The Pomp of Yesterday

Joseph Hocking
1918

Title: The Pomp of Yesterday
Author: Hocking, Joseph
Date of first publication: 1918
Date first posted: April 22, 2008
Date last updated: January 10, 2019
Faded Page ebook#20190123

E-text prepared by Al Haines

‘THE POMP OF YESTERDAY’

by

JOSEPH HOCKING

Author of ‘All for a Scrap of Paper,’ ‘Dearer than Life,’
‘The Curtain of Fire,’ etc.

“Far famed our Navies melt away,
On dune and headland sinks the fire,
Lo, all the pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre.
God of the Nations, spare us yet!
Lest we forget, lest we forget.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

Hodder and Stoughton
London —— New York —— Toronto

JOSEPH HOCKING'S GREAT WAR STORIES

ALL FOR A SCRAP OF PAPER
THE CURTAIN OF FIRE
DEARER THAN LIFE
THE PRICE OF A THRONE
THE PATH OF GLORY
'THE POMP OF YESTERDAY'
TOMMY
TOMMY AND THE MAID OF ATHENS

OTHER STORIES BY JOSEPH HOCKING

Facing Fearful Odds
O’er Moor and Fen
The Wilderness
Rosaleen O’Hara
The Soul of Dominic Wildthorne
Follow the Gleam
David Baring
The Trampled Cross

“Let us never forget in all that we do, that the measure of our ultimate success will be governed, largely if not mainly, by the strength with which we put our religious convictions into our action and hold fast firmly and fearlessly to the faith of our forefathers.”

Extract of speech by General Sir William Robertson.
March 2, 1918.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

It is now fast approaching four years since our country at the call of duty, and for the world's welfare entered the great struggle which is still convulsing the nations of the earth. What this has cost us, and what it has meant to us, and to other countries, it is impossible to describe. Imagination reels before the thought. Still the ghastly struggle continues, daily comes the story of carnage, and suffering, and loss; and still the enemy who stands for all that is basest, and most degraded in life, stands firm, and proudly vaunts his prowess.

Why is Victory delayed?

That is the question which has haunted me for many months, and I have asked myself whether we, and our Allies, have failed in those things which are essential, not only to Victory, but to a righteous and, therefore, lasting peace.

In this story, while not attempting a full and complete answer to the question, I have made certain suggestions which I am sure the Nation, the Empire, ought to consider; for on our attitude towards them depends much that is most vital to our welfare.

Let it not be imagined, however, that *The Pomp of Yesterday* is anything in the nature of a polemic, or a treatise. It is first and foremost a story—a romance if you like—of incident, and adventure. But it is more than a story. It deals with vital things, and it deals with them—however inadequately—sincerely and earnestly. The statements, moreover, which will probably arouse a great deal of antagonism in certain quarters, are not inventions of the Author, but were related to him by those in a position to know.

Neither are the descriptions of the Battle of the Somme the result of the Author's imagination, but transcripts from the experiences of some who passed through it. Added to this, I have, since first writing the story, paid a Second Visit to the Front, during which I traversed the country on which Thiepval, Goomecourt, La Boiselle, Contalmaison; and a score of other towns and villages once stood. Because of this, while doubtless a military authority could point out technical errors in my descriptions, I have been able to visualize the scenes of the battle, and correct such mistakes as I made at the time of writing.

One other word. More than once, the chief character in the narrative anticipates what has taken place in Russia. While I do not claim to be a prophet, it is only fair to say that I finished writing the story in August, 1917, when very few dreamt of the terrible chaos which now exists in the once Great Empire on which we so largely depended.

JOSEPH HOCKING.

March, 1918.

The Pomp of Yesterday

CHAPTER I
THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST

My first meeting with the man whose story I have set out to relate was in Plymouth. I had been standing in the harbour, hoping that the friends I had come to meet might yet appear, even although the chances of their doing so had become very small. Perhaps a hundred passengers had landed at the historic quay, and practically all of them had rushed away to catch the London train. I had scrutinized each face eagerly, but when the last passenger had crossed the gangway I had been reluctantly compelled to assume that my friends, for some reason or other, had not come.

I was about to turn away, and go back to the town, when some one touched my arm. ‘This is Plymouth, isn’t it?’

I turned, and saw a young man. At that time I was not sure he was young; he might have been twenty-eight, or he might have been forty-eight. His face was marked by a thousand lines, while a look suggestive of age was in his eyes. He spoke to me in an apologetic sort of way, and looked at me wistfully.

I did not answer him for a second, as his appearance startled me. The strange admixture of youth and age gave me an eerie feeling.

‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘this is Plymouth. At least, this is Plymouth Harbour.’

He turned toward the vessel, and looked at it for some seconds, and then heaved a sigh.

‘Have you friends on board?’ I asked.

‘Oh, no,’ he replied. ‘I have just left it. I thought I remembered Plymouth, and so I got off.’

‘Where have you come from?’

‘From India.’

‘Where did you come from?’

‘From Bombay. It was a long journey to Bombay, but it seemed my only chance.’ Then he shuddered.

‘Aren’t you well?’ I asked.

‘Oh, yes, I am very well now. But everything seems difficult to realize; you, now, and all this,’ and he cast his eyes quickly around him, ‘seem to be something

which exists in the imagination, rather than objective, tangible things.'

He spoke perfect English, and his manner suggested education, refinement.

'You don't mind my speaking to you, do you?' he added somewhat nervously.

'Not at all,' and I scrutinized him more closely. 'If you did not speak English so well,' I said, 'I should have thought you were an Indian,'—and then I realized that I had been guilty of a *faux pas,* for I saw his face flush and his lips tremble painfully.

'You were thinking of my clothes,' was his reply. 'They were the best I could get. When I realized that I was alive, I was half naked; I was very weak and ill, too. I picked up these things,' and he glanced at his motley garments, 'where and how I could. On the whole, however, people were very kind to me. When I got to Bombay, my feeling was that I must get to England.'

'And where are you going now?' I asked.

'I don't know. Luckily I have a little money; I found it inside my vest. I suppose I must have put it there before——' and then he became silent, while the strange, wistful look in his eyes was intensified.

'What is your name?' I asked.

'I haven't the slightest idea. It's very awkward, isn't it?' and he laughed nervously. 'Sometimes dim pictures float before my mind, and I seem to have vague recollections of things that happened ages and ages ago. But they pass away in a second. I am afraid you think my conduct unpardonable, but I can hardly help myself. You see, having no memory, I act on impulse. That was why I spoke to you.'

'The poor fellow must be mad,' I said to myself; 'it would be a kindness to him to take him to a police station, and ask the authorities to take care of him.' But as I looked at him again, I was not sure of this. In spite of his strange attire, and in spite, too, of the wistful look in his eyes, there was no suggestion of insanity. That he had passed through great trouble I was sure, and I had a feeling that he must, at some time, have undergone some awful experiences. But his eyes were not those of a madman. In some senses they were bold and resolute, and suggested great courage; in others they expressed gentleness and kindness.

'Then you have no idea what you are going to do, now you have landed at Plymouth?'

'I'm afraid I haven't. Perhaps I ought not to have got off here at all. But again I acted on impulse. You see, when I first saw the harbour, I had a feeling that I had been here before, so seeing the others landing, I followed them. My reason for speaking to you was, I think, this,'—and he touched my tunic. 'Besides, there was something in your eyes which made me trust you.'

