

ALL FOR
A SCRAP OF PAPER



JOSEPH
HOCKING

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ALL FOR A SCRAP OF PAPER

A Romance of the Present War

by
JOSEPH HOCKING

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"Dearer Than Life," "The Curtain of Fire," "The Path of Glory," Etc.

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“I then said that I should like to go and see the Chancellor. . . I found the Chancellor very agitated. His Excellency began a harangue which lasted about twenty minutes. He said that the step taken by His Majesty’s Government was terrible to a degree; just for a word, ‘neutrality’—a word which in war time had also often been disregarded—just for a scrap of paper. . . . I protested strongly. . . . I would wish him to understand it was a matter, so to speak, of ‘life and death’ for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement. The Chancellor said, ‘But at what price will that compact have to be kept? Has the British Government thought of that?’ I hinted to his Excellency as plainly as I could that fear of consequences could hardly be regarded as an excuse for breaking solemn engagements.”—*Extract of Report from Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, August 8, 1914.*

All for a Scrap of Paper

CHAPTER I

Events have moved so rapidly in our little town of St. Ia, that it is difficult to set them down with the clearness they deserve. We Cornish people are an imaginative race, just as all people of a Celtic origin are, but we never dreamed of what has taken place. One week we were sitting idly in our boats in the bay, the next our lads had heard the call of their country, and had hurried away in its defence. One day we were at peace with the world, the next we were at war with one of the greatest fighting nations in the world. At the end of July, little knowing of the correspondence taking place between Sir Edward Grey and the Ambassadors of Europe, we tended our flocks, prepared to garner our harvest, and sent out our fishing-boats; at the beginning of August we had almost forgotten these things in the wild excitement with which the news of war filled us. Placards headed by the Royal Arms were posted at public places, calling up Army and Navy Reserves, and fervent appeals were made to all our boys old enough to bear arms, to bid good-bye to home and loved ones, in order to help England to maintain her plighted word, and support her honour.

Not that we were in a state of panic, or fear, thank God. There was nothing of that. Neither were we in doubt as to the ultimate issue. We believed we had right on our side, and as our forefathers had fought in every stage of our country's history, we were prepared to fight again. But we Cornish are a quiet, Peace-loving people, and many of us hated, and still hate with a deadly hatred, the very thought of the bloody welter, the awful carnage, and the untold misery and suffering which war means.

But it is not of these things I have to write. My work is to tell the story of a lad I know, and love; the story, too, of a maid who loved him, and what this great war, which even yet seems only to have just begun, has meant to them.

It was on Monday, the twenty-ninth day of June in this present year, that Robert, or, as he is generally spoken of by his friends, Bob Nancarrow, got out his two-seater Renaud, and prepared to drive to Penwennack, the home of Admiral Tresize. Bob had but just "come down" from Oxford, and was now in great good spirits at the prospect before him.

This was scarcely to be wondered at, for Nancy Tresize had asked him to take her to Gurnard's Head, which, as all Cornish people know, is near to the town of St. Ia, and one of the most favoured spots in the county. Perhaps, too, the coast scenery around Gurnard's Head is among the finest in Cornwall, while Gurnard's Head itself, the great rock which throws itself, grim, black, and majestic, far out into the sea, challenges comparison with even Land's End itself.

But Bob was not thinking of scenery as he got out his car. His mind and heart were full of the thought that he was going to spend the afternoon with Nancy Tresize, the fairest girl in a county of fair women.

For years Bob had loved her—loved her with a love which seemed to him all the greater because it appeared to be hopeless. As far as he could remember, Nancy had never given him one shadow of hope, never by word or action suggested that she cared for him in any way other than that of a lifelong playmate and friend. But then, as Bob reflected, Nancy was not like other girls. She was just a bundle of contradictions, and was, as her brothers had often said, “always breaking out in new places.”

“Of course she'll not give me a chance to tell her what is in my heart,” he reflected, as the car spun along a winding lane, the hedges of which rose high above his head; “but then I shall be with her. That's something, anyhow.”

Presently the grey, lichen-covered, weather-beaten walls of Penwennack, Nancy's home, appeared, and Bob looked eagerly towards it as though he were trying to discover something.

“I hope nothing has turned up to hinder her,” he reflected. “I know that Captain Trevanion is coming to dinner to-night, and people have it that the Admiral favours him as—as a——”

But he would not, even in his mind, finish the sentence that was born there. It was too horrible to contemplate, for to Bob, Nancy was the only girl in the world. She might be wilful and unreasonable, she might change her mind a dozen times in a day, she might at times seem flippant, and callous to the feelings of others, she might even be “a little bit of a flirt”—it made no difference to him. He knew that she had not a mean fibre in her nature, and that a more honourable girl never lived. Besides, even if she were, what in his moments of anger and chagrin he called her, she was still Nancy, the only girl he had ever loved and ever could love.

“Of course there's no chance for me,” he reflected. “Trevanion is always there, and any one can see he's madly in love with her. He bears one of the oldest names in England too, he's heir to an old title, and he's Captain in one of the crack regiments. And Nancy loves a soldier. She comes of a fighting race, and thinks there's no profession in the world worthy of being compared with the army.”

Bob Nancarrow was the only son of Dr. Nancarrow, a man much respected in St. Ia, but whom Admiral Tresize regarded as a crank. For Dr. Nancarrow was a

Quaker, and although he did not parade his faith, it was well known that he held fast by those principles for which the Society of Friends is known. For one thing, he hated war. To him it was utterly opposed to the religion which England was supposed to believe, and he maintained that it seemed to him an impossibility for Christianity and war to be reconciled.

Admiral Tresize and he had had many arguments about this, and when the Boer War broke out, the condemnation of the doctor was so strong that it seemed almost inevitable that he and the Admiral should quarrel. Indeed, a coolness did spring up between them, and but for the fact that Mrs. Nancarrow had been a Miss Trelawney, and a direct descendant of the most important family in the county, it is probable that the coolness would have ended in an estrangement.

Bob, although he inherited his mother's looks, was greatly influenced by his father's opinions. Dr. Nancarrow died when he was quite a boy, yet his father's memory became one of the most potent influences in his life.

His mother sent him to Clifton College, and although to please her he joined the Officers' Training Corps, he held by his father's opinion that war and Christianity were a direct contradiction to each other.

Bob was one of those boys who throw their hearts into everything they take in hand, and although soldiering as a profession was repugnant to him, he made such progress in the O.T.C. that he quite distinguished himself. Indeed, he did so well, that Captain Pringle, with whom he became very friendly, urged him to become a soldier.

"You would do well," urged the Captain; "you have the makings of a first-class soldier, and if a war broke out, you'd be a valuable man."

"Not a bit in my line, I assure you," was Bob's reply. "I went in for this thing only to please my mater, and, to tell the truth, I regard it as little more than waste of time."

"It wouldn't be waste of time if we went to war," said Captain Pringle.

"War! who are we going to war with?"

"We may be on the brink of it now."

"Excuse me, but I don't believe in all these war scares. We are not a military nation, and there's not a shadow of reason for believing that while our Statesmen have level heads we shall be so mad as to embroil ourselves."

"It may be forced upon us. Think of the Boer War."

Bob laughed. His father had often spoken of the Boer War as a crime against humanity. As something wholly unnecessary, as a waste of life and treasure, waged on behalf of Jew financiers rather than for any great principle. In the doctor's eyes it had been a violation of Christianity, and a disgrace to the country, and Bob, boy though he had been at the time, felt that his father was right.

"I think the less we say about that the better," was his reply. "Certainly I would never fight in such a war."

“You mean that?”

“Certainly, I do. I doubt if war can be justified anyhow; but *that* war!” . . .

“Anyhow, the Germans are aching to be at us,” replied Captain Pringle, who, although he was regarded as a good officer, was not deeply versed in politics.

“Who says so?”

“Everybody. They are jealous of us, and they’ll be at it on the slightest pretext.”

“Don’t you think the German bogey is very silly?” was Bob’s retort. “I was in Germany last summer with my mother, and we had a great time. She knew some German families there, and we became great friends with them. They don’t want war any more than we do. All they desire is to develop their own resources and to live their lives quietly.”

“Then what is the meaning of their huge army? Why are they trying to build a navy that shall out-match ours?”

“Of course there is a large war party in Germany just as there is in England; but, as a people, they are as peace-loving as we are. Why, a war with Germany is unthinkable, and it would be the greatest crime in history to draw our sword against them. Even supposing we had a quarrel with them, nothing could be more revolting to humanity than to settle it by blood.”

“I don’t wonder that you will not go into the Army if those are your views,” replied Captain Pringle. “You talk like a peace-at-any-price parson.”

From Clifton Bob went on to Oxford, where he became known as a “reading man.” His ostensible purpose was to read for the Bar, after taking his degree; but he secretly hoped to obtain a Fellowship at his college, and settle down to a scholastic life.

While he was at Oxford Bob became acquainted with a Professor, named Dr. Renthall, who had been an undergraduate there with his father. Professor Renthall was also a Friend, and it was perhaps this fact that first drew them together. For while Bob did not in any way profess adherence to the Society of Friends, he greatly admired those of that persuasion. In addition to this, too, his father’s influence was still strong upon him. The boy revered his father’s memory, and treasured in his heart those faiths by which Dr. Nancarrow had steered his life. Indeed, during his Oxford days he often declared that the Quakers were nearer to the ideal of Christianity than any other body.

“My father was logical at all events,” he often reflected, “and as a consequence his life was a benediction. On the other hand, religion among most people, whether churchmen or nonconformists, seems to mean nothing. We attend so many ‘chapels’ as a matter of necessity, and are glad when they are over. As to religion having any effect on our lives, it seems to be out of the question.”

Dr. Renthall had a great influence over Bob. Although he was nearing fifty, he was a keen sportsman. He played a scratch game at golf, and during the cricket

season he could keep his end up with the best of the younger men. This appealed to the young fellow strongly. But, more than this, he was one of the greatest authorities on history in the University. He was a saint too, although he made little profession of Christianity. He went regularly to the Meeting House, but never spoke, while his theology was of too latitudinarian a nature, to be "sound."

Robert often went to Dr. Renthall's house, and it was during his many visits that his hatred of war grew.

"War," said the Professor to him more than once, "cannot obtain where there is real Christianity. That is why Christianity is dying in this country. We are being more and more filled with the spirit of militarism, which means the death of religion; while every new Dreadnought, which drains the nation of its treasure, is another nail driven into the Cross of Christ."

When Bob returned to St. Ia this summer, the influence of his father's life, and his association with Dr. Renthall, had done their work. He detested militarism, and he hated the thought of war. Not that the thought of war loomed largely in the horizon. The country was at peace, and as far as he could judge no war-cloud hung in the sky.

"Ah, there she is!" Bob exclaimed, as presently the car drew up in front of the door of the great house, and a few seconds later he was talking eagerly with old Admiral Tresize, at the same time casting fervent glances towards Nancy.

It was no wonder that Bob loved her, for no fairer or better girl lived in the land of Tre, Pol, and Pen. I, who have known her all her life, can testify to this, and as she stood there that day, young, happy, and beautiful, it was no wonder that his heart burned with a great love.

"You'll almost have time for a run to Land's End," said the Admiral, looking at his watch, "and it's a glorious afternoon."

"No, we are going to picnic in the good old-fashioned way," said Nancy. "We are going to have tea on the headland, after which we are going to quarrel about things generally. We always do."

The Admiral laughed. He had not the slightest hesitation about allowing Bob and Nancy to go to Gurnard's Head together. They had been playfellows and friends all their lives, as for their being anything else, the thought never occurred to him.

"Off you go," he said, "and mind you take great care of her, Bob."

Admiral Tresize liked Bob very much, and always welcomed him to Penwennack. He remembered that he had Trelawney blood in his veins, and, although his father had been a Quaker doctor, he made no secret of the fact that he liked the boy, and he often spoke of him as a nice, quiet, clever lad.

"Fine-looking chap too," he would add; "just the build for a soldier. Six feet in his stockings, and forty inches around the chest. But there, although he has the looks of a Trelawney, he has the views of his Quaker father, and it's no use

talking about it. But it's a pity all the same, a great pity."

"Well, Bob, I hear you have done great things at Oxford. Astonished the professors, swept everything before you, and all that sort of thing," said Nancy, as presently they stood on the headland.

Bob laughed, and looked rather shamefaced. He was very sensitive about his scholastic achievements, besides which he knew that Nancy thought far more of a "blue" than of a classical scholar.

"You are fairly clever, you know, Bob," and the girl laughed as she spoke.

"That does not count much with you, Nancy."

"How do you know? It doesn't follow that because I don't like dressing like a frump, and because I love hunting and dancing, that I don't admire cleverness."

"It's not that at all, Nancy. I know you admire clever people. What I meant was," and he stammered painfully, "that—that it's—a matter of indifference to you whether I, personally, am dull or clever."

"What reason have you for saying that?"

"Hundreds," replied Bob. "That is—you see, you are always laughing at my desire to be 'a fusty bookworm,' as you call it, and—and, well, all that sort of thing."

"Does that prove indifference?" she replied, and Bob thought he noted a tremor in her voice.

"You know it does," he went on, hating himself for talking in such a fashion, and yet unable to control his words. "Only yesterday, when we were talking together at tea, and some one said that I should die an old bachelor, you said that I was far more likely to die an old maid. Then, although you saw you wounded me, you went off with Captain Trevanion."

"Hadn't you, just before, refused to stay the evening, although I went out of my way to persuade you? And you gave as your excuse that you had some reading to do. As though your—your books——"

"Did you want me to stay?" asked Bob eagerly. "Nancy—did you really care?"

The girl did not speak, but turned her eyes toward the great heaving sea.

Robert's heart beat wildly as he looked at her. Never did he love her as he loved her now, never had she seemed so fair to him. It was no wonder he had fallen in love with her, for he knew that, in spite of her love of pleasure, and her sometimes flippant way of talking, she was one of the sweetest, truest girls that ever breathed. Although she might be wilful, and passionate, and sometimes seemed careless whether she gave pain or pleasure, she would give her last farthing to help any one in difficulty.

He had been surprised when she suggested his motoring her to Gurnard's Head that afternoon, little thinking that she did it to atone for what she had said two days before.

“Nancy, did you want me to stay?” he repeated. “If—if I thought you really
_____”

“Did it vex you that I asked Captain Trevanion to show me his new horse?” she interrupted.

The flush on her face and the tremor of her lips set his heart beating more wildly than ever. All caution went to the winds. The mad passion which for years he had been trying to crush again mastered him. He knew that his hour had come, and that he must speak and know his fate.

CHAPTER II

“Nancy,” repeated Bob, “you know what is in my heart, don’t you? Know I’ve loved you for years?”

“You’ve never told me so,” and there was a suggestion of a laugh in Nancy’s voice.

“Because I was afraid. How could I dare to—to tell you—when—when you never gave a sign, and when—you seemed to like others better? Others have wanted you, I know that; fellows—better looking than I, more—more attractive than I, and with far better prospects. I am not your sort of fellow—I know that; but—you’ve known all along that I loved you. I’ve been afraid to tell you so, but I would willingly shed my life’s blood for you.”

“I hate a coward!” cried the girl.

“Yes, I’ve known that; but then, how dared I speak when a fellow like Trevanion, heir to a title, and captain in a crack regiment, would give his life to get you? What chance had I?”

“Then why do you tell me this now?”

“Because I can’t help myself. Because—Nancy, is there any chance? I know your father would be mad, but I wouldn’t mind that a bit. Nancy, is there any hope for me?”

Again the girl’s lips became tremulous as she looked at the waves lashing themselves to foam on the great black rocks, while the sea-birds soared overhead. It was easy to see she was greatly moved, although it was her nature to hide her feelings.

“I don’t know, Bob.”

It did not seem like Nancy’s voice at all. It was almost hoarse, and she had a difficulty in speaking.

“Don’t know?” he repeated. “Then—then——”

“I want to speak plainly. Bob. I may hurt you, although—I’ll try not to. Yes, I have believed that—you cared for me. I suppose I’ve seen it, and I expect I’ve been vexed that you’ve never told me. I—I wanted you to.”

“Wanted me to!” cried Bob. “You have never given me a chance. And—and you always seemed to care for—for those other fellows.”

“I wanted you to make your chances. If—if a man loves a girl, he should dare anything to get her. Anything. What do I care about Hector Trevanion? He hasn’t a thought in his head above his latest horse and his newest uniform. But how could I help being friendly with him, when you—have always on the slightest pretext been ready to leave me with him.”

“And you wanted me all the time!” There was a note of joy and triumph in his

voice.

“I don’t know,” replied the girl. “I’ll be absolutely frank with you, Bob. You are not the sort of man I wanted to love. Yes, I’ll admit it—I wanted to love a soldier, a sailor, a man of action. I can never admire a man who will be content to spend his days in a library poring over old dusty books. That’s why I have been angry when I’ve heard you glorifying these useless old fossils. And yet—oh, Bob!” and the girl concluded with a sob.

“Do you mean,” and Bob’s voice was tremulous, “that you cared for me all the time, although you—you didn’t like my plans for my future? That you preferred me to Trevanion? Oh, Nancy!”

“As though a girl must care for six feet of flesh without brains because she isn’t a blue-stocking. Why—why—couldn’t you see, Bob?”

“And I say—oh, Nancy, does this mean that you care for me—love me?”

“I’m afraid I do,” she half-laughed, half-sobbed.

“Afraid?”

“Yes, don’t you see? You are not in the least like the man I wanted to love. You could have won your blue as a cricketer, but you wouldn’t take the trouble to get it. A man in Oxford told me that you could be the best three-quarter in the ’Varsity Rugby team, but that you were too lazy to play. You’ve been a sort of negative creature, while I love a man of action. What are old shrivelled manuscripts worth to the world to-day? Who cares about the sayings of some old dead and forgotten German, or some obscure passages in *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, when there’s a great surging life all around us to-day? History is only a record of what took place in the past; I love the thought of a man who wants to make history, who sets his ideas to action. And you, Bob, you have told me again and again that you want to spend your life in historical research, or some such useless thing.”

“But—but, Nancy, what does all that matter when I love you—love you with all my life? Besides——”

“I come of a race of fighters,” cried the girl. “When Philip of Spain sent over his Great Armada, to rob us of our liberty, one of my ancestors fought the Dons. He gave ships and men to our country, and helped to save us from oppression. When Napoleon cast a shadow over Europe, and threatened to destroy our country, men of my name were among the foremost in fighting him. My grandfather represented St. Ia in Parliament, and he roused the country. While you—oh, Bob, forgive me, but your ideal seems to be to sit in a library in Oxford, wearing a dirty old dressing-gown and iron-rimmed spectacles, reading or writing books which will be of no use to any one! Is that a life for a man?”

“But if his mind is cast in that mould?”

“I haven’t finished yet,” went on the girl. “Forgive me, Bob, for talking so much. I wouldn’t only—oh, Bob, can’t you see? Why, at our last dance—when—

when I had kept four for you, you never even asked for them. And I—I wanted to dance them too; but—but I had to sit them out, and when other men begged me to let them put their names down on my card, I said I was tired. Then, when I heard afterwards that you had gone into the library, and were reading some old book which hadn't been opened for years, I just—cried.”

“Oh, Nancy, I never dreamt of such a thing! I—I never thought you wanted me. I was just aching for you all the time, but I thought—why, you've always laughed at my dancing. But there, now I know, I can do anything, be anything. And there's nothing I won't do for you?”

“You are not vexed with me, are you?”

“I couldn't be vexed with you, Nancy. I'd let myself be cut in bits for you. And you love me, don't you? Oh, it's too good to be true! but say you do, tell me that in spite of everything you love me?”

“Haven't I been telling you so all the time? And—and yet you haven't asked me to—to——”

“What, Nancy?”

“Oh, I do hate a coward!”

“But what haven't I asked you?”

“Bob, isn't there something you want very much?”

“Yes, there is,” replied Bob. “Something—that—— Nancy, you won't be vexed with me if I ask you?”

“Risk my being vexed,” laughed the girl.

“Then I want to take you in my arms, and kiss you—kiss you a hundred times.”

“Then, why don't you?”

Bob looked around him, like one afraid. They were beneath the shadow of a great rock. At their feet was headland grass, wind-swept and grey, but peeping through the grass were thousands upon thousands of wild thyme, giving the little plateau a purple hue. They were hidden from the gaze of any who might be on the great rock. His heart beat so that his breath came with difficulty; he was trembling with a new-found joy—a joy so great that it almost gave him pain.

“Oh, my love!—my love!” he cried, as he took her in his arms, and his kisses were as pure as those with which a young mother lasses her firstborn.

“What haven't I asked you?” he said, a few minutes later.

They were sitting beneath the shadow of the rock now, and Nancy was rearranging her hat. She did not reply, but her eyes were full of gladsome mischief as she looked at him.

“I mean just now, when—when you said you had been telling me that you loved me, but I hadn't asked for something. What was it?”

“You've made up for it since,” and there was a laugh in her voice.

“Do you mean that you wanted me to kiss you? Oh, you are right, Nancy, I am an awful coward, but I’ll make up for lost time now.”

The sea continued to roll on the great rugged rock, which threw its mighty head far out into its depths. Overhead the sea-birds hovered, sailing with graceful motion over the silvery waters, and uttering their mournful cry, while far out vessels ploughed their way up and down the Atlantic; but neither noticed. They were happy in each other’s love. Nancy had forgotten the fact that Robert Nancarrow was not the kind of man she had meant to love, while he was far too happy to care for the lecture she had given him. Her kisses were warm upon his lips, her words of love rung in his ears. They were in the dreamland of happy lovers, while the sky of their lives was as free from clouds as the great dome of blue overhead. He was the only man she had ever loved, or ever could love, while to him the maid, wilful and passionate though she might be, was perfect. What were books, learning, and the fame of scholarship to him now? He had won the love of the girl whom for years he had loved, and ever despaired of winning. She, who had seemed so far away from him, so far above him, had come to his arms, willingly, gladly. She, with her proud old name, and almost lordly wealth, had chosen him, and forgotten everything in her choice.

It seemed too wonderful to be true, and he looked at her again and again in his wonder, proud beyond all words, yet almost afraid to believe in his good fortune.

“Oh, Nancy, you are beautiful!”

The light of joy flashed from her eyes. What girl is there beneath the all-beholding heavens who does not long to know that the man she loves thinks her beautiful?—Who does not long for him to tell her?

“And what a lovely dress you are wearing.”

“I’ve worn it three times since you came down from Oxford, and you’ve never once mentioned it.”

“I never saw it as I see it now. I never saw as I see you now. Nancy, there’s no one like. Bless you, my love, for loving me.”

But I must not dwell on that happy hour, much as I would love to. We who are older may laugh at “Love’s young dream,” and grow cynical about its transitory nature. We may say that lovers live in a fool’s paradise, and that the dream of lovers ends in the tragedies of later years. Still, there’s nothing sweeter or purer on God’s green earth than the love of a clean-minded honest lad for the maid he has chosen from all others. It keeps the world young and hopeful; humanly speaking, it is life’s greatest joy, and the man who can throw scorn upon its joys and utter cynical words about its reality has himself lost the pearl of great price. It is he who is to be pitied, and not the lovers. They hear the birds of paradise singing in the bowers of Eden, while he hears only the croaking of the raven.

They got back to realities presently. Bob’s new-found joy had led him to the realisation of the future.

“I’m going to speak to your father to-night, Nancy. I know he’ll be angry, but that I don’t mind a bit.”

“No, Bob, you must not speak to him—at least not yet.”

“Why?”

“Because he’ll refuse, and you mustn’t speak to him until you can make him consent.”

“I don’t understand, Nancy.”

“You see, he has exactly the same feeling that I have about men. He would never consent to my being the wife of a book-worm.”

“Oh, I’ve thought that all out while I’ve been here,” replied Bob confidently. “Yes, I know I’ve been unpractical—a dreamer, in fact. But I’m going to alter all that. Now you’ve told me—that—that you love me, I feel I must become a man of action. You’ve wakened something in me that I didn’t know existed. I haven’t been half alive. I’ve imagined that only thoughts, ideas mattered; now I know differently. I’ve lived only half-life. Mark you, I don’t altogether go back upon my faith—I only add a new element to it. I’ve always said that we owe everything to thought. I’ve said that thoughts covered the seas with floating cities, and converted the world into a whispering-gallery. That thoughts have belted the globe with electric currents, and given us untold blessings. Now I know that I’ve stated only half a truth. The man who is simply a man of ideas, is like a bird trying to fly with one wing. There must be action to put the ideas into use. Oh, yes, I see it all.”

“Yes, yes, Bob; and what are you going to do?”

“I’m going to study for the Bar. I’m going to set about it right away. And then I’m going into Parliament. I’ve big ideas, Nancy—big ideas about governments, and about reforms in our laws. There are great things that want doing, and I’m going to do them. I’m going to get at the helm of government, and destroy abuses. I am not going to be content by writing books about what is needed; I’m going to see that my ideas take shape in the laws of the country, and effect the betterment of the world.”

Please do not smile at Robert Nancarrow’s somewhat highfalutin talk, and set him down as a conceited prig. Every young fellow who has ever done or been anything in the world, has at some time in his life had such thoughts. Sad will it be for England as a nation when our boys do not dream impossible dreams, and think thoughts which wiseacres call foolishness.

“That’s splendid, Bob!” cried Nancy, her eyes sparkling. “I should love you to go into Parliament—love to hear you speak in the House of Commons. Why, you might be elected for St. Ia! Dad has at great deal of influence there too, and could get you nominated. But what things would you advocate?”

“I know,” cried Bob. “I am going to create a peace party in England. Yes, I know some of your people have been soldiers, while my mother glories in the fact that many of the Trelawneys have been and are in the Army. But think of the

horrors of war. Even now Europe is said to be sitting on a powder-barrel. Every nation in Europe is being bled to death, in order to pay war taxes, even although at present there isn't a shadow of war in the sky. Money that might be spent, and should be spent, on the betterment of the lives of the people and destroying, the possibility of poverty and want, is spent in Dreadnoughts and weapons to kill. Hundreds of millions are being spent on the Army and Navy, while paltry sums are grudged for education and all those things which go to make up the manhood of the nation."

"Yes, I know war is terrible, ghastly. But how can you stop it? You wouldn't advocate the destruction of our Army and Navy. It would be madness, it would _____"

"Not yet," interrupted Bob eagerly. "I would labour for a great European movement. Take Germany for example. The Germans are worse taxed than we are to pay for armaments, but the people don't want war. They are a peace-loving people. The Kaiser doesn't want war. He's said so a hundred times. The Czar of Russia doesn't want war. And yet hundreds upon hundreds of millions of money are being spent on war implements, while the people want bread. Besides, a ghastly, warlike, unchristian spirit is kept alive by this eternal talk about the possibilities of war. What is wanted is an agreement among the Governments of nations that there shall be no war. We want to create an anti-war spirit in the hearts of the people, and so kill the terrible thing at the fountain-head."

"Yes, yes," cried the girl, "if all the nations could be persuaded to disarm, it would be splendid! But, but——"

"It can be done," cried Bob. "I will give my life to it. Everybody hates war in the abstract, but no one seems to throw himself heart and soul into a great peace crusade. Even the Peace Society is half-hearted. The cause of Peace hasn't been voiced of late years. That's it," and Bob rose to his feet excitedly; "I see my work, Nancy. Neither your father nor any one else shall say that I'm unpractical, or that I sit still and do nothing. Think of the glory of such a cause! Think of destroying for ever the ghastly horrors of war, of helping to bring about universal peace."

"Yes," replied Nancy, "it would be glorious, simply glorious. I was only very little when the Boer War broke out, and when my eldest brother Roger went away to it, father gave a dinner, and all our friends came to bid him good-bye. Although I was only a kiddie, I was allowed to sit up to it, and I remember some of the speeches that were made. They promised him that he should be made a colonel and all that sort of thing, and there was such laughing and shouting. Every one imagined it would be over in a few weeks; it seemed such a little thing to crush a few Boer farmers. After that I used to watch dad's face as he read his newspaper, and wondered what he was so sad about. Then one day some one brought him a letter which almost killed him. I shall never forget it. He staggered as though some one had struck him a blow, and groaned as if he were in agony. Roger was killed.

It added years to dad's life, and he's never been the same since."

"War is that kind of thing multiplied thousands of times," said Bob. "There were unnumbered homes in England, yes, and in South Africa too, desolated by that war, when—when it ought to have been avoided. Yes, my mind's made up. I'm going into Parliament, and I'm going to make war against war. The holiest and most Christlike work a man can undertake. Shan't I tell your father to-night, Nancy?"

"No, no, not yet. I'm afraid he might—— I'll prepare him little by little, and then, when the proper time comes, I'll tell you. But, Bob," and the girl laughed gaily, "I had almost to propose to you, hadn't I?"

"No," replied Bob. "I did the proposing, and you did the lecturing. That's what it'll be all our lives, I expect; but what do I care, as long as I have you?"

"I—I was afraid you were going to be a coward, though."

"And you don't like cowards?"

She became serious in a moment. "If there's anything I hate and despise, it's cowardice," she cried. "I think I could forgive anything but that. It's—it's beneath even contempt. Hark, what's that?"

They heard a rustling sound behind them, and saw, close by, a newspaper blown towards them by the light summer breeze.

Bob put out his hand and caught it. "It's to-day's paper," he said. "I haven't looked at mine to-day."

He read it almost mechanically. Neither dreamed that this paper, carelessly dropped by a man who had come to see the famous rock, contained news on which depended not only the future of their own lives, but which altered the destinies of nations, and which turned a great part of Europe into a shambles.

CHAPTER III

This is what he read:

TERRIBLE TRAGEDY IN BOSNIA.

ASSASSINATION OF THE HEIR PRESUMPTIVE TO THE
AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN THRONE.

BOMB THROWN INTO THE CAR OF THE ARCHDUKE
FERDINAND AND HIS CONSORT, THE DUCHESS OF
HOHENBERG.

OVERWHELMING INDIGNATION IN VIENNA.

GRIEF OF THE AGED EMPEROR.

These were the staring headlines which riveted the gaze of both, and for the moment made them silent.

“Good heavens, how terrible!” cried Nancy presently.

“Ghastly beyond words,” was Bob’s reply. “It has come like a thunderbolt. As I told you, I did not look at my paper this morning, and, as I have not been to St. Ia to-day, I saw no announcements.”

“And our papers were late this morning. I have not seen them,” rejoined Nancy. “Fancy the grief of the poor old Emperor! Who did it?—and why was it done?”

“Evidently it was done by two young men, both anarchists, and both said to be Servians.”

“Aren’t these anarchists terrible? No king or queen in Europe seems to be safe.”

“This doesn’t appear to have been done by anarchists in the usual sense of the term after all,” said Bob, who hastily scanned the paper. “It seems there are suspicions of political causes. This paper suggests that these fellows were agents of the Servian Government, who have a special grudge against the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who was heir-presumptive to the Austrian Throne. Are you interested in European politics, Nancy?”

“Not a bit. I always skip foreign news.”

“If it is as this paper suggests, it might lead to serious complications. You see, it was hoped by the Servians that at the close of the Balkan War they would be able to obtain a naval port on the Adriatic, and it is said they would have got it but for the Archduke. It is also commonly believed that a School of Servian Patriots

have for years been struggling to make Bosnia and Herzegovina part of Greater Serbia, owing to the preponderance of Serb population. These two provinces, in spite of Russia, belong to Austria.”

“I suppose the Servians are awful people. Always quarrelling and fighting, and that kind of thing,” and Nancy crept closer to Bob as she spoke.

“It’s a wonderfully interesting part of Europe, although it was so little known before the war of the Balkan States with the Turks. I say, Nancy, wouldn’t it be fun to go there for our honeymoon?”

“It would be like going into a savage country.”

“Oh, no, not so bad as that. I was talking a few weeks ago with a man who was a war correspondent during their squabble, and he told me a lot about Montenegro and Serbia and Roumania. He fairly fired my imagination, and made me long to go. It would be great fun.”

Nancy shook her head. “No, Bob,” she said, with a blush, “when that time comes, we’ll go to some lovely spot somewhere on the Rhine, where we shall be among civilised people, and where there will be no possibility of meeting these half-civilised races. But what do you think the Austrians will do?”

“Oh, of course, if this murder is simply a revolt of the anarchists, the murderers will be executed, and I suppose that will be the end of it; but if there is evidence which goes to show that they were emissaries of the Servian Government, it will lead to all sorts of complications.”

“What complications?”

“Well, of course, Austria will want an explanation from Serbia, and if Serbia doesn’t give a satisfactory reply, there will be trouble. It’s common knowledge that Austria doesn’t like Slav influence, and she’ll use this as an excuse for crushing all Slav ideals. It might end in Austria practically administering Servian affairs.”

“That would be the best way, wouldn’t it? Austria is a civilised country, while the Servians are savages. One of the girls I went to school with, spent a winter in Vienna, and she had a lovely time. She says that Vienna is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and the Austrians are such charming people.”

“That would be easier said than done,” replied Bob, smiling at her school-girl fashion of settling European difficulties. “You see, directly Austria tried to do this, Russia would step in. Russia is practically under a contract to protect the Servians, and to help them in need. Russia, which is a great Slav Empire, wouldn’t stand by and see Austria swallow up Slav Serbia.”

“And then there might be a war between Russia and Austria? And Russia, with her countless hordes of men, would crush Austria?”

“That wouldn’t suit Germany’s book,” was Bob’s reply. “You see, there is a close alliance between Austria and Germany, and Germany wouldn’t allow Austria to be put under.”

“Oh, it would be horrible!” gasped the girl. “But there, we won’t talk about it any more. It can’t affect us, can it? England has nothing to do with Servians murdering an Austrian Archduke. I’m awfully sorry for the poor old Austrian Emperor, but—but——”

“It can’t affect us, or our happiness,” cried Bob, taking her outstretched hand. “No, thank God! but I say, Nancy, this is an awful commentary on what we were saying just now, isn’t it? It makes me more than ever determined to throw myself into a movement that shall make war impossible. But oh, my dear girl, I do wish you’d let me speak to your father to-night! I want my happiness assured. I want everybody to know that I’ve won you—that you’ve promised to be my wife.”

A thoughtful look came into her eyes. It might seem as though she were fighting a battle between inclination and judgment.

“No, Bob,” she said at length, “it won’t do. I’m sure dad wouldn’t consent. The truth is——” she hesitated.

“What?” asked Bob eagerly.

“Dad’s awfully fond of Captain Trevanion. I—I believe he’s set his mind on it.”

“On what? On your marrying him!”

“Now, don’t be jealous.”

“I’m not jealous. How could I be when”—he held her to him, and kissed her passionately—“when you’ve told me you love me.”

“He’ll be terribly mad when he knows at first. You see, he’s always looked on you as a—well, to put it mildly, a useless bookworm. And he likes Hector Trevanion because, although he’s a fool in many things, he’s a good soldier. He says he’s very young for a captain, and with his name and prospects—he’ll be sure to be a major and afterwards a colonel in a very short time, especially if a war breaks out. And—and he’s very ambitious for me. That’s why I shall have to break it to him by degrees. I shall begin by talking about your successes at Oxford, and then I shall tell him that you are going to study for the Bar, as a preliminary to going into Parliament. You are so clever, that you won’t be long before you are called to the Bar, will you?”

“I’ll do it in record time,” cried Bob. “There are a number of dinners to eat, and certain examinations to pass; but I can manage them all right. Don’t think I’m conceited, Nancy; lots of the Professors told me that the Bar exams. would be comparatively easy to me.”

“Of course they will be,” said Nancy confidently, “and meanwhile you could be on the look out for a constituency, couldn’t you?”

“Ye-es,” replied Bob doubtfully. “Of course, I’d rather get called first, but it could be managed. As it happens, I’m comfortably off, and so I need not be dependent on my profession.”

“Anyhow, we must say nothing about our—our——”

“Engagement,” suggested Bob, as Nancy hesitated.

“Call it what you like, but we must keep it quiet for the present, and be very circumspect and all that. So, as we’ve been here for quite a long while, we had better be getting home.”

Bob crumpled up the newspaper and threw it over the cliff.

“It’s horrible, isn’t it?” she said, as they watched it falling from rock to rock until it fell into the sea; “but it can’t affect us, can it, Bob?”

“No,” replied Bob, “it can’t affect us. Nothing shall affect us, Nancy, and nothing shall come between us. I feel as though I could do anything now, and there’s nothing I won’t do to win a position worthy of you. I’ll work like a slave. I’ll map out my programme to the minutest detail, and I’ll win all along the line. Edward VII was called a peacemaker, and everybody admired him for it. But I’ll do more than he ever did. Just think of it! To be known throughout the country, and throughout the world, as the man who made war on war, and made it impossible. I’ll give my life to it, Nancy—my whole life!”

“And where do I come in?” she asked, with mock sorrow.

“You! You come in everywhere. You are everything. You are my love, my inspiration; but for you everything would be impossible. One more kiss, Nancy, while no one can see us.”

When Bob Nancarrow returned home that night he was the happiest man in Cornwall. More than he had ever hoped for had come to pass. Nancy had promised to wait for him because she loved him. She had preferred him to all others, and sacrificed brilliant prospects because of her love for him. The sky of his life seemed cloudless. Nothing, as far as he could see, stood in the way of his attaining his highest hopes. The plan which had so suddenly been born in his mind and heart grew in attractiveness. He had the most glorious objective in the world. He saw an outlet for his energies, while the cause for which he would stand appealed to all that was noblest within him.

War against war!

The thing had become a passion with him. Here was the great work which, unknown to himself, he had all along wanted. Even when he had dreamed of becoming an Oxford Don, and of spending his life in a kind of cultured seclusion, there had always been something wanting. He had fighting blood in his veins; the old fire for which the Trelawneys had been famous had constantly made its appeal. And now Nancy had shown him how his life could be a positive one. Now he could be true to the principles which he had inherited from his father, and to which he held with strong tenacity, and at the same time satisfy his desires to participate in the struggles and battles of the great world.

“A noble cause demands your zeal!”

He found himself humming the words as he turned on the lights. And he had a noble cause, the noblest, the most Christlike on earth. Warfare! Yes, in spite of his

peace principles he loved warfare. Man was a fighting animal, and he was a man, every inch of him. And he was called on to fight—to fight the War-god which had lifted its head so arrogantly and brutally. But his warfare was to be for peace—the peace of the world. It was to be for man’s salvation, and not for his destruction. Not for pillage, carnage, cruelty, mad hatred, overwhelming ambition, lust for blood; but brotherhood, kindliness, love, mercy. This was the battle of the Lord; this was the cause of Christ.

In this way he could be true to his father’s teaching, true to the Christianity in which he believed; but more, he could by this means make himself worthy of Nancy, and make a place in the world, in which even her father would rejoice.

His heart beat with wild joy. Even now Nancy’s kisses were warm on his lips, her words of love rang in his ears.

Yes, his plan of life was plain, his work arose before him, alluring, ennobling, inspiring. And Nancy loved him! What more could he desire?

He looked around the room with a long tremulous sigh of contentment. Life was indeed beautiful, glorious. Around him were thousands of books. His father had been an omnivorous reader, and had amassed a large library. Nearly every inch of wall-space was covered with book-shelves. Only one space, above the mantelpiece, was uncovered, and there hung what was even dearer than the books. It was an oil painting of his father.

Robert Nancarrow looked at it long and steadily, and as he did so his eyes became moist.

“Dear old father!” he murmured; “the noblest man that ever breathed.”

It was a fine face he saw. Rather serious on the whole, but still with a smile lurking around the lips and shining in the eyes. The face of a good—almost a great man. No one could associate it with meanness or impurity. An intellectual face too, with a broad forehead and large, speaking eyes. A face which suggested conscientiousness, which proclaimed the fact that its owner must do whatever conscience told him to do, no matter what it might cost.

It seemed to Bob as he looked that his father smiled on him.

“Yes, it is what he would most desire,” reflected the young fellow. “It was the passion of his life, and it shall be mine.”

He went to a bookcase, and took therefrom a small volume. It was entitled *Thoughts on the Boer War*, by Robert Nancarrow, M.D.

The young man opened it, and began to read; but his mind was too full of his plans to concentrate his attention.

“Father would love Nancy,” he reflected, and then he arose from his chair and went close to the picture. “He does love her,” he reflected. “He is alive, he knows, and he is pleased. I feel as though he were here now, and giving me his blessing on my love, and on my work.”

The house was very silent. Every one had long since gone to bed, and not a

sound was to be heard. The night was almost windless too, and not even the murmur of the waves in the Bay of St. Ia, which could be faintly heard outside, reached him. He felt himself alone with his father.

“Good night, father,” he said aloud, still looking the picture. “I love her as my life, and I am very happy. I have your blessing, haven’t I?”

Again it seemed to him that his father smiled on him. He was sure he saw the quiet humour in his eyes which he remembered so well.

Bob was in a strange humour that night. The day had been eventful beyond all the days of his life. He had entered into a happiness of which he had never dreamed before; he had seen visions of the future of which hitherto he had been blind. He had been carried away by his love and his enthusiasm; his nature had been moved to its depths. Now the memory of it all, the quietness of the house, caused thoughts to come to his mind, and moved him to feelings to which he had been a stranger.

“It’s what you would wish me to do, father, isn’t it?” he still continued aloud. “To go into Parliament, and then work and fight for the peace of the world? To destroy the ghastly nightmare of war, to fight against the War-god, to put an end to this eternal making of implements of death. I have your consent, and your blessing, haven’t I?”

Yes, he was sure his father was smiling on him, and giving him his blessing. There was something sacred, holy, in the thought.

He turned out the lights, but the beams of the moon streamed through the window, and rested on the picture.

“Good night, father,” he said. “I’ll try to be a true man,” and then he left the room, feeling as if indeed he had been talking to his father.

“Is that you, Bob?”

He was passing his mother’s bedroom door, as the words reached his ears.

“Yes, mother. I thought you would have been asleep hours ago.”

“No, I couldn’t sleep till I heard you come in. Come in, and kiss me good night.”

Bob entered his mother’s room, and went towards the bed. Mrs. Nancarrow was still a young woman, and looked almost like a girl as she lay on the snowy pillows.

“Whom was that you were talking to?”

“I—I was thinking, mother.”

“Thinking? Thinking aloud?”

“I suppose so.”

“What about?”

“About father.”

There was a silence for a few seconds. Both felt they were on sacred ground.

“Mother,” said Bob, remembering what Nancy had said to him, “I want to tell

you something. But you won't breathe a word, will you? It's a profound secret. I mean that you must not mention it to *any one*, must not speak about it to any one, under any circumstances."

"Of course I won't, if you don't wish it. What is it?"

"I'm engaged to Nancy Tresize."

"What!"

Bob repeated the news.

"Aren't you pleased, mother?"

She lifted herself up in the bed and threw her arms around his neck.

"You don't mean it really, Bob? Why, I never dreamed that such a thing was possible."

