A PASSING WORLD

Marie Belloc Lowndes

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MARIE BELLOC LOWNDES
Photograph by Blackstone Studios, New York

A PASSING WORLD

BY

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

AUTHOR OF "I, TOO, HAVE LIVED IN ARCADIA"
"WHERE LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP DWELT"
ETC., ETC.

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NOTE

Opposite page 18 is reproduced the Mobilization Order of the French Army and Navy in 1914. Mrs. Belloc Lowndes framed a copy of this poster, and it hung in her bedroom for the remainder of her life—a constant reminder of her father's country. Though the greater part of her life was spent in England she often said, "Je suis toute française de cœur".

The frontispiece is reproduced by courtesy of Blackstone Studios, New York

I

I recall the winter and spring of 1914 as having been the happiest of the first eighteen years of my married life. From early childhood I had longed to write stories, and I was now becoming in a modest way established as a novelist.

In the spring of 1912, I had received a letter from a member of The Writers' Club with whom I was slightly acquainted. In this she explained she was an amateur fortune-teller, and desired to tell my fortune. The lady cast my horoscope, and sent me the result, which consisted of four closely written pages.

In a covering letter she urged me to give up the journalism from which I still drew almost the whole of my income, and begged me to devote myself entirely to novel writing. She added that if I dilly-dallied as to that form of literary work, a time would come when I should find it exceedingly difficult to publish a novel. I had always longed to do creative work; but I am diffident, and nobody, excepting my husband, had given me any encouragement. Also, after having published two novels with no success, I had come to fear I would never make any headway as a novelist. All the same, my intention persisted, and for many years I wrote early each morning part of a chapter of whatever novel I had in hand.

The famous remark made by Talleyrand concerning the gentle happiness of life as led by the men and women of his world before the French Revolution, might have been echoed by a great many Englishmen and Englishwomen of my generation belonging to the professional classes up to the end of July 1914. I was at last beginning to earn about half of my

income with fiction, and *The Lodger* had proved a successful serial in the *Daily Telegraph*. Yet although this story was destined to have a far larger sale than any of my other novels, when published in book form it was badly noticed. It shocked those reviewers who had approved of *The Heart of Penelope* and *Barbara Rebell*, which had both been written in the Victorian tradition. That my first two novels should belong to that solid tradition was natural, for my favourite Victorian novel was, and still is, Mrs. Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*.

The *Daily Telegraph* also serialized *The Chink in the Armour*. I laid the scene of this novel at Enghien, a popular resort within a few miles of Paris. It was the only French inland town where certain forms of gambling—I think *roulette* and *trente-et-quarante*—were permitted. I had never been there, although I had often heard of it as a gay, and somewhat improper, place. After I had written the story, I was in Paris one wintry week with a little daughter, and I suddenly decided I should like to see Enghien. I remember how sadly disappointed was the child at the forlorn appearance of the town, and even more of the famous lake, but I realized how charming Enghien must be in the summer and autumn.

Although I was working extremely hard, for I was afraid to give up my regular journalistic work, I was leading a most interesting, indeed a delightful, life, and on the eve of my forty-sixth birthday I still felt a young woman. I went out a great deal, meeting almost all my fellow-writers, and I was often at 10 Downing Street, the house of the Prime Minister.

In 1914 I had known Margot Asquith, in a real sense, for exactly twenty years. In 1894 I spent a week in a Scotch country-house where she and I were the only unmarried young women. I became truly fond of Margot, and I was on kindly terms with Mr. Asquith, although I had the feeling that his

prejudice against Catholicism affected his relationship with me —this in spite of the fact that he was always a kind, courteous, and indeed a delightful, host. I became, and remained, warmly attached to his and Margot's only daughter, Elizabeth, later Princess Antoine Bibesco. I have known a considerable number of highly intelligent and charming English girls. Elizabeth Asquith stands out in my memory as the most attractive of them all. She also had a kind and generous nature —as well as what used to be called a good mind.

During the spring and early summer of 1914 I was also constantly in the London house of Margot Asquith's brother and sister-in-law, Lord and Lady Glenconner. Their house in Queen Anne's Gate was a few moments' walk from the Foreign Office, and Sir Edward Grey, who was becoming acutely anxious as to the state of Europe, dined with them almost every night, going back to the Foreign Office, after dinner, to read the cables which were then arriving from every European capital all night as well as all day.

I remember every waking hour of the week preceding the Declaration of War in the August of 1914. I learned of the letter sent to Mr. Asquith on the Sunday by the Conservative group almost before anyone else did so, and I recollect being told that its dispatch had been a great relief to Edward Grey. It may be recalled that certain members of the British Cabinet believed England could keep out of the new Franco-German war.

Meanwhile, my son, Charles Lowndes, had come home from school suffering from severe pains in his head. I felt acutely anxious, not at my boy's condition, as I should have been, but because my whole heart was in France. I had another, immediate, reason for anxiety, for it was rumoured in Fleet Street that the Government might order every daily paper to

cease publication.

I had always had a woman doctor; my husband and our children were looked after by Dr. Henry Troutbeck, who as a little child had been with me at a dame's school during the two winters my mother had spent in Westminster after my father's death. I was very fond of Dr. Troutbeck, and I had great faith in him; so I felt much dismayed when I learned the outbreak of war had caught him in Switzerland. The very young locum who was looking after Dr. Troutbeck's practice sent for a nurse, and on the Friday of that first week of war he suddenly told us he wished for a second medical opinion, as our boy's condition puzzled as well as alarmed him. The specialist arrived after my husband had left for *The Times* office; he was accompanied by a friend who was also a doctor, and they both examined the boy. I was then told our son had acute mastoid trouble, and that an immediate operation was essential, and must be performed in a nursing-home where he should be taken as soon as an ambulance could be procured. The specialist informed me that the usual fee for the operation was a hundred guineas, but that he would accept thirty guineas, and he offered to arrange for a considerable reduction in the usual nursing-home charges. I went into our study, and telephoned to my husband. He told me to hold on, and within a few moments came back to say the Editor of *The Times* had himself got in touch with St. Thomas's Hospital, and arranged for our boy to be taken in there at once.

I had cashed an American cheque for sixty pounds the day before war had been declared, and I had put the notes and gold in a box where I kept some lace which had belonged to my English grandmother. I took out of the box three gold sovereigns and three shillings, and I remember, as I thanked him, the look of surprise which flashed across the face of the

specialist when I handed him the fee. A moratorium had been declared, and no one was paying out any money.

An ambulance arrived two hours later and, as my son was being carried out of the house, I told myself that he had gone through our front door for the last time.

The nurse was a very young woman, and her whole mind was set on going to France at the very first possible moment. So when we reached the gates of St. Thomas's Hospital she refused to go any further, though I begged her to wait for at least the few minutes it would take her to explain my son's case to the house surgeon.

Charles Lowndes was carried into what looked to me like a mortuary, for there were slabs of stone or marble, on one of which he was laid to be examined by a doctor. My secretary, a dear friend, was in our house that day, and I had dictated to her a short account of my son's illness. I took the typed page with me to the hospital, and handed it to the doctor. The boy was then taken to what I learned afterwards was a surgical ward. I was in a sad state of distress, but I could hardly help smiling when in reply to my question to the sister in charge of the ward, "May I see the surgeon?" she looked as if I had made a most improper suggestion as to that gentleman, as she exclaimed, "Certainly not! Come back to-morrow morning, and I will tell you what it will be right for you to know."

I bade her goodbye, and no doubt she supposed I was about to go home. But I had seen a notice in the hall which stated that as long as a patient was on the danger list, his next-of-kin could stay in the hospital. So I sat down in the great hall which in St. Thomas's Hospital overlooks the Thames, and is open to the air on one side. There I waited till I saw the doctor who had examined my son. Going up to him, I asked if I might stay in the hospital till after the operation had been performed. He said

brusquely, "What makes you think your son is going to have an operation?" I replied, "Because two noted specialists"—and I gave their names—"have declared that if he does not have an operation to-day he will die in agony before to-morrow morning." He said firmly, "If your son has an operation to-day he will certainly die, for he is not in a fit state to have an immediate operation." This doctor and I became good friends; indeed he was exceedingly kind to me during the weeks which followed, and I never pass St. Thomas's Hospital, now badly shattered by the bombs which fell during the second World War, without giving him an affectionate thought. I came to know him and his charming young wife; he admired my brother's verse, and this formed a tie between us, apart from my gratitude for all the kindness he showed me in connection with my son's illness. I felt a pang of pain when I learned, after peace had been declared, that he had died as a result of his increasingly hard work.

Charles Lowndes was soon moved to what I think was called the medical side of the hospital. In a short time he was put into a comparatively small room of which the door opened on the left of the passage leading into a large ward. There, during that first August of the first World War, I sat for many hours of each day, writing and correcting proofs.

My son's condition remained very serious, and none of the doctors seemed able to discover what was the matter with him. I was told that on one occasion nine physicians were gathered round his bed. Then one day the house surgeon said to me, "Has your boy been in contact with a case of scarlet fever?" I reminded him that, in the account of the boy's illness I had dictated, I had stated there had been cases of scarlet fever at Westminster School just before the outbreak of war. In that statement I had also told how he had gone to a swimming-bath

just before he had fallen ill. The account I had written was found, and his illness was diagnosed as rheumatic fever complicated with suppressed scarlet fever. Till then it had been believed he had an abscess on the brain, and was bound to die. This, however, I did not learn at the time.

Two things have remained in my mind concerning those summer weeks of 1914. The first was coming out of the hospital at six o'clock one evening, and seeing on the newspaper placards the news of the fall of Namur. I realized, with a sensation of anguish, what this would mean to France. The second thing I remember was the sudden arrival at the hospital of certain of the soldiers who had fought at Mons—those who will live in English history as "the Old Contemptibles".

The Germans have an expression which means "joy in another's pain". I have only once felt that despicable feeling. I felt it, coupled with a certain bitter amusement, when I became aware that the nurses who had looked forward so eagerly to the coming of the wounded that they had done everything in their power—and that power was considerable—to stay the influx of ordinary patients, were having a most unpleasant time with the gallant survivors of the British Expeditionary Force. These men were naturally all Regulars, and to me they recalled the most famous of Kipling's characters. They were full of cheer, full of courage, and regarded the war as being as good as won. Splendid fighters they had already proved themselves, but they were very different to what the nurses had expected them to be, and with these patients it proved impossible to keep up the ordinary hospital discipline. They insisted on smoking in bed, and their relations and friends brought them bottles of gin and whisky cleverly concealed about their persons.

Well do I remember, when the King and Queen visited the

hospital for the first time after the beginning of the war, going into a stifled fit of real hysterical laughter—a thing which had only happened to me twice in my life—when I overheard one of the sisters telling the Queen how much they all enjoyed nursing these heroes.

During the summer of 1914 I led a strange, and in a sense a most unnatural, life. I arrived at the hospital at nine o'clock each morning, and I stayed till six, bringing sandwiches for my lunch. I also kept there everything necessary to make an early afternoon cup of tea.

Meanwhile my son went on suffering from acute pains in his head, and there was still nothing to show what was the matter with him. Two of my women friends came to see us at St. Thomas's, and each told me, long afterwards, that she had felt there was no hope of Charles Lowndes leaving the hospital alive. But I, on my side, once he was in St. Thomas's, believed he would get well. The war filled my mind to the exclusion of everything else, yet it never occurred to me that a time could come when he, too, would be in the fighting line.

And now I come to the strangest part of the story. The frightful pain in my son's head was finally cured by massage, administered by a Swedish masseur attached to the hospital. So at last I was able to take him by road, in a friend's car, to a little holiday house we had at Epsom. Almost at once he had a serious relapse, but I battled through with it alone, and eventually he became once more the strong healthy boy he had been before his illness. I wrote to a friend, "I have had no change at all this dreadful summer. I had hoped to go to France for a few days, for of course all my men relations aged under forty-five are fighting, and I want to see their mothers, sisters, and wives. But Lord Haldane says the Channel has become very unsafe, as there are German submarines about."

Evening after evening, as I walked home after having spent the day by my son's bedside, I told myself that after all it was well that the stillborn child, whose loss I had so bitterly mourned, had not lived to take his place among the youths whose leaving for Flanders now rent my heart.

Owing to my mother's early friendship with Dante Gabriel Rossetti I was familiar with his verse. Only once have I seen quoted the lines:

> The hour which might have been but could not be,
> Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore,
> Yet whereof life was barren, on what shore
> Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea? . . .
>
> But lo! what wedded souls now hand in hand
> Together tread at last the immortal strand
> With eyes where burning memory lights love home?
> Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned
> And leapt to them and in their faces yearned:
> "I am your child: O parents, ye have come!"

Now and again, in writing to my mother, I struck a cheerful note, such as, "The Rothschilds say it must end next winter, as Germany will then be bankrupt". And again, "The news looks really good this week, because people expect the Russians to be in Silesia before Christmas, and that this will be the beginning of the end. As to possible raids, who can tell? Hilaire thinks a descent on the coast unlikely, though possible."

A little later I wrote, "I don't believe in either Zepps or an Invasion. I did believe Zeppelins might come over London till I learned they are very fragile. The Germans have not yet ventured to send a Zeppelin over France. But I can't help being

impressed by the preparations which are now being made with a view to their coming over London." I did not add that I had been told by a member of the Government that it was thought that if they did come, there would be ten thousand casualties. I did, however, write, little thinking of what was going to happen twenty-six years later, "I have been told by a man concerned with our defences that they can do very little damage". And the next day, "I had a long talk with Sir Edward Grey last night. He seemed fairly cheerful; and he is quite convinced, in his quiet way, that England will win through. But he said the fighting is very fierce, and I could see he felt very anxious about his nephew."

Some of my friends were becoming extremely worried as their dividends were being "passed". That anxiety was spared my husband and myself, both then and during the rest of our married life. We had no capital, and we were never able to save. But I did not allow this fact to disturb me unduly. What troubled me as time went on were the rising prices. I became very uneasy, and I wrote, "The war is costing ten pounds a second now, and will soon cost twenty pounds a second. Everything in the way of necessities is going up by leaps and bounds. I feel rather worried about this." As a matter of fact I was acutely anxious, as all my journalistic work had stopped.

Few of the people I knew left London during the first months of a war which was to last four years, and I went out almost every evening, while my husband was at *The Times* office, to see my friends and acquaintances. What was happening in Flanders filled every one's mind to the exclusion of all else, and very soon long lists of casualties were being published in every newspaper.

Yet there were times, during that strange summer and autumn of 1914, when it appeared to me as if I alone realized

what war meant. Most of my childhood and girlhood in France had been overshadowed by the memories of those about me concerning what had happened there during 1870-1871; thus not only war, but war with Germany, was to me a frightful reality.

With the exception of a few British and French officers, and the German High Command, I think it may be said with truth that no one in Europe had any conception of what modern warfare would be like. This, however, was not true of a certain General Grierson. Not only was he a brilliant soldier; he was a remarkable man with a fine mind who had given the whole of his grown-up life to the study of war. He was also one of the very few Englishmen who knew the German Army; for he had been Military Attaché in Berlin, and spoke German perfectly, a rare accomplishment among the British officers of that day.

I was acquainted with a woman who was a close friend of General Grierson, and I recall a conversation during which she told me his views. He had no illusions as to the might, power, and scientific knowledge, of those commanding the German Army. Those people who even now, when writing of 1914, think poorly of Sir John French, may be reminded that Grierson was the first officer Sir John asked should be attached to his staff, after the Expeditionary Force had left for France. But in a French train, while on his way to the Front, General Grierson died from what was described as a stroke, a few minutes after drinking a glass of lemonade.

The censorship of all war news had been put in the hands of a brilliant young lawyer. Rightly or wrongly, he regarded the British public as apathetic, and just after the battle of Mons there appeared in a British newspaper an alarmist account of the first military operations. It began with words which approximated to "Oh God, that I should have to reveal what

you are about to read!" Then followed a terrifying description of the fate which, according to this correspondent, had befallen the Expeditionary Force. He wrote as though that Force had disintegrated. This report from an unknown war correspondent —though it was soon discovered who he was—created fierce anger and surprise rather than the fear the writer had hoped it would induce. What appeared certain to those who knew the man, was that he had lost his nerve. The fact that the article had been passed by the War Office deeply shocked a great many people.

As was the case in the second World War, very few men and women thought it conceivable their country could be vanquished. This feeling of confidence was an immense asset to the British people, and proved the truth of Foch's dictum that an army is never beaten until it believes itself to be.

At that time of my life I had a large circle of friends and acquaintances, and I only knew one person among them—a woman who had been brought up in Germany—who thought it possible the Allies might lose the war. Even so, pathetic and terrible stories began to seep through. They were not published in the newspapers; they were passed from one to another by word of mouth.

The death which most impressed me at the beginning of the war was that of a man for whom I had a great liking. This was General Hubert Hamilton, who belonged to a famous Irish military family. I had often met him in the house of his sister, Lady Allendale, whose first husband, Sir George Colley, had perished in the battle of Majuba Hill. I remember how astonished I felt when I learned that Hubert Hamilton and his staff had been killed many miles behind the lines, while they were smoking on the terrace of a French château.

As many of my friends were older than myself, almost

every married woman I knew had one or more sons already fighting, and I used to open *The Times* every morning with a feeling of acute fear and pain.

During that first summer of the war I was amazed at the confidence shown by those about me. Many who should have known better were certain the war would only last a short time; this was so even after what could truly be called the tragedy of Mons.

In the first World War, next to the loss of my brother's eldest son, Louis Belloc, what most distressed me, partly because I regarded it as a serious loss to his country, was the death of Denis Buxton, the son of Lord and Lady Buxton. The finest strain of the Society of Friends ran in his veins, for he was a great-great-nephew of Elizabeth Fry. Though under twenty when he was killed, Denis Buxton had a mature mind, and he had already mapped out his life in a way that was in those days most unusual. He and I once had a discussion as to his future. It took place in the long narrow drawing-room of Fort Belvedere, which was then occupied by his uncle, Colonel Baring. Denis was exceedingly modest, and not apt to speak of himself, but on that occasion he told me he meant to go into Parliament, and intended to make politics his career. As he talked I felt him to be very different from the other youths with whom I was at that time thrown in contact. His whole being was absorbed in the thought of giving those contemporaries whose circumstances and birth made it difficult, if not impossible, to lead lives which would be of value to their country, the chance to do so. Not only was he highly intelligent and cultivated, he also possessed a delightful gift of humour. I often think of Denis Buxton, and it is as if I could see him standing before me. I am grieved that I never saw him in the country home he loved so truly.

It was there in Sussex, twenty miles from the sea, that I had spent some happy days in the summer of 1914, just before the outbreak of war. Gathered together were the foreign members of a committee which had just met in London to consider means of saving life at sea, yet within a few weeks the U-boats were hard at work sinking British ships. During that visit I had made friends with the German delegate. He spoke perfect English, though he had never been to England before. I recall feeling grieved that the French delegate did not appear to such advantage as did the German, for the Frenchman could not speak a word of English.

In that same party was the then Lord Harcourt. He was one of the most cultivated and agreeable men I had ever met, and I remember discussing with him at some length the question of his father's letters. A dull life of Sir William Harcourt had been written by a man who had not known him. I pressed Lord Harcourt to publish a selection of Sir William's letters, as I had heard they were extremely amusing, and full of pungent wit. They are still unpublished.

I have wondered since that visit whether Lord Buxton, who under a quiet reserved manner was very shrewd, and had a sound judgment, foresaw even in a dim measure the coming calamity. But not one of the members of the Liberal Party I was then meeting in London, not even Mr. Asquith, had a suspicion of Germany's plans. Their minds were wholly absorbed with the troubles in Ireland and a possible rebellion in Ulster.

Although so much of that, to me, memorable house-party remains clear in my mind, I have but a vague recollection of a great political meeting in Brighton, at which we were all present. A brilliant speech was made by the Prime Minister's elder daughter (now Lady Violet Bonham Carter), who was

one of the finest political speakers of that day.

One of the pleasantest traits in Margot Asquith's character was her interest in every kind of human being. This was remarkable at a time when London society, though far more catholic than was Paris society, was, even so, composed of sets and cliques. To give only one example, the man who stands out most clearly in my memory as having been perhaps the most interesting of my fellow-guests in Margot's hospitable house was Basil Zaharoff. There were those who called him "the mystery man of Europe". But as a matter of fact there was nothing mysterious about him. Though I believe he was of Greek birth, he was to all intents and purposes a Frenchman, and had been educated in France. Two facts were certainly true. The first was that of his immense wealth—he was said to have a finger in every financial pie in Europe, and it was believed that he owned the majority of the shares in the Casino at Monte Carlo. The second fact was that he had married a connection of the Spanish royal family, by whom he had two daughters.

At the time of the outbreak of the first World War Basil Zaharoff was hated in one section of the London world—the section composed of the intellectual Socialists, headed by the Sidney Webbs. They all regarded Zaharoff as a war-monger, owing to the fact that he had a large share in the Creusot armament firm. When war came he at once threw his great wealth and immense influence on the side of the Allies.

Although I last saw him over thirty years ago, and though he had a quiet and what the French call an effaced personality, I remember Basil Zaharoff very clearly. This is partly because, although he spoke English well, he was more at home in French, so I was generally put next to him both at 10 Downing Street, and in the house of the Reginald McKennas. No man of

his day can have had a shrewder notion of the part money plays, or can play, in life. He was believed to be the richest man in Europe, and he gave huge anonymous gifts not only to the British Red Cross, but to every kind of war charity. There were certain members of the Government who regarded him with deep suspicion. This suspicion was increased when the following story became known. A girl in the political world was engaged to be married. Basil Zaharoff sent her a bouquet, and when she opened the envelope which contained the name of the donor, she found, in addition to his card, a thousand pounds in notes.

Sir Basil was much courted in Government circles, for it was thought he was in a position to swing Greece to the side of the Allies. He was certainly strongly pro-Ally, and deserved the knighthood of which, to my thinking, he was amusingly proud.

When I was in his company I felt sure he was a Frenchman. I also felt sure of something else. This was that every man or woman, in his opinion, had his or her price. What astonished me was the way certain of his English acquaintances—I cannot call them his friends—sponged on him.

I recall that, on one occasion, when I was anxious concerning some childish ailment of my younger daughter, he learned the fact, and wrote me a touching little note. I regret I did not keep that note, for he was certainly one of the outstanding figures of what was an extraordinary time of European history.

II

In the summer of 1914 my mother, Bessie Parkes Belloc, was eighty-five, and the outbreak of war brought back a surge of memories of 1870-1871. Although she spent the four years at Slindon, she was often in London, and took the keenest interest in everything that happened. Thus my elder daughter remembers it was from her grandmother she first heard of the tanks. It is probable my brother told her of this new engine of war, and it had impressed her imagination. Even in the darkest days she never faltered in her conviction that the Allies were bound to win. Yet her belief in the strength of Germany was not affected by Germany's defeat. She felt convinced that Germany would again attack, though she did not think that attack would take place as soon as it did. This conviction was partly owing to what had happened in 1870-1871, and also because all through her youth the growing strength of Prussia had disturbed and made anxious her father and certain of his friends.

Her attitude to this matter was the more remarkable because all her English friends had by then turned against France, and were becoming, even if unaware of the fact, pro-German. She had no belief in a German republican regime and had hoped that in 1919 the Allies would reconstitute the Germany of her youth, with Prussia once more a kingdom.

My son Charles joined the 52nd Light Infantry, being then eighteen. He was stationed for a short time at Shorncliffe, and went to France for the first time on September 8th, 1916. He fought in the battle of Beaumont-Hamel, where he won the Military Cross. After being out in No-Man's Land for three

days, wounded, he was sent to England. I remember with deep gratitude an officer at the War Office, whose name I never knew, who telephoned and asked me where I wished my boy to be sent. I told him Lady Ridley's Hospital, in Carlton House Terrace, because my closest friend was an aunt of Lady Ridley. As to that we were very fortunate—England was full of wounded, and private houses had been turned into hospitals all over the country.

ARMÉE DE TERRE ET ARMÉE DE MER

ORDRE
DE MOBILISATION GÉNÉRALE

Par décret du Président de la République, la mobilisation des armées de terre et de mer est ordonnée, ainsi que la réquisition des animaux, voitures et harnais nécessaires au complément de ces armées.

Le premier jour de la mobilisation est le Dimanche Deux Août 1914

Tout Français soumis aux obligations militaires doit, sous peine d'être puni avec toute la rigueur des lois, obéir aux prescriptions du **FASCICULE DE MOBILISATION** (pages coloriées placées dans son livret).

Sont visés par le présent ordre **TOUS LES HOMMES** non présents sous les Drapeaux et appartenant :

1° à l'**ARMÉE DE TERRE** y compris les **TROUPES COLONIALES** et les hommes des **SERVICES AUXILIAIRES**;

2° à l'**ARMÉE DE MER** y compris les **INSCRITS MARITIMES** et les **ARMURIERS** de la **MARINE.**

Les Autorités civiles et militaires sont responsables de l'exécution du présent décret.

Le Ministre de la Guerre. *Le Ministre de la Marine*

POSTER ORDERING GENERAL MOBILIZATION OF FRENCH
AUGUST 2, 1914.

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Le Ministre de la Guerre	Le Ministre de la Marine
(seal)	(seal)

Before he left for the Front again, my mother sent Charles a letter, which I read long afterwards, telling him what she knew would interest him concerning Slindon, the village in Sussex where he had spent a good deal of his childhood. She ended with the words, "You are rarely out of my thoughts. This little house seems to me full of you at every age, and you know I remain, always Your loving Granny."

She felt fearfully anxious when her two grandsons were both fighting and she was deeply moved by the death of my brother's eldest son, Louis Belloc, in 1918. She felt for him a special affection, as he had been named after his grandfather. The memory of the husband she had lost after five years filled with happiness was constantly in her mind.

In the December of 1918, after my son had come back from France, where he had nearly died from a form of Russian 'flu caught in a German dug-out the day of the Armistice, she wrote a letter to be given him on New Year's Day, in which, with her characteristic simplicity, she wrote, "I thank God, my dear, your life has been spared".

She was not in any way deaf and used occasionally, in her Sussex garden, to hear the guns in France. She wrote in one of her letters to me, "They seem to bring the War nearer home. How well I remember seeing the gun carriages go by our house in the early August of 1870 just after your brother's birth."

She took the closest interest in the young men who had joined the Army from Slindon. When she heard a rumour in August 1915 that approaches had been made separately to France and England on the part of Germany, she expressed a strong hope that no peace offer would be accepted unless it meant total victory. The only time she seemed anxious and disturbed was during the three weeks my brother spent with the French Army. He had told her he hoped to be in the French trenches for a few days; she thought this foolhardy and also wrong on his part.

August 5th, 1915, was to be one of the very few times in my life that I was not with my mother on my birthday. She wrote me a touching letter, telling me various incidents connected with my birth, and she ended her letter, "When you appeared, it was an occasion for deep rejoicing. Hilaire, when he was born, was very ugly, whereas you were as lovely as the dawn. How well I remember the wonderful cradle given you by your Aunt Louise, which the brutal Prussians made away with." In the same birthday letter, she gave a vivid sketch of Lady Sarah Lennox, and of how Horace Walpole had written from Goodwood, saying that she had an incommunicable charm. My mother had a cult for Lady Sarah, and in this same letter she sent me the following lines, apropos of a certain statue in Trafalgar Square:

Napier, who in the bright light stand,
Of all the triumphs that you won,
Proclaim to all the listening land
That you were Lady Sarah's son.

She read again and again the letters of Lady Sarah and her friends. I remember at Goodwood her once surprising a man who was with us, by observing that it always gave her pleasure to be present at those races because she felt it probable that Lady Sarah as a child had run across the strip of down where we were then standing.

So unexpected was the outbreak of war that one of the English difficulties in the summer of 1914 was getting money for the Secret Service. All London was raked for French gold and notes; yet the sum required was only ten thousand pounds. Any amount, however small, was welcome. I heard of one well-known peer who kept four thousand pounds in francs, as he wished to be always ready to go to France at a moment's notice. He gave them at once to the Government. Six weeks before the war, the Germans had managed to extract three hundred millions sterling from British bankers, by offering a little more interest than could be got in London.

During the early months of the war, my brother, Hilaire Belloc, made many determined efforts to join the British or French Army as a liaison officer. His remarkable knowledge of French military terms (owing to his having served in the French Army in his early youth) would have been of considerable value to the British General Headquarters; but the fact that he had stood as an Independent Liberal went against him with the then Government. He twice prepared his kit, and twice was told that he could not leave England. At last *de guerre lasse*, to use an old French expression, he began writing

articles on the war, and there came a joyful day when he called on me to say he had had a very good offer of work on a paper called *Land and Water*. He often came in to see me for a few moments, and I remember his telling me one morning that the war just started would be the first of many wars, and not as the people about me said, "the war to end war".

I have a note of something he told me which makes it clear that he foresaw with startling clarity what was to happen in 1939-1945. He always believed that the Allies would win the first war, but he was convinced that Germany would fight in due course a war of revenge.

Before the summer of 1914, few Englishwomen went to France except to buy clothes in Paris, or to escape from the cold to the Riviera, but a great number of people—in fact all those who could afford to do so—sent their young daughters to be what was called "finished" in Germany. This not only led in some cases to Anglo-German marriages, which were on the whole happy and successful, it also caused many young people in this country to have a most affectionate feeling for Germany. This being so, the outbreak of war in 1914 seemed to stun many of my friends.

For some time no one read anything except the war news. This state of things made me feel very anxious, but I told no one of my anxiety except my mother. To her I wrote in that first September:

> "No one is now reading fiction, and my literary agent warns me that he doubts whether my publisher will be able to carry out the contract he made with me. Thus I am far more anxious about money than I am about the War. I also feel that when England begins paying for victory, all those who have money,

or who earn money, will be in a very bad way, and no one will think of buying books."

How amazed, and oh, how relieved I should have been, to learn that fairly soon reading would become the principal diversion of the British public, and that my war novels would all do well.

My brother came to see me one morning at eight o'clock. We had a long talk, and he told me that he was convinced no invasion would take place. He said it would be easy for the Germans to make a landing, as the British coast-line is so long. "But," he exclaimed, "once here, how could they get away again?"

I have often felt, since that far-off day, that it was indeed unfortunate no landing on the English coast was attempted by the Germans during the first World War. Had such an attempt been made, I feel sure the war of 1939-1945 would not have taken place. Even a small landing would have roused England to the German peril, and what would then have happened might have halted Hitler in 1939. As it was, there was very little anti-German feeling—I heard, to my indignation, far more criticism of the French than of the Germans.

I wrote to my mother in the autumn of 1914:

"London has become very melancholy. The mourning worn by relations of the soldiers who have been killed is beginning to show in the streets, and strikes a tragic note. Everything is going to be terribly dear. I got in a case of China tea this morning at the old price, and in the afternoon it went up twopence a pound, so now I wish I had got in two cases. I am being offered more work, but it is to be

very badly paid."

Our children stayed on in Epsom, as my husband believed a bombing-raid on London might take place any night. After spending a week-end out of town I noted:

> "There is a regular panic in Epsom, trenches being dug, and so on. But I am not in the least nervous. How can the Germans land while the British fleet is in being? Yet it is true that troops just starting for France are being kept back. Lord Roberts believes in a possible invasion, Kitchener and Asquith do not."

As time went on, the whole of my working income stopped. I did, however, write a short life of Lord Kitchener, for which I received fifty-five pounds. Then I suddenly thought of writing a war book for children, to be called *Told in Gallant Deeds*. For that book I received an advance of a hundred and fifty pounds from my kind friend, Bertram Christian, of Nisbet's. The gallant deeds described were not only those of the Allies, for I put in a number of gallant deeds performed by the Germans. I went on receiving letters about this book for years, and from all over the world.

Gradually the food situation in London became serious, for Germany intended to starve England out. But I could regard myself as more fortunate than most people in the winter of 1914-1915. For some years I had had six pounds of butter posted to me each week from Ireland, and the parcels went on arriving long after butter had vanished from London, and I was able to give some away. But at last the parcels stopped altogether.

There were two households within a short walk of our house in Westminster where I was always welcome. The one was that of Lord Haldane, in Queen Anne's Gate, and the other, in Smith Square, close to Barton Street, belonged to the Reginald McKennas. The men and women I met in those two houses were very different, though equally interesting to me, as they were almost all connected with the Government, the War Office, or the Admiralty.

I had a standing invitation to dinner at 48 Lennox Gardens, where lived the Judge, Sir Edward Ridley, and his wife. She was my closest friend for exactly forty years. Their elder son was in the Grenadier Guards, and when he was on leave I saw him constantly, and so heard what to me were extraordinarily exciting accounts of what life was like on the Western Front. Certain of my friends much disliked what they called "war talk", but it was the only talk I wished to hear. Edward Ridley was the first British officer I had the privilege of knowing really well, and I was exceedingly fond of him.

I was also in constant correspondence with three men at the Front, a general, a major, and a captain. I used to send them books and newspapers.

A friend of mine, Guy Ridley, who was a lawyer, was doing important work at Scotland Yard. It was fortunate for me he was there, for a strange misfortune befell me in 1915, while I was writing a spy story, *Good Old Anna*. The plot of the novel had as central figure a dear old German woman who had been a nurse in England for many years, and had stayed on with her nursling and the nursling's mother as housekeeper, and, without knowing it, was used by the German spy service. In due course she was asked to keep a parcel for her German friends, and in that parcel was a bomb.

I took considerable trouble to find out what a bomb was

made of, and I described the process in my story. I was bringing the manuscript from Epsom to London, and because I was very tired, I left it on the rack of a railway carriage. There it had been found, and sent to Scotland Yard. An official called on me, and said that he did not think the book could be published until after the war, as I described the making of a bomb. When the war was over, the story would have been of little interest; I therefore appealed to Guy Ridley, and I went to see Sir Basil Thomson at Scotland Yard. He was very kind, and, having read the passage in question, told me he thought it was of no consequence.

Good Old Anna was the first real success I had ever had. It was for a time refused in America as it was thought un-neutral, but in the end it did appear there, and did very well. I wrote another war story I far preferred, called *Lilla; A Part of Her Life*, in which the hero was drowned with Lord Kitchener in the *Hampshire*.

All sorts of curious tales were being told concerning people who had been caught in Germany at the outbreak of war. Many Englishwomen were well treated by the Germans. This was especially the case with my friend Alice Hughes, the noted photographer. In her unhappiness after her father's death, she had sold her studio in London, undertaking not to start again within a thousand miles. She was warmly invited by a group of people attached to the Court in Berlin to settle in Germany, and she had just arrived there in the spring of 1914. When war began, several ladies of the German nobility at once came to see what they could do for her, and they succeeded in getting her back to England.

Among the stories going the rounds was one concerning a telegram sent by a Scotch peer who was in Germany at the outbreak of war. It was to his wife, and ran as follows, "To

think that in a week I shall have left this——" and he signed the telegram with the initial "L", as if his name were "Leopold" or "Lancelot".

I felt intensely interested as to what was going on in the German capital, and a friend of mine, knowing this, asked me to meet an American who had just come from Berlin. He was obviously very pro-German, and spoke to me with great anger about the possibility of Germany being starved out by the British blockade.

Some time in the August of 1914, two women, neither of whom knew the other, came to see me in order to ask (perhaps owing to my known friendship with Haldane, then Minister for War) whether I could help, in one case a dearly loved husband, in the other an adored brother, to be sent to the Front. In each case the request struck me—I can truly say dumb with surprise. In those days society, using the word in its narrowest sense, still appeared to live in the atmosphere of the Boer War. There had been tragic losses in South Africa, but it had not been war in the sense in which I understood the term, and I felt distressed and dismayed when some friend would speak to me exultantly of her son's "luck" in having been sent to the Front two or three weeks earlier than he had expected to be. That he would probably be killed or, to my mind worse, seriously injured, did not seem to occur to her.

As I look back, I am astonished at the calmness shown, and the lack of anxiety felt, in the London of that first war summer. One of the most intelligent soldiers I knew was convinced that the fighting would be over within three months. Portugal, England's friend, was the only country which steadfastly believed in her final victory. Every neutral was convinced that at the best, from the British point of view, the war would end in a "draw".

Again and again, during the winter of 1914-1915, I quoted in my letters well-known men and women who believed the war would soon be over. Sometimes a year was mentioned, sometimes two years, but never longer than three years.

The only soldier I met now and again who foresaw what was going to happen I foolishly thought a pessimist. This was Richard Pope-Hennessy. He was a fine soldier, and never doubted that in the end Germany would be defeated. I noted in the March of 1915 that he estimated that between the coming Easter and October, fifty thousand British officers and men would be killed and wounded. When I asked him if he believed the Allied armies would ever reach German soil, he replied, "Yes, they will certainly do so. For one thing, nothing else would be of any lasting good."

The personality of the German Emperor was often discussed in my presence, and I met now and again certain people who had known William the Second really well, and who had been brought into touch with him during his visits to England. They almost all liked him, and thought him extremely clever.

In the autumn of 1914 I met Sir Frank Lascelles in the house of his sister, Lady Edward Cavendish. Sir Frank had been British Ambassador in Berlin, and was a most agreeable man, and a really brilliant diplomat. Of all the people I met during that winter he was almost alone in the belief that the war would go on for a long time. On one occasion, when I was sitting next to him at dinner, he spoke to me with great frankness. He said he had liked the Germans, and had believed in their good intentions towards England. He added that he had proved this belief by founding an Anglo-German friendship society. But what was of intense interest to me at the time, and for the matter of that still is, was the fact that Sir Frank

Lascelles, who had been in Germany and had access to Court circles, regarded William the Second as largely, if not entirely, responsible for the outbreak of the war.

Sir Frank had known the Emperor intimately, and he had gradually become convinced that, from boyhood, William the Second had been secretly and passionately anxious to repeat what he regarded as the glorious triumphs of 1870-1871. It was, however, with France he intended to go to war. He had no wish to fight with England.

But, as is unfortunately the case with almost all royal personages, William the Second was surrounded by men who only told him what he wished to be told. Thus, in the early summer of 1914, he had been convinced by those about him that the Irish imbroglio would make it impossible for England to fight. Another of his theories was that Englishmen would only embark on a war to defend England. He further misconceived the character of his mother's country to so great an extent that he actually believed—he told this to someone I knew—that the British had become at once so soft and so over-civilized that they would have no stomach for fighting in Europe.

In my view it must be admitted that William the Second was a remarkable man. This was shown by the varying opinions of him expressed by people who had known him well. What impressed me was that with one exception—an Englishwoman—they neither liked nor respected him. The Englishmen who met him regarded him as unpleasantly arrogant, and they also thought him easily deceived by the camarilla among whom he lived, moved, and had his being.

It has been often said that William the Second had a kind of jealous love of England, and a wish—directly inherited from his mother—that the Germans should become like the British,

or rather, like those British of whom he approved, and whose qualities he admired. Yet the only man I have met who thoroughly liked and admired the German Emperor was an American named Bigelow. I used to see this gentleman in the house of Mrs. George Prothero. Mr. Prothero had for many years edited the *Quarterly Review*, and I remember his telling me, with a smile, that among his most assiduous readers had been William the Second.

George and Rowland Prothero (afterwards Lord Ernle) had an age-long intimacy with the royal family, owing to the fact that their father had been the Rector of Whippingham, close to Osborne House, in the Isle of Wight. As was natural, the children at the Rectory and Queen Victoria's children at Osborne were constantly—indeed daily—together. With one member of that family, the Empress Frederick remained on terms of intimate friendship, and I believe it to be true that after her marriage he and she wrote to each other every week.

It was suggested to me early in this century that I should write a Life of the Empress Frederick. To many Englishmen and Englishwomen of her generation she remained a vivid and admired figure, and when the Life of her father, the Prince Consort, was published, this feeling became intensified. Certain letters in that Life, and letters alone do not lie, make it plain she had been a really remarkable woman.

I agreed to write this royal biography, if I was allowed to omit my name. I was already becoming known as a novelist, and I thought, and I still think, it would have injured me to be known as having written something so different from the sort of novels I was writing. There were still living, at the time I wrote the book, a considerable number of English people who had known the Empress well, and certain among them, notably Lord Ernle and Lady Edward Cavendish, told me interesting

and authentic facts concerning her life. The Empress had a singular character. I say singular, because she was certainly quite unlike any other woman of royal blood who ever lived. Apart from that fact, she was passionately interested in literature and in art, also, in a lesser measure, in religion. She read every English book—whether it was a novel or a work of philosophy—she had reason to think worth reading. To the annoyance of Queen Victoria, she insisted, during one of her visits to England, on being taken to see George Eliot.

The Empress Frederick's most intimate friend from girlhood was Lady Ponsonby, a granddaughter of the distinguished statesman, Sir George Grey. After having been for a short time a Maid of Honour, she had married Colonel Ponsonby, one of the secretaries of the Prince Consort. Ponsonby was not only a delightful, but also a highly intelligent, man, with an original mind. This is proved by his letters which were published long after his death by his son, the late Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede, who became one of the first Socialist peers. After sitting next to Lord Ponsonby at dinner, I wrote a long account of our talk to my mother. That he should be a Liberal was natural, but he was in some ways a Red, in spite of, or perhaps because of, his lifelong association with the Court. As a child he had been one of Queen Victoria's pages, and he was once photographed with the Queen. In this photograph he looks a very cross little boy.

All through the years of 1914-1918, the luncheon club known as the Thirty Club, to which I belonged, met during two-thirds of each year. As the women who were members of the club were from every section of the London world, the talk was keenly interesting, and covered every kind of subject. I also heard a great deal of news there, and many happenings which were not allowed to be made public were revealed

during the luncheons, as also what the French call *les petits côtés de l'histoire*.

Before the first year of the war was over, I used to meet fairly frequently a remarkable man called Leverton Harris. He had a singularly beautiful wife, and they both, most unfairly, got into trouble owing to their supposed kindness to German officer prisoners. This kindness only took the form of sending fruit to a young Austrian who was a vegetarian. I met in the Leverton Harris's house many Americans going to, and coming from, Germany. These gentlemen, unlike Colonel House, felt free to say exactly what they had seen and heard, so to my mind were far more worth listening to than was their then famous fellow-countryman.

I heard of a curious story having been told by an American diplomat. He had occasion to visit a prison camp of German officers. Their spokesman complained bitterly of everything, and at last the visitor said to him, "Will you give me an example of one particular matter you wish put right?" The German exclaimed, "Whereas in Germany officers who are prisoners of war can buy anything they like at the canteen, in *our* canteen there is no pomade for our hair, or bay rum for use after shaving."

Many strange and sometimes terrible stories were told during the war. One such story made a great impression upon me. An Englishman was shipwrecked, and taken prisoner on the way home. He had refused to have the diplomatic bags in his charge weighted down, though according to my informant a three-pound weight attached to each of the bags would have caused them to sink. As it was, various papers floated, and were captured by the Germans, who, with natural delight, published the secret information they contained. There was a strong rumour which I remember hoping with all my heart was

false, that among the other secrets which the bags had contained, were the names of all the British agents in a certain neutral country. News from them ceased abruptly, though it was believed that even from prison they could have got news through.