'Are you a soldier, then?' I asked.

'I don't know. You see, I don't know anything. But I rather think I must have been interested in the Army, because I am instinctively drawn to any one wearing

a soldier's uniform. You are a captain, I see.'

'Yes,' I replied. 'I'm afraid my position in the Army is somewhat anomalous, but there it is. When the war broke out, I was asked by the War Office to do some recruiting, and thinking that I should have more influence as a soldier, a commission was given me. I don't know much about soldiering, although I have taken a great deal of interest in the Army all my life.'

He looked at me in a puzzled sort of way. 'War broke out?' he queried. 'Is England at war?'

'Didn't you know?'

He shook his head pathetically. 'I know nothing. All the way home I talked to no one. I didn't feel as though I could. You see, people looked upon me as a kind of curiosity, and I resented it somewhat. But, England at war! By Jove, that's interesting!'

His eyes flashed with a new light, and another tone came into his voice. 'Who are we at war with?' he added.

'Principally with Germany,' I replied, 'but it'll take a lot of explaining, if you've heard nothing about it. Roughly speaking, England, France, and Russia are at war with Germany, Austria and Turkey.'

'I always said it would come—always. The Germans have meant it for years.'

'The fellow is contradicting himself; he begins to have a memory in a remarkable manner,' I thought. 'When did you think it would come?' I asked.

He looked at me in a puzzled way as if he were trying to co-ordinate his thoughts, and then, with a sigh, gave it up as if in despair. 'It is always that way,' he said with a sigh, 'sometimes flashes of the past come to me, but they never remain. But what is England at war about?'

'I am afraid it would take too long to tell you. I say,' and I turned to him suddenly, 'have you done anything wrong in India, that you come home in this way?'

I was sorry the moment I had spoken, for I knew by the look in his eyes that my suspicion was unjust.

'Not that I know of,' he replied. 'I am simply a fellow who can't remember. You don't know how I have struggled to recall the past, and what a weary business it is.'

I must confess I felt interested in him. That he had been educated as a gentleman was evident from every word he spoke, and in spite of his motley garb, no one would take him for an ordinary man. I wanted to know more about him, and to look behind the curtain which hid his past from him.

'I'm afraid I must be an awful nuisance to you,' he said. 'I'm taking up a lot of your time, and doubtless you have your affairs to attend to.'

'No, I'm at a loose end just now. If you like, I'll help you to get some other clothes, and then you'll feel more comfortable.'

‘It would be awfully good of you if you would.’

Two hours later, he sat with me in the dining-room of a hotel which faced The Hoe. His nondescript garments were discarded, and he was now clothed in decent British attire. That he had a good upbringing, and was accustomed to the polite forms of society, was more than ever evidenced while we were together at the hotel. There was no suggestion of awkwardness in his movements, and everything he did betrayed the fact that he had been accustomed to the habits and associations of an English gentleman.

After dinner, we went for a walk on The Hoe.

‘It would be really ever so much easier to talk to you,’ I said with a laugh, ‘if you had a name. Have you no remembrance of what you were called?’

‘Not the slightest. In a vague way I know I am an Englishman, and that’s about all. Months ago I seemed to awake out of a deep sleep, and I realized that I was in India. By a kind of intuition, I found my way to Bombay, and hearing that a boat was immediately starting for England, I came by it. It was by the merest chance that I was able to come. I had walked a good way, and was foot-sore. I had a bathe in a pond by the roadside, and on examining a pocket inside my vest I found several £5 notes.’

‘And you knew their value?’ I asked.

‘Oh, yes, perfectly,’ he replied.

‘Did you not realize that they might not belong to you?’

‘No, I was perfectly sure that they belonged to me, and that I had put them there before I lost my memory, I can’t give you any reason for this, but I know it was so. I have just another remembrance,’ he added, and he shuddered as he spoke.

‘What is that?’

‘That I had been with Indians. Even now I dream about them, and I wake up in the night sometimes, seeing the glitter of their eyes, and the flash of their knives. I think they tortured me, too. I have curious scars on my body. Still, I don’t think about that if I can help it.’

‘And you have no recollection of your father or mother?’

He shook his head.

‘No memories of your boyhood?’

‘No.’

‘Then I must give you a name. What would you like to be called?’

He laughed almost merrily. ‘I don’t know. One name is as good as another. What a beautiful place!’ and he pointed to one of the proudest dwellings in that part of the country. ‘What is it called?’

‘That is Mount Edgecumbe,’ I said.

‘Mount Edgecumbe,’ he repeated, ‘Edgecumbe? That sounds rather nice. Call me Edgecumbe.’

‘All right,’ I laughed; ‘but what about your Christian name?’

‘I don’t mind what it is. What do you suggest?’

‘There was a scriptural character who had strange experiences, called Paul.’

‘Paul Edgecumbe,—that wouldn’t sound bad, would it?’

‘No, it sounds very well.’

‘For the future, then, I’ll be Paul Edgecumbe, until—my memory comes back;—if ever it does,’ he added with a sigh. ‘Paul Edgecumbe, Paul Edgecumbe,—yes, I shall remember that.’

‘And what are you going to do?’ I asked. ‘Your little store of money will soon be gone. Have you any idea what you are fit for?’

‘Not the slightest. Stay though——’ A group of newly-made soldiers passed by as he spoke, and each of them, according to the custom of soldiers, saluted me. ‘Strapping lot of chaps, aren’t they?’ he said, like one talking to himself; ‘they’ll need a lot of licking into shape, though. By Jove, that’ll do.’

‘What’ll do?’

‘You say England is at war, and you’ve been on a recruiting stunt. That will suit me. Recruit me, will you?’

‘Do you know anything about soldiering?’

‘I don’t think so. I remember nothing. Why do you ask?’

‘Because when those soldiers saluted me just now, you returned the salute.’

‘Did I? I didn’t know. Perhaps I saw you doing so and I unconsciously followed your lead. But I don’t think I do know anything about soldiering. I remember nothing about it, anyhow.’

This conversation took place in the early spring of 1915, just as England began to realize that we were actually at war. The first flush of recruiting had passed, and hundreds of thousands of our finest young men had volunteered for the Army. But a kind of apathy had settled upon the nation, and fellows who should have come forward willingly hung back.

I had been fairly successful in my recruiting campaign; nevertheless I was often disappointed at the lack of enthusiasm manifested. I found that young men gave all sorts of foolish excuses as reasons for not joining; and when this stranger volunteered, as it seemed to me, unthinkingly, and without realizing the gravity of the step he was taking, I hesitated.

‘Of course you understand that you are doing a very important thing?’ I said. ‘We are at war, and fellows who volunteer know that they are possibly volunteering for death.’

‘Oh yes, of course.’ He said this in what seemed to me such a casual and matter-of-fact way that I could not believe he realized what war was.

‘The casualty list is already becoming very serious,’ I continued. ‘You see, we are having to send out men after a very short training, and thus it comes about that the lads who, when war broke out, never dreamed of being soldiers, are now,

many of them, either maimed and crippled for life, or dead. You quite realize what you are doing?'