"Neither did I until to-day. I—I—mother, what are you crying about? Aren't you pleased?"

"Of course I am; but oh, my dear boy! Oh, if only your father had lived!"

"He knows. I've been telling him," said Bob, who had a strain of the mystic in his nature. "I'm sure I have his blessing."

"Nancy is the finest, sweetest girl in Cornwall," she cried; "I couldn't have wished for anything better. I've always loved her. But I never thought that——"

"Neither did I," interrupted Bob. "It seems too good to be true, but it is true. I motored Nancy over to Gurnard's Head this afternoon, and—and it is all settled. She's the dearest girl in the world, mother."

"Of course she is," sobbed Mrs. Nancarrow. "There, wait a minute until I dry my eyes. I never expected such a thing, and—and oh, Bob, my dear, dear boy!"

"You mustn't imagine that you aren't still dear to me, mother, or that I love you one whit the less. I don't, you know, and Nancy loves you too."

"Yes, yes, I know that. It isn't that, my boy! But—but—you'll never know what a woman feels when she first learns that her only boy loves another woman better than he loves his mother. It isn't sorrow. Bob, oh no! I'm as glad as glad, and I couldn't wish for anything better. But what about the Admiral? Will he consent? I know he wants Nancy to marry Captain Trevanion."

CHAPTER IV

For the next few days Bob lived in happy dreamland. It is true he did not see Nancy much alone, and no suggestion of their betrothal was made known. But he found an excuse for going to Penwennack every day, and Admiral Tresize, never imagining what was in his mind, always gave him a hearty welcome. Nancy had two brothers nearly of Bob's age, one of whom had been to Clifton with him; and although he was on the military side of the college, they saw much of each other. Dick Tresize was fond of Bob, in spite of the dissimilarity in their tastes, and as Bob evinced a sudden love and efficiency for tennis, he became in great demand. He also raised himself in the Admiral's estimation by challenging Captain Trevanion, who was a scratch man at golf, to a match on the Leiant Links.

"How many strokes do you expect me to give you?" rather scornfully demanded Trevanion, who had not been at all pleased at Nancy's constant disinclination for his society and her sudden preference for Bob's.

"Oh, we'll play level!" was Bob's reply.

"I like a game when I play," said the Captain who joined heartily in the laugh at Bob's expense.

"I'll try to give you a game," was Bob's reply.

"Good old Bob," cried Dick Tresize, "and the loser shall stand tea at the Club House for the whole bally lot of us. And it must be a good tea too. We'll have a dish of cream and all sorts of cakes. We can easily arrange it, for Thursday is a quiet day, and the crowds of visitors haven't made their appearance yet. Have you plenty of money with you, Bob."

"Oceans," replied Bob, pulling out a handful of change. "I'm only thinking about the state of Trevanion's finances."

"They are all right," replied Trevanion. "And I propose that we play for a box of balls into the bargain."

"How many of you are going?" asked Bob quietly.

Several hands went up, including that of the Admiral, who had become enthusiastic about forming what he called "a gallery."

"Good, Admiral. I'm glad you are going. That'll make twelve altogether. No, Trevanion, we won't play for the balls. The tea will be enough for you to pay for. I am told that the Army pays junior officers very badly."

"That's why I want to play for a box of balls. My stock is running low, and I want to get some on the cheap."

"Come, let's be off!" cried Dick. "I'll tell the men to bring out the cars, and we'll start right away. Where are your clubs, Bob?"

"They are in my locker at the Club. I haven't seen them since the Easter Vac."

“But you’ve played at Oxford?”

“No; been too busy.”

Dick held up his hands in mock horror, at which several of the party laughed.

“Trevanion will wipe the floor with you,” he said woefully. “He’s on the links at least three days a week, and he plays a good scratch game.”

“Aren’t you in practice, Bob?” asked Nancy, when they had a few seconds alone together.

“Scarcely played for a year.”

“Then why did you challenge Captain Trevanion?”

“Because I was mad,” replied Bob. “He’s been trying to raise a laugh against me all the morning and so—well, there it is.”

“But he’ll be sure to beat you?”

“No, he won’t,” and there was a confident ring in his voice.

Half an hour later they had reached the Club House, and much laughter and many pleasantries were exchanged as they teed their balls. Captain Trevanion’s clubs were shining, while Bob’s were rusty through disuse.

“They ’a’an’t a bin clained for months,” said the caddy, who was vigorously rubbing them with emery paper.

Captain Trevanion won the toss, and took the honour. He was a tall, athletic fellow, and showed by his practice swing that he was master of his tools. He hit his ball straight and clean, and it fell a few yards behind the great grass mound which guards the first green. Bob, on the other hand, felt nervous and awkward. He was out of practice, and knew his disadvantage. He played the ball badly, and while it cleared the rough, he had an awkward stance for his second. In playing the odd, too, he miscalculated the distance, and found himself in the rough, on the offside of the green. Captain Trevanion holed out in four and although Bob got a five, he lost the hole.

“One up to the Army,” laughed the Admiral.

The second hole, which can easily be reached by a good iron shot, Captain Trevanion played perfectly. His ball soared over a high mountain of sand, and plumped down comfortably a few yards from the hole. Bob topped his ball, and it landed half way up the sand-hill in a bad place. Again it took him five to hole out, while Trevanion was down in three.

At the third the Captain drove a perfect ball, while Bob, who though he got just as far, landed in the churchyard, out of bounds. The result was that he lost this hole also.

“This is what I call a grand procession,” remarked some one.

“Come, Bob,” laughed the Admiral, “this looks as though you will have to pay for the tea.”

“I hope it’ll be a good one anyhow,” replied Bob quietly. “I’m working up a fine appetite.”

At the next hole Captain Trevanion drove short, and landed in the bunker guarding the green. Bob, on the other hand, sent his ball straight and true over the guiding-post.

“Fine shot,” was the general remark.

“Too far,” said Dick Tresize. “That ball’s over the green and gone down the cliff. I’d rather be where Trevanion is.”

He proved to be right. Bob had got into a well-nigh impossible place and lost another hole.

“Beastly luck,” remarked Dick. “That’s not a fair hole.”

“Rub of the green,” was all Bob said.

“Yes, but it makes you four down,” said the Admiral. “Trevanion has done every hole in bogey so far, and he’s not likely to make mistakes.”

It seemed as though Bob were destined to bad luck, for although he seemed to play the next hole perfectly, he made too much allowance for the wind, and his second shot went over a high bank which guarded the green, and fell among the shingle, near which some old boats were lying.

“Five up to the Military,” shouted the Admiral.

“The same grand procession,” giggled a girl who was a great admirer of Trevanion.

“I say, Bob, I thought you were going to give Trevanion a game,” said George Tresize, Nancy’s younger brother.

Captain Trevanion laughed confidently. He felt certain of victory now, and regarded the match as a walk over.

“Five down is a big handicap,” said Bob. “Still the match is young yet.”

“He’s had beastly luck at the last two holes,” grumbled Dick Tresize, who was evidently deeply chagrined.

The next hole was halved in bogey. Bob got his four easily, but Trevanion only halved his by a long and uncertain putt.

“Five up at the sixth,” shouted the Admiral. “Come, Bob, that’s better, you’ve halved a hole at last.”

Bob said nothing, but cast a look at Nancy, who was pale with excitement. He could see how anxious she was, and noted the confident air with which Trevanion approached the next tee. Although his position seemed almost hopeless, a feeling of confidence came into his heart. He had measured his opponent by this time, and he knew he had got to his old mastery of his clubs. He felt sure, too, that he could play the stronger game, even although he had lost hole after hole in succession.

Trevanion again drove, but this time his ball was off the line and landed in a huge basin of sand. Bob’s, on the other hand, was perfectly straight. It carried the bunker a hundred and forty yards from the tee, and was well on its way to the green. As a consequence, although the bogey was five, Bob did it in four and won the hole.

“You played that well, Nancarrow,” said Trevanion.

“The wind helped me,” replied Bob.

The next hole was also a five bogey; but again Bob, who reached the green in two, got out in four, while Trevanion took five. He had reduced the difference between them to three. The ninth hole was halved.

“Three up at the turn for the Army,” shouted the Admiral.

The tenth hole, as all who have played on the Leiant Links know, is very difficult. If the player has a long drive, he can, if he has a good second, land on the green in two; but in order to do so he has to carry a very difficult piece of country, which, if he gets into it, is generally fatal. Bob’s drive was short, and it seemed impossible for him to carry the tremendous hazard with his second shot. Trevanion, on the other hand, was in an easy position. When he saw Bob’s short drive he laughed contentedly.

“I’m wanting my tea badly,” he said to Nancy.

“That’s a pity,” replied the girl. “It’ll take another hour to play the next nine holes.”

“It looks as though the match will be over before then,” he replied confidently. “I’ll bet you a box of chocolates that we shall finish at the fourteenth.”

“Done!” cried the girl, and there was a flash of anger in her eyes.

“Of course Bob’ll have to play short here,” grumbled Dick Tresize. “He ought to have insisted on Trevanion giving him strokes. By George, he’s surely not going to be such a fool as to risk a brassy!”

The next minute there was great cheering. Bob’s ball had surely mounted all difficulties and apparently landed on the green.

“A magnificent shot!” cried the Admiral. “By gad, Bob, but Vardon couldn’t have done it better!”

It was easy to see that Trevanion was annoyed as well as surprised at Bob’s shot. The bogey for the hole was five, and Bob had to all appearance made a four possible by a very fine brassy shot. Trevanion had driven thirty yards further than Bob, but he had still a big sand-hill, covered with long grass, to carry. Whether Bob’s shot had made him fear that, after being five up, he might yet be beaten, it is impossible to say, certain it is that he missed his ball, and Bob won the hole.

“Military down to two,” cried the Admiral. “It’s going to be a close match, after all.”

The rest of the spectators became silent; they felt that things were becoming serious, and that they must not talk, especially as Trevanion had looked angrily at some one who had spoken as he was addressing his ball for the next drive. The eleventh and the twelfth holes were halved, and so the game stood at two up for Trevanion and six to play.

“I’ve won my box of chocolates, Captain Trevanion,” Nancy could not help saying, as they walked to the thirteenth tee. “Even if you win the next two holes

you can only be dormy at the fourteenth.”

“I shall buy the chocolates with all the pleasure in the world,” replied the Captain. “You see, I didn’t reckon on that brassy of Nancarrow’s at the tenth.”

“I think you are going to have an expensive afternoon,” she laughed.

Bob, who still retained the honour, addressed his ball. A strong cross wind was blowing, but he made up his mind to carry the green, although it was considerably over two hundred yards, and guarded by a high mound. If he could do so he stood a good chance of a three, and might rob his opponent of another hole. He hit the ball clean and true, and as it left his club the spectators gave a gasp. It looked as though it would strike the guiding-post, but to the relief of all, and especially of Nancy, it rose a foot above it, and was soon lost to sight.

“By gosh, Bob, I believe you’ve driven the green!” said Dick to Bob, in a whisper. “If you have, you stand a good chance. You drive a longer ball than Trevanion.”

It was easy to see by the change that had come over the Captain’s face that he was becoming anxious. He hit his ball with perfect precision, but it dropped on the tee side of the high mound. Dick Tresize turned towards the green.

“You are on, old chap,” he said, as his friend came up. “It’s at the corner of the green, but you should do it.”

Trevanion played a good approach shot, and then Bob laid his approach putt dead. His three was safe. If Trevanion could not hole out, there would be but one hole between them. Trevanion did his best, but the ball did not reach the hole by a few inches, and was not quite straight.

“The Army down to one,” said the Admiral.

By this time several people had been attracted by the news of the match, and among the new spectators was an amiable-looking gentleman who wore large, round spectacles. He had been seemingly much impressed by Bob’s last drive, and had loudly expressed himself to that effect.

“I tell you,” he said, “I haf seen Vardon, and Braid, and all ze rest of zem play, but I neffer saw a finer shot, neffer. It vas great.”

He spoke so loudly that, when they were walking to the fourteenth tee, Trevanion, who was slightly ruffled, said:

“Excuse me, sir, but if you knew the etiquette of golf, you would know that it is bad form to talk while people are playing.”

The stranger lifted his hat, and bowed profoundly. “I apologise, sir,” he said; “nothing was further from my mind than to interfere with your play. I will take much care not to offend again. I hope I did not offend you, sir,” he added, bowing to Bob.

“Not the slightest,” replied Bob.

The stranger bowed again, and from that time was silent, although he followed the party at a distance.

The next three holes were halved, and there remained but two more to play. Bob was very quiet, Trevanion looked grim and determined, the colour came and went on Nancy's face. It seemed to her as though Bob's future and her own depended on the result of the next few minutes.

"One up to the Military, and two to play," cried the Admiral.

"If you halve this, you'll be dorny, Captain Trevanion," said George Tresize, who seemed very anxious for him to win.

The Captain did not reply. Evidently he was in no mood for talk; as for the rest of the crowd, a deadly silence rested on it.

Like nearly all the holes on the Leiant Links, the seventeenth is blind, although it is just possible to see the top of the flag. It is not an easy hole to play, as I know to my cost. The green is guarded on the right by a hedge, which if you get over it, makes your case desperate. If you go too far, you are caught by a bunker; while if you play to the left, the ground is so hummocky, that it is very difficult to lay your ball dead. That is why, although the hole is barely two hundred yards long, the committee have given it a four bogey.

Bob took an iron, and played straight for the pin.

"Good shot, but a bit short, I'm afraid," whispered Dick, as Bob stood aside for Trevanion to drive. Trevanion also hit his ball clean, but it was a trifle to the left. A little later they saw that both balls were on the green, although Bob's was several yards the nearer. Trevanion examined the ground carefully. He felt that much depended on the approach putt. If he laid himself dead, he was sure he could not be beaten. Every one stood breathless while the ball ran over the hummocky ground.

"By gosh, it's too merry!" gasped George Tresize. But he had not accounted for a steep ascent. The ball rested less than two feet from the hole; Trevanion's three was safe.

Bob also carefully examined his ground, and then played his ball. It went to the lip of the hole, and then half-hanging over, stopped. For a second the little company held its breath, and then gave a gasp. The ball fell in.

"Beastly fluke!" muttered Trevanion, between his set teeth.

"A great putt!" cried Dick.

"All square and one to play," cried the Admiral.

Bob felt his heart bound as he addressed the ball for the last drive. What if after all he should miss it! A mist hung before his eyes. But no, he would not miss, and a second later he watched the ball as it soared over the hazard. Trevanion's was only a few yards behind. It required but a chip shot to reach the green, which lay in a hollow just over a turf-grown hedge, and guarded by a bunker. They had now reached the final stage of the game. One shot might win or lose the match.

Evidently Trevanion realised this as he took his mashie. More than one saw his cigarette tremble between his lips; there could be no doubt that he was greatly

excited. Perhaps his nerves played him tricks, or perhaps in his anxiety he looked up before he hit his ball. Anyhow he missed it, and he found himself badly bunkered. Bob's chance had come, and he took advantage of it. His ball pitched over the hedge, and then rolled towards the hole. He had a possible three. Trevanion, on the other hand, failed to get out of the bunker at the first shot, and got too far with the second. Bob had won the match.

"Jolly hard luck, getting into the bunker, Trevanion," he said; but the other did not speak. For the moment he was too chagrined.

"Nancarrow wins the match on the last green; now for tea," shouted the Admiral. "Bob, my boy, you've played a great game. I congratulate you."

"A very fine game, Nancarrow," said Trevanion, who, like the sportsman he was, had got over his disappointment. "You played the last fourteen holes like a book."

"Pardon me," said a voice, "I hope I shall not be considered to intrude, but may I also congratulate you, sir. I am not English, I am sorry to say, but I take advantage of the *Entente Cordiale*. You haf given me much pleasure in watching you."

The stranger bowed as he spoke, and produced his card. "Allow me," he continued, as he presented it to Bob.

"Thank you, Count von Weimer," replied Bob, as he read the card. "It is very kind of you."

"Forgive me as a stranger in speaking to you," went on the Count, "but I felt I must. Never haf I seen such a feat of skill, and I cannot be silent. I take advantage of the *Entente Cordiale*. I bear a German name, but I am from Alsace, and my heart beats warm to you and your country," then with another bow he walked away.

"Who is that old buffer?" asked Dick.

"You know as much about him as I," replied Bob; "evidently he wanted to be friendly."

"What did you say he was called?" asked the Admiral.

"Count von Weimer, Château Villar, Alsace, and Continental Club, London," said Bob, reading the card.

"Von Weimer is a good name," said the Admiral, "and the Continental is a good club; I've been there several times. I shall be civil to him if I meet him again. But now for tea. By Jove, Trevanion, but the boy has given you a twisting!"

"Oh, Bob, I am glad!" whispered Nancy, as they went towards the Club House. "At one time I—I; oh, Bob, I *am* glad you've beaten him."

"So am I," replied Bob, "but I'm not thinking so much about the golf."

"Now for tea," said Trevanion, with a laugh. "You've won on this field of battle, but in the next my turn will come."

CHAPTER V

Bob was in great spirits at tea that day. He had won his match, and proved himself a stronger player than Trevanion. Nancy, who sat by his side, was radiant with smiles, while evidently the Admiral looked on him with greater favour than ever before.

“A remarkable feat, my boy,” he said again and again. “To be five down to a man like Trevanion, and then to beat him, means not only skill, but nerve. That’s the thing I like about it—the nerve, the pluck.”

“A game is never lost until it’s won, sir,” said Bob sententiously.

“That’s it, my boy. Stick to that. What did I hear about your plan to go into Parliament? Do you mean it?”

“If I have good luck, sir.”

“A great career, my lad, and you should do well. I am so glad you’ve given up the idea of being a book-worm. Of course your scholarship will come handy to you in Parliament, so perhaps you’ve been wise to stick to your books. But the country wants men who can *do* things.”

“I mean to do them too, sir.”

“Trelawney blood,” laughed the old man. “Well, there’s no reason in the world why you shouldn’t do big things. I always had hoped that Roger would go into Parliament; indeed, he was as good as nominated for St. Ia. But he was killed in the Boer War, poor fellow. A fine lad too, as fine a lad as ever stepped in shoeleather,” and his eyes became moist. “Thank God we are at peace now!” he added.

“You are coming back with me to Penwennack?” he went on, when presently the party were leaving the Club House.

“I’d love to, sir, but I can’t. I must get back. I promised mother.”

“Ah well, stick to your mother. A lad who keeps his promise to his mother seldom goes wrong. But come up to dinner to-morrow night, and bring your mother with you.”

“You may depend on me,” cried Bob. “Thanks very much, Admiral, we shall be delighted.”

“Bob,” said Nancy, “you’ve done more to soften dad to-day, and to prepare the way for me, than if you had got ten fellowships. He loves a plucky fight, and hates a coward.”

“And I’ll fight,” cried Bob, “because I shall fighting for you, Nancy.”

“I wish you were going to spend the evening with us,” she said ruefully. “I do want you with me.”

“And don’t I wish it too! But I told you how things stood. Till to-morrow

then.”

“Be sure to come early,” cried Nancy, as she drove away.

Bob made his way over the Towans towards St. Ia, as happy as a king. Everywhere the sun seemed to be shining. At his feet the wild thyme grew in profusion. Acres upon acres were made purple by this modest flower. The sea was glorious with many coloured hues, the whole country-side was beautiful beyond words. What wonder that he was happy! He was young and vigorous, the best and most beautiful girl in the world loved him, and his future was rosy hued.

In order to reach his mother’s house, he had to pass through St. Ia, and he had barely entered the little town when he saw Count von Weimer, who had expressed his congratulations so fervently on the golf links.

“Ah, this is lucky!” cried the Count. “I was wondering if I should haf the good fortune to meet you again. May I walk with you? That is goot!”

“You are a stranger to St. Ia,” said Bob.

“Yes. I have been drawn here by the beauty of the place, and—and because I want peace.” He still spoke in broken English, although I will no longer try to reproduce it.

“You love peace?” Bob ventured.

“Love it! Ah, young sir, you little know. I am one of those unfortunate men who are placed in an awful position. I am, although I bear a German name, French on my mother’s side. I love France too, and am at heart a Frenchman. But then my house is in Alsace—Alsace, you understand. France under German Government. I can say here, what I could not say there. I hate Germany, I hate her government, her militarism, her arrogance. The Germans suspect my loyalty, and so I have come to England.”

“And you like England?”

“Ah, who can help loving it? Your British flag means liberty, wherever it flies. It stands for peace, brotherhood, progress. That is why I think of buying a house near St. Ia, and settling down. Realising my position in Alsace, you can understand. Besides, what can be more beautiful than this?” and he waved his hand toward the sunlit bay.

“Yes, it’s the most beautiful spot on earth!” cried Bob.

“It is indeed, and I love its peace. I love the quiet ways of the people. I saw a house yesterday which captivated, charmed me. Tre-Trelyon, yes, that’s it; Trelyon, I was told it was called, and I hear it is for sale, or to let, I don’t know which.”

“Yes, it is, and it is one of the finest places in the district. Why, it belongs to Admiral Tresize, whom perhaps you saw on the links this afternoon.”

“What, that stout, hearty, John Bull gentleman? Oh, yes, I saw him! What a splendid specimen of your British thoroughness. It belongs to him, eh?”

“Yes, it formerly belonged to his wife’s family, the Trelyons. I’m sure he’d be

glad of a good tenant.”

“Ah, but that is pleasant. I could perhaps deal with him personally? I am, I suppose, what you would call a rich man, but I hate dealing with agents, and lawyers, and that kind of thing. He is—friendly, this, what do you call him, Admiral——”

“Oh, yes, he’s most friendly.”

“He’s in the Navy, I suppose?”

“He’s retired from active service, but he is still one of the most influential men in our Admiralty.”

“Ah, yes, but I’m afraid I have but little knowledge of these things. I am a man of peace. I hate war of every sort. I am at one with what you English people call—Quakers. But ah, it looks like war again now.”

“You mean the Servian trouble?”

“Yes. At first I thought the Austrians were going to be kind and reasonable. But they have Germany behind them, and now, I suppose, they’ve sent impossible demands to Serbia. It is here in the evening paper. It seems, too, that Russia is going to back up Serbia, and that will mean trouble.”

“How?”

“I am not an authority on European politics, but I am sure that if Russia espouses the cause of Serbia, Germany will throw in her lot with Austria. Don’t you see what follows?”

“You mean that Germany would declare war on Russia too?”

“Yes, and that is not all. France, my own country, although I am an Alsatian, is bound to be dragged in. And I am a man of peace. I hate war.”

“I am with you there,” cried Bob eagerly. “War was born in hell.”

“Ah, you say so, and you are a young man! That is good! But still you need not fear. England, in spite of the *Entente Cordiale*, holds to her policy of splendid isolation. She will not be dragged into the turmoil?”

“No, I think that is impossible. You see we are not a military nation, in spite of a section of the community. Our Army is small, and will, I hope, remain small.”

“Stick to that, my friend—stick to that. Big armies only breed war, and war is a crime. But about my desire to buy Tre-Trelyon—ah, your English names are hard to pronounce—do you, who know the owner, this bluff John Bull, Admiral—what do you call him?”

“Admiral Tresize.”

“Admiral Tresize, yes. Do you think it would be possible for me to see him?”

“I’m quite sure it would be,” replied Bob, who remembered what the Admiral had said. “I’m dining at his house to-morrow night. I’ll tell him what you have said.”

“Ah, that is kind, friendly of you; but I must not detain you longer. Good evening.”

“What a friendly old fellow,” reflected Bob, as he walked away. “Yes, I can quite imagine how one who is a Frenchman at heart would be treated in Alsace,” and then he forgot all about him.

As day followed day, disquieting news came from the Near East. It seemed as though the cloud which at first was no bigger than a man’s hand was covering the whole Eastern sky. Disturbing news flashed across the Channel, even while it was generally felt that the tragedy of Sarajevo could never lead to open hostilities. About the middle of July, as all the world knows, it was believed that Austria had accepted Serbia’s assurance that her attitude towards the greater Power was altogether pacific, and that full justice should be meted out to all who had participated in the ghastly murders.

On July 24, even in the quiet neighbourhood of St. Ia, much apprehension was felt by many who took an interest in foreign affairs at the announcement of the presentation of the Austro-Hungarian Note to the Servian Government, especially when we read the terms of the Note. They were so brutal, so arrogant, that we could not see how any self-respecting people could accept them. Still, we reflected that Serbia who had only lately been much weakened and impoverished by her war with Turkey, might be humble.

On the morning of July 25, Admiral Tresize received a letter from a friend who lived in Vienna, which caused him to be greatly perturbed.

“Things look very black here,” ran the letter. “Many of us, until a day or so ago, believed that the Austro-Servian difficulty would be amicably settled. As a matter of fact, I know that Austria was prepared to let Serbia down rather lightly, but since then new forces have been at work. I am in a position to state that Germany, and by Germany I mean the Kaiser and the War Party generally, whose word is, of course, law in Germany, has instructed the Emperor Franz-Josef to send Serbia practically impossible demands. What is in the Kaiser’s mind it is impossible to say, but, as is very well known, he has been using almost superhuman efforts in perfecting his army and navy, until Germany has become the greatest fighting machine in the world. It is well known, too, that the Kaiser believes that Russia is so impoverished and enfeebled by her war with Japan that she is no longer dangerous, and he considers France altogether unprepared for war. This being so, it is the general opinion in diplomatic circles that the Kaiser’s purpose in sending Serbia impossible conditions is intended to arouse hostilities. Only to-day I had a chat with a man who moves in the inner circle of things, and he told me, that if Russia defends Serbia, as he hopes she will, and that if France prepares to help Russia, as she is sure to do, Austria can keep Serbia and Russia busy, while Germany fulfils her long-held determination to bring France to her knees, and to make her practically her vassal. No one believes that England would interfere. My own belief is that Germany is using the present occasion as the first step towards carrying out her long-cherished ambitions. When once she has

conquered France, and commands her sea-board and her navy, she will then be able to crush England, which is her ultimate aim.”

When the Admiral showed me this letter, I suppose I smiled incredulously, for the old man broke out into violent language.

“I believe it’s true,” he cried. “The Kaiser, for all his pious hypocrisies, is a war devil. He hates the thought that England should be such a World Power, while Germany is only an European Power.”

“But the Kaiser isn’t such a fool,” I replied. “He knows England and her strength.”

“Yes, but he’s drunk with pride and arrogance. He thinks Germany is destined to rule the world.”

A day or so later news came that Serbia had consented to all Austria’s demands with the exception of two points, and suggested that these should be submitted to the mediation of the Great Powers.

“Ah, that clears the air!” I thought; “nothing can be more reasonable.”

Much to the surprise of every one, news came on July 26 that Austria regarded Serbia’s answer as unsatisfactory, and that the Austro-Hungarian Minister, with the Legation Staff, had left Belgrade on the previous day.

On July 28 I called at Mrs. Nancarrow’s house, where I saw Bob reading the newspaper with a smile on his face.

“This is fine,” he cried—“just fine. What a splendid fellow Sir Edward Grey is! It was he who proposed a Conference in the Turco-Balkan difficulty, and now it is he again who is going to settle this.”

“I am afraid the Turco-Balkan Conference didn’t help much,” I replied.

“Ah, but this will. After all, what’s the heart of the quarrel? The murder of the heir to the Austrian throne. A ghastly affair, I’ll admit, but everything can be settled.”

“Has Admiral Tresize mentioned a letter which he received from Vienna a day or two ago?” I asked.

“Yes,” replied Bob, “but of course it was pure imagination. Do you know, I admire the Kaiser. He’s a good man, a religious man.”

I coughed.

“Of course it is easy to imagine a case against him,” he went on lightly; “but it has no foundation in fact. I told the Admiral so. We had quite an argument about it, and I maintained that whatever the circumstances, England had no occasion to be dragged in, and that it would be criminal on the part of our statesmen if they allowed it. Evidently Sir Edward Grey thinks the same. Of course you’ve seen that he has proposed a Conference. He has suggested that Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain, who are not directly connected with the quarrel, should meet, and settle it.”

“Will Germany accept?”

“Of course she will,” replied Bob confidently, “we shall soon hear that the trouble is at an end.”

“I hope you are right, but if the Kaiser holds the views expressed by the Admiral’s friend, I very much doubt it,” was my rejoinder.

When we read that a Russian Cabinet Council was held, and regarded the Austrian demands as an indirect challenge to Russia, and when we also read that Austria, without giving Servia any chance for further consideration, had declared war upon her, and seized certain of her vessels which happened to be on the Danube, we began to fear trouble, although even then we in St. Ia never seriously believed that England would be directly implicated in it.

I am stating these things here, not that they are not known to every one, but because they will help to make the story I am writing clearer to the reader, especially when it reaches the later stages.

Later the news came to us that there was partial Russian mobilisation along the Austrian frontier, and that as a consequence a Council was held in Berlin. Of course we knew nothing of what was said in that Council, but when we heard that Russia’s partial mobilisation had become general, we began to shudder at the gradual darkening of the European sky.

As all the world knows now, Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, and I remember meeting Bob outside the St. Ia post office that day.

“You see you were not right about Germany,” I said. “Both France and Italy accepted Sir Edward Grey’s suggestion, and consented to join in a Conference; but Germany refused. Nothing can be plainer than that. If Germany had wanted peace, she could easily have secured it. Austria would not have opposed her in any case, but she would not even join in a Conference in order to secure peace.”

Bob shook his head. “You know the reason Germany gave for refusing,” he said.

“About the most arrogant, but the most characteristic possible. Fancy saying that Austria as a Great Power could not think of allowing mediation as though she were a small Balkan state.”

“Yes, it’s terrible enough,” replied Bob. “But, thank heaven, we are not likely to be dragged into it.”

“I hope and pray not,” I replied.

“Why? Do you think it possible?” he cried.

“Anything is possible. You’ve seen that Germany has invaded Luxemburg. As you know, Luxemburg is a small neutral state, and has been promised the protection of the Powers. Germany was a party to this promise, and yet she has violated everything.”

“That’s only hearsay,” was his reply.

“It is more than hearsay,” I answered; but Bob did not appear to be convinced.

“I am almost glad dear old father is dead,” he went on presently. “The Boer

War nearly broke his heart, while this business threatens to be so ghastly, that it would have driven him mad. It is simply hellish.”

After this we almost feared to open our newspapers, and events followed so rapidly that we were unable to keep count of them.

Never shall I forget the look on Admiral Tresize’s face when he read Sir Edward Grey’s momentous speech. His ruddy face became almost pale, and his hands trembled.

“Sir Edward has done all mortal man can do,” he declared. “Whose ever hands are clean of this bloody business, his are. He has simply laboured night and day for peace.”

“Seemingly all in vain,” was my reply.

“I have been informed on unimpeachable authority that the Kaiser, in spite of his pious harangues, has been preparing for this, planning for this, for years.”

“Still there is no necessity for us to be dragged in,” I urged.

“Of course there is the *Entente* between ourselves and France,” he replied. “France will be bound to help Russia on account of their alliance, and the question will naturally arise as to whether we can stand aside while the German fleet bombards France’s shores and while German armies cross her frontier.”

“But think of war, Admiral.”

“Yes, God knows I think of it. I didn’t sleep last night for thinking of it. I know what war is, know of its bloody horrors. War is hell, I know that; but I would rather that my country should go through hell, than allow a Power like Germany to crush her.”

“But Germany couldn’t crush us. She has no desire to crush us.”

The Admiral looked at me angrily, but did not speak for some seconds.

“I cannot say all I know,” he said presently, “but, mark my words, in a few days you will know by the most incontestable proofs that all this is a part of Germany’s plans; that she has used these Sarajevo murders as a pretext for causing European war, that she thinks we shall do nothing, and that her ultimate plan is to crush England, and to dominate the world.”

Every one knows the thrill that went through England when war was declared. The shadow of war had closed the Stock Exchange, and paralysed business, but the declaration of war moved the nation to its very depths.

Bob Nancarrow was at Penwennack when the call came to the young men of England to rise and help their country in her need. Several young people had met there for a tennis party, and Bob was among them.

“I’m going to send in my name,” cried George Tresize. “I was in the O.T.C. at Rugby.”

“I shall join my regiment right away,” said Dick quietly. “Trevanion’s gone. Of course you’ll join, Bob?”

“No,” replied Bob quietly, “I shall not join.”

CHAPTER VI

“What!”

“Not going to join! Why, you were in the O.T.C. while you were at Clifton! Not going to join!”

Bob’s face was very pale, but he shook his head.

“You are joking, man! Haven’t you read Kitchener’s call? He wants half a million men. It’s said he’ll need a million before long. You can’t stand out. No decent fellow can. You don’t mean it!”

“Yes, I mean it.”

“But why?”

“I’m afraid I couldn’t make you understand.”

“No, I don’t think you could,” and there was a sneer in George Tresize’s voice.

It happened at that moment that the girls had gone into the house, and had not heard the conversation, but the half-dozen young men who were there looked at Bob as though he were a kind of reptile.

“I say, Bob,” said Dick Tresize, who had been always his close friend, “you can’t mean it! You are joking. Have—have you read the papers? Have you read what led up to our being in it? Have you seen the white paper?”

“Yes, I’ve read everything.”

“Then you must know that the war is right.”

“No war is right,” was Bob’s answer. “It’s opposed to every law, human and divine. How can a fellow who is trying to be a—*a* Christian,” his voice trembled as he spoke, “deliberately enlist for the purpose of killing his fellow-man? If I have a quarrel with a man, and I murder him, I am guilty of the most terrible deed a man *can* be guilty of. If I did it, I should be branded with the mark of Cain, and you would shudder at the mention of my name. A nation is a combination of individuals, and if nations in order to settle their quarrel go to war, and murder, not by ones, but by thousands, does it cease to be the crime of Cain? Does it cease to be murder?”

“Yes, of course it does,” replied a young fellow, named Poldhu, who had arranged to leave for his regiment on the following morning.

“How?”

Poldhu was silent for a moment, then he cried out, “Is a hangman a murderer, for hanging a devil? Is a judge a murderer for condemning a fellow like Crippen to death?”

“And you mean to say you are going to funk it?” There was something ominous in Dick Tresize’s voice.

“I am not going to enlist.”

“I say, you fellows,” said Dick, looking towards the others, “the climate’s not healthy here. What do you say to a stroll?”

Without a word each one walked away, leaving Bob alone. They had gone only a few steps when there was a sound of many voices at the front door, and a bevy of girls appeared in their light summer dresses. A few seconds later the girls and boys were talking eagerly together, and before long were casting furtive looks towards Bob, who, miserable beyond words, sat watching them.

“No,” he heard one say, “I’m not going to play with him.”

“Oh, but there’s a mistake somewhere! He’s all right.”

“Is he? Then what did he mean by——”

Bob got up and walked to the other end of the lawn; he had been playing the part of an eavesdropper in spite of himself. He knew what they were talking about—knew that in the future he would be treated as a pariah. They were good fellows, all of them. Clean-minded, healthy young Englishmen. Tom Poldhu, Dick and George Tresize, Harry Lorrimer, and the others were among the best products of English public schools, and although they had their failings, each had his code of honour which is generally held sacred by the class to which he belonged. All of them, too, had been reared in a military atmosphere. Most of them, I imagine, would, with a certain amount of reservation, drink to the old toast, “My country. In all her relations with other nations, may she be in the right. But right or wrong, my country.” They did not trouble about the deeper ethics of international quarrels. It was enough for them to know that England was in danger; for them, forgetful of everything else, to offer their lives, if need be, for the land of their birth.

They could not understand Bob. They simply could not see from his point of view. Only one thing was plain to them. Their country was at war. The King’s soldiers were going to defend their nation’s word of honour, and to crush a Power, which they had no doubt meant to rob England of her glory, and conquer her. Beyond that they troubled little. Neither of them understood much about the cause of the trouble. But that did not matter. They had heard the call, “Your King and Country need you,” and that was enough. To remain quietly at home after that was the act of a poltroon and a coward.

“Bob, are you there?”

He had gone from the lawn into a shrubbery, where he was completely hidden. He felt as though he must get out of the sight of every one.

It was Nancy’s voice, and every nerve in his body thrilled as he heard it. Yes, Nancy would understand him; he could make everything plain to her.

“Yes, Nancy.” He tried to speak cheerfully, but his heart was like lead.

“Bob,” and there was a tone in her voice which he had never heard before. “What Dick has been telling us isn’t true, is it?”

She had reached his side by this time, and, in spite of her pallor, and the peculiar light in her eyes, he had never seen her look so beautiful.

“What has he been telling you?” he asked, feeling ashamed of himself for asking the question. He knew quite well.

“That—all the rest of them have offered themselves for their country, and you—you——”

“Let me explain, Nancy,” he cried eagerly. “Let me tell you why I can’t——”

“I don’t want any explanations,” and there was anger in her voice. “Lord Kitchener has called for volunteers. He has asked for half a million men, so that we may stand by our word of honour, and save our country. What I want to know is, are you going to play the coward?”

“You know my principles, Nancy. You know what we said to each other down at Gurnard’s Head, and——”

“I don’t want to hear anything more about that,” she interrupted impatiently. “I want to know what you are going to *do*. Please answer me.”

She had ceased to be pale now, although her lips quivered and her hands trembled. A pink spot burnt on each cheek, and her eyes burned like fire. Bob knew that she would not be satisfied with subterfuges, or contented with evasions. Neither, indeed, did he wish to shelter himself behind them.

“I’m going to do nothing,” he replied. “That is I’m going to carry out the plan we agreed on. Look here, Nancy——”

But again she interrupted him. She was angry beyond words, but she kept herself in check.

“That’s all I wanted to know. Thank you. We are not going to play tennis for a little while. We are all going for a walk. Good afternoon.”

“You mean that you do not wish me to go with you.”

“I do not think you—you would enjoy coming. You see the others——”

She did not complete the sentence, but hurried away, leaving him alone.

Bob felt as though the heavens had become black. He had expected to be misunderstood, sneered at, despised; but he had never dreamed that Nancy would turn from him like this. He knew she hated war. He remembered her telling him about her eldest brother who had been killed in the Boer War, and how it had darkened her home, and added years to her father’s life. She had encouraged him in the career he had marked out too; she had agreed with him that the work he had at heart was the noblest any man could do. As a consequence, he thought she would understand him, sympathise with him.

Bob had not come to his decision carelessly, or with a light heart. He had gone over the ground inch by inch. Yes, England was in the right. He did not believe that Germany had planned the war, and he blamed the Czar as much as he blamed the Kaiser. No doubt Germany had broken treaties. It was wrong for her to invade Luxemburg, and then to send her ultimatum to Belgium, after she had been a party

to the treaty to maintain Belgium's integrity and neutrality. Of course, the King of the Belgians had made a strong case when he had called upon England to protect her.

But war!

He thought of what it meant, for his father's teaching and influence were not forgotten. Generations of Quaker influence and blood were not without effect. War was born in hell. It was an act of savagery, and not of Christian nations. He pictured the awful carnage, the indescribable butchery, the untold horror which were entailed. He saw hordes of men fighting like devils; realised the lust for blood which was ever the concomitant of war. Besides, they settled nothing. Wars always bred wars, one always sowed the seeds of another. When this bloody welter came to an end, what then? After the nation's wealth had been wasted, after tens of thousands of the most promising lives had been sacrificed, after innumerable homes had been laid waste, after all the agony, what then? Would we be any nearer justice? Would wrong be righted, and love take the place of hatred?

But this was not all, neither did it touch the depths of the question. War, ghastly as it was, might superficially be justified. More than once, when he thought of England's plighted word to defend a small, neighbouring state, when he heard of tens of thousands of England's most stalwart sons leaving home and country, not for aggrandisement, nor gain of any sort, but out of desire to keep England's plighted word, to maintain her honour unsullied, and defend the weak, he felt that he must cast everything aside, and offer himself for the fray. But then he had called himself a Christian, he believed in the teaching of the Prince of Peace. How could a man, believing in the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount, accepting the dictum, "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you," do his utmost to murder men who believed in the same Lord as he did?

No, no, it would not do. If Christianity were right, war was wrong. Either Christianity was a foolish thing, an impossible dream, and all our profession of it so much empty cant, or war was something which every Christian should turn from with loathing and horror.

Bob had made no outward profession of Christianity. He had been so far influenced by the spirit of the age, that he seldom spoke about religion, and perhaps many would have regarded him as by no means an exemplary Christian. Nevertheless, deep down in his life was a reverence for Christ and His words. Humanly speaking, the most potent influence in his life was his dead father. Bob, although he had never been inside a Friends' Meeting House, and was not in any way regarded as a member of their community, was one at heart. Either Christ's teaching must be taken to mean what it said, or it was of no value; and Bob took it seriously. Hitherto, it had not clashed with what people had expected of him; but now it seemed to him he must either give up the faith his father had held, or he

must hold aloof from this war, and fight for peace.

For days he had seen the trend of affairs, and what they would lead to, and although he had said nothing to any one, he had decided upon the course of his life. Thus it was, when at the tennis party the other men had asked him what he was going to do, he told them.

But he had never dreamed that Nancy would turn from him, never imagined that his decision would separate them. Yes, that was what it meant. If he held fast to his principles, then Nancy was lost to him.

He heard shouts of laughter near by. Those fellows had no doubts, no struggles. They saw the way of duty clearly, and were going to follow it, while he must go in the opposite direction, and thereby lose—oh God, he could not bear it!

He felt himself a pariah. He was no longer wanted, his presence would no longer be tolerated. Even his friend, Dick Tresize, would turn his back on him if he attempted to join him.

“I was tempted to bring my evening clothes, and spend the evening as the Admiral asked me,” he reflected; “I’m glad I didn’t. I should be frozen out of the house.”

He made his way through the gardens towards the garage, where he had left his car; on his way he came across an old gardener, whom he had known for years.

“Well, Master Bob, we be in for a ’ot job.”

“I’m afraid we are, Tonkin.”

“I wish I was twenty ’ear younger. I’d be off like a shot.”

“Where, Tonkin?”

“Off to fight they Germans, to be sure. Why, no young chap worthy of the naame caan’t stay ’ome, tha’s my veelin’. Tell ’ee wot, they Germans ’ave bin jillus o’ we for ’ears, and tes a put-up job. They do ’ate we, and main to wipe us off the faace of the globe. I d’ ’ear that the Kaiser ev got eight millyen sodgers. Every able-bodied man ’ave bin trained for a sodger, jist to carry out that ould Kaiser’s plans. A cantin’ old ’ippy crit, tha’s wot ’ee es. But we bean’t fear’d ov’m, Maaster Bob. One Englishman es wuth five Germans, ’cos every Englishman es a volunteer, an’ a free man. Aw I do wish I was twenty ’ear younger. Of course you’ll be off with the rest of the young gen’lemen?”

But Bob did not reply. He did not want to enter into an argument with the plain-spoken old Cornishman.

When he arrived home, he found that his mother had gone out, and would not return till dinner-time. He was glad for this. He did not want to explain to her why he had come home so early. He felt he could not do so. Besides, her absence gave him an opportunity to think out the whole question again.

