three days the Surgeon Major had no time himself to attend to the less badly wounded.

The man with the wound in the thigh asked nothing of any one. He did not even ask, they say, to have his people sent for.

They were all down at the château; it was only after forty-eight hours that they got word of what had happened to him and where he was.

His wife came up to town. His mother, of course, was not able to come, and it had not seemed worth while to bring the little boys.

That was when he had been for two days in the hospital. [238]

Here is a part of the thing that people say they do not understand.

It seems as if his wife might have had him moved out of the common ward. It is a little dreadful to

think of him there, who had always been used to so much luxury—among the grey blankets, the coarse grey sheets, the beds and stretcher-beds crowded together, a bottle of the hospital champagne on the night-table, the black man in the next bed screaming. She might, it would seem, have had in their own doctor, or any one of the big doctors. She surely might have got permission to stay in the ward and sit by him the night he died.

He died the night after the operation. They had amputated too late. It was only the third day that the chief saw him. They amputated next morning, and he died in the night.

In that hospital they do not put a screen about the bed of one who dies.

If only some one had done something while there was time. It seems such a sad waste of a life, and such a dreary end. You see he had had no glory. It was for bringing up the comrades' soup that he had died. There were no medals to be left after him, with his blue coat and his cap. I suppose there was just one of those coarse grey sheets drawn up over him till they carried him out of the ward. [239]

Some people say he did not want to live. But then he was probably too ill to concern himself much about anything. Some people say his wife did not want him to live. But then she may have been too confused and stunned to be able to concern herself about anything. Some people say she loved another man, and some people say he loved another woman.

Well, from him no one will ever know. It appears also as if no one were likely ever to know from her.

And now, no one sees her or hears from her any more.

His mother, who for a time would not speak of her, says now only that her devotion in the typhus hospital is wonderful, and her self-sacrifice; that she renders incalculable service there, and is above all praise.

That much is true.

And people give all sorts of different, amazing reasons for it.

They all agree, however, upon one point—that she has lost her looks completely.

## Smoke

[240]

Suddenly, as the motor was passing the Place de la Concorde, Valérie said, "Would you mind if we just went home? I should like to go home."

Of course Nanette could only say that she did not mind.

Valérie had invited her to drive in the Bois and have tea at the little chalet of gaufres, by the gate of the Pré Catelan; she had her mother's motor car for the afternoon, and they need not take anybody with them. Nanette had thought it would be such fun, just the two of them, without governesses or maids. She had been looking forward to it for days.

Nanette was still in the schoolroom, whereas Valérie, nearly two years older, had escaped from all that. The younger girl admired Valérie immensely. They had seen a good deal of one another three years before in a summer at Dinard. Then the difference between their ages had mattered less; but now, dividing the schoolroom girl with her hair just tied back from the girl who would have been going out if war had not ended the world, it invested Valérie with a glamour of romance for the little Nanette. The romance, moreover, was heightened by the fact that people talked rather much of the older girl and coupled her name most unhappily with that of a man she never could marry, who was proving himself to be one of the heroes of the war. [241]

Nanette would have been very proud to have had tea in the Bois with her beautiful friend. She said she did not mind turning back, but she did mind rather. She thought it odd indeed of Valérie to change like that. And Valérie's way of saying it was so odd, as if she had been all the time trying to keep it back and could not.

Valérie spoke through the tube to the chauffeur, and he turned the car.

She, Valérie, talked much and fast as they went back to the rue de Varennes, but she did not tell why she had changed her mind so suddenly.

The court of the old hôtel seemed more than usually boring and solemn to Nanette, and also the dim grave stairway. She would rather have had tea in the salon of the peacock tapestries, but Valérie told the old man-servant to bring it up to her little sitting-room.

She went in at her own door ahead of Nanette, and looked about her as if for something she expected to find in the room. She seemed so odd that Nanette just stood back against the door watching her. [242]

After quite a minute Valérie turned to her and said, "Tell me, does it not seem to you that there is smoke in the room?"

The room was full of the afternoon July sunshine. The window that gave on to the garden was open. There were some arum lilies in a vase, and their fragrance was heavy in the sunshine.

"Why, no," said Nanette, "there is no smoke here."

Valérie began moving about the room aimlessly. As she moved here and there she was taking off her long suède gloves that Nanette admired.

"It is very queer," she said, never looking at Nanette, "but for days, three days, it has seemed to me all the time that my room was full of smoke. I see it and smell it. At first I thought something must be burning somewhere. But there was nothing. Besides, it is not that sort of smoke. It is the smoke of gunpowder."

She had thrown her gloves down on a chair, and was taking off her hat. She pulled the pins out of it, one after the other, and took it off, and thrust the pins back into it. "It is quite different from other smoke," she said, "there is no doubting what it is."

"Gunpowder smoke! Oh, but Valérie——"

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Valérie went on, "Sometimes the smoke is so thick in the room that I cannot make my way about; it burns my eyes most dreadfully, it gets into my throat and chokes me, it makes me cry." She tossed her hat into the chair with her gloves, and turned to the mirror over the mantelpiece, and stood with her hands up, fluffing out her lovely gold hair. "It is not only that I cry because I am frightened," she said, "it is also that the smoke actually hurts my throat and eyes."

Nanette, standing behind her, could see her face in the mirror and thought it was become curiously stiff and dull. Valérie's lovely face, usually so full of expression, had become quite blank.

It was dreadful. The younger girl was afraid of—she did not know what. She could think of nothing that would have been of any use to say. She knew the older girl was telling her this thing only because she had to tell it to some one.