'Certainly,' he replied, 'but then, although I have forgotten nearly everything else, I have not forgotten that I am an Englishman, and of course, as an Englishman, I could do no other than offer myself to my country. Still, I'd like to know the exact nature of our quarrel with Germany.'

'You've not forgotten there is such a country as Germany, then?'

'Oh, no.' And then he sighed, as if trying to recollect something. 'I say,' he went on, 'my mind is a curious business. I know that Germany is a country in Europe. I can even remember the German language. I know that Berlin is the capital of the country, and I can recall the names of many of their big towns,—Leipzig, Frankfurt, Munich, Nuremburg; I have a sort of fancy that I have visited them; but I know nothing of the history of Germany,—that is all a blank. Funny, isn't it?' and then he sighed again.

'As it happens,' I said, 'I have to speak at a recruiting meeting to-night, here in Plymouth. Would you like to come? I am going to deal with the reasons for the war, and to show why it is every chap's duty to do his bit.'

'I'd love to come. My word! what's that?'

Away in the distance there was a sound of martial music, and as the wind was blowing from the south-west the strains reached us clearly. Evidently some soldiers were marching with a band.

'It's fine, isn't it!' he cried. He threw back his shoulders, stood perfectly erect, and his footsteps kept perfect time to the music. I felt more than ever convinced that he had had some former association with the Army.

On our way to the recruiting meeting, however, he seemed to have forgotten all about it. He was very listless, and languid, and depressed. He was like a man who wanted to hide himself from the crowd, and he slunk along the streets as though apologizing for his presence.

'That's the hall,' I said, pointing to a big building into which the people were thronging.

'I shall not be noticed, shall I? If you think I should, I'd rather not go.'

'Certainly not. Who's going to notice you? I'll get you a seat on the platform if you like.'

'Oh, no, no. Let me slink behind a pillar somewhere. No, please don't bother about me, I'll go in with that crowd. I'll find you after the meeting.' He left me as he spoke, and a minute later I had lost sight of him.

I am afraid I paid scanty attention to what was said to me in the anteroom, prior to going into the hall. The man interested me more than I can say. I found myself wondering who he was, where he came from, and what his experiences had been. More than once, I doubted whether I had not been the victim of an impostor. The story of his loss of memory was very weak and did not accord with the spirit

of the men in the anteroom, who were eagerly talking about the war; or with the purposes of the meeting. And yet I could not help trusting in him, he was so frank and manly. In a way, he was transparent, too, and talked like a grown-up child.

When I entered the hall, which was by this time crowded with, perhaps, two thousand people, I scanned the sea of faces eagerly, but could nowhere see the man who had adopted the name of Paul Edgecumbe. I doubted whether he was there at all, and whether I should ever see him again. Still, I did not see what purpose he could have had in deceiving me. He had received nothing from me, save his dinner at the hotel, which I had persisted in paying for in spite of his protests. The clothes he wore were paid for by his own money, and he showed not the slightest expectation of receiving any benefits from me.

Just as I was called upon to speak, I caught sight of him. He was sitting only a few rows back from the platform, close to a pillar, and his eyes, I thought, had a vacant stare. When my name was mentioned, however, and I stood by the table on the platform, waiting for the applause which is usual on such an occasion to die down, the vacant look had gone. He was eager, alert, attentive.

Usually I am not a ready speaker, but that night my work seemed easy. After I had sketched the story of the events which led to the war, the atmosphere became electric, and the cause I had espoused gripped me as never before, and presently, when I came to the application of the story I had told, and of our duty as a nation which pretended to stand for honour and truth, and Christianity, my heart grew hot, and the meeting became wild with enthusiasm.

Just as I was closing, I looked toward the pillar by which Paul Edgecumbe sat, and his face had become so changed that I scarcely knew him. There were no evidences of the drawn, parchment-like skin; instead, his cheeks were flushed, and looked youthful. His eyes were no longer wistful and sad, but burned like coals of fire. He was like a man consumed by a great passion. If he had forgotten the past, the present, at all events, was vividly revealed to him.

Before I sat down, I appealed for volunteers. I asked the young men, who believed in the sacredness of promises, in the honour of life, in the sanctity of women, to come on to the platform, and to give in their names as soldiers of the King.

There was no applause, a kind of hush rested on the audience; but for more than a minute no one came forward. Then I saw Paul Edgecumbe make his way from behind the pillar, and come towards the platform, the people cheering as he did so. He climbed the platform steps, and walked straight toward the chairman, who looked at him curiously.

‘Will you take me, sir?’ he said, and his voice rang out clearly among the now hushed audience.

‘You wish to join, do you?’

‘Join!’ he said passionately, ‘how can a man, who is a man, do anything else?’

What I have related describes how I first met Paul Edgecumbe, and how he joined the Army. At least a hundred other volunteers came forward that night, but I paid little attention to them. The man whose history was unknown to me, and whose life-story was unknown even to himself, had laid a strong hand upon me.

As I look back on that night now, and as I remember what has since taken place, I should, if power had been given me to read the future, have been even more excited than I was.

CHAPTER II
SIR ROGER GRANVILLE'S SUGGESTION

When the meeting was over, I looked around for my new acquaintance, but he was nowhere to be found. I waited at the hall door until the last man had departed, but could not see him. Thinking he might have gone to the hotel where we had had dinner, I went up to The Hoe, and inquired for him; but he had not been seen. He had vanished as suddenly as he had appeared.

I must confess that I was somewhat anxious about him, and wondered what had become of him. He was alone; he knew no one but myself; he had lost his memory; he was utterly ignorant of Plymouth, and I feared lest something untoward should have happened to him. However, I reflected that, as volunteers had been ordered to report themselves at the barracks at nine o'clock on the following morning, I should find him there.

I went to the house I was staying at, therefore, hoping, in spite of my misgivings, that all would be well.

I had no opportunity of going to the barracks, however. Before I had finished breakfast the next day a telegram arrived, ordering me to go to Falmouth by the earliest possible train on an urgent matter. This necessitated my leaving Plymouth almost before my breakfast was finished. All I could do, therefore, was to scribble him a hasty line, explaining the situation, and urging him to communicate with me at an address I gave him in Falmouth. I also told him that on my return to Plymouth I would look him up, and do all I could for him.

As events turned out, however, I did not get back for more than a week, and when I did, although I made careful inquiries, I could learn nothing. Whether he remained in Plymouth, or not, I could not tell, and of course, among the thousands of men who were daily enlisting, it was difficult to discover the whereabouts of an unknown volunteer. Moreover, there were several recruiting stations in Plymouth besides the barracks, and thus it was easy for me to miss him.

Months passed, and I heard nothing about Paul Edgecumbe, and if the truth must be told, owing to the multifarious duties which pressed upon me at that time, I almost forgot him. But not altogether. Little as I knew of him, his personality had impressed itself upon me, while the remembrance of that wild flash in his eyes as he came on to the platform in Plymouth, and declared that he should join the Army, was not easily forgotten.

One day, about three months after our meeting, I was lunching with Colonel Gray in Exeter, when Sir Roger Granville, who was chairman of the meeting at which Edgecumbe had enlisted, joined us.

‘I have often thought about that fellow who joined up at Plymouth, Luscombe,’ he said. ‘Have you ever heard any more about him?’