A great deal of information came through from German sources, and a man in the diplomatic service who knew Germany well told me that early in the war the German Government were convinced the French Government was about to surrender. Had that been true such easy terms would have been offered to London that it was confidently thought in Berlin a British surrender would at once follow.

The greatest difference between the war of 1914-1918 and that of 1939-1945 was the comparatively small part played in the air during the first World War. Yet in 1914 I wrote, "A German staff officer who has been taken prisoner by the French, declared that the Air Service of his country is being tremendously developed, and that it is hoped in Berlin that ten thousand British civilians will be killed by bombing from the air".

It became the fashion, for the obvious reason that there were so few men left in England, for women who could afford it to give what were called "ladies' dinner-parties". After having been at one of these dinners I noted:

> "I was told of a most exciting diary kept by a woman who died recently and which was going to be published. This was mentioned in the hearing of Princess Christian. The Princess said the lady had been her dearest friend, and she would like to see the proofs. She slashed them about so much that every good story was deleted, as was also a report of a long

and interesting talk which King Edward, as Prince of Wales, had had with a friend concerning Germany. As this conversation had taken place years ago, during the Danish war, there was nothing to which any reasonable person could have objected. All it proved was the prescience of the then Prince of Wales, who had told his informant valuable data concerning Germany's aims and ambitions."

As time went on I felt indignant at the bitter feeling which was then being shown concerning Lord Haldane. A striking example concerned the plaintiff in an action, who, originally named Haldenstein, had altered his name to Haldane. The Judge persisted in calling the man "Haldenstein". At last his Counsel leaned forward, and whispered, "My Lord, Mr. Haldane has dropped the 'stein'," whereupon Mr. Justice Darling, quick as lightning, replied, "I suppose the Lord Chancellor has picked it up."

There was very little ill-feeling against Germany among the women I knew. I wrote:

"Now and again one hears something greatly to the credit of the Germans. A friend of mine has a distant German cousin who lives in Hamburg. The German was most kind in secretly helping a young English clergyman to get away—though they were then interning all Englishmen of military age. This clergyman had gone over to Germany the last week of July 1914, to take part in a tennis tournament. According to him there were thousands of first-line troops ready to embark for an attack on England. He saw them being loaded on to transports on three

different occasions, yet the transports never put out to sea."

During those war years I was always anxious to meet anyone who had news of the state of Germany. I met one man who showed me a letter he had received from Holland. It was written in English, and described a dinner at the Adlon, the Ritz of Berlin. A friend of the writer had sat down to a beautifully arranged table, where there was actually gold plate, and some fine flowers. There were five courses, but each consisted of something to eat about the size of a walnut. The same man had believed in an inconclusive peace, but now felt convinced that if the Allies remained united, they were certain of victory.

I heard of a letter written by the Crown Prince of Sweden. He stayed in Berlin when he was on his way back from the funeral of the old Austrian Emperor. He was a first cousin of the German Emperor, and stayed in one of the royal palaces. His breakfast was composed entirely of substitutes. He was given a sham egg, sham butter, even—according to him—sham bread.

III

Two of the young men belonging to my French family who spoke good English, and who had been wounded at the battle of Charleroi, were sent on missions to England. Thus Philippe, the elder son of the diplomat, René Millet, often came to London on official business. Our house was too small for him to sleep there, but he always dined with us, and told me the most interesting, and to me exciting, facts which were not in the papers. On one occasion he described a number of French disabled prisoners who had been sent back to France. They declared that each of the German orderlies at their camp had asked the French to give them testimonials saying, what was true, that they had been well treated. Certain of these Germans declared that if they were sent to the Front they would surrender at the first opportunity. The French did not believe they would do so, but a considerable number of German prisoners did come in tendering the testimonials stating they had treated the French well.

During Philippe's visits to London he constantly saw members of the British Cabinet. I once asked him which of the men he had met he regarded as the most able. At once he replied, "Milner."

I saw the already famous Colonel House several times at 10 Downing Street, and I heard him tell one striking story. This was that, during one of his visits to Berlin, he had dined with Bethmann Hollweg. One evening, towards the end of dinner, his host exclaimed, "Surely, Colonel House, you must agree that the British are very stupid?" "Yes," answered the Colonel, "but they are something else which begins with 'STU'."

"I know," answered Bethmann Hollweg, "you mean sturdy?" "No, I mean stubborn," replied Colonel House, adding, "When I am in London I hear them talking of a five years' war." His host turned on him. "My God!" he cried, "do you really mean that?" and the other replied, "I certainly do."

On another occasion I wrote to my mother, "I have just heard that Colonel House had brought back a good deal of news from Berlin. In his view the Allied High Command does not realize the severity of the blow which Germany is preparing against the Allies."

He was certainly right, for immediately after I had written those words the great German attack on Verdun began.

Belgium was constantly in everyone's thoughts during the early part of the first World War. A good many Belgians of all classes came to England when it was still possible for them to do so. One woman I met had been present at the fall of Antwerp, and she said the place had been thought impregnable until within a few hours of the end. She possessed three estates. In one of her castles three hundred Germans were quartered. She told us that so far they had not discovered the place where she had hidden her portable valuables. She had put them in one side of a very large room, then built a wall, and had the whole room papered, including of course the wall. On one occasion she went back to her castle, and had a great deal of talk with the German officers who occupied it. One of them said to her, "You should not go to England, for we shall be there soon, and although we shall give all foreigners two days to clear out, you may find it impossible to get away."

I had the feeling, as I often had when with Belgians who took refuge here, that she did not like English people, and enjoyed making their flesh creep.

At a ladies' luncheon party, I sat next to the Mayoress of

Grimsby. She described most vividly the Zeppelin which was brought down. She said that all the Germans in the Zeppelin were dead from exposure, with the exception of one man. Great efforts were made to save him, but he died almost at once. His death justified Balfour's strong denial that any Germans had been saved.

I was often asked to meet Frenchmen who happened to be in London on official business. One such gave me an unforgettable account of Verdun, yet he said that its fall would impress neutrals, and have no other effect. I believe it to be true that the whole of the French Army at one time or another fought at Verdun. I never met a French officer who had not fought there.

I wrote to my mother:

> "Rowland Prothero, who was the lifelong friend of the Empress Frederick, and knows Germany well, does not see the Germans giving in, though he believes they would stop if the War could be treated as a draw. I hope the Allies would never allow that to come to pass. If they do, Germany will immediately get ready for another war. But if the War does go on, the condition of people like us, I mean Freddie and me, will become very serious, as all publishing will stop. There is a good deal of uneasiness felt regarding Russia. Very little is known of what is going on there. It is rumoured that Reginald McKenna, accompanied by a small deputation of business men, knowing Russia, is going to Archangel in August. He wants to see the Russian Minister of Finance, and to find out for himself the state of Russia. But Russia refused to receive the

deputation."

In the summer, Lloyd George made a malignant attack on Lord Haldane, and I wrote:

> "I do not remember anything ever happening since I was grown up which caused me, personally, so deep a sense of disgust and, as far as I am English, of shame. Even if Haldane had been really imprudent—and no one who knows him can ever suspect him of being that—if he had really made some revelation which he might have kept to himself, as the action of a colleague, and of the man he vigorously defended at a time when Lloyd George was very ill thought of over the Marconi business, this attack would still be despicable. As it is, there is no shadow of excuse. Lloyd George took advantage of a fact which was being kept a profound secret—Asquith, Balfour and Kitchener being in France—to issue a statement which the innocent public naturally believed was authorized by the Prime Minister. But he has probably overshot his mark, for I saw a number of people yesterday, and not a single one—whatever his, or her, politics—but expressed loathing of Lloyd George's action. This was the case even amongst those who dislike and distrust Haldane. Many declare that Lloyd George wishes to be Prime Minister, and that he has been working for some time, in a subterranean way, to get rid of Asquith and Grey. Some people think he is being actively backed by Lord Northcliffe. This I do not believe. A man who has known Lloyd George well for many years,

told me that in his opinion Lloyd George was childishly annoyed at the enthusiastic reception given to Haldane at the National Liberal Club, which L. G. regards as his own particular nest. But there must have been something in the background, no one yet knows or suspects, to provoke him to do what he did. How Mr. Asquith must now regret having upheld him and Rufus Isaacs over the Marconi affair."

And a day or two later:

"Last night I saw Elizabeth Haldane. She was, as always, reserved and dignified; but I could see that this attack on her brother had cut her far more than his having been made to leave the Cabinet. The vulgarity of the attack pained her most of all. I had not the heart to remind her how she has always taken Lloyd George's part—not over the Marconi business, over which she naturally prefers to remain silent—but over everything else he has done during the last few years. I am amused to see that Margot, rather late in the day, has awakened to the fact that Lloyd George desires to supersede her Henry. I went to see her, at her wish, and I found her very worried and agitated. Indeed I had never seen her so unlike her usual brave self."

That same week I met at the Glenconners' a remarkable man, F. W. Bain, who wrote a strange fantastic tale I much admired, called *A Digit of the Moon*. He spoke with enthusiasm of the French Army, and he annoyed several men

who were present by saying that people in England did not give France full credit for the achievements of her Army. He further declared that the war in South Africa would have been lost but for the Indian Government, and that if England were governed like India, this war would have been won long ago!

I wrote in my diary:

> "Mr. Bain said he knew Germany well, and is certain that that country, being entirely run by means of an artificial discipline, will suddenly crack up, once the German people knew that they were not likely to achieve final victory. He said he had had letters from certain German friends not very long ago, and that they all believed not only they were winning, but that they were going to add enormously to their possessions in Europe, and also to their wealth.
>
> There was some discussion concerning the Dardanelles. Mr. Bain disapproves of the operation, as he believes that owing to what is happening there, the attack on the West Front has been postponed, if not actually imperilled. So does my brother. But Pamela Glenconner declared that the Dardanelles operation taking place when it did, not only pleased Russia, but saved Warsaw, as it diverted an immense amount of German material and, what is more important, some of the best brains in the German Army.
>
> Lord Glenconner told me the most interesting thing I have heard this week. Two Zeppelins were brought down at Newcastle the night before last—the first time the anti-aircraft guns have been of any

use. The Zeppelins were a fleet of seven, and they were going to Armstrong's! Five turned back, but two were caught.

"I called on a friend who said that the most hateful word in the English language is 'patching'. She said, 'Everything is always being "patched up".' She spoke with deep feeling, and declared one trouble to be the *age* of the men who had fought in the South African War—that Kitchener still thought of himself as a young man, and considered his contemporaries as the only soldiers likely to do well in everything—so that the really splendid younger officers are not given a chance. The Staff College would like to see Haig in French's place, with Robertson as Chief of Staff. They do not dislike Sir John French, but they think him not up to modern warfare. She has been seeing a great number of men from the Staff College, and men back from the Front. She said no operation would succeed as long as things were going on as they are now, and that the waste of lives, as well as of time, was fearful.

I went on somewhere else where was a man home on leave. Naturally I did not say anything to him of all I had heard, but I was amused to hear him give one piece of corroboration which would not, however, have pleased my friend at all. He remarked, 'I heard last week that Joffre had observed that the only British general he would care to employ was Haig'.

I dined at Ciro's, a supper club situated between the National Gallery and Leicester Square. There were there the oddest crowd I have ever seen. Of the

hundreds round me, the only people in the whole room I had ever seen were my host and hostess. My co-guests were a nice Danish youth, and Godfrey Isaacs. I was introduced to the latter as 'Mrs. Lowndes', the name of 'Belloc' being carefully kept out. But I could see he knew who I was. We had a curious talk. He is a miniature replica of his brother, with a clever, keen, enthusiastic face. He looks more like a musician than a financier. He said mysteriously he had just come from the Admiralty, where they had told him wonderful things which he could not reveal. But after he had had a little—a very little—champagne, he suddenly burst out—'I should not mind taking a heavy bet that the war will be over by August the 15th'. And when we all said we did not agree, he went on—'Last week a great financial authority, whose name I cannot give, was not only allowed, but engaged by the Government, to go to Holland to meet two German bankers with whom certain essential money matters had to be settled. The Englishman was an old friend of theirs, and they talked over the situation very frankly. Then one German banker said—"We are satisfied, and more than satisfied, with our military situation, but financially we are done, and within the next few weeks, in fact before August the 15th, the German Emperor is going to take a step which will astonish the world, and end the war."'

I observed that I supposed this neutral banker was a man of whom a Jewish friend of mine had spoken to me some weeks ago, as procuring very valuable information for the British Government.

Mr. Isaacs went on to say that, apart from this strange tale, he had inside information of the present state of Germany. He had been told the bulk of the German people were getting very dissatisfied and restless; that the state of the country financially was terrible, and the moment the war is over, Germany will have to repudiate her public debt, and declare herself bankrupt.

He then jumped up to go out and telephone to his wife, whereupon our host said sadly, 'All hot air!' I asked the Dane, who was a cousin of the Danish Minister, and whom I thought the most honest pro-British neutral I have met, what *he* believed. He said he thought the war would go on for a long time, but that it was quite true that Germany, financially, was in a serious condition. The most hopeful thing he had heard lately was contained in a letter from his father, who told him that the Germans were running short of torpedoes for submarine warfare, and that this was the real reason why there has been such a curious slackening lately in the German naval warfare."

During that July there was some talk on presentiments and fortune-tellers at the Thirty luncheon club.

"A member told a story which I had heard before, of a stockbroker who went to a fortune-teller last year. She told him that he was going to become a soldier, and that he would lose an arm. He said he had no connection with the Army, and that if her words came true he would give her fifty pounds. Her words did come true, and when he was in England

on sick leave, he went to see her again, and paid her the fifty pounds. She then told him further things, and they impressed him so much that he again said he would pay her fifty pounds if they came true. But she observed, 'You will not be able to do that, for I shall die in March,' and this part of her prophecy has been fulfilled. As was the case during the South African War, people are going more and more to fortune-tellers."

I went to Cambridge to stay with the famous educationalist Mr. Rouse and his sister. He and I talked about crime for three solid hours, then we discussed education. His account of the Germans in Cambridge was curiously illuminating, and the only direct reference to the war made during my visit. They both agreed—he and his sister were very different—that practically every German who was there just before August 1914 was in an unofficial sense a spy; always trying to find out military secrets, even asking the undergraduates—to the latter's natural amusement—what they thought would happen to the British Colonies and overseas possessions, in case of war! One young German they all liked very much, and who was attached to the Emperor's household, left ten days before the war so hurriedly that he did not even stop to pack up his clothes and take them with him.

I spent Friday morning watching the teaching at the Perse School. It impressed me very much, and I thought it the best teaching by far I had ever seen. I heard a number of boys make little speeches on subjects chosen by themselves. Four of the ten subjects were about the Navy, not one about the Army. The other subjects were concerned with natural history and a light railway.

I had long had a special feeling for prisoners of war. Some of my French great-uncles were taken prisoners during the great Retreat from Moscow. So I was exceedingly moved by a most pathetic account given by Lady Vera Herbert, of the prisoners of war now in Germany.

> "She sends parcels every ten days to a hundred and twenty-seven prisoners who have no friends to look after them, as well as to those who have official adopters. She told me they have had news of an officer who was paralysed from shock. Great efforts are being made to persuade the Germans to exchange him, but so far without result. All the unhappy people who have those they love among the missing, hope it is this man. With every parcel Lady Vera encloses a postcard, saying what is in the parcel, and this checks the thefts at the other end. The greatest trouble concerns boots and shoes. The prisoners are helping with the harvest, and even being sent down into mines, and they have no foot coverings.
>
> The British Government sent out a large consignment of boots and shoes, but they never reached the prisoners. The Germans are very short of leather, and are getting hold of everything of the sort they can for their own soldiers; so the British are now sending shoes with canvas tops and leather soles —they are all right for our prisoners, but useless from the point of view of a marching soldier. Lady Vera seemed in great distress over the lot of the Russian prisoners. They are practically starving, and after the British and French soldiers have eaten the food in their parcels, the Russians come and pick up

the scraps off the floor. All exchanged prisoners mention this, and she is making great efforts to persuade the Russian colony in London to take charge of their own prisoners. Unfortunately there are millions of them. She has just met Henry James who had seen an American back from Germany. He said the prisoners were being given less and less, and that even in the best managed camps they are kept so short as to be always frightfully hungry and therefore more liable to infection and disease."

The next day I noted:

"A dear Jewish friend of mine gave me an extraordinary account of her house near Cromer, which is entirely deserted. It is regarded as the acute danger zone for an invasion, so no one will go and live there. In fact all the people who can afford to do so have left the East Coast. This woman is highly interested in every form of religion, more so than anyone else I know. She said with deep feeling that the kind of will a Jew often makes, barring his children from marrying out of their own faith, should be forbidden by law. She declares that when people are determined to do so, they can drive a coach and four through any will. She gave me some curious examples of this fact. One of the Goldsmids made a will which contained the sentence, 'Any one of my daughters who marries out of her own religion forfeits all benefit under this will'. Two of his daughters became Christian Scientists, and married in due course men who were not Jews. As they had

already become Christian Scientists before their marriages, it was held that the words of their father's will did not apply to them. Another daughter actually became a Roman Catholic and a *nun*, which, as my friend observed, would have made her father frantic with rage and horror. But as she did not marry, she kept all her money. She also told me of a Jewish girl whose father left her a fortune under the same kind of condition. She married a Jew, and after a time he died. She then fell in love with a Christian, and having once fulfilled the condition of the father's will, her money had become her own to do with it what she liked."

IV

I think one reason why the French and the English will never understand one another, is that the French look at everything from an objective point of view. This was very evident to me during the years 1915 and 1916.

Although the French will tell a lie in everyday life of the sort which used to be called in England a "taradiddle", they are not apt to be, as even the finest types of Englishman and Englishwoman are so often, self-deceivers. The one outstanding misfortune for France has been that she has allowed herself to be ill-governed, it may be said, continuously.

When I was a little girl there were literally thousands of Frenchmen who so hated their Government that they never voted, and unhappily they belonged to the well-educated and intelligent classes. This was a terrible misfortune for the country, and I think largely contributed to France's defeat in 1940.

During the first World War, I was often in the company of the then French Ambassador, Monsieur Cambon, who was a beloved friend of very dear friends of mine, and he used to dine with them constantly. They lived in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, and he once told me that the only exercise he was able to take each day was his walk every evening from the Embassy. He had not to give notice when he was coming to dinner; he just came. The fact that my husband was on *The Times* had made him slightly nervous at first, but as time went on he talked to me freely, and that though—unlike most Frenchmen—he never said much. I once had a long talk with

him concerning what was happening in Europe. One thing he said struck me very much. He told me that the nation which would win the war was that nation which would show itself the most patient. He added that in his view war was a game of patience. On one occasion he told me something which amused me, but also made me sad. Thrifty France, instead of buying fresh wood-pulp for her paper, had used for a number of years all the old paper from England. But in 1916 a prohibition was put on old paper being sent abroad, and hundreds of letters reached the French Embassy, each concerning this question. He did his best, and England good-naturedly consented to begin sending old paper across the Channel once more.

I remember Monsieur Cambon telling me never to believe a word I heard uttered in what he called "ordinary society". He said that men and women of the world were invariably wrong as to the conclusions they drew, and this was true everywhere, in London, Paris, and Berlin. As to that he gave me a curious example. During the General Boulanger affair, every foreign diplomat in Paris wrote home to his Government declaring that Boulanger was about to become the Dictator of France. The only one who omitted to do this was the German Ambassador, Count Munster. He told Berlin that Boulanger was a man of straw, and that the whole affair would go up in smoke. Shortly afterwards he met a neutral ambassador who said that he had asked Count Munster why he alone had been right. The answer was curious. He replied he had long noticed that anything that what he called high society says is going to happen, never does happen. So when he is told anything in that world, he at once concludes that the opposite will occur.

The Cambon brothers, the one in Berlin, the other in London, alone realized what was going to happen. When he told me that this was so, I said, and I think he felt annoyed at

my view, that all governments, in my opinion lived remote from reality. What I remembered, as I said that, was the curiously false forecasts that I had heard made at 10 Downing Street, by men who were undoubtedly honest and upright, as well as extremely shrewd. To give but one example: the Prime Minister was more or less convinced that the French would make an inconclusive peace with Germany. But I felt that the one country about which he really knew little was France. In that he was entirely unlike his old friend, Lord Haldane.

In the autumn of 1915 my daughters and I were asked to spend some weeks at Glen. I had been one of those who did not believe Germany would send Zeppelins over London. But my view was not shared by my husband. It turned out that he was right, and I was wrong. We were to arrive at Glen on September the 9th, and before starting I went to bed early. After I had been asleep for about half an hour, I was suddenly awakened by what appeared to be a terrific clap of thunder. Harriet Callaghan, who was a dear friend, was packing in the hall of our house; she ran up to my room calling out, "They've come! We'd better get the children down."

What sounded terrifying was the bombardment from the anti-aircraft guns which had been placed on the buildings of Whitehall. The guns on Lambeth Bridge and the Victoria Tower were even closer to us. But I foolishly thought the sounds came from bombs flung from a Zeppelin. Before I had time to get to the nursery, Miss Callaghan had pulled my daughters out of bed, wrapped them in eiderdowns, and rushed them to the ground floor. I put on a dressing-gown, and opening the front door wide, I saw, looking as if it was floating just above the Abbey, a Zeppelin. It must have been very high up, for it was just like a small trout, and not—as many people said—like a cigar. There was a light at either end, and it hung

as if suspended in the midst of the searchlights which were zigzagging across the clear September sky.

I put a chair in the door, so that it should stay open, and I stood in the street, while from the Zeppelin drifted down about thirty bombs, each looking like a shaft of light about the length of a pin. It was, if a wonderful, yet a terrifying sight, and I did not feel reassured by the fact that all round the Zeppelin, shining across the sky, were red star-like beams of light.

I felt faint with fear, and bitterly regretted that I had not left my children in the country. The Zeppelin began to move towards us, and I was well aware that even one bomb would destroy all the little houses in Barton Street.

I heard later that a friend who lived in Queen Anne's Gate had been dining with Sir Edward Grey in Eccleston Square. He was walking home, when something made him look up, and he saw the Zeppelin, as he thought, just over his head. Then in Queen Anne's Gate, one of the quietest thoroughfares in London, there suddenly arose a state of wild confusion. People rushed out of their houses, and began running about, while others hurried through the open doors of these same houses, in the hope of shelter.

Even small Barton Street was full of people, but they were quite calm, and spent their time looking up at the Zeppelin, unconscious of the real danger from anti-aircraft fire. I did not know what it would be best for us to do. Our little house was over two hundred years old, and very frail. I knew my elder daughter must be feeling alarmed, though she remained silent. Her sister, then aged seven, was pleased at having been got out of bed. A neighbour suggested we should ask some friends who lived next door if we could all go in there, as it was a large modern house. We had scarcely stepped into their hall before the Zeppelin moved off, and the guns ceased firing. To

their delight, I allowed my children to dress, and we walked to Westminster Bridge, after I had telephoned to a friend in Scotland Yard to know if it would be safe, to see the fires in the City.

The view from Westminster Bridge was most impressive, for the sky was lit up, and the flames were reflected in the Thames. Everyone talked to everybody else, but those about me did not seem frightened, only excited. It was said that if there had been one naval gunner on the roof of the Admiralty the Zeppelin would have been brought down, as it was stationary for a long time. Unfortunately the gunners were men I heard described later as "gifted amateurs". One story which went the rounds was that the gun on the Admiralty Arch was commanded by the Admiralty librarian!

It was thought the Zeppelin was hit, but it got safely away, and sailed up Baker Street, over Regent's Park, and so to Hampstead and Golders Green, where it did some damage. The damage done in London was said to have been two million pounds. The bulk of it, oddly enough, was in the City, in Wood Street, where a huge factory was completely gutted. It was rumoured the Zeppelin nearly bombed Woolwich, as it had been lit up again too soon after the raid. As it was, it turned round, and missed the Arsenal by only fifty yards. It was said that Sir Francis Lloyd, who was in charge of the defence of London, had told a young lady that for every Zeppelin which came again over the city he would give her a thousand pounds.

No places were mentioned in the accounts which were published in the papers the next day, but I heard that a bomb had fallen close to the General Post Office, another in the Old Bailey, and a third in St. Paul's Churchyard. An absurd story, which I believe to have been true, was that one unexploded bomb was picked up as a souvenir, by a man who ran away

with it. He was pursued by two policemen, who after a fierce struggle took it from him.

On the whole Londoners showed very little sense of alarm, though as to that there was one outstanding exception. Officers on leave from the Front knew the effect of high explosives, and begged those about them to seek shelter. At the time I was not unduly excited or frightened; but a strange thing occurred to me the morning after I had arrived in Scotland.

I was in a large bedroom, lying in a four-poster bed, when someone outside the door dropped a tray. At the sound my whole body automatically leapt up into the air. This proved I had been far more affected by what had happened in London than I had been aware of at the time.

We went on to Cloan, the charming country-house in Perthshire which belonged to Mrs. Haldane. Our only fellow-guest was a Scotchman, Professor Hume Brown, of whom I was very fond. He was a delightful, highly cultivated man, and had been for a time tutor to Mrs. Haldane's children. He once told me that the cleverest of them all had been the one daughter, Elizabeth.

I wrote to my mother:

> "Lord Haldane is in great form, amusing and interesting about everything. He gave me a vivid account of taking Sir John French to see George Meredith. Meredith had said to him plaintively, 'I adore soldiers, and I never see any. Can't you bring me a typical soldier?' Sir John French had never read any of Meredith's novels, but his Chief of Staff was a Meredithian, and he begged Sir John to ask Meredith to put his name in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. This Sir John, who was a kindly soul, said he would

do. Meredith was deaf, and when the novel was handed to him, he thought it belonged to Sir John, and that it was his favourite among Meredith's novels. He pressed Sir John to tell him which character he preferred. Sir John was very much taken aback, and did not know what to say. So Haldane interposed with, 'What Sir John French naturally admires most in your novels, is your account of the Italian campaign in *Vittoria*.' Sir John, much relieved, began to talk about that campaign. Unfortunately he and Meredith took diametrically opposite views concerning a certain battle. Meredith became extremely angry, and shook with rage, while Sir John put him right as to the disposition of certain troops. They almost came to blows, and Lord Haldane found it impossible to conciliate them."

As I look back to my youth, I recall how people had for one another far more violent likes, and above all dislikes, than they appear to have now. Strong antipathies and strong likings were the rule. A man or a woman who steered a middle course was regarded as a poor thing. As to this fact, years later Lord Haldane gave me a curious account of another visit he had paid to Meredith. He was staying at Epsom for a week-end with Lord Rosebery, and on the Sunday afternoon Rosebery exclaimed, "Let's go out for a drive—say where you'd like us to go!" Haldane replied, "Meredith lives just below Box Hill. Let us go and see him." Rosebery expressed himself delighted at the thought, for he had never seen Meredith, and had always wished to do so.

But after their arrival at Meredith's cottage, Haldane became suddenly aware that the two men had taken a violent

antipathy to one another, so he made up his mind that the only thing to do was to take Rosebery away at once, and this he did.

I once asked Haldane who was the most remarkable German he had ever met. He told me that on the whole he thought Ehrlich, whom he had only met once, was the most remarkable. They sat next each other at some kind of Anglo-German friendship dinner, and at the end of the meal Ehrlich said to Haldane, "I want to give you something to remember me by". He took out of his pocket a case which contained a queer-looking little knife. He said, "I have made all my experiments with this knife. I value it exceedingly. I should like you to accept it as a gift from me." Haldane had recently had given to him a fine example of Sheffield cutlery in the way of a pocket-knife. He had it with him that evening, and he handed it to Ehrlich in exchange. He told me Ehrlich had been abominably treated by the German Government because he was a Jew, and that Ehrlich had only been given a public honour late in life.

I often dined with Lord Haldane, and I wrote to my mother:

> "If some of Haldane's enemies could hear him speak, they would no longer believe, as they do now, that he doted on his 'spiritual home'. He must have made a study of the European military world for many years before he had anything to do with the War Office. What he admires is the Germans' remarkable power of organization. Unlike everyone else I meet, he thinks poorly of their military leaders. He says that had they been better led, they would have won the war in the first ten weeks, and that, mathematically speaking, they were bound to win it. On the other hand he believes that France might hold

out for years fighting a kind of guerrilla warfare."

Looking back, as I often do to those four years, I remember how my brother's prophecies constantly came true. I was once present when Sir John Simon asked Hilaire what he thought ought to be done in Gallipoli. "If, as I am told," he answered, "we cannot get emplacements for big guns, we ought to evacuate the place at once; to-morrow, even to-night, if it could be managed." Someone exclaimed, "We cannot do that." My brother observed, "If it is not done now, it will have to be done later."

All sorts of strange stories were current—stranger stories than those told in the war of 1939-1945.

I learned it had been agreed that an easy way to raise money would be to put a tax on plate-glass. Then Sir Percy Scott informed the Government that the guns he had just installed would, when fired, break every window within a certain radius.

I dined one evening with a Frenchman I had known since my childhood. He spoke perfect English, and used to go backwards and forwards between Paris and London. He told me that, as regards the German high-water mark, it had been reached about six weeks before in Russia. He had heard secretly that good offers of peace had been made to France, offering her everything she wanted. And, as he observed, "These offers would not have been countenanced by the German General Staff had they thought they were still on the up-grade".

A dear friend of my girlhood married a German and lived in Berlin. She wrote frequently to her family, the letters being sent open through Switzerland. Her handwriting was very bad, and in one of the letters, which was duly passed by the German

Censor, she said that every house in the Park Lane of Berlin had been put up for sale, and that even the very wealthy found it difficult to get money on which to live even "parsimoniously".

One of my French relations, who spoke German fluently, was given the job of cross-examining German prisoners. He told me during that autumn that it was strange to see what an extraordinary change had come over both the German officers and men. So true was this that it was as if they belonged to another planet.

At that time my most interesting talks were with my brother. He was indignant concerning the attacks then being made on the Foreign Office. He said that what really mattered in war was blood and iron. There was great criticism of the Foreign Office over the course of events in the Balkan countries. Hilaire pointed out that this was not because of any mistake in British diplomacy, but because of what had happened at the Dardanelles. The neutrals had believed the Allies were certain to defeat the Turks on the Gallipoli Peninsula; and as this did not happen, the neutrals were disagreeably impressed, not so much as to the might of Germany, but as to the weakness of the Allies. My brother considered Edward Grey more able than did many people. In Hilaire's view everything that could have been done before the outbreak of war had been done by Grey. He had, however, been well seconded by the astute Delcassé and by the Italian Foreign Office, which was then believed on the Continent to possess the shrewdest diplomats in the world.

My brother and I were seldom asked to the same country-house parties; but in the December of 1915 I spent a week with Lady Jekyll, a dear and kind friend. Among my fellow-guests were Haldane, Lady Horner, and my brother. The most striking

thing I remember was Hilaire describing exactly what was going to happen in the Balkans. No one believed him, yet within a month everything he foretold did actually take place. As one of the people who had been there said to me when we met some time afterwards, "I feel now as if Hilaire had been speaking with the prescience of God". He foretold every war movement, including the retirement at Salonika. Everyone there, including myself, thought him wrong. After he had told us what he believed was about to happen, he remarked, "If neither the Italians nor the Russians come to the help of the Allies, what I have told you is mathematically certain to come to pass." When he was asked why he thought this, he replied it was because the Allies were outnumbered in a proportion of five to one.

It was always a pleasure to me to meet Lord Sanderson, and yet on the whole he was a pessimist. His love of the Foreign Office was such that a story went the rounds that when a member of the Cabinet happened to be passing down Whitehall in the early morning, he said to the man who was with him, "Do you see that old charwoman cleaning the steps of the Foreign Office?" And when the other said he did, the Minister exclaimed, "It is really Sanderson, you know. He never leaves the Foreign Office day or night." It was a curious fact that he spent so much of his time there that he was very seldom seen elsewhere.

I remember the first time I met Sir Edward Carson. He made a great impression upon me. That impression was the more vivid as it was just after he was supposed to have been a failure in the Coalition Government. It was said that he could not bear having only one vote among twenty-two, as he was used to leading and dominating any circle of men to which he belonged. As I came to see him fairly often, in a friend's house,

I realized he possessed a remarkable mind. As time went on, I was touched by the love his young wife had for him, and I was also struck by the great difference his second marriage had made, causing him to look years younger.

I have often heard it asserted that no human being ever meets another human being who says that he or she has seen a ghost. They always declare that this experience has befallen a friend or an acquaintance. This lent a special interest to the fact that Sir Edgar Sebright told me he had seen in broad daylight a man he knew was dead coming towards him in Waverley Station at Edinburgh. He was also once a tenant of a haunted house called Markel Sell. Being determined to see the ghost, if there was a ghost, he slept in what was called the haunted room.

There he saw nothing! but late in his tenancy, when he was sitting in a small study, he suddenly felt two hands fall heavily on his shoulders. It never occurred to him that the hands were not material hands. He tried to shake himself free from them, regarding what was happening to him as a stupid practical joke. He swore with anger and surprise, and then felt himself released. Looking round, he found there was no one there.

The house where this occurred had four lodges, and in one of the lodges lived two old women who, when the house was not let, acted as caretakers. After he had had this strange experience, he went and saw the elder of the two women and asked her whether she had ever seen or felt anything unusual in the house. She shook her head, and he went on, "Did you never see anything peculiar or strange while you lived in the house?" She looked round, as if afraid that her sister would hear her, and then she answered in a low voice, "Sometimes they come and lean on me."

Among my brother's friends was Aubrey Herbert, who had

an exceptional knowledge of the Near East. He once told me a strange story.

He was lunching with two generals whom he regarded as typically unimaginative soldiers. He had known them for a long time. One of them told him that when he had to take over a new piece of country at the Front, he always realized that although he had never been there before, he knew not only the lie of the land but what buildings he would see, what woods, and what hills.

Some time later Aubrey Herbert met a man who had been at the luncheon, and Herbert said, "That was a queer tale told us." The other exclaimed, "I can cap that story. All my life I have had a dream house of which I know every inch inside and out. After I married, I told my wife about my dream house, and while I was at the Front in April 1917, she wrote to me, 'Some people where I was staying the other day, took me over to a place which I feel convinced is your dream house. In fact I feel so sure of it that I send you a photograph of the house.'" The General went on, "I at once knew the place for my dream house."

V

I remember walking to 10 Downing Street in a fearful blizzard of snow and sleet. I had been asked to dine at eight-fifteen; I got there at a quarter to nine, thinking they would be half-way through dinner, but they had not gone into the dining-room, as some of their guests were still missing.

That evening I had an interesting talk with a man who was at Scotland Yard. He told me that most novelists, as well as the general public, seem to think that Scotland Yard investigates all the serious crimes which take place in England. He said that no one from there ever leaves London, excepting when specially asked to do so. "And then," he went on, "every impediment is put in his way by the local police." At that time many people took a considerable interest in what was called "The Brides in the Bath Mystery", although there was very little mystery about it, and this gentleman told me Smith had probably murdered many more women than was known. Smith's outstanding trait was a passionate love of money. Each time he claimed the insurance on the unfortunate women he had murdered, he added, as a postscript to his letter, "I presume you will allow the usual commission for the introduction of the business?"

My informant went on to say that in his opinion a considerable number of people, more women than men, poison relations they have insured. He added that, in almost every instance, the insurance company take no action, and he told me the following story. A well-to-do widow, living in a prosperous London suburb, had two stepsons. The eldest, a boy of fourteen, died, and she collected a large sum in insurance. A

year later her other stepson died; he also had been heavily insured. An official of the insurance company went to see her, and told her that, if she pressed the claim, the Home Office would be asked to permit the body of her elder stepson to be exhumed. She sank into a chair exclaiming, "I feel very ill; this kind of discussion is most distressing to me," and she became so pale, the man thought she was about to faint. However, she pulled herself together, and quickly added, "I will not press the claim".

From every point of view, 10 Downing Street was then the most interesting house in London. This was in a measure owing to the remarkable personality of the very young daughter of the house. As I have said before, Elizabeth Asquith was the cleverest and most cultivated girl I have ever known. But, as I wrote at the time:

> "This has the disadvantage of making her unlike other girls. In fact she is more like a mature woman than a girl of eighteen, as she is a queer mixture of her mother's brilliance and her father's solid intellect. Some people said she talked far too much, but every word she uttered was worth hearing."

I well remember her telling me, early in 1915, something which showed Mr. Asquith's prescience. Her father then believed the new German policy of torpedoing neutrals would inevitably end by bringing America into the European War.

I told my mother what I never heard mentioned, still less published: that Mrs. Asquith set an example in war economy as to food. Indeed, 10 Downing Street as to that was a striking contrast to what was found in other Ministers' houses.

In the April of 1916, a chance meeting caused for a long

time a most beneficial difference to our lives. Calling on a friend, I met an American international lawyer named Charles Burr. We made friends, and walked away from the house together. He then told me he was doing a great deal of business with Russia. He went on to speak with something like hatred of the public departments with which this business brought him in contact. Thus he told me with grim pleasure of what he called a certain line of goods which had been offered to the British Government for forty thousand pounds. The offer was refused. A little later the Government urgently required these goods; in the interval their price in the world market had risen to nine times forty thousand pounds, and this had to be paid. He was extremely frank, and gave me the details of every case he quoted. He observed that he was looking out for an Englishman to help him with his work, as he found his interviews at the Government departments with which he had to work very trying and difficult. I asked him to come into my house, and tentatively put forward a suggestion that my husband might be the sort of man whom he wished to find.

That night I waited up till the return of my husband from *The Times*. He was overworking, so I asked him to consider taking, as a temporary war job, easier work with Mr. Burr.

The two men met, and got on well; so for a time my husband left *The Times* and worked with Mr. Burr. Then came the Russian Revolution, and Mr. Burr's vast business interests in Europe came to an abrupt end, and so, naturally, did my husband's connection with him. *The Times* had missed F. S. A. Lowndes more than he had supposed they would do, for he was singularly modest. He returned to far pleasanter work than he had done previously, and with a larger salary. My income had been much affected, and at times I was exceedingly anxious, wondering if it would ever come back. We had

always lived extremely simply, so it was impossible to cut down our expenses. But my eager interest in public affairs filled my mind, and made me forget my troubles.

I wrote to my mother:

> "I've just had a long talk with Colonel Berthier (I suppose a descendant of Napoleon's Marshal). He has come over to represent Joffre at the War Office, and I asked him if the French losses were as heavy as they were said to be. This was really apropos of Verdun. He replied sadly, 'Our losses are indeed heavy; but we have reason to think the German losses are four times as large'. He spoke warmly of the kindness and courtesy shown him in London. He told me the War Office do not seem to realize the importance of numbers in war. Numbers are what all military men on the Continent, both in Germany and in France, believe to be the crucial question. He is also struck by the fact that with certain outstanding exceptions—he admitted they were outstanding—the brilliant books written on warfare both in France and Germany since 1870 are scarcely known in England, apart from a certain rare type of scientific soldier. He observed that Hilaire's insistence on numbers in *Land and Water* is regarded as an idiosyncrasy on his part, and bores his readers. Colonel Berthier lately read a British history of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, and noted with astonishment that the subject of the numbers of soldiers taking part in each battle was not once mentioned."

There was a great deal of private entertaining in London

during the first World War, also many country-house parties. I recall one week-end party where one of the guests was the then Editor of *The Times*. On the first evening it was suggested we should all write down what each would consider the ideal Cabinet. The editor of *The Times* said he would make Milner Prime Minister, and put Hardinge at the Foreign Office. I asked him what he would do with Lloyd George. He replied that he would order him to run up and down the country making speeches, as that was all he was fit for.

There was a great deal of discussion concerning Winston Churchill, who was not then in office. The whole company, which included some noted men and women, agreed that Churchill carried far bigger guns than any of the men then in the Cabinet. But, as was always the case when he was being discussed, he was described as "dangerous". One of the guests told how he had had reason to go into a room at the War Office, where he found, to his boundless astonishment, Churchill hobnobbing with Lord Kitchener, though when they were in the Cabinet together Kitchener was regarded as Churchill's deadliest enemy.

I am sometimes asked what has been the most interesting hour of my life—a foolish question which I think few people could answer. Yet I can say with truth that the most interesting afternoon of my life was when I heard a distinguished Belgian lawyer who had arranged for the defence of Nurse Cavell give his version of the story.

We were a small party. The lawyer, whose name was de Leval, had been brought by a Belgian lady, and there were no other men present. He told his story mostly in English, though now and again he broke into French. He described how impossible it had been for the Belgians to obtain a clear account of what had actually happened at the trial of Nurse

Cavell. He said again and again, with deep emotion, that on the day she was condemned to death, he had been assured, as had been also Brand Whitlock, the American Minister, that nothing had been decided, and that there had been no verdict given. He (de Leval) believed this to be true, but in the evening two English nurses came to see him and said, "Miss Cavell has been condemned to death. She will be shot at two o'clock to-morrow morning." He did not believe them; still he was impressed by what they said, and telephoned to the Belgian Headquarters of the German Foreign Office. As there was no one there, he went off to see the American Minister, Brand Whitlock, who was ill. Whitlock at once got up, dressed, and said that something must be done at once. Then the Belgian lawyer went off to see the Spanish Ambassador, the Marquis de Villalobar, and together the three of them went to the German Headquarters and asked to see the German Minister. He was obviously annoyed, and said in French, "You come and disturb me because you've heard some cock-and-bull story concerning that tiresome Englishwoman. Please believe me when I say that no execution will take place, for the good reason that no verdict has been given. I promise you to go thoroughly into the question to-morrow morning." The Belgian exclaimed, "That won't do! My information is that she will be shot to-morrow morning. Will you please communicate with von Bissing?"

And then the Belgian lawyer broke off, and told us that even now he could not make up his mind whether the German Minister was telling the truth or lying. What is certainly true is that he had nothing to do with the military side of the tragic affair.

As I listened to this account of all that had happened, I came to the conclusion that probably the German Minister was

aware the British nurse had been condemned to death, but did not believe her execution would really take place. Among other things de Leval told us was that the German Minister felt he could not disturb von Bissing, who was not even in Brussels, but at some country house near by. To that Villalobar exclaimed, "You need not disturb von Bissing! You can telephone direct to the prison."

"So I can," said the other, obviously relieved, and he went off to telephone. After a while he returned, and said gravely, "Your information was correct. Miss Cavell has been condemned to death, and now I am going off to see what can be done." He asked them to come back in two hours. They (de Leval and Villalobar) did so, and the German exclaimed, "I'm very sorry, gentlemen! But the execution will have to take place. I have seen the military authorities; they have weighed the matter very carefully, and there is nothing to be done. As to the suggestion of an appeal to the German Emperor, von Bissing refuses to transmit it. He is within his rights as to this refusal."

Then a curious thing happened.

Villalobar, who was a cripple, and who, though backed up by the American Embassy, had not shown any very great excitement, suddenly rushed up to the German, exclaiming, "I must speak to you in private!" took him by the arm, and dragged him into another room. De Leval overheard him saying terrible things, and threatening him with awful consequences if the nurse was executed. Among other things he said was, "The British have a lot of German women and children in England. Are you not afraid the British will take reprisals?"