"You see," Valérie continued, "that is why I wanted to come home. I cannot bear to be long away from my room, because I am so afraid of missing the moment." She had turned back from the mirror, and stood looking past Nanette.

"The moment?" Nanette repeated, as she did not go on.

"Yes, the moment when the smoke will lift. It is every time more dense. There will be a time when it quite, quite blinds me, and then I shall see." She sat down in the chair that was nearest her. She sat limply, leaning back against the cushions, her hands lying loosely together in her lap.

[244]

Nanette had been standing all the time just inside the door. Now she came nearer, but not quite close, and she did not sit down. It was as if there were something encircling Valérie and keeping every one and everything apart from her. Nanette thought of the spells cast about fairy-tale princesses, a circle of magic drawn around, that no one could step across.

Valérie sat rigid, her eyes staring. The clock on the chimney began to strike five.

Nanette sprang forward. "Valérie, Valérie, what is the matter?" But Valérie did not hear her.

Nanette caught her hand. It was icy cold. "Valérie, Valérie!" She let the cold hand go, and touched her cheek.

But Valérie did not feel the touch.

Nanette flew to the door and opened it and called into the passage, "Jeanne-Marie, Jeanne-Marie!"

The old Bretonne nurse came instantly out from her door down the passage.

"Jeanne-Marie, quick, something has happened to mademoiselle."

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The old woman passed her, and was beside Valérie. "God and the saints! It has come again!" she cried. She put her arms about Valérie and the girl fell stiffly against her shoulder. "Oh, my lamb, my little lamb!"

"Is she dead?" implored Nanette. "Jeanne-Marie, is she dead?"

"No, no, it has happened before. Go call Francine, quick."

The maid was already at the door; she must have heard the excited voices.

The old nurse said to the maid, "Help me get her to the sofa." To Nanette she said, "Go away, mademoiselle; you must go away."

Nanette besought, "No, oh, no!"

But the maid said, "Please, mademoiselle, Jeanne-Marie knows," and pushed her out of the room as if she had been a child.

Nanette, terribly frightened, waited outside in the passage, walking up and down.

After a long while Francine came and told her that mademoiselle was herself again, but very tired and must rest.

From her own home, an hour later, Nanette telephoned, and was told that mademoiselle was asleep.

The next day Valérie sent asking her to come about five o'clock.

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Nanette was taken first to Valérie's mother, in the drawing-room.

The marquise was as stately and frigid as usual, dressed for the street, rather hurried and most difficult to talk to.

She told Nanette that she was troubled about the fright she must have had yesterday, and asked her not to speak to any one of what had occurred. She looked at Nanette through her tortoiseshell lorgnon, and asked if Valérie had been talking to her of anything in particular before

she fainted. "Had she been agitating herself with any special confidences?" she asked.

"No," faltered Nanette, wondering.

The marquise went on to explain that Valérie was very much run down just now and nervous, and, in these last days, had had one or two fainting spells, such as that of yesterday, but less grave. She again asked Nanette not to speak of it. She appeared more concerned about people knowing of it, and about something she evidently feared Nanette might have imagined, than about what had happened to Valérie.

Nanette was anxious only to get to Valérie, who wanted her.

She found a little white Valérie snuggled down in the pillows of the big rose-hung bed. She seemed very quiet and rested, not strange as she had been yesterday, only tired. Her brown eyes looked bigger than ever, dark-circled, and her golden hair was very soft and curly about her face, like a child's hair. [247]

She made Nanette sit close to her, and held her hand while she told her strange things, as if they were not strange at all.

When she spoke of yesterday it was as if she were speaking of something that happened very long ago. "I ought not to have brought you home with me," she said, "but you see I was afraid then. I was afraid to be alone. I knew the smoke was going to lift, I knew I was going to be shown something, and I was afraid to go through it alone. Old Jeanne-Marie is a darling, but she is different, of course. And mother would have been so annoyed if I had spoken of him. Mother has known all the time how unhappy we were, you see, and was always awfully annoyed about it."

Nanette, half understanding, could only say, as Valérie paused, "I am so frightened about you."

"Poor Nanette! You must not be frightened, for I am not frightened any more. It is all going to be well, very soon. Only I have got to tell you about it, because I am so lonely. I must tell some one. I am not a bit unhappy any more, but just to-day lonely. I have got to tell you, though it is selfish of me." [248]

"I love you to tell me, please, Valérie."

"I was terribly unhappy," Valérie went on, "when I thought it was only he who would die. I knew, the moment I realized it was gunpowder smoke, that he was going to be killed. I knew that the smoke would lift for me when the moment came, and that then I should see him die."

"Valérie, oh, Valérie!"

"But you need not be sad for me, Nanette, because there is a thing I know that makes it all quite beautiful and right." She lifted herself up from the pillows, still holding Nanette's hand; the two heavy gold braids of her hair fell over her shoulders. "You see, we never could have been happy together, he and I," she said, "there would have been nothing but unhappiness for us both, always. I must tell you what I saw. I must have some one know, and you seem to understand things. You will not speak of it, till afterwards. And now, as I am telling you, you will not interrupt me, will you? You will not say any of the things most people would say, to break into my peace?" She stopped and waited, looking at Nanette intensely.