I shook my head. ‘I’ve tried to follow him up, too. The fellow has had a curious history.’ Whereupon I told Sir Roger what I knew about him.

‘Quite a romance,’ laughed Colonel Gray. ‘It would be interesting to know what becomes of him.’

‘I wonder who and what he is?’ mused Sir Roger.

‘Anything might happen to a fellow like that. He may be a peer or a pauper; he may be married or single, and there may be all sorts of interesting developments.’

He grew quite eloquent, I remember, as to the poor fellow’s possible future, and would not listen to Colonel Gray’s suggestions that probably everything would turn out in the most prosaic fashion.

About five o’clock that evening our train arrived at a little roadside station, where Sir Roger Granville’s motor-car awaited us. It was a beautiful day in early summer, and the whole countryside was lovely.

‘No wonder you Devonshire people are proud of your county,’ I said, as the car swept along a winding country lane.

‘Yes, you Cornishmen may well be jealous of us, although, for that matter, I don’t know whether I am a Cornishman or a Devonshire man. There has always been a quarrel, you know, as to whether the Granvilles belonged to Cornwall or Devon, although I believe old Sir Richard was born on the Cornish side of the county boundary. In fact, there are several families around here who can hardly tell the county they hail from. You see that place over there?’ and he pointed to a fine old mansion that stood on the slopes of a wooded hill.

‘It’s a lovely spot,’ I ventured.

‘It is lovely, and George St. Mabyn is a lucky fellow. But *à propos* of our conversation, George does not know which county his family came from originally, Cornwall or Devon. St. Mabyn, you know, is a Cornish parish, and I suppose that some of the St. Mabyns came to Devonshire from Cornwall three centuries ago. That reminds me, he is dining with us to-night. If I mistake not, he is a bit gone on a lady who’s staying at my house,—fascinating girl she is, too; but whether she’ll have him or not, I have my doubts.’

‘Why?’ I asked.

‘Oh, she was engaged to his elder brother, who was killed in Egypt, and who was heir to the estate. It was awfully sad about Maurice,—fine fellow he was. But there was a row with the Arabs up by the Nile somewhere, and Maurice got potted.’

‘And George not only came into the estate, but may also succeed to his brother’s sweetheart?’ I laughed.

‘That’s so. It’s years ago now since Maurice’s regiment was sent to Egypt, and the engagement, so I am informed, was fixed up the night before he went.’

‘And is George St. Mabyn a good chap?’

‘Oh, yes. He was a captain in the Territorials before the war broke out, and was very active in recruiting last autumn. In November he got sent to Ypres, and had a rough time there, I suppose. He was there until two months ago, when he was wounded. He’s home on leave now. This war’s likely to drag on, isn’t it? We’ve been at it nine months, and there are no signs of the Germans crumbling up.’

‘From all I can hear,’ I said, ‘it was touch and go with us a little while ago. If they had broken through our lines at Ypres, we should have been in a bad way.’

‘My word, we should! Still, the way our fellows stuck it was magnificent.’

The car entered the drive just then which led to Sir Roger’s place, and after passing more than a mile through fine park land, we swept up to an old, grey stone mansion.

‘You possess one of the finest specimens of an Old English home that I know, Sir Roger,’ I said.

‘Yes, I do,’ and there was a touch of pride in his voice. ‘I love every stone of it,—I love every outbuilding,—I love every acre of the old place. I suppose it’s natural, too,—my people have lived here so long. Heavens! suppose the Germans were to get here, and treat it as they have treated the old French chateaux! Hallo, here we are!’ and he shouted to some people near the house. ‘You see I have brought the orator with me!’

We alighted from the car, and made our way towards three ladies who sat in a secluded nook on the lawn. One I knew immediately as Lady Granville, the other two were strangers to me. But as they will figure more or less prominently in this story, and were closely associated with the events which followed, it will be necessary for me to give some description of them.

CHAPTER III
THE STRANGE BEHAVIOUR OF GEORGE ST. MABYN

One was a tall, stylishly dressed, handsome girl, of striking appearance. I had almost called her a woman, for although she was still young, her appearance could not be called strictly girlish. She might be about twenty-five years of age, and her face, though free from lines, suggested a history. I thought, too, that there was a lack of frankness in her face, and that she had a furtive look in her eyes. There was nothing else in her appearance, however, which suggested this. She gave me a pleasant greeting, and expressed the hope that we should have a good meeting in the little town near Granitelands, which was the name of Lord Granville's house.

'I have heard such tremendous things about you, Captain Luscombe,' she said, 'that I am quite excited. Report has it that you are quite an orator.'

'Report is a lying jade,' I replied; 'still, I suppose since the people at the War Office think I am no use as a fighter, they must use me to persuade others to do their bit.'

'Of course I am going,' she laughed, 'although, personally, I don't like the Army.'

'Not like the Army, Norah!' It was the other girl who spoke, and who thus drew my attention to her.

I was not much impressed by Lorna Bolivick when I had been first introduced to her, but a second glance showed me that she was by far the more interesting of the two. In one sense, she looked only a child, and I judged her to be about nineteen or twenty years of age. She had all a child's innocence, and *naïveté*, too; I thought she seemed as free from care as the lambs I had seen sporting in the meadows, or the birds singing among the trees. I judged her to be just a happy-go-lucky child of nature, who had lived among the shoals of life, and had never realized its depths. Her brown eyes were full of laughter and fun. Her frank, untrammelled ways suggested a creature of impulse.

'That girl never had a care in her life,' I reflected; 'she's just a happy kid who, although nearly a woman in years, is not grown up.'

I soon found myself mistaken, however. Something was said, I have forgotten what, which evidently moved her, and her face changed as if by magic. The look of carelessness left her in a moment, her great brown eyes burned with a new light, her face revealed possibilities which I had not dreamt of. I knew then that Lorna Bolivick could feel deeply, that she was one who heard voices, and had plumbed the depths of life which were unknown to the other.

She was not handsome, a passing observer would not even call her pretty, but

she had a wondrous face.

'Do you like my name, Captain Luscombe?' she asked.

'It is one of the most musical I know,' I replied.

'I don't like it,' she laughed. 'You see, in a way it gives me such a lot to live up to. I suppose dad was reading Blackmore's great novel when I was born, and so, although all the family protested, he insisted on my being called Lorna. But I'm not a bit like her. She was gentle, and winsome, and beautiful, and I am not a bit gentle, I am not a bit winsome, and I am as ugly as sin,—my brothers all tell me so. Besides, in spite of the people who talk so much about Lorna Doone, I think she was insipid,—a sort of wax doll.'

Just then we heard the tooting of a motor horn, and turning, saw a car approaching the house.

'There's George St. Mabyn,' cried Sir Roger. 'You're just in time, George,—I was wondering if you would be in time for our early dinner.'

Immediately afterwards, I was introduced to a young fellow about twenty-eight years of age, who struck me as a remarkably good specimen of the English squire class. He had, as I was afterwards told, conducted himself with great bravery in Belgium and France, and had been mentioned in the dispatches. I quickly saw that Sir Roger Granville had been right when he said that George St. Mabyn was deeply in love with Norah Blackwater. In fact, he took no trouble to hide the fact. He flushed like a boy as he approached her, and then, as I thought, his face looked pained as he noticed her cold greeting. They were evidently well known to each other, however, as he called her by her Christian name, and assumed the attitude of an old friend.