Yes, his choice was plain enough. Nancy, the daughter of an English sailor, the child of many generations of fighters, had been carried away by the tide of

feeling that swept over the country. Having fighting blood in her veins, she could not understand his feelings. To her it was the duty, the sacred duty, of every healthy young Englishman to defend his country, and none but shirkers, cowards, would stay behind. Therefore, if he stood by his principles, she would cast him off with scorn and contempt. If he continued to hold by what he regarded as the foundation of the teachings of the Prince of Peace, he would lose the girl who was as dear to him as his own life.

Oh, how he longed to join the fray! Pride of race, and pride in the history of that race surged up within him. He, too, had fighting blood in his veins, and he longed to share in the fight. He did not fear death. Once accept the theory of war as right, and death on the battlefield, especially in such a cause, would be glorious. He was young too, and his blood ran warm. What nobler cause could there be than to defend a small people, and to crush the fighting hordes of the Kaiser? And besides all that, there was Nancy. He had been dreaming love's young dream, he had been living in the land of bliss, he loved with a pure, devoted love the fairest girl in the county.

And he could keep her love! From signs which seemed to him infallible, he judged that the Admiral during the last few days had learnt his secret, and had not discouraged him from visiting the house, while Nancy had hinted to him that the time was nearly ripe for him to approach her father, and ask for his consent to their engagement.

But how could he? There were things in the world deeper, more sacred, even than love for a woman—principle, conscience, faith. Could he sacrifice these? Could he trample on the Cross of Christ, in order to embrace the sword, and hold to his heart the woman he loved?

He looked towards the mantelpiece, and saw the picture of his father, whom he had idealised as the noblest man who ever lived. He remembered his teaching, remembered that to him the true man was he who sacrificed everything to principle, to conscience. He looked around among the many books, and noted those his father loved. He took from the table a New Testament, and instinctively turned to the Sermon on the Mount.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

“Ye have heard it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

And so on and on. How could a man believing in this, grasp the sword to take away the lives of others. The Germans were Christians just as we were; Germany was the home of the Reformation, the home of religious liberty. Was it not Luther who, standing before the greatest tribunal the world had ever known, and having to choose between conscience and death, cried out:

“It is neither safe nor wise for any man to do aught against his own

conscience. Here stand I; I can do no other, God help me!”?

No, no, he simply could not. Though he were boycotted, scorned, held up to derision, he could not change. He must be true to his conscience.

But Nancy!

Yes, he must lose Nancy, and the very thought of it made him groan in agony; but he must sacrifice his love rather than his Lord.

He heard his mother come in, and, although he dreaded her coming, he steeled his heart to tell her the truth.

She, too, was full of war news; it had been the common talk at the houses where she had called.

“Bob,” she said; and her face was pale, her lips tremulous. “Bob, the thought of it is terrible; but you’ll have to go. It is your duty—your country needs you.”

She, too, had been fighting a hard battle. A battle between love for her only boy, fear for his safety, and what she believed her duty to her country. The struggle had been hard, but she had determined to make her sacrifice.

“No, I’m not going, mother.”

“What, you are going to allow those Germans to crush France and Belgium, and finally conquer and crush us, and never lift a hand in defence?”

Bob was silent.

“You can’t mean it, my dear. It’s like tearing my heartstrings out to let you go, but you must. I know; you are thinking of me; but I shall be all right. You must do your duty.”

“Would *he* have me go?” and Bob nodded towards his father’s picture.

“Your father was a Quaker,” she said.

“He was a Christian,” and Bob’s voice was very low. “That was why he hated war, and denounced it. That is why I am not going to fight.”

“Then every brave, true Englishman will despise you.”

“That’s nothing,” replied Bob; and his voice sounded as though he were weary.

“And what of Nancy?”

“Yes, what of her?”

“I know what she feels, I know that——”

“Mother,” Bob interrupted, “I can’t bear any more just now; and it’s no use talking, my mind’s made up.”

He left the room as he spoke, and soon after, left the house. He did not have any dinner that night, but spent hours tramping the wild moors at the back of the house. The next day he was in misery. Again and again he reviewed the situation, but he could not change. He could not offer himself to be a legalised murderer, for that was how his country’s call appealed to him. It was a battle between Calvary and Militarism, and he could not take the side of Militarism.

When he reached the house in the evening, after a long, lonely walk, his

mother pointed to a letter lying on the table.

“It’s from Admiral Tresize,” he said, after he had read it. “He wants me to go up there to dinner, or as soon afterwards as possible.”

“You’ll go, of course,” said the mother eagerly.

“Yes, I’ll go. Of course it is too late for me to get there in time for dinner, but I’ll go directly afterwards.”

“That’s right.”

An hour later Bob got out his car, and drove towards Penwennack, with a sad heart. He dreaded what he felt sure was coming, and his heart beat wildly with the hope that he might perhaps see Nancy, and make her understand.

CHAPTER VII

When Bob knocked at the door of the house, he realised that he was expected. Without delay the servant opened the door, and without question at once ushered him into the room which went by the name of "the library," though there was but little indication that the apartment was used as a storehouse for books. Nautical charts, globes, pictures of Dreadnoughts, and things appertaining to naval warfare practically filled up all the available space.

As Bob entered, he saw the Admiral seated at a table, with a map of Europe spread before him.

"Ah! Bob," cried the Admiral, "glad to see you. I hoped you would have come in for dinner, but I suppose you were busy. I wanted a chat with you, my boy."

The old man spoke with an obvious endeavour to retain his old friendly footing, but it was evident that he was anxious and somewhat nervous.

"This is a terrible business, my boy," he went on; "who would have thought it a month ago? I, who always believed that the Germans meant war, never imagined it would come upon us like this. But, by gad, they have found us ready this time! Never was the mobilisation of the Army and Navy managed with such speed; everything has gone like clockwork—just clockwork. Of course you know that Dick and George are gone?"

"I heard they were going," said Bob.

"Yes, the young rascals were just mad to go. Naturally I expected it of Dick, who had just finished his training at Sandhurst; but George was just as keen. I am proud of them too. Yes, my boy, I have lost one son in war, and God only knows what it meant to me; but I would rather lose these two as well, than that England should not play her part."

Bob was silent; he knew what the Admiral had in his mind, and what he was leading up to.

"I have been thinking a good deal about you, Bob," went on the old man. "Of course you have been almost one of the family for years; your mother's people and mine have been friends for centuries. Ah! my lad, let the Radicals say what they will, but it's grand to come of a good family. You have to go a long way back in English history before you come to the time when the Trelawneys and Tresizes were not known. They have fought in a hundred battles for their country, and, thank God, their descendants are ready to do it again. It is a great thing to have a good name, eh, my boy?"

"Yes, sir," replied Bob.

"You told me some time ago that you were in the O.T.C. while you were at Clifton College, and Dick says that you quite distinguished yourself. I am very

glad of that; I have some influence in military quarters, although I am a naval man, and I can arrange for you to have your commission right away. Of course it will be in a Cornish regiment." He did not refer to the conversation which had passed between the young men two days before, although Bob felt sure he knew of it, but was assuming his enlistment as a matter of course.

"I have not made up my mind to join," said Bob.

"Not made up your mind to join! Then it is time you should. Every young fellow should join in these days. Of course it will break in upon your law studies and the other things you have in your mind, but, God willing, we shall get all this business over in a few months, and then you'll be able to come back to your work. You'll not suffer for it, my boy—you'll not suffer."

"It is not that at all, sir," replied the young fellow.

"What is it, then?"

"You knew my father, sir?"

"Knew him—of course I did! A good fellow and an honest man, but, you will excuse me for saying so, a crank."

Bob was silent; he did not dare let himself speak.

"Your father was a Quaker," went on the Admiral, "but your mother was a Trelawney. She told me only a few days ago that if war came, hard as it would be for her, she would not move a finger to keep you from going, even if it meant your going to your death. Come now, I will do all I can to push things forward for you."

"Thank you, sir," replied Bob, "but—but I have made up my mind that I can't."

"In heaven's name, why?"

"Admiral," said Bob, and his voice became tremulous, "do you think it right for a man to undertake anything which his conscience condemns?"

"No, of course not; what has that to do with it?"

"Everything, sir, to me. War is brutal and devilish, opposed to everything I have been taught to believe."

"Do you mean to say," cried the Admiral, "that you are not convinced of the righteousness of this war? Why, my lad, the thing is as plain as the nose on your face. Have you gone through the papers? Have you read the correspondence between the various ambassadors?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then do you not think that Germany has been planning this war for years, and that she has checked every movement for peace?"

"That is debatable, isn't it, sir?"

"Debatable? No! You are not such a fool as to believe that this war is on account of the Servian assassination? That is a mere flimsy pretext—one of the flimsiest ever known. I have read all about it to-day. Austria had practically

agreed to live at peace with Serbia, to allow Serbia to retain her independence. The trouble was, to all intents and purposes, patched up, and then Germany insisted on an impossible ultimatum. Austria would never have declared war on Serbia had not Germany given her orders to do so. Here is a letter written by Sir Maurice de Bunsen, on July 26. He states plainly that Germany wanted war, that she had schemes in Asia Minor which she wanted to carry out. She believed that by war with Serbia she would be able to accomplish her purposes. She believed that Russia would keep quiet during the time Austria worked her will, and as de Bunsen says, ‘Germany knew very well what she was about in backing up Austria-Hungary in this matter.’ ”

“Yes, sir, that is all very well, but that does not make war right. Personally, I find it easy to believe that Germany was the aggressor in this case; I believe, too, that Russia decided to stand by Serbia not for the sake of the Servians, but for her own interests; that does not justify her in dragging the whole of Europe into war.”

“Yes, but are you mad, my boy? The Servian business was only the beginning of it. Of course, when Russia prepared to protect Serbia, Germany, knowing that the war she had been trying to bring about must come some time, declared war on Russia. Then, without giving France a chance, she invaded Luxemburg and French territory; don’t you see?”

“I do not see how that makes war right, sir.”

“No, but when Germany invaded Belgium, broke all treaty rights, and Belgium asked us to protect her what were we to do?”

“Admiral,” said Bob, “I believe you pretend to be a Christian.”

“Yes, of course I do, but what has that to do with it?”

“Do you happen to believe in ‘The Sermon on the Mount’?”

“Good Lord, yes! Isn’t it our Lord’s own words?”

“Then I want to ask you how a man can reconcile the teaching of ‘The Sermon on the Mount’ with bloody warfare such as this is to be?”

The Admiral was nonplussed for a moment; he was a simple seaman, and not versed in the philosophy of ethics.

“Look here, my boy!” he cried passionately, “if I know anything about Christianity, it teaches a man to be honourable, truthful, and to keep his word. I would not give a fig for any Christian who did not keep his word. Well, we gave our word to Belgium. The Germans did so, too, but, like the brutes they are, they violated theirs, and when Belgium appealed to us, and asked us to keep our word, could we refuse? Could any Christian refuse? No, by gad, no!”

“But, Admiral, don’t you see that——”

“Look here, Bob, I want no more talking. Are you going to back out of your duty, or are you going to play the game like a man?”

“I am going to try to be true to my conscience, sir. As I told you, war to me is unchristian, devilish, and if I enlisted, I should, by so doing, become a paid

murderer.”

The Admiral rose to his feet, his eyes blazing. For a moment his temper had got the better of him, and, had he been able to speak, he would have hurled at Bob words for which he would have been sorry afterwards. Luckily, he could not. Presently he had gained command over himself.

“I do not think we had better say any more,” he said quietly. “I am sorry I have been mistaken in you; sorry that you should have accepted the hospitality of a Pagan home like this. Of course you are not renewing your visits here?”

“But, Admiral!” cried Bob, angry with himself for not weighing his words before uttering them. “I—I——”

“Excuse me,” said the old man, “it is no use saying any more. Good night.”

He did not offer to shake hands, but went to the bell push. A second later a servant appeared, to whom the Admiral nodded. Without hesitation the man opened the door and held it while Bob passed out, and then led the way to the front entrance. When he had gone, the Admiral threw himself into an arm-chair and heaved a deep sigh; it was like saying good-bye to his own son.

As Bob walked down the hall he felt as if an end had come to all his dreams, and that he was being turned out of the house which he had always looked upon as a kind of second home. Of course Nancy would be aware of the interview, and would learn the result. In bidding good-bye to the house, he was also bidding good-bye to her. The servant had his hand upon the door-knob when he heard the rustle of a woman’s dress, and Nancy, pale and eager-eyed, came from an adjoining room.

“Jenkins,” she said, “Mr. Nancarrow will not go yet; you need not wait.” The man left without a word, and Nancy led the way into the room where she had been sitting.

“I felt, perhaps, that I was not fair to you yesterday, and I thought I would give you another chance of—explaining yourself.” Her voice was hoarse and trembling—indeed it did not sound like Nancy’s voice at all.

“Oh, Nancy,” he said, “I was afraid I should not see you! Thank you for speaking.”

“Father told me he had written you,” she went on. “I—I hope everything is arranged all right. Bob, do you mean what you said? Do you mean that you are going to play the coward?”

“I am doing the hardest thing I ever did in my life,” he blurted out.

“In taking a coward’s part?”

“Call it that if you like,” was his reply.

They were alone by this time, and the door closed behind them.

“I am trying to be calm,” said Nancy. “You know all we had hoped and planned, but—but I don’t want to be foolish; there must be deeper reasons than those you mentioned the other day. I do not think you can have realised the

circumstances. Since you left, I have done nothing but read—and try to understand. I have been very ignorant about such matters, and I thought, perhaps, my ignorance kept me from understanding you. I have read all the papers which father has been able to obtain, all the miserable story which led up to this war. Have you?”

“Yes,” said Bob; “all!”

“Then surely you do not hold to what you said?”

“I am afraid I do.”

“Then perhaps you will explain.”

“That is what I want to do,” cried Bob. “Oh, Nancy, you don’t know what I have been through since I left you!—you don’t know how I have longed to enlist, longed to take part in the fray—but—there it is. Look here, Nancy, I was never one to talk much about these things, but you knew my father, knew that he was a Quaker, a Christian, in a very real sense of the word. When he died, my mother and others told me they hoped I should be worthy of him, and—I have tried to be. It is difficult to talk about such matters, Nancy, and I am not one of those fellows who parade their piety and that sort of thing. I would not say what I am going to now, but for the circumstances. I have tried to understand what Christianity means. I have read the New Testament, especially the Gospels, again and again. I have tried to realise what Jesus Christ said, what He lived for, what He died for, and I think I have tried to follow him. No, I am not namby-pamby, and this is not empty talk. I expect there are hundreds of young fellows who never talk about religion, but who are trying, honestly and squarely, to live Christian lives. Anyhow, that is what I have tried to do. When this war seemed to be inevitable, I went into the whole business. I read everything I could,—newspapers, state papers, correspondence between the ambassadors, and all that kind of thing. You see, I felt what was coming; and, Nancy, I simply cannot square Christianity with war. Either Jesus Christ was mistaken, and Christianity is an empty dream; or war is wrong—wrong under any circumstances. It is hellish, and I can’t stand for it—I can’t!”

The girl looked at him with wide open eyes, and her lips trembled, but she did not speak.

“Yes,” he went on, “I know what it means. I shall be boycotted, sneered at, called a coward, and all that; but that is nothing, is it? What is much more terrible to me is the fact that I shall—that I shall lose you! You drove me away the other day, Nancy. You did not mean it, did you? You would not have me go against my conscience?”

“Conscience!” there was a world of scorn in her voice. She seemed to be hesitating whether she should not open the door and tell him to leave the house. Perhaps there was something in the tone of his voice, in the expression of his eyes, which kept her from doing this. “Perhaps you have not thought of the other side,”

she tried to say calmly. "Have you ever thought what it would mean if Germany conquered England—Germany with her militarism and her savagery? Have you thought how she would treat us, what would become of us, and all that we hold most dear?"

"Yes, I have thought of that."

"And would it not be right, if, to save our country, and all our country stands for, if need be, to deluge Europe in blood? Oh, Bob, can't you see?"

"It is never right to do wrong," said Bob. "Is it right to tell a lie that truth may come? Is it right to tell a lie to save any one from pain? Is it right to commit murder to save some one from an even greater calamity? That's nothing but the old Jesuit doctrine of the end justifying the means. But, Nancy, don't let's talk anything more about it. I am tired, weary of it! You love me, I love you. Can't you let me live my own life, carry out the projects I have in my mind, and trust to Providence?"

"What right have we to trust in Providence," asked the girl passionately, "when we stand by and do nothing? Suppose at the end of this war we come off victorious, I suppose that you, who have never lifted your finger to save your country, will think it your right to enter into the benefits which others have won for you? That is your idea of Christianity, I suppose?"

"But war cannot be right."

"I don't know about war in the abstract," cried the girl, "but I do know that this war is. I am not a sophist, and I can't put into words what is in my mind. I am only an ordinary girl; but, Bob"—she raised her voice as she spoke—"if you can stand by while your country is in danger, if you can turn a deaf ear to her call, if you refuse to help, and go on working at your law books while other young men are fighting for their country's honour and safety, then—then—don't you see? We live in different worlds, we breathe different air, and—there is an end to everything."

"Have we tried to understand the German position?" said Bob. "Germany is a Christian country as much as England is; the German people are what Thomas Carlyle calls them, a brave, quiet, patient people. Are we right in attributing evil motives to them?"

"But do you not believe," cried Nancy, "that the Emperor and his ministers planned all this?—that they depended upon the neutrality of England, thinking we would stand by and see a little nation crushed? Everything proves that their object and desire is to crush England, and to dominate the world. You say you have read all about it. Surely you do not believe that Germany is going to war to crush Servia because of the assassination of an Austrian prince? You do not believe in that flimsy pretext?"

"No," said Bob, "I can't say I do."

"And have you thought of this?" said the girl. "When this war was declared, it

was not at the time the Crown Prince was assassinated, but when things seemed to be favourable to the Kaiser's plans of aggression. Any one can see how everything fits in. A speech had been made in the French Senate about the unreadiness of that country for war, and then when the President and Foreign Secretary of the French Republic were staying in Russia and could not get back for days, Germany hurled out her ultimatum. War was declared at a time, too, when Russia was believed to be confronted with revolutionary strikes, and was almost bled to death by her war with Japan. It was declared at a time when England was believed to be on the eve of civil war on account of her Irish troubles, and when it seemed that she must, of necessity, remain neutral. Can't you see the fiendishness of the plot? The Kaiser and his creatures thought the time had come when they could begin the war for which they had been preparing."

"Is not that a pure hypothesis?" exclaimed Bob; nevertheless, he was struck with the girl's evident knowledge of affairs.

"Hypothesis!" cried the girl. "Are you mad, Bob? Isn't everything plain? What sense of honour has Germany shown? What desire for peace? She had her plans ready, and she determined to carry them out at whatever cost. To little Luxemburg she promised protection, and yet without even saying 'by your leave,' invaded Luxemburg. Belgium, also, was protected by treaty. Germany, as well as other countries, had plighted her word that Belgium's neutrality and integrity should be respected; yet she sent that infamous ultimatum to Belgium that if the German troops were not allowed to march through the country without opposition, she would be treated as an enemy. Can you think of anything more dishonourable? Why," and Nancy's voice trembled with pain, "I was just mad when I read it in the newspapers, and when afterwards dad showed me the official reports about it, I could scarcely contain myself. The Chancellor of Germany said, 'Yes, we know we have done wrong; we have broken our word to Luxemburg, and violated the treaty we signed; but necessity knows no law. It was a part of our plan to do it, and we did it. We know we signed a treaty that Belgium's neutrality and integrity should be maintained, but you see it did not suit our plans to keep our word, so we broke it. We will make it up to the Belgians afterwards, if they will do what we tell them; but if they will not, we will crush them.' What is honour to a country like that? Can't you see that all along Germany intended to dominate Europe, and because she thought the present time propitious, she was willing to cover herself with dishonour in order to do the thing she wanted?"

"Is there not another side to that?" interjected Bob.

"Another side? How can there be another side? When our Ambassador met the German Chancellor, what took place? The Chancellor had the audacity to make what our Prime Minister called an 'infamous proposal.' He suggested that we should break our word to Belgium, and remain neutral so that Germany could crush France. Then when our Ambassador asked, as any gentleman would ask,

‘But what about the treaty we signed?’ he replied, ‘What is a treaty? A thing to be broken! A scrap of paper! Will you go to war for that?’ ”

“But consider what war means!” cried Bob. “Does it follow that because the Germans are willing to plunge Europe into war, we should do likewise? Does anything, *anything*, justify the violation of every law, human and divine?”

“Bob, do please just call to mind what that horrible German, who had not even the first instincts of a gentleman, said, ‘Have you counted the cost, and still stand by your honour and plighted word?’ As if an English gentleman could ever count the cost when his plighted word was given!”

“Yes,” said Bob, “but any statesman ought to count the cost. Think of what it will all mean, Nancy; think of all the hatred, the feelings of devilish revenge, the mad passions that will be roused; think of countries lying waste, think of the whole spirit of war, of the untold misery and horror of it all, and then ask if anything justifies war. I know you have a strong case, but two wrongs cannot make a right. Suppose a man broke his word to me, outraged my feelings, did me great wrong; would that justify my driving a knife into his heart? I should be called a murderer if I did it, and be hanged for my deed. Besides, to come back to where we were just now, Nancy, how could I pretend to be a Christian, if I enlisted, and went to the war for the purpose of killing my fellow-men? Christ said, ‘Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. If a man smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other.’ Oh, Nancy, can’t you see how utterly opposed Christianity is to the whole ghastly thing? Here is the German Emperor saying to his soldiers, ‘Go to church and pray—we are fighting God’s battle.’ Here are our clergymen saying to our people, ‘Go to church and pray—we are fighting God’s battle.’ How can God answer both our prayers? They believe they are in the right, we believe we are in the right, and so to uphold what we both believe to be right we engage in this hellish business.”

“And that is your explanation,” she said.

“Yes, Nancy; I cannot, I simply cannot be a soldier and a Christian at the same time. But you will not let this come between us, will you? I am trying to be true to my conscience, to act in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, and I cannot reconcile Christianity with war.”

“Do you believe that we shall win in this fight?” and the girl’s voice became hard as she asked the question.

“Yes,” said Bob. “Yes, I believe we shall in the end. After rivers of blood have been shed, after horrors worse than can be described have been realised, after tens and tens of thousands of men have been killed, after a whole continent has been desolated, I believe we shall win. We shall be stronger than the Germans because we have such vast numbers of men in reserve; yes, I expect that in the long run we shall be able to dictate terms of peace; yes, I expect that.”

“But you believe that no war can be justified?”

Bob shook his head.

“Think,” said the girl, “think of the sixteenth century, when Philip of Spain made such great preparations to conquer and subdue England. If he had succeeded, our religion would have been destroyed, our homes taken away from us, our liberty torn from us, our existence as a nation would have been practically wiped out. Do you believe God meant Drake and Hawkins and the rest of them to sit down quietly while the Spaniards invaded our land and destroyed our liberties? Do you believe that?”

Bob was silent.

“No, you do not believe it. You know that had Philip II succeeded there would be no England to-day such as we know. Well, now it comes to this: A greater and a more terrible power than Spain seeks to crush us; but our men, thank God, have not ceased to be Englishmen, and they will safeguard our liberties, and keep for us still the England we love. When the war is over, and all danger is gone, I suppose that you, who stand idly by, and talk about the ethics of war, will think it your right to enjoy the liberties which these brave fellows suffer and die to give you. Is that it?”

“Nancy, that’s not fair.”

“I want to be fair. Tell me, is that your attitude? It is un-English, and it is cowardly. Is it yours?”

“I will not try to answer you, Nancy—I should be sorry afterwards, perhaps; but—but—Nancy, is everything over between us?”

“That’s for you to say.”

“For me?”

“Yes, you. You have your choice. I—I had nearly overcome dad’s—objections to you.”

“But, Nancy, do you mean to say that——”

“I can never marry a man who shrinks from his duty at such a time as this? Yes, I mean that.”

“Nancy, you make it a choice between you and my conscience.”

For a few seconds she looked at him without speaking. Her lips were quivering, and her hands were trembling. It was easy to see that she was greatly wrought upon.

“No, that is not the choice,” she said, and her voice had a hard ring in it.

“What is it, then?”

“A choice between me and cowardice.”

He staggered as if some one had struck him. “Do you mean that?” he asked hoarsely.

“Yes, I mean that.”

Without speaking another word, he staggered blindly out of the house. Nancy

heard him close the front door behind him, and then, throwing herself into a chair, sobbed as though her heart would break.

CHAPTER VIII

For the next few days St. Ia was completely under the influence of the war fever. Although we have only about three thousand inhabitants, three hundred of our men belonging to the Naval Reserve left in one day, while many who were away in their fishing-boats were expected to join their vessels as soon as they could return home. Young territorials left the neighbourhood by the score, and many a lad who had previously been laughed at, when wearing his uniform, was looked upon as a kind of hero, and everywhere one turned, the only subject of conversation was the war.

Each morning at eight o'clock, the time at which our newspapers usually arrive, there was such a rush for the train, in order to obtain early copies, as I had never seen before; and presently, when the news came that an army consisting of one hundred thousand men had landed on French soil without even a hitch or casualty, we cheered wildly. Evidently our War-office machinery was in good order, and our soldiers, perhaps the best armed and equipped that ever left our shores, would, we were sure, give a good account of themselves.

Among the older and more staid people the inwardness of the situation was more and more realised. It seemed so strange that the German nation, which a few weeks before was looked upon as a nation of friends, was now spoken of as "the enemy." We held our breaths when we read of the bombardment of Liége, and cheered wildly at the thought of the brave Belgian army holding the forts against the opposing forces, and driving back the hordes of Huns with such valour. "How long will the English take to get there?" we asked again and again. "When shall we come to close grips with them?" Many a mother grew pale as she thought of her boy in the line of battle.

Presently news came of the fall of Liége and the victorious march of the Germans towards Brussels. The terror of the whole thing got hold of us, as we thought of the unfortified capital being seized by the advancing hosts of a great military Power. We troubled very little about French successes or losses in Alsace and Lorraine. We knew that the French, true to their characters, had yielded to sentiment rather than to strategy in making what seemed to us a foolish attempt to win back these provinces. Of course it was only forty-four years ago that they had been taken from them by their conquerors in the Franco-German war. We knew too that, ever since, they had been longing for revenge, longing to win back what they felt to be part of their own country. Naturally we sympathised with the French in this, and tears came to our eyes, and sobs to our throats, when we read how old Frenchmen who had been through the Franco-German war, welcomed the soldiers with wild and tumultuous joy. Nevertheless we knew that victory could

not be won by sentiment, and that if the carefully trained German soldiers were to be driven back, there must be strategy on our side equal to theirs, and that the armies must be led, not only courageously, but intelligently. Thus, although we had no proof of the rumour, we rejoiced when we heard that Lord Kitchener had gone to Paris, and by his wise counsels and tremendous personality had altered the whole course of the campaign.

“He’s the man!” one would say to another; “he’s like the Iron Duke in Boney’s time. Nerves like steel, a mind like a razor, and the heart of a lion.”

Nevertheless day by day our hearts grew heavier and heavier as we read of the steady German advance towards Paris. “If the capital is taken,” men said, “Isn’t everything done for?” and then we weighed the pros and cons with all the wisdom of a rustic population.

Another thing added to our discomfort. The lads of Cornwall were not responding as we thought they should, to the call of their country. From all parts of England young men were coming forward, and London was enlisting volunteers at the rate of a thousand a day. Yorkshire and Lancashire proved their devotion and their loyalty. Devon, too, our sister county, more than maintained her traditions. We read how in one little village where only thirty young men lived, twenty-five of them had volunteered. “It is because our boys don’t understand, don’t realise what we are fighting for,” said one to another; and then we heard with delight that Admiral Tresize and the Member of Parliament for St. Ila were arranging for a public meeting, at which truth should be made known.

During this time Bob Nancarrow was much alone. He seldom left the house, neither was he to be seen in any of his old favourite haunts. No one followed the fortunes of the war more closely than he. With almost feverish eagerness he read every item of news, although, by his own decision, he was an outsider. He was torn by two opposing forces. One was the love of his country and his own people, and the other was the voice of his conscience. He thought, when he happened to go into the little town, that people nudged each other significantly as he passed, and made unflattering remarks about him. As a matter of fact, however, no such thing happened. True, there were some who wondered why he remained at home, while all his schoolfellows and friends had volunteered; but many more remembered that he was the son of Dr. Nancarrow, a man who, to the time of his death, was an apostle of peace. Of course the inner circle of his acquaintances knew the truth, but they only talked of it among their own set, and thus Bob’s fears were groundless.

One day he was attracted by a large placard which appeared on all the public hoardings headed by the Royal Coat of Arms: “‘Your King and Country Need You!’ A great meeting will be held in the Public Hall on Thursday night in order to explain why this war has taken place, and why it is the duty of every man to help.” It announced also that Admiral Tresize was to take the chair, while, in

addition to the local Member, the meeting was to be addressed by Captain Trevanion, who was coming down from Plymouth for this purpose, just before leaving for the front.

“Of course I shan’t go,” said Bob to himself. “I know the reasons for the war, and I should be in utter misery if I went.” Nevertheless he found himself making plans for going.

For several days Mrs. Nancarrow had been cold and uncommunicative, and he knew that a cloud of reserve hung between them. He felt that his mother despised him. He felt sure, too, that she knew all that had taken place at Penwennack—that he was henceforth to be treated, in what he had regarded as his second home, as worse than a stranger.

“There is to be a great meeting at the Public Hall to-night,” said Mrs. Nancarrow, on the day of the meeting. “Are you going?”

Bob shook his head.

“There seems to be tremendous enthusiasm about Captain Trevanion’s coming down, although, of course, he is no speaker,” went on Mrs. Nancarrow. “But you see, the fact of his starting for the front in a day or so, makes him of special interest. I understand that Nancy Tresize is going away as a Red Cross nurse, almost at once.”

Bob’s heart fluttered wildly as he heard her name.

“Captain Trevanion stayed at Penwennack last night. Naturally the Admiral admires him more than ever. The Captain and Nancy motored to Land’s End yesterday afternoon.”

Her every word was like a sword thrust into the young fellow’s heart. He knew what she meant—knew too, that the Admiral had always favoured Trevanion as a suitor for his daughter. How could it be otherwise, when Trevanion was a man after the Admiral’s own heart? *He* had showed no hesitation about the right of defending his country; rather he had throughout been enthusiastic to a degree, while Bob had hung back. Mad jealousy filled his heart as he realised what might possibly be taking place. Even then, Nancy, in her scorn for the man whom she believed to have been unworthy of her love, might be listening to the pleadings of one who was worthy.

“I expect Nancy will be at the meeting,” went on Mrs. Nancarrow. “As you know, she goes almost everywhere with her father, and as the Admiral will take the chair, I expect she will be on the platform.”

Bob conjured up the scene. He fancied he saw Trevanion, in his uniform, speaking in a soldier-like fashion about the duty of defending his country, the crowd cheering wildly, while Nancy, carried away by her admiration of the man who accorded with her ideals of how an Englishman should act, would yield to the gallant soldier the love for which he would give his life.

That night, with a kind of savage love for self-torture, Bob made his way to

the Public Hall. He got there half an hour before the announced time, and found the place nearly full. All round the walls hung bunting, characteristic of the county. The Cornish Coat of Arms hung over the chairman's table, while the chorus of the old Cornish song:

And shall they scorn Tre, Pol, and Pen,
And shall Trelawney die?
Then twenty thousand Cornishmen
Will know the reason why.

was printed in large letters, and hung in a prominent place. At the back of the platform some one had written, "Cornwall has never failed her country yet. Shall she be unworthy of the names of Trelawney, Killigrew, Boscawen, Carew, Tresize, and Trevanion? Never!"

To Bob's chagrin he was led to a seat close to the platform. Evidently the man who took him there, wanted him, as the son of one who had been, perhaps, the most respected man in the town, to have a place of honour.

In a few minutes the audience was singing patriotic songs. It was true that there was something jingoistic about them, nevertheless Bob's heart thrilled. Perhaps there are no people in the whole country whose voices are sweeter than those of the dwellers in our most Western county. His heart caught fire as he listened. Yes, there was something in fighting for home and fatherland, something sublime in dying for a noble cause. Then again the horror of war, the brutal butchery, the senseless hatred, the welter of blood, the blighted lives and homes, arose before him. He knew that the meeting would have no message for him.

Precisely at the time announced the speakers appeared on the platform amidst a tumult of shouting, and then Bob's heart gave a great leap, for he saw that Nancy Tresize, with several other ladies, followed the old Admiral. In spite of himself his eyes were drawn towards her as if by a magnet. He tried to look away from her, but could not, and then, when he least expected it, her gaze caught his. It was only for a second, but that second plunged him into the deepest darkness. He saw the flush that mounted to her cheeks, the smile of derision that passed her lips, and the look of scorn and contempt that expressed itself on her face. He knew then what Nancy felt about him, and that he had lost her—lost her for ever.

I am not going to try to describe the speeches at length—there is no need. The Admiral spoke in a bluff, hearty way about the causes which led up to the war, and then told of the part which the county had always played, and of her great names which had gone down to history. Spoke, too, of the need of men at the present time, and then made his appeal.

After him came the Member for St. Ia. He evidently tried to speak as a statesman on the question. He was listened to respectfully, but without enthusiasm. He was little fitted to explain the intricacies of international politics.

Bob felt, during the whole time he was speaking, that he did not know the A.B.C. of his subject, felt that if he had been in his place he would have made a far stronger case for the country and the cause.

Then some one got up and recited some doggerel by a London journalist which was said to be very popular in various parts of the country, but which did not appeal to our Cornish boys at all.

Up to this point the meeting could not be pronounced a success. Crowds were there, and the people were waiting to be caught on fire; but the right spark had not been struck. It only wanted a little to rouse the whole audience to white heat; the train was laid, the powder was set, but no one seemed able to ignite the match. People looked at one another doubtfully. The youths who had been expected to enlist remained cold and almost jeeringly critical. Then the Admiral called for Captain Trevanion.

A feeling of envy came into Bob's heart as the Captain rose. He was wearing his regimentals and looked a soldier, every inch of him; tall, stalwart, straight as a rule. Young and handsome, he bore proudly a name which might be found in the remotest history of his county.

"I am no speaker," he began, "and never pretend to speak; in fact, this is almost the first time that I have tried to address a meeting. I am a soldier; I start in a few days for the front, and I have only come to tell you why I am going."

There was evidence of sincerity in his words, and they were spoken in such a hearty and convincing way that they appealed to every one present. Bob felt it more than any one else. Yes, he envied him. Oh, if he could only take his place! If he could say, "I am going to the front in a few days!"

"I have been working hard, these last weeks," went on Trevanion; "drilling, drilling; training, training; preparing for the fray, and waiting and longing to, hear the command, 'Up, lads, and at them!' Thank heaven the command has at last come!"

His voice rang out clearly, and as he spoke a new light came into the eyes of many.

"And why am I going?" he cried. "Why are tens of thousands of the brave lads from all over the Empire going to France at this time? I'll tell you!"

He was not eloquent. He had no great command of language, but he stirred the hearts of the people, because he told a simple story, which, while from the standpoint of the cold critic it might appear unconvincing, was, when listened to by patriotic Englishmen, full of appeal and power.

He drew two pictures, and although he did it crudely he did it well. He described first a meeting of Cabinet Ministers in Whitehall. These men had for a long time been labouring night and day for peace, and now the final stage had come. They had sent what was in some senses an ultimatum to Germany, and they were now waiting for the answer. War and peace hung in the balance. The time

was approaching midnight, and the hour when the final decision was to be made was near at hand. The question they had asked Germany was this: "Will you keep your word to Belgium, or will you violate the treaty you have signed?"

"The Belgians," said Trevanion, "had the promise of the Kaiser to maintain their country's neutrality and integrity. Was that promise to be trusted, or was it a sham and a lie? 'We Britons gave our word,' our statesmen had said, 'and, like Britons, we are going to keep it. What are you going to do? If you prove false, we are going to stand by our promise, if it cost us our last man and our last pound.'

"Presently the sound of Big Ben at Westminster boomed across the city. The Germans had not replied. This meant that the Kaiser had played the traitor, that he had torn up the treaty he had signed; and thus when the last stroke of Big Ben sounded across London, the four statesmen looked at each other, and said, 'This means war.' Could they have done any other?" cried the Captain—"could they? No!"

From the hall, rose the many-throated reply, "No, by God, no!"

"Now for another picture," he went on. "It is not in London, not in Whitehall this time; it is in Germany, at Berlin. Our Ambassador there, was speaking to a representative of the German Kaiser, the mouthpiece of the German nation. 'What will you do?' asked the German. 'Surely you English will be neutral?'

"'That depends,' said the Englishman.

"'On what?' queried the German.

"'It depends whether you Germans are going to be true to the treaty you have signed, true to your plighted word.'

"'And if not?' the German asked.

"'In that case,' replied the Englishman, 'we are not going to stand by and see a little state wronged and ruined, because a great nation like Germany, who should keep her word, is playing Belgium false.'

"'Treaty,' questioned the German, 'what is a treaty? Will you go to war with us for that—just for a scrap of paper?'

"'But that scrap of paper means our nation's honour,' the Englishman said.

"'Have you counted the cost?' asked the German, thinking to frighten the Englishman.

"'We English,' replied the British Ambassador, 'are not likely to go back on our word because of fear.'

"The German left him in a passion, and the Englishman said in his heart, 'It is war.'

"Would you have had him give another answer?"

And again a mighty shout from the hall, "No, by God, no!"

"Then do your duty—help us in the fight," cried the Captain. The right note was struck now, and it had been struck by Bob's rival. Oh, how he envied him! He saw that Nancy's eyes were ablaze with joy, that she was moved to the depth of

her being; and the man who had moved her to enthusiasm and admiration was the man who wanted the woman Bob loved, and whom he had lost.

“Can any Englishman,” went on Captain Trevanion, “stand by after that? If he can, what is he worth? Of course he will make paltry excuses, he will say this and that and the other thing, but what are his excuses worth? I have heard of young fellows, men who have been trained in our public schools, who stand by and refuse to help; what shall we say of them? And you young chaps, healthy, strong, unmarried, without home ties, what if you refuse to respond to the call of your country? I will tell you what I think of you: you are white-livered cowards.”

Again the audience cheered, and Captain Trevanion, fired by the enthusiasm he had roused, became almost eloquent. He knew he had the grip of his audience, and his words came more easily.

“I want to appeal to you girls,” he went on. “Your sweethearts are sitting by you: well, a fellow who is such a coward as to refuse to fight for his country isn’t worth having. Tell him so, shame him into being a man!” he cried, and his voice rang out, as though he were giving orders on parade.

“What shall we do?” shouted a voice in the hall.

“Make them feel what cowards they are. Here,” and he laughed as he spoke, “I have in a basket a lot of white feathers; I think they might be of use. Any of you girls who know men who are hanging back from cowardice, just give them a white feather, and never speak to them again until they have wiped away their disgrace.” He took up the basket and held it out. “There,” he said, “I have finished my speech: men and women do your duty!”

As he sat down the whole meeting was in a state of wild uproarious enthusiasm.

A few minutes later the hall began to empty itself, although a number of people remained behind to discuss the situation. An old retired sergeant of seventy years of age stayed with a number of young fellows who lingered behind, and as they stood near to Bob he could hear every word that was said.

“Come, you chaps,” said the sergeant, “aren’t you going to be men? aren’t you going to fight the Germans?”

“Why shud us?” they asked. “What ’ave we got ’gainst the Germans?”

“Would you like the Germans to conquer your country? would you like to have the Kaiser for a king?”

“Dunnaw: why shudden us?” replied one.

“Laive they that want to fight the Germans, fight ’em—we bean’t goin’ to,” said another. “Why shud we all git killed to please Members of Parliament?”

“I be sheamed ov ’ee,” cried an old man near; “you bean’t worthy to be called Englishmen.”

“Why bean’t us?”

“ ’Cos you be cowards. Wud ’ee like to be traited like they Germans be?”

“From oal accounts they be a darned sight better on than we be,” was the reply.

“Wot do ’ee main?”

“Why,” laughed a young fellow, “at the last general election one of the spaikers, I doan’ know who ’twas, but the one that talked Tariff Reform, zaid that the Germans was a lot better off than we be. He zaid that the Germans was fat, and that we was lean, and that the Germans had better times, shorter hours, and higher wages than we’ve got. Ef tha’s so, we’d be a lot better off under the Germans than we be now.”

“Bean’t ’ee Englishmen?” cried the old man. “Bean’t ’ee goin’ to fight and keep ’em from England?”

“I bean’t goin’ over there to git killed—not me. I know trick worth two of that”; and then shamefacedly the whole lot of them left the hall without enlisting.

Bob’s anger rose as he listened. “What mean cowards they are!” he said to himself; “I feel almost ashamed to be a Cornishman. Of course scores of our boys are playing the game like men, but these creatures make one sick.” A moment later his face became crimson with shame. Was he not doing the same? Yes; his reasons were different, and of course he could have made a better case for himself than they did, but was he not a shirker just as much as they were? Then all such thoughts were driven from his mind in a second, for down the platform steps, with the evident intention of passing into the hall, came Admiral Tresize, Captain Trevanion, and several ladies, among whom was Nancy. At first he felt as if he must rush out of the hall, but his feet seemed rooted, he could not move. Captain Trevanion and Nancy came towards him.

“Now then, Nancarrow, have you enlisted yet?” asked Trevanion. “You should, as an old O.T.C. man. I find that hosts of the fellows from Clifton College have enlisted. Aren’t you going to?”

Bob did not speak, he could not. He heard the sneer in the Captain’s voice, saw the look of contempt on his face, and he knew why he spoke. But he could not understand why Nancy stood waiting as if with the intention of speaking to him. He knew that he cut a poor figure compared with Trevanion, and that to Nancy he must seem a slacker, a wastrel. Still he could not speak nor move. He felt that the girl’s eyes were upon him, felt contempt in her every gesture, her every movement. She came up close to him.

“Aren’t you going to help to uphold your country’s honour?” she said, and her voice quivered with excitement. Evidently she was deeply moved.

He felt as if the room were whirling round. He thought he noted a sign of pleading in her voice, and that her eyes became softer. It seemed to him that she was giving him his last chance. He could not speak, he could only shake his head.

“Then allow me to present you with this,” she went on, and she held out a white feather. “I am sure you must be proud of it, and that you will wear it

honourably, especially at such a time as this.”

The insult pierced his heart like a poisoned arrow. He knew that her intention was to heap upon him the greatest ignominy of which she was capable. There were not many people in the room, but there were some who must have seen her action. As for Trevanion he turned away his head with a laugh.

“Come, Captain Trevanion,” said Nancy, “we must be going.” She took hold of his arm, and they walked out of the hall together.