Nanette could not speak at all. [249]

But Valérie must have understood, for she told it. She told it always quietly, as if she had passed beyond any shock or grief or sense of its strangeness: "The smoke was all about him, and about them; he and they had to fight blindly. They fought with bayonets. It was in the street of a village; I saw the cobbles under his feet, and a broken doorstep. He fought and fought. It seemed very long; he was quite alone to fight against so many of them. There were blue heaps behind him on the cobbles; I could make out just vaguely through the smoke. I think they were his comrades, wounded and dead. The others, the grey ones, were too many. I saw their grey shapes and their bayonets, and his wounds. I saw his face, just as he went down. His face was all alight, as it was the last time I saw him." Her own eyes were shining when she stopped, and her voice was like a singing.

In the quiet of the room Nanette waited, as if there were some spell she was afraid to break.

Valérie told her: "The last time I saw him was when he went out, nearly two years ago. I knew the station he would be passing through, with just some minutes there; and I went, and waited for him. I did not care if people knew. I ran to him in the crowd, and he saw me, and he said, 'Why, my Valérie, it is you!' as if there were a miracle. In my vision, his face was just as it had been then. There was no sound at all in my vision, but from his face, as he died, I knew he was saying, 'Why, my Valérie, it is you!'" Her warm, live hand held Nanette's hand steadily. "I know that I shall go to meet him, that I shall be waiting for him when he dies; I *know*, Nanette. I know because of the look there was in his face. I shall be waiting there, and he shall see me. And so I have no grief or fear." She was patting Nanette's hand to comfort her. "Is not it strange, Nanette; to-day I have a letter from him, a sad letter. And I have written him a happy one, and he will not understand why at all. He does not know how soon we will be together. I cannot tell him. And I am lonely waiting, now I know. Nanette, I am so glad that it is I who will go first." [250]

Perhaps, when she is older, Nanette will have to wonder if there was something she might have done.

But nothing would have made any difference.

In the next days they had many doctors. But none of the doctors knew what it was, or could do

anything.

A week from the day when the smoke had lifted, Nanette sent arum lilies for old Jeanne-Marie to put into Valérie's hands. [251]

And three days after that, the man Valérie never could have married was killed.

He had gone down, it was known afterwards, in house-to-house fighting, in a street of the village of X—.

### **Hospital, Saturday, July 8th**

Some new ones are arrived from the Somme, only ten for my ward, the orderly told me at the gate. They were brought in at four o'clock this morning. The orderly, Hamond, said, "They are nothing so bad as the Verduns."

When I came to the top of the stairs, Madame Marthe was in the corridor, waiting for Madame Bayle to come and unlock the linen-press. She looked very tired already, at the beginning of the day, and she was walking up and down between the stairs and the door of our ward, not able to keep still for a minute.

She told them off on her small fine fingers, stained with iodine: "Two heads, one of them has a bad leg-wound also; one amputé of the arm, infected; two of the leg, infected both of them; two faces; a bad chest-wound, bullet; other two slight. Zut! that Madame Bayle, will she never come! Run over to the store-house and tell them I have got to have tubes and funnels to feed the 9 and 14. See that they give them to you, whatever fuss they make, tell them it is for very bad faces. Quick now, the chief has been around, and they are going to trepan the worst head this morning." [252]

### **Hospital, Sunday, July 9th**

The man they trepanned yesterday will not keep still; he worries about everything. They say he is doing well, but he talks all the time. They told me to sit by him and try to make him stay quiet. At first he held my hand and seemed to rest, but he would not shut his eyes, and after a little he began to talk again.

He was worried because he thought I had not enough to eat; he thought, because I was so thin, that I must be very poor. He said he had some biscuits and some rillettes de Tours done up together in a piece of newspaper. The package had been in his musette when he went into the charge. Where was his musette? He would have me go and find it, and eat the biscuits, and the rillettes de Tours. He worried because he had fallen back into a trench deep with water, and the newspaper package might have got wet. But I must not mind that, he said, it was better than starving. What had they done with his musette? I must go and get it. And I must not mind taking his biscuits and rillettes de Tours, for he was not hungry at all. [253]

### **Monday, July 10th**

All day long there has been sunshine, and the sky has been blue. There were great white clouds that mounted up over the city, and that one kept imagining was the smoke of battle. The blue of the sky was wonderful, infinite and near, like something of music or of religion, and the sunshine was like golden wine. But those soft white puffs of cloud were terrible.

At the top of the Champs Elysées, behind the Arch, the clouds were driven up as if it were from the mouths of cannon.

It must be just like that the smoke is rising in the sunshine over the high edge of a field I used to know. They say that field is laid across everywhere with railroad tracks, along which monster grey cannon crawl up to their positions, and crawl back across again when their work is done. Hundreds of horses are corralled in the field, and everywhere there are dotted little white tents. Sometimes black faces come to the openings of the tents, and one would think of the Village Nègre people went to see in Magic City, ages and ages ago. [254]

It seems strange that when the great white clouds mounted up from behind the Arch of Triumph, the city did not rock beneath them. It seems strange that the great white clouds rose silently and really were only clouds.

### **Thursday, July 13th**

People in the streets go slowly, looking up at the flags, and stopping to stand. They speak to one another wherever they happen to be standing together, and say that they hope to-morrow will be a fine day.

The streets are getting ready for to-morrow, hanging out flags and streamers and garlands to the breeze that is strong to-day, and to the comings and goings of sunshine. Grey minutes and gold minutes follow one another across the city, where the flags of the different nations are blending their colours and waving all together.

Many different uniforms, on their way up and down the streets, salute one another, and stop and linger about together, looking at their flags. [255]

The streets are full of bandages and crutches, pinned-up trouser-legs and pinned-up coat-sleeves, steps that halt along with tap of canes, and shuffling, uncertain steps that must be led.