I did not think Lorna Bolivick liked him. Her greeting was cordial enough, and yet I thought I detected a certain reserve; but of course it might be only my fancy. In any case, they were nothing to me. I was simply a bird of passage, and would, in all probability, go away on the morrow, never to see them again.

During the informal and somewhat hurried evening meal which had been prepared, I found myself much interested in the young squire. He had a frank, boyish manner which charmed me, and in spite of his being still somewhat of an invalid, his fresh, open-air way of looking at things was very pleasant.

'By the way, Luscombe,' said Sir Roger, as the ladies rushed away to their rooms to prepare for their motor drive, 'tell St. Mabyn about that fellow we were talking of to-day; he'll be interested.'

'It's only a man I met with in Plymouth some time ago, who has lost his memory,' I responded.

'Lost his memory? What do you mean?'

I gave him a brief outline of the story I have related in these pages, and then added: 'It is not so strange after all; I have heard of several cases since, where, through some accident, or shock, men have been robbed of the past. In some cases

their memory has returned to them suddenly, and they have gone back to their people, who had given them up for dead. On the other hand, I suppose there have been lots who have never recovered.'

'The thing that struck me,' said Sir Roger, 'was the possibility of a very interesting *dénouement* in this case. I was chairman of the meeting at Plymouth, where the fellow enlisted, and he struck me as an extraordinary chap. He had all the antiquity of Adam on his face, and yet he might have been young. He had the look of a gentleman, too, and from what Luscombe tells me, he is a gentleman. But there it is; he remembers nothing, the past is a perfect blank to him. What'll happen, if his memory comes back?'

'Probably nothing,' said St. Mabyn; 'he may have had the most humdrum past imaginable.'

'Of course he may, but on the other hand there may be quite a romance in the story. As I said to Luscombe, he may have a wife, or a sweetheart, who has been waiting for him for years, and perhaps given him up as dead. Think of his memory coming back, and of the meeting which would follow! Or supposing he is an heir to some estate, and somebody else has got it? Why, George, think if something like that had happened to your brother Maurice! It might, in fact it *would* alter everything. But there are the motors at the door; we must be off.'

He turned toward the door as he spoke, and did not see George St. Mabyn's face; but I did. It had become drawn and haggard, while in his eyes was a look which suggested anguish.

In spite of myself, a suspicion flashed across my mind. Of course the thing was improbable, if not impossible. But, perhaps influenced by Sir Roger's insistence upon the romantic possibilities of the story, I could not help thinking of it. There could be no doubt, too, that George St. Mabyn looked positively ghastly. A few minutes before, he looked ruddy and well, but now his face was haggard, as if he were in great pain.

Of course it was all nonsense; nevertheless I caught myself constantly thinking about it on my way to the meeting. In fact, so much did it occupy my attention that Lorna Bolivick, who sat with me in the car, laughingly suggested that I was a dull companion, and was evidently thinking more about my speech than how to be agreeable to a lady.

'St. Mabyn ought to be the speaker, not I,' I said. 'He has been to the front, and knows what real fighting means.'

'Oh, George can't speak,' she replied laughingly; 'why, even when he addressed his tenants, after Maurice was killed, he nearly broke down.'

'What sort of fellow was Maurice?' I asked.

'Oh, just splendid. Everybody loved Maurice. But he ought not to have stayed in the Army.'

'Why?'

‘Because,—because—oh, I don’t know why, but it didn’t seem right. His father was old and feeble when he went away, and as he was the heir he ought to have stayed at home and looked after him, and the estate. But he would go. There were rumours about trouble in Egypt, and Maurice said he wanted to see some fighting. I suppose it was his duty, too. After all, he was a soldier, and when his regiment was ordered abroad, he had to go. But it seems an awful shame.’

‘What kind of a looking fellow was he?’

‘I don’t think I am a judge; I was only a kiddy at the time, and people said I made an idol of Maurice. But to me he was just splendid, just the handsomest fellow I ever saw. He had such a way with him, too; no one could refuse him anything.’

‘I suppose he was engaged to Miss Blackwater?’

The girl was silent. Evidently she did not wish to talk about it.

‘Were the two brothers fond of each other?’ I asked.

‘Oh, yes, awfully fond. The news of Maurice’s death almost killed George. You see, it happened not long after his father’s death. You have no idea how he was cut up; it was just horrible to see him. But he’s got over it now. It nearly broke my heart too, so I can quite understand what George felt. But this must be very uninteresting to you.’

‘On the other hand, it is very interesting. Did you tell me that George St. Mabyn was engaged to Miss Blackwater?’

‘No, I didn’t tell you that.’

‘Is he going to be?’

I knew I was rather overstepping the bounds of good taste, but the question escaped me almost before I was aware.

‘I don’t know. Oh, won’t it be lovely when the war is over! You think it will be over soon, don’t you?’

‘I am afraid not,’ I said; ‘as far as I can see, we are only at the beginning of it.’

‘Have you reason for saying that?’

‘The gravest,’ I replied; ‘why do you ask?’

‘Only that I feel so ashamed of myself. Here are you going to a meeting to-night to persuade men to join the Army, while some of us women do practically nothing. But I’m going to; I told dad I should, only this morning, but he laughed at me. He said I should stay at home and stick to my knitting.’

‘What did you tell him you were going to do?’

‘Train as a nurse. But he wouldn’t hear of it. He said it was not a fit thing for a young girl to nurse wounded men. But if they are wounded for their country, surely we women ought to stop at nothing. But here we are at the hall. Mind you make a good speech, Captain Luscombe; I am going to be an awfully severe critic.’

After the meeting, George St. Mabyn returned with us to Granitelands, and Sir Roger, in talking about the men who had volunteered for service that night, again referred to the meeting at Plymouth, and to the man who had enlisted. He also again insisted upon the possible romantic outcome of the situation. Again I thought I saw the haunted look in George St. Mabyn's eyes, and I fancied that the cigar he held between his fingers trembled.

Miss Blackwater, however, showed very little interest in the story, and seemed to be somewhat bored by its recital. Lorna Bolivick, however, was greatly interested.

'And do you mean to say,' she asked, 'that you don't know where he is?'

'I have not the slightest idea.'

'And aren't you going to find out?'

'If I can, certainly.'

'Why,—why,'—and she spoke in a childish, impetuous way—'I think it is just cruel of you. If I were in your place, I wouldn't rest until I had found him. I would hunt the whole Army through.'

'I should have a long job,' I replied. 'Besides, he may not have joined the Army.'

'But he has,—of course he has. He could not help himself. It is your duty to be with him, and to help him. I think you are responsible for him.'

Of course every one laughed at this.

'But I *do*!' she insisted. 'It was not for nothing that they met like that. Mr. Luscombe was meant to meet him, meant to help him. It was he who persuaded him to join the Army, and now it is his bounden duty to find him out, wherever he is. Why, think of the people who may be grieving about him! Here he is, a gentleman, with all a gentleman's instincts, an ordinary private; and of course having no memory he'll, in a way, be helpless, and may be led to do all sorts of foolish things. I mean it, Captain Luscombe; I think it's just—just awful of you to be so careless.'