Bob made a stride forward as if to follow them. He wanted to hurl defiance at them, wanted to tell her that her action was mean and contemptible, unworthy of an Englishwoman. Wanted to—God knows what he wanted. His brain was whirling, everything seemed to be mad confusion, but he only took one step; the uselessness of it all appealed to him. What could he do, what could he say? He had made his decision, taken his stand, and must be ready to suffer.

Then he remembered what Captain Trevanion had said at the close of the golf match:

“In this field of battle you have beaten me, but in the next I shall be the conqueror.”

“Yes,” said Bob, and he silently made his way home. “I have lost her. I have lost everything, but what could I do?”

CHAPTER IX

“Mother,” said Bob, on his return home, “I shall be leaving St. Ia to-morrow morning.”

“What! going away, Eh?” said Mrs. Nancarrow, looking at him searchingly. For days she had been hoping that he would see it his duty to offer himself to his country, and yet all the time dreading the thought of parting from him.

“Where are you going?”

“To Oxford,” he replied.

“Then you are not going to enlist?”

He shook his head. “I am going to Oxford,” he repeated.

“Bob, my dear, we have not seemed to understand each other just lately. I am afraid I spoke unkindly to you the other day, and as a consequence there has been a lack of trust. Won’t you tell me all about it?”

“There is nothing to tell, mother; I simply cannot do what you expect me to, that is all. You see I believe in what my father taught me,” and he looked towards the fireplace, over which hung Dr. Nancarrow’s picture. “Perhaps it is in my blood, perhaps—I don’t know; anyhow, I think my hand would shrivel up if I tried to sign my name as a soldier.”

“But you have a mother, Bob, a mother whose name was Trelawney, and the Trelawneys have never failed in time of need. Are you going to be the first to fail, Bob? Oh, please don’t think I do not dread the thought of your going to the front, and perhaps being killed; but I cannot bear the thought that my boy should shirk his duty to his country. Tell me, Bob, why do you want to play the coward?”

“Play the coward! Great God, mother! don’t you understand me? I simply long to go. It seems to me as though everything in life worth having depends on my doing what you and others want me to do. But how can I! I hate talking about it, it sounds so pharisaical, but my father wanted me to be a Christian, and you know what Christianity meant to him. As I have said again and again, it comes to this—either war is wrong and hellish, or Christianity is a fable. Both cannot be right. And if I went as a soldier I should have to renounce my Christianity—at least that is how it seems, to me. If I went to a recruiting station I should have to go there over Calvary; that is the whole trouble.”

Mrs. Nancarrow sighed.

“Think, mother,” went on Bob, and again he looked towards his father’s picture. “Do you believe he would have me go?”

“Why are you going to Oxford?” she asked.

“I want to see my father’s old friend Renthall.”

“And get strengthened in your Quaker opinions, I suppose?”

“I have heard nothing about them lately, at all events,” said Bob, and his voice became almost bitter. “It would seem as though we had accepted a new Gospel which has taken the place of the New Testament. Big guns are believed in rather than the Cross. But there is no use talking any more. Good night.”

The following morning Bob made his way to the little station at St. Ia in order to catch an early train for London. When he arrived there he saw that it was the scene of unusual excitement. A great crowd of people had gathered, many of whom evidently had no intention of travelling by train. A few minutes later he saw the reason for this. Admiral Tresize’s motor-car was driving up, containing not only the Admiral himself, but Captain Trevanion and Nancy. No sooner did the people see them, than there was a wild shout. Evidently the Captain, since the meeting, had become a kind of hero, and the fact that he was starting for the front added fresh lustre to his name.

“We’ll see you back again by Christmas,” some one shouted. “The Germans will be licked by that time, and you will be a Colonel at least. Oh, we don’t fear for you—you will be all right.”

“It was a fine speech you gave, Trevanion,” said another. “By George, that idea of giving a white feather to all the shirkers was just fine. I hear that the basket is nearly empty.”

“I am afraid I cannot claim the credit for that,” laughed the Captain.

“Who suggested it, then?”

“Oh, it was Miss Tresize here. She thinks it such a disgrace for any man to shirk at such a time as this, that she thought they should be shamed to some sense of decency and pluck.”

“Three cheers for Miss Tresize!” shouted some one, and a minute later, Nancy, half-angry and half-pleased, was blushing at the shouts of her friends.

Bob felt himself to be a complete outsider. He too was going by that train, but no one thought of cheering him—indeed, no one spoke to him. He was what the people called a shirker. He would have given anything he possessed to have gone up to Trevanion, and said, “I’ll go with you,” but he could not. If he did, he would have to uproot the Faith of a lifetime.

The Captain moved towards the carriage which was close to his own, Nancy accompanying him. Bob knew that the girl saw him, but he might not have existed as far as she was concerned. She spoke gaily, and her face was wreathed with smiles, but the smiles were not for him, they were for the man who was going to fight for his country.

The Admiral and the Captain also saw him, but neither spoke. They seemed to regard him as one who henceforth could not be one of themselves.

“A man must pay his price, I suppose,” reflected Bob. “If he does not shout with the crowd, he is despised by it. I knew that when I made up my mind, but I never thought it would be so hard. She thinks I am a coward—the cowardice

would lie in doing what she wants me to do.”

“Well, good-bye, Captain: a fine time to you; come back safe to us. You shall have a great homecoming,” shouted the Admiral. “There, another cheer, lads; he is going to fight for his country,” and amidst wild shouting Trevanion entered the carriage, while only looks of derision and scornful glances were directed towards Bob.

Arrived in London, Bob caught the first train for Oxford, and before it was dark entered that classic city. But it was not the Oxford he knew; an indescribable change had come over everything. When he had left it, the streets were full of undergraduates, who with merry jest and laughter had thronged the public places. The colleges then were all on the point of breaking up, and the students, wearing their short, absurd little gowns, made Oxford what it ordinarily is in term time. Now the streets were comparatively empty, many of the colleges had been taken by the Government in order to be made ready to receive wounded soldiers. There were no shouts of jubilation, for the news in the papers that day saddened the hearts of the people. The German army was steadily driving back the Allied forces towards Paris. Whispers were heard about the French Government’s being shifted to Bordeaux. It seemed as though Germany were going to repeat the victories of forty-four years before, when the great *débâcle* of the French nation startled Europe. Business was at a standstill. How could the city be gay when the English soldiers were being driven back with enormous losses?

“They called it a strategical retreat,” Bob heard some one say as he stood outside the door of The Mitre. “I do not believe in strategical retreats—it is not like the English to run away.”

“Ah! but General French is only carrying out his plans,” said another.

“Well then, they’re mighty poor plans,” was the response.

It seemed to Bob as though a cloud of gloom hung over this old university town.

His luggage having been taken to the hotel, he found his way into the dining-room, and the waiter, whom he had known for years, came up to him and spoke familiarly.

“Bad times, Mr. Nancarrow,” he said. “Oxford won’t be a university town now, it’ll be a barracks town. I suppose you have come up for training. Yes, hosts of the young gentlemen have. We shall send out one of the finest Companies in the British Army, from Oxford. It’s grand, sir, it’s grand, the way you young gentlemen come up at this time. After all, your learning is no good at a time like this; it do not save the country, sir. We want fighting chaps.”

Bob sat down at a little table and picked up the menu.

“Yes, sir,” went on the waiter. “It is splendid, the way the young gentlemen are coming up, and I say a man isn’t a man if he stays at home at a time like this. I wish I was ten years younger, I’d be off like a bird.”

“It’s the same everywhere,” reflected Bob, “wherever I go I seem to have poisoned arrows shot at me. I don’t care what this fellow thinks about me, and yet I am ashamed to tell him that I have not come up for training, at all.”

“By the way,” he said to the waiter in order to stop his garrulous talk, which was becoming painful to him, “will you ring up Dr. Renthall, and ask him if he can see me in about an hour’s time?”

A little later Bob was out in the streets again, on his way to Dr. Renthall’s house. It was a relief to him to feel that here, at least, was one man who would understand his position. After the experiences of the last two or three weeks the Professor’s study would be indeed a haven of rest.

Bob was not kept waiting at the door. The Professor’s old serving-man knew him well, and showed him into the study without any delay whatever.

“I am glad to see you, Nancarrow,” said the Professor. “Oxford has been a strange city to me these last few weeks; even here, in my den, I cannot get away from the strife and turmoil. Tell me what you have been doing, and how you have been getting on.”

“I have been like one in an enemy’s country,” was the young fellow’s reply, and then he briefly told him what had taken place.

“The thing that troubles me,” said the Professor, “is the utter failure of Christianity. All our old ideas seem to have gone by the board. Even many of my Quaker friends have got the war spirit and are no longer sane. It is true we have placards all over the town calling us to prayer, but as far as Christianity is concerned it seems as dead as Queen Anne.”

“Then what is your attitude?” asked Bob.

A few minutes later the Professor was explaining the beliefs which he had for long held so strongly, and Bob listened greedily. He spoke not only of the horror of war, but of its unrighteousness and of its futility.

“We talk about the country going into war for the sake of honour,” he said warmly. “But has there ever been a war in which we have not made the same plea, and how much honour has there been in it all? What honour was there in the Boer War? What honour has there been in half the wars we have made? In the main it has all been a miserable game of grab. How much was the Founder of Christianity considered when we bombarded Alexandria? How much of the Sermon on the Mount was considered when we went to war with those Boer farmers?”

“Yes, yes, I know,” replied Bob. “But isn’t this war different? I am not thinking now of the righteousness or unrighteousness of many of the wars of the past; the thing which troubles me is just this: Is it ever right to go to war? Can a nation, according to Christian principles, draw the sword? Mind you, I have gone into this business as carefully as I have been able. I have read everything that I can get hold of which bears on it, and I cannot close my eyes to the fact that as far as justice and righteousness go we are in the right. I have but little doubt that the

Kaiser is playing his own game; he wants some of the French Colonies, he also wants to extend his power in Asia Minor. In order to do this he has for years been perfecting his army and strengthening his navy. But here is the question: Can a nation like England, according to Christian principles, engage in a bloody war in order to crush any one or anything?"

"Impossible!" cried the Professor.

"Then, according to you," went on Bob, "the Kaiser should be allowed to work his will without protest? He should be allowed to crush France, to violate his promises to Belgium, and to carry out his purposes, whatever they may be, without resistance on our part."

"I do not say that," replied the Professor. "I only say that war is never a remedy, and that by trusting in the sword we only add wrong to wrong, and thus keep back the day of universal brotherhood. Think what this war has done, even although it has scarcely begun. It has destroyed the good work of centuries. A few months ago, we in England had only kind feelings towards the Germans. We regarded them as friends. We spoke of them as a great Protestant people. To-day, the bitterness and hatred of all England is roused against them. On every hand the Germans are being distrusted and abused. Think what this means? It has put back the clock of Christianity, it has aroused hatred instead of love, and the whole country is being carried off its feet by militarism. Even from the pulpit has gone forth the cry of battle. Militarism has overwhelmed Calvary, and Christ and all that He stood for have been swept away amidst the clash of arms."

"Yes," was Bob's reply. "But that does not seem to me to solve the present difficulty. My point is this: What ought one to do at the present time? Of course, it is easy to say that this war ought never to have begun. Easy to believe, too, that all wars mean hell let loose upon earth. We can urge that those old treaties ought never to have been signed, that alliances ought never to have been formed. But that does not help us forward. We have to face the situation as it is. We did sign the treaty and promise our support. There is an *Entente Cordiale* between us and France. On the other hand, there is very little doubt that Germany means to crush France. She means also to dominate the life of the world. War has been declared, Germany has marched across Luxemburg, through Belgium, into France. England, in response to the plea of Belgium, is fulfilling her promise, and scores of thousands of our soldiers are fighting on the side of the French. The cry is for more men. On every hand one is appealed to to join the Army. Now then, what ought one who is trying to be a Christian, to do?"

"There is only one thing to do, it seems to me," was Professor Renthall's reply. "That is for him to follow the leadings of his conscience and leave results to God. When Jesus Christ called His disciples, He made them no alluring promises; in accepting His call, they simply followed Him regardless of consequences. That, it seems to me, is the position to-day. We have nothing to do with this wild war

spirit. There are a few men in England, thank God, who protest against war, and it is for them to be true to the light that is within them, no matter what the result may be. Of course, we are told that if we do not crush Germany our liberties will be destroyed and our Empire taken from us. What have we to do with that? We believe in an over-ruling Providence. Believing that, and knowing that Christ is the Prince of Peace, we must absolutely refuse to meet force with force, bloodshed with bloodshed.”

Bob stayed a long time with the Professor, and when he left he was more than ever convinced that he had done right. A Christian could not participate in this war, and still be true to his Christianity.

In spite of this, however, there was something at the back of his mind which told him that the Professor was not right. He could not tell what it was; nevertheless, it was there.

It was eleven o'clock when he left Dr. Renthall's house, and then, instead of going back to his hotel, he wandered away in the opposite direction towards the country.

Heedless of time, and forgetful of everything in the maze of his own thoughts, he went farther than he had intended, and presently, when he heard the sound of a clock striking midnight, he realised that he was staying at an hotel, and ought to have been back long since.

No sooner had he turned, however, than he was startled by a cry of fear and pain. It was the cry of a woman's voice too, and, acting upon the impulse of the moment, he rushed to the spot whence the sound came.

Near by was a little village, every house of which was in darkness. At first he could see nothing, then he heard the sound of struggling coming from a lonely lane close by the village.

“Give it me, I say, or I'll murder you.”

It was a man's voice, raucous and brutal.

“No, no, you may kill me if you like, but I won't,” a woman's voice replied.

Bob saw the man lift his hand to strike her, but before it fell he had rushed upon him, and hurled him aside.

“Who are you, and what do yer want?” cried the fellow, interlarding his question with foul epithets.

“No matter who I am, or what I want,” replied Bob. “Leave that woman alone.”

The man eyed Bob for a moment, stealthily, and then without warning rushed upon him.

A minute later the two men were struggling wildly. The man was strongly but clumsily built, and lacked the agility and muscular force of the young athlete. But Bob's victory did not come easily. Again and again the fellow renewed his attack, while the woman stood by with a look of terror in her eyes.

“Save me,” she cried, again and again, “or he will kill me.”

At length, by a well-planted blow, Bob sent his opponent staggering to the ground. The man was stunned for a second, but only for a second. He raised himself to his feet slowly.

“All right, gov’ner, you have beaten me,” he said. “It wasn’t my fault; if she weren’t so b—— obstinate, there would have been no trouble.”

Then evidently hearing some one near by, he shouted aloud: “I say, Bill, come here;” and Bob realised that a new danger was at hand.

“Wait a minute, gov’ner,” said the fellow, “I just want to ask your advice.” But Bob was too alert to be caught in this way. Believing that there must be a police station in the village, he, too, shouted aloud.

“Help!—help!”

A minute later he found his position doubly dangerous. The one man he, after a severe struggle, had been able to overcome, but he knew that he would be no match for the two, and that the woman would be at their mercy.

“Get away while you can,” he said to her; but the woman did not appear to heed him—she seemed spellbound by what was taking place.

Both men rushed on him madly, and only by a trick which he had learned as a boy did he save himself. Tripping one of them up, he was able at the same time to parry the other’s blow, and keep him at bay.

His position, however, was desperate, for the second man had again risen to his feet, and prepared for another attack.

Then suddenly it was all over, the heavy thud of a policeman’s truncheon was heard, and a few minutes later, with Bob’s help, the two men were led away to the police station.

“Lucky for you I was near by, sir,” said the constable.

“Lucky for the poor woman too,” was Bob’s rejoinder.

“I’ve had my eye on these two blackguards for a day or two,” replied the policeman. “They are a bad lot, and I do not think the woman is much better than they are. Tell me exactly what happened, sir?”

The policeman nodded his head sagely when Bob had finished his story.

“Yes, sir,” he said, “you have done a good night’s work. I am afraid I shall have to take your name and address, because you will be called upon as witness against them. You have helped me to put my hand upon a nice little plot, and if these fellows don’t get six months, I am very much mistaken.”

When Bob got back to his hotel that night, and was able to think calmly of what had taken place, he was considerably perturbed.

Of course the incident in itself was sordid enough. The woman was supposed to be the wife of one of these men, and Bob by his intervention had hindered what might have been a brutal tragedy.

But that wasn’t all. The thing was a commentary on his conversation with Dr.

Renthall.

Two days later Bob appeared at the police court against these men, and heard with satisfaction the Magistrates sentence them both to severe punishment.

There is no need for me to tell the whole story here, a story of cruelty and theft. The fellows received less than their due in the sentence that was pronounced, and Bob felt that he had freed society, for some time at all events, of two dangerous characters.

The local papers made quite a feature of the case and spoke with great warmth of Bob's courage, and the benefit he had rendered the community.

"I say, Nancarrow," said Dr. Renthall, when next they met, "they are making quite a hero of you. I must congratulate you."

"On what?" asked Bob.

"On the part you played in that affair."

"I am all at sea," was the young man's rejoinder. "It seems to me that according to Christian principles I should have done nothing. If I had literally interpreted the dictum: 'If a man strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,' I should have allowed the fellow to work his will without opposition. But you see, I could not stand by and see that fellow ill-treat the woman. That was why, before I knew what I was about, I was fighting for life. Do you think I did right?"

"I see what you are driving at," replied the Professor, "and I admit you were in a difficult position."

"You said the other night," said Bob, "that force was no remedy. Perhaps it is not a remedy, but it seems to me necessary. After all, if you come to think about it, the well-being of the community rests upon force. But for force that brute would perhaps have killed the woman. But for force the two fellows would have killed me, but it so happened that the police came up and saved me, and a policeman represents force, both moral and physical. No, force may not be a remedy, but without it, while society is as it is, everything would be chaos and mad confusion."

"You are thinking about the war, I suppose," said Dr. Renthall.

"One can scarcely think about anything else," replied Bob. "I am all at sea, Professor—simply all at sea. Oh! I confess it frankly—I admit that I acted on impulse the other night. My one thought was to master that fellow, and if I had been driven to extremes, I should have stopped at nothing, to keep him from harming the woman. For the moment there was no thought of love, no thought of brotherly feeling in my heart, I simply yielded to the impulse of my nature. The man threatened to kill his wife, and if I had not defended her I should have been unworthy to be called a man. How does that square with Christianity? Was I wrong?"

"I think you were right," said the Professor slowly. "Yes, I am sure you were."

“Then, if I were right,” replied Bob, “and Germany is acting in the same spirit as that fellow was acting, is not England right in going to war? We promised to defend the Belgians, and Germany with brutal arrogance swept into their country.”

“Yes,” replied Renthall; “but would it not have been better for Belgium to have acted on the spirit of non-resistance? If they had, Liège would never have been bombarded. All the atrocities at Louvain would never have been heard of.”

“You mean, then,” said Bob, “that they should have allowed a bully like Germany to have swept through their country, without resistance, in order that they might crush France? Don’t you see? If it were right for me to defend the woman against a brute; if I were right in knocking down that fellow; if the police were right in taking them both to the police station; if the Magistrates were right in sending them to prison; was not England right in attacking Germany? Nay, was she not acting in a Christian spirit in saying: ‘This bully shall be crushed.’ ”

“Have you read the papers to-day?” asked the Professor.

“Yes.”

“Did you come across that account of the correspondent who described what he had seen on the stricken field? Did you get at the inwardness of it all? You are a fellow with imagination, Nancarrow; didn’t you feel a ghastly terror of war?”

“Yes,” replied Bob, “but that does not clear up the question. Meanwhile, Germany is marching towards Paris and Lord Kitchener is calling for more men. What ought I to do?”

“Read your New Testament,” said the Professor, “remember the words of our Lord just before He was crucified, ‘My Kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight.’ ”

“Yes,” cried Bob, “but——”

“I really cannot stay any longer now,” interrupted the Professor, and he slipped away, leaving Bob alone.

CHAPTER X

The next day Bob was in London. He had engaged chambers in the Temple in order to prepare for his examinations. In spite of what he had said to Professor Renthall, his old opinions remained unshaken. It might be right, it undoubtedly was right, to defend the weak against brutal strength in the way he had done, but war between nations was different. He simply could not participate in it.

He had been stigmatised as a coward, and as a traitor to his country, but still he must be true to his conscience.

Law and order were different from the arbitrament of the sword. War was a violation of all that was best and noblest in humanity, and he must walk along the lines he had marked out.

Still he could not get away from the spirit of the times. The one subject talked about in restaurants, in clubs, in offices, and in the streets was this bloody carnage which was convulsing Europe. Almost every vehicle that passed was placarded with a call to war. Every newspaper he opened was full of news of the war. Even the religious papers seemed to have forgotten that the Gospel of Christ was the Gospel of Peace.

It was true that here and there were letters from correspondents protesting against the whole horrible business, but these were in the main, at a discount.

After he had been in London a few days, he happened to get hold of a German newspaper, and there he read the German side of the question. This newspaper pleaded that the Kaiser never wanted war. That he had struggled against war, and that during the whole of his reign, war had been kept at arm's length. If the Kaiser loved war, the paper urged, the country would not have remained at peace so long, seeing that never since 1870 had Germany drawn the sword. Now that war was forced upon them, the people were only doing what they were obliged to do.

One evening he dined at a small hotel, and, having found his way to the smoke-room after dinner, he met a man from Cornwall with whom he was slightly acquainted.

They talked about other things at first, but were eventually led to the one subject of the times.

"Do you know," said the man from Cornwall, Richards by name, "that I heard a strange story the other day?"

"What story?"

"A man with whom I am acquainted, a financier from Alsace, told me that he, with two other bankers, were some weeks ago dining with the Kaiser; and the Kaiser spoke to them about the mission of Germany. He said that a great part of Europe was paralysed by materialism, that immorality had eaten out the best life

of France, and was fast finding its way into the vitals of England. That Germany was called by God to purify Europe, and that he who was anointed by God to reign over Germany, felt it his duty to fight against this scourge of materialism and immorality. In no other way could Europe be saved from infidelity and ruin, and that he, the Kaiser, was raised up as a scourge of God. That just as Jesus Christ drove the hucksters and money-lenders out of the Temple when He was on earth, so was he, the Kaiser, called upon to cleanse Europe, and that this war was God's crusade to bring back Europe to purity and righteousness."

"Your informant told you this?"

"Yes. He said that the Kaiser was undoubtedly sincere, and was one of the most religious men he had ever met. Of course the man is mad, but there is not the slightest doubt but that he believes this."

When Mr. Richards had gone, Bob felt very lonely. He wanted to get away from his sad thoughts, wanted to blot from his memory the facts which had seemingly blighted his life. He was alone in London; he had no friend to whom he could go. Of course a hundred places of amusement were open, but he did not feel in the humour to go to them. He dreaded the thought of going back to his chambers, while the streets repelled him.

He glanced around the smoke-room, and noticed that it was peculiarly shaped, and then, looking behind a huge palm, he saw an alcove which he had not hitherto noticed. Sitting in it, he would be completely hidden from the rest of the room, and yet could command a view of a great part of it. The place was quite empty, and, although in the heart of London, singularly quiet. Acting on impulse, he threw himself into a chair behind the palm, and prepared to light another cigar.

He had scarcely taken his seat in the alcove when two men entered and summoned a waiter. The man fulfilled their orders and left the room.

One of the men got up and looked around. "We are lucky," he said; "there's not a soul here."

"Yes, we have an opportunity for our chat. Not that there's much difficulty anywhere. The English people are the most unsuspecting in the world. No matter what nationality a man may be, he is absolutely free to go where he likes, and do what he likes."

"Except the Germans and Austrians," and the other laughed meaningly.

"Yes, yes, and aren't their precautions silly? Because our parents thought it wise to educate us in England, we speak the language like natives, and are looked upon as thorough John Bulls. Heavens, if they only knew!"

Bob's pulses began to quicken. Surely he had seen one of them before. Where, he could not tell, but both face and voice were familiar.

Evidently they had no idea that he was near. Even if they looked towards him, he was hidden from them by the huge palm fronds.

"Yes," responded the other. "Of all the guileless people in the world, these

British fools are the worst. Here are you and I regarded as English people. We do what we like, we go where we like, and they welcome us. It is true, since the war broke out, they have taken all sorts of precautions against what they call German spies. But, bah! they are as easy to deceive as children. Why, only a week or two ago, by the simplest ruse imaginable, I obtained some valuable information down in Cornwall.”

Again Bob looked at the face, and wondered. The speaker was a middle-aged man, and spoke without the slightest suggestion of a foreign accent. He would pass anywhere as an Englishman. He had an air of assurance too, as though it were his habit to move in good society. Dress, manner, and general appearance suggested an Englishman of good standing and yet he spoke as an enemy to the country.

“In Cornwall, eh? That’s an out-of-the-way part of the country.”

“Yes, in Cornwall. It was at a little fishing village called St. Ia. I laugh when I think of it, the whole thing was so amusing.”

Bob gave a start. He knew who was speaking now. His whole appearance had changed, but he could not help penetrating his disguise. It was the man who had called himself Count von Weimer—an Alsatian whose sympathies were so strongly French, and who had come to Cornwall for peace. The simplicity, and yet the audacity, of his action made Bob wonder.

Forgetful of the fact that he was playing the part of an eavesdropper, he sat still, and listened.

“Yes, I promised I’d tell you about it,” the man went on, “although, strictly speaking, I ought to say nothing. Still, the matter is over and done with now, and the information lodged in the right quarter; besides we, to an extent, work together, so it will be all right. As you know, I was instructed to obtain information on certain naval matters, and I had a great difficulty in getting it. You see, I couldn’t get introduced in the right quarters. By and by I discovered that a retired Admiral who was in the secrets of the Admiralty lived in a little out-of-the-way place in Cornwall. I learnt all that was possible about his fads and prejudices, and then went down there as an Alsatian.”

“An Alsatian, eh?”

“Yes, as an Alsatian, who, although bearing a German name, was a suspect by the Germans on account of his love of France. It was a move which presented certain difficulties, but, having considered everything, I thought it best to risk it. You see, I went down as a lover of peace, as one who was tired of the militarism of Germany and wanted the quiet and rest which only such a place could afford.”

Both of the men laughed heartily at this.

“Of course I looked the part. I adopted the circular spectacles, and assumed the manner befitting my role. I knew that a Count von Weimer lived in Alsace, knew also that this old fool of an Admiral had heard of him. So I went to the golf links.”

“Golf links?”

“Yes. I knew that a young chap called Nancarrow often played there, and that he was very friendly with the Admiral’s family. A worshipper of his daughter in fact. This Nancarrow is of Quaker descent on his father’s side, and is a sort of peace-at-any-price fellow. Rather a nice chap, but brought up with his father’s notions. As luck would have it, a match had been arranged between Nancarrow and a rival for the Admiral’s daughter’s affections, and the old man was present. You see, my star was in the ascendant. Of course I followed the match as an ignorant but ardent admirer of the game.”

“I see. Spare me the details.”

“Pooh! the tricks of a child! I feel almost ashamed of them! Of course I made no attempt to get introduced to the old fool just then, but in Continental fashion I praised the prowess of the young one. I, the simple foreigner, thought him wonderful! Eh?”

“Just so.”

“Naturally I met him later—of course by accident. I played my cards carefully. I was a rich man charmed by the place, and was on the look out for a house to buy. What could one want more? Eh?”

“Exactly.”

“Of course I had seen a house of the Admiral’s that was for sale, and I hated dealing with house agents. Would it be possible to deal direct with the Admiral? The little fly walked into my parlour at the first invitation, and two or three days later I was introduced to the Admiral. Your line of work has not drawn you into contact with this class of man. A typical John Bull, my dear chap. Blunt, straightforward, above board. No diplomacy, no *arrière pensée*, but loud-voiced and hearty. Proud as Lucifer in one way, but as gullible as a hedgehog. English, quite English, you know, with a proper scorn for everything that isn’t English. The British Navy, you know—the British Navy can defy the world!

“Of course I was ignorant of the British Navy. I was not anxious to hear anything about it. I was keen to buy or rent his house, and I was able to refer to the names of men who were just slightly above the Admiral in social position. Of course one can’t take a house without some palaver, and one meeting led to another. Naturally I offered my cheque as a deposit, and a guarantee of my good faith. I was invited to dinner, and then, without the old buffer suspecting anything, I drew the truth from him as easily as a wine waiter draws the cork out of a champagne bottle. I learnt man—I learnt——” and his voice became so low that Bob could not catch what he said.

“By Jove, that was a haul!”

“A haul! I should think it was. It told me what our people were willing to give their eyes to know. And the best of it was, he did not think he was telling me anything! Ah, you should have seen me, the mild-eyed Alsatian pleading the

uselessness of a big navy, and he, to prove me in the wrong, giving me all sorts of information. Of, course, when I had sucked him dry, I hooked it. I paid him for my information; all the same, I got it cheaply. A year's rent for his house! I expect he is wondering why I don't come and take possession."

"The British are fools!"

The other laughed. "Fools, yes, but arrogant fools, proud fools, dangerous fools too, in a way. They are what we are not, and what we are destined to be—a World Power. But the reckoning day has come."

"Do you think so? That is, do you think this is the right moment for the war? Of course it had to come—we had made up our minds to that; but don't you think William forced the pace too soon? Surely he meant to crush France, and control her navy before he angered the little dog which calls itself the British Lion. I had always reckoned England's turn would come about 1920."

"Perhaps you are right; but the result will be the same. Austria will deal with Russia and the Balkan States while William marches to Paris; then, when we have a repetition of 1870, we can go back and settle Russia."

"The English generally put up a good fight!"

"A pricked bubble, my dear fellow. It took the whole British Empire four years to deal with about 70,000 Boer farmers; how then can it do anything against us? Aren't facts speaking aloud? In about three weeks we have armies within twenty miles of Paris. In another week that capital will be in our hands. What is the use of Kitchener's absurd army? Before it can do anything, England will be on its knees. As for the French! Bah!"

"And meanwhile we play our little game here."

"Yes, John Bull may have the heart of a lion, but he hasn't the brains of a water-hen. Oh, John is hospitable, very hospitable. You and I, my dear Charles, with hundreds more, go around as Englishmen. Doesn't John scorn a spy? That's why we can go everywhere. At present I am London born, never having been out of England in my life. I know the Stock Exchange inside and out. I am a city man! And who suspects? There are over 20,000 Germans in London, all registered, yes, *all* registered. Meanwhile—eh?"

"But if we are beaten!"

"We can't be. It is impossible. The time-table will be kept. But oh, I can't help laughing! They never suspected our designs, never imagined the game we have been playing. They were just contented with their contemptible little army, and they allowed us to learn their secrets, not dreaming that England will be a vassal state to Germany, and that all her colonies will be ours. But there is that other matter. I want to speak about it. You remember that at the close of the Boer War _____"

During the whole time Bob had listened like a man in a dream. He felt as though he were standing on the brink of a precipice. His eyes were opened to

truths that he never dreamt of. He saw that for years there had been a deliberate plot to conquer England, that the Kaiser had not only made Germany an armed camp, and had strained every nerve to construct the greatest and most powerful and complete fighting machine the world had ever known, but he had sent an army of spies to the country to learn her secrets and fasten upon her weaknesses. He realised that the Kaiser had been our enemy during all the years he had been pretending to be our friend. He had been spending vast sums of money on men and women who were willing to do the dirtiest kind of work, in order that he might cause our downfall.

His honest, straightforward nature revolted at it. These two men were spies, traitors. He wondered at their speaking so freely, that they had not taken greater precaution to make sure no one was near. But the room was peculiarly shaped, and it was difficult for them to see the recess in which he sat, hidden as it was by the huge palm. To all appearance the place was empty.

Again he acted on impulse. Forgetting the rights and wrongs of the situation, he felt he must act. Looking through the fronds of the palm, he saw that the two men were conversing eagerly. Behind him was a door, but where it led he did not know. He must get out without their being aware of his presence.

Silently he opened the door, and soon found himself in the domestic portion of the little hotel. A waiter looked at him questioningly. Bob held up his finger to command silence.

“Show me to the manager, at once,” he said.

The waiter instinctively felt how much in earnest he was, and obeyed him.

“This way, sir,” he whispered.

“There are two German spies in the smoke-room,” Bob said to the manager a minute later, and he explained how he had been led to this conclusion.

“Did you serve two men in the smoking-room?” asked the manager, turning to the waiter.

“Yes, sir, I served them each with a whisky-and-soda. But they are not Germans, sir, I’ll swear to that.”

“We’ll see, anyhow,” was the manager’s response. “You guard your door carefully, and I’ll go in at the public entrance. Will you come with me, sir.”

The manager led Bob to the door by which he had first entered the room, and then they both entered silently.

The room was empty; the two men had gone.

“But can’t we do anything?” asked Bob.

“What can we do, sir? If you were mistaken, then no harm is done. If you were not, they must have seen you leave the room, and then made their way out. I’ll speak to the hall-porter. There are very few people here to-night, and he will know how many people have gone out during the last five minutes.”

“Yes,” the hall-porter declared a few seconds later, “two gentlemen have just

gone out in a hurry. They said they were late for an appointment, and had to make haste.”

“Did you recognise them?” asked the manager.

“I’ve seen them here once or twice before,” was the porter’s reply, “but I know nothing about them.”

The manager looked at Bob in despair. “You see how it is, sir. I daresay you are right. London is just infested with them, and in spite of all our precautions they just laugh at us.”

Bob went back to his chambers and tried to reflect on what he had heard. On reconsideration he supposed there was not so much in it all, but he was much disturbed nevertheless. He supposed every government had its secret information service, but the fact that this man calling himself Count von Weimer had by lies and fraud found his way into Admiral Tresize’s house, and thereby obtained valuable information about our Navy, staggered him. From the conversation of the two men, moreover, it was evident that Germany had always meant to go to war with England, and had for years been preparing for it. The German army had evidently been built up for the express purpose, not of defence, but aggression. They had been waiting for years for a favourable opportunity, and then, when the time was ripe, to force the pace.

Oh, the madness, the criminal madness of it all!

But it was worse than madness. There was an awful danger about it all.

He opened the evening paper he had just bought, and read the staring headlines.

GERMAN ARMY WITHIN A FEW MILES OF PARIS.
FRENCH GOVERNMENT REMOVED TO BORDEAUX.

Of course all sorts of theories were propounded. This was all strategy on the part of General Joffre and Sir John French. They were trying to draw the Germans from their base of supplies, and that done, would pounce upon them, and annihilate them.

All this, however, was very unsatisfactory. The truth was, the German Legions were sweeping all before them.

He turned to an article copied from an American paper, written by a man who had been admitted into the German lines, and who had gone into the very heart of the German Headquarters. Bob found his muscles hardening as he read. The article in graphic language described the countless hordes in the German army. It told how the writer rode hour after hour in a swiftly moving motor-car, always through this great seething mass of the best-trained soldiers in the world. They were not ill-fed weaklings, either; but young, stalwart, well-fed, strong, the flower of the German nation.

The camp was a vast moving city of fighting men. Everything was perfectly

arranged to the minutest detail. Nothing was lacking. Every need was supplied as if by magic. The discipline and order were perfect. The soldiers were confident and happy.

How could these legions be overcome? Were they not, as the German General had said, invincible?

“See the accuracy of our big guns,” said the General to the newspaper correspondent. “You see that windmill three miles away. Now watch.”

An order was given, and then as if by magic a great gun was directed towards the distant object. A few seconds later there was a tremendous explosion, and the windmill was shattered to atoms.

That was it! Germany was a huge fighting machine, and with it the Kaiser and his minions intended to rule the world!

And if he did? Supposing Germany won in the war, as she was determined to win? What would be the result? Where would all Bob’s dreams and visions of Universal Peace be?

“No, no!” cried Bob aloud, as if he were answering some pleading voice of his own heart, “I tell you I can’t. The whole thing is ghastly, hellish! It would be to fight the devil with the devil’s weapons. If I did, I should have to give up my faith in Christ and His salvation. The sword would take the place of the Cross. I should have to say that the life and work of Christ are a miserable fiasco, that He Himself was an idle dreamer. There is no possibility for a man who believes in the New Testament to take part in this hellish business!”

But if he only could!

All his patriotism, his love of home and country, called to him. For a moment the longing to take his part in helping England to drive back this huge fighting octopus, which was longing to stretch out its tentacles all over Europe, became a passion.

But no, he could not, he simply could not. He was trying to be a Christian, and no man who followed the Christ Who said “Love your enemies; . . . if a man strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also,” could volunteer to take part in this bloody welter of the nations! He had been true to his principles so far, and he would continue to be true.

But the cost!

Yes, he had counted the cost, and paid it. He had sacrificed the dearest thing on earth, he had lost the woman he loved. Nancy could never be his now. She had driven him from her mind and heart, because she believed him to be a shirker, a recreant, a coward.

He took from his pocket-book the white feather she had given him, and looked at it. Yes, that was what she thought of him. A coward! And all the time he would have given anything to be able to offer himself for the front.

A knock came at the door, and a servant entered bearing a letter.

“It’s from my mother,” said Bob to himself, as he broke the seal.

CHAPTER XI

Evidently some one had sent Mrs. Nancarrow an Oxford newspaper, for her letter was in the main about what Bob had done there.

“I am proud of you,” she wrote. “People down here have been saying that you are a coward, and that you ran away from home because you did not dare to meet the people who knew of your action in relation to the war. What you did at Oxford at least shows that is untrue. I am delighted that you defended the poor creature, and thrashed the wretches badly. I see that one of them is still suffering from the blow you struck him. I have written to Oxford for fifty copies of the paper, and shall send them to all our friends. I cannot bear, I simply cannot bear people to think of you as a coward; and I have also arranged with our local paper to insert a full account of what you did. I was glad yesterday to see that one of the Cornish papers had a full report of it, and in its bill of contents printed the following:

“‘PLUCKY CONDUCT OF A YOUNG CORNISHMAN IN OXFORD

“‘MR. ROBERT NANCARROW THRASHES TWO BLACKGUARDS AND HANDS THEM OVER
TO THE POLICE.’

“But, Bob, I don’t understand you. In spite of your Quaker principles you felt it right to thrash these villains. What is the difference between thrashing the wretches who would harm a weak and defenceless woman, and helping your country to thrash that German bully who is a menace to Europe? If it was your duty to do one, it is surely your duty to do the other? The same principle is involved.

“By the way, Nancy Tresize has been accepted for Nursing work abroad. You remember that years ago she took a full certificate as a Nurse, and through the Admiral’s influence she has obtained a post in France—at a French hospital, I expect. Perhaps she thinks she will thus be nearer Captain Trevanion, to whom report says she is going to be, if she is not already, engaged. If he is wounded, it might be that she would be able to nurse him.

“Oh, Bob, my boy, my boy, you’ve lost her. I am told that she despises you beyond words, while the Admiral regrets having given you free access to his house and called you his friend. All this is an awful grief to me. If you went to the front I should of course live in daily and hourly dread of anything happening to you, but all the same I should be proud beyond words to know that my son had offered his life for his country. But now—well, before I received this Oxford paper I felt ashamed to meet my friends.”

Bob closed the letter with a sigh. He was wounded in the house of his friends.

If it were only right, if it were Christian to——; but no, it was not. It was a violation of every known principle of Christ. Because the Germans used murderous means to make Europe a hell, it did not follow that England should do the same. Two wrongs could not make a right Besides, how much peace and good-will was there in it all?

The next day he saw an announcement that a great meeting was to be held that same night at the Imperial Opera House, to be addressed by certain well-known statesmen. The purpose of the meeting was to instruct the public as to the real causes of the war, and to point out the nation's duty. Bob made up his mind to go. Throughout the day he applied himself to his work, and then after an early dinner he left the Temple, and going out by way of the Temple Church found himself in Fleet Street.

Everywhere the evidences of the war were manifest. On every conveyance was a call to arms. Newsboys were eagerly shouting the contents of the papers, people were talking in the streets of the one prevailing topic.

Presently he stopped at a bookshop, and was immediately struck with the changed character of the literature in the window. There were no "latest novels," no "new and important biographies"; instead every shelf was weighted with books about the war.

"GERMANY AND THE NEXT WAR, by General von Bernhardi. Startling disclosures of Germany's aims and plans, by a well-known German General," he read. "This is one of the most popular books in Germany, and is recommended by the Kaiser and the Crown Prince of Germany, as a book which every patriot should read. It explains why we are at war to-day."

Side by side were others of a similar description, all written by men who bore the greatest German names.

Prince von Bülow, ex-German Chancellor, Nietzsche, Trietschke, and similar great names were given as the authors of the books.

Bob entered the shop, and having selected three which he thought promised to give him the best idea of Germany's aims and methods, ordered the bookseller to send them to his chambers.

When he reached the Great Opera House, early as it was, he found a vast concourse of people. After some little difficulty he found a seat in a good position for viewing the audience. He was immediately struck by the fact that here was no thoughtless, irresponsible crowd; rather one largely made up of men of grim determination and iron will. They were intelligent, well-read men too. They knew the history of their country, knew its weakness, and realised its faults. Nevertheless they loved it.

They were not saints. They were just commonplace people, who lived commonplace lives, amidst commonplace surroundings. But they had a sense of right and wrong, and in spite of their failings they had an inherent love of right.

They were Englishmen who instinctively hated war, and would do anything in their power to avoid it. But there were, to them, worse things than war. Breach of faith was one; the destruction of truth, honour, and the nation's good name was another. If England had made a promise, no matter what it cost her, she must keep it. England could not stand by and see a little nation whom she had promised to protect, crushed:

But above all, they were Englishmen. Love of country was a tremendous factor. The homeland was dearer than their own lives. They could not stand by and see it filched from them.

Of course there were a lot of patriotic songs in which the whole audience joined. Some of them were silly doggerel, but there was nothing coarse or unworthy in them.

"Yes," thought Bob, "there is something almost divine in this love of home and country. It is eternal in the human heart. One can't get away from that."

Presently the speakers came on the stage, amidst great cheering and waving of handkerchiefs.

The chief speaker, one who held the supreme position in Naval matters, spoke first. It was a masterly speech, every sentence of which was carefully prepared and tellingly delivered. He did not appeal to passion, but in cold, measured terms spoke of the causes which led to the war, and then passed on to the success of the Navy and the Army.

"Yes," reflected Bob, as the young statesman sat down amidst the thundering applause of the multitude, "as far as a war can be righteous, this is. If ever a war were justified, this is. But can a resort to brute force and instruments of murder ever be justified? That is the question. No, it is not right that these Germans should be a menace to Europe and the world; but do we not believe in God? Can we not trust Him? Must blood be washed out by blood, must brutal arrogance be swept away at the cost of carnage and infinite misery?"

The second speaker, although he had not the same weight, deepened the impression the other had made by his brilliance and rhetoric. He too told the story of the English Ambassador in Berlin who was asked whether England would go to war for "a scrap of paper."

That was the question which he asked amidst the cheers of the crowd, and then waited a second.

"Yes," and his voice rang clearly through the great building, "when that scrap of paper meant England's honour and faithfulness."