One is always coming in the streets upon an especial type of little group of people, one might indeed think each time that it was the same little group over again, so much each different one of them resembles all the others—four or five women, an old man, a young sick-looking man, and quite a tagging on of children. One knows that they are refugees. They have the unmistakable look of refugees. It gives them all that likeness, every little dragging tribe of them to every other. It is the look of people who are waiting for something, and to whom nothing in the meanwhile matters. They are indifferent and dull because nothing else matters. They make no effort and take no trouble—of what use? It is not worth their while to better things that will not last. There is always a woman in poor rusty deep mourning who has tied her little girl's hair with a Belgian ribbon.

Music comes and goes at odd times through the streets, as pipe and drum and trumpet of tomorrow's procession are moved this way and that to their various places. [256]

You get fragments of strange music, sometimes come from very far-away strange countries, to these streets.

### Friday, July 14th: Pink Shoes

It would be too unkind of it to rain, as if the fête were not already shadowed enough.

One was angry waking in the rain.

It rained when they took their wreaths and flowers to the statues of Strasburg and Lille, and it rained when the troops were massed before the Invalides for the prise d'armes.

But afterwards the rain did stop.

A girl and a limping soldier, ahead of us as we went to the Nord-Sud, were sopping wet. I suppose they had been standing for hours on the Esplanade. Her knitted cape and cotton blouse were quite soaked through. She had no hat, and she was laughing because her brown curls dripped into her eyes.

In the Place de la Concorde people had put down their umbrellas, and were telling one another that it was really better not to have the heat of sunshine.

We waited a little with the crowd in the Place, the friendly, orderly Paris crowd that used to come to fêtes so gaily, grave now, almost solemn. The crowd was full of wounded. The men flung back out of the war, broken, were come to watch their comrades pass between two battles. The crowd gave place to them, and they were proud in it. [257]

Then Diane came, with Miss and the babies, both of them tremendously excited in their little mackintosh coats.

One of the club servants showed us to the small writing-room, where a window had been reserved for us. From the window we looked down on the wide grey stream of the street between banks of people. One way we could see the great Place kept clear also, in grey reaches, past islands of crowd, and the other way we could see a heap of people on the steps of the Madeleine.

The babies sat on the window-ledge and forgot everything at once because of another baby, down in the crowd on the opposite kerb, who wore a pink bonnet and pink shoes, and had a little flag in either hand.

"Oh, mummy, her mummy has put down a newspaper for her to stand on, so the wet won't hurt her shoes."

"Yes, Cricri darling. Don't wriggle so, child; Miss, do watch out for her."

"I've got pink shoes, too, haven't I, Fafa?" [258]

Diane, holding Fafa very tight on the window-ledge—not because he wriggled, he was too big, but because he might have been grown up, like the little boys of other mothers, and gone away to war—was telling him what a wonderful thing it was he had come to see, and how, when he was a big man, he would always remember it, and could say to people, "On the 14th of July, 1916, I saw \_\_\_"

"Yes, mummy! Oh, mummy, do you suppose that little girl's shoes are quite new for to-day?"

"Babies, you are going to see Belgian soldiers; you will always and always remember what they did for us. And there will be British soldiers; you know how they are fighting for us, just the same as papa and Uncle Raoul. And you will see the Russians, who have come from so far away to help us; and beautiful Hindus, and big Africans, and the little Anamites, and our own men."

Her voice thrilled when she said "our own men."

Her voice has that curious quality of drawing darkness: it made me feel the shadows when she said like that, "our own men."

She said, "There will be the fusilliers marins, and the cuirassiers, and the artilleurs. You may see the 75', Fafa. And there will be the chasseurs à pied, from Verdun, with their fourragère."

"Mummy, was it her mummy who gave her the little flags?" [259]

"I think so, Fafa darling."

"Is it her mummy there with her?"

"I think so."



"Is her papa gone to the war, like my papa?"

Diane put her cheek down against the top of his little fuzzy head as she stood with her arms around him.

"Is her papa gone to the war too, mummy?"

"I think so."

"She has to stand up all the time, mummy, will she not be tired? I am afraid she will be tired before the procession comes. When will the procession come, mummy?"

Diane said to me, "To think it is the first day of flags and music we have had since the war began \_\_\_"

I was thinking all the time of the day when the troops will come home. I was thinking that this day was a promise of that day. I knew that Diane was thinking of that also. Her eyes filled with tears; I saw them through the tears that were in my own eyes. We both knew so well. The men look forward fearlessly to that day, but the women know fear. Every woman in the crowd was thinking how this day promised that day, gloriously; and every one was thinking—but if *he* does not come home.

The people were come to their day of flags and music almost as if it were to some religious ceremony. They waited in the grey morning to see their troops go by; coming from battles, going back again to battles, and always with the war so close that, if it were not for the sounds of the city, we could have heard its thundering. [260]

Diane said, because she did not want the children to think she was sad, "The little pink girl must have come very early to have got so good a place."

"Mummy, did she have a nice breakfast before she came?"

"Oh, yes, a lovely breakfast."

"Will the procession never come, mummy dear? That little girl must be so tired. Why doesn't the procession come, mummy?"

"Oh, there's the sun," Cricri sang out, wriggling in Miss's arms, and clapping her hands. "There's the sun come out!"

The sun shone straight into our eyes for a few minutes, and then the soft grey settled down again.