Again there was general laughter, and yet the girl's words made me feel uneasy. Although I could not explain it, it seemed to me that some Power higher than our own had drawn us together, that in some way this man's life would be linked with mine, and that I should have to take my part in the unravelling of a mystery.

All this time, George St. Mabyn had not spoken. He sat staring into vacancy, and what he was thinking about it was impossible to tell. Of course the thoughts which, in spite of myself, haunted my mind, were absurd. If I had not seen that ashen pallor come to his face, and caught the haunted look in his eyes, when earlier in the evening Sir Roger Granville had almost jokingly associated the unknown man with Maurice St. Mabyn, I do not suppose such foolish fancies would have entered-my mind. But now, although I told myself that I was

entertaining an absurd suspicion, that suspicion would not leave me.

I looked for a resemblance between him and Paul Edgecumbe, but could find none. Was he, I wondered, in doubt about his brother's death? Had he entered into possession on insufficient proof? Many strange things happened in the East; soldiers had more than once been reported to be dead, and then turned up in a most remarkable way. Had George St. Mabyn, in his desire to become owner of the beautiful old house I had seen, taken his brother's death for granted, on insufficient grounds, and had not troubled about it since?

'Promise me,' said Lorna Bolivick, in her impetuous way, 'that you will never rest until you find this man again! Promise me that you will befriend him!' and she looked eagerly into my eyes as she spoke.

'Of course I will,' I said laughingly.

'No, but that won't do. Promise me that you will look for him as if he were your own brother!'

'That's a pretty large order. But why should you be so interested in this stranger?'

'I never give reasons,' she laughed, 'they are so stupid. But you *will* promise me, won't you?'

'Of course I will,' I replied.

'That's a bargain, then.'

'When are you leaving this neighbourhood?' asked George St. Mabyn, when presently he was leaving the house.

'To-morrow afternoon,' I replied. 'They are working me pretty hard, I can tell you.'

'Won't you look me up to-morrow morning?' he asked. 'There's a man staying with me whom you'd like to know. I tried to persuade him to come to the meeting to-night, but he did not feel up to it. He is convalescing at my place; he's had a baddish time. He could tell you some good stories, too, that would help you in this recruiting stunt.'

'By all means,' said Sir Roger, to whom I looked, as St. Mabyn spoke. 'I can send you over in the car.'

The next day, about eleven o'clock, I started to pay my promised visit, and passed through the same beautiful countryside which had so appealed to me before. I found that St. Mabyn's house was not quite so large as Granitelands, but it was a place to rejoice in nevertheless. It was approached by a long avenue of trees, which skirted park lands where deer disported themselves. Giant oaks studded the park, and the house, I judged, was built in the Elizabethan period. An air of comfort and homeliness was everywhere; the grey walls were lichen-covered, and the diamond-paned, stone-mullioned windows seemed to suggest security and peace.

‘I wonder why he wanted me to come here?’ I reflected, as the car drew up at the old, ivy-covered porch.

CHAPTER IV
I MEET CAPTAIN SPRINGFIELD

I stood at the window of the room into which I had been shown, looking over the flower-beds towards the beautiful landscape. Devonshire has been called the Queen of the English counties, perhaps not without reason. Even my beloved Cornwall could provide no fairer sight than that which spread itself before me. For a coast scenery, Cornwall is unrivalled in the whole of England, but for sweet, rustic loveliness, I had to confess that we had nothing to surpass what I saw that day.

Mile after mile of field, and woodland, in undulating beauty, spread themselves out before me, while away in the distance was a fringe of rocky tors and wild moor-land.

At the bottom of the hill on the side of which the house stood ran a clear, sparkling river, which wound itself away down the valley like a ribbon of silver, hidden only here and there by trees and brushwood.

So enamoured was I that I stood like one entranced, and did not notice the two men who had entered, until St. Mabyn spoke.

Captain Horace Springfield was a tall, dark, lean man from thirty to thirty-five years of age, and from what I learnt afterwards, had spent a great deal of time abroad. Although still young, his intensely black hair was becoming tinged with grey, and his deeply-lined cheeks, and somewhat sunken eyes made him look older than he really was. Although he was home on sick leave, he showed no sign of weakness; his every movement suggested strength and decision.

‘Glad to know you,’ he said; ‘it’s a degrading sort of business to go round the country persuading men to do their duty, but since there are so many shirkers in the country, some one’s obliged to do it. We shall need all the strength of England, and of the Empire, before we’ve done, if this job is to be finished satisfactorily; the Germans will need a lot of licking.’

‘Still, our chaps are doing very well,’ I ventured.

‘Oh, yes, they are all right. But naturally these new fellows haven’t the staying power of the men in the old Army. They, poor chaps, were nearly all done for in the early days of the war. Still, the Territorials saved the situation.’

‘You’ve seen service in the East?’ I ventured.

‘Yes, Egypt and India.’

‘It was in Egypt that Captain Springfield knew my brother Maurice,’ and George St. Mabyn glanced quickly at him as he spoke.

‘The country lost a fine soldier in Maurice St. Mabyn,’ said Springfield. ‘If he

had lived, he'd have been colonel by now; in fact, there is no knowing what he mightn't have become. He had a big mind, and was able to take a broad grasp of things. I'd like to have seen him at the General Headquarters in France. What Maurice St. Mabyn didn't know about soldiering wasn't worth knowing. Still, he's dead, poor chap.'

'Were you with him when he died?' I asked.

'Yes, I was,—that is I was in the show when he was killed. It was one of those affairs which make it hard to forgive Providence. You see, it was only a small skirmish; some mad mullah of a fellow became a paid agitator among the natives. He stirred up a good deal of religious feeling, and quite a number of poor fools joined him. By some means, too, he obtained arms for them. St. Mabyn was ordered to put down what the English press called "a native rebellion." He was able to do it easily for although he hadn't many men, he planned our attack so perfectly that we blew them into smithereens in a few hours.'

'And you were in it?' I asked.

'Yes,' and then in a few words he described how Maurice St. Mabyn was killed.

'It's jolly hard when a friend dies like that,' I said awkwardly.

'Yes,' was Springfield's reply, 'it is. Of course it is one of the risks of the Army, and I am sure that Maurice would have gone into it, even if he had known what would take place. He was that sort. In a way, too, it was a glorious death. By his pluck and foresight he made the whole job easy, and put down what might have been a big rebellion. But that isn't quite how I look at it. I lost a pal, the best pal a man ever had. His death bowled me over, too, and I wasn't fit for anything for months. Poor old Maurice!'

I must confess that I was moved by the man's evident feeling. He had not struck me as an emotional man,—rather, at first, he gave me the impression of being somewhat hard and callous. His deep-set eyes, high cheek-bones, and tall gaunt form, suggested one of those men who was as hard as nails, and who could see his own mother die without a quiver of his lips.

'Forgive me, Luscombe,' he said, 'I'm not a sloppy kind of chap as a rule, and sentiment isn't my strong point. I have seen as much hard service as few men, and death has not been a rare thing to me. I have been in one or two little affairs out in India, and seen men die fast. It is no make-belief over in France, either, although I have seen no big engagement there. But to lose a pal is—— I say, shall we change the subject?'

After this, we went out into the grounds, and talked of anything rather than war or soldiering, and I must confess that Springfield talked well. There was a kind of rough strength about him which impressed me. That he was on good terms with George St. Mabyn was evident, for they called each other by their Christian names, and I judged that their friendship was of long standing.