Before Bob knew what he was doing, he found himself cheering wildly. A man, a nation should fight for its honour, its plighted word.

Then the old question came back. But how could it do so in the name of Christ? Should not the weapons of Christ be used? Should not an appeal be made to the Founder of the Christian religion? Would not the Kaiser, he who professed

to be a Christian, have laid down the sword if he had been appealed to in the name of the Prince of Peace? How could a bloody war be waged by those who believed in Christ? It was all confusing, maddening!

The last speaker was a Labour Member of Parliament. He used no polished phrases, no brilliant epigrams. He had no knowledge of the classics, and could not illustrate his arguments by quotations from great writers. But he had something better—a homely wit, a great human sympathy. He had a ready tongue, too, and the crowd roared at his homely humour.

“Six years ago,” he said, “I went to Berlin. I was a delegate at a Peace Conference in that capital. I was one of many sent there by all the nations of Europe. Our aim was to discuss means whereby national quarrels could be settled without an appeal to the sword—by brotherly counsel, by friendly arrangement, by arbitration.

“What happened? Remember this was in Berlin, the capital of the German Empire. We had met there in the interests of the peace of the world. Surely the noblest, the most Christ-like purpose for which any conference could meet.”

Bob’s heart grew warm at this. It was the dream of his own life, it accorded with the teaching of Him Who died for the world.

“What happened?” went on the speaker. “This happened. No sooner had the President of the Conference got on his feet to address the delegates, before a single sentence had been spoken, than a number of soldiers rushed in, sent there by the German Government, and brutally broke up the Conference. We were not allowed even to discuss the means whereby the nations might live at peace, there in the German capital. What would become of the liberties of England if we were conquered by a nation like that?”

Bob had no knowledge of what took place at the meeting after that. The incident told, as it was, in homely, yet forcible fashion, seemed unbelievable. Yet, he thought, the man would not dare to tell it if it were not true. It was not a matter of hearsay; the thing had been seen, experienced by the speaker. Not only did the Germans not desire peace, but they made it impossible even to discuss means of maintaining it. That was Germany! War they could engage in proudly, but even friendly discussion among lovers of peace, to obtain peace, was made impossible by the soldiers of the Kaiser.

Bob left the meeting bewildered. The brilliant speeches were forgotten in the recital of this single incident. Surely there must be some mistake! It could not be! It was opposed to, nay, it was the grossest violation of the first elements of Christianity. And it had, been done by the Government of the Kaiser.

No, no, the Kaiser did not know, he could not know! But this must have been because of the law of the land, and the Kaiser must be cognisant of it.

As he entered the door of the building where his chambers were, he saw a young fellow whom he knew slightly.

"I say, have you seen this, Nancarrow?" he said.

"What is it?"

"It is an order given to his army by the Kaiser. It was sent me by a man who actually saw it. Just read it. It is the sweetest thing I have seen yet."

Bob read what has since become public property, but which was at the time but little known:—

"It is my Royal and Imperial Command, that you concentrate your energy, for the immediate present, upon me single purpose, and that is that you address all your skill, and all the valour of my soldiers, to exterminate first the treacherous English, and walk over General French's contemptible little Army.

"HEADQUARTERS,

"AIX-LA-CHAPELLE,

"August 19."

"Pretty, isn't it?"

Bob's heart grew hot. The arrogance, the self-glory, the mountebankism of the order aroused all the fighting spirit of the old Trelawneys.

"But they haven't done it yet, neither will they," went on the young fellow. "Thank Heaven the tables are being turned, and we are driving them back. No, by Jove, French's 'contemptible little Army' has given them something to do already. Even when the Kaiser poured the flower of his army upon them, when they were five to one at Mons, they couldn't break our ranks. Our chaps faced the fire without a squirm, and coolly told as afterwards that their shooting was rotten. For that matter I'm told by the German prisoners that but for the English they'd be in Paris before now."

"Have you talked with them?"

"Yes, I was admitted into one of the prisoners' camps. I know one of the men in authority. According to their account the soldiers themselves scarcely knew why they were fighting; but they were promised a sort of picnic. Instead of which the British gave them hell. Oh, they have tremendous respect for us now!"

"I wonder you haven't enlisted."

"Heavens, don't I wish I could! I've tried again and again, but my eyes are bad. I have to wear tremendously powerful glasses. When are you off?"

Bob did not reply. He would have given anything to say, "To-morrow," but he felt as though a weight were on his tongue.

He made his way to his chambers. It was still early—not more than half-past nine. He was excited beyond measure, and it was madness to think of going to bed. What should he do?

Looking around, he saw a parcel, on which was the label of the bookseller at

whose shop he had called.

“It’s the books I bought,” he reflected. “I can’t do any law work to-night; I’ll read them.” Almost feverishly he untied the parcel. A few minutes later he was reading hard.

The book he opened first was *Germany and the Next War*, by General von Bernhardi. He had heard it spoken of, but had no idea of its contents. At that time it was but little known. The publishers had just brought out a cheap edition, and although it was beginning to be talked about, the world at large was almost ignorant of it.

It has been said that on more than one occasion a speech or a book has altered the history of nations; that some of the utterances of our great statesmen have altered the destinies of an Empire. Doubtless such sayings have much truth behind them, and it would not be difficult to quote instances in proof of them. Sometimes even a song has moved a whole nation, and made what seemed impossible, an accomplished fact. What influence had the Marseillaise on the French Revolution? Let French historians tell us.

When Bob opened Von Bernhardi’s book, he expected to be interested, and perhaps enlightened; but he certainly did not expect it to revolutionise his thoughts.

At first he read with only half his mind. He had been greatly excited by the meeting he had attended, and for the first few minutes constantly found himself thinking rather of the speeches than of the book.

Presently, however, a sentence gripped him, and then he forgot everything else. He realised that he was reading, not simply the opinions and sentiments of a single individual, but of the ruling caste of the German Empire. As he read, he rubbed his eyes. He could not believe that he saw aright. He had expected windy vapourings, instead he found cold, reasoned statements—a kind of Machiavellian philosophy.

Hour after hour he read, regardless of time, his mind absorbing the author’s arguments as a sponge sucks up water.

An hour after midnight he rose from his chair and flung the book from him as though it were something unclean.

CHAPTER XII

It is not my purpose to analyse the book which moved Bob so profoundly, and I am only referring to it because of its effect on his thoughts. It must be remembered that he had been reared to regard war as something born in hell, something which meant, in the words of the Prime Minister of England, "Hell let loose." He had never heard any one speak of it as something to be desired. At best it was only a "ghastly necessity," something which should not be resorted to until "all the resources of civilisation were exhausted."

Here, however, he found war not only gloried in, but set forth as a necessity to the well-being of nations. War was not only a necessity, it was a virtuous thing, it was the will of God, it was taught by Christ.

A score of sentences burnt like flames of fire before his eyes. Sentences, not written in the heat of passion, but in cold, measured terms. And they were accepted as the Gospel of Germany.

"Without war," said the writer, *"inferior and decaying nations would easily choke the growth of healthy and budding elements, and universal decadence would follow. . . ."*

"It is not the possessor, but the victor who has the right. . . ."

"Might is at once the supreme right, AND THE DISPUTE AS TO WHAT IS RIGHT IS SETTLED BY THE ARBITRAMENT OF WAR. . . ."

"Reflection shows that not only is war an unqualified necessity, but that it is justifiable from every point of view. . . ."

"If we sum up our arguments, we shall see that from the most opposite aspects the efforts directed towards the abolition of war must not only be termed foolish, but ABSOLUTELY IMMORAL, and must be stigmatised as unworthy of the human race. . . ."

"According to peace treaties, 'the weak nation is to have the same right to live as the powerful and vigorous nation.' . . . this is absolutely immoral. . . ."

"Efforts for peace would, if they attained their goal, not merely lead to general degeneration, but would have a damaging and unnerving effect. . . ."

"Every means must be employed to oppose those who work for peace. . . ."

As Bob came to this last passage, he understood why the German soldiers entered the Peace Convention in Berlin and broke it up by force of arms. He felt that the Germans lived in a different world from that in which other nations lived. What to him was a duty, was to them a crime. What to him was the goal of every Christian and humane man, was to the German something to be destroyed root and branch. They lived in different worlds, worshipped a different God. Christianity was not the same thing to them as to us. We had no common ground on which to

meet. He understood now why the Hague Conference was a failure. Germany had made it a failure. What other nations longed for, they discarded with scorn.

They had an utterly different religion. In spite of whatever militarism there might be in England, the people believed in and worshipped the Prince of Peace. In Germany Christ was crucified, and in his place was set up a WAR GOD before which they fell down and which they adored. All the policy of the Empire was directly controlled by this War God, and they could not understand being governed by any other power.

It was all overwhelming, bewildering. This Gospel of the Germans completely revolutionised his whole intellectual outlook. The idea of living at peace with such a people was impossible. One might as well think of living at peace with a mad dog. They had no common morality to which one could appeal. One could not appeal in the Name of the Prince of Peace, because to them the Gospel of Peace was immoral.

Then the arrogance of their Creed was revolting. This man Bernhardt, and Treitschke, and Nietzsche, and the rest of them lived, and acted on one assumption. They compressed their thoughts into a syllogism:

The people with the highest civilisation and the highest culture should become dominant throughout the world.

Germany had the highest civilisation, and boasted the highest culture.

Therefore Germany had the right, and not only the right, but the duty to make war in order that Germany might be dominant. Of course she must wait for a favourable opportunity, and when that opportunity came, she must make war regardless of all the misery and bloodshed that it must cause.

“The great Elector,” said Bernhardt, “laid the foundations of Prussia’s power by deliberately incurred wars.”

In the light of all this Bob called to mind the German Emperor’s speech to his soldiers when on their way to the front.

“Remember that the German people are the chosen of God. On me, on me as the German Emperor, the Spirit of God has descended. I am His weapon, his sword, and his vizard. Woe to the disobedient! Death to the cowards and unbelievers!”

It would be laughable if it were not so terrible.

Of course the Emperor was sincere and conscientious in all this mountebankism, but he was a menace and a blighting danger all the same.

Mohammed was earnest and sincere when he led his wild armies forward crying, “Death or conversion!” Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain were earnest and conscientious when they roasted the Moors of Spain in the name of the Holy Church and Jesus the Saviour of the world. Torquemada was earnest and conscientious as the Grand Inquisitor who burnt heretics who could not accept his doctrines.

But that did not make this German menace any the less dangerous. Rather it increased the danger. The military caste, the ruling caste in Germany, they who had been planning and preparing for war, and looked upon it as a duty, had no moral standard to which a Christian could appeal. Their right was our wrong. It would be as easy to argue with a virus-toothed tiger as to argue with them. They had accepted the terrible religion of the duty of war as the faith of the nation, and nothing but equal or superior force would stop them in their onward march.

This explained the terrible stories in which Bob had not hitherto been able to believe. The ghastly outrages at Louvain, the unspeakable deeds at Malines. They were all a part of the same ghastly creed.

“A sacrifice made to an alien nation,” said Treitschke, “is immoral. . . .

“Among all political sins, the sin of feebleness is the most contemptible. It is the political sin against the Holy Ghost.”

It also explained their violation of the Belgian treaty. Bernhardt argued most earnestly, that if a treaty placed a difficulty in the way of a great nation’s realising its purposes, then it was not only justifiable, but the duty of that nation to break that treaty.

“We must not hold back in the hard struggle for the sovereignty of the world,” he argued.

Every nation that stood in their way must be swept aside. For that Germany had been for years building up her “invincible army,” and filling her war chests. Protection was no part of her policy; it was for ever and always, aggression, aggression. How can Germany obtain the sovereignty of the world?

Again Bob found that these Germans regarded England as their greatest hindrance to the fulfilment of their dreams. Therefore the question arose as to how England could be swept aside. It was all a matter of calculation. Laying down the basic principles that war was a necessity and a duty, and that Germany must dominate the world, all the rest followed as a natural consequence.

The nations of Europe were like so many pieces on a chessboard. They must be made strong, or destroyed just as the occasion fitted in with Germany’s plans. Thus for the present Italy must be strengthened, and Turkey must be supported, but the power of France must be destroyed. Why? What harm was France doing? That was not the question. France stood in the way of Germany’s ambitions, therefore France must be crushed.

“*In one way or another,*” said Bernhardt, “*we must square our account with France. This is the first and foremost condition of a sound German policy. This must be settled by force of arms.* FRANCE MUST BE SO COMPLETELY CRUSHED THAT SHE CAN NEVER AGAIN COME ACROSS OUR PATH.”

As I said, Bob had arisen from his chair and thrown the book from him. It in itself was a crime. The cold, calculating immorality of its teaching was revolting. He felt as though he had been wading through filth.

“There is nothing for it,” he cried, “but to destroy it root and branch. Great God, this is a Holy War. It is Christ’s war!”

He saw everything in a new light. Yes, war was a crime, it was “hell let loose,” but by no other means could this poisonous lust for war be destroyed.

“He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one!”

Who said that?

He remembered that they were the words of Jesus just before His crucifixion. They were not uttered lightly, they contained the essence of a great truth.

What did Jesus mean?

Again He said, “I came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword.”

Bob walked to and fro in the room in his excitement. Did not Christ have such a problem as now faced him in His mind when He uttered these words?

Here was a great military caste which threatened, nay, destroyed, the peace of the world. That caste was so poisoned by the virus of war, that to reason with it was impossible. To appeal to it on moral grounds was a waste of breath, simply because there was no common ground of appeal.

What then? Must this great immoral force be allowed to menace the world?

He thought of his long-cherished dream. *War against war*. Why, every sword drawn in this war was drawn in the interests of peace? Overthrow this great War God, and this might be the last European war.

He thought of all his old arguments. “I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you.” The spirit of it all was, Live by the law of Love.

He did not hate the Germans. Millions of them were quiet, industrious, honest people. Left alone, they would pursue peaceful avocations, kindly, and with good intent. But they were under the reign of the War God, they were turned into killing-machines to satisfy the ambition of a great military caste which ruled the Empire and enforced its will.

The practical effect of love was service. It would be the greatest blessing that could befall this German people if this War God could be destroyed, crushed to atoms. Then the people would be free to live their own lives.

“I’ll enlist!” he cried excitedly. “It is a great duty! It’s service for Christ!”

The thought staggered him. Where were all his old qualms and objections? He hated war as much as ever. He still longed for peace with a consuming passion; and it was because he longed for peace, and because he was trying to be a Christian, that he felt the call of God!

This war caste in Germany was like a great cancer growing in the heart of Europe. Its poisonous roots had found their way into the vitals of the German Empire, and the thing threatened to destroy the best life of the world. If the Kaiser and his hosts won in this war, it would keep the spirit of war more alive than ever. It would mean the destruction of liberty, it would mean the impossibility of peace; and more, it would mean that in future every country would be forced to increase

its armaments, to the ruin of the best life of the people, in order to protect themselves from this evil power.

German culture! What was it worth in the last analysis? It was a resort to barbarism and savagery, and brutal arrogance.

No, no, the poisonous cancer must be cut out. The power of the German war caste must be destroyed so that the people might live in peace.

Christianity stood for brotherhood, purity, truth, honour, love, mercy—it stood for the peace of the world, while this War God of Germany stood like a great Colossus making all these things impossible.

Bob felt as though a great burden had fallen from him! His eyes were opened! His duty was clear!

The next morning he found his way to a recruiting station which he had previously noticed. All hesitation had gone. Not a suggestion of his old qualms occurred to him. He had no more doubt about his duty to fight in this quarrel than he would have doubted about his duty if a mad dog were in the district.

When he arrived at the station, a number of young men had gathered. Some belonged to the poorest and most uneducated classes; but in the main they were clerks, assistants in shops, and young tradesmen. A few of them, Bob judged, were of the professional class. They were in a group by themselves, and did not seem at home amidst their present surroundings. They looked curiously towards Bob as he came up, and seemed to be carefully summing him up.

Bob nodded in a friendly way.

“Joining?” asked one.

“Yes,” replied Bob.

“Had any previous training?”

“O.T.C.”

“While you were at school?”

“Yes.”

“Which?”

“Clifton.”

“Good! I know some of the chaps there. I was at Marlborough. We used to play cricket and football with Clifton. What years were you there?”

Bob was about to reply, when a motor-car drove up, and a tall, military-looking man got out.

He looked around him, and then seemed to be about to pass into the building when his eyes rested on Bob. He immediately came towards him.

CHAPTER XIII

“That you, Nancarrow?”

“Yes, Captain Pringle,” replied Bob, whom by this time he had recognised.

“What are you doing here?” asked Captain Pringle, with a smile.

“I want to enlist, sir.”

The Captain lifted his eyebrows; perhaps he remembered their last conversation together.

“Will you come this way,” he said; “I should like a chat with you.”

Bob followed the Captain, while the other fellows looked enviously towards him.

Captain Pringle led the way to a small room which he evidently used as an office. To all appearance he was in authority at the station.

“I’m rather surprised to see you here, Nancarrow,” he said, when he had taken his seat behind a business-looking desk, and pointed Bob to a chair.

“I’m rather surprised myself, sir.”

“What have you been doing since I saw you last?”

Bob told him.

“And now you want to enlist?”

“If I can, sir.”

“What as?”

“Anything, sir. For the front, if it is possible. I want to be at it.”

The Captain smiled at Bob’s eagerness.

“But, my dear chap,” he said, “this is surely a big change for you. If I remember aright, you joined the O.T.C. only to please your mother, and you hated soldiering and all its doings as you hated the devil.”

“I expect I do still, sir; but—but I am afraid it would take too long to explain why—why I feel I must go to the front. I’ve had a bad time in one way and another. You see, my father was a Quaker, and I was brought up to believe in his teachings. I do still, for that matter. War is hell, there’s no doubt about that. But I’ve gone through the whole business, and now I want to be at it. I don’t want to stay in England five minutes longer than I can help. I must get to the firing-line. I feel like a man who wants to kill a mad dog.”

“Commissions aren’t so easily obtained.”

“I’m not troubling about a commission, sir. We can’t be all officers, and I feel that all I ever learnt about soldiering would come back to me in a week. If I can help it, I don’t want to be idling around in a barracks, or in camp; I just want to go to France as soon as ever I can. I’ll do anything, be anything; I don’t care what, so long as I can get into action.”

“That’s the spirit,” replied Captain Pringle; “and I can’t tell you how glad I am to see you here. Of course I remember you when you were in the O.T.C. You did jolly well—distinguished yourself, in fact. You remember what I said to you.”

“Yes, sir, I remember very well.”

The Captain was silent for a few seconds. He seemed to be thinking deeply, as if he were uncertain what to say.

“Naturally you know that even although you took a kind of double first in the O.T.C., in the ordinary course of things you would have to have further training before you could go into active service as a private.”

“That’s what’s bothering me, sir. I did think of joining one of the Public School or University Corps, but from what I can find out, they are kept down at Epsom or some such place. I suppose they are having a great time, and all that sort of thing; but, don’t you see, that’s not what I want! I mean business, Captain Pringle.”

The Captain started from his chair, and took two or three turns up and down the room.

“You are really anxious for active service?” he said presently.

“I am. I feel that I’ve waited too long, and I want to make up for lost time. It’s several weeks now since the war commenced, and although, heaven knows, I thought I was doing the right thing, I feel now as though I have been playing the sneak and the coward. Other chaps have been fighting while I have been sitting in an arm-chair theorising on the ethics of the business. Now, however, I see my duty, and my way is clear. But I want to make up for lost time. I want to be in the thick of it. Of course, if I can’t, I can’t, and, as I said, I’m willing and anxious to do whatever I am told. But I *do* want to go to the front; I don’t care in what capacity, but somewhere where I can help to kill this Mad Mullah who is threatening the best life of Europe.”

“You want to help to smash Germany?” laughed the Captain.

“Yes, that’s it!”

“But why?” asked the Captain curiously.

“Because Germany, that is, official Germany, the Germany that holds in thralldom millions of people, is the spirit of war. It worships the God of War, and I want to go to war in order to kill war. You can’t argue with it, you can’t appeal to it, because what is right to you is simple madness to them. There’s nothing for it but to crush it, destroy it root and branch.”

“But what about your religious views?” laughed the Captain. “Don’t you still believe in prayer and in that kind of thing?”

“It’s because I *do* believe in it that I’ve been led to think as I do think. But it would be mocking the Almighty to pray to be kept from starvation when you refused to work; blasphemy to pray for good health while your drains are foul; madness to pray that no robbers might enter your house, when you left your doors

unlocked, knowing that all the time fellows were waiting to come in and rob you. Just the same it would be mockery to pray that Germany may be kept from going to war, when she believes that Christ encourages it, that it is her duty to force war, and as a consequence has been for twenty years preparing for it, and waiting for a favourable opportunity to begin her hellish work, without doing all one can. We've got to crush, to kill this War God of theirs, and make war impossible for the future. Forgive me, sir, for talking like this; I didn't mean to. I've been a long time in getting to this point, but now it has become a kind of passion with me, because I feel it to be the Call of God."

"By gad, Nancarrow, but you've touched the spot this time, and you've put it well too! I'm not much at religion, I'm afraid, and I've had no scruples. I'm an Englishman, and an Englishman must stand by his promises, and help the weak. That's enough for me. All the same, I've thought, as I suppose every one else has, how any war can be squared with Christianity. But as you've put it—yes, I see—you mean that out of love for the German people themselves, this War God, as you call it, must be thrown down and crushed to powder!"

"Yes, that's it."

"Yes, and then there is another question—but no, I'll not go into that now. As you said, you mean business, and I've spent a good quarter of an hour, or more, talking. But still, old times are old times, after all, and we were friends in the old days. But to business now. I'm as keen as you are that you shall get into the thick of it. As a matter of fact, I expect to go to the front myself in a week, and I want to do what I can for you. You are willing to do anything, you say?"

"Anything."

"Look here, can you ride—well, I mean? No modesty, now. Speak plainly."

"I can ride anything, sir. I can stick on a horse galloping, with my face to its tail."

"Good! Know anything about motoring?"

"I've had a car for years, and always driven it myself. I do my own repairing, and I know every inch of it, inside and out."

"Good again! Know anything about motorbikes?"

"Ridden one for years. After the last Easter Vac., I went from Cornwall to Oxford on an old Humber. When I got there, I took it all to pieces, repaired some of the parts, and turned it into a good machine. Excuse me for talking so much about myself. I wouldn't have done it, had you not asked me. Besides, I'm anxious to show you that I'm not helpless."

"Helpless, by George! You are a useful man. You ride like a Centaur, and you know all about motor-cars and motor-bikes. In addition to all this, you did jolly well in the O.T.C. Yes, you certainly must be made use of."

Again Captain Pringle was silent for a few seconds.

"You've got your licence and all that sort of thing for motoring?"

“Certainly, sir.”

“Ever been to France?”

“Often, sir; also Germany.”

“Know the lingo?”

“Passably.”

“That is, you can understand what a Frenchman or a German says?”

“Everything, sir.”

“Good! I’ll speak to my Colonel right away. But let’s strike while the iron is hot. You came here to enlist as a private, you say. In that case let’s get through the medical business at once.”

“I’m all right, sir.”

“That must be proved. You are big enough, Heaven knows! Six feet high, aren’t you?”

“Just a trifle above that.”

“And forty inches around the chest, I should think. Come this way.”

A few minutes later Bob had been overhauled by a doctor.

“Sound as a bell,” was the doctor’s verdict.

Next he had to submit himself to an oculist, who tested Bob’s eyes.

“All right?” asked Captain Pringle, who was present during the examination, and told the doctors that Bob was an old friend of his.

“Should be a good shot,” replied the oculist. “He’s all right.”

“Good!” said Captain. “How are your teeth, Nancarrow?”

Bob opened his mouth with a laugh. He was in high spirits.

“They look all right,” said Captain Pringle; “but you must be properly examined. A week or two ago hundreds of fellows were taken on without any real examination at all. Only yesterday, when I was down at S——, I was talking with a doctor there, and he told me that a fellow had actually been passed who had a weak spine, and wore instruments to support his back. Of course he was sent home at once, but it shows how, under the new conditions, things were conducted in a loose fashion. However, that’s all over now. We are taking only sound men. Here you are.”

Bob was quickly dismissed by the dentist, and pronounced “all right.”

“I suppose you are ready at once?” asked Pringle.

“Give me a couple of hours to settle up about my chambers, and a few things like that, and I shall be ready, sir.”

“Right. Of course there are the papers to sign and all that kind of thing, but that’s nothing. Be here at three o’clock this afternoon.”

“Very good, *mon capitaine*,” and Bob saluted military fashion, while the other laughed.

“I don’t know quite what to do with you yet, Nancarrow,” said Pringle. “You see, you are too good a man for a private—beside, you want to go straight to the

front. Naturally, too, at such times as these we can't do everything by cast-iron rule. Exceptional cases demand exceptional treatment. I can't say any more than that until I see my Colonel. You will go with me to see him this evening. As you will see, I'm not treating you quite like an ordinary recruit."

"I should think not, sir. I did not expect such favours."

When Bob got back to his chambers, he wrote to his mother.

"I expect this letter will come as a great surprise to you, mother," he wrote. "This morning I enlisted! Of course you are rubbing your eyes by this time, especially when you remember how I regard war. I haven't altered my opinions in the slightest about its horror, and all that. In fact, that's why I *have* enlisted. I'm not going to enter into any explanations of my change of belief and conduct. I'm only going to say that I believe it is my Christian duty to fight as long as God gives me health against this War God which Germany has set up. I'm not sorry I have gone through what I have gone through, even although I've lost nearly everything I treasure most, and have lived in hell for weeks. If I had enlisted when you wanted me to, I should have been no good. I should have been feeling all the time that I was not doing right. I should have been like a paralysed man trying to walk. Now everything is different. I am eager to be in the thick of it. I am just longing to be at those Germans. Not that I have anything against the German people, but I want to help to kill the system that has gripped them body and soul. It seems that nothing but war will cut out this poisonous cancer of militarism, and it is the call of God to cut it out.

"That's why I've pleaded to be sent to the front right away. I met Captain Pringle this morning (you remember him), and he's going to do his best for me. He's off to the firing line in about a week's time, and I'm in hopes that I shall be able to go with him. In what capacity I don't know as yet; possibly only as a private, but I don't mind that. We can't all be officers, and I'm eager, anxious to be *anything* whereby I can help the cause. It is possible, therefore, that in a week or two's time I shall be out of England, on my way to, if not in the very midst of action.

"Please don't talk about this. God knows it's too serious to be talked about. Fancy a doctor going to perform an operation which may kill not only the patient but himself, and you have a hint of my feelings at this moment. Let the people think what they will of me—I'm beyond all that now. I'll write you in a day or two telling you exactly what has taken place."

When Bob arrived at S—— that afternoon, Captain Pringle went straight to Colonel Sapsworth. In a few minutes the Colonel knew the main outlines of Bob's career.

"I should have advised him to join one of the Public School Corps," said the Captain, "but in that case he would have been months before he could have gone into active service. You see he's as keen as mustard to be at the front, and

remembering my last conversation with you, I thought I'd bring him down. We shall be sadly in need of men of his stamp. He will provide his own motor-bike, which he knows inside and out; he speaks French and German almost like a native, he's as plucky as they make 'em, he's eager to get to work; in addition to which he was the best lad we had in the O.T.C. with which I was connected."

"Does he want a commission?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes, I should think so—naturally. You see he's been well brought up, and is well off. On his mother's side he belongs to one of the best families in the West of England, and—and—well, Tommies are having to rough it just now."

"And none the worse for it," snapped the Colonel.

"Exactly; and he's quite prepared to enlist as a private. I was only answering your question."

"Just so: let's see him."

A few minutes later Bob was undergoing a severe cross-examination by the Colonel, who had the reputation of being somewhat eccentric in his methods. Bob, who of course knew that he was being subjected to special treatment, did not know whether the old officer was pleased with him or not. He only knew that he was asked keen, searching questions in a brusque, military fashion, and that he was finally dismissed without knowing what was to become of him.

For some time after this Bob knew what it meant to be a Tommy; he soon found out, moreover, that his experiences in the O.T.C. did not prepare him for those he was now undergoing. Each morning he was up at half-past five, and then for several hours a day he was submitted to the severest drilling. He quite understood the necessity for men being physically fit before being drafted into the army at war time. When he lay down at night in the company of men whom in ordinary times he would never think of associating with, he was so tired that he forgot the uncomfortable surroundings and uncongenial society. Never in his life had he slept as he slept now. Never did he imagine he would have to put up with such privations.

In one sense he found that, as far as the privates went, the army was a great democracy. One man was as good as another. The sons of well-to-do families rubbed shoulders with colliers and farm labourers. Tommy was Tommy, whether he was "Duke's Son" or "Cook's Son." And yet, in another sense, education and social status were recognised. He found that in spite of themselves, and in spite of the fact that all distinctions were technically sunk between them, those who came from labourers' cottages found themselves almost instinctively paying deference to the men who did not belong to their class.

There were some half a dozen men in Bob's company who had come from good homes, and while general comradeship existed, these men naturally drifted together.

One of the great hardships to Bob was the food. The rancid butter, the coarse

bread, the almost uneatable bacon, the tough meat, tried him sorely. At first he could scarcely swallow it. He got used to it at length, however, and found that he was none the worse for it. He also longed for the luxury of a private bath. Oh! just for half an hour in the porcelain bath in his mother's house! Just to have the exquisite pleasure of feeling the sting of cold pure water around his body!

But things were not to be. As he laughed to himself, "I am a full private, and I must take my chance like the rest of them!" Nevertheless, to a lad reared amidst all the refinements of a good home the change was so great that had he not felt it a bounden duty to be where he was, he would have felt like running away. Still he was not there for fun, neither had he anticipated an easy time. Sometimes, it is true, he was more than disgusted by what he saw. Many of the men did not seem to understand the ordinary decencies of life, and acted in such a fashion as to grate sorely upon his sensitive nature. Their language was often unprintable, while their ideas of life and conduct often made him sick.

How could such fellows as these fight for honour and truth? Some of them seemed to have no sense of honour or decency. He saw presently, however, that even these, who were not by any means representative of the whole, had far higher standards than he had at first thought. They were coarse, and some times brutal, but they were kind to their pals, and would put themselves to any trouble to do another chap a good turn.

One night it was very cold, although it had been very warm during the day. They had all been drilling hard, and were dog-tired. One of the men was evidently very seedy. He complained of a sick headache, and he was shivering with the cold.

"Bit off colour, mite?" said one.

"Jist orful, Bill. Gawd, I wish I was 'ome. The graand is so —— hard too, and I'm as sore as if some one had been a-beatin' me with a big stick."

"Ere mitey, you just 'ave my blanket. I don't want it. And let me mike my old overcoat into a bit of a pillow for yer."

"You are bloomin' kind, Bill, and I don't like——"

"Oh, stow it, it's nothink. Anything you'd like, mitey?"

"No, that is——"

"Come, out with it you ——. Wot is it? Shall I fetch the doctor?"

"Ee ain't no use! besides, you'd get into a —— row if you went to him now. When I was 'ome and like this my mother used to go to a chemist and git me some sweet spirits of nitre, and it always made me as right as a trivet. But there ain't no such —— luck 'ere."

"Wot yer call it? Sweet spirits o' mitre? Never 'eerd on it afore. 'Ow do you tike it?"

"Oh, you just puts it in 'ot water; but there, I can't 'ave it. Good night, Bill, and thank you for the blanket."

Bill, without a word, tired as he was, left the tent, and half an hour afterwards

returned with the medicine.

“Gawd, Bill,” said the sick man, “but you ain’t a ——”

“Not so much chin music. There, tike it, and go to sleep.”

Such little acts of kindness as these were constantly taking place, and they were by no means confined to men who belonged to the better-class but were more frequently seen among the roughest and coarsest.

Bob found out, too, that there was a rough sense of honour among them. Some of them seemed to revel in filthy language, but if a man did a mean thing, or didn’t play the game according to their standard, he was in for a bad time. Indeed, he soon found out that, in a certain sense, the same code of honour which prevailed at Clifton, with exceptions, operated in this newly-formed camp.

Day after day and week after week passed, and still Bob knew nothing of what was to happen to him. He had enlisted as a private, but on Captain Pringle’s advice had put down his name for a commission. From the first day, however, he had heard nothing more of it. From early morning till late in the day it was nothing but hard, tiring work.

It was all wonderfully strange to him, this intermingling with a mixed humanity, working like a slave for that which he had hitherto hated, and which he still hated. Still, he threw his whole heart into it, and he could not help knowing that he was progressing rapidly. After the first few days his tiredness and soreness passed away, and he could go through the most arduous duties without feeling tired. There was something in it all, too, which inspired him. The military precision of everything appealed to him, and the shouts, and laughter of hundreds of voices made life gay in spite of everything. As the days passed by, moreover, he could not help seeing that the association with clean-minded, healthy-bodied, educated men, was having a good effect upon the coarse-fibred portion of the strange community. They did not indulge so frequently in coarse language, neither was their general conduct so objectionable. It seemed as though they had something to live up to.

“Shut up, mate, and don’t be a beast,” Bob heard one man say to another one day.

“You are mighty squeamish, you son of a swine,” was the rejoinder; “wot are you so partic’ler about?”

“ ’Cos I don’t want to tell them ’ere fellers that we’re a low lot.”

“We’re as good as they are, thet’s wot we are. We’re just all equals ’ere. They are Tommies just as we are. That’s wot *I* ses.”

“We may be all equals as soldiers; but we cawn’t git away from it, Bill, some of ’em are gentlemen. Thet’s wot they are. Some of ’em just make me ashamed of myself sometimes. No, I ain’t a puttin’ on no side; but I just want to let ’em see that we workin’ chaps can behave as well as they can. Thet’s all. See?”

Meanwhile, good news came from the front. The Allies had driven the

Germans back over the Marne, and were making progress all along the line.

The men cheered wildly as they heard the news.

“They’ll git licked afore we get a smack at ’em,” some ventured.

But in the main they knew better. They realised that the war was going to be long and bloody, and although going to the front possibly meant their death, there were very few who did not want to get there.

No one felt this more than Bob. He had now been three weeks in camp, and it seemed to him possible that it might be months before his time for action came. Of Captain Pringle he had heard nothing since he enlisted, and he was afraid he had gone to the front without having been able to do anything for him.

One evening he was sitting outside his tent, smoking his pipe. It had been a hot, sweltering day, although the summer was now over. Around him, as far as he could see, was a sea of bell-shaped tents. Everywhere was a great seething mass of men in khaki. Horses of all sorts abounded. Many of the men were bandying jokes one with another, others were at the canteen, while many more had gone to the nearest town. Bob himself had earlier in the day gone to the town to indulge in a “good square well-cooked meal,” as he called it; and now, early as it was, although he little relished the thought of sleeping so-many in a tent, he was just thinking of going to bed. Near him a number of soldiers were singing gaily.

“Nancarrow!”

Bob turned his head, and saw a fellow soldier beckoning.

“What’s up?”

“You are wanted.”

“Where?”

“Officers’ quarters.”

As Bob obeyed the summons, he caught the song in which a great mass of men had joined.

“It’s a long way to Tipperary,
It’s a long way to go;
It’s a long way to Tipperary,
To the sweetest girl I know.
Good-bye, Piccadilly;
Farewell, Leicester Square.
It’s a long, long way to Tipperary.
But my heart’s right there.”

As he reached the officers’ quarters, he was surprised to see Captain Pringle.

“I’ve news for you, Nancarrow.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“You’ve got your commission.”

“That’s great. Thank you. I’m sure I owe it to you.”

“Nonsense. Come this way. You’ve to go to Colonel Sapsworth. But that’s not all. You start for the front almost immediately.”

For a moment Bob could not speak. It was not fear that overwhelmed him, it was something more terrible. Every nerve in his body quivered, while his heart beat wildly.

“It’s what you wanted, isn’t it?”

“Yes, Captain. By Jove, that’s great!”

And that was all Bob could say.

CHAPTER XIV

"I was afraid—that is, I thought you might be at the front," Bob stammered at length. "You told me, the day I enlisted, that you expected to go in a week."

"Yes, I know, but fresh orders came from headquarters. However, it can't be long now, thank Heaven! You were surprised at not seeing or hearing from me, I expect."

"I was a bit."

"Yes—well, that was by order."

Bob looked up inquiringly.

"You don't know Colonel Sapsworth," went on Captain Pringle. "He's what some of us call a holy terror. A fine officer, but has methods of his own. He's jolly good to us all, but he's determined to have no mugs about him. When I first brought you to him, I thought he didn't like you, but I found I was mistaken. All the same, he wanted to see the stuff you were made of. The truth is, he hasn't much of an opinion of O.T.C. men. He says that a lot of whipper-snappers from the public schools pass their exams, in the O.T.C., who are no more fit for officers than girls from a boarding-school. So, seeing you were willing to enlist as a private, he took you at your word. In fact, if Sapsworth had his way, he would have every officer in the Army rise from the ranks. No man, he maintains, can be a good officer unless he knows what it is to be a private. That was why you were sent here. He gave special instructions about you, however, and told the drill sergeant to keep his eye on you. He wanted to see what sort of stuff you were made of."

"I satisfied him, I hope?"

"You've got your Lieutenancy. That's the answer. Here we are."

Bob felt very uncomfortable during the next half-hour. As Pringle said, the Colonel was not a man who would stand any nonsense. He gave Bob some wholesome advice in no honeyed terms; he asked him many searching questions, after which he shook hands with him, and wished him good luck.

If Bob had worked hard as a private, he worked still harder as an officer. The work was, of course, different, yet it was essentially the same. Every day he expected orders to go to the front, but day followed day without the order being given. Meanwhile it seemed as though he were doing three days' work in one.

Of course the circumstances were somewhat more pleasant than they had been, the society was more congenial, and, instead of sleeping twelve in a tent, there were only two. Still the life was rough and hard.

"I wonder when we shall be off!" thought Bob, after what seemed to him an interminable number of days. "Pringle said we were to start immediately, and yet

we are still hanging around here.”

At length the orders arrived, and one night Bob found himself in a closely packed train bound for the South Coast. He wondered at what he called his good fortune in being allowed to start so soon, but reflected that he owed it to Captain Pringle’s good offices and to what were called the Colonel’s eccentricities. He rejoiced now, although he had been very reluctant at the time, that he had joined the O.T.C. This, of course, had made it possible for him to get to the front so soon.

Eager as he was to be in action, he could not help being saddened as he watched the men making their way to the trains. Splendid young fellows most of them were. The cream of England’s manhood. They were almost without exception ruddy with health, and as hard as nails: straight, muscular men, who laughed at hardships, and who seemed to look at the whole business as a joke. They might have been going to a picnic, so merry were they. And yet, as Bob looked more closely, it was easy to see by the compressed lips, and the steely looks in their eyes, that they realised what they were doing.

“Good-bye, Piccadilly,
Farewell Leicester Square,
It’s a long, long way to Tipperary,
But my heart’s right there.”

They sang, and perhaps as they sang they pictured the homes to which they would never again return; they saw, as in a vision, the girls to whom they had said “Good-bye,” perhaps for ever.

In a few days, perhaps, many of those light-hearted boys would be lying in the trenches, or in some ditch, stark and dead, or in some hospital maimed and crippled for life.

Yes, war was a ghastly, hellish business, and it should never be possible in Christian countries. This war, Bob felt, was one of the greatest crimes ever known, and all through which he had been passing ought only to be able to exist in troublous dreams.

Still he had no doubts about his duty. England’s hands were clean, and England’s path was clearly marked out. We were not fighting for gain or territory. With us it was a war of sacrifice, a war of duty. We were going in order to keep our word with a small state, to crush tyranny and slavery. But more, we were going to overthrow the war devil which the Germans had set up as a god. That was the thought that stirred Bob’s heart and hardened his muscles. It was a war against war; he was really taking his part in a great mission on behalf of peace. Yes, it must be a fight to the finish. The sword must never be sheathed until this military god, which had turned all Europe into an armed camp, and which had made Germany a menace to the world, should never be able to lift its ghastly head again.

“I say, Nancarrow, you look mighty grim.”

“I’m in for grim work, Pringle.”

“By gad, yes. How many of these chaps will be singing ‘It’s a long way to Tipperary’ in a month from now? How many aching hearts are there because of this business? Yes, Nancarrow, you were right, war was born in hell, but we must see it through.”

When they landed on French soil, they were received with great jubilation.

“*Vive les anglais!*” was the cry on every hand. Old men with tears in their eyes welcomed them; old women vied with each other in showering blessings upon them; young girls followed them with shouts of laughter, yet with sobs in their laughter, and wished them every blessing.

“Yes, monsieur,” cried an old dame to Bob, as he entered a fruit-shop, “take what you will. You English are our friends, our saviours. We French did not want to fight, but the Germans forced us. And then, voilà! You came forward like the friends you are, and you say, ‘Down with the German eagle. France shall have fair play.’ No, no, I will take no payment. Take what you will.”

“But you are, perhaps, poor, madame!” urged Bob. “This war has made it hard for you.”

“Hard! Ah, you say the truth. We have a garden near by. My husband and sons worked in it—now they are all gone. My husband and four sons went, but two of my sons are dead—killed.”

“Perhaps they are only taken prisoners.”

“And is not that death? What is life in a German prison but death? But, never mind, I have my husband and two sons still alive—but no, I will not take your money. Perhaps you have a mother, young monsieur?”

“Yes,” replied Bob, and the picture of his mother sitting alone in the old home at St. Ia flashed before his eyes.

“Ah, yes, I see,” said the old woman. “I see. But perhaps you have brothers, sisters?”

“No, I am her only son.”

“And she grieves to part with you?”

“Yes, but she wanted me to go. She was angry with me for keeping back so long.”

“Ah, that is the true woman. She hates the Germans?”

“No, we have friends there. But she wanted me to be here for duty’s sake, and for England’s honour.”

“Ah, yes—England’s honour. You promised Belgium, didn’t you? And then there is the *Entente Cordiale*. *Vive l’Entente Cordiale*, monsieur! Ah, must you go? There is nothing else you will take?”

“Nothing, madame. Good-bye. God be with you.”

“If you meet my husband, Alphonse Renaud is his name, or my two sons, Jean and Albert, you will tell them you saw me, spoke to me.”

“But certainly, madame.”

“And when the war is over, and if you return this way, you will call and see me, won’t you? Adieu, monsieur, and the good God be with you.”

Bob felt all the better for the old woman’s simple talk. She was only a commonplace old dame, but a kindly heart beat in her bosom. After all, this war, ghastly as it was, was bringing a thousand noble qualities to light, and it was certainly bringing the French and the English more closely together. There was a bond of sympathy, of brotherhood, existing, which was never felt before.

When they left the town, they were followed by shouts of thanks and good fellowship. Laughter and merry words were heard too. France was being baptized with molten iron and blood, but she was still light of heart. She was still true to her characteristics.