Maître de Leval gave us a pathetic account of what happened the next morning. The British nurse was not shot at

two o'clock, but at seven o'clock, and she was allowed to see an English clergyman. But, at the actual execution, there was only present a German clergyman, and the firing-party who shot her.

We asked the Belgian lawyer if the story of her having been shot in the head by a German officer was true. He told us he did not believe that story, as the German clergyman who had been present, and whom he had seen just afterwards, assured him she had been killed by the first volley. On the other hand he added that what struck him as suspicious was that no one connected with the American Embassy, or anyone connected with the poor woman's nursing institution, was allowed to see the body.

He added that he had been told Nurse Cavell was perfectly calm, and died bravely. He showed us a facsimile of what she wrote just before she was shot. The original piece of paper was sent to her mother.

To the best of my recollection this document was not published in the official report. It only occupied half a sheet of notepaper, and is curiously pathetic in wording. None of us liked to ask if we could take a copy, but I think I remember the exact words, and that they ran as follows:

"Arrested." Then came a date.
"Tried." Then came a date.
"Condemned." Then came a date.
"Shot at seven in the morning of the 12th of October 1915."
"With love."

Then followed her initials.

De Leval said that if she had remained silent at the trial,

she would not have been condemned to death, and if he had seen her he would have told her to say nothing. He felt deeply the fact that she was not allowed to consult a proper legal authority. He said one curious and terrible thing. This was, "I was anxious to know whether she had been tortured to extract from her the statements she made against herself. I was relieved when the English clergyman told me she had admitted having made those statements freely and of her own accord."

I thought it a singular fact that her lawyer never saw Nurse Cavell alone after her arrest.

One person present asked him what was the truth as to the anger of the German Emperor after the execution. He said it was rumoured in Brussels that the principal people concerned in the matter had been sent for to Berlin, and severely censured by the Emperor.

He then gave us a most strange account of what happened after Nurse Cavell's execution. A full report had been drawn up by de Leval, after he had taken refuge in the American Embassy. His report was smuggled out of Belgium, and finally reached Mr. Page, the American Ambassador in London. He, Mr. Page, handed it to the British Foreign Office.

The moment it was published in England, the rage of the German authorities in Brussels knew no bounds. They wrote to Mr. Brand Whitlock, and said that de Leval had broken his word, and that he must at once be taken to Germany and imprisoned there. That he was a Belgian subject, and had nothing to do with the American Embassy. Whitlock replied that the report had only incidentally to do with de Leval. Then de Leval read to us what Mr. Whitlock had written. It ran something like this:

"You yourselves arranged that de Leval should

> be our legal adviser, and you have treated more than two hundred cases with him. He has the standing, at your own request, of an American citizen. His permits and passes were signed as a member of our Embassy by von der Goltz, as well as by von Bissing. I therefore refuse to give him up."

It was finally settled that de Leval, his wife, and household, should be allowed to leave Belgium and come to England via Holland.

What impressed me during the hour that we listened to his account of all that happened, was that he showed no violent animosity toward the Germans, even though he seemed to believe them capable of any deed of darkness.

I was interested in meeting Madame de Leval, and I asked her, as I always did any foreigner, whether she knew anything of the internal state of Germany. She answered, "Yes, I do, for I saw yesterday a Dutch friend just back from Cologne. He said the city is in a state of siege, with a gun at every corner." She added, "A Dutchman was kept twelve hours in the railway station, and the people he had to see on business were brought to him there."

I am always surprised at the untrue way in which history is written. On the plinth of Nurse Cavell's statue in London are the words which she said just before she was shot. These are, "Patriotism is not enough; I must have no hatred or bitterness for anyone". It was understood at the time, and I suppose is still believed, that when she spoke those noble words she was thinking of the Germans who were about to shoot her. When she uttered them I believe she was thinking of the girls in her nursing-home, whose foolish talk had betrayed her. It was known in Brussels that she was not liked by them, for she was

a stern disciplinarian, and had done all in her power, with but little success, to manage her nursing-home on strictly English lines.

VI

The immense popularity of Lord Kitchener was a matter of concern to certain members of the Government, and I knew the wife of a Cabinet Minister who expressed joy when she heard that he was going to Russia. Some people actually thought that if the war began going badly for England, Kitchener might become a kind of dictator. The Cabinet were undoubtedly afraid of the kind of passionate admiration many men and women felt for him.

Lady Battersea lent us a charming chalet at Overstrand near Cromer. The chalet was on the edge of her beautiful gardens and there we spent a month in the summer of 1916. There was a telephone in the house, and I had a friend who rang me up from London almost every evening. One night she told me Kitchener had been drowned. This tragic news made a greater sensation than any other one thing I can remember. It was believed by the then Government that he, and he alone, could keep Russia in the war. Considerable mystery had surrounded his departure. My husband told me later it had been an absolute secret. I was told the following story.

On the evening he was starting for Russia, when he got to the station from which he was to go to the Scotch port where a cruiser was waiting for him, Kitchener found Mr. O'Beirne of the Foreign Office, who was to accompany him. O'Beirne went up to him and exclaimed, "I don't know what to do! The man who should have brought my dispatches has not arrived." Kitchener said sharply, "You ought to have gone and fetched them yourself," and he added, "I'm not going to wait for anybody. I always start to time." So when the train started, and

they had not arrived, Mr. O'Beirne was left behind. A few minutes later the messenger arrived with the dispatches, and poor O'Beirne, who was far from well off, paid for a special train and caught up with the Kitchener party at Crewe.

Had O'Beirne not engaged the special train Kitchener would have had to wait till the next day. As it was, Jellicoe sent a message saying he hoped they would wait till the great storm then raging had abated, but Kitchener exclaimed, "I'm not afraid of a storm!" and insisted on sailing.

There was, however, a question as to which way the cruiser should go, and finally it was decided they should steam through a stretch of sea which it was believed had not been mined.

I heard later discussed at great length the question as to what had really happened, and from all I heard, I am convinced there was an internal explosion in the ship. A relation of Kitchener declared in my presence that the Germans had been making endless attempts "to get Kitchener"; that he was well aware of this fact, and never had it out of his mind. On one occasion he would have been on a hospital ship which was torpedoed, and he had not sailed on her owing to the fact that at the last moment he had been ordered, to his indignation, to wait to confer with a number of French staff officers. I also heard that Kitchener was actually in the *Sussex* when she was torpedoed. He followed the advice of the captain, who told him to stick to the ship.

It was at first said that everyone on board the *Hampshire* had been drowned, but later that several members of the crew were saved. An extraordinary mystery was made of everything concerned with the disaster. It was believed that a bomb had been placed in the hold. Many weeks later a woman told me, quite seriously, that the person who had arranged for the bomb

to be put there was Mrs. Asquith. So violent was the prejudice felt against her at that time.

It was believed by a good many people that Kitchener had not been drowned; that he had been taken prisoner by the German man-o'-war which had sunk the ship on which he was going to Russia, and he was being held a captive in Germany. I told this story to an officer and he said that he, too, had heard it and thought it possible that a number of men had been saved, but he scouted the notion that Kitchener was among them. It was certainly true that, though there were several sailors saved —it was said at the time there were nine—these men were not allowed to be seen by any of the relations of the men who had gone down in the *Hampshire*. The wireless messages which must have been exchanged between the *Hampshire* and the shore before the sinking of the ship were never published, though they were called for in the House of Commons.

There was undoubtedly some mystery concerning the sinking of this cruiser, and now no one is likely to learn what the solution was. I remember hearing that Kitchener's sister was convinced he had not been drowned, and she believed him to be a prisoner. It was widely believed that had Kitchener reached Russia, the Revolution might not have taken place.

I only once met Kitchener. It was at the house of Mrs. Coombe Tennant, just after his return from his victorious Egyptian campaign. I recall my pleasure when I was introduced to him, for I was aware that after he had passed out from Woolwich, but before he had received his commission, he had joined the Armée de la Loire, and had served with the French Army for some time.

I think it is a pity that British officers never wear uniform if they can possibly help doing so. It seems to me the greater mistake, because men of the non-commissioned class are

constantly in uniform. Thus I remember, some time during the first World War, going into an omnibus where the conductor was in uniform, and among the passengers, in a badly cut dark suit, was a famous soldier who had won the Victoria Cross. Whatever may be the habit now, when I was young no one in the French Army was ever seen out of uniform.

On a visit to my mother at Slindon, I had a talk with a relation of Lord French, who told us that when he, Lord French, took over the British Command, the arrangements for dealing with a possible German invasion were in the wildest confusion. The most interesting fact I was told was that instead of allowing the Germans to land and get six miles inland—which I know to have been the original scheme—they were to be stopped on the beaches. She added, "A landing is still expected; a fortnight ago it was regarded as imminent".

I met Sir William Garstin. He had been in Hyde Park, and heard a Salvation Army officer go up to a soldier and say, "You only wear King George's livery. I wear the livery of a greater King, and I fight for the Kingdom of Heaven." "Well, mate," replied the soldier, "all I can say is—you are a mighty long way from your barracks."

In the May of 1916, I went to a reception at the Russian Embassy given in honour of the members of the Duma. I wrote:

> "Everybody remarked how strange it was to be once more at a large evening party. There were about three hundred people present. I had a most interesting talk with Mr. Steed, the foreign editor of *The Times*. He had seen all the French generals and talked with them. He says Pétain does not believe in the wisdom of a push this summer, as he does not

think it would lead to a decision. But Joffre and Castelnau disagree, and feel certain a great offensive in August would succeed. He says, however, that there is a general consensus of opinion among all the General Staffs that if it were possible to arrange it, an offensive from Salonika would have the best chance of breaking the back of the war.

"I also had a talk with Sir Mark Sykes, who possesses a singularly attractive personality. He strikes me as one of the cleverest Englishmen with whom I am acquainted, though our acquaintance is very slight. He said that over a year ago he had prophesied that about this time the Germans would make a tremendous effort on the West, and after it, whether it succeeded or whether it failed, start peace negotiations. I said to him, 'If you are such a good prophet, please tell me when you think the war will end'. He looked very grave as he answered, 'I think it may end by Christmas; in any case I do not think your boy, if he is only eighteen, will be in the war'.

"As I went downstairs, Lord Haldane asked me how I was going home. I said I proposed to walk, or go by omnibus. He said he would take me home as he had hired a brougham.

"We waited in the hall for half an hour; it amused me to see the people pass by to their cars as their names were shouted out. The man I saw with the most interest was Sir William Robertson. He looked more like a French than an English general, and there is a look of rugged power in his face. I was also interested to see Lord Charles Beresford. Forgetting his new title, he gave his old one.

"It is increasingly clear to me that so far Russia has been the great disappointment of this war, both to France and to England. At the beginning of the struggle Russia had a fairly good army. But that army has gradually been beaten up, and she has not had the pluck, the energy, or the honesty, to build up a new army. Still, Russians are splendid fighters and, in spite of this delay, if I were a German I should be far more frightened of Russia than of either England or France. It is Russia who in time may overwhelm and finish Germany, and give her, as it were, the *coup de grâce*."

A few days later:

"Last night there dined with me an American lady who had come over here to look at our prisons. She said that she hoped America would not come into the war, as she thought America could on the whole help the Allies more by keeping out. She told me an odd fact, namely, that when Brand Whitlock had been asked to take up a diplomatic appointment he said he would only do so if he were given a very quiet post. Mr. Wilson, who is a great friend of Whitlock, said to him, 'Brussels just fills the bill'.

"I have heard an extraordinary account of how the Allies are catching the German submarines by the combined action of aeroplanes and small destroyers. In one day last week they caught four near the mouth of the Thames. From a certain distance in the sky an aeroplane can see a submarine exactly as one can see a black pill at the bottom of a

glassful of water. The little destroyers then all hurry up, and form a kind of star round the doomed submarine. When it rises near enough to the surface they torpedo it."

I went to a political party where there was a great deal of discussion as to whether Winston Churchill would ever come back into public life. Opinion was divided, but on the whole I gathered the impression that the more intelligent people present felt convinced he would. To me it was a singular fact that while Churchill's remarkable gifts were recognized, the then Cabinet had a strong prejudice against him. For one thing they were annoyed because he was writing for the press. I took his part, and boldly observed that the people who criticized him were very well off, and had no idea what it was like to be really short of money. "Churchill is a born writer. In my view he would write even if he were a wealthy man."

Later in the month I met a British General who had been with the Russians since the beginning of the war. He said something which impressed me. This was that Germany would never become sated with war, until she was actually invaded. This was a remarkable prophecy, the more so as he was careful to say he spoke with no vindictive feeling. He further observed, "If no Occupation of Germany takes place, Germany will start another war in our own time". This General, by the way, was a most cautious man. To me his most interesting remarks concerned the Czar, whom he had seen constantly during his stay in Russia. He had a great respect for Nicholas II as a man.

I met the wife of a British officer who had been taken prisoner. Before the war he had been one of the German Emperor's English friends. He spoke German perfectly, and

had lived in Berlin. He was severely wounded and his men, taking part in the Great Retreat, had left him in a barn. There the Germans found him. He had been given a high German decoration before the war, and he much regretted he was not wearing it at the time he was taken prisoner. But a German friend told me later that, had he worn it then, he would certainly have been shot as a spy, as his captors would not have believed his story. However, when going through a station on his way to captivity he bribed a porter to telegraph to some German friends, and when the train stopped at the town where they lived, they were there to meet him, and took steps to such good effect that he was later much better treated.

I sometimes heard a discussion as to the relationship between the French and the British. Those relations were for the most part bad. For one thing the French Cabinet behaved very foolishly in lamenting their shortage of men. They did this in the hope that it would stimulate England's efforts. In fact Mr. Asquith told me that within a very short time the last French reserves would be used up. These false statements were widely believed, and not only in London, for there was a great deal of leakage from England to Germany. On one occasion the informant told his German friends that France would be in no position to make an early offensive. All at once the French did make an offensive, and to their astonishment had hardly any casualties. When I told this to someone in touch with the Government, she asked me indignantly why I thought news from England reached Germany. To her surprise I answered that as neutrals were always going backwards and forwards from Berlin to London, it would be strange indeed if no news came through. But to my indignation, "Intelligence", as they were called, were very down on the journalists who went to and from Germany, and gave too little thought to the high-

placed neutral officials and well-known foreigners who travelled all over Europe.

To me an outstanding fact during the 1914-1918 War was that, apart from soldiers of all ranks, no one in England thought another European war within the bounds of possibility.

A certain number of spy stories were current in England and Scotland. The one which seemed to me the most credible was told me by the wife of a landowner who lived near Peebles. She was sitting alone at dinner, her husband being away, when her servant told her that a party of people had asked to see her. He said they were stranded motorists. Four people—two men and two women—came in. The lady realized they were foreigners, though they spoke good English. The chief of the party asked if he might telephone to a friend in Edinburgh, who would send out another car. Their hostess, who took them for Americans, gave them dinner. While they were eating, a woman who had not spoken before suddenly observed, "I think you are the daughter of the General commanding in South Africa". She said that she was. The woman then asked, "Do you know whether troops are coming from South Africa to join in this war?" She said she had no idea, and asked, "Who told you my maiden name?" The other murmured someone had told her so in the village. After they had finished dinner they all began saying goodbye, and their hostess exclaimed, "But you've forgotten to telephone!" The man seemed taken aback, and said he no longer wished to telephone, and that the party would walk down to the village and find their car. They went off, and a few moments later the chauffeur came in and said he had found the car with lights on, nothing being wrong with it at all. She was convinced that one of the men was the German officer who called himself Lody, and who was subsequently caught, put in the Tower and shot.

Her view that he might have been Lody was partly confirmed, for at his trial he admitted he had been to Peebles.

One of the absurd stories which were widely believed was that Haldane had gone on a secret mission to Berlin, and had brought back with him peace proposals from the Kaiser. I was told this as a fact by a well-known woman, who added, however, that Mr. Asquith wished to accept these peace proposals, but had been stopped from doing so by Lloyd George! As she told me this tale I found it difficult to believe she was serious, but she was indignant at my doubt. I heard much discussion as to who were going to form the new Cabinet. Everyone would have liked Lord Robert Cecil to have had the Foreign Office, but he was said to have refused it.

One of the women present on this occasion had just had an hour's talk with a man back from Russia. He had actually been at the Duma meeting, and he said the account which was published in England was false. He further said that the unfortunate Czarina was regarded in Russia as Marie Antoinette had been regarded in France just before the Revolution.

A sensation of that dreary winter was Roger Casement's landing in Ireland. The British Government had been told of this possibility by one of their best secret agents. I received a curious account of Roger Casement from J. H. Morgan, who had the remarkable distinction of having been at the same time a General in the British Army and a King's Counsel. He was one of Casement's Counsel.

> "Casement is in the Tower, and General Morgan had been allowed to go and see him. Casement spoke with bitterness of the German Emperor, who he declared has treated him with treacherous

ingratitude. The truth seems to be that news had reached England that the German Government had become very tired of Casement, and deliberately arranged to get rid of him. Although he is a naturalized German subject there seems to be no doubt that he can be tried as a traitor in England. In my view he should be sent to Broadmoor Lunatic Asylum. I had a talk with a woman who had a great regard for Casement because of his work in the Congo. I was at a dinner party where this lady burst into tears, and had to leave the table, so deeply was she angered by a remark made about Casement by one of her fellow guests."

Before his execution Casement became a Catholic, and I asked his counsel to what he attributed this sudden decision on Casement's part. He said he thought it was partially owing to the fact that Casement's mother had been a Catholic. Although she had died when he was only a month old, she had played a great part in his imagination during the whole of his life.

Another extraordinary story was told me by a man next whom I had sat at dinner. It concerned the blowing-up of a warship. The youngest sailor on board, who was a boy of fifteen, appeared every night to his mother in a dream during the week that followed the explosion. Each time he said to her, "X blew up the ship". The woman was so impressed by these dreams that she wrote to the Admiralty. Enquiries were made, and it was discovered that X had left the ship half an hour before the explosion. After certain further investigations the man was court-martialed and subsequently shot. My informant said he had heard this strange and dramatic story from the man who had conducted the enquiry. I reminded him that there was

at least one official record of a murderer having been discovered through a dream. This was the notorious "Murder in the Red Barn". A girl vanished. In due course her spirit appeared to her mother, telling her where her body was to be found, and who had killed her.

One day during the winter the telephone bell rang and I heard the voice of S. S. McClure, the famous American editor, writer and publisher. He had been the first American editor to take any of my short stories, and I had a kind feeling for him. His voice sounded agitated, and he said he would like to see me. When he came into my sitting-room, he said that he was "on the run" and the British police were looking for him, as he had made an illegal entry into the country. A wealthy American woman had seized on the notion that she could bring about peace if the right kind of Americans could contact the right kind of Germans. She therefore paid for a ship to take those she regarded as the "right kind of Americans" to Holland. She christened it "The Peace Ship" and the party was headed by Henry Ford. S. S. McClure managed to get a passage. He was bored with the peace talk, however, and with his usual shrewdness he did not believe it would come to anything, and he was passionately anxious to come to England. But he had been refused a *visa*. However, he did manage to land in this country. Under a false name he went to a small hotel where he had stayed before, and where they willingly put him up. He then found that he had been at once tracked down by Scotland Yard, and was being followed wherever he went. He was obviously afraid he was about to be arrested and put in prison, and as he had never been on good terms with Washington, he did not expect any help from the American Embassy.

I asked him to allow me to telephone to Basil Thomson at Scotland Yard, and tell him the truth. I said I knew that

gentleman slightly (he had helped me with *Good Old Anna* in 1915). Rather against his judgment, Mr. McClure consented to my getting in touch with Scotland Yard. I went down there, and gave a true dispassionate account of S. S. McClure to Basil Thomson, and as a result he was allowed to stay on in London for a time.

At that time S. S. McClure was a great figure in American journalism, and that he should have been refused a *visa* had been, in my view, an act of folly, the more so as his whole heart was with the Allies. However, Henry Ford's absurdly named Peace Ship was regarded with great suspicion, and I told S. S. McClure frankly that his going on that ship was a foolish move on his part.

He had also declared it to be his intention to go to Germany, and, after having heard what the Germans had to say, to go on to Paris, and then finally to England. I considered then, and I still consider, the way he was treated was unfair, for after all he only wished to do what Colonel House did with great applause. Yet when I met Colonel House on two occasions, I felt he was far more likely to do unwitting mischief by these perambulations about Europe than was S. S. McClure. There was one great difference between these two men. Colonel House came as the personal representative of President Wilson, whereas McClure was a journalistic free-lance, with no official backing.

Enormous sums must have been earned by S. S. McClure, who was the originator of what can be called popular journalism throughout the world. Yet he never seemed to be easy as regards money, though many men who had been associated with him made fortunes.

I have missed many chances in my life, and one of them was that of becoming the London representative of *McClure's*

Magazine. He was a generous man, and I might then have started a literary connection with America which would have made a great difference, not only to my life, but to the lives of all those dear to me.

I went on hearing from Mr. McClure till the end of his life, and I owe him a great debt of gratitude, because it was through his having printed certain stories which had been published in England under the title of *Studies in Wives* that I came to have my work accepted in America.

VII

During that November I was asked to tea at the Deanery of St. Paul's, my elder daughter and I being close friends of Mrs. Inge and the Dean. In the historic house Kitty had made so delightful I met a number of French Protestants who had come to England to procure assistance for the Protestants in the invaded districts. I had sad talks with two of the ladies, Madame Mallet and Madame Cornelius De Witt, for the losses in their religious body had been exceptionally heavy.

A curious discussion followed concerning servants, and the difficulty of making them economize. The French chef of one English lady, when told there really must be less bacon eaten in the servants' hall, exclaimed, "C'est si triste de s'asseoir à table sans lard!"

After the Food Dictatorship had been offered to everybody to whom it could be offered—and refused, the Prime Minister went to a distinguished man who was exceedingly unsuitable from every point of view, as he had never had anything to do with business. He hesitated, and said he would speak about the matter to his wife. The Prime Minister said encouragingly: "You would get your peerage and your pension at once". The other answered: "But I am entitled to both of those in any case; it has nothing to do with this appointment", which was the fact. He wrote to his wife a long careful letter explaining everything, and asked her to telegraph an answer. No telegram came. He wired to her: "Please send me answer to very important letter posted yesterday", She replied, "Have not yet had your letter". He took this as an omen, and when the Prime Minister came to see him and asked, "Have you good news for

me? I hope your wife approves," he shook his head sadly and said, "No, the news is not good. I have to refuse the job."

I wrote:

> "The food situation is getting worse, and it is said there will be no food dictator; if one was appointed he would have to go about in a tank in which to take refuge from the fury of the populace!
>
> "The changes at the Admiralty—Jellicoe going there and Beatty commanding the Fleet—are not meeting with universal approval. One man who should know observed to me that it was like changing a very fine chess player for a very fine draughts player, Jellicoe being the former."

In my diary I see:

> "I heard to-day that Princess Henry of Battenberg had shown a friend a letter from the German Empress to Queen Alexandra. The Queen had written informing her that many English war widows were marrying again, and imploring her, as one Christian woman to another, to tell her if there were many English officers of whom news had not come through. The Empress replied in cryptic language, 'War widows should not be in too great a hurry. There will be many surprises at the end of the war.' When I told this to someone connected with the war prisoners, she said that it was quite true there had been such a letter, but that it meant nothing—as German royal personages were always writing in that sort of way, and are allowed to know very little.

Germany is 'run' by the Army Chiefs."

London was full of rumours concerning a big political crisis—Balfour, Curzon, Crewe, all said to be going to resign, while Lloyd George and Carson form a group apart.

> "A friend who is in the City world said that she had always disliked Lloyd George, and all she had heard of him, but she now thinks the Government are doing so badly that something must be done. I told her I had heard that if Bucharest falls, the British and the French Cabinets will fall with it.
>
> "I dined with Lord Haldane, and I told him of the rumours. He scouted them utterly, and said that if Lloyd George came in, he would not stay three weeks. I also told Lady Jekyll what I had heard. I thought she knew more than did my host, though she also denied that anything is likely to happen. She believes it to be a manufactured agitation—manufactured by the newspapers, not by the politicians."

On December the 1st, 1916, I wrote:

> "It is widely believed that Balfour will resign to-day. Rumour has it that he heads a party in the Cabinet who would consider peace proposals on the theory that Germany, once peace is declared, will crumble like a house of cards. It seems to be a fact that the interior state of Germany (civilian) could hardly be worse. All the neutral embassies, legations, and so on, are being fed from England—even bread

is sent to them."

The next day I noted:

> "Balfour resigned, but his resignation was not accepted. It is thought by many people that the Prime Minister will override the crisis. He said to a woman I know, 'I'm like an old cab-horse, and I mean to go on between the shafts to the end'."

It is strange to reflect that, during that month, peace appeared to be very near.

> "I hear that peace proposals have come via President Wilson, offering everything the West could dream of wanting, but giving nothing to Russia, and keeping the route to Baghdad open. Sir Hugh Bell said there was a party here who would accept these terms, as Russia has let the Allies down so badly over Roumania."

All through my life I have felt astonished at the ease with which a certain type of swindler can "get away with it". About this time I heard an extraordinary account of a super-swindler. The man was of Italian extraction, with a good deal of personal charm. He had gone to Constantinople and there married the daughter of a much esteemed but by no means wealthy British resident. The couple were popular in the British colony, and a prominent and kind-hearted member of it started the young man as an art dealer. He came to England, and soon built up a good business in works of art. One day he presented to a discount house a six months' bill for fifteen thousand pounds

signed by J. Pierpont Morgan. It was thought odd that such a man as Mr. Morgan should give a bill, but it was discovered on enquiry that he only made his payments twice a year, and the dealer explained that as he had very little capital, he had been compelled to ask for a bill. They still felt doubtful, however, and the bill was shown to Mr. Morgan's son, who at once said it was his father's signature. Therefore the bill was honoured, and subsequently other bills of the same kind, also apparently signed by Pierpont Morgan.

Meanwhile the young man had procured an introduction to a great landowner, and had persuaded him to hand over a number of his ancestral treasures for disposal to Pierpont Morgan. By a mere chance the landowner discovered the young dealer had never seen Mr. Morgan, and that the bills were forgeries. Not only had he forged the bills, but he had forged a letter from Mr. Morgan to himself, in which the writer had spoken of one of his sisters-in-law as "the expert of our family". Then again, by a mere chance, the collector learned that the treasures which he had believed to have been sold privately to Mr. Morgan, were about to be offered for sale in a London auction room.

The swindler then disappeared. A year later a Chicago millionaire said to a London friend, "I want you to meet a most delightful man, a French art expert". Again by an extraordinary chance, the Londoner had met the swindler, and at once recognized him. The so-called art expert had wormed himself into the affectionate confidence of certain noted American collectors.

World capitals during a great war are the happy hunting-ground of crooks, as everyone is too busy or too unhappy to make the kind of enquiries which are made in peace-time.

In the winter of 1916 the violent suspicion, indeed hatred,

felt for Lord Haldane reached its height, and on one occasion when I dined alone with him and his sister he gave me a curious account of how he was being persecuted. He and Lord Sandhurst were walking by Westminster Hospital one afternoon when a woman cried out to a soldier, "Look at the man who lost you your leg!"

I felt grieved that he mentioned this before his sister. I could see it distressed her acutely, and though he affected to make light of it, he undoubtedly felt the way he was being treated, and what to me was touching, Haldane was not only distressed, he was extremely bewildered as well. I was relieved to find he was convinced that Germany was nearly at the end of her tether. It was curious to hear the man who was considered to have so passionate a love of Germany speak as if he had a far less good opinion of the enemy as "stayers" than had most English people who knew Germany well.

There were, to my mind, some very blind spots in Haldane's remarkable character. As an example, I quote his attitude to spiritualism. He had been staying with the Oliver Lodges, and was astonished to find that Lodge was a spiritualist. I could see he was amazed to discover that I did not regard all spiritualists as fraudulent beings who, to quote his own words, "batten on the credulous".

He told me at great length of having met a well-known judge at a house-party many years before. The people round them were talking of spiritualism, and making fun of it. Haldane noticed the judge looked grave, and when they were alone, Haldane observed, "I take it you don't agree with the scoffers?" The other replied, "I certainly do not agree with them, for I myself saw two spirits while I was at Oxford." Haldane then told me what kind of spirits the judge believed he had seen, and how according to what is apparently known as

the "David Brewster test", he, the judge, convinced himself they were not figments of his imagination, but separate entities.

In due course the judge died, and, shortly after, Haldane was asked to a séance. The host enquired whether there was any spirit with whom he would like to communicate, and at once Haldane named the dead judge. The room was darkened, then a figure appeared, and addressing Haldane mentioned the fact that they had met. Haldane then said to the supposed spirit, "During your life on earth I understand you had no belief in spiritualism, and never had experiences of a kind which would lead you to believe in the return of the dead?" At once came the answer, "No; I never had any experiences of the kind". At that point Elizabeth Haldane broke in—she also had been to a séance. Spirit hands were supposed to have touched her, and she regarded the whole proceedings as grossly fraudulent.

To her surprise, and certainly to mine, Haldane went on to say that he thought there was something in spiritualism, but he did not think that those who manifest themselves are the souls of those they say they are. He was inclined to believe they are tricky, mischievous spirits of an intermediate type.

Considering his remarkable ability, it was curious Haldane should have allowed a book to be written about him of the nature of a vindication. My husband, who had a peculiar dislike for interfering in any way with other people's affairs, and between whom and Haldane there was little in common, was much disturbed when he heard of this book. He earnestly begged me to tell Elizabeth Haldane that it could only do her brother harm. I asked my husband, who I may truly say was an admirable letter-writer, to draft a letter to Elizabeth Haldane, which I sent. The letter had no effect, and there can be no doubt that the book in question, though written with the best intentions, did Haldane considerable harm.

I was told that the last time the German Emperor was in England staying at Buckingham Palace, he sent for Alfred de Rothschild. They walked up and down the terrace, and the Emperor, putting his arm round the other man's shoulders, kept exclaiming, "Grey is no good! Grey is no good to your people! Why do you not explain this to them, my dear Rothschild?"

When dining in the company of a distinguished American lawyer, I sat next to an official who had seen all the Zeppelins which had been brought down. When the first fell, he had been in the first car which reached the spot. I observed, "I suppose there was no truth in the rumour that a woman had been in the Zeppelin?" He replied, "I am sorry to say it was true. I myself saw what remained of her, her little legs and tiny shoes with high heels; there were also strands of her hair. She had evidently tried to jump out." He added, "Word came through from Germany that she was a woman well known in Berlin society. But I myself don't believe this; I think she was the wireless operator."

Long afterwards I was told she was a German lady who was in love with one of the officers on board the Zeppelin, and had persuaded him to allow her to accompany him.

I met a British officer who had had charge of a young U-boat commander for a little while. Before the war there had always been a good feeling between the German and the British Navy—in fact a better feeling than existed between the French and the British Navy. So this British officer made friends with his prisoner, who, according to him, was a pleasant, gentlemanly youth of twenty-two, who spoke perfect English. During the course of a talk they had together in March 1917, the German observed, "The war will be over in August and will be a 'draw', for we shall both by then be done in, and it will be a contest of wits round a table." The British officer

replied courteously, "I don't know about you, but I can assure you that England will not be done in by then." The other answered, "Oh yes you will, for by that time our U-boats will have reduced your country to starvation." He was taken to his place of internment in a first-class carriage, where he and the British officer were alone. As they stopped at various English railway stations, it was plain the German began to feel uneasy, as everything looked so prosperous and so usual.

One of the most vivid memories in my life is the bursting open of our front door—a very heavy door—when the Silvertown munition factory explosion took place. Although it happened many miles from Barton Street, it made such a frightful noise that I believed the explosion had been in Westminster.

A German diplomat who was constantly talked of during the war, but who is never mentioned now, was Count Bernstorff, Germany's Ambassador at Washington when the war broke out. I had met his nephew in the winter and spring of 1913-14, and in my view it was strangely plain that he had come over to obtain any kind of information likely to be useful in case war broke out between Germany and England. He asked me many questions concerning *The Times* office, and his questions showed a surprising knowledge of the staff, and of the way they worked. I was told afterwards that when he had heard I was coming, he had asked his hostess if he might sit next to me.

Even then America loomed very large in the German imagination. The German Foreign Office used to send to America about twenty-four hours ahead any good news which they thought was going to arrive. Their most successful effort of the kind was their foreseeing the fall of Warsaw. The least successful announced the taking of the Citadel of Verdun on a

certain date.

I was astonished to meet a young American diplomat who had been in Berlin, who declared that during three months he had not had a fresh egg or a drop of fresh milk, and he believed Germany would give up within three months. Conditions were then such that when a Princess of the Royal House expected a baby she went to have her *accouchement* in either Denmark or Sweden.

Among the funny stories told was that of a woman, the mother of the village idiot, a harmless young man of the "wanting" type, who said to the Rector's wife, "This war is bringing some of us luck!" The lady looked surprised, and the other went on, "Even my Jimmy here has got a job." The rector's wife turned to Jimmy, and said kindly, "Have you really got a job? How nice to feel that you, too, are helping your country. What is your job?" Jimmy, smiling broadly, replied, "Yes, ma'am, I'm getting one and sixpence a week for sleeping with a young woman as is afraid of Zepps." Again a well-known man exclaimed he would like to see a certain member of the Cabinet in hell; his wife replied quickly, "I should like to see him in heaven." Her husband asked, "Why, my dear?" "Because in heaven there is no drink, and all the women are virtuous."

Philippe Millet paid us a visit about this time. I wrote:

> "He is quite cheerful and confident, and believes the war may be over within the year. He was most indignant at my suggestion that the French had come to their last reserves. I told him I had heard this twice in the last ten days or so, both times from people connected with the British Government. He declares it to be utterly false."

I went on:

> "I asked him what he thought of the internal state of Germany, and what he knew. He said the most significant thing, in his opinion, and it was a thing that he knew as apart from *on dits* and rumours, was the fact that whereas the German prisoners in France during the first year of the War received masses of parcels and other comforts from Germany, they now receive practically none. He said that in place of the parcels there came pathetic letters saying: 'We cannot send you a parcel this week, as we are so short ourselves'. He spoke with great feeling of this, and seemed sorry for the unfortunate people who could not send the parcels, for, as he shrewdly observed, the prisoners lack for nothing; they are extremely well fed."

I had a most interesting account of a woman spy, given me by one of the judges who tried her. She was, like most spies, a neutral, in fact born Danish, and naturalized Swedish. She wrote rather stupid letters, but in between the lines added the real information in invisible ink. Not a single letter of hers reached her base. She received a pound a day, and was a quiet, meek-looking little woman of about forty. She lived in boarding-houses, and was instructed to go about a great deal on the Tube and Underground, to hear what people were saying. The most outstanding point about the instructions given to her was the constant insistence on her finding out what sections of the British people were longing for peace. This query appeared in every letter addressed to her.

I heard another curious story. An English lady was staying

with Hungarian friends when the war broke out, and in some mysterious way escaped detection, or at any rate molestation, till a fortnight after, when she was sent home. Her friends were acquainted with Bethmann Hollweg, and it was arranged that she should pass through Berlin, and have a talk with him. She had only kindly feelings towards the Germans.

Bethmann Hollweg gave her a number of letters addressed to English friends, and asked her to deliver them personally to the people in question. In spite of the fact that everyone was carefully searched on landing in England, she managed to get these letters through. As she knew nothing of London, and was ignorant of ordinary public affairs, she did not know how to get at the people in question, so she wrote to an old acquaintance, a distinguished Anglo-Indian, telling him the circumstances, and asking for the addresses! He, of course, at once went to see her, and found with great amusement and interest that the letters were addressed to various members of the Union of Democratic Control.

Hugh Walpole, whom I had known from his earliest days as a writer, was rejected for the Army, and was not allowed to go to Belgium as a correspondent. So he went to Russia, which he had always wanted to visit, and served in Galicia with the Russian Red Cross. But he later became a King's Messenger, and he must have had remarkable prescience, for I wrote on December the 15th, 1916:

> "I dined with Hugh Walpole, who is just back from Russia. He gave me an extraordinary account of the situation there. He is convinced Rasputin will be assassinated, and he predicts a Revolution. Although there is plenty of food, he says the distribution of it is extremely ill done. In Petrograd,

the sort of dinner for which one now pays half-a-crown in Soho, costs twenty-three shillings, and the sort of reach-me-down suit which here would cost four pounds, costs there thirty-five pounds."

Extremely sad—indeed fearful—was the position at the outbreak of war of English girls who were engaged to German officers. One such girl was sent back via Holland to England. To her bitter sorrow she was not allowed to marry her lover. As was natural she was pro-German, and one of the things she said was of great interest to me. This was that not a single soul in Germany had believed England would be in the war. She was in Berlin at the time, and said the news, when it became known, stunned everyone, and this strange condition even went on for two days.

An odd reason given to me for a probable German landing was that it would galvanize the German civilian population, and make them once more believe in victory. I never thought such an attempt would be made. This for the reason that as long as the British Navy endured, it could only take place on a very small scale, and on some desolate part of the coast.

The officer in command of the East Coast gave a friend of mine an exact picture of how he thought such an invasion might take place. He said everything would depend on the German mine-laying operations. As to the actual landing, it could be effected with the help of a curtain of fire from the ships guarding the convoys. In his view this curtain of fire could sweep two miles inland, destroying everything within its range. I observed that an invasion, even if a complete fiasco, would arouse a far greater hatred against the Germans than already existed, even if only one British village was laid waste.

On the other hand, a woman whose husband had to do with

the British railways said that the mischief the Germans could do if they did land was almost incalculable. That the whole railway system would be disorganized for at least ten days, and many towns reduced to starvation.

Many small actions at sea took place of which we—the public—were told nothing. I heard of two German destroyers being sunk, and of a big raider which, while sinking, actually succeeded in sinking its captor, which happened to be a converted liner. One heard queer stories of German submarines brought into British ports with certain of their crews alive. The story that a German officer landed, made friends with a lady and gave her dinner at one of the big seaside hotels, is, I believe, quite true. I used this story in a novel which I called *The Gentleman Anonymous*.

I think one of the strangest objects I ever saw was a book brought from Berlin by a member of the American Embassy. It consisted of one chapter, printed in the language of every country; it was designed to show up the Allies, especially England, in the blackest light. Two pages showed photographs of negroes, Arabs, and natives of every kind. Underneath the photographs were the words "These are the apostles of British culture".

It is strange to reflect nowadays that, in the March of 1916, I said to a famous soldier, "I suppose it is possible the war now being fought might bring about the obliteration of a nation". He replied, "No, that will not be true of this war, but that might be true of the next war". He said that some day Germany would be destroyed in the same way as the Roman Empire had been destroyed.

Almost every woman in London society was doing some form of war work, and it used to be pointed out with indignation that neither Margot nor her daughter Elizabeth was

officially connected with any work of that kind. This was a cruel and unfair criticism. The wife of the British Prime Minister is always overwhelmed not only with official, but with unofficial, work connected with her husband's position. A stream of foreigners came and went to No. 10 Downing Street, and Elizabeth Asquith played a considerable part in their entertainment, for she spoke perfect French and good German.

Elizabeth Asquith organized a Poets' Reading, and what added immensely to my interest in this Reading was the fact that it took place at what had been Byron's house in Piccadilly. The entire proceeds went to a society which looked after totally disabled soldiers. This was one of the few war entertainments I ever heard of that gave the whole of the proceeds, without deducting anything for expenses, to the organization. The beautiful house in which it took place was lent by the French bankers who owned it, and they also gave the refreshments. All too often the expenses connected with war charities took "a large bite", as someone put it to me once, of the sum raised.

Augustine Birrell was in the chair, and made a most excellent speech. The house was quite unlike what I had supposed it would be, but exactly what anyone who knew anything about Byron would have expected Byron to choose, for it was of the grandiose foreign type, and like a Paris eighteenth-century house rather than a London mansion. There was a fine marble staircase which ran up the middle of the house. The drawing-room was very large, long, and narrow.

Great curiosity was felt concerning this Reading, and Elizabeth Asquith sold over three hundred tickets. From childhood she had always been intensely interested in literature, and like her father had a remarkable knowledge of eighteenth-century fiction and verse. She was in touch with

many distinguished writers, and only one or two refused to take part in the Reading. All those who had promised to come did come, with the one exception of Chesterton, who had made a mistake as to the date.

What interested me more than the poets was the house, and as I sat in the drawing-room, my mind went back to the scene which had taken place there between Byron and his wife, when he had flung at her the verses, "Fare thee well, and if for ever". The actual copy had been found by his sister, Mrs. Leigh, on the floor. She kept it, and years later gave it to my grandfather, Joseph Parkes. Parkes must have been one of the kindest men who ever lived. He was always helping every type of man and woman, whatever their position in life, and whatever their particular trouble might be. What he did for Mrs. Leigh evidently moved her to great gratitude, otherwise she would never have given him what must have been precious in her eyes, for she set great store on every line she possessed of her brother's handwriting.

One day in the spring a friend came to see me, and gave me a vivid account of Mr. Asquith's visit to the Pope. His Holiness gave him a long audience. They first spoke of nothing in particular, including the weather, which just then was not good in Rome. Then at last the Pope said how terrible it was to think of the slaughter which was going on, and how very unhappy it made him. He said he could not get it out of his mind even for a moment, every waking instant he was thinking of the war. He told Mr. Asquith that it was quite untrue that he desired to play a part in the peace negotiations which were then supposed to be imminent. His Holiness also said emphatically he did not care who took part in the negotiations, as long as peace was the outcome of them. To that Asquith seems to have answered that any talk of peace was still premature.

VIII

During the first autumn and winter of 1914-1915 Margot Asquith often asked me to lunch at 10 Downing Street. She had always been what I once heard not over-kindly described as "incurably hospitable". At a time when many people gave up entertaining even their closest friends, and a certain side of social life in London had almost stopped, Margot's friends—indeed many who should not have claimed to be her friends, for they were continually criticizing her—were welcomed to what, looking back, I feel to have been the most hospitable board in London. Five to ten people could always be met at luncheon in the beautiful dining-room of that famous house, and among them were invariably two or three foreigners, for there was a great deal of coming and going from France and from America.

The food served, though well cooked, was extremely plain, and I recall the resentment I felt on hearing a spiteful person declare that while every other woman in society was finding it almost impossible to entertain friends to lunch and dinner, Mrs. Asquith was constantly being given splendid gifts of food by her Jewish friends. This was quite untrue. Indeed, I feel no woman of my time has been so calumniated as was Margot Asquith.

To take this one matter of the coming and going at 10 Downing Street. All her life Margot had been accustomed, first as a girl, and then as a married woman, to receive her friends on what can only be called not merely a lavish, but a magnificent, scale. And yet, perhaps because she was herself oddly indifferent as to what she ate, in each of the three houses

where I saw her often, there was no profusion of food of the kind of which there was so much in what the French call *le beau monde*, up to the August of 1914.