After I had been there a little over an hour, and was on the point of telling the chauffeur to take me back to Granitelands, George St. Mabyn informed me that he and Springfield were going there to lunch. I was rather surprised at this, as no mention of it had been made before, and I wondered why, if they had arranged to be at Granitelands, I should have been asked to visit them that morning. Still, I did not give the matter a second thought, and before one o'clock St. Mabyn appeared in the seventh heaven of delight, for he was walking around the grounds of Granitelands with Norah Blackwater by his side.

I left soon after lunch, but before I went I had a few minutes' chat with Lorna Bolivick.

'You will remember your promise, won't you?' and she looked eagerly into my face as she spoke.

'What promise?'

'You know. The promise, you made about that man, Paul Edgecumbe. I want you to promise something else, too.'

'What is that?'

'I want you to let me know when you have found him.'

'What possible interest can you have in him, Miss Bolivick?'

'I only know that I *am* interested in him; I couldn't sleep last night for thinking about him. It's—it's just awful, isn't it? Do you like Captain Springfield?'

'I neither like nor dislike him. I only met him an hour or two ago, and in all probability I shall never see him again.'

'Oh, but you will. You are a friend of Sir Roger Granville's, aren't you?'

'Scarcely. I happen to have been brought into contact with him because of this work I am doing, and he has been very kind to me. That is all. I have never been here before, and probably I shall never come again.'

'Oh, yes, you will. Sir Roger likes you, so does Lady Granville; they said so last night after you went to bed. I am sure you will come here again.'

'I shall be awfully glad if I do, especially if it will lead to my seeing you.'

'Don't be silly,' and she spoke with all the freedom of a child; 'all the same, I'd like you to meet my father. He'd like to know you, too. We only live about five miles away. Ours is a dear old house; it is close by the village of South Petherwin. Can you remember that?'

'If I have to write you about Paul Edgecumbe, will that find you?'

'Yes. You needn't put Bolivick, which is the name of the house, because every one who is called Bolivick lives at Bolivick, don't you see? I shall expect to hear from you directly you find him. You are sure you won't forget?'

I laughed at the girl's insistence. 'To make it impossible,' I said, 'I will put it down in my diary. Here we are. May 29,—you see there is a good big space for writing. "I give my promise, that as soon as I have found the man, Paul Edgecumbe, I will write Miss Lorna Bolivick and acquaint her of the fact." '

‘That’s right. Now then, sign your name.’

I laughingly did as she desired.

‘I am going to witness it,’ she said, and there was quite a serious tone in her voice. She took my pencil, and wrote in a somewhat crude, schoolgirl hand, —‘Witnessed by Lorna Bolivick, Bolivick, South Petherwin.’ ‘You can’t get rid of it now,’ she said.

While she was writing, I happened to look up, and saw Norah Blackwater, who was accompanied by George St. Mabyn and Captain Springfield.

‘What deep plot are you engaged in?’ asked Norah Blackwater.

‘It’s only some private business Mr. Luscombe and I are transacting,’ she replied, whereupon the others laughed and passed on.

‘Do you know what that Captain Springfield makes me think of?’ she asked.

‘No,’ I replied.

‘Snakes,’ she said.

As I watched the captain’s retreating form, I shook my head.

‘I can’t help it. Have you noticed his eyes? There now, put your diary in your pocket, and don’t forget what you’ve promised.’

‘One thing is certain,’ I said to myself, as I was driven along to the station that afternoon, ‘my suspicions about George St. Mabyn are groundless. What a fool a man is when he lets his imagination run away with him! Here was I, building up all sorts of mad theories, and then I meet a man who knows nothing about my thoughts, but who destroys my theories in half a dozen sentences. Whoever Paul Edgecumbe is, it is certain he is not Maurice St. Mabyn.’

Several months passed, and still I heard nothing of Paul Edgecumbe. I made all sorts of inquiries, and did my best to find him, all without success, until I came to the conclusion that the man had not joined the Army at all. Then, suddenly, I ceased thinking about him. My recruiting work came to an end, and I was pitchforked into the active work of the Army. As I have said, I knew practically nothing about soldiering, and the little I had learnt was wellnigh useless, because, being merely an officer in the old Volunteers, my knowledge was largely out of date. Still, there it was. New schemes for obtaining soldiers were on foot, and as a commission had been given to me, and there being no need for me at the University, I became a soldier, not only in name, but in actuality. I suppose I was not altogether a failure as a battalion officer; indeed, I was told I picked up my duties with remarkable ease. Anyhow, I worked very hard. And then, before I had time to realize what had happened to me, I was ordered to the front.

Some one has described life at the front as two weeks of monotony and one week of hell. I do not say it is quite like that, although it certainly gives a hint of the truth. When one is in the trenches, it is often a very ghastly business, so

ghastly that I will not attempt to describe it. On the other hand, life behind the lines is dreadfully monotonous, especially in the winter months, when the whole of our battle-line is a sea of mud and the quintessence of discomfort. Still, I did not fare badly. I was engaged in two small skirmishes, from which my battalion came out well, and although, during the winter of 1915-1916, things could not be described as lively, a great deal of useful work was done.

Then something took place which bade fair to put an end to my activities for the duration of the war, and which calamity was averted in what I cannot help describing now as a miraculous way. I need not go into the matter at length; it was a little affair as far as I was concerned, but was intended as a preliminary to something far more serious, but of which I had no knowledge. It was on a dark night, I remember, and my work was to raid a bit of the Boches' trenches, and do all the damage possible. Preparations had been carefully made, and as far as we could gather, everything promised success. I had twenty men under my command, and early in the morning, about an hour before daylight, we set out to do it. Everything seemed favourable to our enterprise. The German searchlights were not at work, and the bit of No Man's Land which we had to cross did not seem to be under enemy observation.

I was given to understand that my little stunt was only one of several others which was to take place, and so, although naturally our nerves were a bit strung up when we crawled over the parapets, we did not anticipate a difficult job.

As a matter of fact, however, the Boches had evidently been warned of our intentions, and had made their plans accordingly. We were allowed to cross the No Man's Land, which at this spot was about three hundred yards wide, and were nearing the place from which we could commence operations, when, without warning, a number of the enemy attacked us. The odds were against us at the very start; they had double our numbers, and were able to take advantage of a situation strongly in their favour.

Evidently some one on our side had either conveyed information to them, or their Intelligence Department was better served than we imagined. Anyhow, there it was. Instead of entering their trenches, and taking a number of prisoners, we had the worst of it. Still, we made a good fight, and I imagine their losses were greater than ours, in spite of their superiority of numbers. Most of our fellows managed to get away, but I was not so fortunate. Just at the first streak of dawn, I found myself a prisoner; while four of the men whom I had brought suffered a similar fate.

It was no use my trying to do anything, they out-numbered us several times over, and I was led away to what I suppose they regarded as a place of safety, until reports could be made concerning us.

I knew German fairly well, although I spoke it badly, and I tried to get some information as to the plans concerning me; but I could get no definite reply. It was

bitterly cold, and in spite of all the Boches had done to make their condition comfortable, it was no picnic. Mud and slush abounded, and I heard the German soldiers complain one to another that it was ten hours since they had tasted any food.