“Here, Nancarrow,” said Captain Pringle, as they watched the men board a train. “You can talk this blessed lingo like a native. I can’t get my tongue around the words, and they talk so fast that I can’t understand them. Here’s an old chap wants to say something,” and he turned towards an old military-looking man, who saluted Bob, and then bowed profoundly.

“Monsieur,” said the old man, “I only wanted to bid you God speed. Yes, yes, you English have saved us. But for you they, the German pigs, bah! would have been in Paris before now. They would have repeated 1870. I was in that *débâcle*, monsieur, and I know what I felt. If we had been willing to violate our treaty and had fallen back on Belgian territory, we might have saved ourselves. But no, a treaty was a treaty, and our word was given. Death rather than dishonour, monsieur! But they haven’t had another Sedan this time. And why? It was because you English turned the scales. Ah, but you English can fight, and you are good comrades. Monsieur, I salute you! We shall win, *mon capitaine*.”

“We’ll give them a run for their money, anyhow,” said Bob, dropping into colloquial French.

“Good, monsieur; that’s it. And you are doing it for honour’s sake. We lost in 1870, because we would not violate what those German pigs called a ‘scrap of paper,’ and now you are going to save us for the same thing. All for ‘a scrap of paper.’ They do not know what honour is! They cannot understand. But we shall win. We are driving them back. They are nearly at Mézières now. They will soon be over the border. And then!”

“And then—— Yes, then we shall see what we shall see. But thank you for your good wishes, monsieur.”

Train after train moved slowly out, while old women waved their handkerchiefs and young girls threw kisses, and all poured out their blessings. The thing that seemed to impress them was that England, who had nothing to gain, and who needed not have taken any part in the war, was throwing all her great weight on their side for the sake of the *Entente Cordiale*, and for the sake of our honour.

A few hours later Bob found himself in Paris. Several of the trains had gone by another route, but both Bob and Captain Pringle, with many others, were ordered to Paris. Here they stayed one day, and then went on to the front.

Although he had often heard how the British soldier was loved in Paris, Bob had no conception of the truth until he got there. The attention which he and Captain Pringle received was embarrassing. Wherever they went they were watched and followed, while remarks of the most complimentary nature were made about them. Even in the restaurant where they went for dinner a number of Frenchmen entered with them, and insisted on paying for their repast.

“No, no, messieurs,” they exclaimed, when Bob protested; “but you are our guests. You come as our friends, you come to help us to fight our battles. Your visit must cost you nothing. *Vive l’Angleterre!*”

Both men and women vied with each other in courteous acts. They insisted on shaking hands again and again, they plied them with cigarettes, while Bob was very much confused by two elderly dames, both of whom insisted on kissing him on both cheeks.

“What would you?” they cried. “We are each old enough to be your mother. Besides—ah, the good God knows what is in our hearts; have we not sons fifty miles away, fighting for France? We shall win, monsieur! Do you not think so? With such gallant men as you to help us we cannot fail. The Germans are pigs, devils; but we have driven them back, back! Soon they will be out of France.”

In the streets it was sometimes difficult for them to get along. On every hand people came up and insisted on shaking hands. But few of them could speak English, and they imagined that Bob was just as ignorant of French.

Again and again they received slaps on the back, while cries of “Good old Sport!” reached them.

Indeed, this was the popular form of salutation. It was nearly all the English many of them knew, and appearing to believe that this was the British form of salutation, they indulged in it freely.

At length their duties in Paris were at an end, and then Bob, with a strange feeling at heart, mounted a train which was to take him to within a short distance of the line of battle.

They had not long left the French capital, before Bob realised that he was passing through country which not long before had been the scene of carnage. The train passed slowly along, and was often held up owing to the terrible exigencies of war.

“Do you see that, Nancarrow?” said Pringle, pointing to a field in which wheat had been planted, but which had never been garnered. Indeed it would be impossible to garner it. It had been trampled under foot by tens of thousands of hurrying feet.

Here and there they saw trenches that had been hastily dug, and then discarded

when they were no longer of use. Repeatedly they saw the ruins of villages, some of which had been wantonly, barbarously destroyed by the invading foe.

It was a warm day, windless and clear, and as the train stopped at roadside stations or drew up at sidings, they could not help being impressed by the peace which seemed to reign. The birds still sang on the tree branches, cattle still lowed in the fields, and peasants still worked on their little farms.

“If one closed one’s eyes, it would seem as though war were impossible,” said Bob.

“Yes, but you’d be quickly undeceived when you opened them,” replied Pringle. “Look at those trees!” and he pointed to a small wood, where charred trunks of trees, splintered branches, and blackened leaves told their story.

“I expect some of our men were there, or the Germans thought they were,” said Pringle, “and so they——” and he shrugged his shoulders significantly.

“Perhaps some poor beggars may be lying wounded around there even yet,” suggested Bob.

“I don’t think so. As far as I can learn, the whole line has been carefully searched, and every man that could be saved has been. But, by God, the thought of it is awful!”

“Yes, no one knows what may have happened in a firing-line hundreds of miles long. It must have been hell.”

What struck them forcibly, however, was the cheerfulness of the peasantry. At the little roadside stations the people crowded around the trains and cheered the soldiers.

“Yes, monsieur,” said one old farmer, “my little house was destroyed—burnt to the ground. I had lived there ever since I was married, and all my children were born there. Two of them, *grace à Dieu*, are at the front now. Where do we live? Ah, monsieur, they spared a barn, and we are there now. It’s not so bad as it might be, and we are cheerful.”

“And your harvest?” asked Bob.

“Ah, that was saved. It was in the fields in small stacks, and not yet brought to the yard. Had it been, it would have been burnt with the house. The turnips and the mangolds are still in the field, badly trampled, but not destroyed. Oh yes, it might have been worse, much worse—with us. Thank God, we had no daughter at the house.”

“Why do you thank God for that?”

“Need you ask, monsieur? Those Germans are devils, devils! Ah, here is Jules Viney; let him tell you what he has had to suffer.”

And then an elderly man told a story which I will not here set down. It was too horrible, too heart-rending. Bob’s heart sickened as he heard it, and he found his teeth becoming set as he vowed to fight long as God gave him breath.

“She was but little more than a child, either,” cried the man, who was

trembling with passion, “and had only a year or two ago made her First Communion. As fair and as pure a child as ever God made. But, thank God, she is dead!”

“Dead?”

“Dead, yes! How could she live after those devils from the deepest hell— But she took her own life, and she is with the saints.”

“And this is the fruits of the German culture, when it is overruled by the War God,” thought Bob. “Great God, I did not believe that these stories could be true!”

About two o’clock the train stopped at a siding, where an official told them they must remain for at least an hour.

“Things have been terrible here,” said the man; “a terrible battle was fought all around,” and he waved his arms significantly.

“Let’s get out,” said Bob. “I see some trenches over yonder. I remember reading about an engagement here.”

A few minutes later they were face to face with evidences of battle. The whole country-side was devastated. Everything had been swept away by the hordes who breathed out death. Sickening *débris* was seen on every hand. Swarms of flies and insects had fastened upon heaps of filthy garbage. Nothing was seen of comfortable homesteads but charred, smoke-begrimed walls. Exploded shells lay around. Great excavations, the work of huge bombs, were seen on every hand. All around, too, they could see the carcasses of horses, killed in battle, the bones of which were beginning to appear. The smells were horrible.

“Let’s get away from this!” said Pringle; “it’s worse than any hell I ever dreamed of.”

But Bob refused to move. He seemed to be fascinated by what he saw. He loathed the sickening sights which met his gaze, but he could not tear himself away.

“See the hundreds of little mounds!” he cried. “They will be the graves of the fellows who fell here. Don’t you remember what we read in the papers? When the Germans retreated, a number of men were left behind to dig little graves, and throw the dead into them.”

“Come away, I tell you!” shouted Pringle.

“This is the beginning of war’s aftermath, only the beginning—but, great God, think of it! What is that?”

“What?”

“Surely that’s some one alive over there! Don’t you see? In the ditch yonder.”

As if by a magnet the two men were drawn to the spot to which Bob had pointed.

“It’s a man, anyhow,” said Pringle.

“No, there are two.”

“They are alive.”

“No, they are dead.”

A few seconds later they reached the spot, and saw what they will never forget, if they live twice the years allotted to man.

In a dry ditch, locked in each other's embrace, were two dead soldiers, one a Frenchman, the other a German. Both had evidently been wounded, but they had engaged in a death struggle. They had fought to the deaths without either conquering the other, and they had died in each other's arms.

There was no look of fury or hatred in the face of either. The hand of death had smoothed away all traces of this. Nevertheless, it had been a duel to the death.

They were little more than boys, perhaps about twenty-four, and both were privates. Their faces proclaimed their nationalities even more plainly than their uniforms.

“I expect they had never seen each other before,” said Bob, like one thinking aloud; “they bore no enmity towards each other.”

“Except that one was French and the other German,” said Pringle. “That was enough for them. Somehow they found themselves together, and fought it out. I expect it was at night time. By God, it's ghastly, isn't it? And this is war!”

“No, it's only the shadow of it, the aftermath. There are no groans here, no suffering. It's peace, but it's the peace of horrible, unnatural death. We shall see real war presently.”

“Come, let's get away. It's sickening.”

“The Prime Minister was right. It's hell let loose. All the same, I'm aching to be at it. I never hated it as I hated it now. God helping us, this shall be Europe's last war.”

They slowly returned towards the railway siding when in the distance they saw the train standing still.

“Look,” said Pringle, “there's been a fire here. It looks as though they had a meal. Here's an empty wine bottle, and a crust of bread.”

“Yes, and here's a pipe half full of tobacco. It might have been thrown down in a hurry, as though some chap were having a quiet smoke, and was suddenly called to duty. Look, it's an English-made pipe. It must have belonged to one of our men. I wonder where he is now. I'll take it as a souvenir.”

As they drew near to the siding they heard the soldiers singing lustily:

“It's a long way to Tipperary.”

Both of them were strangely silent as the train crawled slowly towards its destination. Their visit to one little corner of the stricken field had made them realise the meaning of war as they had never realised it before. Before the afternoon was over their eyes were still more widely opened by a passing train to the meaning of the work that lay before them.

It was going slowly, more slowly than their own, and Bob saw that it was full

of wounded soldiers. How many there were he could not estimate, but it seemed to him that there must be hundreds. Some were laughing and talking cheerfully, while others lay with their eyes closed. More than one brave fellow held a wounded comrade's head on his knees.

It was only a minute, and the train had passed them. One trainload going to the front full of strong, stalwart men, hale and hearty, another returning full of the wounded. And this was war!

And why?

It was all because a war devil reigned in Germany, which the military caste worshipped as a kind of Deity.

Presently the train stopped. They had reached their destination. They were close to the front.

"Listen," said some one, and all the men were strangely silent.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

It was the great iron-mouthed messengers of death which sent molten lead into great masses of flesh and blood. It was the voice of the great guns—the contributions of science to the ghastly crime of war.

CHAPTER XV

Captain Trevanion did not go to the front as soon as he had expected. That was why, although few people in St. Ia knew anything about it, he again found himself at Penwennack. As chance would have it, he found Nancy at home. The Admiral had been called to London on Admiralty business, and so the girl, who had not yet undertaken the duties for which she had offered herself, was alone when the Captain arrived.

“Nancy,” said Trevanion, who had been a friend of the family for years, “forgive me, but I could not help coming. The date of our starting has been put off for a day or two, so I found myself with a few hours to spare. You do not seem pleased to see me. Why?”

“I am sorry you should think so,” was Nancy’s reply. “But, you see, I did not expect you. Wouldn’t it be—that is—isn’t it a sort of anti-climax to come down here like this, after the great send-off St. Ia gave you?”

She laughed nervously as she spoke, and, although a faint flush tinged her cheeks, it was easy to see that she was far from well.

“What do I care about climaxes or anti-climaxes?” cried Trevanion. “I came because I couldn’t help it. I knew you hadn’t gone abroad, and I came just on the chance of seeing you. I caught the early train at Plymouth, and here I am. I must get back to-night.”

“I’m afraid I’m no good at tennis or golf just now,” said Nancy, “still I’ll——”

“Hang tennis and golf!” interrupted Trevanion. “I didn’t come all the way from Plymouth for that. I came because—because—but you know why? I say,” he went on hurriedly, “you know Gossett of the Engineers, don’t you? He goes to-morrow, and—and he was married yesterday. Both he and—and his wife felt they couldn’t wait any longer. I suppose her people tried to dissuade her from getting married at such a time as this; but she wouldn’t listen to them. ‘I’m going to get married because Jack is going to the front,’ was her reply to the croakers. ‘I want him to feel that he has a wife waiting at home for him.’ ‘But suppose he should be killed?’ said an old dame. ‘Then I’d rather be his widow than his fiancée,’ was her reply. Plucky, wasn’t it?”

Nancy did not reply.

“Hosts of chaps have done the same thing,” went on Trevanion hurriedly. “They had meant to have waited for months, but when the war came on they determined to marry right away.”

“Are you thinking of getting married?” Nancy was angry with herself the moment she had spoken, but she was excited beyond measure, and the words escaped her almost unconsciously.

“Would to God I could!” cried Trevanion excitedly. “I’d give—heavens, what wouldn’t I give for the chance! I say, Nancy, you know why I’ve come down, don’t you? You—you didn’t give me a chance to speak the other day, but now I feel as though I can’t be silent any longer. You know how I love you, Nancy—you must know, you must have seen it for months—and—and—perhaps in a way it’s cowardly of me to come to you like this, when I’m possibly going to my death. But I couldn’t help myself, Nancy. If—if—you could only give me a little hope!”

Nancy did not reply—indeed, for the moment she was unable to speak. The last three weeks had tried her sorely. She had as she had thought decided to link her fate with that of Bob Nancarrow. She had, in spite of herself, confessed her love for him, and had promised to be his wife. Then suddenly the heavens had become black. The great war had broken out, and then when almost every young man she knew had offered himself for his country, the man she loved had proved a coward, and had sought to hide his cowardice behind pious platitudes. She blushed with shame as she thought of it. She hated herself for having loved a man who was unworthy to call himself an Englishman. And yet she had told him that she loved him. She had allowed him to hold her in his arms, while he had rained kisses on her lips. She, the daughter of Admiral Tresize, she, who bore a name which had ever been honoured among people who had fought for their country’s safety and honour, had promised herself to a poltroon, a coward! The thought was maddening, and yet she had not been able to drive her love from her heart. In spite of his cowardice she still loved him. Even when she sought to insult him at the recruiting meeting she loved him. She constantly found herself trying to make excuses for him. But the fact remained. He had held back in the time of his country’s peril, he had refused to listen when the King had sent out his call! Even when she had given him the white feather, his manhood had not been aroused. He had stood like a sulky school-boy, ashamed of his cowardice, but still a coward.

Yes, all was over between herself and Bob Nancarrow. How could it be otherwise? She had given him every chance to explain himself, and she had listened to his reasons for holding back. And such reasons! How could she, Nancy Tresize, who came from a race of fighters, accept such paltry excuses? Christianity to her meant the highest code of honour: it meant faithfulness to promise, it meant honour, it meant truth, it meant defending the weak—and in all this Bob had failed.

And yet she loved him. In her heart of hearts she did not believe he was a coward; as for meanness and dishonour, they were alien to his nature.

Of course she knew why Captain Trevanion had come, even before he had spoken. She had not been blind during the past year, and therefore, could not mistake the meaning of his attentions. She admired him too. He was just the kind of man she had always admired. He was the son of one of the oldest and most honoured families in the land; he was generous, chivalrous, brave, handsome.

What more could she want? How the people cheered at the recruiting meeting! And what wonder? He had touched their hearts by his burning words, and he was just off to fight for his country.

Every selfish interest, every tradition of her family pleaded for him. She was fond of him too. She had always liked him as a friend; she had always admired him as a loyal gentleman and a soldier. Of course, he was not clever. He was no lover of books, and, compared with Bob, he was an ignoramus; but what did that matter? He was a brave man—a gentleman.

As for Bob, all their former relations were ended. He himself had closed and bolted the door between them. The choice had been between her and honour on the one hand, and selfish ease and cowardice on the other. And Bob had chosen to be a coward. What could she do, therefore, but drive him from her mind, and crush all affection for him? Was it not her duty to her father, her family, and to herself to accept Trevanion?

“You are not vexed with me, are you?” went on Trevanion, after he had waited a few seconds.

“No, not vexed.”

“Then—then, can’t you give me a word of hope? I—I don’t even ask you to make a definite promise, although I’d give my eyes if you could; but if you could tell me that you liked no one better, and that I—I may speak again—if—if I come back, I could go away with a braver heart. I should feel all the time as if I were fighting for you. Just say something to cheer me, won’t you, Nancy?”

“I’m afraid I can’t,” the girl’s voice was hoarse as she spoke. Evidently his words had moved her greatly.

“Why? There is no one else, is there?”

“No, yes, that is——”

“Some one else! But, Nancy——”

“No, there is no one else.”

“Then, Nancy, promise me something. Give me an inkling of hope.”

She shook her head.

“But why?”

“Because—because it would not be fair to you.”

“Anything would be fair to me if you’d give me some hope.”

“Even if I could only offer you half my heart?”

“Give me half, and I’d quickly gain the rest,” laughed Trevanion. “Why, why, I should be in heaven if you could say even so much.”

“Do you care so much?” and there was a touch of wistfulness in her voice.

“So much! Why, you know. You have been the only thing I’ve cared for—for months. Why, you—you are everything to me. I’m not a clever fellow, I know that—but—but—I can fight, Nancy. And it’s all for you.”

Nancy stood still a few seconds, evidently fighting with herself. She knew she

could not in honour promise even what Trevanion had asked for without telling him the truth. And this was terribly difficult. She felt that he had a right to know, and yet it was like sacrilege to tell him.

“You see,” went on the Captain, “your father——!”

“Stop!” cried the girl; “before you say any more, I must tell you something. It’s very hard, but I must. I said there was no one else, but that’s not—true.”

“Not true! Then, then——”

“There was some one else, although it’s—all over.”

“But, but who? No, forgive me for asking. I’ve no right to ask. Besides, you say—that—that it’s a thing of the past.”

“You have a right to ask if—if——”

“If what? Tell me who—if you think it fair of me to ask.”

“Can’t you guess?”

“There can be no one, except—I say, Nancy, you can’t mean Nancarrow?”

She nodded her head.

“But, Nancy—that—that——”

“Don’t, please. I loved him—at least I thought I did, and—and we were engaged. If—if—that is, but for the war, he would have spoken to father by this time, and—and everything would have been made known. When—he played the coward, I found out my mistake, and I told him so.”

“Great heavens, yes! It was, of course, only a foolish fancy. A girl like you could never seriously care for that class of man.”

“I am ashamed of myself when I think of him,” and Nancy’s voice was hoarse as she spoke. “In a way I feel contaminated. If there is anything under heaven that I despise, it’s a coward. I want to forget that I—I ever thought of him. I want to drive him from my mind.”

“And that is what keeps you from promising me anything. But surely you do not care for him now. Why—why, you couldn’t! The fellow who could show the white feather at such a time as this, and then try and cover up his cowardice by all that religious humbug, is not of your class, Nancy. He’s a rank outsider. I’m sorry I was ever friends with him. Your father told me he was mad with himself for ever allowing him inside the house.”

“That’s why I’m so ashamed of——”

“We’ll drive him from our minds, Nancy. There, he’s done with. He’s not worthy of a thought. You owe it to yourself, to your name, your country, to banish it from your mind.”

For the moment Nancy was angry with Trevanion. She wanted to defend Bob. She wanted to tell him that Bob was braver than he. But she could not. She had spoken truly when she said that she was ashamed of herself for having allowed herself to think of him.

“Give me even the shadow of a promise,” went on Trevanion, “and all thought

of him will be for ever gone.”

“No,” said Nancy, “I can promise nothing—now.”

“But will you try—to—to care for me?”

“Yes,” said the girl, “I’ll promise that, if—if it will be of any comfort to you.”

“I don’t fear now,” cried Trevanion. “Everything will be right. What you have been telling me is nothing—just a passing fancy which will be—nothing. Give me a kiss, Nancy, and——”

“No,” said the girl, and she shrank back almost instinctively, “not that; but the other—yes, I’ll promise to try.”

“I’m the happiest man in England with only that,” laughed Trevanion; “what shall I be when—when the war is over, and I come back to claim my own. I shall find you waiting for me, shan’t I?”

“I—I don’t know. I may not come back. It what the papers say is true, even the nurses are not safe.”

“But have you really settled to go abroad as a nurse?”

“I thought you understood that when you were here last. I go to London the day after to-morrow, and in a week from now I expect to be in one of the French hospitals.”

“I had hoped you’d given up that,” said the Captain moodily.

“Why should you hope that? If it’s your duty to go, it is mine. There are plenty of nurses for the English hospitals, but there are fewer volunteers for Belgium and France. I suppose the most hopeful cases are sent home to England. Those who are dangerously wounded remain in France or Belgium. That’s where I want to be.”

Trevanion looked at her with admiring eyes. Even while he hoped she would remain in England, he admired her determination to go and nurse the worst cases.

“What a wife she’ll be!” he reflected. “Proud as Lucifer and honourable to the finger tips. Yes, I’ve got her. She’ll regard even this shadow of a promise as binding on her. As for Nancarrow, he’s done with for ever. Thank heaven for that! By Jove, I’m a lucky beggar!”

“Perhaps we may meet in France, Nancy,” he said aloud; “I may be wounded, and——”

“Don’t!” she said, with a shudder.

“Heavens, she loves me!” thought the Captain. “She can’t bear the idea of my being wounded.”

“Anyhow, the man who has you as a nurse may thank his lucky stars,” he said aloud, “and of this you may be sure, if there’s any chance of our meeting, I shall make the most of it. Trust me for that.”

That same day Trevanion made his way back to Plymouth with a glad heart. He regarded his engagement with Nancy as good as settled, for he knew that she regarded even the suggestion of a promise as sacred. Besides, he had everything in

his favour. He knew that the old Admiral favoured his suit, and would do his best to remove any doubts which might exist in Nancy's mind. As for Bob Nancarrow, he was a negligible quantity. Nancy had driven him out of the house with scorn and anger in her heart. How could it be otherwise? The fellow was an outsider, a poltroon, a coward. He knew how Nancy despised such; knew that even if she loved him, she would regard it as a sacred duty to crush a love which to her would be a disgrace to the name she bore.

Thus it came about that all three found themselves on French soil. The Captain went at the head of a Cornish regiment, brave and fearless, determined to do his duty as a soldier should. The ethics of the war had never cost him a moment's thought. England was at war, and that was enough for him. He was needed in the firing-line, and he, without a question or a reason, save that he was a soldier, must be there.

Nancy, on the other hand, went because she wanted to nurse—to save. It was a woman's work—the noblest any woman could do. She was not allowed to fight herself, although she would gladly have done so; but even although she could not fight, she would be near the line of battle. She would do all in her power for the brave fellows who had fallen in fighting their country's battles.

As for Bob, he was there because he had listened to what he was sure was the Call of God. He hated war, he hated the soldiers' calling, and, because he hated it, he was there. Not one in the whole of His Majesty's Army was more eager to be in the thick of the fight than he, because he wanted to take his part in killing the war devil which had turned a great part of Europe into a hell.

CHAPTER XVI

September was nearly at an end when Bob, alighting at a little station, heard the booming of guns. The country-side seemed quiet and peaceful but for this. There were evidences that fighting had been going on, but at present no fighting was to be seen. The sky was a great dome of blue, the air was pure and sweet. It was as though great Mother Nature were defying the War God to disturb her tranquillity. Scarcely a breath of wind stirred; bird and beast and flower were composing themselves for their nightly sleep.

And yet to Bob the atmosphere was tense with excitement. The very calm of the evening was unnatural. He felt as though lightnings should be flashing, the wind roaring.

“Boom! Boom! Boom!”

The great War God was roaring, and from his mouth death came. With every boom of the guns men were falling, souls were going home to God.

Bob felt a shiver to the centre of his being. It seemed to him as though the foundations of his life were shaken. He had never experienced such a feeling before. He did not think it was fear; rather it was awesomeness. For a moment he regarded life, his own life, from a new standpoint. He was only a pawn on a chess-board, one of a million of human beings, none of whom had any personality, any will. Life and death were nothing. Each had to fill his place, and to do what was allotted to him, regardless of consequences.

He found himself thinking of lines from “The Charge of the Light Brigade”:

“Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die,
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.”

Suddenly he found himself alert. The men were forming into marching order, and almost unconsciously he was performing the duties allotted to him.

Bob saw that a large mass of men had gathered. Other trains had arrived before the one by which he had come, and each had brought its quota from England.

He realised, as he had never realised before, how efficiently, quietly, and at the same time wonderfully, the forces at home were working. He, like others, had read several weeks before, that something like a hundred thousand men had landed on French soil without a casualty, without a mishap. It had come to him, as it had come to us all, as a kind of surprise, that such a mass of humanity, with horses,

accoutrements, and provisions, could have been sent to France with so little noise, and without the nation's knowing anything about it. Yet so it was. While we were wondering, the work was done.

But that was not all. While the country was asleep, or while it was pursuing its usual avocations, tens of thousands of men were leaving our shores, taking the places of those who had fallen or adding to the force already there, while tens of thousands more were preparing to leave. The heart of the Empire was moved, and her sons were offering themselves, many thousands every day, to fight her battles.

“How many men have we at the front?” we often asked.

No one knew, although we hazarded many guesses. But we knew that we were doing what we could, that a great river of humanity was flowing into France, and that hundreds of thousands of our bravest hearts were beating on foreign soil, and that no matter how many men fell wounded or dead, ten times their number could and would be supplied.

Bob's heart thrilled as he thought of it. He was only an obscure youth, who had first fought his battle on the solitary battlefield of his own soul, and then, as a consequence, could no longer keep himself from throwing himself into this great light against tyranny and militarism.

They were marching towards the firing-line! The boom of the guns sounded more and more near. Sometimes above the steady tramp, tramp of the soldiers they thought they heard the ghastly whistle of the shells as they went on their mission of death.

Bob looked on the faces of the men as they marched. Yes, it was easy to see by the steely glitter of their eyes, the tightly compressed lips, that every nerve was in tension, that they knew they were entering the danger zone. Many were praying who had not prayed for years, while others, careless of life or death, marched forward, with a laugh on their lips.

It is not for me to describe what took place during the next few days. Indeed, I could not if I would. First, the news which has reached me concerning them is scanty—so scanty that even if I recorded every word of it, it would add but little interest to the narrative I am writing. More than that, I am utterly ignorant of the art of war, and if I tried to describe in anything like detail the events which have been related to me, I should, doubtless, fall into many mistakes, and convey altogether wrong impressions. Besides, I am not so much writing the story of the war, as the story of Robert Nancarrow, and of what has befallen him these last few weeks.

For the first fortnight after Bob joined the British forces at the front, he was disappointed at not being placed in the fighting-line. Moreover, his duties seemed to him of an unimportant nature, such as could have been performed by the most unintelligent. He saw others take the places which he longed to occupy, while he had to attend to merely mechanical duties.

Still he did not complain. The work he was doing had to be done, and since some one must do it, why not he as well as another? The great fact which cheered him was that little by little the Allies were slowly gaining ground in this "Battle of the Rivers," even although he saw but little of it. Neither, for that matter, did he know very much of the progress which was being made generally. He was so situated that he heard very little of what was being done. People in England were far better informed of what was taking place than the soldiers, except in some little corner of the great battlefield where they were individually engaged.

He saw enough, however, to realise the horror all around him, and to become inured to the life he was living.

"Oh, to be in the thick of it!" he cried again and again, as day after day passed, and he was continually delegated to what seemed to him unimportant duties. He little realised that his time was coming, and that he was to be baptized with a baptism of fire more terrible than befell many, even in that time of horrible carnage.

It was on a Sunday morning in October, in this year of our Lord, 1914, that the events which I have now to describe, began. In England I remember it was like a summer day, while in France it was even warmer, and more cloudless. The night had been comparatively still, and the enemies' guns had scarcely been heard since sunset.

The sentries had reported all well, and when the morning came, it seemed to be generally believed that it would be a quiet day. On the distant hills, several miles away, the German hordes were entrenched and alert. The day previous the Allies had been less harried, and tens of thousands who had been well-nigh worn out by continuous fighting had gained some measure of respite.

Bob awoke just before dawn. All along the lines were watchful sentinels; but many thousands, assured by the reports of those on outpost duty that all was well, were asleep. Presently the *réveillé* sounded, and then, what had seemed an uninhabited tract of country, was peopled by a great armed host. Men in khaki were everywhere. On every hand were preparations for breakfast; laughter and shouts were heard on every hand. As the light increased, Bob saw thousands upon thousands of men. They literally swarmed everywhere.

"Colonel Sapsworth wants you, sir."

Bob turned and saw a soldier saluting him as delivered his message.

"I wonder what that means," thought Bob, as he found his way towards the spot where the Colonel was. A minute later his heart was beating high with joy and excitement. He was informed that he was appointed to a post of responsibility, which might be of importance. A number of men were to be placed under his command, and great events might be taking place in a few hours.

"I shall know definitely soon," Colonel Sapsworth said, when he had given him some general directions. "Meanwhile you know what to do."

He had scarcely spoken, when a man came to the a tent and asked for admission; a second later he had entered, bearing a despatch.

Colonel Sapsworth read it hastily.

“By God!” he muttered under his breath; “but I expected it!”

It was a despatch sent from the General of the Division telling him that an attack on his forces would possibly be made that day—that men in the Flying Corps had been able to see the general movements of the enemy, and had brought the news that before long great masses of men would be upon them.

A few minutes later everything was in order. The officers had each received his instructions, and were on the *qui vive*.

It was only half an hour past daylight, and the dewdrops were still glistening on the grass and shining on the tree-tops. It seemed as if some occult influences were at work, and that the men were conscious of the fact that the atmosphere was laden with tragedy, for instead of laughter and merry jest, a strange silence prevailed.

Only one sound broke the great stillness which had fallen on the camp. It was the sound of a body of men singing:

“O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.”

Bob had heard both hymn and tune a hundred times in St. Ia. He thought, too, from the intonation of the men’s voices, that they were Cornish lads who sang. For the moment he forgot where he was, and was oblivious to the fact that he was in the midst of a great armed host, and that tens of thousands of men were all around him, each armed with implements of death. He was in Cornwall again, and he was breathing the Sabbath morning air. He heard the church bells ringing in the distance, while the hymn he heard came from some humble Meeting House where simple people met together for prayer and praise.

“A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening——”

“Some religious swabs,” laughed one.

“Boom! boom! Crack, crack, boom!”

The hymn was broken off in the middle. The sound of guns was nearer than Bob had ever heard it before. The enemy had evidently decided upon a surprise attack.

A horrible screech rent the air, and, looking up, Bob saw an explosion. It was as though a bouquet of fire were falling on them; and then he heard noises such as he had never heard before. It was the groans of the wounded; the cries of men

pierced by arrows of fire; the moaning of brave fellows torn and mutilated for life.

The British guns answered the fire of the enemy, while all around quick, decisive commands were given.

For some hours after this Bob had only a vague remembrance of what took place. He knew that the position they now occupied had been captured from the enemy, who had receded only with the idea of endeavouring to take it again. Evidently they had kept the secret of their plans well, for from all the reports given on the previous night there had been no likelihood of an early attack. But for the Flying Corps they would have been utterly surprised, and even as it was their preparations had to be hurriedly made.

“Boom! boom!” bellowed forth the big guns.

“Crack! crack!” said the voices of a thousand rifles.

Bob’s remembrance was that he was calmly fulfilling the orders that had been given to him, and that he was strangely oblivious of danger.

Event after event seemed to follow each other, like so many pictures in a cinema performance.

He remembered his men in their trenches coolly firing, while shot and shell fell thick around them.

Later, they moved forward, and took cover under some raised ground, where they lay silently and warily watching.

He was watching too. In his eagerness he had risen to his feet, and thus exposed himself to the sight of the enemy. The ground was torn up at his feet, and he felt something burning hot graze his arm, as if some one had touched him with a burning knife.

But he was unhurt! He knew that a bullet had only touched his arm. An inch to the right, and it would have missed him altogether; two inches to the left, and his arm would have been shattered; a foot to the left, and he would, in all probability, have been killed.

He saw a body of men in German uniform moving nearer to them. It was a great mass of soldiers, who came on in great blocks of sixty or eighty, four deep. The British waited silently, awaiting the word of command. Eagerly they longed for the word, “Fire!”

At last it came, and almost as if by magic a thousand rifles went off at the same moment, leaving great gaps in the German ranks which had a few seconds before been filled with a living, breathing humanity.

Again the crack of rifles, and again gaps were made. But still the enemy came forward. Bob even thought he heard the cry of “*Vorwärts! Vorwärts!*”

Now and then above the din he heard what seemed like the sound of singing. It sounded like the tune he had heard early in the morning.

Meanwhile the cannonade continued to rage. The heavens were full of bursting shells, even the very skies seemed like hell.

Hour after hour the fusillade continued, and presently there was a halt in the enemies' progress. They were falling back.

“Now at them! Give 'em ——”

There was a wild rush forward. How long it continued Bob could not tell. Behind them the big English guns were booming, and he knew that our artillery was pounding at the German trenches a long distance away.

Forward! forward!

Shot and shell were dropping thickly around, while on the right and left men were falling. In the distance lay the German trenches. Could they be reached? Yes, a few minutes later our men were in them. For a time at all events Bob's company was in comparative safety.

Panting aloud the hardy lads threw themselves into position. They had gained their immediate object, but could they hold it?

Suddenly amid the din a musical note rang out; it pierced the very heavens, it was more penetrating than the boom of the big guns, the screech of shells, or the crack of rifles.

From the distant heather, perhaps half a mile away, men with clear sight could see great masses of humanity in grey rise, seemingly out of the earth, and Bob heard the distant sound of fifes and drums.

“They are going to charge us!”

Who said this no one knew, but it did not matter. All knew it was true. Strong stalwart men they were who rushed madly forward. They were commanded to do so, and they must not disobey. Every step meant death to many, but Germany was careless about her losses. They must win the victory, they must get back the position they had lost, no matter what it might cost.

“We are lost!” thought Bob: “what are we against so many?”

But even before the thought had passed his mind, out from their cover came the British—sections, companies, battalions.

Then, almost before Bob realised what was taking place, a great hand-to-hand carnage began. Shrieks, groans, cries filled the heavens. From that time Bob ceased to be the quiet student who had aspirations after a serene scholastic life. He was an Englishman doing battle with a huge fighting machine. He was one of the many who determined to cut out the great cancer of Europe. England and all she stood for was at stake. Honour, faithfulness to promise, liberty, religion, all must be maintained!

He found himself facing a huge German. The German hesitated a second, and rushed on him. It was that moment's hesitation to which Bob owed his life. With all the strength of his right arm he parried the fearful lunge of the German, who rushed on him with fixed bayonet. A second later the man fell.

Bob shuddered as he saw him fall. What had he against the man he had killed? Nothing. Even at that moment he would gladly have helped him had he been able.

Possibly, probably he had a wife or sweetheart somewhere, probably too he was a quiet, inoffensive fellow who had no desire to harm any one. In spite of the war fever which raged, the English had no personal animus against the Germans. But then they were not fighting against Germans, they were fighting against the War God which dominated Germany, they were fighting a system which threatened the liberty, the peace, the religion of Europe—the world.

All this killing was hellish, but the cancer had to be cut out. If it were allowed to remain it would poison the life of the world.

“At ’em! at ’em!”

Blood and carnage everywhere; earth made hell at the bidding of a bully, a madman who declared himself to be the vicegerent of God. Yes, the horrors of war could not be described in human language, but it had to be waged in order to destroy the hellish doctrine that might was right, the hideous creed of “blood and iron.”

CHAPTER XVII

The English army had, for the time being, occupied the trenches from which they had driven the Germans, and for a moment they were safe. The enemy was moving away towards a distant hill, but a huge rearguard was on the alert.

The commanding officer knew that although a slight advantage had been gained, pursuit would be madness, so, taking advantage of the enemies' trenches, they decided to await further events.

To Bob, the whole day seemed like a dream. His encounter with the German private was like the memory of some event which had taken place long, long ago. All the same, it was a wonder to him that he was alive and unwounded.

All around him lay men in various positions; some never to rise again; some, even if they recovered, to be mutilated for life. Only now and then did the rearguard of the enemy's army reveal its whereabouts, but all knew that thousands of men were waiting for any advantage which might be given to them.

The day was fast dying, and whatever little wind there had been had nearly sunk to rest.

"Hello, Nancarrow! you here?"

"Pickford! Great heavens, man, whoever thought of seeing you!"

It was an old school-fellow who spoke to Bob. They had been four years together at Clifton, and Pickford had been on the military side of the school.

When Bob had gone up to Oxford, Pickford had left for Sandhurst. They had last seen each other on what they called their breaking-up row at the school. Both of them had been as wild as March hares, and they with a hundred others had yelled like mad at the thought of their school days being over.

Now they had met on French soil, amidst carnage and the welter of blood, at the close of a day which would ever live in Bob's memory.

"I heard you had refused to enlist, Nancarrow."

"Who told you?"

"Trevanion: he said you had shown the white feather over the whole business, and pretended to excuse yourself by religious scruples."

Bob was silent for a moment; he scarcely knew how to reply.

"I told Trevanion he was altogether mistaken in you," went on Pickford; "but he gave such details of your refusal, and described in such graphic language what others had said about you, that it seemed impossible for him to be mistaken. Some girl gave you a white feather, didn't she, at the Public Hall in St. Ia?"

"Did Trevanion tell you that?"—and there was anger in Bob's voice.

"I thought it was scarcely a sportsmanlike thing to do," said Pickford, noticing the look on Bob's face; "I told him so, too. We were talking about you only last

night.”

“Is Trevanion here, then?”

“Yes: didn’t you know? He has been in the thick of it the whole day. As you know, he is Captain of the Royal West—a fine lot of men he has, too.”

“And he thinks I am still in Cornwall?” asked Bob.

“I suppose so. You see it was this way: we were talking about certain swabs of whom we were ashamed, and he mentioned you.”

“Don’t tell him I am here,” said Bob quietly.

“Why?”

“Never mind—don’t; I daresay he will find out soon enough.”

“Anyhow,” said Pickford, “he is awfully popular with himself just now; I hear he is certain to be a Major in a few days, and will be Colonel in no time. You know he is engaged?”

“Engaged? To whom?”

“You know her—old Tresize’s daughter; Nancy, I think her name is. Of course you know her: Penwennack, her father’s place, is close by St. Ia.”

“And—and is he engaged to her?”

“Yes,” replied Pickford.

“Did he tell you so himself?”

“No, not in so many words; but he spoke of her to one of the other men as his *fiancée*.”

Bob’s heart sank like lead; the worst he had feared had come to pass. This, then, was his reward for his fidelity to his conscience. He could not understand it. He knew Nancy was angry with him—angry at what she had called his cowardice, at his refusal to obey the call of his country. But he was sure she loved him: had she not told him so?—and now, to become engaged within only a few weeks, to the man she had spoken of, almost with scorn, was simply unbelievable.

For the moment he had become heedless of his surroundings; the fact that thousands of soldiers were crouching in the trenches waiting for any possible advance of the enemy, the groans of men who were wounded and perhaps dying, did not exist to him.

At that moment the issue of battles was less to him than the action of the woman he loved.

“I used to imagine you were gone on her,” went on Pickford; “I suppose it was only a boy-and-girl affair.”

Bob did not reply; he could not discuss the tragedy of his life with his old school-fellow.

“Where is Trevanion now?” he asked presently.

“He must be close by,” was the reply. “I saw him less than an hour ago, when the Germans were beginning to give way. Of course I have always known him to be a fine soldier, but I never knew he had so much of the fighting devil in him.

Man, you should have seen his eyes burn red—he was just like a wild savage. I think he forgot his duties as an officer and gave himself up to the lust of fighting.”

Pickford had scarcely uttered the words when a man came up to him. “I say, Trevanion’s missing,” he said.

“Trevanion missing? I was telling Nancarrow here that I saw him less than an hour ago.”

“Yes, so did I; but we have had later reports. Sergeant Beel says he saw him fall; I think he was wounded by a bullet. Beel was at that time so hard pressed that he could do nothing for him.”

In spite of himself a feeling of joy shot into Bob’s heart. If Trevanion were wounded, perhaps he—then . . . but he would not allow himself to complete the thought which had been born in his mind.

Bob found himself amidst a group of officers. “It is impossible to do anything for him,” he heard one say: “I know where he is, but no man’s life would be worth a pin’s purchase who tried to get at him. The Germans are not more than 500 yards away, and whoever shows himself to them is a dead man. Only a few minutes ago some men were trying to get from one trench to another, and they were just mowed down like grass.”

“But Trevanion may not be killed,” urged another, “and if he is badly wounded it might mean death to him if nothing is done for him. Besides, daylight will be gone in less than an hour, and if he is not got at at once, it will be impossible to find him in the dark.”

“And the man who tries to get at him in the light,” said another, “will find himself full of bullets.”

Bob listened eagerly to every word that was said, and again he could not help rejoicing at what seemed Trevanion’s fate. The fact that he had discussed his, Bob’s, cowardice with fellows with whom he had been at school had roused his anger against him; and when he was told that Trevanion was engaged to Nancy Tresize, a feeling of mad hatred mastered him.

“By God,” said one, “but we cannot leave him out there without trying to get at him! Isn’t there one of us who will make the attempt?”

“It would be a madman’s act,” cried another. “You know they are waiting for us, and, if any one dares to go out in the open, he is a dead man.”

“You say you know where he is now?” said Bob.

“I know where Sergeant Beel said he saw him,” was the reply.

“I should like to speak to Beel,” and Bob’s voice was very quiet as he spoke.

Instantly an order was given, and a few minutes later Sergeant Beel was saluting him.

“You say you saw Captain Trevanion fall?” said Bob.

“Yes, sir.”

“Can you point out the spot?”

“Yes, sir.”

A few minutes later Bob was in possession of all the information which the Sergeant could give.

“Heavens, you are not going, Nancarrow?”

“I’m going to have a try,” was Bob’s reply.

In the few seconds which it took Sergeant Beel to tell his story, Bob had been fighting the greatest battle of his life. It seemed to him as though thousands of devils were pleading with him to let his rival die, and all the time every particle of manhood he possessed was telling him where his duty lay.

If Nancy Tresize had promised Trevanion to be his wife, she must love him, and if she loved him, the death of her lover would be like death to her. Anyhow, it was for him to make the attempt.

He crept from his place of safety, and threw himself flat on the ground, while the others, with whispered exclamations of surprise, watched him.

Keeping his body as close as he could to the ground, he crawled forward. When he had been a boy, he, like thousands of other English boys, had played at fighting Indians, and the old trick of crawling close to the ground served him well now; but it was painfully slow, and every yard he took he expected to hear the whistle of bullets—to feel the baptism of fire.