Also, at a time when it was regarded as an inevitable duty to entertain dull unpleasant people if they belonged to the hostess's circle, both Henry and Margot Asquith only tolerated the company of those they regarded as possessing remarkable personalities. But whereas the Prime Minister, had he had his way, would have chosen his guests with care and discrimination, every kind of curious and unusual human being was eagerly welcomed by his wife. Margot's impulsive nature and kind heart might now and again "land her with a bore", as it was once put to me; yet I never met a bore in her house. The men and women were always worth meeting, though often extremely unlike one another. They did not always get on together, but they all made it a point to get on with their generous-hearted host and hostess.

Mr. Asquith was greatly esteemed by a type of Liberal who regarded him as a second Cromwell. There were days when one of these devoted political supporters would be bidden to lunch with the Prime Minister, and I used to feel considerable amusement while noting the bewilderment of some faithful henchman, who had expected a note of—may I say dismal austerity, at 10 Downing Street, and found something very different.

Now and again I had the good fortune to sit next Mr. Asquith, and I felt it indeed good fortune, as his talk was the best talk to which I have ever listened. Though it was widely said that the only house in London where the war was seldom mentioned was 10 Downing Street, none of those carping critics seemed to realize that during almost the whole of his waking hours the Prime Minister was perforce dealing in some

form or other with the war. It was surely wise, as well as natural that during the course of lunch and dinner there should be a tacit agreement to avoid war-talk. But that this was not always the case was proved one day when Mr. Asquith showed me, with the help of a knife, a fork, and a spoon, the operations which were just about to take place at Gallipoli.

Even then Mr. Asquith looked older than his age, though he must have been endowed with immense physical and mental strength. Unlike almost every Englishman of his generation, he took little exercise apart from golf.

All sorts of spiteful stories were current as to the amount of drink the Prime Minister consumed. During many years I saw him fairly often in London, and I stayed several times in his country house, so I can testify that, though not abstemious, he never in the least, to use yet another old-fashioned word, exceeded. He drank considerably less than did certain of the men I met at 10 Downing Street and in Lord Haldane's London house.

When it was known that the King had given up every form of alcohol, some of his Ministers imposed on themselves what was certainly in some cases a severe self-denying ordinance, and followed his example. It was said that on the doors of the cellars of Buckingham Palace had been placed, by an oddly minded joker, large funeral wreaths. Someone connected with the Court told me the King had given up alcohol because he was told that, if he did so, it would make a difference to what would be drunk in the Army. But the King's example was not followed in any class to any great degree, and though there were at times serious shortages of food during those four years, I do not recall any shortages of wines or beer.

During one of those war winters there was a time when our household largely lived on bread and on savoury rice. The

ingredients of my savoury rice were rice, fried onions, and fat.

When food began to get really short, people invited to join a country-house party were expected to bring some food. I received a touching letter from Margot Asquith telling me that as I was poor, I need only bring a box of sardines! I wrote back that I was not as poor as all that, and I took with me a cooked tongue, which was greeted with acclamation.

As Margot was fond of me she would sometimes ask me from a Thursday to a Monday, instead of the Friday. On such occasions there would be a good deal of stifled excitement as to what the real week-end party would bring. What was specially welcome was good cooked food, such as a small ham, a tongue, or a piece of spiced beef.

Margot Asquith's father, Sir Charles Tennant, had at one time been reputed to have an income of three hundred thousand pounds a year. It was said he had had twenty children by the same wife. But of those twenty, only three daughters and three sons had survived infancy. Each of these six children was remarkable. The eldest daughter, Charlotte, married the Lord Ribblesdale of that day. She was a tall, beautiful woman, and the story went that Lord Ribblesdale first saw her at a ball, and after he had danced with her twice, a man said to him, "Is that your sister?" and he answered, "No, thank God!" They had a happy marriage, and their children were all exceptionally good-looking and clever. Charles Lister was in Turkey during the first World War, and a collection of his vivid letters was published after his death by his father. I knew all three daughters, but only one of them intimately. This was Barbara, married to Sir Matthew Wilson. She wrote a charming book of which the central figure was a German governess. It had a great success, for it was published long after the first World War, when English society had once more become pro-

German. Sir Charles Tennant's second daughter, Laura, made an exceedingly happy marriage. She died young, leaving moving memories of what must have been an enchanting personality. There are allusions to her in the diaries and letters of her short day; the best account of her is in her sister Margot's book.

I recall that the most beautiful woman at Margot's wedding was Lady Helen Vincent, wearing a turquoise velvet bodice in curious but becoming contrast to a pink and white silk skirt. I also remember Mrs. Willie Grenfell, another noted beauty. Although Margot was very pale, and her white gown was not becoming, I never saw her looking to greater advantage than she did on her wedding day. I gazed with intense interest at Mr. Gladstone. He had been exceedingly fond of Margot as a girl, and he gave her a special gift, apart from the joint present from himself and his wife. With it was a card on which was written, "To Margot Tennant as she is and is to be, from W. E. Gladstone, with warm recollections and fervent hope". Gladstone by then felt certain Asquith would become Prime Minister.

I remember little Dorothy Drew among Margot's bridesmaids. She held the hand of Violet Asquith, the bridegroom's eldest child by his first marriage. To me there is something painful in the sight of a girl acting as bridesmaid at her father's second marriage, but at the time I remember hearing that Mr. Asquith's five children were already devoted to Margot, and the relationship between them was of the kind that brought out all her best qualities.

Margot Asquith was fond of pretty clothes. She knew instinctively what suited her slight figure and bony face. Oddly enough, however, the only time I saw her, as I thought, ill-dressed, was when she was starting for her honeymoon. She

wore a blue gown, and a green straw hat trimmed with cornflowers. As she grew older, and her popularity waned, I heard people speak unkindly of her love of clothes. A friend of hers, calling at a dressmaker, saw a beautiful picture dress of shot silk. This lady had a daughter of seventeen, and she said to the dressmaker, "If that frock is in your sale, I will buy it for my girl". The frock was too dear, however, even in the sale. A year later that same frock was again put in the sale, and the lady bought it. Long after, she was Margot's guest at The Wharf, and felt amused to see her hostess wearing the self-same girlish model. Margot gave up going to Worth after she had met in his salons a well-known English statesman of that day helping a notorious French coquette to choose a gown. This not only embarrassed Margot, but also deeply shocked her, for in a sense she was one of those women who "keep innocency". She was certainly strangely ignorant of certain sides of human nature, and I never heard her allude, for instance, to the famous divorce cases of her day.

She was often painted, but her portraits were none of them like her. Yet I have never known any woman who photographed so well as did Margot Asquith. She had never been pretty at any time, and she never attempted to "cut out" any girl or woman about her.

I think the happiest years of her life were before her marriage, when she was virtually the hostess of Glen, her father's country-house near Peebles. In that faraway day every bachelor she met seemed to be attracted to her. Her kindness of nature and, above all, her extreme vitality, bewitched and delighted the men belonging to the late Victorian world. In that world there was what was called the fast set, but to that set Margot never belonged. It is strange how seldom she is mentioned in the Lives of certain people who were warmly

attached to her. I regard this as having been due to the publication of her memoirs.

All her life she was quite indifferent to the conventions which even now play a part, and then played a far greater one, in the world to which she belonged. An old friend of hers showed the members of a house-party of which I formed part the reply Margot had sent to a long and affectionately worded letter of condolence on the death of her husband. It consisted of two sentences scrawled on a postcard.

I find in a letter I wrote just after her death:

> "I knew Margot for exactly fifty years, and of all the human beings I have ever known she had more ups and downs in her life than any man or woman with whom I have ever been acquainted. You are too young to remember her astonishing position in the later eighties and early nineties of the last century. There was an echo of this fact in a music-hall sketch seen by my husband and myself. It was supposed to describe the future. A very old gentleman was brought on to the stage in a bath-chair. He was asked his claim to fame. He answered, 'I am the only man who in the eighties of the last century never asked Margot to marry me.'"

A friend of all her life allows me to quote the following:

> "You ask me what I really thought of Margot Asquith? There were times, and I knew her for sixty years, when I felt for her warm affection. But there were other times when I despised and disliked her. One thing I can say with certainty. Margot was

unlike any other woman in the world. She was always a law unto herself. While invariably intending to be kind and helpful, she was frightfully imprudent in her way of talking, and now and again actively unkind. Thus while sensitive to even the slightest criticism of herself, she would say even to those she believed she loved cruel, and even shocking, things. And yet there was no malicious streak in her nature. I feel sure she would never have knowingly repeated anything told her in confidence; on the other hand I would never tell her a secret, for after a while she would forget it was a secret. She was foolish in always preferring the company of the dullest man to that of the most agreeable and brilliant woman. The nearest she came to real friendship with a woman was that with Lady (Frances) Horner. She was certainly exceedingly fond of her."

Margot had always liked the Germans, but it is quite untrue that she often went to Germany, or kept up with the Germans with whom she had made friends during the short time she had spent as a girl in, I think, Munich. She cared for music, and was on terms of affection with many distinguished German musicians who lived in London, and especially with the Jewish section of Anglo-German society.

In her memoirs she mentioned a certain number of famous soldiers she had come across in her life. But she had had no direct connection with the Army before the war of 1914. In this respect she was unlike the majority of her friends and acquaintances.

As I have said, no woman during my lifetime had such ups and downs, in a social and financial sense, as had Margot

Asquith. When I first heard of her, when I was seventeen, in the mid-eighties of the last century, she had a remarkable position in the London world. As an old man said to me not long ago, "No unmarried woman had ever had such a place in society". This was owing to a certain extent to her remarkable qualities. But it was also owing, though she was quite unaware of it, to the fact that she was the favourite daughter of an immensely wealthy man who denied her nothing. Sir Charles owed his wealth partly to his ability where anything connected with money was concerned, and partly to his amazing luck. I was told that some of his wealth came from his possession of the Tarsus mine, and I believe the following story is true. He took a map on which were shown the names of certain of the world's copper mines which happened to be in the market. Sir Charles took a pin, and stuck it on the name of a mine of which he knew nothing. From that mine the bulk of his vast wealth was afterwards derived.

My mother as a girl was, with her father, Joseph Parkes, staying with the then young Charles Tennants, when their eldest child was born prematurely. My grandfather and his daughter were making a tour of Scottish country-houses, and they were acquainted with the prominent supporters of the Liberal Party. Mr. Charles Tennant then lived in a comparatively small country-house, and was engaged in building what is now known as Glen.

Lord Glenconner, Sir Charles Tennant's eldest son, who was deeply attached to his mother, once told me the following singular story. His maternal grandfather was a Scottish laird. He married, when still quite young, another laird's daughter, and by her had two children, a son and a daughter. He must have been a man of considerable wealth, for hearing of a trout stream in Germany where a long stretch of river could be either

taken for the fishing, or actually bought from the then owner, he went there for what he intended to be a short holiday. But after a while he wrote and informed his wife he had met a German girl with whom he had fallen in love, and taking advantage of the Scotch marriage laws, he intended to desert his wife, and marry the German girl. He carried out this plan, and after he had provided for his Scotch wife, he never saw her again. He further broke off all connection with Scotland, though he always sent to Glasgow for his fishing tackle.

The German lady bore him eight sons. They all became German officers, and the late Kaiser used to call them "my Winsloes". Meanwhile his deserted wife brought up her two children, and the daughter became the wife of Sir Charles Tennant.

Lord Glenconner went on to tell me that one day he received a letter from a German baron explaining that he believed they were connected, and suggesting they should meet. He further said he would arrange to be in London when Lord Glenconner was likely to be there. The two men met, and Lord Glenconner could not make up his mind as to how much this German officer did, or did not, know of their common origin; the German's pose was that he knew they were related, though he did not know in what way. Taking full advantage of their relationship, he persuaded Lord Glenconner not only to entertain him, but to show him all the sights of London. I remember feeling, as he told me this strange story, that it looked as if his grandfather's love of Germany and the Germans had been transmitted to Margot. Lord Glenconner himself disliked the Germans, and resented the intrusion of this German cousin into his life.

No book in my time made so great a sensation as did Margot's autobiography, and I have always believed that this

work, in its original form, and at its original price, became scarce owing to the fact that copies were quietly bought up by certain men and women who deeply resented what she had written concerning themselves, or those they loved.

I heard that Margot showed the manuscript of her memoirs to Lord Crewe, and that he refused to read any of the chapters excepting those dealing with what might have been called the political side of her life. I believe that he found little, if anything, to alter or suppress. She also showed it to another man who could not have been more ill-chosen, for he had a malicious side to an otherwise kind and generous nature. This was Edmund Gosse. To him she sent her first set of proofs, asking him to make any comments or suggestions. He wrote back a letter, which for a long time she carried about with her, and showed to almost everyone she met. In this letter he highly praised her memoirs, and added that their author would be regarded as the Pepys of our time. But when the two volumes were published, and at once caused a great deal of hurt feeling and even anger, he wrote a severe review which both surprised and pained Margot.

It was a most unfortunate thing for Margot Asquith that she did not care for women. She would speak of herself as the close friend of certain women; but those friendships were hollow friendships. The only two women she really loved were her sister, Lucy Graham Smith, and her daughter, Elizabeth Bibesco. I say again that had she shown the manuscript of her memoirs to any one of half a dozen women with whom she thought herself on intimate terms, she would have received advice which would have made a great difference to the whole of her after-life. She felt deeply hurt at the criticism of her book, and at the anger certain passages provoked. The last time I saw her, years after the publication of her memoirs, she spoke

with pain of the way they had been received.

I knew Margot Asquith well for exactly fifty years. I first met her in 1894, and I went to see her, a short time before her death, in the winter of 1944. She was then in a charming house she had just taken in Kensington Square. From the physical point of view, she was astonishingly little changed since I had first met her. She spoke in the same vivid, incisive way, and her vitality appeared unimpaired. I mentioned a public man, and her remarks as to his nature, character, and conduct were blistering. She also spoke with warmth and affection of two or three other public men—notably Lord Baldwin, whom she held in high regard.

There was, however, one great change; to me a most painful change. She had always been a woman of powerful and moving sensibility where those she loved were concerned, and I had always known her passionate and tender love for her children. On this occasion she did not seem to realize that the daughter she had loved with so great a love had lately died. Yet that I had always had a very kind feeling for Elizabeth Bibesco was evidently present to her mother's mind.

Elizabeth was a curious amalgamation of her father and mother. She had in her nature much of Mr. Asquith's breadth and quiet power; but her wit—and she was very witty—came to her from Margot.

Margot Asquith was incapable of deceit, and was always herself. If she did not like a man or woman she could not conceal what she felt. Had she possessed a great fortune she would most certainly have been extremely generous, and she could not understand that the people about her had not the same instincts.

The mystery of money is, I feel, far greater than the mystery of pain. The way in which people deal with their

money-matters astonishes me now that I am old as much as it did when I was young.

In a sense Sir Charles Tennant owed a great deal to his daughter Margot. He delighted in society, and it was due to her that he became a great figure in the late Victorian world, where he was nicknamed "The Monarch of the Glen". At Glen Margot entertained the whole of the political and social worlds of that day. Years later, when I was staying there with her brother and sister-in-law, I remember looking at the visitors' book and being amazed at the names I found there—amazed because of the immense change which had taken place in Margot's life. Indeed when I think of her, I feel inclined to echo the doggerel which Edmund Gosse was fond of quoting:

> It's human nature—then if so,
> Isn't human nature low?

The very men and women who had fawned—and fawned is the right word—on Margot during her glorious youth, spoke of her with severe condemnation, and indeed intense dislike, when she lost her popularity. I once said to one of them—a well-known, indeed a distinguished, man—"But I thought you had been a very intimate friend—constantly at Glen?" He replied, "So I was; but that was in the old days, before she began worrying everybody about money." He then proceeded to tell me how, while he was staying at Glen, he and Margot had gone out in a dog-cart. They came across a couple looking tired and worn-out, who were walking on the road. Margot threw him the reins, jumped down, went up to them, and gave them all the money she had in her purse. She also warmly invited them to come the next day to Glen, where she promised to give them both some clothes.

Among certain circles which I frequented in 1914-1918,

there was a strong prejudice against Margot Asquith. She was believed to be so pro-German as to even hope Germany would win the war! The belief that she was pro-German could be traced to her misplaced loyalty to her daughter Elizabeth's German governess. Froy, as they all called her, had been with the Asquiths for many years, and both Margot and Mr. Asquith were convinced she had saved their daughter's life when Elizabeth had once been seriously ill in Switzerland. As a girl she had been very delicate, so this was probably true.

It was also widely believed—indeed it was stated as a fact—that Mrs. Asquith had a great number of friends in Germany, and that she managed, even during the war, to keep in touch with them in a secret way. Both statements were quite untrue. In this connection I should like to put on record a curious incident which I think will prove why such a belief was held, and also how much truth there was in it.

I went one day to see Elizabeth Asquith. She was not well, and had telephoned to ask me to come and see her. She was in bed, and I had not been with her many minutes when she exclaimed, "Would you like to have a direct account of how things really are in Germany?" I said I should very much like to know that. She then produced a letter, and handed it to me. It was in English, and written by the German governess I have mentioned. To my mind it was an absurd letter—the sort of letter one could imagine a foolish lady's-maid writing to another foolish lady's-maid, for it contained a great number of questions concerning the trousseau of a cousin of Elizabeth's who had recently married.

I said I was sorry she had shown me the letter, as I would no longer be able to deny, as I had hitherto often done, that 10 Downing Street was in touch with Germany. This letter—as was the case with all communications that reached England

from the enemy countries—had been sent open through Switzerland, and to me it was clear that someone to whom Elizabeth had shown it had talked.

Some tales that were current concerning both Mr. and Mrs. Asquith were cruelly untrue. It was said that the Prime Minister was an idle man, who was always saying aloud, and to himself, "Wait and see". I doubt if any man of Mr. Asquith's generation and age got through more hard and continuous work.

As for me, I never drive down Whitehall, or through St. James's Park, without giving a grateful and affectionate thought to Mr. and Mrs. Asquith. The last time I was at 10 Downing Street was at an afternoon party given by Mrs. Neville Chamberlain, and when we went into the dining-room where tea was being served, there came over me overwhelming recollections of the hours I had spent there in the summer and winter of 1914-1915. I felt as if I could see the Prime Minister of that day seated at the head of the table, with Margot opposite to him, and his daughter Violet and some of her friends round us.

Mr. Asquith must have been a man of prodigious physical, as well as mental, strength. I was well acquainted with one of his secretaries, and this man once told me that in the previous twenty-four hours the Prime Minister had not slept for longer than three hours. His look of calmness—and he had an exceptionally placid expression.—was curiously deceptive. He was strongly emotional, and far more easily moved to tears than any other Englishman I have ever met. The losses of his friends—I am thinking of the death in battle of their sons—caused him anguish. It was impossible for any woman to be with him for any length of time without becoming really fond of him.

I felt for him a true affection, and that though he and I were often at odds, and went on being at odds, owing to the circumstance that he certainly did not like—or what was far more serious, did not understand—the French. Also, while with regard to English literature he was extraordinarily cultivated, his life had been such that he knew scarcely anything of that French culture which has had so immense an influence on Europe, and especially on the period of English social and political history which fascinated Mr. Asquith, and of which he knew so much, that of the eighteenth century.

I recall my surprise when he told me he had lately read, I gathered for the first time, a Life of Voltaire. I realized the reading of this book had opened a window on France in his mind, and I could not help being slightly amused at his astonishment when he found how much I knew of that period of French history.

As was true of Haldane, the finest strain in Mr. Asquith's character was his magnanimity. No man was less capable of feeling malice or, I would even say, resentment. Certain men he would have had a right to regard as absolutely loyal to him —I mean in a political sense—behaved in what can only be called a shameless, as well as a shameful, way. He never showed that he was even conscious of their malignant lack of loyalty.

In the early June of 1918, hearing some talk at the other end of the table concerning Russia and the Revolution, he turned to me and said that during his life he had never known such a case of everybody having been wrong. He added that he had not seen a single person, who had come from Russia, expect the Revolution. I was astonished at his going on to say that the Czar could have stopped the Revolution if he had shown courage, grit, and nerve. I think this has been proved to

have been a false view.

Mr. Asquith and I once went a long drive together, and nearly had what might have been a terrible accident. He made no sign, neither did I, but I suppose I turned pale, for he looked round and said in no very pleasant way, "You were very frightened just then, weren't you?" I said, "Yes." He remarked dryly, "I don't think I was." I observed, "You have not young children to consider—your children are grown up. When I thought, just now, we were going to be killed, my thoughts flew to my children." He said at once, "You're right. I feel ashamed of what I said just now."

In some ways Mr. Asquith was extremely reserved, in other ways curiously and movingly frank. I used to wonder what was his real relationship with Margot. She left in a book a letter her husband had written to her when they had been married twenty-five years, which she asked me to read. It was admirably expressed, and to me it was most moving. I was amazed she allowed any one else to read it.

Mr. Asquith was almost grotesquely unlike the type of Englishman—perhaps I ought to say Yorkshireman—some of his devoted adherents believed him to be. Not only was he extremely emotional (I remember a painful account of his unrestrained grief at the funeral of a son of the then Lord Aberdeen, who had been killed in a motoring accident) but he was also exceptionally frank. In answer to a question he would either say, "I must not answer that", or he would tell the exact truth.

Early in their married life he must have made up his mind that he would never contradict Margot, or put her right when she said something which was manifestly untrue. She was extremely—indeed inconveniently—honest, but as is always the case with a woman of that particular type, she would

constantly assert that something was true which as a matter of fact was entirely false. With all her astonishing brilliance she had what can only be called an un-coordinated mind. In other words, unlike what is true of the great majority of human beings, she could not put two and two together. Quite often two and two meant, to her, five or even six.

Of all the women I have known in various political worlds, Margot had in a sense the greatest knowledge of politics. She had a kind of uncanny instinct with regard to the characters and the likely behaviour of her husband's colleagues. This was the more remarkable as she had an unsuspicious and a generous nature. Yet again and again she was right, while he was wrong, with regard to certain men whom Mr. Asquith believed to be his faithful and loyal adherents. This gift of Margot showed itself at the time of the break-up of his Government. Margot had a touching admiration for her husband's character, and a great belief in his judgment. I am convinced that she would have eliminated any passage in her book to which he took strong exception, had he told her so. There must have come a time later on when he regretted his decision not to read the manuscript. The more so as the passages which, as she once said to me with pardonable exaggeration, "have lost me all my friends", were few in number—in fact I remember writing in a letter that they would not have filled more than three pages of the two volumes.

I think one of the serious mistakes Margot Asquith made in her life was in going to America to lecture. Whoever advised her to do so did a cruel action. Her book had shocked the American reading public, and as a result there was a deep prejudice against her. This was increased as it was known that in the old days, as a young woman, she had not cared for Americans, and this at a time when Americans were very

popular in London society. Although she had not known a great number of Americans, those she had known had all belonged to the type of man and woman who is as much at home in London as in New York. Of the real America she knew nothing, and she possessed a completely false picture of the world where she was to make a brief appearance. She had always lived, though I am sure she would have been the last to believe it, in a comparatively small circle of people who, even if they did not approve of her, did more or less understand her. Also her remarkable kindness of heart endeared her even to those who did not agree with her. Of the finer sides of her nature nothing was known in America. She was a woman of high courage—indeed I should say courage was her leading trait—but after she returned to this country she gave me a pitiful account of how fearfully frightened she had felt. It was evident to me that it was as if she had stepped into another dimension from the one in which she habitually dwelt.

It is not too much to say that of France, apart from Paris, she knew absolutely nothing. She asked me to meet Anatole France at a small tea-party at 10 Downing Street, and I recall his air of amazement when she gaily began talking to him of certain French writers of whom she obviously knew nothing, except that they were writers.

A touching and beautiful side of Margot's character came out in her relations with her sister Lucy, Mrs. Graham Smith. Lucy was an invalid, and Margot's great care and love for her was very moving, the more so as they were quite different in all their interests. Lucy was a fine artist. I remember looking with deep interest and admiration at some albums of portraits she had done in the old, old days when Glen was known as "Château Margot".

IX

Lord Haldane had prepared a confidential statement in the event of his sudden death, and he told his sister he would like me to read it. I therefore called on him, and he handed me a typewritten booklet bound in brown paper. I was not only attached to Lord Haldane, I felt that he had been singularly ill-treated by almost all his colleagues in the Cabinets of which he had formed part. So it was with a sensation of painful interest that I took from his hand what I saw was called "Memorandum of events between 1906 and 1915". I read it all through that night, though I went out to dinner in the interval.

No fair-minded impartial person can read what was written there and hold a view adverse to Haldane's dealings with the then German Government. To me it is sad and strange that this man, who played so great a part in the history of his time, is now never mentioned.

I could not help feeling, as I read this statement, that Haldane could have made certain points which for some reason he omitted. It began by describing the first official visit he made to Berlin, when he was Minister of War in the September of 1906. King Edward asked him to keep a detailed diary of everything that happened to him, and this he had done. The statement was in the form of a letter, and was headed "Berlin, September 2nd, 1906". He gave me on three different occasions a vivid account of the visit, and incidentally I obtained from what he said by far the clearest picture of William the Second ever shown me. The Kaiser, at whose invitation Haldane had gone to Berlin, had been in great good humour, though again and again he raised the question of the

British Navy. He obviously ardently desired that there should be parity between the German and the British Navies. Haldane, in all these conversations, many of which took place in the open air with no one within earshot, obviously discussed these matters as the most suspicious British patriot would have wished him to do. Indeed he went much further than many of his colleagues in the Government of that day, for he told the Emperor repeatedly that England would always insist on the two-power standard.

He told me that his most memorable conversation with the Emperor took place at a small luncheon party at the palace in Berlin. The Emperor put Haldane next to himself, and spoke continuously, sometimes in German, sometimes in English, and when he wished to make a point, he laid his hand heavily on Haldane's shoulder. It was in vain that Haldane tried to make William the Second see that her fleet was to England what the army was to Germany. Haldane declared again and again that her Navy was to the British people "as sacred as the Gospel", to quote his own words.

As I read the statement I could not help feeling that though the Emperor, all through his talks with Haldane, was posing as an absolute sovereign, he was really in the hands of his Army Chiefs and, in a minor sense, of his Ministers. After having consented to certain concessions which Haldane thought important, and always speaking as though he loved England and wished to keep on the best of terms with her, when their next meeting took place he gave what the Scotsman called "a dash of cold water".

As he played so great a part in the history of those years, I hope that some day a more intimate life of Haldane will be written, in which more of his letters will be given. He wrote to his mother, an exceptionally able woman, every day.

Reading the statement again comparatively lately, I felt astonished the British Government forbade its publication. One recorded fact which seems to me of importance concerned Haldane's visit to Berlin in 1912. The invitation came in the shape of an informal request from the Emperor and Bethmann Hollweg. According to my information the message was transmitted by three extraordinarily different men—Ballin, Cassel, and Winston Churchill. I believe it to be true that when he was asked by Grey if he would undertake what was described as a Mission of Good-will, he had an instinctive feeling that to accept would do him harm. What to me is strange is that he did not seem to realize that the British Ambassador, Sir Edward Goschen, would be surprised, and even angered, by the visit.

This was proved to me, much later, by a talk I once had with Sir Edward Goschen. He admitted that his feelings had been in every way considered, and his dignity safeguarded, but he pointed out that it was strange the British Cabinet had not realized that Haldane's so-called Mission of Good-will was more likely to do harm than good.

I have never read anything of greater and more ominous interest to me than the account of the Mission as given in Haldane's private diary.

Whereas when he visited Berlin in 1906 everyone had been very cordial, six years later he realized the feeling as to England had altered.

As I read the account of Haldane's second visit, I could not help feeling, what was nowhere even hinted at, that William the Second was a brilliant animated puppet in the hands of the men who were really governing Germany. Thus the formidable Admiral von Tirpitz was very much to the fore. He was even present at an informal luncheon given in the Palace when the

Empress and her young daughter entertained Lord Haldane. Immediately after luncheon the Emperor took Haldane and von Tirpitz to his study, and it soon became clear that the German admiral was exceedingly anxious that England should give some kind of pledge as to slowing up her shipbuilding. Among the things von Tirpitz said, was that the two-power standard was hard on Germany, and he used the expression, "My country cannot make any concessions". Haldane at once answered that it was not a matter for concessions. Germany was free as Britain was free, but it was absurd to try and come to a friendly agreement if Germany constantly increased the size of her fleet.

It should not be forgotten that all this time the Emperor and his advisers were making frantic efforts to come to a working *neutrality* agreement with England, while yet enlarging a fleet which could only be used against England.

As we know, these discussions came to nothing, but Haldane's statement makes it very clear that he was then convinced that there was a very strong peace party in Germany; in fact the mistake he made—and he as good as says so—is that he thought it impossible the military party would ever be in a position to bring about a war.

The most exciting portion of Haldane's statement concerned the visit of Herr Ballin to London before the war. I was aware Sir Edward Grey had met Ballin; as a matter of fact Grey was at the time staying with Lord Haldane. Another guest at the same dinner-party was Lord Morley. What was new to me was the record of a conversation in which both Haldane and Grey assured Ballin that the maintenance of good relations between Great Britain and Germany was dependent on Germany's not attacking France, and that otherwise Germany could not count on England's neutrality. It is impossible now

not to believe that, when Ballin paid that visit to England, he knew that war was going to break out between France and Germany.

Haldane does not quote textually the now memorable letter Ballin sent by special messenger to England a day or two before Germany invaded Belgium. But he declared that its substance simply consisted in "Thanks for the pleasant dinner", and that it contained the pious hope that if Germany did not try to dismember France, England would remain neutral. Haldane did not answer this letter; but *The Times* discovered such a letter had been sent, and a question was asked in the House of Lords. Haldane later gave as his reason for refusing to read out the letter, that he did not want Grey, who was mentioned as having been present, to be brought into the discussion. He further said that the letter was harmless, and rather foolish, but with that view I think most people would disagree. The letter was harmless only because Ballin knew Haldane so slightly that he was unaware that such a letter could have no effect one way or the other. Haldane took the phrase about France as simply a pious hope on the part of a big German business man that England would "keep out of it".

I wrote:

> "Evidently Haldane has felt deeply the attacks on him. He mentions the assertions that he has a German wife, that he is the illegitimate brother of the Kaiser, and that he is still in correspondence with Germany, with great soreness. He points out that for two years he had had nothing to do with Germany or German affairs, as he was completely taken up with his work as Lord Chancellor. He gave me a moving account of the few days preceding the outbreak of

war, and said to me that Grey, who was staying with him, 'passed a time of agony under my roof'."

Haldane also described how on that fateful Sunday both men came to the conclusion, separately and for different reasons, that war could not be avoided. It is clear from what Haldane wrote later that not till then did it become clear to his mind that the war party had triumphed, and that it was to be a war not merely against Russia and France, but for the domination of the world. He said in the most solemn way that he was *entirely in favour of the great decision to throw England into the struggle*, and that he felt sure, even then, that the Allies must emerge victorious, owing to their immense reserves in men and money.

The two friends, he and Grey, having come separately to the same conclusion, went over to Downing Street, and found Asquith and Crewe alone. He told the following strange little story. The four men drew up a communication to the French Ambassador. It was sent off to him in the usual way in a dispatch-box, and suddenly a terrible misgiving came over them that the wrong label had been put on the box, and it might have gone to the German Ambassador! However, that was not the case, but it shows the state of their nerves that they should have thought such a thing possible.

Haldane described to me all the arrangements made for the sending out of the Expeditionary Force, and he added that it was his suggestion that there should be formed the War Committee of railway managers which worked so splendidly. He said pathetically that there was never the slightest truth in what has been often said since, that he tried to delay the sending-off of the Expeditionary Force. On the contrary, he wanted to send six divisions, not four, and in the account he

gave of the War Council which was summoned, he put on record what I had already heard from a very different source, namely that Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener both believed in a coming invasion, and that this was why two divisions were kept back.

One man in high office who seemed to be able to foresee what was going to happen, was Edward Grey. Although it was always said by the people who belittled him that he had no knowledge of the Continent of Europe and of what went on there, he had a remarkable grasp of Foreign Affairs. Thus he was convinced, from the outbreak of war, that in the end the Germans would lose the war. This was certainly not the view of certain of his colleagues. The most they hoped for, and that in spite of Asquith's famous declaration beginning, "We shall never sheathe the sword", was that there would be a draw.

I have been struck all through my grown-up life by the false views of public men entertained even by those who knew them very well, and I have sometimes wondered, when reading the memoirs and letters of the Victorian era, whether the pictures drawn of the noted men of that day were as false as those drawn of the noted men with whom I happened to be acquainted in my day.

I regret I never met Lloyd George. He was, with all his brilliance and astounding ability, an ability which raised him from the position of a small country solicitor, to be not only Prime Minister, but for a time the idol of the British people, curiously mistaken in some things. Most lawyers have a poor opinion of human nature, and this was certainly true of him. The view he entertained, for instance, of Edward Grey, was so distorted as to be ludicrous.

I was once thrown by a curious accident into intimate contact with a man who was, if not an intimate friend, at any

rate an old and trusted colleague of Lloyd George. He told me that he had never known any man with so cynical an outlook. He thought better of women than of men. He was convinced that every man has his price, and that it is only a question of finding out what that price happens to be.

One of the things which struck me when I used to be fairly often both at No. 10 Downing Street and The Wharf, was that Mr. Asquith had no intimate friends of his own intellectual stature. This had not always been true when he was a young and middle-aged man. I used to wonder at times how far he was influenced by his second wife's views of men and matters. She had an intuitive knowledge in which he was himself lacking. I once said this to him, and he laughed and observed that he thought this was true. Though hers was a generous and I would say unsuspecting nature, she knew long before he did when there were what I once heard oddly described as "weevils in the porridge".

I like to remember a remark concerning my work which gave me great pleasure. It was uttered at the dining-table of Mr. and Mrs. Asquith. I was sitting next to Sir Donald Maclean, of whom at the time I knew nothing, excepting that he was a distinguished man and a well-known Liberal.

Suddenly he said to me, "I wonder if you would mind telling me the name of the town, and who was the solicitor living in that town, you describe in a novel called *The Terriford Mystery*. You also describe the lawyer's country-house and his family, and I am sure I know them." I answered, "I invented the town, and also the lawyer and his family." I could see by his expression that he could hardly believe what I said was true, and I went on, "I have never known a country solicitor, so I am glad you think that the portrait I drew gave a good idea of such a man."

To me one of the curious and in a sense unexplained traits in Mr. Asquith's character was his attitude to money. He was extremely simple in his personal habits, and I remember hearing him say during dinner at The Wharf something implying that he had always lived and still lived an extremely simple life. After dinner was over, I went a walk with one of his guests, and the man said to me: "You heard what our host said concerning the simplicity and frugality of his life? I wonder whether it will surprise you to learn that it is years since he ever went in a train. He motors everywhere."

I have noticed that people who lead really simple lives seldom say so, or seem aware how different they are in that from some of their friends. To give an example, Haldane lived a very simple life. He seldom had a motor-car in London, and that even at a time when he was going out every evening, unless he had friends to dinner. His mother had an old motor in the country. In my view, and I knew him well for over thirty years, simplicity was the keynote of Haldane's character, and that though he was supposed to be very crafty. He had the lawyer's brain, and when he put his mind to it, no doubt he could evolve a complicated system of action. But he would never have done anything of the kind in connection with his own life.

I saw him constantly at a time when it can truly be said hundreds of thousands of English men and women believed him to be very little better than a traitor. He took his astounding fall, for such indeed it was, not only with great dignity, but with a kind of magnanimity which I thought moving. As he was sensitive and affectionate, he must have felt deeply the way he was treated by a number of his former colleagues. Some of them were men who had fawned on him in the days when he was immensely powerful in the Cabinet.

But when he was regarded as pro-German they avoided him, almost, as a famous lawyer said to me, as if he might give them the plague. He always walked from his house in Queen Anne's Gate to the House of Lords, and he was such a singular-looking being that he was often accosted by people who knew him from pictures which appeared in the press. Sometimes these passers-by would fling violent abuse at him. Occasionally strangers would tell him they were sorry his work for his country, especially what he had done in connection with the Territorials, seemed to have been forgotten.

There had been a time, say in the autumn and winter of 1914-1915, when a very few words uttered in the House of Commons by Sir Edward Grey or Mr. Asquith, would have completely altered Haldane's position, at any rate with the immense majority of his countrymen. But those words, to my pain and surprise, were never uttered.

Long after Haldane had been hounded out of public life I spoke to Edward Grey, with whom I was a fellow-guest at Glen, and expressed my astonishment that Haldane had been, as I said plainly, thrown to the wolves by Asquith's War Cabinet. A look of pain crossed Grey's face as he said, "You must remember that at the time it all happened there was no moment of the waking day when the Cabinet was not overwhelmed with urgent and perilous business".

I suppose what I said produced an impression on Grey, for the next day, when we happened to be alone together, he asked me whether I thought it would give Mrs. Haldane and her daughter pleasure if he proposed himself as a guest at Cloan. I said I was convinced his going to Cloan would give Mrs. Haldane, who adored her eldest son, and Elizabeth, his sister, who had suffered acutely during the attacks made on her brother, real happiness. I was glad indeed when a fortnight

later I received a letter from Elizabeth Haldane saying they were looking forward to a visit from Grey. Reading between the lines I could see that she felt, what I think she had seldom felt in her life, a sensation of intense joy.

Considering the fact that he was a great lawyer, and in addition was intensely interested in human nature, it has always seemed to me strange that Haldane did not realize that what really in the end loosened his friendship with Grey was his indifference to, and almost his dislike of, the two people who even at that time meant everything to Grey. I mean Eddie and Pamela Glenconner. From 1908, Grey's close woman friend had been Pamela Glenconner. I saw him constantly from 1912 to the time of his death, and I do not remember his ever mentioning any other woman in ordinary conversation.

I dined with Lord Haldane and his sister one evening and Haldane observed that he had always noticed that the soldiers were much less bitter than the civilians with regard to the enemy. I agreed, but added that after all the people who would make peace would be civilians, not soldiers. By that time Haldane was regarded with deep distrust as a friend of the Germans. I have always thought it a misfortune for England that he took no part in the peace negotiations.

As I look back over my long life, one of the facts that stand out with regard to England and the English-speaking peoples, is their amazing power of self-deception. This has sometimes a valuable result, and I believe it is the reason why England is unlikely ever to be beaten in war; the certainty felt that the country is right in whatever course she is pursuing, permeates every class. I remember how shocked an English friend of mine, a man, felt when he was present at a French dinner-party where the French people spoke with entire frankness of certain traits they considered unfortunate, and even evil, in the French

character. Such a discussion could never have taken place round an English dinner-table. Individuals may attack one another, but the ranks close up at once if anything like serious disapproval is even hinted at.

X

I have always felt great interest in the British Navy, though I have known very few naval men, and it was an odd fact that I knew more about naval matters while the Liberals were in office in the first World War than I have done since.

This was perhaps because Lord Haldane took an intense interest in the Navy, and he would have liked the Navy and the War Office to work together far more closely than seems to have been the case. During a talk I once had with him when we were alone together, he spoke with the greatest admiration of the efficiency of the Admiralty, much of which he attributed to Admiral Sir Arthur Knyvet Wilson.

Among the Liberals of that time, I had a special regard and respect for Charles Masterman. In my view he was very badly treated by Lloyd George, of whom he had been an enthusiastic and faithful friend.

Few things have surprised me more in my life than the changes of public opinion as to Winston Churchill. During the years of which I am writing, there were times when he was immensely popular, and other times when one can only say he was abhorred. I remember a man saying to me, "There is only one thing to Winston Churchill's credit, and can you say it *is* to his credit, for how can he help it?" And when I asked what it was he could not help, came the instant answer, "His love for his beautiful wife".

One of the great sensations of my time was when it was suggested that the King would be compelled to create five hundred new peers (one of them would have been Winston Churchill). I wrote to my mother, "Already people are

speculating as to the choice and the titles of the five hundred new peers".

The terms on which their Sovereign happens to be with his Ministers are far more important than is realized by many people. How few whom it concerned knew how fond Edward the Seventh was of Haldane. The King wrote to him affectionate and intimate letters which he showed me, and Haldane, on his side, was deeply attached to the King, though the two were utterly unlike.

Going out to tea one afternoon in 1911 I had read to me a private letter from Biarritz saying that King Edward had been taken ill, and that there had even been some question of sending for the Queen.

That same evening I saw Lord Haldane, and I spoke to him of what I had just heard. He pooh-poohed the news, saying that if there were a word of truth in such a story, the Cabinet would have heard of it at once. I then heard a second story of how the King had had a choking fit at a private luncheon. However, he came back to England and stayed, as he put it to a Court official, *en garçon* at Buckingham Palace. He went out to dinner with friends who lived close to the Palace. After he came back he suddenly felt ill, and I heard some curious details of what happened. The King declined to consider himself ill, and he even refused to go to bed. The next day the Court Circular was actually prepared under the King's supervision, and he had added, "The Prince and Princess of Wales called at the Palace, and remained to luncheon". This was so far true that they did remain to luncheon by the King's wish, but the King was not present at the meal. Meanwhile, it became vaguely known in London that the King was not well, and at six o'clock that evening I walked to the front of Buckingham Palace, and I felt moved by the demeanour of the crowd. It was

plain that every man and woman there was sad and anxious. But the King insisted on reading the bulletins which were about to be sent to Reuter's.

When, later on, I dined with Lord Haldane I was touched when he drew me aside and said, "I want to tell you that you were right, and I was wrong, concerning the King's illness at Biarritz".

It will be remembered that after King Edward's death, his coffin was placed in the centre of Westminster Hall, and hundreds of thousands of men and women silent, slowly moving crowd was on its way to pay tribute to the dead Sovereign.

I should not have seen Westminster Hall that day, had I not met a Member of Parliament who took me in through the Lords Entrance. We stood for a while at the top of the Hall. It was indeed a strange and magnificent sight. Some of those there must have spent six or seven hours in the queue, for the progress was exceedingly slow.

An outstanding trait of Edward the Seventh from early youth was his determination that everything should be done with the greatest decorum—in fact that old-fashioned word, now almost gone out of use, was often on his lips, yet there can be little doubt that he thought not only that "the King can do no wrong", but that there is a special dispensation as to conduct for all royal personages.

On one occasion I had a singular talk with the dowager Lady Leconfield. At the time of our conversation she was over ninety, but she might have been a woman of fifty. She had about her no sign of age, and was slight and active. She was deeply religious, and yet, what I thought strange in so good a woman, she had a great fear of death. To the end of her life she constantly visited poor people in the neighbourhood of her

house. I remember her saying it was a delusion to suppose only rich people lived in Mayfair, and that there were slums behind the fine streets. She had a keen sense of humour, and I recall her description of watching Disraeli passing slowly by her house in his brougham, always at the same time every afternoon, on one occasion with a bird-cage containing a canary balanced on his knee. This canary bird was his gift to Lady Bradford. Few people were then aware of "Dizzy's" sentimental friendships with the two sisters, Lady Bradford, who was the one he really loved, and Lady Chesterfield.