We heard the sound of music and of marching, from a long way off.

The crowd stirred and thrilled.

"They are coming," cried the babies, "they're coming!"

"Yes, yes, they're coming. What is that the band plays? There's the Garde Républicaine, and the music—listen, babies! And now it is Belgian music. There are the Belgians—see the people run out to give them flowers! There are the mitrailleuses and the Lanciers and the Cyclistes!" [261]

"Mummy, I've got a bicycle too, haven't I; and I can ride it well, can't I?"

"Now the English, with their music! Cricri, do keep still and let Miss see. How beautifully they march! Aren't you proud, Miss? There are the Ansacs, Fafa; and look at the Indians! The street is carpeted with flowers: they cannot pick them up, they walk over them. There are the Russians. Look, babies, the little boys and girls from the crowd run out and pick up the flowers to give them! Listen, the Russian music sounds like great seas and winds in forests. It will be our own men coming now, Fafa."

"Mummy, oh, mummy! I can't see the little girl any more!"

"Now it will be our own men coming! Look, look, babies, to see the very first of them! There's our own music—listen."

Holding Fafa close against her shoulder, she leaned out past him over the window-ledge, her eyes lighted with that flame one knows in soldiers' eyes. [262]

"They will be our own men, who have fought for us, who will go back to fight for us. Fafa, think of it! Here they are, their music—oh, oh, it is the Chant du Départ!"

"Mummy, do you think we'll never any more see the little girl with the pink shoes?"

## Monday, July 17th

Twenty-eight beds and ten stretcher-beds, the ward is full again. They are all from the Somme. They are not nearly so bad as those from Verdun and the Champagne. There has been only one of them, so far, who died.

He was brought in on Wednesday, they operated next morning, and he died in the night. The wound had become gangrenous.

He was twenty-five years old. He was from the invaded countries, and had no one, no one at all, who could come. He had had no news of his people since the beginning of the war, nor had he been able to send his news to them. He had never been out of his little commune, except to go to the trenches. He had no name to give of any friend.

The patronne told me to go to the funeral, for there was no one else to go. None of the real [263]

nurses could be spared, and very few of the men from downstairs would be able to walk so far. It was to be at Pantin. We would go first to the church. We would leave the hospital at half-past three.

I tell of so many funerals. But there are so many, and they impress me so. Those men die for us, and we, who may not die—how could it be but that their dying means more to us than other things? There is nothing we can do for those who fall and lie on the battlefield. But with these, here, we go a little way.

And what else is there?

I have got some decent clothes, and I go sometimes to see some one, and we pretend we are amused by bits of gossip. We say, "Oh, that's a hat from Rose-Marie!" and, "Where did you get your tricot?" But it is as if we went on a journey, and we come home tired from it, to the dark shelter of our thoughts.

One rests better following through endless poor streets after a pine-box with the flag upon it and the palms.

The people stand back, the men salute, the women make the sign of the Cross, and we keep our own small perfect silence with us as we pass. The piquet d'honneur walked with arms reversed, four on either side of him. [264]

There was no one but me to bring him flowers, but he had a big fine tin wreath from his comrades of our service, and his palms from the Ville de Paris, and the spray of zinc flowers with the ribbon marked "Souvenir Français" that, Madame Bayle said, is always sent from the Ministère de la Guerre.

Madame Bayle came with us. She is fat and always ill, but she could be spared from the linen-room. I never had seen her before "en civil." She had a large black hat from which, she told me, she had, for the occasion, taken off fourteen red roses. I thought, as we walked together, "Why, she and I are bitter enemies! For nine months we have quarrelled every day!"

We walked together, close behind the boy, who had no one but we two and five of his comrades to follow him.

It was hot, there was no air at all. There was a terrible odour of disinfectant.

Madame Bayle said, "It is because of the gangrene," and quite worried for fear I could not stand it.

And I worried about her bad knee. Was it bad to-day? I was afraid she would be very tired.

We felt most sympathetically about each other. [265]

She kept saying, "It is all the same sad, it is all the same sad."

One of the wounded said, "Not so sad as to lie out for the crows in no-man's-land."

The Garde Républicaine, standing at attention, formed an aisle for him and for us to pass through into the church. Of course, they never come into the church.

Madame Bayle, kneeling stiffly beside him, went on whispering, "C'est tout de même triste," as if it were a sort of prayer. "C'est tout de même triste d'être seul comme ça."

An old woman appeared from somewhere and put a little bunch of marguerites on his flag, and went away again. The stems of the marguerites were done up in white paper. Some women came and stayed; and some little girls, and a troop of small boys, in black blouses, just let out from the school opposite.

When it was over, they all filed out, past Madame Bayle and me, as we stood in the place where would have been his people.

On and on we went, through streets always sadder and more sad as they frayed out at the edge of the city.

Madame Bayle always shuffled and panted, and the wounded followed more and more slowly.

The city gate, and the ramparts, and longer, wider, even sadder streets to pass along, over the cobbles; then an avenue of limes in fragrant blossom, and the entrance of the great cemetery. [266]

The piquet d'honneur left us at the gate, and we were just ourselves to go on with him to the place where the soldiers who are lonely like him lie, so many of them together.

It is a beautiful place. When his people can come to him I think they will be proud to find him in so beautiful a place.

We put our flowers with him, and went away Madame Bayle always saying, "C'est triste tout de même, d'être comme ça, tout seul."

The wounded went so fast ahead of us out of the cemetery that Madame Bayle could not keep up at all.