When he had crawled perhaps one hundred yards, a rifle shot rang out, and he heard a bullet cut its way through the leaves of the trees in the near distance. Was it aimed at him? He didn’t know, but he did know that the nearer he went to the enemies’ lines, the greater chance they would have of seeing him.

“Why should I go any further?” he asked himself. “It is a madman’s trick I am playing. No one but an idiot would take such a risk; besides, it is useless—I can never reach him. Even if I get to the spot Beel described, I may not find him, and then I shall have simply thrown away my life for nothing.” Then for the first time that day he really felt what fear meant.

Since early morning he had been in the midst of the fray, now directing his soldiers, now fighting hand-to-hand battles, but never once had he felt fear; even when his comrades on his right hand and on his left had fallen, he had not felt even a tremor. His nerves had been wrought up to such a pitch that fear was almost impossible; rather he had known a kind of mad joy in fighting. When in answer to the German charge the English soldiers had rushed forward, bayonets fixed, to meet them, he knew he had become almost a savage in his lust for blood. More than once he had laughed aloud as slowly, amidst cries of pain, savage yells of joy, and feverish passion, they had fought their way, inch by inch, and driven the Germans back; but now he felt fear.

It was one thing to rush forward amidst the clash of arms and the cheers of his comrades; it was another to crawl along like an Indian savage, in the silence of the dying day. And for what purpose? To save a man who, half an hour before, he had

wished dead.

But he knew he could not go back. Something, he could not explain what, urged him forward. How could he go back with his purpose unfulfilled? What would the others say? In spite of the fact that he had undertaken what every man of them had said was a madman's act, they would in their heart of hearts scorn him for having played the coward.

Every muscle in his body ached; his hands were torn and bleeding; it seemed to him as if there were hammers striking his temples; sparks of fire were in his eyes,—still he struggled forward.

He lifted his head and looked around. Yes, he was near the spot which Sergeant Beel had described. Daylight was now falling, and half an hour later darkness would be upon them. If his mission were not accomplished whilst the light lasted, the Captain would have to lie until the morning, and if he were wounded, he might during those hours die from loss of blood.

Again there was a crack of rifles, and he heard the whistle of bullets as they passed by him; one of these was not more than a yard away. What the Germans meant, he did not know, neither could he tell whether he had been seen, but he was sure that his life was not worth a pin's purchase.

He had left his sword behind—that was of no use to him now and would be only an encumbrance—but he had his revolver ready to hand.

Feverishly he looked around him, but nowhere could he see the man he sought. Still, he had done his duty; he could go back to Pickford and the other fellows and tell them he had done his best and had failed.

But he stayed where he was.

He realised that he was faint and hungry. Since, early that Sunday morning he had scarcely partaken of food; all day long there had been mad fighting and deadly carnage, and in his excitement he had forgotten hunger; now he thought he was going to faint. Then suddenly every nerve became tense again. He saw not more than a dozen yards away a man in German uniform; like lightning his hand flew to his revolver, and he held himself in readiness. Scarcely had he done so, when he heard a groan. The German also evidently heard it, for he quickly made his way towards the spot from which the sound came.

A moment later Bob heard the German give a low laugh as if he were pleased, but the laugh died in its birth; before it was finished, a bullet from Bob's revolver had pierced his brain. Forgetful of danger, he rushed forward, and saw that he had not been a moment too soon. The German was about to drive his sword into the body of a prostrate man.

"It is he!" cried Bob, in a hoarse whisper; he had found the man he had come to seek. There, partly hidden by a small bush, lay Captain Trevanion, and on his face was a pallor like the pallor of death.

"He is alive," reflected Bob; "I heard him groan just now."

He put his ear close to Trevanion's heart and listened. Yes, he was faintly breathing, but his clothes were saturated with blood.

With trembling hands Bob undid the other's uniform, and was not long in finding a wound from which oozed his life's blood. He called to mind all the medical knowledge he had, and set to work to stop the bleeding; in a few minutes had partially succeeded.

But how to get him back to the English lines! That was the question. He did not think Trevanion was in any immediate danger now. All he could do was to wait until the daylight was gone, and then carry the wounded man to a place of safety. But he dared not wait. The wound began bleeding again. Trevanion was a heavy man, almost as heavy as Bob himself, and in carrying him he knew that he must expose himself to the German fire; but that risk must be taken.

He thought he might carry him two or three hundred yards before being shot, and by that time he would be near enough to the English lines to enable those who were watching, to reach them.

Bob could never call clearly to mind any details of the next few minutes. He knew that he was stumbling along in the twilight, bearing a heavy burden—knew, too, that bullets whizzed by him; but, heedless of everything, he plodded forward. He had a vague idea, too, that he must be seen; but all thought of danger had gone.

If he were killed, he was killed, and that was all.

Then suddenly cheers reached him. It seemed to him as though a thousand arms were around him, and wild excited cries filled the air. After that he knew no more.

When he came to himself again, he was lying in a tent, and bending over him was a face he had never seen before.

"There, you'll do now; you're all right."

"Who are you?" asked Bob.

"I'm Doctor Grey; but that doesn't matter. You haven't a wound or a scratch, my dear chap; you just fainted—that was all. How the devil you got through, I don't know; but there it is, you're as right as rain."

"Have I been long here?"

"Not more than five minutes. Heavens, man, it was the maddest thing I ever heard of! Trevanion is in a bad way; whether he'll pull through or not, I don't know; but if he does, he'll owe his life to you. He was slowly bleeding to death, and of course your getting him here didn't help him. Still, he's in good hands."

"He's alive, then?"

"Oh, yes, he's alive, and I think he'll live; still, he'll have a bad time. Oh, yes, you can get up, if you want; you're all right. When did you have food last?"

"I don't think I remember," said Bob. "It must have been about midday, I think."

"I thought so. Now drink this. Do you mind seeing the fellows? That's right;

here they come. Now, Pringle—oh, yes, and Colonel Sapsworth too—no wonder you are proud of your subaltern; there are men who've got the Victoria Cross for less."

Colonel Sapsworth caught Bob's hand and wrung it without a word.

Bob saw his lips tremble beneath his grey moustache, saw too that his eyes were filled with tears; but Colonel Sapsworth was a man who didn't talk much. "You're a plucky young devil," he said, "but I thought you had it in you. There, there, do you feel better now? By Jove, you're the talk of the whole division! Yes, Trevanion will do all right—at least, I hope so," and then the Colonel rubbed his eyes.

"That is enough," said Dr. Grey. "I'm chief in command here; he wants a few hours' rest, and then he'll be as right as ever. Meanwhile, let him alone; the young beggar has had a hard day."

CHAPTER XVIII

After the incidents I have just recorded, Bob had no longer reason to complain that he was kept out of the firing-line. Event after event followed quickly in what is now generally spoken of as "The Battle of the Rivers."

Position after position was taken by the English, only to be lost again; now the Germans were driven back, and again, although on the whole progress was made, the English were driven back, but all the time carnage and bloodshed continued.

Every day and all through the days the great guns poured forth red-hot death. Every day the welter of blood went on.

We in England read in our newspapers that a great flanking movement was taking place which was eventually either to wipe out or capture General von Kluck's Army, and for this, day after day, we waited in vain.

We were told that the Germans were surrounded by a ring of steel, from which, except a miracle took place, they could not escape; but somehow there was an opening in the ring of steel, and nothing decisive took place. In the minds of many, conviction grew that it might be years before the war, brought about by the Germans, would come to an end.

The soldiers at the front knew little of this. I, who have received letters from more than one of them, learned that they, who were in the very thick of the fighting, knew practically nothing of the trend of the war. The interest of each regiment was largely confined to the little space it occupied.

All the soldiers knew was that they were advancing slowly, and that instead of the German army's reaching Paris, it was steadily going backward.

Tragedy ceased to be tragedy, because it became so commonplace; death was an everyday event, and men grew almost careless of it. "It may be my turn to-day," they said one to another, with a grim laugh; and some of them, even when they were wounded, jested about their sufferings.

This, however, Bob could not help noticing; he was more and more trusted by his Colonel, and, although he was in a subordinate position, work of importance was often entrusted to him. Especially was this the case after an incident, which, in one form or another, was repeated all along the battle-line.

One morning a young officer came to him saying that he had been requested to obtain information which Bob had gathered the day before, and concerning which a new line of action had to be taken.

This young officer was an utter stranger to Bob, but, seeing he possessed the necessary papers, he spoke to him freely.

"We had a great day yesterday," he said.

"We shall have a greater to-morrow," was Bob's reply.

A few minutes later the two were eagerly discussing what would probably take place, and Bob found himself giving away information of great importance.

"I wish I could talk German," said the young officer presently. "I had heaps of chances whilst I was at school, but, like a fool, I neglected them."

"Why, what would you do?" asked Bob.

"I would find my way to the enemies' camp," was the reply; "and I would learn what they are up to; it would be a great advantage to us. It is said that our lines are filled with German spies."

"I suppose spies are necessary," was Bob's reply; "but, somehow, spying does not fall in with our ideas; still, I suppose we have to use them."

"Those Germans are such mean devils," was Captain Rivers' retort; "there's no dirty work they aren't prepared to do; still, if I only knew German, I would be a match for 'em. I suppose you do not happen to know German?"

Bob did not reply, but he looked at the other keenly, noticing his fair, smooth, ruddy face and altogether innocent appearance. Then a suspicion was born in his mind. "Wait a minute, will you?" he said, and then, calling a soldier, told him to fetch Lieutenant Proctor, as he wished to speak to him.

"What's up, Nancarrow?" said Proctor, when he came.

"I want to know how poor Trevanion is getting on have you heard anything?"

"He has been removed to a hospital at C——," replied Proctor; "as you know, he was not well enough to be sent back to England. I'm afraid it will be a long time before he is well again."

"Let's see, who is taking his place?"

"Captain Tremaine. Didn't you know? Promotions are rapid in these days."

"Oh, he has got his captaincy, has he? By the way, there is something else I want to ask you," and Bob, knowing that Proctor had spent some time in Germany, spoke to him in German.

While Proctor was replying, he gave a quick glance at Rivers, and then moved towards him. It was no time for hesitation or parley.

"Rivers," said Bob—"if that is your name—you're a liar. You know German, and, if I'm not mistaken, you're a German spy. At him, Proctor." The last words came out like a shot from a pistol, and he saw Rivers draw a revolver from his pocket as if he intended to shoot him. A few seconds later he was fast bound, and Bob and Proctor escorted Rivers towards General Fortescue's tent.

"General," said Bob, "this man tells me he was sent to me from you; is that true?"

"Heavens, no! I never saw the fellow before, but I am inclined to think we have put our hands upon a spy," he said, when Bob had recorded what had taken place.

Ten minutes later the guilt of the *soi-disant* Rivers was proved up to the hilt.

Notes were found on his person proving not only the fact that he had come

from the German lines, but that he had for some time been gathering information in the British lines, with the evident intention of conveying it to the enemy.

This information, moreover, was of such vital import, and it had been kept with such secrecy, that it seemed miraculous that he could have obtained it; still, obtained it he had, and a dozen proofs of his treachery were found upon him. To all questions, however, he maintained a rigid silence; evidently he was faithful to his own country.

“And did the blackguard tell you he did not know German?” asked the General.

“That’s what aroused my suspicions, sir,” replied Bob. “He was like a character in Hamlet—he protested too much; this made me send for Proctor, to whom I could speak German in a natural sort of way. As I watched his face, I saw that he understood every word that was being said, and I took steps accordingly.”

“A jolly sensible thing to do,” was the General’s response. “Still, we have spotted him, and, what is more, the biter’s bitten; not only will he fail to carry back the information he has gained, to the enemy, but his papers reveal their intentions, and so you have rendered us a great service.”

A little later on, the man who had called himself Rivers, but whose real name, according to his papers, was Werter, was shot.

“That Nancarrow is a useful man,” said Colonel Sapsworth to the General, not long after, when they were discussing the situation.

“He certainly seems to have behaved very well,” was the General’s response.

“I have had my eye upon him for weeks,” said the Colonel. “From the first time I saw him, I felt he had the makings of a good soldier, and I gave special instructions about him. Of course, I had to be careful, and I saw to it that he was tested in various ways; but he’s as plucky as they make ’em. Of course, it was a mad thing to do to creep out into the open, as he did, and bring back Trevanion, but it was a fine thing all the same.”

“He seems quite intelligent too,” said the General.

“Yes, the way he nabbed that German was just fine; he had very little data upon which to go, and it seems that this man Werter has been on the loose for weeks. Nancarrow, however, spotted him, and now he will not do any more spying. If Nancarrow doesn’t get killed, he will be of great service to us.”

“We’ll give him every chance,” was the General’s reply, “and if what you have told me is a true indication of his quality, he shall not lack for opportunity.”

This was probably why, a few days later, Bob was placed in command of a number of men to do outpost duty in the direction of the enemies’ lines.

For three days the English had been preparing for an attack which they hoped might be of considerable importance, but it was vital to the fulfilment of their plans that they should not be in any way surprised before they were ready.

It was well known that the Germans were in strong force close by, and that any

false step might prove disastrous.

It was late in the evening when Bob and the men placed under his command found themselves at the post which had been allotted to them. All round them was wooded country, which made observation difficult, but which also sheltered them from the enemies' fire.

"Anything may happen here, sir," said a young non-commissioned officer to Bob.

"Still things seem pretty quiet; we may as well feed now."

Bob was on good terms with his men, and while he never slackened discipline in the slightest degree, he tried to be friendly with all. He ate the same food and partook of the same danger—never in any degree commanding them to do what he himself shirked.

The little meal was nearly over, and Bob was taking his last drink of tea out of a tin can, when he caught a sound which brought him quickly to his feet.

Ten seconds later every soldier was on the alert, ready for action. Then in the light of the dying day they saw a number of men marching from behind the trees.

"They look like our own men," said Corporal West; "still, them blessed Germans' uniform seems just the same colour as our own in this light."

A minute later some English words rang out in the still evening air.

"We're the Lancashire Fusiliers," said a voice.

"Wait a minute," said Bob to the corporal. "I am going to see who they are before taking any risks."

He covered the intervening space in less than a minute, and saw that the other party was not quite so large as his own, but still of considerable strength. They wore, as far as he could judge, the English uniform, and gave evidence that they were our own soldiers.

Barely had he reached the man whom he supposed to be the officer, however, than from behind the trees a dozen more rushed to him, whom he had not hitherto seen. A second later, he was surrounded.

"Speak one word, and you're a dead man," was the cry. Bob knew what this meant. If his soldiers remained in ignorance, and were unable to give alarm to the general army, the enemy could easily surprise them and have them at advantage. Without a second's hesitation, however, and unmindful of his own danger, he shouted aloud:

"They're Germans. Fire!"

Almost at the same moment there was a crash of rifle shots, and the men around him fell by scores. It seemed almost miraculous that he himself was untouched, but, before he had time to say another word, a huge German struck him with the butt-end at his revolver, and he felt himself hastily dragged away.

For some time after this he little knew what was taking place; he had a vague idea, however, that he was in the hands of the enemy, but, from the fact that they

were going away from the English lines, he hoped that his action had not been in vain.

As his senses returned to him, he saw that he was accompanied by a dozen German soldiers, and that he was being hastily dragged towards the German lines.

“We’ve got *you*, anyhow,” said one by his side.

“Where are you taking me?” asked Bob.

“You’ll soon know,” was the reply.

“I fancy I spoiled your little game, anyhow,” and Bob was able to laugh, in spite of the fact that the world seemed to be swimming around him.

“Yes, our trick nearly succeeded; but, thanks to you, it has been spoiled,” was the German’s grim reply. “Still, better luck next time.”

“I fancy you have lost heavily,” said Bob.

“Yes,” replied the German, “every man except ourselves is either killed or taken prisoner. Still, we’ve got you.”

“That doesn’t matter much,” replied Bob. “Your little plans are spoiled, and by this time all the information will be in the right quarters.”

The German with whom he had this conversation spoke English almost like a native; indeed, but for certain intonations, he might easily pass as an Englishman. The others were evidently ignorant of our language, but spoke to each other freely in their own tongue. Apparently they imagined that their prisoner was entirely ignorant of what they said, and Bob was not long in gathering the importance of what had taken place. But for his little company, which had surprised and overwhelmed them, they would have been able to carry out their plans without our Army’s knowing anything of their whereabouts. It was evident, too, that they were in considerable apprehension as to how they would be treated when they reported their failure. They had not only failed to accomplish their purpose, but they had lost a large number of men. As Bob thought over the matter, he realised that had he hesitated a second before speaking, he would have been silenced altogether, and that they would have been able to accomplish their purpose.

Half an hour later he found himself in the German camp.

Night had now fallen, but in the light of the moon he saw that he was surrounded by vast hordes of men. No one spoke to him, however; but he saw by the many glances that were cast at him, that he was an abject of great interest.

Some time later he came to the conclusion that he had reached the quarters of officers in high position. He was evidently away from the main army, and from the nature of his surroundings he came to the conclusion that he was to be questioned by those in high places.

The officer who had captured him and who spoke English, made his way to a large tent, and was evidently making his report of what had taken place.

Bob could not catch a word of what was being said, but he noted that the officers constantly threw glances towards him.

A few minutes later he found himself amongst a number of men, whom he couldn't help realising occupied important commands.

To his surprise these men seemed to speak to him quite freely, and appeared to desire to be on friendly terms. They told him they were naturally chagrined at the failure of their plans, but congratulated him on his coolness and courage in giving warning to his men. After this, they tried to draw him into conversation about the numbers of the Allies, and of their plans of warfare. As may be imagined, however, Bob was very careful of what he said, and gave them only the vaguest generalities.

One thing, however, struck him very forcibly; instead of being treated harshly, each seemed to vie with the other in showing him kindnesses. Good food was brought to him, and excellent wine was placed before him.

He, like others, had heard of the harshness with which English prisoners were treated; thus, when he found himself regarded rather as an honoured guest than as a prisoner of war, his astonishment was great.

Nearly all the officers spoke English, and they laughed and chatted with him freely. They told him that all the reports he had heard about the bitterness of the Germans towards the English were so many lies. Of course, they said, now they were at war they meant to fight it out to the end, but it was impossible for them to feel bitterly towards the English, with whom they had for so many years been friendly. They also pretended to speak freely of their plans, evidently with the intention of leading him to copy their example.

To his surprise, moreover, he found himself a little later in a well-appointed tent of his own, and whilst it was guarded jealously, he was surrounded with comforts which he had never expected.

It was nearly midnight, and he was just on the point of falling asleep when an officer came to him.

"Follow me," he said brusquely, and ere long he found himself again in the open, walking between lines of soldiers.

As he thought of it afterwards, his experiences that night seemed to him almost like a dream. He was passed from guard to guard, seemingly without reason, yet according to some pre-arranged plan. After what appeared to him an interminable time, he was ushered into the presence of a grave-looking military man, whose uniform bespoke the fact that he was of the highest rank.

This man was quickly joined by another, and a whispered conversation took place between them, and Bob saw that keen, searching glances were constantly directed towards himself.

"He's only a lieutenant," he heard one say.

"It's no use; he will have it so," replied the other; "after he had heard the report, he gave his orders, and there's nothing else for it."

The other shrugged his shoulders, as if impatient at something, and then Bob

was again commanded to move forward to another place.

Eventually he found himself in what seemed to him like an ante-room of some apartment of extreme importance. Here he waited for nearly half an hour; still on each side of him stood a soldier, erect, motionless, silent.

Then some curtains were drawn aside, and Bob found himself in what might have been a richly appointed room of an old French mansion.

Seated at a desk, covered with documents of all sorts, his face almost hidden from the light, sat a man—alone. He did not look up at Bob's entrance, but went on reading quietly, now and then making a note on the margin of the papers which he was examining.

He was clad in an officer's uniform, but what rank he held, Bob was unable to determine; that he was in high command, there could be no doubt.

Minute after minute passed, and still this lonely figure sat reading and examining.

The silence was intense; they might have been away in the heart of the country, far from the rush and clamour of life. Had not Bob passed through innumerable hordes of men, he would have thought himself in an uninhabited region.

A little clock on a kind of sideboard ticked distinctly, and as minute after minute passed by, the ticking strangely affected his nerves. On his right hand and on his left, men on guard still stood silent, motionless.

Presently the lonely figure at the desk lifted his head and gave Bob a keen, searching glance. In so doing, although the young man was unable to distinguish any particular feature, he caught a glimpse of the face. As far as he could judge, it was grave and deeply lined. He noticed, too, that the hair was grey, while over the temples it was nearly white.

But what impressed him most was the peculiar quality of the eyes—he did not remember ever having seen such eyes before; they were not large, neither was there anything particular in their colour—and yet, they held him like a magnet. Instinctively he knew that here was a master of men.

Those eyes which looked into his—not large, light, steely grey in colour—spoke of domination—of power; they seemed hard and glittering.

A second later he gave a nod to the officers on guard, whereupon they silently backed out of the apartment, leaving Bob alone with the grave, solitary figure at the desk.

CHAPTER XIX

“Your name is Robert Nancarrow?” The words came suddenly, not in the form of a question, but as an assertion.

The voice was light, almost thin; the eyes were the eyes of a commander; the face, to Bob, suggested weakness.

He spoke English almost as an Englishman might; there was scarcely the suggestion of a German accent.

“Yes, sir,” was Bob’s reply.

“You are under General Fortescue, and to-night were placed on outpost duty. By your quick, decisive action you gave your men alarm and frustrated the plans of those you call your enemy?”

“I’m very proud to think so, sir,” replied Bob.

Again those piercing eyes rested on him. Bob felt a shiver run down his spine as he saw them. Evidently the man at the desk was reading him like an open book; he was estimating his quality—his position.

“You wear a lieutenant’s uniform, I see?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Were you trained as a soldier?”

“No, sir.”

“How long have you been in the Army?”

“Only a few weeks, sir.”

“And yet they made you a lieutenant?” and the suggestion of a smile passed his lips—a smile that was almost a sneer.

“You may know, sir,” said Bob, “that in England we have what is called an ‘Officers Training Corps’; men who join that corps do not necessarily go into the Army, but they join it so that in time of need officers may be forthcoming. When I was at school at Clifton, I joined the Officers’ Training Corps, and qualified. That accounts for what would seem a rapid promotion.”

“I see; and you come from what is called a good family in England, I suppose?”

“I can claim to have that honour, sir,” and again the lonely figure was silent, and appeared to be reexamining the papers before him. His face was still in the shade, but, as far as Bob could judge, he appeared to be thinking deeply. “Who is he, and what does he want with me, I wonder?” he reflected. “I am nobody; why have I been treated in this wonderful fashion?”

“You Englishmen think you are winning in this war, I suppose?”

Again the words came suddenly, and still in the same, almost light, weak voice.

“We do not think, sir—we are sure.”

“Ah, how? why?”

For a moment Bob felt afraid to speak; the silence of the room, save for the ticking of the little clock, and the occasional rustle of papers, together with the experiences through which he had been passing, almost unnerved him; besides, there was something uncanny, almost ghostly, about the silent, lonely figure there.

“You would have me speak freely, sir?”

“I command you to do so.”

“We shall win, sir, because God is always on the side of right.”

“God! Do you believe in God?”

“I believe in nothing else so much.”

“Right! Then you think you are in the right?”

“What doubt can there be? We stand for liberty against tyranny; for faithfulness to our promises; but, more than all, we stand for peace against war,—that is why God will be on our side.”

Again the lonely figure looked at Bob intently; the young man’s words seemed to have caused him some surprise.

“Nonsense!” he said presently. “I suppose you are thinking of the Belgian Treaty? What do you English care about the Belgian Treaty?”

“Enough to risk our very existence, sir.”

“Come, tell me frankly—of course, you cannot speak for your statesmen—but do you know anything of the English people as a whole? I was informed just now that you seemed intelligent; perhaps you are. It will be interesting to hear what you regard as the general feeling in England about this war.”

“The English hate it, sir—hate it as they hate the devil; they think it is the greatest crime in history. The English are a peace-loving people; they want only peace.”

“Ah, then they hate this war?”

“Bitterly.”

“And, as a consequence, they do not support it.”

“On the contrary, sir, never was so much enthusiasm shown about any war in the history of the nation as is shown about this.”

“And yet they hate it. Why then are they enthusiastic?”

“Because they believe it to be war against war; against the spirit of war; against the doctrines that might is right, and that force is the will of God.”

“How? I do not understand. Tell me.”

“Since you command me to speak plainly, sir, I will, and perhaps I can best tell you what I mean by recounting my own history. My father belonged to a Community in England who believe that all war is sinful, and I was brought up to accept his doctrine; he took the teaching of our Lord literally.”

“What teaching of our Lord?”

“What we call the Sermon on the Mount: ‘Ye have heard it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that if a man strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Ye have heard it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies’; I was taught to believe that, sir, and to regard all war as a crime.

“For some time after this war was declared I refused to volunteer. I was trying to be a Christian, and I did not see how a man who wanted to be a Christian could be a soldier.”

His interrogator looked at him, evidently in surprise: “You believe that?”

“In a deep vital sense I believe it still, sir.”

“Well, go on.”

“That was why I refused to volunteer for the Army, when Lord Kitchener sent out his appeal that he wanted half a million men immediately.”

“Why have you changed your mind? It might be interesting to hear,” and again there was the suggestion of a sneer in the voice.

“I read some German books, and got to know what the Germans actually thought; I realised the ideas which lay at the heart of Germany, and then I knew that if Germany won this war, all liberty would be gone, all our free institutions would be destroyed, and that the spirit of war would reign more and more throughout the world. I saw that what to the Germans was right, was to us wrong; that the Germans’ Gospel was different from ours.”

“Different! How?”

“I saw that the Germans gloried in war; that they regarded it as necessary; that to them those who asked for peace committed a crime. I heard one of our Members of Parliament say that he had been in Berlin at a Peace Conference, but that Conference was broken up by the order of the German Government. I read the works of authors whose words are accepted as gospel by the dominant party in Germany, I realised the Germans’ aim and ambitions, and I knew that if they succeeded, peace would for ever be impossible in the world. Then I knew I had a call from God, and then I no longer hesitated.”

“Ah, you are a dreamer, I see. So you joined the Army; but are your beliefs common in England, may I ask?”

“Throughout the major portion of England they are common,” replied Bob. “The great feeling in the hearts of the English throughout the whole country is—we must destroy this War God of Germany. Against Germans as individuals we feel nothing but kindness, but this War God, before which the people fall down and worship, is a devil.”

“And you say that is the belief throughout England?”

“That is so, especially among thoughtful people.”

“Then why is it you have so few volunteers?”

“Few volunteers, sir! I do not understand.”

“Why is it, in spite of Lord Kitchener’s call, only a few thousands of the offscouring of the country have joined his Army in spite of huge bribes?”

“Your question shows that you are misinformed, sir. Instead of a few thousands of the off-scouring, as you call them, there has simply been a rush to the English recruiting stations; not only of the poorer classes, but of every class—from our public schools, from the Universities, from our middle-class families, the flower of our young manhood have come.”

“Do you mean that your well-born people have been willing to join as privates?”

“I mean, sir, that there are tens of thousands of the sons of our best families, who have joined, side by side with privates with labourers and colliers. In three weeks after the call, half a million volunteered.”

“Half a million!” this with a contemptuous shrug, “and what then?”

“The call for the second half-million came,” was Bob’s reply; “and that second half-million has responded.”

“From England alone?”

“From the British Isles.”

“But the Empire as a whole has not responded.”

“The Germans thought our Empire was a rope of sand—that it would fall to pieces at the first touch of war; instead of that, from Canada, from Africa, from India, from Australia, men volunteered by thousands—by hundreds of thousands.”

“And you believe that these can stand against the Army through which you passed?”

“I don’t believe—I am sure, sir.”

“And that is the feeling of your nation?”

“That is the conviction of our nation, sir.”

“But do you realise that Germany has millions of trained soldiers?”

“Yes, sir; but every German is forced to be a soldier. We have in England to-day hundreds upon hundreds of thousands who are soldiers because they long to be at the front. If a man doesn’t pass the doctor’s examination, he is disappointed beyond measure, because he is longing to fight. Ours is not a conscript army, sir, but an army which pleads to be at the front.”

“You are sure of this?”

“I’m absolutely certain, sir.”

Again the lonely man turned to some papers before him and read eagerly.

“And when your first million is killed, what then?” He again spoke suddenly.

“Another million will come forward, sir, and, if need be, another, and another, and another. Rather than that Germany should conquer, the whole nation will come forward—the whole Empire will fight.”

“And what have the English thought of the German victories?”

“That they are merely passing phases,” was Bob’s reply; “but this I will tell

you: the greatest impetus to volunteers coming forward has been the news of a German victory. Officers have repeatedly told me that our new volunteers, eagerly do more work in a week and learn more of the art of war in a few days than the men learned in six months in time of peace. In England we have no need for conscription, because the best manhood of our nation pleads to be allowed to fight for the country.”

“And yet the English hate war?” Again there was a sneer in the voice.

“That is why we are eager to fight,” was Bob’s reply, “and we shall never rest until German militarism is destroyed root and branch; until this War God which dominates Germany is thrown down, and crushed to atoms; until this poisonous cancer of war which has thrown its venomous roots into the heart of Europe is cut out for ever. We shall never cease fighting until that is done, and when that is done, we shall have peace.”

Bob had almost forgotten where he was by this time—forgotten the circumstances under which he spoke, and to whom he spoke; he did not seem to realise that he was in the heart of the German camp—that he was speaking to one in high command in the German army; he had got away from the mere material aspect of the question—he was dealing with spiritual things.

“And if you win”—and still there was a sneer in the other’s voice—“what do you expect to gain?”

“As a nation, sir?”

“As a nation.”

“Nothing, sir; I’ve never heard of an Englishman speaking of any gain that might be ours when we win.”

“Then what do you suppose will happen?”

“Justice and peace will come, sir; Belgium will have justice.”

“Belgium! If she had obeyed our commands, she need never have suffered.”

“But why should she obey your commands, sir? You had promised her neutrality and independence, and you broke your promise; she had depended upon you, and you failed her. Then she turned to England, and England will never rest until Belgium has justice.”

“And what is to become of Germany?”

“This is to be a fight to the end, sir; and Germany will never have power to make war again.”

“You would rob us of our country, I suppose?”

“No, sir, we do not want to rob you of your country. We hope that when the war is over, the German people—many of whom hate war—will come back to their peaceful life; but we shall never rest until the War God of Germany is destroyed and is powerless to make war again. That is why we are fighting, and will fight for the peace of the world.”

“But, surely, that is not the feeling of England as a whole?”

“It is the feeling of England as a whole, and we shall never cease fighting until our object is accomplished.”

“And the Kaiser, what think you of him? What is the feeling in Britain about him?”

“We believe the Kaiser to be sincere, sir, but obsessed with the war spirit, and that because of it he is full of arrogance and conceit; many believe him mad—that he suffers from a kind of megalomania. Evidently he, like the rest of the war party in Germany, believes that war is a good thing—a virtuous thing, a necessity; and, because of it, he regards himself as a kind of Deity. We believe that his great ambition is to make Germany the dominant power in the world, and that war is the means by which he hopes to accomplish this. That is why we are fighting, sir—and will fight.”

While Bob was speaking, he saw that the other’s hand moved nervously among the papers on the desk; he saw too that he fidgeted uneasily in his chair, as though with difficulty he restrained himself.

“And you think the Kaiser is responsible for this war?”

“We believe that he has been preparing for it for years. For a long time we fought against the belief, and a great part of the country held that those who regarded him as a kind of War god were mistaken: now we know otherwise. Doubtless, in many respects, he is a great man—a strong man; but he is mad.”

Again the man in the chair started: then he touched the bell, and the officers who brought Bob there again returned. The man at the desk nodded to them and they led Bob out. As he withdrew, the last sight which met his gaze was that of the lonely figure seated at the desk, his face still largely in obscurity, but the eyes plain to be seen—light, steely, penetrating—the eyes of a master of men.

A few minutes later Bob heard two of the officers, with whom he had been previously brought into contact, conversing in their own tongue:

“It was unlike him to give an audience to a subaltern like that,” said one.

“Yes,” was the reply; “but he said he was dissatisfied with the reports of the spies; he wanted to see England’s position through English eyes. I wonder what the young cuckoo said to him.”

Still between his guards, Bob walked away from the house where he had been for more than an hour; he was oblivious of the fact that he was passed from sentry to sentry, from guard to guard; his mind was full of the strange scene in which he had taken part.

The figure of the lonely man at the desk, who was thinking and working while others were asleep, haunted him, and he wondered.

As he came to the tent from which he had been led more than an hour before, he again saw the officer who had given the command which had ended in the scene we have just described.

“Whom have I been speaking to?” he asked, as the officer entered the tent with

him.

“Didn’t you recognise him?”

“I fancied I did, but I dared not think I was right.”

“You’ve been speaking to the Emperor of Germany,” was the reply.

“I’m glad I spoke my mind,” Bob said.

CHAPTER XX

During the three days which followed the one on which he was captured, Bob's experiences were difficult to explain. He found himself being moved farther and farther away from the English lines; but he knew nothing of what was taking place, neither could he understand why he was treated with such kindness and consideration.

He had expected to be immediately forwarded to some dirty German prison, where he would suffer the same fate as many of his English comrades. Instead of which, however, he might almost have been a guest of honour.

For this reason he could not help coming to the conclusion that this special treatment was for some purpose.

On the second day after the interview mentioned in the last chapter, he was closely questioned by some German officers. They evidently believed that he was possessed of information which would be valuable to them, and for that reason did not treat him like an ordinary prisoner.

Although he knew but little of what was going on in the German camp, his experience there was of great interest; it gave him an insight into the life of the German army which he had never hoped for. He realised at once the different atmosphere which obtained there from that which obtained in the English army.

He saw that the German discipline was more severe and more unbending; that not the slightest feeling of friendship or comradeship could be found between officers and men.

He saw too that the German private was scarcely regarded as a human being, but as a pawn on a chessboard; the officer looked upon himself as living in a different world from that of his men.

One day Bob saw that one of the soldiers failed to salute an officer with sufficient promptness to please him, and immediately the officer struck the man across the face with a whip.

Bob saw the great red mark rise on the man's face, where the officer had struck him. He knew that the pain he suffered must be great, but he made no sign; he simply bore the punishment as if he were without feeling.

That same evening he was admitted into the circle of a number of the officers. Bob mentioned the incident he had seen, and asked whether this treatment was common.

"What would you?" replied the German. "The man did not salute quickly, therefore he must be punished."

"And if he had cast a look of disrespect?" asked Bob.

The German shrugged his shoulders.

“We do not allow disrespect from men to their officers,” was the reply. “In time of war he would be shot like a dog.”

“And in peace?” asked Bob.

“Ah—in peace, he would be treated in such a fashion that he would not soon offend again.”

It was at that time, too, that Bob realised the terrible disappointment among the German troops at the progress of the war. It had been given out during its early stages, that the German Army would be in Paris by the end of August. At first their boasts seemed likely to be fulfilled, but as the days went by—as August passed and September came to an end, and then, not only did they not find themselves in Paris, but were driven back mile by mile, until they were nearing their own borders—they were not only dismayed, but astonished. It seemed impossible to them that anything could stand before the German Army.

“It’s you English,” said one to him. “In 1870 we crushed the French Army in six weeks, and we should have done the same now but for you.”

“And the contemptible little army has given you a great deal of trouble?” said Bob.

“That was one of the Kaiser’s jokes, but we will pay you out for it.”

Upon this they turned the conversation into such a channel that Bob was not slow to see their purpose. They were trying to obtain information from him, and, as may be imagined, he did not fall readily into their trap; indeed, they soon began to regard him as a hopeless case.

He saw, too, that his position was becoming desperate. The German officers were not cheerful and gay as our own were. Even in spite of the most terrible fighting and awful suffering the English had kept cheerful.

It was as though the Germans felt themselves on the losing side. Almost hourly they were pressed back, while great masses of wounded soldiers were being brought from the battle-lines and hurried off to the hospitals.

“This does not seem like another Sedan,” Bob heard one officer say to another. “It is all those English; they fight like devils, and yet they are as cool as men on parade. Instead of advancing, we are going backward. Unless there is a change, we shall be driven out of the country.”

“They shall pay for it later, never fear,” said another. “When we have once beaten them, France will be ours, and England crushed like an empty eggshell.”

“When we have beaten them,” was the doubtful response.

What Bob suffered it is impossible to say; how he longed to be back among his comrades in the fighting-line, I cannot put into words.

He knew by the questions which were constantly asked him that they thought he would be in a position to render them invaluable service; that was why he had special treatment.

At the end of three days, however, he knew that this special treatment was

over, and by the looks that were cast towards him, he felt sure that the doom he expected would be his. He would be packed off to a German prison.

“What is to become of me?” he asked one of the officers, who had constantly been plying him with questions.

“You’ll know to-morrow morning,” was the curt reply.

As may be imagined, Bob had, during the whole time, sought eagerly for a means of escape; but this seemed impossible. All around him were vast hordes of men, and he knew that any movement towards liberty on his part would mean instant death. Yet he determined to try, and hour by hour had formulated his plans.

Up to the present no alteration had taken place in his treatment. It seemed to him madness that the Germans should spare two men continuously to guard him and watch him; yet they did.

Then, inadvertently, he learned that the august personage with whom he had had such a long conversation on the night of his capture had given special orders concerning him, as it was his intention to speak with him again.

In view, however, of the significant words of the officer who had told him that some change would take place on the following morning, he imagined that this determination had been abandoned.

Bob’s opportunity of escape seemed to him afterwards almost like a miracle. One night, as chance would have it, only one of the guards was on duty, and he determined to take advantage of the circumstance. If he were to escape, a bold, almost mad, endeavour must be made. Failure would mean death; but, with all the enthusiasm of youth, he decided to risk it.

The guard was a man about his own height and build, and, under ordinary circumstances, would be his match in physical strength.

Of course a hand-to-hand struggle was out of the question; a cry from the German soldier would mean arousing hundreds of others, and then Bob’s fate would be sealed. But if—and his brain almost reeled at the madness of the plan which had been so suddenly born in his mind.

Seizing his opportunity, and taking full advantage of the fact that he had been allowed the use of his limbs, he suddenly struck his guard a heavy blow, which, for the time, stunned him; then, seizing the man’s rifle, he struck him a blow on the head which left him senseless. Quick as lightning, he pulled the man’s clothes from off his prostrate body, and a minute later he was himself, to all appearances, a German soldier.

As he reflected afterwards, the thing happened so quickly and under such strange circumstances, that it seemed to him impossible.

To overpower a German guard in the midst of thousands of German soldiers, and then to appear among the others in a German uniform, seemed absolutely impossible; yet he did it.

It was for him, now, to find his way through the German lines without

revealing his identity. One thing was in his favour—that was a fact which he had kept rigorously secret—he spoke German almost like a German.

I will not weary the reader with Bob's experiences during the next few hours. In the letter he wrote to me about them, he gave but few details. Nevertheless, he told me enough to make me realise that for hours he was within an ace of detection and death.

All around him shot and shell were falling, for although night had come, a continuous bombardment was taking place. Each army was sending forth its missiles of death; the guns of each were pounding to the other's trenches.

Before daylight came Bob had, in the darkness, passed the advance lines of the enemy, and was making his way towards his own people. But even yet his danger was not at an end; indeed, he was in more immediate peril than when he was a prisoner in the German camp. Clad as he was in the enemies' uniform, he knew that at first sight he would be shot down. Still he must take his risk and press forward.

Moreover, he knew that anything like hesitation must end in disaster.

Daylight had just begun to appear when he heard the murmur of voices. He felt sure he was some distance from the main line of the English, and yet he thought he heard some English voices. "It will be some men on outpost duty," he thought; "at any rate, I will have a try." Hiding behind some bushes, he listened intently. "Yes," he thought, "they are our own chaps."

"Who goes there?"

Bob knew it was a question which must be answered promptly.

"I say, you fellows," he cried, "wait a minute."

A dozen rifles were pointed towards him. Evidently the men who held the rifles waited for the word of command to fire.

"It's some German spy," he heard some one say.

Bob threw up his arms as a sign of surrender, and immediately he was seized. A few minutes later he told his story, which at first was not believed; but when he told who he was, and asked to be taken immediately to either General Fortescue or Colonel Sapsworth, the sergeant in command of the little company of Englishmen opened his eyes wide with astonishment.

"By George, he talks like an Englishman, anyhow!" said the puzzled sergeant; "and I did hear some talk three days ago about a Lieutenant Nancarrow giving the alarm to his own soldiers at the risk of his own life; anyhow, we've got him."

Hours later Bob found himself in the presence of his own superior officers.

"Talk about miracles," said Colonel Sapsworth; "but you're about the biggest miracle of this war. Nancarrow, we had all mourned for you as dead, although your name was sent to England as missing. I never knew the General so cut up as when he was told what had taken place; he seemed to think it mean of Providence to allow you to be taken when you had acted in the way you did. By gad, man, do

you mean to tell me that you escaped from those infernal Germans?"

"You see, I robbed the poor beggar of his uniform," was Bob's answer, "and I knew their lingo; I had a near shave several times, but it was bluff that did it."

"You're a plucky young beggar, anyhow," and the Colonel laughed almost merrily as he spoke. "Yes, yes, my boy, you'll get mentioned in despatches. It was a great thing you did, and Sir John French will hear of it."

As may be imagined, Bob was questioned closely concerning his experiences in the German lines, and when he told of his conversation with the Kaiser, they listened to him with opened mouths.

"Good, good!" they cried again and again, as he repeated what he had said to the Kaiser. "By George, Nancarrow, if you could get back to England now, you would be interviewed by all the newspapers in the country. You would be a God-send to the English Press."

But times were too stirring for more than a passing notice to be taken of the young Cornishman's experiences.

A little later he was back at his post of duty again, little realising that although a man might be fortune's favourite on one day, the next might bring him dire disaster.

The next day it was evident, as appeared in Sir John French's despatches, which we read in England later, that the German Army were determined to throw all their strength into one crushing blow, for a phase of the battle began, which was continued night and day, in that part of the British Army where Bob was situated, with scarcely any intermission.

During these four days and nights, Bob, with thousands of others, had scarcely time to eat or sleep.

Weary hour after weary hour our men lay in the trenches, amidst pain which amounted to torture, incessantly firing, or again, at the word of command, ready to rush forward to meet the onset of the enemy.

Hundreds upon hundreds were killed; thousands upon thousands were wounded. Never did Bob realise, as he realised then, the meaning of the Prime Minister's words that "war was hell let loose." On his right hand and on his left his comrades fell—some never to speak again; others groaning in agony; others still laughing amidst their pain. Strange as it may seem, when the carnage was at its most awful stage, and when the heavens were rent with the booming of guns and the clashing of arms, Bob could not help picturing this same France, as he had passed through it years before.