I have known no woman who had a clearer and more ruthless view of human nature than had the dowager Lady Leconfield. I always felt, when the famous people she had known were discussed, that she was telling the exact truth as to her view of their natures and characters. But she never descended to what may be called idle gossip. During the last years of her life I spent a week with her each summer. She always took a delightful country-house, such as Clovelly Court, or Firle Place, and there she would gather round her, not only her children, and their wives and husbands, but a few friends as well. The life so led was simple, happy, and agreeable, with much excellent talk of the past. In spite of her great age our hostess was extremely active, and she always came down to breakfast. She remained a staunch Liberal, and was devoted to the memory of her brother, Lord Rosebery.

She had known Queen Victoria well, and as I found again and again when speaking to those who had known the Queen, her picture of Queen Victoria was entirely different from that which was then commonly accepted as true; for the years of which I am writing were the years during which Queen Victoria was regarded as having been a commonplace, far from clever, woman. Lady Leconfield regarded the Queen as not

only clever, but ruthless. I remember that during one of our talks she told me that in her view none of the Queen's children had a tenth of her ability.

I always felt as though I knew Dalmeny, the ancestral home of Lord Rosebery near Edinburgh, so much had I heard about it from Lady Leconfield. She knew all the strange and pathetic old stories connected with the place. There had been a beautiful Lady Dalmeny who ran away from her husband, and after this had happened he turned her picture to the wall, and never again spent a night in the house. He slept in a room at the end of the garden.

Lady Leconfield must have talked to me more freely than to almost anyone else she knew in her old age, for in general company, although most witty and amusing, she was extremely cautious as to what she said. Her mother had been one of Queen Victoria's bridesmaids. She once showed me the ugly brooch made of small turquoises which had been designed by Prince Albert and given to each of the bridesmaids.

After Prince Albert had married Queen Victoria, he imposed on himself what must have been a self-denying ordinance. He never went out alone in the London streets. He told General Grey that he had made this rule because he felt certain that if he followed his natural instinct, which would have been to go and see anything that he considered interesting or remarkable, he would be suspected of having a second establishment. As is now well known, the Prince Consort was not liked by either the men or the women with whom he was brought in contact. I was once given the following reason for this dislike. There had survived from the days of the Regency a tradition of great courtesy of manner towards women. Queen Victoria's Maids of Honour felt that the Prince regarded them as if they were his domestic servants. When I was a girl an old

lady told me that she remembered her surprise when the Prince Consort had told her to put some coals on the fire.

The Prince was also fond, and taught the Queen to be fond, of what had become abhorrent to the better-bred people in English society. This was a rough kind of practical joking which caused deep offence, and even in some cases disgust. It is strange that a man who was so sensitive should not have realized the unkindness, as well as the impropriety, of victimizing men and women who could not retaliate in kind.

There was a time, but it did not last long, when his favourite joke was that of so arranging a pail of water that when a door opened, whoever came through it received the pailful of water on his or her head.

The theory that Prince Albert led a melancholy life, and was not happy in his marriage, is disproved by a long series of unpublished letters to one of his close friends in Germany. They are frank, outspoken letters, and show him to have been, during the early years of his married life, a cheerful, happy man, passionately fond of his children, and enjoying the friendship and esteem of several distinguished and agreeable English people. That he was a man of intelligence and taste has been proved by the fact that his friends were all intelligent and accomplished.

Of the same generation as the dowager Lady Leconfield was Emily Lady Ampthill. Her husband had been for many years British Ambassador in Berlin, and she told me something which made an impression on me. She said that Queen Victoria and Princess Christian had both been anxious to know whether in her, Lady Ampthill's, opinion the Empress Frederick, as a widow, had married Count Seckendorff. She said she dreaded going to Windsor, as always the Queen and Princess Christian, not together, but separately, would ask her

what she believed to be true as to this possible morganatic marriage. To these questions her invariable reply was that she had formed no opinion. Lord Ernle once asked her if this was really true, as she was a woman of decided views. She replied that on the whole she was inclined to believe the Empress Frederick had made a morganatic marriage. Count Seckendorff, who was exactly the Empress Frederick's age, had become her page when she married the Crown Prince, and during the whole of their joint lives he had always been devoted to her. When her brother, the Prince of Wales, went to India, the then Crown Princess asked him if he would take the Count with him.

I heard that Sir Frederick Ponsonby, having published the Empress Frederick's letters to Queen Victoria, obtained leave to publish her letters to Edward the Seventh, when he was Prince of Wales, as these letters were of the highest historical interest. Unfortunately the German Emperor, then living in exile in Holland, sent a violent letter to the King of England saying he thought it would be monstrous for these letters to be published. A man who read them told me they contained bitter reflections on the writer's eldest son. Of this fact the German Emperor was probably aware, or if not aware, he must have suspected it, as he had been on bad terms with his parents. Yet it is strange, considering what has been, and is being, published, that letters of such outstanding interest have not yet appeared.

The Empress Frederick had a tender love for her eldest brother, and it was a love he fully returned. This, I was told by one who knew them all, was the reason King Edward so disliked William the Second. He thought the German Emperor had behaved with great unkindness to his mother, and he once told his nephew in the presence of my informant, that God

would punish him in this life for his lack of filial duty.

Apart from the fact that I am French by birth, I was interested in the personality of the German Emperor. As I have said before, I had published anonymously in 1908 a life of his mother, the Empress Frederick. I had been acquainted with several men and women who had known her well, and I had a sincere admiration for her character. She was far the cleverest of Queen Victoria's children, and though she was impulsive, and exceedingly imprudent in her conversation, there was a very noble streak in her nature.

The Empress's eldest son was liked in a section of London society, and went to considerable pains to make himself popular in England.

During his early youth, whenever he could escape—and escape was the word—from the Prussian Court, Prince William would pay a private visit to the United Kingdom. I remember hearing two couples who had entertained him compare him favourably with the Princes belonging to the British Royal Family. His manner to ladies, both old and young, was regarded as perfect, and he was certainly fond of England. This, to me, was confirmed in a curious way by the following fact.

When the question of his marriage arose, he being then a very young man, he asked that he might first meet Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein in his mother's country. The place chosen was Cumberland Lodge, a house in Windsor Great Park, where lived the lady's great-uncle, Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein.

Prince William of Prussia, as he then was, would ride from Windsor Castle to enjoy what he believed to be a romantic courtship, and appear at Cumberland Lodge unaccompanied. There he would spend sometimes as long as two hours with the

young girl who ultimately became his Empress. At the time Queen Victoria was believed to disapprove of this unconventional form of wooing, but she was exceedingly anxious for the marriage—far more so than were Prince William's own parents.

When I stayed, as I often did many years later, at Cumberland Lodge, I remembered all I had heard of this royal romance, and of how intelligently Queen Victoria had arranged everything in connection with what was to her so important a marriage. Yet I was told a story which showed how remote from reality were the royal personages of that day. The then Prince William of Prussia met at the British Embassy in Berlin an English girl with an ordinary English name. The two made friends, and the Prince suggested that when he next came to England he should get in touch with her. He did not, however, ask for her address. Some months later when staying at Buckingham Palace, the Prince wrote and suggested he should call on her, simply addressing his letter "London". The postal authorities, who therefore had to return it to the sender, saw it came from the Palace, and on opening the envelope were astonished to see the letter was simply signed "Wilhelm". They supposed it to have been written by one of the servants, and the letter was accordingly returned to the Palace, addressed to "Wilhelm".

Once I sat between Winston Churchill and Shane Leslie at a small luncheon party. Though they are first cousins, they are extraordinarily unlike the one to the other, yet they are both such interesting men and talked so well that I felt sorry they were *both* there, for I should have liked to be able to give undivided attention to one or other of them.

I asked Winston Churchill about his forthcoming book, and how long it was to be. He answered, "Two hundred thousand

words". I said I thought that tremendously long, but he replied, "Not nearly long enough for all I want to say".

He gave me an account of his methods of work. They were of deep interest to me, as a writer. I was astonished to learn that he writes far more than will be ultimately published. I was interested to hear that, like myself, he corrects what he has dictated till sometimes there is very little of the original left. He was in a very good humour and talked in a way which amused me, and caused me to admire his philosophical outlook on life.

He went on to tell the company of a novel he had written as a very young man. He was in the Army in India at the time. Someone stupidly asked him if the novel had been published, and he exclaimed crossly, "Of course it has been published! It came out recently in a cheap edition."

After luncheon several of the women there told extraordinary stories. The most interesting to me was that told by Hazel Lavery. It described how in a studio she had taken there was a Buddhist shrine. She was warned that everything had gone wrong in the house ever since it had been there, so she asked the owner to have the shrine taken away. The day she arrived it had gone, and she felt reassured, when suddenly she noticed a door which opened into another room. She went through the door, and there was the shrine. The caretaker of the studio was sent for and he said the door had been locked. She then locked the door again, and went out to lunch. When she came back, however, it was found the door was open, and she refused to use the studio till the Buddha had been removed. It was supposed to be extremely valuable, and had been left to its owner by a German officer killed in the war.

I heard a story which amused me. At the time of a great scandal in which a friend of Joseph Chamberlain played a

considerable part, Chamberlain went to see Labouchere and said, "What are the people saying about this awful affair?" Labouchere answered, "All the people I meet say how they wished it concerned that fellow Chamberlain, but that there was no hope of such a thing with him".

XI

Though it was believed the German fleet might come out and give battle to the British fleet, the more so as the German naval officers were said to be anxious to effect a landing on the British coast, it was also asserted that the Kaiser was violently opposed to anything of the kind being attempted. He undoubtedly had an intense affection for England and I was told by two people—neither of whom knew the other—that should England be conquered, he intended to become King-Emperor of the two countries. Early in the war he spoke to a neutral diplomat of his conviction that within a comparatively short time he would be established in Buckingham Palace. As a boy he asked whether he might go over the British Admiralty and, when he visited England after succeeding his father, he embarrassed certain British naval men he met by telling them that he hoped the German and the British navies would soon be fighting France side by side. It must have been a great annoyance and mortification to him when he learned that part of the French fleet was with the British fleet in the North Sea.

About this time I spent one of the most interesting evenings of my life, for I sat next to Sir Edward Goschen at dinner. My host had a minor royalty seated on his right, and as I was on his left, I was able to hear all Sir Edward had to say. He gave an account of what had happened in Berlin and in Vienna just before the outbreak of war. He said that if I wished to know what the German Emperor and Empress were really like, I would have my wish when I heard what each of them had said to von Jagow after he, an elderly man, who was on his honeymoon, hearing rumours of possible war, had rushed back

to Berlin.

William the Second and the Empress had not seen von Jagow since his wedding and, by way of congratulation, the Emperor observed, in English, "Let me remind you of the good old proverb, 'There is no fool like an old fool'". The Empress quickly intervened and said with a smile, "And now for a pleasanter proverb—'It is never too late to mend!'"

I gathered Sir Edward Goschen was inclined to believe the Kaiser had not had the slightest intention of really plunging all Europe into war. What he longed for was a short war with France. Still, ever since he had dropped Bismarck, his delight had been to rattle his sword, and to utter loud, vague threats.

One thing amused me and gave me pleasure. I believe it to be true, as it came directly from a German Princess who lived at Biarritz. She told an English friend that, early in the war, the Kaiser had been most rude and haughty to the minor royalties, but that later he could not do too much for them, and consulted them on all occasions, treating them with real courtesy.

Astonishing stories were told of the preparations which were being made at Kiel for the invasion of England. One such tale declared, on what was supposed to be excellent authority, that the Germans had actually loaded up twenty thousand men in shallow boats, and sent them out on a kind of trial trip. But they had to turn back before the trip was over, because the German sailors became violently seasick.

I wrote to a friend:

> "As you have always said, the Germans are people of one idea. Their submarine successes have so bucked them up that they actually sent a considerable number of submarines round the Isle of Wight in the hope of catching the Canadian convoys.

This became known, and so the Canadian troops were landed at Plymouth instead of at Southampton where everything had been got ready for them."

I cannot remember how I first became acquainted with Lady Randolph Churchill. I knew her, however, for many years, and soon after our first meeting I became really attached to her. She was at once so kind-hearted, so broad-minded, and had a true sense of humour. I do remember the first time we had a really intimate talk. We were both members of a house-party at Highgrove, the delightful house near Pinner, where our hostess was Eleanor Warrender and our host her brother, Hugh Warrender. Though Hugh Warrender was nearly fifty when the 1914-18 war broke out, he managed to get to the Front, and went into the trenches as a second lieutenant. He was extremely handsome, and at times looked twenty years younger than his real age.

I think Lady Randolph Churchill was one of my fellow-guests the first time I stayed at Highgrove. The weather was very hot, and she and I went out of doors after dinner, and walked about what was an exceptionally beautiful garden. Lady Randolph talked to me with extreme freedom of her past life and of her views and theories as to human life. What touched me then, and always when I was with her, was her deep love of her two sons. There was nothing in the world she would not have done for either of them. She was very proud of Winston, and some time after that visit to Highgrove, I remember her saying to me that some day he would be Prime Minister. I told her that I felt convinced he had a great future before him, as well as already a remarkable past behind him.

I felt then what I always felt when I was with her, and I saw her not infrequently in London, that her whole heart was

absorbed in her sons, and in Winston Churchill's political future. She gave me on this occasion a very true analysis of his character. She spoke with admiration and affection of his wife. This was of interest to me as I had known Clementine Churchill as Clementine Hozier, and there can have seldom been two women more different than Winston Churchill's wife and mother, each in their way admirable in their relation to him, but with very different views as to how life should be conducted.

I am not surprised that Lady Randolph had such an attraction for men much younger than herself. Apart from the remains of exceptional beauty, there was something so kindly and so broad-minded in her nature. There must have been a very powerful strain in either the father or the mother of Lady Randolph and her two sisters, for Winston's cousins, like himself, are all remarkable people. Clare Sheridan is a fine sculptor, and her first volume of memoirs was an outstandingly good book.

Lady Randolph's friends, and she was a woman of many friends, regarded her predictions as to Winston's future with scepticism. In the years of which I am writing, before the first World War, he was believed to have no political future. I always believed otherwise, and again and again I argued the question with people who claimed to know him very well, and to be familiar with his strange and powerful character. The best such men and women would allow was that he had a very remarkable gift for writing. Several of them believed he would live as an historian, and not in any way as a statesman.

Of deep interest to me was a talk I had with the brother of a friend of mine who had been British Consul at Dresden. I had heard that he had been well treated and had been given all diplomatic privileges. I asked him if this was true. He said in a

low voice, "Quite untrue", and went on to say that even before the Declaration of War, he was not allowed to have cipher messages, and did not see any English newspapers. One day he was asked to speak on the telephone, and an Englishman with whom he was only slightly acquainted and who lived in Dresden said very quickly, "War has been declared between England and Germany, and the mob is marching on your house". This was all too true, and there was little doubt that if they could have got hold of him he would have been murdered. On the other hand his German friends behaved well, and came to say goodbye to him.

I heard a funny story about an Englishwoman married to a German officer. She thought it wise to go to Holland, but when her husband was home on leave he wrote and begged her to bring the children to see him, and that she did. The moment they had passed the frontier, her little boy pointed to a picture of the Kaiser and said, "Look, mother, there is the wicked man who made the war". She said her heart stopped beating as everyone in the restaurant-car looked at her with hatred, but with extraordinary quickness she exclaimed, "Foolish boy! That is the great Kaiser, not the King of England."

Such strange and moving stories were told. One of them was that the fact that soldiers are always buried in uniform was causing a considerable shortage of wool not only in the belligerent countries, but all over the world. A man said to me, "No wool is ever entirely destroyed. To give you an example—the serge dress you are wearing. Even if you wear it out and throw it away, every scrap of wool in it will be used up again in some form."

Although the reverse was constantly said, I sometimes felt, when meeting Dutch people, that they were pro-German, and that although the French have always been popular in Holland.

This was shown by the French War Loan being over-subscribed there at once.

After lunching at 10 Downing Street I wrote to my mother that I had the feeling of how superior Margot was in mind and heart to all the men and women who were there, in spite of her odd flighty manner, and the foolish way in which she often talked. I could not help being amused when Mr. Asquith tried to persuade Margot to go to a meeting in the Guildhall, which had been called together with a view to making the British people save their money. She said sharply that thrift was a hateful quality, and that she had never known any thrifty person who was worth knowing, that she didn't wish to hear any more about thrift than she was forced to do. This was one of the few occasions when I heard Mr. Asquith bait his wife.

There was some notion that Cabinet Ministers might have to receive their salaries in Exchequer bonds. Mr. Asquith observed that as Exchequer bonds are exchangeable for cash at any time, it might be termed a laughing-stock. A gentleman present who sat next to me, said angrily that this was quite untrue, and that it would not be possible to exchange these bonds for money; and he was horrified at the thought of being paid in that way. He said the price of everything was going up and up.

Margot was so accustomed to people agreeing with her, even when in their heart of hearts they disagreed, that she was quite taken aback when I told her that the French had not been warned by the British Staff of the coming offensive at Verdun. I said to her, and very surprised she looked: "The British General Staff were so far from expecting an attack on Verdun that they were saying up to the last moment that it was only a feint, and they believed the big attack would be on the British lines." Her strong anti-French—what I suppose people would

call her pro-German—bias came out in almost everything she said concerning the war.

One day she actually observed that the Germans did not want to attack England. I replied, "Of course they did not. They would have done anything in the world to have kept England out, in the August of 1914. But do you think that was from kindness of heart to England?" I waited, and as she said nothing and only looked uncomfortable, I went on, "It was because with England standing out they would have had an easy task in rolling up France and Russia." She actually exclaimed, "And after that they would all have been sick of war". I answered, and how strange it seems now to look back on, "For a time, perhaps for a long time, during which they would be preparing for another war, they would be content to stay put".

Now and again Margot would say something that impressed me. There was a moment when the Asquith Government had a peculiar dislike of Northcliffe. Asquith was convinced he had warm secret friends in the Cabinet. One day Margot alluded to this belief. I said right out that I supposed Lloyd George was meant. To my astonishment she replied bitterly, "No, not Lloyd George. He and Northcliffe are no longer friends—I mean Lord Curzon, who at one time did a great deal of work for Northcliffe."

I at once said, "No, that is not true". She replied, "At one time he was on *The Times* staff. He told me so himself."

I replied, "He may have told you that. All the same, if he did he told you a lie. What *is* true is that as a young man Curzon wrote many articles for *The Times*, but he has never written a word since Northcliffe bought the paper, save one or two tributes to dead friends."

I told my husband what she had said, and he told me her

remark had shown the queer mixture of truth and untruth which obtained just then in Government circles.

During the March of that year, so convinced was the War Office that there would be a landing on the East Coast that the trenches were manned for four days, and some railway traffic was stopped. Had a landing taken place hundreds of thousands of troops would have been rushed up to the coast. I asked why this was believed—I mean that a landing was likely. I was told that it was owing to the fact that the Fleet had been mined in, for four days, and so would have been immobilized if the Germans had come. I was told this was a great secret, but that same afternoon I met a woman friend in no way connected with either of the services. She exclaimed, "Anything may happen at any time! Last week the Fleet could not go in or get out, for it had been mined in by the Germans."

I used to hear a great deal of discussion as to how many men the Germans would try and land in England. It was said they kept 200,000 soldiers always ready to start in Schleswig-Holstein. There was a theory current that there would be what were called "Murder raids". I said that in my view that might have happened at the beginning of the war with Germany, when she believed she was winning, but that I felt certain the German governing classes would deprecate anything being done which would make very difficult the relations between England and Germany after the war. I was convinced that what they still hoped for was an inconclusive peace. A lady present, who was supposed to be pro-German, agreed with me, but I could see that another woman there, a shrewd and intelligent Austrian, thought the military authorities in Berlin far too strong to listen to any sensible suggestion.

Among various tales that were going the rounds was a circumstantial story of how a fleet of German transports had

been seen off the British coast. They were steaming south-west, then they turned sharply towards France. There were constant rumours of battles in the North Sea.

In my view, however, everything I heard, but naturally I did not pose as an authority, convinced me that the finest soldier after Foch was Castelnau. It was owing to him that Verdun was defended. It was thought such a defence would be impossible, as there was only one line of railway, but Castelnau rushed up the famous 20th Corps, which in France is considered as good as are the Guards in this country. He organized the whole of the defence in one day, disregarded the wishes of the French Government, and commandeered every kind of vehicle, including commercial vans and private motors.

I wrote then:

> "I constantly meet people who have lived in Germany, and were very fond of the Germans. One such lady was always trying to see Americans, as they are neutral. She said her latest news had come from an Englishwoman married to a German. She gave a terrible account of the sufferings which were being endured by the very poor, and declared that although the well-to-do were managing, the state of general depression reigning over German society was very strong. My informant seemed to think that this depression was of great importance. I could not agree with her. I didn't feel that the military authorities would care whether 'Society' were depressed or not. What they would mind would be a really vital shortage of rubber and leather, and above all of food for the fighting men."

There were times when all the people I met were absorbed in what was going on in Parliament rather than what was happening at the Front. At one meeting in the House of Commons, Balfour completely lost his temper, and made a violent attack on Churchill. Churchill took careful notes during the whole of the Balfour speech, then he got up, but only spoke for seven minutes. This quarrel—if so it might be called—between two politicians was the one thing which was talked of, and to my disgust pushed the war, Verdun, the German fleet, into the background.

About this time I heard an extraordinary account of the Secret Services. The best was that run by Russia, and it was through the Russian spies at Kiel that the British Government received its most authentic information.

A considerable number of foreign women of high birth offered themselves as nurses to the London hospitals. One such was the Princess de Chimay. Everything she valued in the world had been destroyed during the first German rush through Belgium.

One of my most interesting evenings during 1916 was on May 24th.

> "I dined with the Reginald McKennas, when my host was obviously gloomy, and, as is true of all British politicians, he could not understand the small amount of influence the French Government has in France. The British Government cannot understand why just now France is governed by a military oligarchy. To this she owes her life. France knows that it was owing to her Government that France was so terribly unprepared in the August of 1914.
>
> "I asked Reginald McKenna what he heard of the

state of Germany. He said at once, 'Don't believe a word you hear. The simple truth is that it is impossible to know what state Germany is in. Every neutral who comes to England from Germany has an axe to grind, and tells a different tale. All the same it is plain that Germany is anxious with regard to her submarine warfare. During the last fortnight the submarine campaign has stopped. No neutral ships have been sunk, and very few Allied ships. They are evidently afraid lest America should come in.' I asked if he thought that that fear was justified. Would America have come in had the submarine campaign gone on? He replied, 'No, nothing will ever bring America in, and were I a German I should think the Germans had been ill advised to act as they have done'."

XII

All through the winter of 1916-1917 there was a feeling of great uneasiness concerning Russia. I recall meeting a lady connected with the Court who told me that the King and Queen, unlike all those English people who thought they knew Russia because they had lived there, felt certain there was going to be a revolution, and what is more, the King was right, almost to a day, as to when it would begin. This was just after a group of well-known Englishmen had returned from Russia declaring there would never be revolution there.

So the news of the Russian Revolution fell on London like a bomb. Russia had become well liked in England, and there was much coming and going between the two countries. I was occasionally asked to meet pleasant, highly intelligent, Russians who came to London in connection with the war, yet I remember certain stories were whispered in the business world concerning what was called graft. One such tale concerned a Grand Duke who, after an interview with an Englishman who was then about to supply the Russian Army with much-needed equipment, hummed and hawed and at last blurted out, "But how much will my share be of the money you are going to receive from my country?"

Amazing tales were told at that time of the corruption in Russia. To give one example, a number of motor-lorries were ordered from England, and to the surprise of the manufacturers exact and clear specifications were sent, although the Russians were always extremely casual as to specifications of any kind. It was further explained that the Russians needed the lorries urgently, and so the making of them was rushed through. I

wrote:

> "The other day some of these lorries were captured on the Western Front. They had been sent straight to Germany, and obviously had really been ordered by Germany."

The Russian Revolution started on March the 17th, 1917, and four days before the news reached London, I wrote:

> "While lunching to-day with Mrs. Leopold de Rothschild I sat next to a young man who has just come back from Russia. He was there as A.D.C. to a British general, and he was at the Russian Front for some months. When I told him the news from Petrograd made me feel very uneasy, he exclaimed, 'Don't believe a word you read in the paper, Mrs. Lowndes! What England ought to pray for is a revolution in Russia.' I felt astounded, and exclaimed, 'Do you mean now, or after the war?' He replied, 'I mean *now*, and the sooner the better'."

I learned it was actually believed in British Government circles that a revolution in Russia would make the Russians more eager to carry on the fight with the Allies.

Meanwhile there was a feeling almost everywhere in England that England's only enemy in Russia was the Czarina. Though she was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, and had been to a certain extent brought up by the Queen, it was never forgotten she was German by birth. Years later, owing to the publication of the unfortunate Czarina's private letters, it became known how untrue had been the views held of her both

in England and France.

I lived among men and women who gave everything to the war. But there were Russians who had taken refuge in England bringing their wealth with them, and to these Russians the war seemed to mean little or nothing. They were wildly extravagant and lived magnificently.

Sir Francis Lloyd, who was in command of the London District, was extremely severe with regard to reckless entertaining. But there was a feeling of impatience and anger at his attitude, partly because it was felt that officers on leave from the Front had a right to be entertained. Yet there was a growing shortage of food, and I was asked by the Duke of Westminster to a gathering at Grosvenor House which was called "A Meeting of Housekeepers". Women belonging to every class of Londoner were invited. I recall the room where the meeting took place as having been curiously small, and I was told afterwards that comparatively few women had expressed their willingness to be present.

The way the human memory works has always struck me as singularly strange. I have forgotten so much that happened during those four years, yet I clearly recollect this somewhat absurd little meeting, and I wrote an account at the time of what had happened.

> "One lady made a violent speech, evidently hoping, so the woman next to me whispered, that she would make the flesh of the duchesses creep. The speaker declared that within a fortnight there would be hardly anything left to eat in London, and she even added with satisfaction that every person now listening to her would soon be walking to a communal kitchen, holding a little basin in her

hand."

I went on:

> "Another speaker declared we should soon have Communism, as the poor were angry with the rich. This irritated me, and I got up and exclaimed that I thought the poor had a right to feel extremely angry with what was then the gross mismanagement of the potato and sugar situations. I was sorry to see that my remarks were very unpalatable to the earnest well-meaning chairwoman. Yet my words embodied the stark truth."

I think I was the only woman present acquainted with a considerable body of working women; and I recall how surprised some of those about me looked when I said I never found the poor giving a thought to those better off than themselves. I said, "Why should they do so, for, as a matter of fact, everyone on the whole is now short of the same things?" Another thing I said which also surprised my hearers, was that those called "poor people" were bitterly incensed at foolish rulings which only benefited tradespeople. I also pointed out that the man who was then bossing the potato market was the biggest potato-dealer in the country, and I added that, with regard to the well-to-do getting potatoes, in so far as I might be regarded as belonging to that category, I had only been able to buy two pounds of potatoes in three weeks. Further, that I had only got those two pounds because I overheard a woman in a shop being told she would be allowed two pounds of potatoes. What caused bitterness was the fact that there were plenty of new potatoes, at half a crown a pound, for those who could

afford to pay that price.

A remarkable woman who invited me to go and see her from time to time was Lady Bryce, wife of the learned man who had been a popular and well-liked British Ambassador to Washington. Lord Bryce was by way of being an extreme Liberal, and he had known many Russian revolutionaries; I met one of these Russians in their flat, and thought him curiously de-nationalized. He showed this by speaking as though he fully expected the German Army would get to Petrograd, and he did not seem to mind one way or the other. This, to me, was an astonishing attitude.

I was so impressed with a talk I had in the March of 1917 with Lord Carnock, who had been Ambassador in Petrograd, that I made a note of what he said. I always felt the better after I had been in Lord Carnock's company. He was what few diplomats are—a frank and upright man. Having known the Czar and Czarina well, he declared the Czar to be straightforward, modest, and intelligent, in fact almost his ideal of a human being. This impressed me, for I was aware Lord Carnock had been the only man in Russia who had warned the Czar of what was going to happen. I also heard that Lord Carnock had told the British Government of the coming Revolution, and that they had not believed him.

I have sometimes wondered whether what I heard at the time was true, that the Kerensky Government had sent Lloyd George a message asking him to invite the Czar and Czarina to come to England. The one country where the new Russian Government was determined these unfortunate people could not be allowed to settle outside Russia was Denmark. It was thought that if she arrived in Denmark the Czarina would at once get in touch with Germany.

During that April, it was rumoured that a British ship was

to be sent to bring the Czar and his family to England, and that Lloyd George was eager they should come. I believe it to be true that, when this might have been done, the Czar refused to leave Russia.

To my mind this was the most dangerous moment of the war for England and France. Extraordinary peace terms were known to have been offered by Berlin to the new Russian Government. Had they been seriously considered, and had Germany and Russia become real allies, the war must have ended in a very different way to what it did.

A British general, the brother of a friend of mine, attached for a long time to the Czar's Headquarters, on his return to England gave me what I have always believed was the truest account I ever heard of the Czarina. He knew her well, as she and her daughters often spent a week with the Czar at Army Headquarters. He assured me she was so absorbed in religion that she gave no thought to politics; but he admitted she would certainly have preferred any kind of peace with Germany to the abdication of the Czar. In this Englishman's view there was a powerful group of people in Russia working for a German peace, half of this group being in the direct pay of Germany, and the other half believing that only by a quick peace could a revolution be avoided. It must be admitted that as to this belief they were probably right. Listening to this man I felt the situation in Russia closely recalled that of France just after 1789.

I remember an occasion at dinner when there were only the three of us, Lord Haldane, his sister, my dear friend Elizabeth, and myself. There was a blizzard that evening and I walked through it to Queen Anne's Gate. No other guest appeared, so I had a real talk with my host. I remember his saying that after the war there would come a great political cleavage between

the Conservatives and those who regarded themselves as the leaders of the Liberal Party. I wrote, "Lord Haldane does not think the old gang will ever come back, but he does believe that Lloyd George and Winston Churchill will survive".

His sister asked if he had any private knowledge of what was happening in Germany, and rather to my surprise he said yes, he had. He then told us the following story. A distinguished chemist, who was partly of Russian extraction, had been employed for many years by a group of South African mine-owners. This man fell ill, and was in Germany having treatment when the war broke out. Though he was much over military age, the Germans knew he was an authority on explosives, and would not allow him to leave their country. So he was interned. He was well treated, and had friends in Berlin. Also his employers sent him parcels. In time he was cured, and the head doctor said to him, "You are now well again; but that makes the possibility of your being exchanged more remote than ever". This so distressed him that he put his whole scientific mind to the problem of making himself ill again. Sure enough after a time the doctor came to him and said sadly, "You are now marked down for death. But there is one cheerful side to it, for you will be able to go back to England." He had a fellow-prisoner whom he wished to take with him; so he got some permanganate of potash, and painted his friend all over, and so awful was the man's appearance that the Germans said he might leave too. He had made friends with the commanding officer of the camp by gifts of margarine and chocolate. When a parcel arrived for him, he would send a pound of butter or margarine to the Commandant, with his compliments, and a day or two later he would be asked if he would care to go into Berlin for the day on business. He was always, of course, accompanied by a guard. So he and his

guard would go off by train, and he would say to the guard, "Give your wife and children this chocolate, and meet me again at four o'clock at the station". One day a German friend said to him, "We are interested in the new English gases. We suspect they are made by a certain Scot, called John Haldane. We know all about his work."

It was confidently believed in 1917 in every newspaper office that an invasion was certain to take place. I recall meeting the director of one of the great railway companies, who told me that in every main London station there were trains with steam up ready to take troops at a moment's notice to any danger point on the coast. A landing at Berwick was expected, and on one day for some hours ordinary railway passengers were not allowed to go North. But almost everyone expected a landing would be attempted on the East Coast, and for many years I kept a rough plan which had been given me when I arrived at Overstrand, in Norfolk, for a holiday with my children. This plan showed the roads, the lanes, and even the little byways where, had a landing taken place, we were to have gone on foot inland.

A sudden outbreak of belief in spiritualism was both pathetic and natural. I was shown a curious pamphlet which purported to contain the experiences, since his death, of the late Archdeacon Wilberforce. It was asserted that he described himself as preaching to groups of Russian soldiers who had just been killed, he standing on one of their guns with them all lying dead about him, while their souls listened to what he was saying.

Any kind of news from Russia was eagerly welcomed, and I recall an afternoon at a friend's house when we were given a most vivid account of Rasputin, and of his mysterious death. Two versions had reached the British Foreign Office, and both

came from what were regarded as reliable sources. Yet they were very different. The first story was that Rasputin was invited to a palace by four young noblemen, on the promise that there would be four beautiful women. The ladies were there, but as soon as he arrived they left, and Rasputin was suddenly told he was about to die. None of them, however, wished to kill him, and he was handed a revolver and told to shoot himself. This he refused to do, and so the men who were there finally killed him, and when night came, they took his body from the palace, and having opened a hole in the ice, put him into the Neva.

The second version is that Rasputin was kidnapped, taken to a palace which belonged to one of the Russian princes, and told he was about to be shot. He asked if he might have supper before being killed, and this was regarded as a reasonable request. While he was eating his supper, a man who was present noticed that everyone there, excepting himself, was falling under Rasputin's hypnotic influence.

I remember being told some time before his death that Rasputin had the gift, common in the East but unknown in the West, of mass hypnotism. Sir Louis Mallet once told me he felt certain Rasputin had this hypnotic power.

His actual murderer, the Prince who shot him dead, had been a great deal in England, where he had many friends. After his return to Russia, he married a niece of the Czar. This young Prince had a special reason for hating Rasputin, for his mother had been a close friend of the Czarina, and had thought it right to tell her of Rasputin's bad moral character. It was said that, as a result, the Czarina broke with the lady, and the family were not only banished from Court, but also sent into exile.

It was believed here that Rasputin was in German pay. He had extremely extravagant tastes, and it would have been

difficult for him to procure much money. On one occasion he persuaded a man to ask the Czarina to give Rasputin a considerable sum. She expressed amazement, and observed that it was impossible Rasputin should want any money, as he lived so very simply and unostentatiously.

I met during that winter one of the few human beings who saw clearly what was going to happen in Russia. This was Sir William Tyrrell, whom I always enjoyed meeting. He was an intimate friend of Sir Edward Grey, while Grey had charge of the Foreign Office. At the time of which I write he had just heard of Rasputin's death, and he told me Rasputin dead would be more dangerous than Rasputin alive. He also had been convinced there would be a revolution in Russia before the end of the war. As to that Sir William Tyrrell was right, when every expert was proved wrong.

What impressed me at the time was that no one seemed to know what was actually going on in Russia. This was true even of Englishmen who had lived there for years.

When the Revolution came these men were convinced there would soon be a new Czar, for they put everything which was happening down to the weakness of the then Czar, and to the Czarina's lack of good sense.

I was deeply attached to Blanche, Lady Airlie. She was by birth a Stanley of Alderley, and, as my English grandfather had been intimate with her father, she had a kind feeling for me. I wrote to my mother:

> "Lady Airlie is extremely interested in the personality of Winston Churchill, her grandson by marriage. Though she admires him, and thinks him brilliantly clever, she would not agree when I told her that in my view he had been badly 'carted' by

> Lloyd George. She actually took Lloyd George's side, and said that if she had to drive a coach on the edge of a precipice (which she seemed to think was what Lloyd George was doing) the last man she would want as a passenger would be Winston Churchill. I disagreed, for to my mind he has an iron nerve."

I have never known any woman whose conversation was more stimulating and delightful than that of Lady Airlie. She had lived all her life among clever people, and she once told me that she had known intimately four Prime Ministers. In her view the British people, while in some ways incalculable, are broad-minded when it comes to their Prime Ministers. She said there were three types of Prime Ministers they admired. The first type is the man who cares for wine, women, and song, with racing thrown in. Such men had been Palmerston and Melbourne. The second type is the serious-minded statesman who, the British believe, walks with God, or it is hoped walks with God. Such a man, for instance, as was Gladstone. The third type is the great noble who, with everything to make his life perfect, becomes the hard-working servant of his country. She singled out the then Lord Hartington as being that type of man.

In the autumn of 1917, I met Sir Eyre Crowe, the *Éminence Grise* of the Foreign Office. Although his mother had been a German, and he was actually married to a German lady to whom he was devoted, he was intensely anti-German.

After the war I spent a fortnight with him as a fellow-guest in a delightful French country-house. I saw little of him, however, for he was determined his children should see everything there was to be seen within a radius of, say, fifty

miles. He persuaded our hostess to let him take the only car available, and every day they would all set off for hours. As a result I never saw any of the châteaux of the Loire.

I was very much impressed by Sir Eyre Crowe's great ability. He talked with extreme freedom of public affairs, and I recall certain things he said which proved how able and shrewd a man he was.

I will give one instance. There was a strong wish on the part of both France and England to support the Kerensky regime in Russia. As a result of this wish Kerensky was highly praised and described as a very remarkable man. Eyre Crowe said to me, "Kerensky is a talker—a talker and little else. The forces in Russia backing that man will none of them fight for an ideal: they don't act, they only talk."

At the present time it is worth putting on record that Eyre Crowe had a high opinion of Winston Churchill, and that when what may be called the Churchill stock was low. He told me that had Churchill not been there in the early months of the 1914-1918 war, little or nothing would have been done. Eyre Crowe in some of his ways was oddly German. For instance he would have liked to suppress every English newspaper on the outbreak of war. Or if that proved impossible, he would have had every editor dragooned, and he would have forbidden a word to be printed which was not approved by the Government. He seemed to think—what was certainly untrue—that nothing was censored except military news. Owing to my being the wife of a member of *The Times* staff, I did not like to tell him that everything that could, or could not, be printed during the war, was in the hands of those who managed the Press Bureau.

I remember one conversation with Sir Eyre Crowe, of which I made a record in my diary. It concerned the power of

the various States of Europe in the air. He gave me a frank account of a discussion which had taken place in London before the war. Someone present had said that England ought to build a fleet of Zeppelins. The others present believed in building aeroplanes. He described the way the experts had discussed this question. The majority had been right in their view that the Zeppelin danger could be countered.

I was surprised to hear him say that Germany ought to be invaded by air, and that it should be with planes, and not called "a reprisal". He told me some of the results obtained by our airmen had been remarkable—he had seen the photographs taken from the air, and said they were much better than those taken by the Germans. Though he did not like the French, he was very fair and honest when talking of them.

He once told me the following story. A German deserter made his way across the lines, bringing with him what seemed to be valuable plans. But when these plans were compared with the photographs which had been taken by a French aviator just before the deserter had arrived, it was found that the location of the big guns on the German plans differed entirely from that shown on the French photographs, and as a result the deserter was shot as a spy. Eyre Crowe said there was little doubt the deserter was an officer in disguise and that, had the plans he had brought with him been accepted, it would have led to very heavy losses of life on the side of the French.

Almost every prediction made during the first World War was wrong. I will give one example. Reginald McKenna, who was extremely shrewd, and was said to have one of the best financial brains in the country, foresaw universal financial ruin if the war went on into 1918. He expected a good peace offer from Germany in the November of 1917. He said that how it would be received would really depend on America. He was

annoyed when I said I couldn't help being pleased at his saying that, as though nominally a Wilson peace, it would really be a French peace, as America on the whole was devoted to France.

About that time I had the good fortune to meet the great authority on the Near East, Mr. Gerald Henry Fitzmaurice. He was said to know more about Turkey than any other living European. He was attached to the British Embassy in Constantinople right up to the outbreak of war, and he knew Germany well too. He told me he had received a curious account of Berlin, and said the condition of the children in the streets was bad.

I remember as if it had just happened the first real daylight raid on London. It was in June 1917, and in broad daylight. I had gone to a private view with my mother, who was eighty-eight, and although always a delicate woman remained full of interest in everything. On that particular occasion she instinctively picked out the finer pictures. When I thought she was becoming tired, we went back to Westminster in an open taxi. All at once, in Abingdon Street, we noticed men looking out of their windows, and an unusual animation in what is generally a quiet thoroughfare. I realized there must be a raid. Sure enough, when we reached Great College Street, where my children went to school, I stopped the taxi, and found they had all been sent into the basement, though the smallest bomb falling on any house in that street would have completely demolished it.

When we reached home I found that several people had telephoned to me. Every kind of rumour was current. I was told that bombs had been dropped on the Tower, the Mint, and Broad Street. As a matter of fact all these rumours were false. Bombs had fallen, one close to Paternoster Row, one in the moat of the Tower, and one on an East End school full of

children. That was the real tragedy.

The next day I met a friend who had been in Liverpool Street Station when a bomb fell there. She was in a train, and at first did not feel frightened, then four more bombs came down, and she became terrified, noticing that everyone was rushing about on the platforms looking for shelter. I heard a vivid account of that raid from someone else who was there. A young woman just about to get into the Cromer Express heard an officer call out to his wife, "They've come! They've come!" and he started running to what he thought would be the shelter of the station roof. A moment later the first bomb fell on the front part of the train, shattering the engine and the first two carriages. Everyone who could do so went down to a large cellar below the Refreshment Room. What haunted me for a long time was her description of the scene on the platform. Sad as she said was the sight of the dead, for many people had been torn limb from limb, what horrified her most was seeing the desperately injured being carried off in ambulances.

It was astonishing how normal life went on. Two days after this raid, I dined out and had a talk with Lord Eustace Cecil, the only surviving brother of the late Lord Salisbury. His commission had been given him, when he was only sixteen, by the Duke of Wellington, and he began his Army career by going out to the Cape and then to India for the Mutiny; then home, and afterwards to the Crimea. All these adventures befell him before he was twenty-six, at which age he married.

He disapproved of ladies smoking, and he told me that after he had been smoking he always took a pastille so that any lady who met him should not know that he had been smoking. He observed that people seemed to want to start a third sex, and he remarked with dry humour that he had always found the two sexes quite enough for him! I thought him one of the most

agreeable men I had ever met.

XIII

My husband and I often agreed to differ in matters of opinion, though never with regard to our conduct of life, or as to our children. We both thought it extraordinary that, after a public man's death, his friends often affect to feel unmoved when something is published to his detriment. They almost always prefer to ignore such an attack, pretending—for it is a pretence—that it is of no consequence. Such conduct appeared to us cruel, as well as foolish, when the man in question is likely to live in history.

The modern biography which caused us most surprise was that of Lord Grey of Fallodon. I wrote to an intimate friend:

> "The biographer, George Trevelyan, is, as you know, a distinguished historian, and was evidently on intimate terms of friendship with Edward Grey. Before he began writing the life he spent an evening with me, and we spoke at length of the man whom we each believed we had known well. So the following facts have surprised me.
>
> "Mr. Trevelyan must have been aware, or if not he should have been, that Lloyd George not only condemned Grey to a certain extent in public, but in private conversation made serious attacks on Grey's private character. Even if only a part of what Lloyd George then said had been true, Grey would have been a singularly ignoble type of hypocrite.
>
> "Now no notice of these attacks is taken in Grey's Life. I have no doubt that Mr. Trevelyan, if

challenged, would say, 'Why take any notice of vile and stupid lies?' Yet the old saying that if mud is thrown some of it sticks, undoubtedly embodies a truth. I know that Edward Grey felt keenly certain far milder statements concerning himself which were made by Lloyd George. That they were untrue made no difference to his feeling. This became known to certain of Grey's friends. They approached Lloyd George and they begged him to retract these statements. He refused to do so.