She panted, "They are so glad to get out of it, poor boys, poor boys. They will wait for us at the entrance; We will go all of us together to the café on the right of the entrance for our 'little glass.'"

**Thursday, July 20th: Little Florist**

Very early this morning, on my way to the hospital, I stopped at the little florist's shop round the corner, near the church, to get some blue and purple larkspur and crimson ramble-roses.

[267]

It was so early, I was afraid Jeannette would not yet be back with the day's flowers from the great central markets.

It is Jeannette, the younger, pretty sister, who goes every morning to choose the fresh flowers, and Caroline, who in the meanwhile puts the little shop in order to receive them, washing their window and filling their bowls and vases with water, and scrubbing out the floor.

Caroline is not yet twenty-five years old, and Jeannette is eighteen. They are quite alone now to keep the little shop.

Their father is paralyzed, helpless, and they must take care of him.

The brother, who used to take care of them all, is at the war.

Just two years ago, in the early summer, before the war, I remember that Caroline, who is not really pretty at all, suddenly came to be quite beautiful. Her small dark thin face was aglow, as if her heart were full of sunlight, and she moved about the shop in a way so glad that it seemed as if every little humble thing she had to do were become for her part of a dance. She gave away to one then more than one bought of larkspur and ramble-roses, and Jeannette and the big brother looked on leniently.

[268]

All that seems now very long ago.

So few people can bear happy colours in these days, that Jeannette brings back from the market little else but white and purple flowers, and green leaves for wreaths and crosses.

I was very early this morning, and Jeannette was not yet come back from the Halles.

Caroline was down on her knees, scrubbing the floor. She was crying as she scrubbed the floor.

She had not expected any one to come so early, and she was crying just as hard as she could cry, while she was alone and had the time.

She got up from her knees and rubbed her bare arm across her eyes.

I thought of her brother at the war, and of the some one because of whom, perhaps, she had been happy, two years ago. I scarcely dared to ask, "Is it bad news, Caroline?"

"No, Madame," she said, still rubbing her eyes, "No, Madame, it is nothing special. It is only as if there were nothing but tears in the world."

[269]

## Trains

Two trains are side-tracked in the fields, beyond the little country station, where the wheat is already bronzed and heavy-headed, and the poppies flame through it, and where there is all the music of grasshoppers and crickets and birds.

One is a train of men coming back from the Front on leave, and very gay. They are all laughing and singing in the carriages. They are all getting themselves tidied up, for shortly they will be in Paris. The officers in several of the carriages have managed to get some water, and are scrubbing luxuriously, with tin-cups and soup-plates for basins. Soapy faces appear at the windows. The men have opened the carriage doors all along the train and got out to tumble about in the grass at the edge of the train. They pick buttercups that grow close to the rails, and some of them have wandered off into the tall wheat to gather poppies.

The second train on the siding is full of wounded, who must wait, like the permissionnaires, to let pass the munition and troop trains going out. The wounded are quite comfortably arranged on their tiers of stretchers; the doctors and orderlies have all the needed things, and move about competently, up and down the train. It is strange how quiet the train of wounded is. It is only here and there along it that one hears moaning or a cry.

[270]

A munition train crawls by, all grey. It is nothing that the permissionnaires or wounded need notice.

Then, after a time, that seems very long, comes a troop-train going out. The men in the troop train hang out of the windows and look silently upon all the things they are passing in the fields, that seem so full of peace and so kind.

They wave to the permissionnaires, who are silent for a moment, watching them as they go. And then they pass the train of wounded, some of whom look up at them.

## Monday, July 24th—5.30 of the morning

Pérot has just gone.

He was noiselessly creeping down the outside stairs from his attic room. But I was waiting at the door on the landing, and made him come in for a minute to the apartment.

He sat, loaded down with all his campaign things, in the little yellow chair, and I sat in the big yellow chair, and we looked at one another.

[271]

It is odd how one never can say any of the things to them; and how, always, they understand perfectly all the things one would say if one could.

He looked very ill, poor boy. Ten days' leave of convalescence after five months in the hospital has really not given him enough time to pick up. And he worries so. He can try to eat, but he cannot sleep at all. All night he thinks and thinks.

I know so very well just what he thinks.

He has never had many words with which to tell me, for he has had all his short life to work so hard that he could get little time for learning to express himself. But sometimes he says, "If I knew they were dead——"

They are his two little sisters. The mother died five years ago, the father several years before that. He helped his mother when he was still a schoolboy to take care of the little sisters, Célestine and Marie; and when the mother was dead he took care of them alone. Now he is twenty-four years old, and Célestine is seventeen and Marie sixteen.

Since the day he left, two years less just eleven days ago, he has had no word of them at all.

Others from those invaded countries have had perhaps messages, a postal card, some sort of a letter; but he had had no word. [272]

An application we got through for him to the maire of the nearest large town has had only the answer that the farm exists no more and that nothing has been known of the two young girls.

It was the "le mauvais sang qu'il faisait," as Madame Marthe said, that kept him so long from getting well. His wound in the shoulder was pretty bad, but what was worse was his unceasing grief and dread. He would have died, of the wound and that, if he had not been so young and northern and strong.

His wound got itself well. The new ones needed his place in the hospital. He was given ten days' sick leave, and came to spend it in the room upstairs, because he had nowhere else to go.

Now his leave has come to an end, and he is going back to his dépôt, and then to the Front. I may never see him again, my poor boy, whose face goes white and red, and white and red, and whose blue northern eyes fill with tears if one speaks kindly to him.