Then it was fair and smiling and peaceful; now it was the scene of untold tragedies, such as he had never dreamt of before. Around him was the smoke of burning villages. Homesteads, which a few months before had been peaceful and prosperous, were now laid waste by the grim horrors of war. Mile after mile of fair country-side were made a vast cemetery. Every man fought his duel to the death.

These men had no personal enmity against each other, and yet they rejoiced to see the enemy fall.

As Bob thought of it all, even in the midst of the fever of war which possessed him, he became almost mad. Those Germans in whose camp he had been, were, many of them, brave, patient, kindly men. They had their homes and their loved ones just as the English and the French had. They had left behind them sweethearts, wives, children, just as our men had; but because they were overruled by a vast military system, which had at its head the German Emperor, all this had taken place.

To this man, his own ambition was everything. What cared he for the lives of a million men, as long as his power could be extended and his ambitions, satisfied?

France was in the way of his advancement, therefore France must be crushed.

England was his great rival, and therefore England must be swept aside.

Germany must be a World Power, and nothing must stop her in fulfilling her destiny. To this end he had made the country a great war-camp, and for this the gospel of war had been preached. Mercy—love—brotherly kindness—peace, must all be sacrificed for the overwhelming ambitions and vain-glory of this man and his followers; this caused hell to be let loose upon earth.

That was why he and millions of others were fighting; that was why tens of thousands of the flower of young English manhood; as well as the best life of France, were being crushed in the dust. That was why homes were being made desolate—hearts broken.

Still the carnage went on; still fire and flame; still the boom of cannon; the groanings of dying men. Fight, fight; slay, slay, and no quarter.

Towards the evening of the fourth day after Bob's escape from the German lines, came a cry which had become almost familiar to him, and he found himself with his company making a bayonet charge on the enemy.

To a distant spectator, not knowing the meaning of the war, this charge must have seemed like some mad Bedlam let loose. Strong men lunging, stabbing, fighting, with only death in their hearts—and this was war!

All around was the crack of rifle shots, the boom of cannon, and still they pressed on, fighting their way inch by inch.

Suddenly Bob found himself bereft of his sword; his revolver was in his left hand, but in the mad struggle his sword had been stricken from the right.

Words of command could scarcely be heard amidst the din and clamour; on his right hand a soldier fell with the bayonet in his chest of a German, who at the same time fell from a wound which the Englishman had inflicted on him. Scarcely had the Englishman fallen, when he saw the bayonets of the enemy directed towards himself.

Seizing the Englishman's rifle—the bayonet fixed at the end of which was red with blood—he sought to defend himself. Directing his attention to the man who

rushed upon him, he fought with all the strength he possessed: “I have mastered him,” was the thought which came into his mind, as the German staggered back, but before he could make his victory sure, a blow, whence he did not know, struck him on the collar-bone; a hot, burning pain passed through his side, as he felt himself falling; a moment later there was a stampede over his body.

“It’s all over with me,” he said, and then he felt himself becoming unconscious.

In a hazy kind of fashion he thought our men were pressing forward, and that the Germans were falling back from them; but this was an impression rather than a thought. Presently it seemed to him that silence reigned. He felt very weary, but suffered no pain. He thought he heard the sound of distant guns; but they were no longer guns, they were the waves which beat upon the great rocks around Gurnard’s Head, while he and Nancy sat in the shade, under the cliff, while he told her the story of his love. He was repeating to her the resolves which had been so suddenly born in his mind.

“Yes, Nancy,” he said aloud, “I’ve found my mission; I am going in for war—war against war; that is the noblest work a man can do.”

It was all very unreal; all far, far away. “The night is falling fast; how can Nancy and I get home?” he reflected. Then he heard some one singing close by him; it was the song popular amongst the soldiers—a song in which he himself had joined a hundred times:

“It’s a long way to Tipperary,
It’s a long, long way to go.”

He turned his head, and saw a soldier at his side. He too, had been stricken down in the battle; he, too was unconscious of what he was doing.

“Yes, it’s a long, long way to Tipperary,” he murmured, and that was all, . . . a great darkness fell upon him.

CHAPTER XXI

When Bob awoke to consciousness again, the scene was altogether unfamiliar to him; he was lying in a big barn-like building, while around him were scores of beds, on each of which lay a wounded man.

He felt weak and languid; but this he would not have minded, it was the awful pain just below his neck that troubled him—a gnawing, maddening pain.

He lifted his hand to try and touch the spot; but this he could not do—it seemed to him as though he caused a fire inside it as he moved.

“I’m not dead, anyhow,” he reflected. “What is this, I wonder?”

There were cheerful voices all round him, and he saw forms moving around the beds; but they were very dim—in fact, nothing seemed real at all: “Still I’m not dead, anyhow,” he repeated; “as soon as I can, I must tell mother that; as for Nancy, she’ll not want to know.” That was all; it was like a scene in a play, and it passed away suddenly.

When he awoke again, his mind was clearer. It was the same scene he saw, just a number of beds on which men were lying.

What he took to be a soldier, wearing an officer’s uniform, came and stood by him. This man felt his pulse; then he did something to his chest, which gave him a great deal of pain. He didn’t trouble much about it, it didn’t matter, nothing mattered.

“You’ll do all right,” said the man; “you’ll get better now.”

“I’m very tired,” said Bob; “I should like to sleep, if I can.”

“Then sleep, my dear fellow.”

Again he awoke to consciousness; the clouds had altogether gone, and the scene was absolutely clear.

He was lying in an improvised hospital; those men lying on the beds all round were wounded like himself; the man who had spoken to him was the doctor; those figures moving around the beds were nurses—each wore a red cross.

Although everything was clear, he was strangely indifferent to what was taking place. What did it matter to him? He supposed that he would never fight again; his arm was useless. He felt sure of that—his right arm. Still, he had done his work, and at least he had done his best. Then a thought flashed through his mind.

“Oh, but the war is not over yet, and they need me; I must get well.”

He threw off the kind of lethargy that possessed him, and presently, when a nurse came to bring him some food, he looked up into her kindly face. She was a Frenchwoman, who was doing all that a woman could, to help; she was not there to kill, but to save.

“Mademoiselle, you’re very kind.”

“I’m not mademoiselle,” was the woman’s reply in French; “I am madame.” Her voice trembled as she spoke: “I was married just before the war, and my husband was called away to fight.”

“Where is he now?”

“I don’t know; I have not heard for weeks, but I live in hope. I pray that he will come back; meanwhile, I am doing what I can.”

“I wish I could fight again,” said Bob.

“Ah, but you will; the doctor told me. Ah, here is the doctor!”

“I’m not done for, doctor?” asked Bob.

“Done for? My dear chap, no; you’ve had a bad time—collar-bone broken, two ribs broken, nasty wound in your side—but in a few weeks you’ll be all right again. Is there any one to whom I could write, so that their minds may be relieved about you?”

“Yes,” said Bob, “write to my mother,” and he told the doctor his mother’s name and address.

“Can friends come to see me?” asked Bob.

“To-morrow or the next day, yes, certainly; in a few days you’ll be convalescent.”

Away in another part of the hospital a man sat smoking a cigarette; he had, during the early part of the day been taking exercise, and, although he felt no pain, he was tired after his exertions.

“In another week I shall be at it again,” he reflected. “Heavens, life is a curious whirligig of a business. Fancy, after all I said to him, his coming to the front in this way! A kind of strange irony of fate that he, of all men, should pull me out of the very jaws of death. Of course, he didn’t know who I was, or he wouldn’t have done it. It was a plucky thing, anyhow; and—and—by Jove, there she is!”

He rose quickly from his chair as he spoke, and went out into the autumn sunshine, where a woman, wearing a nurse’s uniform, was talking with a doctor.

“Nancy,” said the man, when presently she came towards him, “I haven’t seen you for days; this is a lucky chance.”

“I haven’t much time for anything,” she replied; “fifty poor fellows were brought here from the front this morning, and ever since every one of us has been hard at it. Are you all right?”

“Yes, I shall soon be well. In another week, the doctor tells me, I shall be at the front again. But for the thought of leaving you, I shall be jolly glad. We little thought, Nancy, when we parted in Cornwall, and when I told you you might have to nurse me, that it would actually take place.”

“No,” replied the girl; “but, somehow, the world seems altogether different now; I feel as though ten years had been added to my life. When the war broke out, I was almost happy about it; it seemed so splendid for those I knew to be able

to go to the front and fight for their country; war was something glorious. I shall never think about it in that way again. Poor Lieutenant Russell died this morning. Oh, yes, I know it was wonderful the way he bore up to the end; he thought he was back on the battlefield, and he kept on crying, 'We're gaining ground—we're gaining ground! That's it, lad, at 'em; we'll save England from those beastly Germans.' And then he died; yes, it was a glorious death. But all war is horrible, horrible! Do you know, Captain Trevanion, I never cease wondering at the way you were rescued."

"Don't speak to me like that. Surely I am not 'Captain Trevanion' to you; I'm 'Hector.' You've never called me by my name yet; why won't you? I say, Nancy, can't you promise me anything definite before I go back?"

The girl almost shuddered: "Don't talk about that now," she said. "I—I—it's too horrible. You never described your escape to me. Tell me all about it, will you?"

"I can't," replied Trevanion; "you see, I was unconscious."

"I got an English paper to-day," went on the girl; "I only read it a few minutes ago."

"Read what?" There was an anxious tone in the Captain's voice.

"Here it is," she said. "Haven't you seen it?"

"No. What is it?"

"Oh, it says all sorts of fine things about you. Of course, you'll soon be promoted as a consequence. But don't you see, the paper says that a Lieutenant Nancarrow, learning of your danger, went right out into the open, braving the German fire in order to get at you. It is spoken of as one of the bravest deeds of the war. Didn't you know about it? You tell me nothing."

"You see, I was unconscious," repeated Trevanion; "all I know is that some fellow, unknown to me, did a splendid deed and brought me back to the English lines."

"Then you never saw your rescuer?"

"No," replied the Captain quietly; "I was packed off here. Of course, it was fine on the part of that fellow, whoever he was. Some day I hope I shall have the chance of thanking him."

The girl looked away across the peaceful countryside, and, as she did so, a tremulous sigh escaped her.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Trevanion.

"Oh—nothing—that is, it doesn't matter. It seems strange, though, doesn't it, that the man who saved you from death should be called Nancarrow; it is a Cornish name too."

"And—and you are thinking of that fellow?" said Captain Trevanion, almost angrily.

"Have you heard anything about Bob?—that is, do you know where—what he

did when he left St. Ia?"

Trevanion did not look at Nancy's face; he couldn't. He knew what he ought to do, he, who always prided himself upon being a sportsman—he ought to tell her that the man who had saved him was the one of whom she was thinking; but he could not—he was afraid. He, who had faced death calmly day by day; he, who had been noted for his bravery on the field, and who had been mentioned in despatches, was now a coward.

In a way he wondered at himself, and he realised that there was more than one kind of courage. He, himself, had called Bob Nancarrow a coward, because he refused to enlist. Now he realised that there was more courage in Bob Nancarrow's cowardice than in his own bravery. Oh, it was all an awful muddle! He ought to tell Nancy what Lieutenant Proctor had related to him just before he was taken away to the hospital; but he couldn't. If he did, he would forfeit his own chance, and he might—yes, he was sure—he would lose Nancy altogether.

"Of course, it couldn't be he," and Nancy seemed to be speaking to herself; "you see, according to the paper, you were rescued by a Lieutenant Nancarrow who belonged to a London regiment. Even if Bob had joined the Army, he couldn't have been promoted so quickly," and the girl sighed again.

"Nancy," said the Captain, "I—I shouldn't be surprised if it were Bob Nancarrow," and the heroism in those words was greater than that of many deeds for which he had been praised. In that moment Trevanion had won a greater battle than he realised. It had caused him little effort to lead his men against the charges of the German infantry, but he felt as though his heart were being pulled out as he uttered the words I have recorded.

The girl's face became pale: "What do you mean?" she asked. "Have you heard anything?"

Still Trevanion could not speak freely; even yet he wondered if there were not some way whereby doubt could be kept in the girl's mind.

"You see," he said presently, "Nancarrow was in the O.T.C. at Clifton, and, I suppose, did very well there. Captain Pringle spoke to me more than once about him, and—and I heard after he left Cornwall that he joined a London regiment; of course, it was only hearsay, and I paid but very little attention to it—in fact, I didn't believe it! Still, it might be he."

The girl's lips became tremulous: "Do you mean that, after all, Bob joined?"

"He might have," admitted Trevanion, and his voice was almost husky as he spoke, and his eyes became hard.

"No, no," she cried, "It couldn't have been he. If he had, he would have told me—I am sure he would."

"Would he?" asked Trevanion.

She stood silent for a few seconds without speaking. She remembered the circumstances under which she had parted from Bob; she called to mind the time

when she had given him a white feather in the Public Hall at St. Ia, and her face crimsoned with shame at the thought of it. No one could offer a more deadly insult than she had offered Bob. She had branded him as a coward, regardless of who might be looking on. No, no, even if he had joined, he would not have told her; his heart would be too bitter against her. Why—why, he must hate her now!

“I say, Nancy,” and Trevanion’s voice was hoarse with pain, “you don’t mean to tell me that you care anything about him still? You know what you said; you told me you despised him, and—and, why, you almost told me to hope! Don’t you remember?”

The girl’s face was set and stern; she did not hear Trevanion’s last words; she was wondering with a great wonder.

“Do you know anything besides what you have told me?” she asked.

“I don’t understand,” he stammered.

“You said it might be he, as though there were a doubt about it; don’t you know for certain? You’ve seen Captain Pringle; did you see him after you recovered consciousness, that is, after you were rescued?”

“Yes, but of course I scarcely knew what was said to me.”

“And did Captain Pringle tell you it was—was—the Nancarrow we knew?”

“He said it was Nancarrow from Clifton, and—and that he had done the bravest thing since the war began; but everything was vague to me. I—I, of course, didn’t believe it was Nancarrow; you know what he said? But, I say, Nancy, all this makes no difference to us, does it? You didn’t raise my hopes only to dash them to the ground! I shall be off to the front again in a few days, and—oh, if you could give me just a word—just a word, Nancy, everything would be different! Hang it all, even if it is he, and, of course, if it is, I shall not be slow in acknowledging it, I haven’t a bad record myself, and I shall go back as major, you know.”

But the girl did not answer. Slowly she walked across the yard outside the improvised hospital, without even bidding him “good-day.”

“I’m glad I told her, anyhow,” reflected Trevanion; “it was beastly hard—one of the hardest things I ever did. Good God, it seems the very irony of fate that he should be the man to save me! I wonder if he knew that it was I? Perhaps though he knows nothing of what passed between us. I wonder where he is now. Anyhow, he shall never have her; there’s no other woman in the world for me, and—oh, yes, I’m all right.”

Meanwhile, Bob still lay in bed, weak as a child, but still on the highway to recovery. He had no fever, and his wounds were beginning to heal.

Hundreds of men lay around him in the huge building which had been commandeered as a hospital; French and English soldiers were carefully nursed without a thought as to their nationality. It seemed as though all the old enmity

between France and England had gone for ever, and that this terrible war made the two nations as one.

Men lay side by side, without knowing each other's language; yet, because they were fighting the same enemy, felt themselves as brothers.

"Ah, yes," said a young French officer, who had been wounded on the day when Bob had been stricken down, "we're at the beginning of a new era. Yes, we have had compulsory military service in France; we have been obliged to have it. We knew all the time that the Germans were waiting to pounce upon us and crush us; that was why we wanted to be ready. But the day is dawning, *mon ami*; we French have been a fighting nation, but we love war no longer. When the Germans are crushed, as they will be crushed; when their army and their navy are destroyed and they are forbidden ever to have others,—then the day of peace will come; then our nation will no longer be bled to pay for millions of soldiers. Yes, we Frenchmen realise it, and we will fight for it to the very last. It is not so much that Germany is an enemy to France and an enemy to England; it is that she is an enemy to peace, to goodwill, to fraternity—that is why we must fight. I had almost given up a belief in Providence, but, *mon Dieu*, I believe in it now; the good God is on our side."

"I thought France had largely given up the belief in God?" said Bob.

"No, no, there was a superficial scepticism, and what wonder? Have you read the story of France? Ah, yes, the faith is coming back. This last twenty years, *mon ami*, a change has come about. There is a new force working. People are beginning to believe again that there is something behind everything—something which cannot be explained away by a shallow philosophy. We have a mission, *monsieur*—the good God has given us and you a mission; it is to fight for peace. Who knows but this is perhaps the last war that Europe will ever know?"

Two days later, when Bob was much stronger, two events took place which must be recorded. One was the arrival of a letter from his mother. The doctor's letter, telling her of Bob's doings, had reached her and so she immediately sent a letter to him full of pride and affection: "Oh, my boy," she wrote, "if once I was ashamed of you, my pride in you now is beyond all words! Everybody knows about you and is talking about you in St. Ia. I simply cannot realise it, and I am crying with joy as I write this. You are spoken of as a hero; the story of your splendid deed in rescuing Captain Trevanion is the talk of the county. I think Captain Pringle met a London journalist in France and told him all about it. Oh, my dear boy, my heart simply aches to be with you, and if it is at all possible I shall get across to France to see you. Meanwhile, I am constantly praying for you. It is all so wonderful, that my boy should do this because of what he believes to be call of God.

"By the way," the letter continued, "I suppose you have heard nothing of Nancy Tresize. I am told she is a nurse in a French hospital, but where, I haven't

the slightest idea. Even the Admiral, whom I saw only a few days ago, told me he didn't know where she was, but he hinted to me that her engagement with Captain Trevanion was now practically settled. The Admiral also told me that the Captain's promotion is bound to be very rapid, and that if he lived he would doubtless come back a Colonel; and so, my boy, although my heart is full of joy at what you have done, I cannot help being sad because I am afraid you have lost the best girl in Cornwall. Still, as your father used to say to me, there is nothing higher in the world than to be true to one's conscience."

After Bob had read this letter he lay for a long time in deep thought. Yes, in spite of everything, his sky was black. This ghastly war had wrecked his life's happiness; but for it he and Nancy might have been together, living a life of happiness and making plans for a life of usefulness. War was hell; still he had no doubt about his duty. The God of War must be killed, and this menace to the peace of Europe must be destroyed. It was a divine call, and he must fight to make war impossible.

While he lay thinking of the letter, he saw coming towards him, accompanied by the doctor, a tall, clean-shaven, handsome man, who was evidently deeply interested in what he saw.

"Yes," Bob heard him say to the doctor, "this is the greatest crime in history. Here we are, nearly two thousand years after the birth of our Lord, engaged in the ghastliest war known in the history of the world. The discoveries of science, instead of being devoted to the good of mankind, have been devoted to the work of the devil. I, for years, hoped to be one of the first inventors of a flying-machine; and now I curse the day when the flying-machine was invented. We have conquered the heavens, only to make hell."

The doctor laughed at the other's words: "Perhaps there's another side to the question, Mr. Scarsfield," he said. "If you had seen what I have seen here during the last few weeks, you would know that the war has brought out many noble traits."

"Yes, yes, that may be so, and I have come all the way from the States to see for myself. You see, we are a neutral country, and what I have seen has made me determined to go back home and take a lecturing tour right through America denouncing the crime of war."

"Here is Lieutenant Nancarrow," said the doctor, nodding to Bob's bed.

"Yes, I want to see him," said Mr. Hiram Scarsfield; "I read the account of what he did in the papers, and I am mighty glad that the authorities have allowed me to come here. I want to shake him by the hand."

"Sir," he said, coming up to Bob, "whatever may be my views about war, I admire brave men, and you risked your life to save another. When I read it in the papers, tears came into my eyes, and when I heard that you were here, I just made up my mind to see you, and what I want to ask you, is this: You saved one man;

how many have you killed?”

“I don’t know,” replied Bob.

“Many?”

“I hope so.”

“Ah, that is the terror of the whole business! And when you get well again, are you going back to the front?”

“I hope so,” was Bob’s reply.

“To kill more, I guess?”

“If it is in my power.”

“Young man, don’t you feel the hellishness of the thought?”

“Yes,” replied Bob, “I shudder at the thought of it.”

“Then my advice to you is—desert. When you get well enough, get out of France and come to America where you can live in peace. Yes, I know that sounds bad, but then I hate war; it just puts back the clock of the world; it crucifies our Lord afresh.”

Bob looked at the other’s face attentively, and he saw immediately that it was the face of a strong man. There was no suggestion of the fanatic about it; rather, it was sane and sincere.

“Then you believe in peace—peace at any price?” was Bob’s query.

“I guess that is so; I guess there is nothing under heaven worth making hell for, and that is what I have seen these last few weeks. I haven’t been right up to the fighting-line—I haven’t been allowed—but I have seen enough to make my heart bleed.”

“I agree with every word you say,” and Bob’s voice was almost tremulous.

“Then why are you a soldier?”

“Look here, Mr. Scarsfield,” said Bob. “Supposing that the French and the English and the Belgians and the Russians were all to disarm, what would happen, do you think?”

“There would be peace,” said the American.

“And what kind of peace?”

“There would be a cessation of bloodshed, anyhow. Mind you, I would rather see all nationalities cease than that war should continue. Let’s all sheathe our swords and trust in God. That is my mission now, as long as I live. I am going back to America, and I am going to rouse the whole country to this feeling. It may be that this is because I have Quaker blood in my veins. I am afraid I am not worthy of my Quaker forbears, but now I am convinced that they were right.”

“Yes,” replied Bob, “I too have Quaker blood in my veins, and I too am convinced in my heart they are right.”

“And still you are a soldier,” said the other, in astonishment.

“Yes, I am a soldier, until this war is over. Look here, Mr. Scarsfield, do you believe you could ever convert Germany to your way of thinking? Have you ever

read the works of those German writers—men like Bernhardt and Treitschke and Nietzsche, and others of that school? Do you know that their teaching is the religion of the war party in Germany, and that that war party rules the Empire? Do you know that it is the avowed determination of Germany to conquer the world by the sword? You do know it? For thirty years Germany has been building up her army and her navy for this purpose. She believes that war is a virtue, and that Germany is called by God to go to war; she worships the War God; she rejoices in it; lives for it. It is preached from her pulpits; it is taught in her schools; it is interwoven into the warp and woof of German life. Because of this they have altered the New Testament. Instead of preaching, ‘Blessed are the peace-makers,’ they preach, ‘Blessed are the war-makers,’ and they believe that the Almighty intends them to make war.”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Scarsfield, “I must admit that. I have read those writers you mention; read them with a sad heart.”

“When I read them,” said Bob, “I was obliged to throw them away from me, as if I had been touching unclean things. I too was brought up to believe in peace at any price, and I hated war as I hate hell itself; so much did I hate it, that I refused to enlist in the English Army and alienated those who were dearest to me. Before I enlisted, I fought the biggest battle of my life. Presently I realised the meaning of the German creed; I saw the inwardness and ghastliness of their so-called Gospel of War; I saw that to carry out their purpose they were willing to sacrifice honour and to crush humanity. I saw that they professed friendship in order to betray us; I saw that while they accepted our hospitality in England, they filled our country with spies in the hope that when the time was ready, and they made war upon us, they would use those spies for our destruction. I saw that they regarded a treaty as something that could be thrown off like an old garment, and I saw they were determined on war. What could we do? You do not believe, I suppose, that the murder of the Crown Prince of Austria was the cause of this war? No one believes that it was anything but a pretext. Germany made war—a war for which she had been preparing for a quarter of a century. She signed the Treaty to protect Belgium; she gave her word of honour as a nation that Belgium’s neutrality and integrity should be maintained. Then she signed her ultimatum to Belgium, and told her that if she did not allow the German Army to pass through Belgium country in order to crush France, she should be treated as an enemy. When our Ambassador in Berlin pleaded that Germany had signed a treaty to protect Belgium, what was the reply? ‘Will you go to war with us just for a scrap of paper?’ That is what the war spirit means in Germany. They cannot understand how the honour of a nation could stand in the way of her ambition. And so Germany entered Belgium. What was mercy? What was honour? What was purity? Read the story of Louvain, of Malines; think of the outrages, cruelties, blasphemies, and then ask yourself, what could we have done?”

“Yes,” said the American; “but war—think of what it has meant.”

“Is not there something worse than war?” said Bob.

“What can be worse?” asked Mr. Hiram Scarsfield.

“Violation of honour, of truth, of purity,” said the young man earnestly. “That is worse; yes, and it is worse than war to allow a cancer like the German war-spirit to live in the very heart of a continent, making peace and goodwill impossible.”

“Yes, young man,” replied the American; “you make out a strong case, and I have no doubt that if a war could be just, England is fighting a just war. But no war can be just, because every war is born in hell. As for me, I’m going back to America on my crusade of peace.”

“Mr. Scarsfield,” said Bob, “may I suggest something to you?”

“Yes; what is it?”

“That you go back to America, and arouse that great Continent to come and help us in this war for peace. I know your President professes to be a peace man. But think! You who could do so much to kill war, are standing by, supine and neutral, while we are shedding our blood to make war impossible. To me, it is the call of God to every young man and to every man who has health and strength, to give his life to kill this war devil at the heart of Europe. And I tell you this, until it is killed, your talk about peace will be so much wind and useless sound. America could, if she would, put an end to this war.”

“How?” cried the American.

“By, raising an army of millions of men, well accoutred and armed and provisioned, to come over to help us. If America placed all her mighty weight on the side of England at this moment, it would paralyse the German Army. If America said, as we are saying, that this war should never cease until Germany was powerless ever to make war again, you would do more for peace than if all the talkers in America were to go round preaching peace. That is why, Quaker as I am, I am a soldier, and will remain a soldier as long as God gives me breath, to make peace not a dream, but a reality.”

“But what about the Sermon on the Mount, young man?” said the American.

“What did our Lord mean,” urged Bob, “when He said, ‘I came not to bring peace but a sword?’ And what did He mean when He said to His disciples, ‘He that hath no sword, let him go and buy one?’ Mind you, we do not hate the Germans in all this; we do not violate the command ‘Love your enemy.’ It would be the greatest blessing ever known to the German people if the Kaiser and all his war-fiends were crushed for ever, for then could peace be made possible.”

“Now, Nancarrow,” said the doctor, “you have talked enough. You’re getting excited as it is, and we want you back at the front.”

“I will say this,” said the American, holding out his hand to Bob, “you have given me something to think about, and I will tell the Americans what you have said.”

CHAPTER XXII

“Nancarrow, it’s a nice day; it might be summer. I want you to get out.” It was the doctor who spoke. “Yes, I know you feel weak, but one hour in the sunshine will do you more good than all the medicine ever invented.”

“I can hardly bear to move my arm yet,” said Bob; “and I am as weak as a kitten.”

“Yes, I know; but, come, you must get out.”

Five minutes later Bob had been taken to a sheltered spot, where he sat rejoicing in the warm rays of the sun. Close by was the great barn-like building, in which many hundreds of wounded men lay, and where scores of brave women were giving their lives to nurse the men who had been fighting for their country.

In the near distance, too, he saw several like himself who were convalescent, and who were drinking in the pure country air and rejoicing in the warm sunlight.

During the last three days he had been able to read, and found that people in the home country had been thinking of those away at the war. Literally tons of periodicals, novels, and other light literature had been forwarded to them; while on every hand were evidences of the fact that millions at home, although they were unable to fight, were anxious to help those who could.

Although it was a scene of suffering, and although many of the sights in the hospital were terrible beyond words, all was cheerfulness and hope. Laughter was heard on every hand; jests were bandied in every direction; all thoughts of differences in nationality were sunk in the common cause of humanity.

“A week or two more,” thought Bob, “and I shall be at it again.”

A copy of an English newspaper, several days old, lay by his side. He took it up and began to read listlessly. The paper had been sent from Lancashire and contained letters from soldiers who had gone from that county. One letter struck him forcibly: it was headed “Back to Hell.” “Dear mother,” the soldier wrote, “I am alive and well, but I have had a terrible time. Four days and nights I have been fighting without ever having time to change my clothes. Never once during that time did I take off my shoes. It was simply fight, fight, all the time. Our chaps were just worn out, and so were ordered away to rest for a day or two. That is why I am here and have time to write to you. To-morrow I am going back to Hell; but I am going willingly, because I know I am wanted there.”

The tears started to Bob’s eyes as he read. There was a touch of heroism, and more than heroism, in the simple lad’s letter: “I am going back to Hell, and I am going willingly, because I know I am wanted there.”

“Yes,” thought Bob; “that just hits off the situation.”

At that moment a laugh rang out which caused him to start violently and his

pulses to quicken; there was not another voice in the world like that; it was a laugh he had heard a hundred times. He remembered it as it sounded above the singing of the waves down by the Cornish sea; he remembered it on the tennis courts at Penwennack, and on the golf links at Leiant. In another second the laugh was lost in a hoarse, excited cry. The eyes of the two met, but neither spoke a word.

“I—I—this is a surprise,” stammered Bob presently.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

It was not a bit what either of them wanted to say, but it didn’t matter; words at that moment meant very little.

“I never heard you were here,” he went on, after a few seconds. “I’ve been in the hospital such a long time, too, but no one ever told me.”

He tried to speak naturally, but the girl heard the tremor in his voice. “It is because he is so weak,” she thought. “How pale he looks!”

“Were you wounded badly?” she asked.

“I got out of it jolly easily, I suppose,” he replied; “and I was lucky too—all the bones were set before I recovered consciousness.”

“He doesn’t tell me he is glad to see me,” she reflected. “Of course, he hates me now. How can it be otherwise? When we last met, I was just cruel to him, and I hurt him all I was able.”

“I am so glad you are better,” she said aloud.

“It’s awfully good of you. Won’t you sit down?”

They might have been mere acquaintances from the way they spoke, but each felt that the moment was tragic.

“The doctor tells me that in a week, or a fortnight at the outside, I shall be ready to go back,” Bob continued. “There’s nothing the matter with me now, except weakness.”

He knew that all this was not what he wanted to say, or what he ought to say, but somehow the right words would not come. He felt awkward and constrained in her presence. “If she’s engaged to Trevanion,” he reflected, “it must be painful for her to see me. I wonder if she knows nothing about Trevanion. I wonder if—if she knows what I did.”

Nancy did not sit down as he had asked her, but stood awkwardly; she was picking a scrap of lint to pieces, nervously, and with twitching fingers.

“Bob,” she said presently, “I want you to forgive me. I insulted you down in Cornwall—you remember that night at the Public Hall. You see, I didn’t know that you intended to enlist.”

“I didn’t,” replied Bob; “nothing was further from my mind than enlisting at that moment.”

Everything seemed unreal between them. Neither of them was saying what was in their hearts; they seemed to be speaking only for the purpose of making conversation.

“Have you seen Captain Trevanion?” he asked, after an awkward silence. “I heard—that is, I was given to understand, he was wounded; not dangerously, you know, but still, wounded. The doctor assured me he would get better.”

He saw a quick flush rise to the girl’s pale face, as he spoke; he saw her lips tremble too, but she did not answer him. His heart became as heavy as lead: “Then it is true,” he reflected. “Mother was right; they are engaged. Still, I must bear up as best I can. I will not give her pain by telling her what it means to me.”

“Oh, Bob, will you forgive me?” she burst out suddenly.

“I—of course, there’s nothing to forgive,” he answered. “What have I to forgive?”

“I called you a coward,” she cried; “I insulted you, and all the time you were braver than I dreamed of. Why, you actually saved him, and in doing so you risked your life in the most horrible way. It was wonderful of you—just wonderful; and I—I—— Oh, I’m so ashamed, Bob!”

“I see what she means,” thought Bob; “she’s trying to tell me how thankful she is to me for having saved her lover for her.”

“I hope you are not worrying about that,” he said, and by this time he was able to speak calmly. “I was awfully lucky, and, after all, it was not so difficult; I came back quite safe—not a shot touched me.”

“He simply won’t see what I mean,” was the thought that burned its way into her brain, “or else he hates me. Yes, that is it; he must hate me. How could it be otherwise, when I insulted him in the Public Hall, when I made him the laughing-stock of the whole town?”

“It’s awfully fine of you,” went on Bob, “to come out here like this. I sometimes think that nurses need more courage than the soldiers. I cannot understand how refined, sensitive women like you can bear to see the horrible sights which are so common in places like this; it is just splendid of you—just splendid. You say you have not seen Trevanion?”

Again her cheeks, which had become pale again, crimsoned.

“Oh, yes,” she replied, “he has been in this hospital; I—I have helped to nurse him.”

“It seems strange that I never heard of it,” said Bob; “but there, after all, it’s not so strange—there are thousands of men and scores of nurses here; so it is no wonder that I never heard of either of you being here.”

“He went back to the front yesterday,” said Nancy. “He’s quite well and strong again now. He told me that it was you who rescued him from death. Oh, Bob, it was splendid of you! It’s all so strange too. Would you mind telling me why you altered your mind and came to the war?”

“I learned that it was my duty,” said Bob simply. “No, I haven’t altered my mind about war, or about soldiering at all; but I had to come. You see, after I left you, I learned things to which I had been blind before; it is difficult to explain, but

I saw that war could only be killed by war. I saw that the Gospel of Peace meant nothing to Germany, and that if she were allowed to go on unmolested, the ghastly creed of war, and the glory of war, would be established for ever; that was why I became a soldier. I wanted to help to cut it out; destroy it, root and branch—and we must never stop until that has been done. But, I'm so glad Captain Trevanion is better, and has been able to go back; he's a brave man; he's a great soldier. You're engaged to him, aren't you?"

The question came out suddenly, and for a moment it staggered her. She was not engaged to him, and yet, in a way, she was bound to him; she had said that which made Trevanion hope. Her promise was as thin as a gossamer thread, yet it seemed to bind, her like a steel chain.

"Forgive my impertinence in asking," said Bob quickly, noting the look on her face. "Of course, I'd no right to ask."

Still she could not speak; she felt as though she would have given worlds to deny all thought of an engagement to Trevanion, but she couldn't—neither could she bring herself to tell him the story; the words she wanted to speak seemed to seal her lips. A long and awkward silence fell between them—a silence that was painful; both had so much to say, and yet neither could say anything.

"Has any one told you I'm engaged to Captain Trevanion?" and her voice was indistinct and hoarse.

"Yes," he replied, "Proctor told me. He was at Clifton with me, you know, and Trevanion told him."

"Did Mr. Proctor say that?"

"I think so—yes; and then, as soon as mother heard I was here, she wrote to me and told me about it. I suppose your father is very pleased?"

"How he must hate me!" she thought. "It is only a few weeks ago since I promised to be his wife, and then only a week or two later I insulted him, and now he thinks I am engaged to Captain Trevanion. How mean, how contemptible he must think me! He must look upon me as a common flirt; he must believe that my promises to him were just a mockery; it is no wonder he speaks to me like that, and I—oh, I wish I could tell him!"

A French soldier hobbled across the open space. "If you please, mademoiselle, you're wanted," he said; "another train load of wounded men has just arrived, and all the nurses are needed." He saluted Bob, who wore his lieutenant's uniform, and then he hobbled away again.

"This war is a terrible business, isn't it?" he queried, and there was a plaintive smile on his lips.

"It has upset everything, just everything; I hate it!" she cried—"I hate it! Oh, Bob, don't you feel how I hate it?"

She wanted him to understand more than her words conveyed; wanted him to feel that it was not the horrors of the war that moved her so greatly, but the fact

that it had separated them.

“Yes, I know what you feel,” said Bob; “but you must go through with it, Nancy. I’m sure you will be brave. When it is over, your reward will come. There—go back, and don’t mind me.”

“I won’t go back!” she cried. “Bob, you can’t forgive me, because I was so mean, so contemptible; I called you a coward; I insulted you; I—I . . . and now you can’t forgive me—and I don’t wonder.”

“That was nothing,” said Bob. “Of course, I did seem like a coward, I suppose, and I don’t wonder at your doing what you did; but that’s nothing. You’ll be happy when it’s all over; and really, he’s a fine soldier, Nancy; and a fine fellow too; all his men just worship him.”

“Oh, Bob, can’t you understand?” her voice was almost inaudible.

“Yes, yes, I understand, but don’t trouble about me one little bit; I shall be all right. There—go now, they want you.”

“Do you really wish me to go, Bob?”

“Of course I do; it’s your duty, and duty is everything in these days; it’s hard and stern now, but by and by it’ll become joyful.”

“And when the war is over?” she stammered—“I—I . . .”

“It won’t be over yet for a long time; still, we must keep a brave heart. You remember those lines of William Blake, Nancy? I used to laugh at them because he mixed his metaphors, but I see their meaning now:

“I will not cease from mental strife,
Nor shall the sword sleep in my hand,
Till I have built Jerusalem,
In England’s good and pleasant land.”

There, get back Nancy; perhaps we shall see each other again, before I go?”

Without another word she went back to her grim and horrible work; her feet seemed like lead as she dragged them across the open space which lay between her and the great, gaunt building.

“He will not see,” she said to herself; “he doesn’t want to see, and he hates me.”

As for Bob, he sat a long while alone, in silence. “It’s jolly hard on her,” he said presently, “and I can’t understand it; but she didn’t deny that she was engaged to him, and, after all, he’s a better man than I.”

Day followed day, and he didn’t see Nancy again; he was far removed from her in another part of the great hospital. Train load after train load of wounded men were brought there, and she had to be at her post almost night and day. He longed to seek her out and to speak to her amidst the loathsome work she had to do, but the discipline which obtained forbade him to do so; besides, as he reflected, he could do no good; it would only make the wound in his heart bleed

more than ever.

Presently he was pronounced fit for duty again, and orders came that he must make his way to the front. Fifty men besides himself who were also recovered from their wounds were to accompany him.

The train was waiting at the little station close by, and at noon that day he was to leave the hospital. By this time he had become accustomed to the place, and knew several of the nurses whose duty lay at his end of the hospital; he also had become on good terms with many of the men.

An hour before the time had come for him to go he had gone out in the open space where he had seen Nancy, in the hopes of finding her, but she was nowhere to be seen.

All his arrangements were made, and nothing was left for him to do until the time came for his departure.

He wandered aimlessly and heedlessly around; his heart ached for just another sight of the woman he loved, and whom he believed he had lost for ever.

He looked at the watch on his wrist: "A quarter of an hour more," he reflected. He had longed to ask boldly to be allowed to see her, but he was afraid to do so; if she wanted to see him, she would have given him a hint, surely.

Then, when all hope had gone from his heart, she came from that part of the hospital where a number of the most dangerously wounded men lay, and ran towards him:

"I heard you were going this morning, Bob," she said, "and I have just crept away like a deserter; I felt I must; I didn't make things plain to you the other day. Bob, you have forgiven me, haven't you?"

"There was nothing to forgive," said Bob, and his heart beat madly.

"You aren't a coward," she said; "you're just—just the bravest man I ever knew. You believe I think that of you, don't you?"

He laughed nervously; he wanted to say a great deal, but the words wouldn't come.

"And—and, Bob, you know what you said to me, what that man Proctor and your mother told you?"

He looked at her in a puzzled way; even yet, he did not dare to hope.

"And—and, Bob"—with the words came a sob—"there's no one in the world but you."

"Nancy," he cried, "You don't mean . . . ?"

At that moment he was summoned to his duty. Still she stood before him—half sobbing, the same light in her eyes which he remembered seeing down by the Cornish sea.

A command from his superior officer was given; he must go. Close by, the soldiers stood in marching order. They had been wounded, but now they were ready for duty again; they were in great good humour, and discipline even yet was

somewhat relaxed. They were laughing and talking gaily; they were going back to fight, but they were going with a laugh upon their lips.

A minute later some one had started a song—the song which he had heard often in the trenches, when shot and shell were falling thickly:

“It’s a long way to Tipperary,
It’s a long, long way to go;
It’s a long way to Tipperary,
To the sweetest girl I know.”

“Nancy,” he cried eagerly, “do you mean that . . . ?”

Before her reply had come, even before he had finished his sentence, he had to leave her, and in a minute more he was on his way to the front.

Hours later he heard the booming of the great guns again, and was met with sight and sound which told him of his duty, but through it all and beyond it all he saw Nancy’s face; he heard the music of her voice; he remembered the look in her eyes—eyes that were filled with tears, yet shining like stars, and he thought again and again of her words: “There’s no one in the world but you.”

NOTE

I had just finished reading the proofs of the foregoing, when I received a letter from my friend, a part of which I have decided to insert here.

“It is now some time since you heard from me, and I am scribbling this hurried note to tell you that I am still alive and well. That I am able to say this seems to me nothing less than miraculous, for I have been in the thick of the fighting ever since I left the hospital. When I have time to write fully, I shall have some wonderful things to tell you concerning the heroism of our Army, and of the marvellous way in which we have not only held our own, but advanced. As you will see, I am now in Belgium, and we are in the midst of one of the most deadly struggles ever known in history. Nothing but the almost superhuman courage of our men could have saved us. It has been simply miraculous. Again and again have the Germans hurled themselves upon us, only to fail. There are signs now that their attacks are weakening, and their defence more feeble. If we only had more men, we could put them to rout and that right quickly. That is our great need. More men like the London Scottish, who have simply covered themselves with glory.

“It is said here that recruiting in England is slackening somewhat. Such news is simply appalling. You should hear what the men at the front are saying about the shirkers who are hanging back. They are a disgrace to the country, and deserve to be flogged. Let the nation be true to itself now, and we shall for ever cut out this cancer of German militarism, and bring in the time of universal peace.

“Have the shirkers at home ever thought, I wonder, of what would happen if Germany should conquer! The very suggestion of it drives me almost mad. Everything depends on the loyalty and enthusiasm of to-day. For, God’s sake do something to stir the people up, to make them feel how pressing is the need.

“If ever God called volunteers to fight in a Holy War, it is now. You know what a ‘peace man’ I have always been, and it is because I am a ‘peace man’ still, that I say this. On every hand the Almighty is calling us to fight for peace. It is not against the Germans that we are fighting, but against the mad, devilish spirit which they have deified. Let us be true now, and we shall surely strangle that spirit.

“You have heard of the story of Thoreau and Emerson. Thoreau went to suffering and prison for the sake of truth and conscience.

“ ‘Why are you here?’ asked Emerson.

“ ‘Why are you *not* here?’ retorted Thoreau.

“That is what I want to say to the young men of England. ‘Why are you not here, or why are you not training to come here?’

“Shall I live through it all I wonder, and shall I ever see my native land again? I hope so, I pray so, for I have so much to live for, more even than I dare to tell you. But even if I do not, even if I die, as thousands of the brave men here are dying, I shall be glad to lay down my life for the cause of honour, and liberty, and peace.

“I wonder if it is possible for you to get across to France or Belgium and get near the fighting-line? I wish you could. There are stories I could tell you that would set your heart on fire. Come, if you can!”

The remainder of Bob’s letter is not for publication, interesting though it is. But this I will say: if I can get near the fighting-line I shall, and then, perhaps I shall be able to complete the story, which is only just begun.

[The end of All for a Scrap of Paper: A Romance of the Present War by Hocking, Joseph]