"I much regret this fact is not mentioned in the biography. I once spoke to someone who had been a close friend of Grey, and who is regarded as one of the most distinguished men of our time. I record his exact words because I put them down immediately after they were uttered. They were as follows: 'I should take as little notice of such an absurd attack as I should of a bad smell'. He did not realise that after all a bad smell does *smell*. What is more, both men and women remember a bad smell after they have forgotten everything else connected with a place."

All through the first World War, indeed till the death of his second wife, I saw a great deal of Edward Grey and I thought him a far more able man than did many people who have left different views of him and of his character on record. At a time when things were not going well I used to be with him, nearly always alone, each morning in a Scotch country-house when he opened the dispatch-boxes which had been brought down from London through the night. He would talk with a certain measured freedom of all that was going on, though I never

heard him utter a word of criticism of any public man.

Dorothy Widdrington, the first wife of Edward Grey, belonged to one of the oldest and most Conservative of Northumbrian families. She was descended from the knight celebrated in a Border ballad as the warrior of whom it was said that "when his legs were cutted off, he fought upon his stumps". On her marriage she became an enthusiastic Liberal, and she was highly esteemed, not only in that section of the political world to which Edward Grey belonged, but in the Conservative social and political world in which she had been born and bred. In Grey's *Life* are published moving letters which prove the deep love and admiration her husband felt for her.

Dorothy Grey's death, in 1906, had been very tragic. She was alone, driving in a high dog-cart through a wood near Fallodon, when the horse took fright and she was thrown out. Her head was injured, she was carried unconscious into a cottage, and lived only four days.

Edward and Dorothy Grey had lived in amity and happiness for over twenty years. They had come closer and closer together, and her death was so crushing a blow to her husband that, for a while, he thought of giving up political life. His friend and colleague, R. B. Haldane, played a considerable part in persuading him not to do so.

It was known that their marriage was what is called in France *un mariage blanc*. The knowledge must have come from Lady Grey, for Grey was deeply reserved. It gave rise to an impression, perhaps natural under the circumstances, that Grey was not what in the Middle Ages was called "a full man". This, however, was not the case. It was, nevertheless, true that when they returned from their honeymoon, Dorothy Grey told her husband she had discovered in herself a strong aversion to

the physical side of marriage. As a result of this admission, Grey said that henceforth they should live as brother and sister. This was plainly stated as a fact in a report sent to his Government by the then German Ambassador just before the outbreak of war in 1914.

Grey told his second wife, Pamela, the widow of Lord Glenconner, that after he and Dorothy had been married a considerable number of years, she suddenly suggested that they should lead a normal married life. He demurred, giving as his reason that they were both happy and satisfied in the life they had agreed on leading.

With Pamela it was otherwise; and after they had been married some months she was expecting a child. But she had a mishap, as a result of having driven many miles to a political meeting. This is not stated in the official biography; it was told by Lady Grey to the present writer, and confirmed, after her death, by Lord Grey, to whom the lack of a child had remained a bitter grief.

I have heard many men and women, especially women, describe Dorothy Grey as singularly delightful. I was never privileged to see that side of her character. To me she seemed extremely self-absorbed.

In *A Victorian Diarist* Lady Monkswell wrote of a friend: "She told me to my astonishment that Lady Grey's central idea is that Sir Edward Grey should retire from political life, and that they should devote themselves to their home and estate, Fallodon in Northumberland". She added, "Lady Grey also has a contempt for children, and does not even desire any. She is a very handsome, delightful, and clever woman, something over thirty, but could anybody be more 'madly with her blessedness at strife'?"

I was touched, years later, to learn that soon after her

marriage she had confided to Elizabeth Haldane her fear lest her husband, then a very young man, should be influenced by various members of the brilliant hedonistic world in which many members of the then Liberal Party had their being. In a sense Lady Grey's fears were absurd, for her husband would never have felt attracted by the sort of people she had in mind.

Many years after Dorothy Grey's death, Lord Haldane spoke to me of her with great affection and admiration. I felt he was contrasting her with my friend Edward Grey's second wife, and certainly to his surprise, and I think to his annoyance, for at that time of his life very few people ever ventured to contradict him, I said that in my view Pamela Grey had a far finer character than Dorothy Grey had had. I added that this was proved by the privately printed Life of Dorothy Grey, written by Mrs. Creighton, the widow of the former Bishop of London. The future bishop had been Vicar of Embleton, the village close to Fallodon, and he and his wife had been in constant touch with Edward and Dorothy Grey.

In my view Edward Grey was very unlike the picture of him which seems to have been formed by many people, and has been put on record in memoirs and letters. Yet it is this picture which will live in history.

Though I have never known a man with a more frank and straightforward manner, Grey's long training as Foreign Secretary had taught him how to evade answering a question he considered indiscreet. The fact that he had been for a long time—and by that I mean over years—on terms of intimate friendship with both Edward and Pamela Glenconner was not realized by certain of his friends.

Propinquity is an old-fashioned word seldom used nowadays—indeed it is some years since I last heard it uttered. Yet it exactly describes the part which was played in the

friendship of Edward Grey and Lord and Lady Glenconner, from 1906 to when Lord Glenconner's death took place.

The Glenconners lived in Queen Anne's Gate, and the Foreign Office is within a few minutes' walk of 34 Queen Anne's Gate. Grey used to work on, long after he had sent his secretaries home, and he would then walk down Birdcage Walk to dine with the Glenconners. I, too, often dined with them, and thus he and I became friends.

At that time Edward Glenconner was far fonder of Grey than was his wife Pamela. What mattered supremely in her life were her children, and she spent with them every spare moment of each day. She did not care for society, but the Liberal Party had very few hostesses who were in a position to entertain on a great scale. Hence she felt compelled to do so.

One of the terrifying experiences in my life occurred at one of these political parties, and it took place in the picture gallery. This was an immense room, lined with the splendid eighteenth-century paintings which had been collected by Sir Charles Tennant.

As preamble to my story, I may say that one of the fine traits of Pamela Glenconner's character was her loyalty. Among her first cousins was Lord Alfred Douglas, who, having been connected with the Oscar Wilde case, was then looked at askance. But he was always asked to the parties given at 34 Queen Anne's Gate, at a time when he was seldom, if ever, seen in London society.

The experience to which I refer occurred at a large party where the then Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, received the guests, standing by the host and hostess. I had been asked to dinner, so I was already in the picture gallery, and I was sitting fairly near the door, talking to Robert Ross who had also been at dinner.

Suddenly I saw Lord Alfred Douglas come through the door. Robert Ross stood up; the two men confronted one another; and Lord Alfred Douglas shouted out various violent terms of abuse.

There were by now many people in the great room, so perhaps as long as two minutes went by before those present took notice of what was happening. Then a number of men, who were friends of Robert Ross, began rushing him towards the entrance of the next room, he being followed the while by the still shouting Lord Alfred Douglas.

Ross's friends managed to get him behind a broad table which had been placed across the farthest corner of the picture gallery, but Douglas flung himself across the table so as to get at his enemy. However, he was pulled back, and a number of men, among whom was our host, quickly pushed Ross through the door which gave into the drawing-room. Someone then shut the door, leaving Lord Alfred shouting with rage at being baulked of his prey. Several of the guests, including Alfred Lyttelton, tried to calm him, but their words had no effect. Meanwhile, the host went from one lady to another, offering his apologies for a scene which had been in no way his fault.

Efforts were then made to persuade Lord Alfred Douglas to leave the house, but for some time he refused to do so. However, at last his mother, an aunt of Lady Glenconner, asked him to take her to her carriage, and he did not reappear in the picture gallery.

This, however, was not the end of the affair for me. After I had gone home, and had been asleep for about an hour, the telephone rang by my bed, and I heard a voice which had been familiar to me from childhood, that of Charles Russell, a son of Lord Russell of Killowen, and a noted solicitor. He said he understood I had been at Lady Glenconner's party, and had

heard what had been said by Lord Alfred Douglas to Robert Ross. He went on to announce that he was coming to see me the next morning, to take down from my lips exactly what had occurred, and to hear from me what Lord Alfred had said. He further informed me there was going to be a case brought by Robert Ross against Lord Alfred Douglas, and that I should be called as a witness, to testify to the abuse which Douglas had hurled at the other man.

Fortunately for me, certain of the words which Lord Alfred had shouted were quite unknown to me. Charles Russell put these words to me, and asked if I could remember hearing them uttered. I said with truth that I did not remember them, that they had sounded to me like gibberish, though I had realized the two men were furiously angry with one another. He said that when he came to see me in the morning I might remember what had been said. I lay awake, quaking with fright, till my husband came in from *The Times* office. He was extremely angry, and told me on no account to try to remember the words Alfred Douglas had shouted.

I was so frightened that I stayed awake all night. But the next morning Charles Russell rang me up and said I should not be called as a witness, as Robert Ross had decided to take no notice of Lord Alfred Douglas's behaviour, as he regarded him as a lunatic.

This horrid experience, terrifying as it had been, had one pleasant effect, for it brought about a real friendship between Lord Glenconner and myself. After that evening he went out of his way to show me kindness, and during the years that followed I think I can truly say we were on terms of true affection. I became a constant guest at his Wiltshire country-house, Wilsford Manor, near Salisbury, and also at Glen in Scotland. The more I knew him, the greater became my

admiration for his character. He was a devoted father, and in my view never recovered from the loss in battle of his eldest son, Bim Tennant, during the autumn of 1915.

Of all the beautiful women I have known, Pamela Glenconner was the most beautiful, and she kept her beauty to the end of her life. She was also endowed with an exceptional sense of humour, a delightful cultivation of mind, and when she chose to show them, brilliant powers of conversation. Yet she would have preferred to lead an entirely country life, surrounded by her children and a few close friends.

One thing which placed her apart from her fellows was certain tenets which she held with all the strength of her being. For instance, she detested the public-school system, by which all about her set such store. She would have preferred her sons to attend a day school, as had been the old Scotch way. Her only fault, and it was one which caused her great unhappiness, was that she had a jealous nature. Thus she took a passionate dislike to any man or woman who was loved by those she herself loved. She once told me, in a voice which shook with anger, how, early in her married life, she being then, I think, the mother of two children, their nurse had locked the door of the nursery as she was about to give one of them a bath and refused to allow the mother to enter. Pamela described to me how she forced the woman to open the door, at once gave her notice, and made her leave the house within an hour! Edward Tennant, as he then was, gave the nurse a year's wages, not so much to assuage her wounded feelings, as because the fact that she had been dismissed at such short notice would then have made it impossible for her to obtain another situation.

And yet so strong was the influence on Pamela of what the French call "the first education"—that is, the training in manners and self-control which was given in her childhood to

children and young people—that only once did I see her show what was then called temper. It occurred as the outcome of a discussion on jealousy, and took place at dinner. Lord Glenconner observed that he had never felt jealous in his life, and that he could not conceive what jealousy was like. He said this in his usual quiet, measured tones. I countered with a remark that only a man or woman who *at the time* is also jealous ever feels sympathy with what after all is a master passion of humanity. To my surprise and distress, Pamela burst into tears and hurriedly left the dining-room. A moment later we could see her walking up and down in the garden and hear her sobbing bitterly.

In many ways she was quite unlike an Englishwoman, and when with her I never forgot she was descended from the long line of the kings of France.

Certain of those who believed themselves to be her intimate friends spoke to me both during her lifetime and after her death, as if they were surprised she had become a spiritualist. I regarded this as natural owing to the fact that her father, Percy Wyndham, to whom she was devoted, had been among the small group of men who in Victorian days had started the Society for Psychical Research. Thus all through her life she had lived among people who believed in communication with the dead. It was supposed—erroneously—that she had only become interested in spiritualism after the death in battle of her beloved eldest son.

During the first World War, when my daughters were constantly with Lady Glenconner, I reminded her the Catholic Church forbade any tampering with spiritualism, and I asked her to give me her word that they would never be present at any of the séances which I knew took place in both her country-houses. She loyally kept her promise.

I feel it to be a curious fact that whereas during the early years of my friendship with Lord and Lady Glenconner, Lord Glenconner had no belief in spiritualism, he later became a spiritualist. I did not learn this from him: I was told it by the second wife of Lord Brassey, who had been a friend of his since childhood. Somewhat to her surprise, he called on her one day to tell her so. He once testified to this change of mind, at a great gathering of spiritualists. It was noble of him to do this, and must have cost him great discomfort, for he was extremely reserved. Someone showed me a curious and rather absurdly worded printed statement, circulated at the time among spiritualists, which told how "the noble lord has now joined us".

I never spoke to Lord Glenconner of spiritualism, but I was once present, in the library at Glen, at a singular discussion which took place between Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Edward Grey. It is my impression that Lord Glenconner was away. Lady Lodge, Pamela Glenconner, and I sat on a sofa opposite the two disputants. I can see the scene now, and I have never spent a more interesting hour than that which followed. Grey, extremely well-bred as well as kind-hearted, would never have uttered a word which could offend the person to whom he was talking. He was not a spiritualist. He was what I should call an old-fashioned Churchman. On this occasion he said very little, so Sir Oliver Lodge had it all his own way, though Grey now and again asked a question, or threw out a tentative challenge to some statement made by Lodge.

I was once present when something took place which may be said to have been connected with spiritualism. It occurred at Wilsford, after Lord Glenconner's death.

Close to the door of the drawing-room was a bookcase filled with books. Lady Glenconner suggested there should

take place what is called "a book test". Incidentally, I may say that she felt distressed because, according to Sir Oliver Lodge, who lived close to Wilsford, the spirit of her husband often entered into communication with him and with Lady Lodge, while never doing so with her.

On this occasion we were all together after dinner, and Lady Glenconner suggested that we should call on Lord Glenconner to communicate with those present. Now one of his many outdoor interests was forestry. When I stayed at Glen he sometimes took me through his plantations, and he would then talk of the part trees had always played in his imagination.

A charming Scotch girl, who was Lady Glenconner's youngest son's governess, did automatic writing. She now wrote down, "Take out the tenth book on the third shelf of the bookcase near the door, and look at page thirty-nine". The book in question had nothing to do with forestry, but on the page indicated was a reference to trees, and the happiness they bring to a certain type of human being.

While I was staying with the Glenconners in the autumn of 1915, my son being then at the Front, I had a singular experience. There was at the time a famous Scotch woman medium, who I believe was the wife of a blacksmith in, or near, Glasgow, and Lady Glenconner invited her to stay at Glen.

On one occasion, after she had had lunch with us, she suddenly said to me: "I saw a lady standing behind you. I think she must be your grandmother", and she then exactly described, in the minutest detail, a Frenchwoman, Madame Déroulède, the mother of two friends to whom I had been devoted during my girlhood. Very beautiful in her youth, when I knew her she had been paralysed for many years. She retained something of her beauty. She wore her abundant grey

hair in thick curls on each side of her still lovely face. Her cheeks were rouged, and though she could not speak clearly, her large grey eyes retained much of their fire. I have described her in a novel called *Barbara Rebell*—the only time I was ever tempted to describe in a book a person I have known.

I was exceedingly moved and surprised at this Scotch medium's words, for fond as I had been of this French lady, she had died very soon after we left my French home, so I naturally did not often think of her. As we left the dining-room, the Scotch medium joined me, and murmured in my ear, "I have a message for you from the lady who was standing behind that chair. She wishes me to tell you that your son will get through, although he will be wounded."

I spent a morning at Fallodon with Lord Grey the autumn after his second wife's death in 1928. He took me into a room in which I had never been and where hung portraits of Dorothy and of Pamela. It was his study, where he spent his day when alone in the house. I spoke to him of Pamela's belief in communication with the dead. A look of distress, even of pain, came over his face when I added, perhaps unwisely, the half-question, "You did not share her belief?" To my surprise he hesitated, and said something implying that as to this matter his views had, I ought not to say changed, but become modified. I saw what I had said disturbed him, so I said no more.

Only three times in my life has a room which I only entered once remained vividly in my mind, and this was one of those times. Though I had already stayed at Fallodon, and though the house was not large, I had never been in the study. That morning he talked to me, for the first time, both of Dorothy and Pamela. He took me out of doors, and showed me the two little gardens he had made—the one dedicated to the

memory of his first wife, and the other dedicated to the memory of his second wife. Then he said something implying that Pamela was not only commemorated in a garden, but also by the aviary which he had put up after their marriage to the right of the house on the extreme right of the lawn overlooked by the drawing-room. At that time he was almost blind, yet he walked about the house and garden with an assured step. He was exceedingly fond of my elder daughter, and he told more than one of our friends that she reminded him of the girls George Meredith pictured in his novels. From him there could have been no higher praise.

I have been acquainted with several well-known men whose official Lives I have naturally read with intense interest. As I have already said, I was astonished at the Life of Edward Grey. In spite of the great ability and literary gift of the author, I felt the book to be seriously injured by those chapters which covered his last years. The author either did not know, or was unwilling to admit, the part his second wife had played in his life.

Early in their married life Pamela asked me one day to go for a drive with her in Hyde Park. She did not like motoring, and when she could she always drove behind horses. During this drive she told me she had left instructions I was to be given all her letters and those of Edward Grey, as she wished me to edit them. I was aware that there would not be much editing to do, for I had seen them, and they were concerned almost entirely with verse, and with bird lore, subjects in which they were both deeply interested. I answered that I was two years older than she, and that I thought it unlikely I should outlive her. At that time, though a little over fifty, she still looked like a beautiful woman of not much over thirty.

Within a day or so of our conversation she telephoned to

say that she had been thinking things over and that she would very much like to edit the letters herself, and would like me to help her. This suggestion filled me with dismay, for I was writing to the limit of my power every day. Even had the question been raised, I would not have taken money for the kind of work she apparently wished me to do, so it was with great relief I heard her say a few days later that she had found with surprise and annoyance that Edward Grey did not wish the book to be prepared during his lifetime. The next time he and I met, he said he hoped his decision had not hurt my feelings. I remember the amused expression that came over his face when I assured him that far from being hurt I had hoped Pamela would change her mind. Without telling me, she finally left the editing of those letters to Anne Douglas Sidgwick, a charming woman and distinguished novelist. But after the death of Lord Grey, the letters were destroyed.

Pamela played an immense part in Grey's later life. She wrote to me:

> "He says in one of his letters, 'It becomes very clear to me that but for you *Twenty-Five Years* would never have been written. It is due to things and influences you brought, much rarer even than your material help, and which could have come from no one else.'"

And she quotes from another letter:

> ". . . Your part was much more than material, it came from the subtle and pervading influence, the stimulating and quickening that a woman has upon a man's mind if he loves her and if she loves in return.

Also if there be between them that peculiar sympathy that there is between your mind and mine. It eludes words, because it is so intimate! . . ."

During my first visit to Fallodon, I wrote to my mother:

"It is most interesting and curious to me to see Edward Grey in his own house. As you know, I had always seen him hitherto in the London house of the Glenconners, at Wilsford, and at Glen. More than ever do I feel that what has made him play such a part in the world is owing to what is evidently very rare among politicians, and those who regard themselves as statesmen. That is, a simple upright character and high breeding. I have never heard him say a single word for effect, and he is naturally reticent, without appearing to be so. That must have been of great value in such a life as that which he has led, for he can never have regretted saying too much, though perhaps he may at times have regretted having said too little. I am amused to notice he is 'pernicketty' as to his household goods. Every book must be in its place, and there was quite a fuss the other day, though a very quiet fuss, concerning some child's book which had been put back in the wrong shelf of the bookcase."

I feel *Twenty-five Years* is the truest and the most honest of the books written after the war of 1914. With regard to one war book, letters of his were inserted without his permission being sought, and conversations were recorded, some of which he told me had been most inaccurately reported. As is well

known, Grey never attempted to justify himself, or to correct what was inaccurate in passages written in certain war books. The one which I think caused him real distress was that published under the title of *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*. Grey never spoke to me of those two volumes, but when I went to stay with him and Pamela Grey, as she had then become, shortly after their publication, as I entered the house she ran forward and exclaimed, "Please don't mention to E. G. Colonel House's book!"

Grey always believed, till he was proved wrong, that the man with whom he was dealing was as honourable and high-minded as he was himself. In that he was unlike any other public man with whom I have ever come in contact, and I cannot help thinking that this must have caused irritation, and even a measure of fear, to certain of his colleagues, notably to such a shrewd realist as was Mr. Asquith.

XIV

I was twenty-four when I first met Bernard Shaw. He must have been over thirty, but as he was fair, and very slight, he looked much younger, and I believed him to be about my own age. Our meeting took place in the house of Mrs. W. K. Clifford, and I wondered who had brought them together, for Shaw lived at the time in a world far apart from the men and women who composed her circle. At that time Shaw was music critic to the *World*. Mrs. Clifford had not yet written any plays, but he was already an important figure in the Socialist world. Of that world Lucy Clifford, in spite of her interest in human nature, must have been entirely ignorant. I, on the other hand, knew and liked many Socialists.

My heart warmed to the fair, emaciated-looking critic, for he was intensely Irish, and I loved Ireland, though I had only been there, to Dublin, on two occasions. Shaw spoke with a brogue which I half suspected was deliberately exaggerated, and he was quite unlike the stiff-mannered, reserved young Englishmen who were then regarded as the coming hopes of the literary world. I am thinking of men not any of whom fulfilled the promise of their youth.

Mr. Shaw's personal appearance has altered very little in over fifty years. As is true now, his manner was easy and pleasant, and he enjoyed giving shrewd useful advice to any young fellow-writer.

On one occasion he and I left Mrs. Clifford's house together, and on our way to the omnibus for which we were both bound, he told me that a play of his was going to be acted, I think at a matinée, and I said I would like to go and see it. I

believe it was *Arms and the Man*, put on at the Avenue Theatre.

Though it would have astonished her to hear it, my mother was certainly a Socialist, for she regarded all men and women as equal, and proved her belief in many practical ways. But in those days Socialism was regarded as akin to what is now called Communism, and I was vaguely aware that Mr. Shaw was looked at askance by the very few people in the London literary world who knew anything of him and his views. I liked him from our first meeting, and I regret I did not see more of him during those far-off days.

Years later we both became members of the Committee of the Society of Authors, and it was at the meetings of that Committee that I first realized he was an extremely able man. Though he did not often speak, every time he opened his mouth what he had to say was wise, clear, and convincing. Yet he was regarded by those who knew anything about him as an eccentric, though interesting, critic, and of very little account as a dramatist. I recall my surprise when I learned how much my friend Frederic Lowndes admired Shaw's work—in fact the first gift I received from him after we were engaged was the two volumes of Shaw's plays.

I often met Mr. Shaw in the house of Sir John and Lady Lavery. Hazel Lavery was not only a beautiful woman, with extraordinary charm and a keen sense of humour, she was a devoted wife, and played an important part in her husband's life as a painter. The small gatherings in his studio were delightful, and she gave amusing luncheon parties to which she invited noted people of every type.

I was present when someone spoke in a cruel and indecent way of a well-known woman. Hazel lost her head, and obviously did not know how to stop her guest's cruel

venomous tongue. But Bernard Shaw, with consummate skill and ease, completely "downed" the slanderous talker.

From our first acquaintance, Mr. Shaw was always kind, and used to talk to me about my work, suggesting means by which I could obtain better prices. In those days, however, I always felt that as regarded money, at any rate, he spoke with his tongue in his cheek. When I had the good luck to have the picture rights of one of my novels bought by a film company, I remember his telling me I ought to have stood out for what would have been in those days a preposterous sum. What struck me then, and later on, was his exceptional kindness and generosity of nature. Clever as he was, there must have been in his character a streak of considerable simplicity, as the following story, which may or may not be true, will show.

At a time when he was known to be making a good deal of money from the production of his plays in Germany, he received a letter by hand written on a piece of the Fabian Society's notepaper. It was delivered by a messenger-boy, and ran somewhat as follows: "Dear Shaw, We are urgently in need of the following large sum in cash. Will you kindly give an open cheque to the bearer for that sum? Yours ever", and the signature appeared to be that of the Secretary of the Society. Without a moment's hesitation, Shaw sat down, wrote the open cheque, and handed it to the bearer, who was unknown to him. The next time he met the Secretary of the Fabian Society he mentioned the matter, and was astonished to learn that no such letter had been sent. He then made enquiries, and discovered the letter had been handed in by a stranger, who had instructed the messenger-boy to return to him with the answer. The stranger had waited, the while, in the street, only a few yards from where Shaw was then living. This story made a considerable stir among the members of the Fabian Society, all

of whom speculated as to how the swindler could have got hold of a piece of the Society's notepaper, as also who could have forged, as cleverly as had been done, the necessary signature.

Bernard Shaw's generosity once led to a sharp interchange between us. This was when he told me that he had guaranteed the overdraft of a woman whose husband, though not a writer, was connected with the literary world. She had brought to a fine art what may be called the begging call. She had written me a letter marked "private", asking if she could come and see me. Then evidently taken aback at the appearance of our small house, and at the simplicity in which we lived, she asked me if I would appeal on her behalf to John Galsworthy, who was known to be well off, apart from the large sums he earned by his novels. She explained she wished to start some kind of business. I told her, what was true, that I did not know Mr. Galsworthy well enough to do what she desired.

Some years later, when in America, I was told by three well-known American writers, who spoke to me separately, of an appeal this lady had written, asking for money on the plea that her husband was very ill-paid, and that he had done a great deal to further the works of American writers in England. One of these gentlemen had sent her a considerable sum, and spoke to me with concern and contempt of the meanness of English authors to a man who had done so much to benefit them. Long afterwards I saw a plain account of this lady's methods in the memoirs of an American writer. Her name was not given, but no one who knew anything of the then London literary world could doubt to whom he referred.

I remember hearing of Shaw's marriage, which took place two years after mine, with sympathy and interest. I hope that when what may be called Bernard Shaw's official biography

comes to be written, it will be made plain how much of his success he owed to his wife.

His marriage was certainly the best thing that had ever happened to Bernard Shaw. It made a sensation in Shaw's world, for though he was what may be called an innocent philanderer, his marriage to Charlotte Payne-Townshend took his friends completely by surprise. Even those who thought they knew him intimately had felt convinced he would never marry.

I believe it to be true that on their marriage Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Shaw agreed to lead an odd and unconventional life. Thus, during the greater part of the year, he was to go on living in his rooms in Adelphi Terrace, and she in her house, which I think was somewhere near Regent's Park. They arranged, however, to spend the summer months together. But Mrs. Shaw was so agreeable a person, and so excellent a housekeeper, that soon their partings became fewer and fewer, and in the end they lived as do an ordinary married couple who love one another. Shaw was also attached to Mrs. Shaw's relations, and, as is known, it was for her sister that he wrote *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*.

His wife paid for the first productions of Shaw's plays at the Court Theatre, which two well-known theatrical managers took, and put on a series of what were then regarded as freak plays. Among them was Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, and, thanks to his wife, certain plays written by St. John Hankin were produced. But the later play by which he set most store, called *The Last of the De Mullins*, had bad notices, to his bitter disappointment.

I had known Mr. Hankin as a clever unsuccessful man of letters, for some years, at a time when he was engaged to a young woman writer who was a close friend of mine. She told

me their engagement was a secret, and that their marriage could not take place for some time, as he was going to India for two years. However, when he returned to England, he told her that his feelings for her had changed, and that he would never marry. This decision caused her much unhappiness, and about a year later she died.

Time went on, and I occasionally had news of St. John Hankin through my husband, who was fond of him. I think they had been at Oxford together.

I was dining one evening with Florence Routledge, an intelligent woman fifteen years older than myself, who had considerable means. She was the type of person, more common then than now, who saves each year a considerable portion of his or her income. She was, however, public spirited, and she accepted the not-over-easy position of Honorary Secretary to a women's club. As I was on the Committee of the club, we saw each other often, and we gradually became intimate, in spite of the difference in our ages, tastes, and views.

We were alone that evening, when she suddenly asked me what I thought of St. John Hankin. I said I thought him exceptionally gifted, and that I hoped some day his plays would be acted. She then pressed me as to whether I liked him. I replied I did not like him, as I considered he had treated badly a friend of mine to whom he had been engaged. Florence said quietly, "There are two sides to that story". I denied this statement, saying I had seen his letters written in India, and that they made it clear that when he returned to England he intended to marry my friend. Florence then observed, "I am sorry you think poorly of St. John Hankin, for he and I are going to be married". In my view she ought to have told me this fact before asking me what I thought of him. However, she

bore me no malice, and my husband and I were among the very few people asked to her wedding.

St. John Hankin's literary work had about it an exceptional quality. I remember a witty series of *Dramatic Sequels* which he wrote for *Punch* consisting of epilogues or endings to various famous plays, ancient and modern. He wished to be the Sheridan of our day; but his dramatic power had only a tenuous quality.

On opening an evening paper I was horrified to see that St. John Hankin had drowned himself in a small piece of ornamental water in the public garden of a Welsh watering-place. In the blotter in the hotel bedroom he had occupied, he left a curious letter of which the gist was that he did not find life worth living. My husband, who had been genuinely fond of him, was sent for by Florence Hankin, and did everything he could to help her through what was to her not only a sorrowful, but also a bewildering, ordeal, for she had supposed her husband to be a happy man.

On the day of his death I had a strange experience—one of the few experiences of the kind which have ever occurred to me. I was staying with some people with whom I was only slightly acquainted, and after luncheon I went up to my bedroom to write letters. The moment I was alone, I felt as if obsessed by the personality of St. John Hankin. I had never liked him, and unless we happened to be together I did not think of him. When I went downstairs, about five o'clock, I opened an evening paper, and read an account of his strange self-inflicted death. I recall hoping that his mother, the only person he had ever really cared for, was dead. As I look back on St. John Hankin's singular personality and, I may add, appearance, I have no doubt he was a Mongol. At the time I had never heard the term.

His wife published his plays after his death, and she told me long afterwards that she drew a small but regular income, each year, from the royalties paid on their production all over the world.

I had a very kind feeling for May Sinclair, a kinder feeling for her than she had for me. In fact I think she was hardly aware of my existence. There must have been an extraordinarily noble streak in this remarkable writer. During the whole of her early life she had been extremely poor, and did difficult translations—I think from the Russian—for a living. She wrote a story dealing with an unhappy marriage, which did not have much success. Then she wrote a very fine novel called *The Divine Fire*—some would say the only credible picture of a genius ever painted in English fiction. *The Divine Fire* made May Sinclair famous, and she became what was then called a literary lion. She could never forget having been very poor, so when success came she worked hard, and saved the money she earned, so that she would have enough to live on when her working powers gave out. She went on writing books, all more or less successful, until the outbreak of the war in 1914. She then, with her savings, started an ambulance, putting in charge of it a brilliant medical man, who, she felt, had not had his chance in life. She must have left this man completely free to select his staff, and herself occupied, in the little party which accompanied him, a post which she called that of "the scribe". In due course the doctor sent her back to England to raise more money for the ambulance, but when she was about to return to the Continent, she was amazed to learn that there was an embargo on her leaving England. Full of astonishment she went to the War Office, and discovered that the man for whom she had done everything had actually written and asked that she should not

be allowed to return to Flanders. Though I do not think she was in love with him, this treacherous conduct on his part in a sense broke her heart. She wrote a bitter and terrible novel of which this doctor was the central figure.

My brother, Hilaire Belloc, was the first person who spoke to me of Wells's work, and he praised him more highly than I ever heard him praise any writer of our day.

I sat next H. G. Wells at what must have been the first of the annual dinners of the Society of Authors. He had just written *The Time Machine*, and he and I had a good deal of talk concerning what may be called the business side of literature. I was surprised to find he regarded the publishing world with distrust and suspicion. At that time of his life he would have liked writers to pay for the publication of their books.

The next time I came into real contact with Wells was through his friendship with Arnold Bennett. He and Bennett both showed a most generous appreciation of the work of younger writers, and I recall the enthusiasm with which they discussed *Nocturne* by the then unknown Frank Swinnerton; indeed each of them did all in his power to win recognition for Swinnerton's early work. I always felt puzzled at Wells and Bennett's close friendship, for the two men seemed to me to have nothing in common, apart from the fact that each had a great admiration for the other's work.

During the last years of his life, I grew to know Wells really well. This was after a curious incident, to which I have seen no allusion in any of the accounts of him which have been written since his death. At the time it made a considerable stir in the world of letters.

He was working on *The Outline of History*, and had engaged a writer to make certain researches, paying him, as he thought, on a generous scale, and he was a generous man. The

writer, however, was not satisfied, and brought his grievance to the notice of the Society of Authors. He called a meeting of the Society to discuss the matter.

Owing to circumstances entirely dissociated from the question in hand, the members of the Committee, with the exception of myself, took the part of the complainant. Years after the meeting at which I had risen and spoken in his defence, Mr. Wells reminded me of the occasion. He had felt deeply the antagonistic atmosphere which he sensed had filled the hall where the meeting took place.

The feud between Wells and my brother distressed his friend, the Baroness Budberg; and more than once she begged me to bring them together. But this I did not feel I could do.

Of the writers I have known, with the exception of my brother Hilaire, Wells was the most modest concerning his work. Unlike most of his fellow-writers, he was interested in everything going on in the world. In the publishing world Wells was regarded as dangerously ill-tempered and suspicious. I attribute this to the fact that in his own childhood and youth he had only seen the ugly side of human nature—the side that always takes the part of the strong against the weak.

When I first knew him he was bad-tempered and irritable, but he succeeded in correcting these unpleasant traits, and during the last half of his life he looked—and I think he really was—benign. He lived very simply, and when I returned to live in London after my husband's death, I dined with him fairly often, and enjoyed his brilliant incisive talk. I feel sorry I shall not live to read the diaries and letters in which he is certain to be discussed, and his curious personality described.

He had a cynical outlook on life, and, though kind and generous to individuals, he thought poorly of human nature. He far preferred the company of women to that of men, an

unusual trait in the English authors I have known. The writer he least resembled was John Galsworthy; in fact the two men were the antithesis of one another. The one was modest, the other not so. Wells knew exactly what was good, and what was poor in his work. To Galsworthy, as is proved by his letters, every word he wrote was good, and destined to live. He was ill served by his friends, who allowed certain absurd criticisms he had made of the work of long-dead writers to remain on record.

Though I became really fond of Wells, I could not understand the strong attraction felt for him by women. When I grew to know him well, I used to wonder what had all through his life caused women to feel for him what it is agreed to call love. Fame brings a certain kind of love from a certain kind of woman, but I am thinking of a time when, though well known, Wells was in no sense famous.

Among my fellow-writers one of the women for whom I cared most was Alice Perrin, the novelist of Anglo-Indian life. Her great-grandfather had been in the employment of the East India Company. In those days an Englishman occasionally married the widowed *ranee* he had rescued from the funeral pyre of her husband. I thought, and so did my husband, that Alice Perrin might have been descended from one of these *ranees*. Those who wish to know what the India of, say, fifty years ago was like can do worse than read Alice Perrin's novels. I specially remember, with admiration, *A Free Solitude* and *The Anglo-Indians*. Her short stories were remarkable, and gave a most vivid impression of what I suppose may be called the supernatural side of the Indian scene. This was the more remarkable as she once told me she was an unbeliever.

Charles Perrin, who was devoted to her, married her when she was eighteen, but he did not share her lack of faith. He was

an ordinary good churchman of the old-fashioned type. I remember she told me how astonished she had been when she first married, to see that Charley always said his prayers night and morning.

The following circumstance made a great impression on me. Charley died in Switzerland, and on his grave his wife had planted poppies, as they had been his favourite flower. One morning after her return to London she woke up, and saw, lying on her bed, a poppy. It was a real poppy, not a dream poppy, for she got up and put it in a glass of water, where it lived some days.

I remember saying to her, "But didn't this strange occurrence impress you, Alice, and show you that your husband was still a sentient being, and thinking of you?" She made no answer, and I on my side said no more.

As was also true of my mother, I was always interested from early youth in psychic phenomena. Had I not been a Catholic, I should have been a spiritualist. Indeed it is to me inconceivable how any thoughtful person can doubt the reality of many of the phenomena which excite derision among those who regard themselves as superior beings.

I felt some interest in the Society for Psychical Research, and when I met some of the distinguished men and women who were members, I was astounded at their great reluctance to admit a belief in the phenomena which they went to so much trouble to investigate. They pushed caution to the extreme limit. I once spoke to a man whose account of certain experiences had impressed me, but who had left it uncertain how far he really believed in psychic phenomena at all. In answer to a direct question he reluctantly admitted that he did entirely believe in the reality of what he had seen.

As to this man's answer one thing became impressed on my

mind. This was the wisdom of the Catholic Church in forbidding her children to practise spiritualism. I have long had the conviction that certain men and women who are regarded as insane are really possessed of devils.

XV

In February 1918, I was told a curious story. A German officer, a very intelligent man, was taken prisoner. He was asked what he considered to have been the greatest mistake made by the British in the war. He answered, "Allowing the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* to escape". Then he was asked, "What was the greatest mistake the Germans made?", and he replied, "Not having taken the French Channel ports when it would have been easy to do so".

I then remembered a strange tale I had heard, which I believe was true, of how, early in the war, Calais and Boulogne had been declared open cities, and could have been theirs for the taking. It was even said that a small detachment of German soldiers did ride into Boulogne, and then went off without even seeing the local authorities.

A prodigious stir was caused by a German aeroplane raid on Paris. For two hours the raiders did exactly what they liked, dropping their bombs here, there, and everywhere. So completely taken by surprise were the authorities, that lights went on everywhere showing the whole city outlined from the sky. One bomb fell into the foyer of a theatre, but no one was killed. The aircraft flew on to Versailles, and dropped eight bombs round the Palace, at a time when certain meetings were taking place. The only human being killed by these bombs was an unfortunate Italian sentry who had accompanied an Italian mission.

Amusing stories were told of the King and Queen. One such concerned a very young Scotch V.C. The King asked him, "What part of England do you come from?" The boy

answered, "Glesgy". The King said, "Westgate? A very delightful seaside place." The youth again called out "Glesgy", and again the King said, "Westgate". The boy then shouted out "Glasgow", and after a pause, "King". Whereupon His Majesty burst into a fit of laughter.

I am often struck by how little grown-up people know of the child mind. I heard of a woman who was reading the Bible to her intelligent little boy of eight. They came to the story of David and Uriah the Hittite. She pointed out that David had repented, and that God promised to forget the sins of those who repent. He listened for a while, and then observed, "If you talk about those sins so much, God will remember".

One evening Lord Haldane discussed the character of Goethe, and especially Goethe's relations with women. I had never before heard Haldane speak of the intimate relations of men and women, and he impressed me by saying that he was convinced Goethe's relations with Frau von Stein had not been platonic. When this discussion was going on, two literary Americans who were present declared that they were certain they had been platonic. As all three were Goethe experts these opinions were of interest to me.

One morning I was rung up and told that a bomb had fallen on the Royal Hospital at Chelsea. I at once telephoned to a sister-in-law of Sir Neville Lyttelton, the Governor of the Hospital. She had heard nothing about it, and did not believe the story. All too soon she learned that it was true. The beautiful house was not hit. I was given a striking account of what the bomb had done. It fell on a long low house which had been part of Wren's original design for the Royal Hospital. An invalided officer, his wife, and their children had just been given this house, and he had felt overjoyed at what he considered his good fortune. Though it was a small bomb it

split the house in two, killing outright the officer and his wife, a lady dining with them, and their three servants. Amazing to relate, two of the children escaped without a scratch. Two of the others were blown out of the window onto the railings, and badly injured. As for the house, it became simply a heap of rubble. The force of the concussion was so strong that the graves in the churchyard close by burst open.

None of the Chelsea Pensioners were injured, and it is an astonishing fact that only those people who lived in the two-story house were touched. I had a remarkable letter from Thackeray's granddaughter, Hester Ritchie, which to my mind showed that she had inherited the literary gifts of her grandfather, and also those of her delightful mother, Lady Ritchie. Hester wrote from St. Leonard's Terrace:

> "We are all safe and unhurt, though the explosion broke every single window in the house, and also blew in the framework of the drawing-room windows. Two men were blown into the area from the road by the force of the explosion, but this was rather a comfort from our point of view, as we had to look to them, and this distracted us from what was going on outside. There were terrible fumes, and the children's governess, by way of cheering us up, suggested they must be poison gas! The house rocked backwards and forwards, and upwards, and down, and from all sides came sounds of falling masonry, crashing glass, and the shooting down of roof tiles."

The people who were killed close to the gate of the Royal Hospital had made it a rule never to go out and take shelter.

This rule was generally followed by all those who were connected with the Hospital, but some of those who lived near by did go out to a shelter that night, and so were saved.

I had had a talk in the previous March with an airman who was concerned with the defences of London. He said we had not had any raid that mattered, but he did believe there would be a big raid when weather conditions were favourable. Paris had had fifty to sixty planes over at a time, but it was thought that only eight or nine had got through over London. I asked this man if it were true that Germany had made an offer through Spain proposing to restrict air raids to so many miles behind the lines, and he told me he thought it was true, and that the offer was owing to the panic in Berlin caused by our raid on Coblenz. I thought my informant very intelligent, and that he knew what he was talking about, so I asked if he thought we would get to Berlin by air. He answered, "Not for some time, but Cologne may be bombed any day". He said how strange it was the Germans should have believed, both with regard to poison gas and air raids, that they would have it all their own way.

In June 1918 the Germans made a great air attack on the north of France. There again began a general exodus. A man I met told me that the train in which he had been travelling from Paris to Boulogne had been stopped sixty times owing to air raids.

It is curious to reflect that less than six months before the end of the war it was universally believed in the official world that there would be no hope of peace till the summer of 1919. This was true of almost all those belonging to the Government.

I met at dinner an American lawyer, of the well-known family of Cushing, who had just come from Paris. As I had the good fortune to sit next to him I was able to ask him certain

questions. While he was there a raid took place, and he thought the bombs far less unpleasant than the missiles sent by "Big Bertha". During certain hours Big Bertha's shells came to Paris every fifteen minutes, and did a great deal of damage. He considered it a mistake that the authorities announced these raids with sirens, which made a deafening din.

I was touched to find how great was the admiration Mr. Cushing felt for France. He told me no one had any idea of what Paris was suffering, and I never met a single American coming from Paris who did not say the same thing.

There was a belief at one time that the Germans would get to Paris, but this American lawyer told me he had never believed they would even get within what he called "gunning distance".

About that time I had a curious talk with Mr. Asquith concerning nerves, and the effect they have on human affairs. I told him that in my view he had the most remarkable nerves of any public man I had ever known. He answered that nerves were a question not only of temperament, but also of habit. He told me that Mr. Gladstone had once told him that early in his life he had felt that he would go mad if anything happened to impair his extraordinary power of going to sleep—almost, it may be said, at will. He therefore made up his mind to dismiss everything which had happened, good, bad, and indifferent, during the day, the moment he got into bed. Gladstone described what he had decided to do as pulling down a shutter on his mind. He only remembered one occasion when he had found it impossible to sleep, owing to a disturbing thought. He was staying with his brother-in-law, Lord Lyttelton, at Hagley. Gladstone had chopped through half a tree, and during the night there was a great storm, and he felt extremely disturbed lest the storm might break the tree before he had made a clean

job of it. That thought so tormented him that he stayed awake all night.