He sat in the little yellow chair and I sat in the big yellow chair, and we looked at each other in the wet grey early morning.

I said, "They gave you a good breakfast?" [273]

"Oh, yes, madame."

"And your little package, for lunch in the train?"

"Oh, yes, madame, and the cigarettes."

"Some letter-paper to write to me on?"

"Yes, madame."

"You have all the money you need, you are sure, my child?"

"Oh, yes, madame, much more than I need. I still have that twenty francs."

"You promise to let me know if I can do anything for you?"

"Yes, madame."

"And you will take care of yourself, please, Pérot."

"Yes, madame."

The clock struck once, the first quarter hour past five.

"You must go, my child."

He stood up.

I went to the door with him.

"You would not have liked me to come to the train, Pérot?"

"No, madame, because I should have cried; I am so stupid, madame."

"I would have cried too. And so, my child—until a less sad day."

"Madame—thank you."

[274]

"No, I thank you, little soldier."

### Wednesday, July 26th

This morning, at the hospital, one of the Verdun men came up from the convalescent ward downstairs, where he was sent when they evacuated for the Somme, to say good-bye to us. He is well enough, and he is going back. He is one of the older men, one of those who have the look of worrying about wives and babies. He has been twice wounded. The first was a bad wound; he had taken long to get over it in some hospital of the provinces, and to be able to go back and be wounded again. Now he is going back for the third time.

I remember his having told me, at first, when he was quite ill and talked with fever, that he was terribly afraid of Verdun. He said he did not mind what they did with him if only they did not send him back to Verdun. He said he was afraid of the bayonet. He could kill with the gun, he said, but not with the bayonet. He said he stood paralyzed when it was the moment to strike with the

bayonet, and could not strike.

It was after he left my ward that his wife had come up from the Limousin, and brought the two little girls to visit him. I never saw her, but I remember how happy he was. He told me his wife could not stay long because she had to go back and take care of the cows. They had two cows, he said. [275]

Now he bade good-bye to Madame Marthe, who was washing her hands with sublimé after a dressing, and who gave him a sharp red elbow to shake.

He said good-bye to the men in the ward, each one in turn, and stood a minute looking at his old place and said, "One was well off there."

I went to the door with him.

It was very hot in the ward, and there were flies buzzing.

I thought: To be going back to that, when one knows it already; to be going back to that, when one has no longer youth's élan and carelessness; when one has to worry over labour and poverty left behind.

I suppose he saw something in my face of what I felt, for he said, in a kind, pitying way, as if to help me, "Do not be sad, madame." And he said the thing they all say, all of them, "I' faut b'en, tous les copains sont là."

"All the others are there."

And then, this afternoon, I heard another soldier say that. [276]

It was in the rue de la Paix. He was giving an order to the chauffeur. His little boy, in a white piqué dress with a big lace collar, was standing beside him, dancing up and down and hanging on his hand.

His wife leaned out of the window of the motor and called to me as I passed, and he turned. I stopped, and we talked for a minute.

He has been home on a six days' leave and is going back to-night.

He is a captain in the chasseurs à pied. Before the war he was an officer in a smart cavalry regiment, but he had himself transferred into the infantry when the war began. I have heard the men in the hospital talk of him. They say, "C'est un type épatant, celui-là." They say he never sends his men to reconnoitre, but goes himself, always.

He looked very young and splendid in his smart uniform, standing at the door of the motor.

The little boy, always dancing up and down beside him, said, "We've got his picture taken! We've got his picture taken!"

His wife tried to laugh but I saw her eyes in the shadow of her white lace hat. "It's true," she said, "we dragged him to it, poor boy. We had nothing decent of him at all, you know." [277]

She was very lovely in her lovely things, with a heap of red roses beside her on the seat of the motor.

Somehow, that it was all so pretty made it sadder. In the bright street I thought: To go back to that, when one has so much, when one has everything in the world, and is young and full of radiant life.

His wife and I looked at each other.

He smiled down at her, as if it were only for her one need be sorry. "We have had six perfect days," he said, "and you know it must be—the others are there."

I have written those words many times over. But they are the words one hears every day. As the men go back, each one of them from the however different circumstances of his life, that is all they seem to find to say about it. It does not make a fine phrase, but it has come to mean for me a beautiful thing. Behind the great sweep of battles it is one of the things I shall always be glad to have known.

I find myself wanting to put each saying of it away with other memories in this book that for two years has kept me company.

Two years ago—so long ago that I find myself saying, once upon a time—there was a small square tower room that had three windows, narrow and deep-set, the loopholes of ancient defences. Once upon a time the three windows stood open to the night and the garden, and to a sense, somehow, of the friendly crowding up of the little town about the rampart walls, and to the country lying away beyond, sweet in the dark with forest and field. [278]

I know that where war has passed strangers can look into broken houses and see all that was intimate and small and dear betrayed with ruin of stones and lives, and that, like that, people who do not care may glance in passing into the wreck of the north tower room.

The tower had stood for so long, keeping watch over that road to Paris—how strange to think it will keep watch no more! It had looked down, in its long time, on much of war, and held its own through three besiegings—and now it is fallen.

Now it is fallen, the strong tower, in a land that is laid waste, from which peace has been taken away, and joy, out of the plentiful fields.

Already that night was passed beyond the end of the world.