One night, when the war was over, I sat at dinner between Sir John Lavery and E. V. Lucas, and Sir John gave me some curious details about his income-tax. He said, and I fully agreed, how hard it was that whereas the ordinary professional man can put all sorts of expenses in his return, an artist can only put in the rent of his studio, the money he pays to models, and the cost of his canvases. A portrait painter must entertain; he has to take journeys connected with his work; and he cannot afford, for his health's sake, to take these journeys on the cheap.

The commissioners later allowed Sir John to take one-third off his income for expenses, but he said that very often a picture cost him, in expenses, more than half of what he received.

At the same dinner I had an interesting talk with Mr. Grenfell, the British partner of the great American financial firm of J. P. Morgan & Co. I wrote:

> "He is hopeful as to the Washington Conference, and says that if it comes off it will be the biggest event of our time. I asked him if he wanted Lloyd George to go there, and his answer amused and surprised me. Most people say they very much want him to go, and lament bitterly the thought of his not doing so. He replied, 'It would be an excellent thing if Lloyd George could be persuaded to go there for a Saturday to Monday. I mean if he could just make an appearance, produce a good impression, and then leave.'
>
> "I agreed with him, and he went on, 'England

ought to send to that sort of Conference two or three of our absolutely upright men, not necessarily clever, but with nothing tricky about them. Such men as Grey, Bryce, or indeed almost anyone who can be trusted to invariably do the straight thing.'

"He told me that Americans, who are so clever themselves, hate tricky cleverness in others, and despise it. He seemed to think the Pacific problem the most important thing of all those about to be discussed. He said the average American knows nothing concerning that problem, and that there were only two men in our Foreign Office who did, and one of them has fortunately gone to America.

"One of the guests amused me before dinner by murmuring that he would willingly give two pounds for a cocktail. The habit of serving cocktails in private houses is becoming much more prevalent. A great many people have a cocktail, and then drink nothing at dinner but water.

"I was driven back to Barton Street by Sir Robert Hudson, with whom I had a most interesting talk. The Northcliffes are indeed fortunate in having such a good, loyal, clever friend as is that man. He asked me to come in and see him now and again when I am walking through Dean's Yard. This pleased me very much."

All sorts of queer little sayings and verses went the rounds. One bit of doggerel which amused people who were acquainted with the three gentlemen, ran as follows:

French likes them tall.
Lloyd George likes them small.
Cowans likes them *all*.

"The wildest rumours are current. It is thought that Turkey and Austria will be the next to give in. Turkey can do very little, as long as Constantinople is covered from the sea by German guns.

"Everyone is speculating on what President Wilson's answer will be. Prince Max of Baden has many friends in England. He is regarded as an enlightened, intelligent man, and he has been humane as far as was in his power in the matter of British prisoners. It is said he was chosen to be spokesman, because he is one of the very few Germans of whom the American Ambassador, Gerard, spoke well in his book."

Early in October I wrote:

"I spent an interesting hour with Madame de Montholon. She was full of excitement and joy, and reminded me of the terrible afternoon we had spent together early last April, when everything looked so black. She gave me a strange account of the diverse views which are held in official quarters. Monsieur Cambon characteristically *ne veut pas se prononcer*, but admits that anything may now happen. The new French Military Attaché, General Corvisart, believes the Germans will go on fighting, and says their Army is still strong, and that the war will not end for at least three months. On the other hand, all the neutral

Ministers who four months ago regarded Germany's victory as certain, now say that the war will be over in eight days—that Germany is quite disintegrated, and that if the Kaiser lingers too long over making peace, he will be forced to abdicate. Their theory is that he will pass over the Crown Prince in favour of his grandson, with Prince Henry of Prussia as Regent.

"A young French married woman came in who is just off to Paris to see her father, who has been in one of the big occupied towns for four years. He also had a spell in Germany as a hostage. He was sixty when the war broke out. All his family were, in Paris; he has five sons fighting—fortunately not one of them has been killed. He had had no news from his family at all, and they had in all five postcards, saying he was alive. The postcards arrived in each case many months after he had written them. She seemed extraordinarily nervous, and afraid of the condition in which she would find her father, and she was going over to support her mother at the first meeting. My little talk with her brought the whole tragedy of these occupied territories very near."

On October the twelfth:

"I went to Robert Ross's funeral. It was a pathetic, almost to my feeling an unreal, little gathering, partly owing to the fact that for some reason difficult to define, his family, though knowing he was a Catholic, had the Church of England service read at the Crematorium, a thing

which would certainly have distressed him very much. He is said, perhaps with truth, to have wished to be cremated. If that was so, he could not have had the Catholic burial service. The reasonable thing would have been to have had a discourse by one of his many friends, eulogizing his remarkable character, and paying tribute to his marvellous kindness of heart. It was no ordinary kindness. With all his intense love of comfort and luxury, and his natural inborn laziness, this trait made him often take long disagreeable journeys, hold conversations with appalling bores, and that not to please or benefit people he cared for, but often for absolute strangers. I was secretly shocked at the absence of a good many people who ought to have made the effort to come and pay him this very small last tribute of affection, to say nothing of gratitude. I had a long talk there with Nevinson, and saw with interest his painter son, who thinks the war would be over but for the Americans.

"I lunched with my sister-in-law, Frances Lowry, and I was much interested by her account of Colonel Maxwell Earle who came to Tonbridge to inspect the Cadet Corps. He gave the Charles Lowrys a most curious and terrible account of his captivity in Germany, and said that at the time he was taken prisoner the Germans deliberately shot in the leg all the prisoners taken with him. It was the first time I had talked to someone who had seen him. I was amused to learn that he had not told the Lowrys of his early intimacy with the German Emperor, or of the fact that he possesses the Order of the Red

Eagle."

Astonishing stories were current that autumn, and it was impossible to ascertain how far they were true. One man, who ought to have known, informed me the Germans had flown to England twenty times in four weeks, but that they had never got farther than the coast, as a gas-shell had been invented which exploded and choked the airmen. It was believed that the heads of the German Air Force were not aware of the reason why none of their airmen returned; but it was admitted that once they knew the truth, they would discover an antidote. There had been a good deal of hesitation as to whether these gas-shells should be used, and certain members of the Cabinet had thought it wrong to use them. Then it was learned that the German Ambassador to a neutral country had stated that the German Emperor had declared his intention to reduce London to the state of Ypres, and that he specially mentioned the proposed destruction of Westminster Abbey. Thus the mind of the Government was made up.

As time went on, the number of pessimists increased, and some people began to believe there would be a stalemate peace. Germany was supposed to be counting on a revolution in England. The account given in the papers concerning our food shortages should not have been allowed to be printed, for it obviously made the Germans, and the neutral nations, believe England on the point of collapse.

I heard that for a long time information of value to the enemy was conveyed in books consigned to British prisoners in Germany. While every kind of difficulty was raised as to sending games, tools, pens, etc., the moment it was suggested that books should be sent—though Germany is full of English books—permission was eagerly given. In one case information

written in clear German characters on a sheet of paper was found simply placed loosely in a book.

On October the 16th:

> "There was great excitement over a stop-press telegram from Holland, saying the Kaiser had abdicated, and that Germany had surrendered. It seems to have been so far believed that Lloyd George hurried up from Walton Heath. But the news was not believed in *The Times* office, and it proved to be, to say the least of it, premature."

I noted in my diary:

> "The German request for an Armistice has fallen like a bombshell on everybody with the exception of the military and civil authorities in Paris. They expected it. To all intents and purposes it is an S.O.S. sent from Germany to America. Many people regard it as a trick to gain time, but the neutrals are certain it is sincere, and say that Germany is on the eve of revolution. The Germans would have done wisely to have withdrawn to the Meuse in the spring, when they knew their great offensive had failed to achieve anything.

I was present at a curious discussion between a pacifist, Logan Pearsall Smith, and an American lady who was Lowell's niece. She was a tremendous jingo, and to the horror of the people present, was very wrathful with Wilson. She said he had been pushed into everything he had done, by the American people, and that up to the middle of last winter his watchword

was "Go slow". He told Admiral Sims that he did not want a single American home to be shadowed by loss in the war. Fortunately for the Allies, Baker was in Paris when there came the terrible fall-back in March, and it was he who galvanized the President into giving the necessary orders. I had never heard the whole story put so plainly, though I had had hints of it, mostly from officials who had gone over to America the first winter America was "in". They had found it hopeless to try and actually *get the men*. That was the real reason why Joffre was sent over there, but Wilson, as long as was possible, thought America's great financial position, her munitions, and her shipbuilding efforts, would be enough, without the actual sacrifice of young American life. The same lady said that General Pershing had said to her that it was no good talking about commanding an army, if you were not to allow the boys to get killed.

> "I could not help feeling, when I saw the way in which the German note had been taken here, that the Germans had been very cunning, and in a sense had produced the effect they wished, which was to split the unity of America and England. Fortunately American feeling is solid for France, and one may say that the answer was in a sense dictated from Paris. Some people believe that the Germans intend to fall back on a short line, and defend the Rhine. Had they been wise they would have done this in 1916, for then they might have held out almost indefinitely.
>
> "All sorts of curious rumours are flying about, but it is clear that the Government know as little as anybody else—in fact less. The people who are now

best informed are neutral diplomats, and they are very careful in what they say. From a private source I heard the following curious account of a journey lately taken through Germany by the wife of the Swedish Minister.

"She was warned to take enough food for three days, and when she reached the Adlon Hotel in Berlin, she was told she could have no food at all. In the morning they brought her what she described as *eau brunie*. She was given a magnificent bedroom, but it was grimy with dirt; everything that should have been white was dark grey, and the sheets on her bed were old tablecloths. She reported, however, that the German people had become used to their state of utter discomfort, and that what had really broken them were the military defeats in the field. She thinks they will agree to any terms; that up to a week or two ago they were still ignorant of what was going on, but that it was impossible to keep Wilson's messages from being published in the papers. She is quite convinced that the Kaiser's abdication is only a question of time. This view is held by all the neutrals, but is not regarded as certain here.

"At the Thirty, yesterday, one of the members who has friends in Holland told us she had heard the most awful stories of revolution at Essen, and at all the great provincial industrial centres.

"I heard last evening from the French Embassy that the German General Staff have sent a message saying they will destroy no more towns. The bitter comment to me was that if England had spoken out months ago, as Wilson did last week, millions of

valuable property would have been saved.

"I have just been told who are to be representatives of England at the Peace Conference —Lloyd George, Balfour, Asquith, and Grey. There was a discussion as to who would represent America. Elizabeth Asquith said that President Wilson intended to come, accompanied by Colonel House. She told us that a witty American had observed, 'I have often heard of a man talking himself into fame, and being talked into fame, but I have never heard of a man becoming famous through his silence. This is the fact about Colonel House.' I observed that I believed Clemenceau, Delcassé, and Foch would represent France. I did not recall to the company the pathetic fact that Kitchener had made it one of his conditions, when taking over the War Office, that he should have a seat at the Peace Conference."

The day after the Armistice had been signed, all sorts of accounts, some of them most curious, were current as to what took place in the railway carriage which stood in the Forest of Compiègne. There was a feeling in the British Army that Foch, in consenting to an Armistice when he did, made the greatest "great refusal" known to history. The French General Staff regarded it as certain that within a week they would have encircled the whole of the German armies. That was why Ludendorff made his despairing appeal, first to Wilson, and then to the United High Command. Foch, being but mortal, hoped that they would refuse the Armistice terms. It was said that what influenced Foch in accepting an Armistice at all was, firstly horror at the thought of further loss of life, and secondly the belief that the kind of military disaster that was being

prepared would certainly mean the starting of a Bolshevik regime in Germany.

I heard a curious account of what took place from someone who had heard it from Rosslyn Wemyss. The German delegates were dressed *en civil*, the French in uniform. When the Germans were introduced into the railway saloon, they apparently hoped and expected that the French would offer to shake hands with them. When they saw that this was not to be, they put their hands behind their backs. Foch said, "What is your business, gentlemen?" Their spokesman answered, "We have come as arranged". Foch observed, "I know nothing of any arrangement. I ask you your business."

The spokesman then said in a subdued voice, "We have come to ask for an armistice". Foch replied, "Thank you, gentlemen. These are our conditions," and handed the spokesman a piece of paper. The Germans were then taken back to the other train, and after a certain interval they asked to see Foch again. Their spokesman pointed out that some of the conditions were extremely severe, and the naval representative, addressing Rosslyn Wemyss in English, exclaimed, "These conditions offered to a fleet that has not been defeated are most hard and unfair!" Rosslyn Wemyss hesitated, and then said curtly, "You only had to come out."

As for Foch, he said quietly that those were the conditions, and could not be discussed. He put the French wireless at the Germans' disposal, however, so that they could communicate with their friends. They had prepared a number of documents which Foch refused to read.

A curious little story, which I believe to be true, is that one of the delegates told one of the French officers who had been deputed to look after the Germans, that he noticed that Foch kept looking at him in a rather peculiar manner. The French

officer replied dryly, "No doubt he was surprised that you chose such an occasion to wear the riband of the Legion of Honour." The German exclaimed, "I thought my wearing that decoration would please the Marshal! I received it some years ago, in connection with one of the Paris Exhibitions." The French officer observed, "If you see the Marshal again, I advise you to leave your Legion of Honour in your pocket."

The tale goes that the Germans were nearly killed by their own gun-fire on their way back to their lines, owing to a certain section of the German Military Command being against the Armistice. They would have been pleased if the delegates had dropped dead.

A fortnight later, a certain number of women, the wives of officers and men of the Fleet, had the remarkable experience of seeing the surrender of the German Navy. It was described to me by someone who was there as having reminded him of a first-class funeral.

> "Beatty is being a good deal criticized for having allowed John Lavery, the painter, to have been present at the actual scene in his cabin. Some say Lavery was hidden in a cupboard, others that he was disguised as a naval officer. People are laughing at Beatty for having arranged for a portrait of Nelson to hang just behind his chair. I think he was right to do so.
>
> "Everyone who was present agrees that the German naval officers felt their position so acutely that it was painful to look at them. On the other hand, the sailors did not seem to care; they looked indifferent."

XVI

To return to the spring of 1918, I met the Danish Minister, who commented strongly on the blockade, and told me that food was much less plentiful in his own country, as also in Holland and in Sweden, than it was in England. I could not help feeling that this was an exaggeration, for at that time food was extremely short in London for ordinary people like us, though no doubt foreign diplomats had all they required.

Even now I recall the thrill of interest that went through me when he told me of a journey he had recently made through Germany. During the days he had spent there he was assured he would never reach England, as the English Channel was filled with German submarines which were sinking everything. He gave me a vivid account of Hindenburg, whom he had known before the war, and for whom he felt a great respect. A deputation of German burgomasters had visited the famous old soldier in the late autumn of 1914 to say they were afraid of famine. Hindenburg exclaimed, "Give me till the first week of April, 1915! By then I shall either be in Paris or in Calais!"

I asked this diplomat what Germany was like when he had passed through that country. I was anxious to know, as I had heard such varying accounts, especially from Americans who had been there. He replied somewhat reluctantly that he had not seen a single normal-looking healthy human being; every one looked ill and half-starved.

There was no food either on the train or in the station at Berlin, and no heating of any kind. In the Berlin station his fur coat was stolen. When the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was asked by the King of Denmark what he would like for a

Christmas present, he replied, "Any kind of food".

I noted that all sorts of amusing stories were being told about the President and Mrs. Wilson's visit to Windsor. It was said that by far the nicest member of their suite was the old black mammy! The Queen wished to meet her, and the old negress curtseyed seventeen times to make up, as she explained, for Mrs. Wilson not curtseying at all. The Queen suggested that the old woman should be taken into St. George's Hall to see the splendid gold plate and the Indian gold and jewelled trophies which were all laid out in preparation for the banquet. The old black mammy refused to be surprised, and observed quietly, "All dat reminds dis child of de pantry at de White House". After she had left Windsor, she said plaintively to a man in the American Embassy, "Why have we noting like dis at de White House? Why only dirty little bits of silver?" Then she went on cunningly, "I was not going to let 'em think dey had anything *we* had not got".

During those four years I was often in touch with a man who held a Court appointment. Everything he told me showed what a noble nature had King George the Fifth. He never felt the slightest doubt of ultimate victory, but unlike some of those about him he did not under-estimate the Germans. At one time when they were believed to be about to suggest peace terms through a neutral country, the King declared they would do nothing of the kind.

During the whole of the war, I was astonished to find how many people were convinced the military party in Germany could have been restrained, and the war averted, had there been a wiser British Administration. One man who held this view was Sir John Barron. It was always a pleasure to me to meet him, and I delighted in looking at his beautiful American wife. I once had a curious talk with him concerning Lord Haldane.

This was after Haldane's fall. Sir John Barron said that where Haldane was singularly unfortunate lay in the fact that certain of his worst enemies, in a political sense, were to be found among his old associates. Men like John Morley, and certain others, could not forgive him for having been in the Cabinet for so long, and for having been well liked—indeed it may be said extremely popular—in so many different worlds.

I went on all through the war being exceedingly interested in everything to do with contemporary literature. During a talk with Hugh Walpole in May 1918, when he was attached to the Office of Foreign Propaganda, he told me that J. D. Beresford had had a novel rejected by a publisher because of its supposed indecency. This was indeed strange in view of the fact that the same publisher had just brought out Arnold Bennett's *The Pretty Lady*. I wrote:

> "Hugh Walpole thinks *The Pretty Lady* a far finer performance than I do—in fact as he talked, I could not help remembering a funny review in a French paper entitled *For the English*.
>
> "Though he is so clever and cultivated, Walpole knows nothing of the great foreign literatures of the world. I told him that after all *The Pretty Lady* challenges comparison with such books as Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, and a novel which I have always placed exceedingly high among the French books written in my time, that is *Bubu de Montparnasse*."

All sorts of strange stories came through as to the state of Germany. One such declared that a lady connected with the Swedish Court, whose husband had to live in Berlin, had recently paid eighty pounds for a ham. The worst deprivation

to many people was that of having no soap. I learned that in the officers' parcels sent to German prison camps three cakes of good soap were always enclosed.

A great sensation was what was called "the Maurice letter". Everyone I saw took a different view. Those in the Government blamed Maurice, those who were anti-Government praised him. Some people thought—I am sure wrongly—that Asquith was behind Maurice, and had helped him to compose the letter. One tale which went the rounds was that Maurice had lost his job—a job, it may be added, he did admirably—through the intervention of the Americans, who considered he was spreading ill-feeling between the French and the British. According to that story, Maurice told an American General that the French had not done their share in rolling back the German offensive, and, in order to prove his point, quoted the number of divisions the British had engaged. The American made enquiries, and considered the figures which had been supplied to him by Maurice were incorrect. He thought the matter sufficiently serious to cable to President Wilson, and the President promptly told the British Ambassador in Washington that such a man, however well-meaning, and however honest in intention, was a danger to the joint cause. In fact I have never heard such violent discussions take place as swirled round this affair.

People often tell strange stories of extraordinary interchanges of words which have taken place in front of them. With one or two exceptions that has not been my experience. One such exception, however, occurred when I was asked to meet the mother-in-law of Sir Douglas Haig. The hostess forgot her guest's relationship to Haig, and exclaimed, "I feel much happier now that Foch is in command!" Lady Vivian asked, "Who is Foch? What has Foch done?" Before anyone

could answer her, another lady observed, "I find an extreme feeling of relief among all soldiers not connected with the Staff at Foch's appointment," and again Lady Vivian asked plaintively, "But who *is* Foch?"

From a Dutch source I was told that the appointment of Foch took the German General Staff by surprise, and much upset them. The Dutch Prince Consort was told by a man at the German G.H.Q. that they would not have made their new offensive, had they known it was going to lead to a united command under Foch. Foch alone foresaw the Italian *débâcle*, and had strongly pressed the desirability of sending French and British armies to Italy. But the proposal was then refused with indignation.

How completely forgotten is the Pemberton Billing case, and yet in the early summer of 1918 little else was talked of in the world in which I lived.

What was the truth about what was called "The Black Book"? No one will ever know. It was said to be a secret record, drawn up for the German Government, concerning certain well-known English people. If it ever really existed, it is indeed surprising that no part of it was ever published or quoted.

The only time I ever knew Margot "rattled" was as regards the Pemberton Billing case. She thought, what was entirely untrue, that he was financed by part of the Press. She declared that that type of man causes a crowd to become a mob, that the mob then acts on the Press, and the end of it is that without knowing it, certain journalists do a frightful amount of harm. I actively disagreed with this view.

Elizabeth Asquith felt deeply the attacks on her mother. I lunched with her one day, our host being Sir William Tyrrell, who was exceedingly fond of Elizabeth—a tribute to her mind,

for he greatly valued intellect.

In the course of our luncheon, they made fun of me because I said I believed in the existence of the Black Book. H. B. Irving, who was present, was shocked that I should be so foolish. I said such a book would never have been mentioned if it had not existed, and I regretted there was not a similar book about the Germans and about the French. I went on to say how unpleasantly impressed I had always been by the ignorance shown by British statesmen concerning French statesmen and generals.

Early in June 1918 I lunched with Lord Haldane, and found him very optimistic as to the war. He believed, unlike everyone else I saw, that the end would come soon. I was pleased to hear him pay a tribute to the French, though he thought they would be the one real difficulty in the way of peace. I told him that I thought he was wrong, and I noticed how English people had altered and hardened as to Germany in the four years. Haldane quoted Bismarck's saying that Germany would always get on with English people, but never with the French. I said that when Bismarck said that, he must have had his tongue in his cheek. I remembered how easy Bismarck had found it to bamboozle the English of his day—diplomats, statesmen, and royal personages. There was one exception: this was the Empress Frederick. She had a great distrust of Bismarck through the whole of her married life. I said—which surprised Haldane—that I thought English people were slow to feel resentment, but when once they did feel it, they were bad enemies, and that this fact was apparent in English family quarrels. He said that if I were right it would make peace difficult.

There was a Scotchman there, who gave us an interesting account of Carlsbad on the outbreak of war. The British who

had gone there for their health were treated decently, and with courtesy and consideration. The train took four days and four nights to reach Switzerland.

I was shown a private memorandum that summer, written by Prince Lichnowsky in 1916, which was about to be published in *The Times*. Oddly enough it is in form very much like the statement Lord Haldane wrote for his friends. Lichnowsky, whom I used to meet at the Glenconners', was a fine type of highly bred German noble. In this memorandum he vindicated not only England, but France also, and paid a high tribute to Sir Edward Grey and, incidentally, to Haldane. I was told by a member of the Cabinet it would have been worth any sum to the German Government, and even the expenditure of much blood as well as treasure, to have had this remarkable memorandum suppressed. What interested me was that it was obviously an answer to those of the writer's friends who had taunted him with not having kept England out of the war.

In my diary I wrote:

> "Some people think he will say he did not write it, but I think him far too honest a man to do this. Besides, it bears the stamp of authenticity in every line, and was a wonderful 'scoop' for *The Times*. What is strange is that it first appeared in Scandinavia, in an obscure Socialist paper. Whoever gave it to this paper could have made his fortune by selling it to the German Government. The copy that came to this country was typewritten, and had been circulated in a secret way."

The man about whom the most amusing stories were told during the war was Lloyd George. The French wrongly

regarded him as their friend, and likened him to Gambetta. Not only was he full of energy and vitality, but he possessed what is rare in this country, the gift of tears. I remember being told that when the King first saw his Ministers, he was moved to the heart because Lloyd George alone of them all came in with tears pouring down his cheeks. He had, what few men have, the power of disguising what he felt. This was particularly true when he was dealing with French politicians.

I spent the August of 1918 in Scotland, paying a visit to friends who had taken Gask House. This curious place was of peculiar interest to me, for it was there that Lady Nairne wrote her beautiful Scottish ballads—some of which are erroneously supposed to have been written in the days of Mary Queen of Scots.

Among my fellow-guests, and to me by far the most interesting man, was Lord Sanderson, whom I already knew. He was then an old man and had been secretary to the second Earl Granville. He gave me a very clear picture of Queen Victoria, whom he had known very well. What amused and surprised me was that he remembered certain things one would think would only have been remembered by a woman. One such thing was that the Queen had a new black silk dress every three months. Some spiteful person revealed to her that her private secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, had said she might have one less often. On the evening of the day she had been told of this remark, when she came down to dinner, she opened out her handkerchief and held it up before Sir Henry, who saw it was full of little holes. She turned to her Indian attendant, and said, "Please take this handkerchief to Sir Henry Ponsonby with the Queen's compliments. This will show him that the Queen is not extravagant."

Lord Sanderson said she had a nervous dislike of receiving

more than three foreign diplomats on the same day, and on one occasion, the day before she was going to Scotland, as there were a considerable number of new diplomats to be presented, he wrote and asked her private secretary if the Queen for once would receive four, instead of three. She consented to do so, and Lord Sanderson was duly apprised of her consent. On a separate piece of paper Sir Henry wrote, "The Queen said damn!"

Lord Sanderson told me that Queen Victoria had an astonishing power of making those with her feel, and that without saying a word, when she was angry, annoyed, or grieved.

Many people felt afraid of Lord Sanderson, and I suppose that in some ways he was a formidable man. And yet I considered him one of the pleasantest fellow-guests in whose company I have ever stayed. I wrote, "It is a misfortune Lord Sanderson has not kept a diary, and will certainly leave no memoirs".

He told me some curious stories. The one I remember best concerns the case of the Cabinet boxes made by a special locksmith. At one time there was only one key to each box, and then gradually more keys were made, and in addition to each Minister having *his* key, his secretary, and even other people, were given keys. All this went on till suddenly a most important Cabinet secret was betrayed. As a matter of fact, it was not given away by anyone possessing a Cabinet key, it was betrayed by the copyist of the document. Still, the fact that a Cabinet secret had been betrayed caused a great fuss, and the number of keys circulated was reduced. Lord Hartington kept his Cabinet key in his coat-tail pocket, and one day, by way of a joke, one of his colleagues took it out of his pocket without his being aware of it. But he showed no excitement, and so the

joke fell flat.

That same autumn of 1918 I stayed with the Glenconners at Glen. I wrote:

> "There is a great deal of talk concerning spiritualism, but I was touched, when reading Pamela's beautiful book on her son Bim, to find that up to the part I read, there is not a word on the subject. I had rather feared it would be a spiritualistic record. I am much looking forward to reading a book called *Christopher*. The boy in question was the son of Charles Coombe Tennant, an old friend of mine. The point of interest in this book is that Mrs. Coombe Tennant was a spiritualist before the war, and had arranged with her son certain tests, in case he was killed. These she claims were fulfilled to the letter. It is very strange to me that so few people are aware of what an enormous extension the spiritualistic movement is now taking. Of course this is partly owing to the war, but it is a stupid mistake to think it is only owing to the war. The war has vitalised the movement, that is all. People like Pamela Glenconner—who is a very intelligent woman, and the more intelligent because, being interested in so few things, she is able to concentrate in a way many intelligent people are not able to do—consider that if spiritualism is to be made 'respectable', the financial side must be properly organised. One constantly hears a man or woman, who is himself or herself in receipt of a comfortable income from work done, speaking with the greatest contempt of a medium, because that medium asks

and receives anything from two shillings and sixpence to one pound, for spending, say, two hours of his or her time with a complete stranger. After all, mediums must live. The clergy of all denominations are paid, and I do not wonder at the impatience of spiritualists with the kind of vulgar silly objections which are made by superior persons when hearing that healers and mediums are paid.

"One of the things that have struck me is the attitude of the Church of England to spiritualism. The Archbishop of Canterbury receives hundreds of letters asking what he thinks about spiritualism, and I feel he is hedging. He is unwilling to take the Roman Catholic standpoint, which is not that it is all fraudulent, but that it is probably evil in origin, and so wrong to practise it."

A book that was called *The Gate of Remembrance* impressed me owing to the fact that the monk through whom the communications were supposed to be received, was undoubtedly an authentic mediaeval Catholic, or a spirit posing as such. No modern mind brought up in modern surroundings could have invented or reconstituted such a personality. Another book which interested me was a curious account by a woman of how she had been brought back to complete health, after years of frightful disablement from, what I take it, was some form of acute dyspepsia, by the care and advice of a spirit who had once been a doctor. The book was written with obvious sincerity, and contained testimonials from all sorts of people who knew her. She had also had the courage to print a curious testimonial from her own doctor who, while admitting that all she said was true as to the change which had taken

place in her, put it down to some obscure form of self-hypnotism.

> "One of the most curious things about spiritualists is the way they will accept certain phenomena and reject others. Thus Oliver Lodge does not believe in spirit photographs, and he has great doubts about what they call trumpet séances, in which the voice of the spirit comes through a trumpet which may be lying on the ground, held in the hand, or put on a piece of furniture. In a word, Oliver Lodge is unwilling to believe in anything which might be fairly easily done by the agency of fraud.
>
> "I have been more impressed by some of the spirit photographs I have seen than by anything else. To give an instance—my hostess was much loved all through her life by a man to whom she had once been engaged to be married. This man died a year ago. She went to a spirit photographer who lived at Crewe, and who is a working-man. She took her own plates, and, to the best of her belief, the man had no clue as to her identity. He took a photograph of her, she being exceedingly desirous that a portrait of her dead son should appear on it. What *did* appear was the undoubted head and shoulders of her one-time lover. I thought this fact significant.
>
> "It is possible that the photographer was aware that she had once been engaged to that man, but I think any honest person would admit that his knowing such a thing was a million to one chance. Also, if he knew who she was it would have been

extremely easy for him to obtain a portrait of her son, as the young man's photograph appeared in all the illustrated papers at the time of his death. On the other hand it would have been extremely difficult to have obtained a photograph of the man who had loved her. I, who knew the whole of his circle, have only once seen a photograph of him. Yet another point. These spirit photographs show no sign of arrangement of the kind it would be very easy to make if fraud were present. The spirit figure will appear in the most incongruous and sometimes absurd positions. In this case the head of the man appeared on her breast. She showed the photograph to me, and asked, 'Do you know whose face that is?' I knew it at once—it was exactly like him, but not at all flattering."

XVII

Of the men much younger than myself who have been my friends, I remember Sir Philip Sassoon with special affection and gratitude. During many years some of the most delightful days of my life were spent in his country-house at Lympne.

I first met Philip just before the first World War, and I vividly remember the occasion. It was at lunch in the house—filled with splendid pictures—of Sir John and Lady Horner. Lady Horner was one of the most remarkable as well as brilliant women of my time. In *Time Remembered* she told the touching and beautiful story of her life.

After lunch Philip offered to motor me back to Westminster. He drove himself, in a small two-seater car, so we were alone, and perhaps because I had learned that his mother was French, I felt much drawn to him. In those days he was like an open-hearted boy, bubbling over with the joy of life. He asked if I would mind driving round St. James's Park two or three times, and while he did so, he told me a great deal about himself. I was touched by his confidences, but I did not expect ever to see him again.

In 1914, after the outbreak of war, I received a letter from him addressed from G.H.Q. Owing to his knowing French just as well as he did English, he had been made A.D.C. to the British Commander-in-Chief. His only escape from what was a difficult and responsible job for so young a man lay in reading, and he begged me to send his London secretary, Mrs. Beresford, a list of any new books I thought he would enjoy reading. I sent him lists of books all through the four years of war, for my heart always goes out to anybody who really cares

for contemporary literature. Philip Sassoon, however busy he might be, and I knew him for twenty-seven years, always found time to read what he had reason to think good.

After the end of the war his house at Lympne was the scene of many important Inter-Allied Conferences, and there in later years he entertained most of the outstanding men of that day. His cousin, Mrs. David Gubbay, acted as his hostess, and I became exceedingly fond not only of her, but of her husband. I look back on David Gubbay as having possessed one of the finest characters of any man I have ever known. He was quiet and unassuming in manner, concerned in everything worth while going on in the world, yet indifferent to the hedonistic brilliant society of men and women then surrounding Philip Sassoon. In the early days of my friendship with Philip, when I stayed at Lympne what I most enjoyed were my talks with David Gubbay; he had an instinctive knowledge of human nature, and a wide knowledge of world affairs.

He and his wife were among the most devoted couples I have ever known, yet while she obviously enjoyed seeing famous people, and acting as hostess in her cousin's strange and beautiful house—a house which might have come right out of the pages of *Hajji Baba of Ispahan*—he was evidently happiest alone with her in their own home. They had a remarkable circle, which included very varying types of men and women. I met there the then Duke and Duchess of York, Charlie Chaplin, and Arthur Balfour.

Lympne became very dear to me, and was the country-house where for some years I spent my happiest days. Philip and his cousin gathered about them a remarkable group of men and women. Philip Sassoon was a hard-working Member of Parliament, his chief interest being centred in the Air Force, at a time when the Air Force was regarded at the War Office and

in the Admiralty as of comparatively small account.

Port Lympne, to give the house its full name, though it never was called that in my hearing, was within a walk of the great aerodrome, and each time I went to stay there I noticed my host's increasing interest in the air. I soon realized that he held the strong belief that when another war came (he and I seemed to be alone in his circle in believing this was certain to happen) the Air Force would play a very great part in the conflict; this long before he became Under-Secretary of State for Air. Among his guests were always two or three shy, quiet young aviators, and with them I made friends. Lympne must have seemed fairyland to these men who were leading dangerous and cheerless lives at the aerodrome which was later to play so vast a part in the war which so few foresaw.

Philip was Member for Hythe and some of his constituents were asked to luncheon every day. In warm weather the meals were almost always served out of doors and I generally sat between two of his constituents. Years later, when driving through that district, I noticed over certain shops the names of the men with whom I had then made friends. Philip took his Parliamentary duties very seriously, and there came a time when I asked the then Prime Minister why Philip Sassoon had never been made Minister for Air. He told me it was because he had an indifferent Parliamentary manner. This, which was undoubtedly true, was strange, for he was a delightful and witty talker and sometimes kept his guests in fits of laughter. He must have spent many hours in reading, and he took a keen interest in writers. I recall his begging me to get in touch with Thornton Wilder. Thornton Wilder had not long published *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, and Philip, having asked him to spend a few days at Lympne, which he did, telegraphed to London for a dozen copies of the book, and gave a copy to each

member of his house-party.

To me the most attractive room at Lympne was the Library. It was a cube room, not large, the walls on three sides being entirely lined with books of every type. Philip's study, which was away from the house, was also lined with books. He always bought any book he wished to read, and though in no sense a scholar, he was well read. His knowledge of French literature was as wide as his knowledge of English literature, and during the first World War, in spite of his then extreme youth, he had managed to get in touch with many well-known French writers. I recall two letters of Proust being read aloud.

What I think I may describe as the most extraordinary experience in my life happened in connection with Philip Sassoon. It fell out in this wise.

During the twenty-seven years I had the happiness of his friendship, he seldom came to see me in London. When he did come it was always when something had caused him distress. He would then sit with me for an hour, plunged in deep dejection. On one occasion he came round from the House of Commons, wretched in the memory of a speech he had just made, and had felt to be a failure.

What remains vividly in my mind is a day when he came to see me after he had lost a dear friend, who had piloted his plane on many occasions. This airman was not only a friend of Philip, he was also a close friend of Mrs. David Gubbay, and I remember seeing a photograph of him in his flying-kit in her London house. Philip begged me to write to Sir Oliver Lodge, with whom he knew I was acquainted, to ask for the address of a medium. I did what he wished. Sir Oliver sent me the name and address of a woman medium, and I forwarded them to Philip Sassoon. The next morning he rang me up and told me he had made an appointment with the medium, but he did not

feel he could face her, unless I would go with him. I told him the Catholic religion forbade any dealings with spiritualism; he then begged me to be present while he saw her, and I consented to do so.

We drove to a road beyond Notting Hill Gate, and stopped in front of a detached villa. We were admitted by a middle-aged woman, who led us into a room which contained some shabby garden furniture. Philip sat down on a wicker chair, and I placed myself on another chair, as far as I could from the other two. After a few moments, the medium went into a trance, and from her lips there issued a man's voice, describing a fall from a plane, and the instant death of the speaker. The same voice then made a strong plea concerning the future of a group of children he called "the kiddies", and who, he was painfully anxious, should not be parted from their mothers.

Meanwhile Philip remained silent, staring at the medium. After a pause the same man's voice as before issued from the sleeping woman's lips. Again the accident was described and there then followed an allusion to a pair of flying-boots, which the speaker hoped Philip would find useful. Then the medium suddenly turned to me and exclaimed, "I have a message for you, too!" I said I refused to receive the message, as I was a Catholic, and my religion did not allow me to practise spiritualism. Then came, "It is a short message which a friend of yours is most anxious that you should receive. Your friend's name begins with an A. I seem to get Al——." I at once thought of Lord Northcliffe, who had then been dead some years, and whose name had been Alfred. But I remained silent. The medium went on, "He wishes you to know that he has just passed over, but that his disappearance from your life will be on the whole to your advantage rather than otherwise, so you are not to feel too anxious". I knew of no friend who had just

died, and I regretted having taken an unwitting part in a séance.

When we were back in his car, Philip Sassoon turned to me and exclaimed, "The voice which spoke to me was the voice of the man, Hannah's friend and mine, who was killed flying in Egypt." I said, "Did you understand the allusion to his flying-boots?" He said, "Of course I did. I bought his flying-boots after his death." He then asked me the name of the supposed spirit who had sent me a message. I told him I did not know it and added I had always thought it possible there was an intermediate type of spirit who gave false messages. I went on, "The only Alfred I have ever known was Lord Northcliffe, and I am quite sure the message was not from him."

That same afternoon I was rung up by the *Daily Mail* and told that the fiction editor, A. Langley Edwards, had died of pneumonia early that morning. I keep a very kind memory of Mr. Langley Edwards; we were friends, but I had never known his Christian name. After he had been put in touch with me by Lord Northcliffe, he had serialized a novel of mine which was afterwards published under the title of *Letty Lynton*. I soon found his whole heart was centred on his wife and his two children. So when I went to Paris, as I then did two or three times a year, I used to bring back toys for the little boy and girl. He was a very intelligent man, and I enjoyed my talks with him.

Sir Louis Mallet, a friend of Philip Sassoon, was exceedingly interested in spiritualism. He was only a half-believer in the phenomena, and I remember once saying to him, "If there is nothing in it, as you are apt sometimes to believe, why is it that the Catholic Church forbids its children to practise spiritualism? Apart from everything else, that fact convinces me that there can be communication." I told him I had heard that Edison had observed to a friend that the next

great discovery would be that of a method of communication between the quick and the dead.

My mother, with whom in a sense I had so little in common, although we were deeply attached to one another, was what may be called an unwilling believer in spiritualism. She once described to me how she had been persuaded by a friend who had bought a ouija board, to hold a séance in her London house just after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. The people present were all English, she alone being in touch with France. The name of a famous French writer was written down, and the next day my mother learned he had died. She told Dr. Manning about this séance, and he sternly forbade her to renew the experiment.

To return to Lympne, I met a more varied company of remarkable people there than I did in any other country-house. I vividly remember a party among whose members was Winston Churchill, who had flown from Paris accompanied by his son, and I recall his penetrating and brilliant talk, he being then in the wilderness. Another time there was talk one night at dinner concerning the League of Nations, and I suddenly heard uttered, for the first time in my life, the word "Sanctions". I exclaimed, "I don't understand the meaning of that word." After someone present had enlightened me, Philip said jokingly, "Well, what do you think of Sanctions?" I answered, "They will either mean nothing, or the imposing of Sanctions must inevitably lead to war." One of the politicians present exclaimed, "The mere threat of Sanctions will *stop* war." And someone else called out, "That's a splendid idea! In fact no Sanctions will ever *have* to be applied."

Philip was wonderfully kind to men and women in real trouble or distress. When at Lympne he sent for a great specialist from London on more than one occasion to see an

ailing person in Dover with whom he was only slightly acquainted. He was a very rich man; but in my life I have known several men who were as rich as Philip Sassoon, and who never spent any money they could avoid spending on other people.

He had a passion for the open air, and to the annoyance of certain of his guests, he would not only make them lunch, but dine, out of doors. I have a strong dislike to the sun, and for any form of heat, so insisted on having a large garden umbrella put up just behind me. I could not have eaten a meal, as all the others did, with the sun beating down on me.

Philip never adopted without careful thought the general view of either a man or a woman. He always judged for himself. Now and again he would take a sudden dislike to a person, but I never knew him turn against anyone he regarded as a friend, and his fidelity to certain unpopular people in his world was strong and enduring.

I consider his kindest action to me was his asking me to meet Lawrence of Arabia. On two occasions I was placed next to Lawrence at luncheon, and so I was able to enjoy almost uninterrupted talks with that extraordinary being. On the first occasion I arrived early; there was no one there but the host and Lawrence. I had not been told Lawrence was to be there, and I supposed him to be a boy scout, probably a son of one of Philip's constituents. But I was soon undeceived.

During that luncheon I had a long talk with Lawrence, entirely connected with what I suppose may be called the art of writing. He spoke at length of the meaning of the word style, and expressed strong admiration for my brother's work. It was very strange seeing him there at the height of the London season, in a boy-scout type of uniform (that of an aircraftman). Luckily for me, the lady on his other side was next to Philip,

and hardly spoke a word to Mr. Shaw (as we were instructed to call him), so I had him more or less to myself. We spoke of books all the time, and he told me his one wish was to become a great writer.

I must have been one of the first people to read *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom,* for Philip Sassoon had been among the first subscribers, and the huge unwieldy volume arrived while I was staying at Trent. None of my fellow-guests seemed in any hurry to read it, and I asked Philip if I might take it up to my bedroom, and read it there. It was so heavy that, while reading it, I had to keep it lying on the arm of the deep armchair where I always sat. No one had yet spoken to me of Lawrence's book, and it had not been reviewed. It made so immense an impression on me that, though I have not re-read it, I remember certain passages as if I had just read them. In the original edition, which I think cost seventy pounds a copy, were passages that did not appear in later editions.

I did not regard Lawrence as a happy man, and he must have been extremely, indeed abnormally, sensitive. I once had a talk with the wife of an Air-Marshal with whom Lawrence stayed more than once. She told me that he seemed to think, wherever he might be, that those round him were looking at him. She described motoring with him once to Victoria Station, and his suddenly saying, "Do let us go up that side street, and get away from the people who are staring at us". At the time no one was looking their way, and none of the people coming and going could have had any idea who he was.

Lawrence's personality has always been of singular interest to me, and I think I have read every word ever written about him. The best account was by a man who had known him in India, at a time when he had taken refuge from the world.

There were people—and very shrewd people—both in

France and in Germany, who believed Lawrence to be Great Britain's super-spy. This was absurdly untrue. What I think is true is that those who had to do with him found him incalculable. That he had a strong dislike of women is made plain in the unexpurgated edition of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. At that time his personality aroused an extraordinary amount of interest and speculation, and everyone wanted to meet him. There was one amusing story of how he on his side wished to meet Bernard Shaw, and I heard that the author of *Man and Superman* had inscribed a copy of one of his books "From Public Shaw to Private Shaw".

Of Philip's guests the man I most enjoyed meeting was Lord Hugh Cecil, and the man with whom I felt least at ease was Lord Curzon. Yet I have always regretted having refused to go with him to Bodiam. I could not imagine why he wished me to spend a day with him. I felt out of sympathy with him for the following reason. With his wide experience of life, I should have expected him to be indulgent to certain failings which are inherent in our poor human nature; but I found this was indeed a mistaken view. A terrible murder had just taken place. A woman whom those about her believed to be entirely respectable, was accosted by a man while she was looking in a shop window. The man was singularly attractive, and he persuaded her to spend a week-end with him in a bungalow he owned on a lonely stretch of land near the coast. She was desperately lonely and unhappy, and she consented to do what this stranger suggested. He evidently belonged to the Don Juan type of man, and while they were away together a woman he had seduced, and who was about to have a child, appeared while his latest temporary friend had gone out, and he killed the unwelcome visitor. The murder once discovered, the woman who had gone away with him was traced, and she had

the terrible experience of having to give evidence at his trial.

After dinner at Lympne the story formed the subject of discussion, and I said how sorry I felt for her. To my amazement Lord Curzon turned to me and said in a pontifical tone that he was surprised at my attitude, as he regarded what had happened to her as a judgment for her sin. I felt shocked at the cruel way he spoke of the unhappy woman, and I did not feel I could endure a long day spent in his company. He was at once so highly thought of, and so pleased with himself, that he was amazed I refused to go with him to Bodiam. Another woman accompanied him, and while they were away, his wife and I had a long talk, during which she said more than once, "George is such a very good man".

What I feel Lord Curzon lacked was imagination, I mean by that the kind of imagination which can understand and sympathize with the misfortunes of others. He was evidently capable of very deep feeling. A man who was with him at the time of the death of his first wife, gave me a heartrending account of Curzon's agonizing grief. On the other hand, he was completely lacking in sympathy with those who behaved in a way he could not himself, under any circumstances, have been capable of.

During another visit the most interesting guest was Lady D'Abernon, wife of the then new Ambassador to Berlin. I wrote:

> "She is marvellously beautiful, and has the pretty graceful figure of a young girl. She was the best of the tennis players, after Philip himself and the Pro. I had heard for many years of her marvellously youthful appearance, but I could not have believed she looked as she does, if I had not seen it myself."

The one outstanding subject of discussion throughout a week-end visit at Lympne was Margot Asquith's book. What shocked everybody there was her putting on record Balfour's remark concerning Lord Midleton's "almost malignant fidelity".

Lady Battersea, a dear friend of mine, was a relation of Philip Sassoon. His mother had been a French Rothschild, and I was intimate with Mrs. Leopold de Rothschild. She was an Austrian, and both she and her sister, Mrs. Sassoon, were immensely popular in the late Victorian and Edwardian worlds. Most people preferred Mrs. Sassoon, but I was far fonder of Marie de Rothschild. She was a very noble-natured woman, and had a greater sense of duty than any other human being I have ever known.

The following story, which I believe to be true, was current. One of the Sassoons, on a visit to Austria, had met an astonishingly beautiful girl named Louise Perugia. He married her, and on their arrival in England her extreme loveliness created a sensation. Several old people have told me she was the most beautiful young woman they had ever seen. One day Mrs. de Rothschild, the matriarch of the British branch, told her son, who was, I think, a man of thirty-five, how passionately anxious she was to see him married. Leopold de Rothschild said to his mother, "If I could find a girl like Arthur Sassoon's wife, I would marry her." Mrs. de Rothschild told this to Lady Battersea, from whom I learned the story years later.

Lady Battersea got in touch with Mrs. Arthur Sassoon, and discovered that she had a sister, ten years younger than herself, named Marie. This girl was supposed to have so remarkable a character that even as a little child she managed her family, and Louise had said naïvely to Lady Battersea, "I would not

have married my husband had not Marie, who was then only ten years old, approved of him".

Lady Battersea invited Mrs. Sassoon to stay with her, and suggested she should bring her sister, who was then on a visit to England. She then asked Leopold de Rothschild, who was regarded as a confirmed bachelor, at the same time. He told her at the end of the visit that he felt much attracted to Marie Perugia, but that he could never marry a woman unless she could ride, as he was very fond of hunting. Lady Battersea found a very quiet mare, gave Marie a riding-habit and some riding lessons. She then asked Leopold de Rothschild to come and stay with her again. Meanwhile Marie, who was very plucky, had learned to ride, with no suspicion of why her English cousin was anxious she should do so.

Lady Battersea gave me an amusing account of how when Leopold was staying with her she sent Marie out riding with him. Their marriage followed, and Marie became an extremely good horsewoman, and constantly hunted after her marriage. She and Leopold had three sons. Evelyn, a delightful young man, was killed in Palestine at the same time as the then Lord Rosebery's second son. I scarcely knew Evelyn, though I had seen him play polo at Gunnersbury. Of Marie's third son, Tony, I think with affectionate thoughts. He was a noted horticulturist, and I recall being told by a man how he had gone to Amen Court on some important business, full of fear and trembling, to interview Lionel and Tony de Rothschild. They had each been reading a book when he had come into the room, and when they left the room for a few minutes, he approached the table to see what they had been reading. Lionel's book was on Field Flowers; Tony's on some peculiar rare breed of dog.

Tony married a young French lady I liked very much when

I met her as a bride at Ascott, Wing. They had beautiful children, their daughter being very like my dear friend, Marie.

XVIII

About the middle of November 1918, when everyone was rejoicing at the Armistice, we received an alarming telegram from Rouen, stating that our son, Charles Lowndes, was dangerously ill. Unfortunately it was not what was then called "an official telegram". It was sent direct from the military hospital, so we could not start without going through various formalities, and that though the war had been over for a week.

We hastened to the War Office, where we had a friend in the Director of Organization. He was exceedingly kind, and said he would arrange for us to be met at Calais and driven straight to Rouen. But he warned us that we must get an entry permit from the French. The fact that our telegram was not official caused us some difficulty, but in the end we obtained the permit. There followed a strange journey; there were many mines in the Channel, and everyone on the boat excepting ourselves wore lifebelts. We only noticed this fact when leaving the boat.

Just before we received the telegram from Rouen, an odd thing happened. The letter from the War Office had been sent to an address in Mayfair. The lady who occupied the house found our name in the telephone book, and most kindly sent it on by hand. I wrote a courteous letter to the War Office, pointing out that we were living at No. 9 Barton Street, Westminster, and so not at the address where the letter had been sent. I then received a letter telling me it was no use my pretending *I* was living at Barton Street with my husband, as we were separated, and *I* was now living in Mayfair. I replied and said we were not separated; that we had been married

twenty-two years, and had lived first in Great College Street, and later at 9 Barton Street. I received a letter, couched in fairly civil language, reproving me for being such a liar.

On the twentieth of November we arrived at Rouen late in the evening, after an astonishing drive in a large German car which had been captured by the French. We drove very quickly, constantly passing carts, and other vehicles, without lights. Had I not been in great distress of mind, I should have felt exceedingly frightened, but the very real dangers of the road made no impression on me.

We reached Rouen about two o'clock in the morning, and were kindly greeted at the Red Cross Hostel, where the relations of those officers who had been wounded, or who were suffering from enteric, were put up free of charge. It was a curious mediaeval building in the middle of the town, and the Hostel was run by a number of kind Englishwomen. It was a fifteenth-century house, and thus very old and queer, probably an ancient inn. We went straight on to where our son was lying desperately ill; the military hospital had been a monastery, and he was in a small cell.

I wrote home to my elder daughter:

> "He has cerebral influenza, and is delirious with a high temperature. On our arrival, to our bitter disappointment, we were not allowed to see him, but the head doctor is not only a nice man, but to our thinking a very clever man, and Charles is in a room by himself. We motored 140 miles in a little over three hours, and now and again I felt anxious, as part of the way we went in pitch darkness, at over fifty miles an hour."

They were still exceedingly short-handed at *The Times* office, so my husband had to go back at the end of the first week. All the younger members of their staff were still in the Forces. But I stayed on, as the crisis was not expected to take place for some days.

There was not an egg or a drop of milk to be bought in Rouen. I made friends with two British doctors who gave me a terrible account of what the influenza was doing there. The inhabitants of the town had been so short of food during the war that they were in no state to stand up to illness. One of the doctors said, "They are dying like flies."

All the food for the British in Rouen had to be sent from England, and one thing surprised me very much. At the Hostel all the personnel, like the personnel for every British institution in France, had been sent from England. There were plenty of very excellent cooks in Rouen, and the town was indeed full of working women who had nothing to do, and would have been glad of any job. Yet even the kitchen-maids were English ladies who were giving their services. They naturally were amateurs, and none of them knew anything about cooking.

Both lunch and dinner consisted of hard bullet-like rissoles made of bully beef. But strange to say each person had a half-bottle of French red wine, and that was apparently the only thing bought locally. Even my digestion, strong as it was, could not stand up to this food, and twice a week I went out and had a decent meal at a humble French restaurant. Prices had not gone up, or I could not have afforded this luxury, and I recall my sensation of intense relief when I suddenly found in a letter from home a cheque for twenty pounds, the sum paid for the sale of a literary right. In fact I remember even now the appearance of the post office where I collected the letter.

In a few days I wrote home, "I have seen Charles for three

minutes. He seems easier, but fearfully weak, and is allowed nothing but milk. His temperature is lower than it was, 101° this morning, but it rises every night."

The Hostel was full of very unhappy people, the parents, and in some cases the wives, of officers who were on the danger list. I began by attending all the funerals, but at last I gave up doing so, for they rent my heart, and made me unfit for the difficult life I was then leading.

For the most part the British officers' hospital was full of men who had been fearfully wounded. I vividly remember one man who lived entirely on tea, and he only liked China tea. Fortunately I had brought quite a stock of this with me, so I was able to supply his sister during the ten days before he died.

My son was very soon moved to a large building outside the town, and I went there every day by tram. The patients were in large huts, and all the surgeons and nurses wore masks.

One day I wrote home:

> "It was strange to see the town beflagged, and the tragic faces of the women one met in the streets. There are dozens and dozens of young widows, all swathed, as is the French way, in *crêpe* from top to toe. Sensibly, none of them have put their children in mourning, and it is curious to see them walking about with gaily dressed boys and girls. A great difference from when I was a child."

I had been four, and my brother two, when our father died, and we wore black clothes for a considerable time, and after that, with white frocks, black sashes and ribbons.

The town of Rouen, where I had not been since I was a girl, was of special interest to me, owing to my intense

admiration for *Madame Bovary*. I almost knew that novel by heart, and with great interest I went to see the Municipal Hospital, where Flaubert had been born, his father having been the head surgeon. I shall always regret not having had either the money or the energy—had I had the money I think I would have found the energy—to go out to see the place where *Madame Bovary* was written. It might, however, have been a disappointment, for I had, and have, in my mind a very clear picture of the house, and of the room where Flaubert wrote that book.

My one extravagance during those weeks was a subscription to a queer little circulating library where, rather to my disgust, there were more English than French books. The extraordinarily complete and admirable Tauchnitz edition formed the basis of almost every British circulating library on the Continent. The books were not only cheap, the print was also very good.

I should have starved but for my parcels from home. The only thing ever taken out of the parcels, which always contained underclothing, for I had no way of getting laundry done, was the pound of sugar. As I wrote home, "Rouen has no sugar at all, even the hospitals have none, and I am taking some up to C. for him to have in his morning tea".

Every kind of human being was represented at the Hostel, from the English woman who had lived all her life in a little village, to a woman whose whole interests had centred in what is called "society". I found the atmosphere of the Hostel the more unendurable because very soon many of the people there confided their troubles to me, and asked my advice. I shall never forget one elderly woman, who had gone there with her husband, suddenly drawing me aside, and asking me whether I thought it was her duty now, and might be conducive to her

son's recovery, if she were to confess to her husband that she had committed adultery about forty years before. I implored her to do nothing of the kind, and told her—what shocked rather than relieved her—that when a Catholic goes to confession and says he has committed adultery, the first thing the priest advises him is to keep the fact to himself. This advice, as I pointed out, but with no effect, was the result of the wisdom the Catholic Church has accumulated through the ages.

After two or three days spent in the Hostel, I decided I would have a bedroom outside. My unfortunate fellow-guests used to talk to me half the night, so it was an immense relief to be sure of being alone. This was also a relief to the ladies who ran the Hostel, as it was overcrowded. My room outside was in an incredibly poor type of lodging-house, but to my joy and relief it was quite clean.

I had fortunately taken with me what was called a Tommy Cooker, so I was able to make my tea every morning; and I had one piece of good fortune so strange that it remains clearly in my mind. A French lady living in the country near Rouen, who learned of my existence through the circulating library, gave me three eggs a week. I cooked them over my Tommy Cooker, and ate them secretly.

After I had been five weeks in Rouen came my worst moment. It was arranged that although he was not even convalescent, in fact still very ill, my son should be taken as a cot-case to England. The day came when he was to have started, but I could not find out on what hospital ship he was supposed to arrive in England. I then learnt with indignation that he had not set out at all, but had simply been moved into another hut in which were certain highly infectious cases. I should like to say that a Frenchwoman, whose very name I

never knew, for I only met her when having lunch one day in an outside restaurant, offered me the loan of a thousand francs (then forty pounds). I refused this loan, although I should have liked very much to have accepted it.

Meanwhile my son went on being as ill as when we first arrived. He grew weaker and weaker. His temperature would not go down, and the excellent surgeon who had him in his charge said he could have nothing but milk until his temperature had been normal for three days.

My elder daughter was always sending me parcels, and one day I wrote to her:

> "I must now tell you of the tragi-comedy of the parcels. All the sugar but a few crumbs was stolen out of the little one, and then so admirably done up again that no one would know it had been opened. The big parcel had had the paper torn off, to see if there was any sugar, and this had been repacked. There is practically no sugar in France."

Then there followed a list of all that had been sent, and that *had* arrived. At last I made what turned out to be an excellent suggestion. I had my parcels addressed to my son, and sent to him done up like washing.

My husband felt miserable about me, and I constantly wrote telling him how very comfortable I was, and how very well I was managing. That on the whole was true.

It was a great pleasure to me to go to Mass in the various beautiful old churches, especially in Saint Ouen. I wrote to my little daughter: "A kind old man took me all over the Cathedral, and told me the most extraordinarily interesting things about it. He spoke as if Joan of Arc had been burnt yesterday, and

evidently hoped I should feel both sad and ashamed."

A picturesque and moving incident took place while I was actually with my son. This was the visit of Cardinal Dubois. He stayed for some moments in the little cell where my son lay ill, and gave him a special blessing. I was only allowed to visit the boy between three and five o'clock. His little sister, who was nine years younger than himself, sent him a present, and I wrote home: "Charles is delighted with your present, and the Archbishop of Rouen, Cardinal Dubois, visited the hospital yesterday afternoon, and blessed both Charles and the present". This makes me suppose the present was a rosary.

After a time German prisoners were put to work on the roads of the town. I looked at these Germans with great curiosity and interest, and I was glad to notice that they were kindly treated by the townspeople. As an old man whom I met in a tram said to me, "I was in Germany as a prisoner in 1870. I remember that time well, and if only for that reason I should always treat any prisoner as he should be treated—that is as an unfortunate man in need of pity."

As I walked about Rouen I used to think of the happy days I had spent there in my girlhood, when my mother took my brother and myself on a wonderful tour of Normandy which began by going in a boat from Havre to Rouen, and then on to the lovely stretch of the Seine which is just below the great ruined castle of Château Gaillard.

The only sign of joy I saw all the time I was there, was when some French prisoners of war came back. They had a civic reception in the open, which I attended. The worst case I heard of a returned prisoner of war was an Englishman, an officer in the Buffs, who had only been taken prisoner seven weeks before the Armistice. I became acquainted with this story because his parents had been telegraphed for, and I met

them in the Hostel. When taken prisoner he had a wound in his head, not very bad, and another in his feet. Neither of these wounds was dressed at all by the Germans, or even washed. After he had been a prisoner about a month, the British pursuit became very hot. The Germans then put him in a very deep cellar where he remained many days till he was found, by accident, by an English Tommy who had gone down to look for a drink. He was in such a state when brought to Rouen that they thought both his feet would have to be amputated, and the moral effect of all he had gone through was such that he had become dumb.

I asked Major Austin, the head surgeon of the military hospital, whether there was any exaggeration in his parents' account of his case. He replied: "No, they have much understated his condition. No words of mine can paint the state the unfortunate man was in." Major Austin was convinced that the man was put in the cellar in the hope that he would die there. But he said the German surgeons had gradually become very much ashamed of those cases that were not attended to, and that they had done everything to prevent these instances becoming known. It was a miracle that this unfortunate man was saved. He was left food and drink, but rats ran over him, and he got into such a terrible state that he looked as if he had been buried alive. His father left after a few days, but they begged his mother to stay on, in the hope that her presence might rouse him from his curious kind of apathy. He was a splendid young man of twenty-six, and Major Austin said he did not think his mental condition had anything to do with the wound in his head, but had been brought on entirely by agony of mind.

"The state of the prisoners is certainly one of the

things that should injure the Germans most in the future. A French barrister whom I know, now a French officer, spoke to me with the deepest horror of the matter. I said to him that I wondered that the German prisoners could go about Rouen in gangs doing work, without anyone taking any notice of them, when one considers the state in which French prisoners have been sent back. One who was only twenty-two has come back with white hair, and so altered in appearance that at first his mother refused to believe he was her son, and thought someone was impersonating him. The French officer answered, shrugging his shoulders: 'A prisoner is no longer a combatant. He is an unfortunate, unarmed man. Who but a brute', then he paused a moment and added, 'or a German, could be cruel to such a fellow?'"

I came back to England to find the whole world absorbed in the elections. I wrote:

"No-one knows what the results will be. There is a general impression that Labour will come out strong, and be the only serious rival the Coalition have to fear in the new Parliament. From enquiries I have made I gather that the Asquithians expect to get in, but with greatly diminished majorities. They seem to fear Labour more than Lloyd George. The women who are expected to be returned are three—Violet Markham, Mary McArthur, and Countess Markievicz. I discreetly asked one of the McKenna family as to Reginald's chances. He said he understood the seat was safe. In a sense it is a freak

election, because of the women's vote, and because the soldiers are still abroad."

Two days later, I noted in my diary:

"I have seldom seen so much excitement as there was in London over the Election. Men spent the whole day at their clubs, watching the tape; this in curious contrast to the apathy shown in the constituencies. I have heard of noted political speakers having audiences of ten or twelve, where in the old days they would have had halls and rooms crammed to their utmost capacity. On the other hand, the women's meetings have been very well attended, and it is evidently false that women are not interested in the vote. The results have amazed everybody, without exception. I have not heard a single person even pretend that they had foreseen what has taken place. Someone who saw Lloyd George yesterday declares that he is slightly uneasy, and begins to see that if he cannot manage to swallow the Tories, they will swallow him. It is more of a Tory triumph than a Lloyd George triumph. Owing to the fact that anyone may stand who can or will put up £150, there were few constituencies where there were not at least three candidates, sometimes five. This has created a most extraordinary state of things. A candidate has often got in without anything like a clear majority over all his opponents put together. Personally I regret Reginald McKenna is out, as I think he was one of the very few members of the old gang who could really honestly be said to have helped to win the war.

To my mind he comes next to Haldane, Haldane having organised the Expeditionary Force, McKenna the Navy. One asks oneself where Lloyd George and some of his friends would be *now*, if Haldane and McKenna had never existed. I am also sorry, from a sentimental point of view, that Mr. Asquith has been thrown out. He has done splendid service first and last for the country. On the other hand I have long thought it an amazing thing that the so-called Liberal Party should have come to be so utterly out of touch with the rest of the country.

"For a long time past I have been amazed at things I have heard said by even the shrewdest official Liberals. They would not face any fact that warred with their prejudices or interests. Again and again prominent Liberals have assured me that the soldiers now fighting in France were quite fond of the Germans; that the prisoners had not really been so badly treated after all; that there was a hatred of militarism growing in the country; that England was thoroughly sick of the war, and so on. Had any of these people, instead of living in their own hedonistic, luxurious circles, gone about as I do, by omnibus, tube, and underground, talking to the workers of whatever class they met on their way, it would have been impossible for them to cherish such delusions. I have yet to meet a private soldier who has anything but loathing for the Germans. I have heard officers speak with admiration of the Germans' disciplined bravery, but I have never once heard an ordinary, commonplace soldier make any of the sort of sentimental remarks attributed to him—'He is a

man like myself', etc., etc.

"What did impress the British soldiers was the devastated regions of France. It is the first thing any of them mention to me when speaking of the war, and it is almost the first thing that the stay-at-homes in touch with them, old men and women of the working class, thoughtful girls of the same class, mention, too. With regard to the prisoners, the feeling is most intense, and as a cynical friend of mine said to me the other day: 'It would have paid the Germans for generations to come to have kept all their prisoners in Ritz hotels.'

"As to militarism, so far the war has brought increased good to the British working class, and apart from the terrible losses by death, there is not a worker that will not have cause to regret the ending of the war. It has meant to the great majority of working people, comfort, and in a modest degree wealth, for the first time in their lives.

"In France and in Germany the end of the war was ardently longed for, for it bit deeply into the life of each country, and also meant that, in innumerable cases, people who were fairly well off became suddenly poor. This has only been true in England of a small section of middle-class people who either belonged to the professional world, or to the one-man-business class."

I wrote to Elizabeth Asquith a letter of condolence, but I told her frankly how very blind I thought the Liberals had all been—I meant blind to the signs of the times, not blind as regarded their own constituencies, for that is always

incalculable.

I noted:

> "On the first of January 1919 the political situation still dominates everything, and is in everybody's thoughts. Even President Wilson has become a back number. I hear privately that the Government were desperately anxious that he should have as good a reception here as he had in Paris. That was why it was arranged he should come on Boxing Day, as on that day the great mass of Londoners, having nothing much to do, would go into the streets and applaud him. Every American one meets, whatever his or her class, sex, or age, is an anti-Wilsonite, so they are all enraged, in varying degrees, with the splendid ovation he received. My friend, Mr. B., says the Americans have already decided against Wilson having a third term of office. If America had really been consulted, the man who would have been here, I am told, is Roosevelt. English people, on the other hand, are inclined to regard Wilson with favour, and think him a great man. I heard with regard to the conference between himself, the King, and Lloyd George, that he was definitely confronted with certain *faits accomplis* (the phrase used by my informant) and gave in with a good grace. I asked an American officer who dined with us last night why there was such universal anti-Wilson feeling among Americans over here. He hummed and hawed and said it was because Wilson, while pretending to do everything in an above-board way, had not told anyone what he meant to do.

Americans think that he is 'all talk', and are looking forward with a sort of savage glee to his having to abandon his Fourteen Points when it comes to business. All the Americans I meet thoroughly approve of Clemenceau's very frank speech—a speech in which he admitted there was not complete agreement between himself and Wilson.

"I heard a curious story the other day. At an informal conference held just after the Armistice between Colonel House, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George, after House had finished saying what he thought the President wished to do, Clemenceau exclaimed: 'Rather than agree to such terms I for one would begin the war again, and every Frenchman would be behind me!' Lloyd George nodded and said: 'I say ditto with regard to the British.'

"It is strongly suspected in France that Wilson now wishes to curry favour with the German-Americans, and that this is why he has not yet visited the French devastated districts. I was surprised to hear that he means to come back in two months, and I think this will be a foolish move on his part. Americans are annoyed, and English people are amused, by the fact that certain papers have alluded to Mrs. Wilson's private secretary as her lady-in-waiting.

"To return to the political situation. People are all agog to know how Lloyd George will compose his new Cabinet. He is holding out a loving hand to Labour, but unfortunately for him, when Labour is in, the Cabinet always becomes divorced from the real Labour people. Lloyd George is not likely to

conciliate the Trades Unions, or the Bolshevik element, by including in his Ministry two or three Labour leaders.

"I hear that a big Expedition to Russia is under consideration; it will be entirely composed of volunteers, who will have double pay. My American friend tells me he has heard a whisper that America may play a considerable role in this army, and the French will also be represented. The news is to be broken to this country when Parliament meets. The odd thing is that a great many good and excellent people approve of the Bolshevik regime, and eagerly deny that there is anything wrong with it. In fact the situation is very much what it must have been when a large number of English people approved of the French Revolution, and denied that there were any horrors.

"I have seen a certain number of men back from Russia—among others an Italian Consul and his wife, whose account of what they went through beggars description. He seems to have been a humble kind of official living in the middle of Russia, and it took him and his wife about two months to get home. Life was entirely disorganized, and though in a sense they were in the midst of plenty, the lady told me she had given £2:10:0 for a piece of bread amounting to a quarter of an English loaf. This bread had had to last them for three or four days, and was their only food. Someone else I met, a governess from Petrograd, told me that one way of getting anything to eat was to visit the hospitals, where the wounded soldiers receive food—the only

food they get—from their families in the country. This food they are willing to sell at high prices. All the factories have closed down, all means of transport have come to an end, and Petrograd, though more than two-thirds of the population have left it, is in an actual state of starvation, with disease rampant. I have heard a rumour that the British are going to occupy the Ukraine until Russia's huge debt to the Allies is paid. As I wrote to a friend—this should bring us to about the day of judgment."

Early in January 1919, I heard some literary gossip.

"The publishers now reject anything to do with the war. Yet I feel sure that the most popular books in the next twenty years will be war novels and war books. A friend and I agreed as to Hugh Walpole's wonderful luck, and we both felt that luck plays a considerable part, as regards material matters, in the life of any artist.

"I hear that the King would much like to make Haig a duke, taking as a precedent the Duke of Wellington; but Lloyd George objects, saying that in that case Beatty ought to be made a duke too, and also that a dukedom cannot be kept up without an enormous income in these days. It is not likely that Parliament would consent to vote more than £100,000, and the lowest sum required would be £250,000. It is now thought that Winston Churchill will be given the new Air Ministry, where even his enemies agree he might do very good work."

Later, after the war was over, I met Somerset Maugham, and by a happy chance was able to have a really long and intimate talk with him. He gave me what I felt to be a painful account of the years when he had tried in vain to get his plays taken. He told me that the time of waiting had lasted ten years. Then at last *Lady Frederick* was taken to be put on as a stopgap, and was an immense success from the first night. Someone claimed to have rewritten the play to make it acceptable after it had been refused by several managers. Maugham naturally was so enraged at this that he wrote a signed article in the *Daily Mail* asserting what of course was true, that the play was being acted exactly as he wrote it, without the change of even a comma.

Maugham told me that to his mind the greatest dramatist of all time was Racine, and that he had lately re-read all his plays. This naturally pleased me, and I was amused when he went on to say that in England a comic writer is regarded as a second-class writer, while in France a comic writer is taken as being on the highest level. He declared that Molière would never have had any real standing in England.

It must have been about this time I read with immense admiration Walter de la Mare's *Memoirs of a Midget*. I then met the publisher, and he told me that they had almost turned down the book, as they had regarded it as too highbrow for their list. We had a discussion as to whether the written recollections of well-known people would go on being popular. He thought that they would not, but I said I thought they supplied a need in human nature. I recalled that a hundred years ago the street in which the publisher of *The Memoirs of Harriette Wilson* lived had to be cordoned off in sections, so great was the rush of customers clamouring for the book.

In the February of 1919 I called on the dowager Lady

Airlie, and she told me many curious and amusing things about her youth. Apropos of courtesy, one of the best examples was that of two old gentlemen who lived in Mayfair, and were celebrated for their dinners. One evening her parents dined there, and were surprised to find no other guests. They had, however, a delicious dinner, and, when putting Lady Stanley into her carriage, her host said caressingly, "You won't forget about to-morrow?"

> "She asked me with great interest how young people, belonging to the smart set, and having very little money, got on nowadays. I told her of one such couple known to me, who live in a very small house, and have no servants. A charwoman comes in and makes their breakfast. They lunch and dine out with friends every day. But this way of living is breaking down the young woman's health, and she has had to go to Banchory for a rest cure which will last for months.
>
> "Lady Airlie said that she had only known one person in her youth who lived in that way. This was Maria Lady Aylesbury. She lunched and dined out every day of her life. She had three footmen and a maid, but no cook, and when she was dying, there was no one in the house who knew how to make invalid food."

Lady Airlie asked me when I had first become aware that married people were not always fond of one another or faithful. I said I thought I had always known it. She said she could remember the day, the hour, the minute when she had learnt this painful fact. She had been married some months, and her

husband took her to the Derby. They had had lunch in a tent, then came a race and almost everybody there rushed out, while she sat on at table, not quite knowing what to do. Among those still there were a young man, popularly known as "the wicked Earl", and a young married woman. Suddenly Lady Airlie heard him say, "Will you have a peach, darling?" The lady replied, "No, my duck." "Duck and darling?" said Lady Airlie to herself. "Surely two people who are not married cannot be on such terms as *that*?" and she grew hot all over with horror and indignation.

EPILOGUE

Before concluding this record of a world which has vanished, I feel I should say something of the man who, though so few of my friends were acquainted with him, played an ever-increasingly great part in my life from the day, so fortunate for me, that I first met him during Eights Week at Oxford early in the nineties of the last century.

Frederic Lowndes was through and through an Englishman. His forebears had all married Englishwomen, and I was the one exception which proved the rule. His father, who had been Rector of St. Mary's, Windermere, must have been an exceptionally high-minded and religious man. He wore himself out riding, day and night, winter as well as summer, over the Fells, seeking out cottages and farms where dwelt men and women who lived too far out to go to church.

He belonged to an old Cheshire family, the Lowndes of Hassall and Bostock. He was descended from a brother of the Charles Lowndes who settled at Charlestown, South Carolina, in 1730. One of this man's sons, Rawlins Lowndes, helped to draft the South Carolina Constitution, and was chosen Governor of the State in 1778. His portrait, by Morse, is at Washington. Rawlins's son, William Lowndes, was a strong supporter of the War of Independence and was elected six times to Congress. The Legislature of South Carolina nominated him for President of the United States.

Henry Clay said that William Lowndes was the wisest man he had ever known in Congress. As a young man, he travelled in Europe, and, one evening, at his hotel in London, he talked with William Roscoe, the writer. A little later Roscoe, meeting

the Duke of Argyll in the street, said to him, "I have been spending a most agreeable hour with a young American gentleman who is the tallest, wisest and best bred young man I have ever met". "It must have been Mr. Lowndes of South Carolina", replied the Duke. "I know him, and I know no other like him."

My husband was the youngest of seven children, and lost his father when he was five. The family consisted of five sisters and two brothers. Charles Lowndes was some years older than Frederic but the brothers were close, devoted friends. I am glad I once met Charles Lowndes. He had evidently discovered his brother was fond of me, and he wished to see what I was like. He was a very tall man and I am a short woman, and I have a clear memory of our standing at my front door, and of a curious quizzical look flitting across his face, as he held my hand in his for perhaps a fraction longer than was usual.

Unlike my husband, who was fair and plain, Charles Lowndes was dark and very good-looking. He had gone straight from Oxford to *The Times*. Frederic Lowndes, who was then on the staff of a paper in Sheffield, was evidently surprised that his brother had called on me, and he implied in one of his letters that I should regard the visit as an honour seldom bestowed.

After the death of her husband Mrs. Lowndes was left poorly off, and she must have had a hard struggle to bring up her children. She also had the fearful sorrow of losing two of her daughters, Ethel and Cordelia, in what was then called a decline. Of the three remaining girls, two married. Maggie, clever and high-spirited, made a good marriage. Her husband belonged to a well-known county family called Cobham, noted for their fanatical Protestantism. Frances Lowndes, a beautiful

young woman, married her first cousin, Charles Lowry. The third sister, Mona, had an original mind, and Ruskin became her close friend.

I had a most affectionate and grateful love for my husband's sister and her husband, Frances and Charles Lowry. Some of our happiest days were spent in their delightful house at Eton. In fact, fortunately for me, my eldest child was due to be born in the Christmas holidays, and the Lowrys lent us their house so that his birth might take place there. I therefore have a peculiar feeling of affection for Eton, and Windsor too. I recall walking on the 14th December—my son was born on the 2nd of the following January—to the melancholy mausoleum on the anniversary of the Prince Consort's death, the only day on which it was open to the public. It was well worth the expedition. I remember most vividly the impression it made on me and how beautifully, I thought, it had been arranged by Queen Victoria.

Both Charles and Frederic Lowndes obtained Oxford scholarships, the former at Brasenose, his father's college, and my husband at Trinity.

Soon after my one meeting with Charles Lowndes he went on a short holiday to Dublin, and while calling there on some friends he died in a moment. This was a bitter blow to his brother, Frederic.

When I first knew him his mother, then an invalid, was still alive, but I never met her.

Like Dr. Johnson, Frederic Lowndes felt that "most schemes of political improvement are very laughable things". It was curious, considering how little he shared my intense interest in human nature, how excellent was his judgment of women as well as men. When we differed in our view of a new acquaintance, his view almost invariably proved right.

He believed the House of Commons was a bad school for character. One of the most exciting and happy moments of my life was in 1906, when, as he and I stood as part of a vast crowd on the Embankment gazing at a white placard hung outside Whitehall Court, we saw flash out my brother's name as having been elected the Member of Parliament for Salford. My companion was moved by my joy, but I remember his saying dryly, "I hope this won't mean Hilary will become what is called a politician". That hope was certainly fulfilled.

As time went on, he would naturally have been a very different man from what he was had he not been a member of *The Times* staff. The work he did there during the last twenty-five years of his life brought him in touch with a number of noted people, and he had what I sometimes thought an alarming knowledge of what may be called the secret history of the day. Not often, but now and again, he would say a word revealing that knowledge. On two occasions I said, musingly, really half talking to myself, that I wondered why there seemed a feeling against a certain well-known man. He gave me an odd look, and also half speaking to himself, told me what was the secret, shameful truth of the man concerned. Frederic Lowndes had much sympathy and understanding of *l'homme sensuel moyen*, but he had a deep contempt for the lengths to which human beings will go, firstly to acquire money, and secondly power.

He had a quick temper allied to a strong sense of humour. Such an alliance does not cause a young man to be liked by his employers. During the years of our early married life, I think what I may truly call his outstanding ability was not recognized by those who then ruled *The Times*. He remained for years one of its sub-editors, which, to my amusement, was regarded, by almost everyone we knew, as an important

position. Then the war of 1914-1918, which brought to so many terrible misfortune, brought him, as I have told before, the offer of a post with an American who was then engaged in important Anglo-Russian war work. The work was interesting and well paid. He had not been gone a month before he was urgently begged to go back to *The Times*. He did not feel he could do so then, but when the collapse of Russia came in 1917, my husband returned to *The Times* with a salary three times as large as he had received during so many years, and what meant much more to him, and to me also, was that he was given the kind of work for which he was suited, and which he enjoyed. Thus his last twenty years at *The Times* office brought him fulfilment and real happiness.

I used to wonder secretly how he came to be so cultivated and so well read, for he had had a hard youth. Though he could not talk French, he read it perfectly, and he was familiar with what has always meant so much to me—French art, French literature, and what goes by the name of French culture.

This slight account of Frederic Lowndes would be indeed imperfect were nothing said of his letters. He was the best letter-writer I have ever known. Even a slight note written by him almost always contained a humorous or pungent twist, and often sentences which deserved to remain in his correspondent's mind. I would especially single out the letters he wrote to our son at the Front, and during the years the boy remained in the Army. They were filled with wise counsel and shrewd common sense.

Under what was often my husband's brusque, sarcastic manner, was hidden a wealth of kindness, and an eager readiness to help the unfortunate and unhappy. Well as I knew him, I was astonished at the many letters I received from men of whom I had never heard, who wrote to tell me of all he had

done for them, and that at a time when he had an exceptionally heavy and even harassed life.

To me it was a source of distress that the son of so deeply religious a man as Frederic Lowndes's father had been was what in my youth was called an agnostic. I further regretted his dislike for the clergy of the Church of England. I had always had a kind feeling for the Anglican Church; indeed, the Rev. Septimus Harding and the Perpetual Curate of Hogglestock are far nearer my heart than the heroic martyrs of *Fabiola*.

I soon became aware that this feeling, even if he were not conscious of it, was due to the fact that a near relation of his, who was a squarson, had behaved with lack of feeling and, it might be said, with meanness to my husband's mother. The clergyman in question must have been a fool, and so, unlike any other member of the Lowndes family. Just before our marriage he wrote and said that as his nephew was marrying a Roman Catholic he desired to give him a wedding gift in which his wife would have no share. I smile, now, when I remember the letter he received in answer to this suggestion. To the very end, I, and our children, who were tenderly attached to their father, hoped he would become a Catholic.

The most interesting experience of my life as a grown-up woman, apart from my visits to America which took place much later, was a stay I made in Cologne during the Allied Occupation. Sir Robert Hutchison (now Lord Hutchison of Montrose) and Lady Hutchison had the kindness to ask me to stay with them. At that time Sir Robert was Deputy-Adjutant-General in the British Army of Occupation.

Every kind of arrangement for my comfort had been made by my host, and I travelled from England as I imagine a princess travels. At each point I was met by an official who

took charge of me, and saw that I had everything I could conceivably require on such a journey.

I vividly recall watching the frightful destruction which had been wrought in France, and how, to the astonishment of some English fellow-travellers, I burst into tears at seeing the countryside devastated by war. Especially was I distressed at the sight of the woods, where all the young trees had been cut down. We went through miles of tree-stumps, and in the villages every building was new, and had a shabby, and invariably extremely ugly, appearance.

I arrived at Cologne in the very early morning, and I recalled the savage behaviour of the Germans to the British prisoners of war as they steamed into that station in 1914.

I was surprised and touched to see Lady Hutchison waiting for me on the empty platform. We then drove through the streets of Cologne, and I noticed that there were no signs of war. We arrived at a splendid house, which I learned long afterwards belonged to relations of certain of my old friends who were Luxembourgeois. The house overlooked the great central public garden, while to the left flowed the beautiful Rhine.

The British Occupation Forces were soon on good terms with the German civilians, and Lady Hutchison did what was within her power in helping the unfortunate German gentlefolk who were by then poverty-stricken owing to the catastrophic fall of the mark.

I was painfully struck by the frightful pallor of every young woman in the streets and in the shops. This was also true of the children, but to a less degree, though I recall that the wan appearance of the children when I went to church gave me a sharp feeling of distress.

I had brought with me a certain amount of money confided

to my care by friends of mine who wished to help aged German governesses who had lived in England. I recall going to see one old lady in Bonn, and how the poor thing burst into tears when I handed to her a number of ten-pound notes, gifts from her old London pupils.

I presume there must be in my nature a lawless French streak, for I remember feeling amused at the horror which certain of my English friends expressed when I came home, at my conveying any money to German women.

Lady Hutchison was interested when she discovered the one thing I wished to see in Bonn was the house where Napoleon had stayed for some time. I thought it much to the credit of the Germans that this modest little villa had been preserved exactly as it had been when he had stayed there. It should, however, be remembered that many Germans had hailed Napoleon as a deliverer because he brought to them the atmosphere of the idealistic side of the French Revolution, which it was believed would lead to making all men free and equal.

Bonn appeared to me one of the most delightful towns I had ever seen; it was then occupied by the French, and the people looked fairly happy and comfortable. As was natural, though I was irritated that the British were taken in, the Germans played the French and British off against one another. To the British they said the French insulted them, and made them wretched in all kinds of ways, while to the French they said the British were barbarians. I noticed that the working people in Bonn looked better fed than did the working people in Cologne. But there must have been a great deal of poverty and undernourishment, for a group of Frenchwomen whose husbands were stationed there started a restaurant where Germans could buy food at cost price.

It is strange, now, to reflect that thirty years later, when the Germans bombed London, they did not realize the British reprisals would be on a frightful scale. There has always been a notion in Europe that the British are a gentle and kindly people. This, though quite true in everyday life, for they are amazingly good-natured and friendly to strangers, is quite untrue when it comes to any form of conflict.

We used to hear from various Germans with whom we came in contact, and who all spoke excellent English, with what relief the entrance of the British Occupation Forces had been hailed in Cologne. This was owing to the fact that "the Reds", who resembled the French Communards of 1871, had seized the town. In fact the victors were only just in time to prevent the destruction of some of the most beautiful old buildings.

One evening of this memorable visit stands out vividly in my memory, for we spent it with Sir William Robertson, who was the Commander-in-Chief. After dinner I had a talk with him, and I remember thinking him one of the most outstanding personalities I had ever met. I felt he was like one of the great Napoleon's marshals, men who, like Robertson, had risen from the ranks. He was very much respected by the Germans, and it was said Cologne was the best-governed town under British administration.

My visits to Cologne gave great pleasure to my mother, who, though then ninety years of age, still wrote to me every day. She remembered with delight a pilgrimage to the house where Goethe had stayed in Cologne. My mother had adored—the right word—the Germany of her youth, and in the drawing-room of my French home was a small bookcase filled with German books. What gave me the greatest pleasure in Cologne was the beauty of the Rhine. I had gone up the Rhine with my

mother as a girl, and that day had stayed with me as one of the most delightful experiences of my youth.

My third visit to Germany took place when my son was Liaison Officer with the French at Wiesbaden. He fell ill with the dangerous influenza then prevalent over much of the Continent, and I went to nurse him. We had rooms in a pleasant hotel, and owing to the mark having fallen to almost nothing I lived in greater luxury than I have ever done before or since. I bought there, and still possess, some beautiful old Irish cut glass. I saw a good deal of a woman dealer who sold me the Irish glass, and who was pathetically pleased at selling anything in her shop. Indeed her prices appeared to me so low that to her great surprise and joy I gave her 25 per cent more than she asked.

Both the French and the British respected all the monuments which had been put up in the Rhineland during the reigns of William the First and William the Second, and I specially remember the splendid monument to Bismarck, which faced the great bridge across the Rhine.

How astounded I should have felt had I known that even in my lifetime there would be another Anglo-German War, and that the Cologne I had known would be laid waste. The Cathedral was spared, and I hope with all my heart that the small mediaeval church where I used to go to Mass on Sundays was also allowed to survive.

All my early life I had had an intense desire to visit the Duchy of Luxembourg. Our closest and best-loved friends, who also owned the splendid château at La Celle St. Cloud, had property in the Grand Duchy. I therefore decided to go there from Cologne, and on my way I spent the night at Treves.

It was a curious experience; indeed for the first time in my life I felt nervous, and even frightened. This was because I was

aware that no one belonging to me knew where I was that night. Treves—the town of the Holy Coat—is between Cologne and Luxembourg, and there must have been a breakdown on the railway line, for when I reached Treves I could not go on any farther. Every hotel was full, and the porter who had charge of my luggage took me to friends of his own, who had a room to let. I slept on a sofa, and was quite comfortable, but I had the strange feeling that if the house were burnt, or if I died suddenly, no one would ever have known what had happened to me. My sense of loneliness was strangely strong, and I recalled what to me are some of the most moving lines in the English language:

> For like a child sent with a fluttering light
> To feel his way along a gusty night,
> Man walks his world; again and yet again
> The lamp He lit by fits of passion slain.
> But shall not He who sent him from the door
> Re-light the lamp once more, and yet once more?

THE END

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[The end of *A Passing World* by Marie Belloc Lowndes]