In the morning of that day, the morning of that last Sunday of peace, I had stood in my window over the garden and seen the sunshine, thick and golden after rain, on wet sweet things, lawns and little formal stately paths and box edges and clipped yews, roses and heliotrope and petunias. And I had not known. I had seen the close, soft dream-sky of France full of white clouds above the tops of trees that were green and golden, or sometimes as dark as purple and black. And I had not known. [279]

The white peacocks were spreading their dreams of tails below the terrace, between the crouching sphynxes that years and years of moss and ivy and rose-vines had grown over.

There had been church bells ringing to the voices of the garden, its birds and bees and grasshoppers. And I had not known.

Against the rampart walls I could see, between the trees, the town roofs gathered close, rust-red ancient tiles and thatch that time and weathers had made beautiful, and crooked chimney-pots and blue smoke rising straight and high in the still, blue air.

I could hear the little sounds of the village, together with the garden sounds and the bells.

I could smell hearth fires and fresh-baked bread, together with the new-cut grass and heliotrope and roses.

Every sound had been part of the stillness; all the lines and colours of things belonged together in that soft harmony which is so especially of France. I had thought, how it was France! And I had not known. [280]

I had gone to Mass in the little ancient, dusky church of the village. I had gone down across the parterres, and along the avenue of limes, through the summer woods that were so happy and alive, out at the little green gate in the rampart walls, and down the street of big square old cobbles, between the nestling houses.

And in the church there had been incense and candles, and the white caps of old women, and the wriggling of the children in their Sunday clothes.

When I came back, there were the papers arrived from Paris. And nothing again was ever, ever, to be the same.

That night, not knowing why, I wanted to write down for my own memory notes of just those little things that seem so small, and that went all together to the making of a mood we can no more find to turn to.

I wanted to write of the fragrance of delicate years that abode in my tower room; of the dim, cloudy mirror over the mantel that had reflected so many stories; of how the writing-table stood in the north window, and had nothing but a bowl of sweet-peas and my travelling-desk things on it; and that the window was open, and how all the wet, sweet, quite cold night came in; and that, over the tops of the dark trees, and between the dark cloud masses, I could see all the stars of the Lyre, Vega, blue-white, very big and near, all more brilliant, I thought, than ever I had known them before. I wanted to explain how, somehow, one felt the village, down under the rampart walls, though it slept and made no sound, and how friendly its presence was as it lay so close, protecting and protected, about its ancient burg. [281]

Now the houses are roofless, and the rampart walls are broken. The tower is fallen. Nothing is left unchanged there, to-night, but the shining down of the August stars.

I had dreamed of the hoofbeats of galloping horses and crash of great wheels and of thunder. And all that came, and does not cease. I had dreamed of blood on the castle stairs, dripping and dripping. And they say that there was one night especially, when the castle was so full of wounded men, that there was nowhere left to lay them in any of the rooms, or in the lower halls. They carried them as they were brought in up the stairs to lie on the floor of the Long Gallery. And the blood ran down the stairs.

There was fighting, over and over, up and down, those big square cobbles of the streets and of the market place, and from the doors and windows and roofs of those little houses. [282]

The people of the streets and houses are gone, who knows where, with their poor small bundles, fled long ago, before the hoofbeats and wheels and thunder.

Across these things, how absurd to remember the sweet-peas there were, that Sunday night, in a bowl on a writing-table!

It was very hot in the ward to-day; the flies buzzed horridly up and down the window-panes.

It was a very bad day in the ward. Thirty-four was very low. He had a hæmorrhage yesterday, and all day he seemed to be sinking. It was to-day he received his Croix de Guerre. The captain came up to the ward with another officer and gave it to him, and read his citation out, standing by the bed. But he seemed scarcely to know.

Several other decorations were given also to-day, downstairs in the Salle de Jeu. We had much to do in our ward, and I could not go down.

Our little 17 received his Cross and also his Military medal. He managed to get downstairs and stand up with the others, most of them like himself on crutches. Yesterday he had news of his mother's death. He told me he had never had a father. "Il du être un salaud, ce type-là," he told me. His only brother had been reported missing since more than a year. He kept calling me over every few minutes—when he was back in the ward, and in his bed, very tired—to show me his medals in their two green boxes. He had no one of his own to whom to show them. [283]

There was much big work to be done, and the ward was so clouded all day with the choking blue smoke of iodine from the hot washings and dressings.

Madame Marthe was very nervous, and Madame Alice seemed especially sullen.

I wondered—was it that her poor little Jeanjean is worse again, there, where he has been all these months, in the children's hospital, cared for by others than she?

I was thinking all the day of it, and never dared to ask her.

Madame Marthe stood all day by the bed of 34. She would say to him, "Now breathe, breathe. Now breathe." If ever she stopped saying it, for one instant, he stopped breathing. It was as if the only thing he understood was that he must obey her.

Madame Alice did all she possibly could of her work for her, sullenly, together with her own hard work. [284]

It was a very bad day; I am proud to belong in such days.

I was thinking very much of the garden of the sphynxes and white peacocks, that is in ruin, and of the tower room given over to bats and swallows.

It was beautiful, that mood which is gone, but this is more beautiful.

## Transcriber's Notes

Obvious errors of punctuation and diacritics repaired.

Inconsistent hyphenation fixed.

P. 23: may loose those memories -> may lose those memories.

P. 32: next the carriage of the British officers -> next to the carriage of the British officers.

P. 105: the slates over beds -> the slates over the beds.

P. 118: rafia grasses -> raffia grasses.

P. 162: trror of thinking -> terror of thinking.

P. 228: Cousin Thérèse -> Cousine Thérèse.

P. 247: stange things -> strange things.

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