Then, suddenly, there was a tremendous boom, followed by a terrific explosion, and although I was not wounded, I was wellnigh stunned. A British shell had fallen close to where we were, and, as far as I could judge, several Boches had been accounted for. A few seconds later, there was a regular tornado.

As I have said our work that night was intended to be preparatory to a big bombardment, and I had the misfortune to learn from the German trenches what a British bombardment meant.

'*Gott in Himmel!*' said one of my captors, 'let's get away from this.' Whereupon I was hurried on to what I supposed to be a safer place. A few minutes later, I was descending what seemed to me a concrete stairway, until I came to what struck me as a great cave, capable of holding two or three hundred men.

As I entered, a German officer looked up from some papers he had been examining, and saw us.

'What have you here?' he asked.

'English prisoners, sir.'

'Prisoners! what use have we for prisoners? Better put a bullet into their brains. They will mean only so many more mouths to feed.'

'One is an officer, sir,' and the soldier nodded toward me.

'Ah well, he may be useful. But I have no time to deal with him now. *Himmel!* what's that?'

It was the noise of a tremendous explosion, and the whole place shook as though there were an earthquake.

The captain gave some rapid instructions which I did not hear, and then hurried away.

CHAPTER V
HOW A MAN WORKED A MIRACLE

Since then, I have been under some terrific bombardments, but up to that time I had never experienced anything so terrible. Evidently our big guns were turned on, and they had located the German trenches to a nicety. Moreover, I judged that something serious was on hand, for it continued hour after hour. Before long all lights went out, and I knew by the hoarse cries which the Germans were making that they were in a state of panic.

The bombardment had lasted perhaps an hour, when part of the roof of the cave fell in with a tremendous crash, and I imagined that several men were buried.

'We'll get out of this,' said the lieutenant who had been left in charge; 'there's a safer place further down.'

'Yes, sir,' replied the soldier, evidently glad of the order, 'but what about the prisoners?'

The young officer seemed in doubt about us, and then grumbled something about his captain's orders.

'Our numbers are up, sergeant,' I said, for Sergeant Smith and I were the only two who were left alive. 'Either we shall be killed by our own guns, or else we shall suffer worse than death at the hands of these fellows.'

'Never say die, sir,' replied Sergeant Smith, who was noted for his optimistic temperament; 'anyhow, these chaps are all in a blue funk.'

'There can be no doubt about that,' was my reply. 'If we live through it, and if this bombardment is but the preliminary to an attack, there's a sporting chance that we may get away.'

'About a hundred to one, sir.'

After this, I have no clear recollection as to what took place. I remember that we moved along a tunnel until we came to another dug-out,—after that everything became a blank to me. Either I had been stunned by my captors, or I had been hurt by falling *débris*.

When I came to my senses again, the guns were still booming, although they seemed at a greater distance, and I judged that our captors regarded us as in a safer place. Then, suddenly, I heard a voice which set my nerves tingling. It was an English voice, too, although he spoke in German.

'You chaps are in an awful hole,' I heard some one say, in quiet matter-of-fact tones, as though the situation were of a most ordinary nature. 'Do you know what I think of you? You are a lot of idiots.'

'We're better off than you, anyhow,' and this time it was a German who

spoke. ‘If we come alive out of this, we shall be all right; but you are our prisoners.’

‘Prisoners if you like, my dear fellow, but what’s the good of that to you?’

‘Every English prisoner taken is one step nearer to German victory,’ replied the soldier sententiously.

‘Nonsense! There’ll never be a German victory, and you know it. You’ve never been behind the British lines, have you? Why, man, there are mountains of guns and ammunition—every day is adding to the stock, and soon, mark you, very soon, all these places of yours will become so many death-traps.’

The German laughed incredulously.

‘Do you know what’ll happen soon?’ went on the English voice, ‘there will be bombing parties along here; you may be safe for the moment, but you can’t get out,—not one of you dare try. If you did, it would be all up with you.’

‘What are you getting at?’ snarled the German. ‘You are our prisoner, anyhow, and if we are killed, so will you be!’

‘Just so. But then I don’t want to get killed, neither do you.’

‘I know it’s a beastly business,’ said the German, ‘and I wish this cursed war would come to an end.’

‘Yes, you see you were mistaken now, don’t you?’ and the Englishman with the quiet voice laughed. ‘You were told it was all going to be over in a few weeks, and that it was going to be a picnic. “Bah!” you said, “what can the English do?” But, my dear fellow, the English have only just begun. You are just ramming your heads against a stone wall. You won’t hurt the wall, but your heads will get mightily battered. Oh yes, we are your prisoners, there are just three of us left alive, and you are thirty. But what is the good of it?’

‘What are you getting at, Tommy?’ asked another, ‘and why are you talking all this humbug?’

‘Because I can get you out of this.’

‘Get us out of it! How?’

‘Ah, that is my secret, but I can.’

‘What! Every one of us, unhurt?’

‘Every one of you, unhurt.’

There was a general laugh of incredulity.

‘You don’t believe me, I know. But I swear to you I can do it.’

‘How?’

‘By taking you as prisoners to the British lines. I know a way by which it can be done.’

As may be imagined, I was not an uninterested listener to this conversation. Evidently another man had been taken prisoner; who I had no knowledge, but we had somehow been brought together. But it was not altogether the quiet confidence of the speaker which interested me, it was the sound of his voice.

While it was not familiar to me, I felt sure I had heard it before. The light was so dim, that I could see neither his face nor any marks whereby I could discover his rank; but he spoke German so well that I judged him to be an officer. The Germans laughed aloud at his last remark.

'Your prisoners!' they shouted, 'and we ten to your one!'

'Why not,' he asked, 'if I take you to safety? Now just think, suppose you all get out of this, and we are lodged in one of your German prison camps; you remain here at the front, and be fodder for cannon. How many of you will come through this war alive, think you? Perhaps one out of ten. And the end of it will be that your country will be beaten. I am as sure of that as I am that the sun will rise to-morrow. Now supposing you adopt my plan, suppose you go with me as prisoners of war; I will take you to the British lines unhurt, and then you will be sent to the Isle of Wight, or some such place; you will be well housed, well clothed, well fed, until the war's over. Don't you think you are silly asses to stay here and play a losing game, amidst all this misery and suffering, when you can get away unhurt and enjoy yourselves?'

In spite of the madness of the proposal, he spoke in such a convincing way that he impressed them in spite of themselves. Indeed I, who am relating the conversation as nearly word for word as I can remember, cannot give anything like an idea of the subtle persuasion which accompanied his words. It might seem as though he were master of the situation, and they had to do his will; in fact, he seemed to hypnotize them by the persuasiveness of his voice, and by some magnetic charm of his presence.

'You may be safe here for the moment,' he went on, 'but I can tell you what'll happen. By this time your trenches are nearly level with the ground,—not a man in them will be alive. Your machine-gun emplacements will be all blown into smithereens, for this is no ordinary bombardment; it is tremendous, man, tremendous! In less than two hours from now, either the outlets of these dug-outs of yours will be stopped up, and you will die of foul air or starvation, or bombing parties will come, and then it'll be all up with you. I tell you, I know what I am talking about.'

'Yes, but if we are killed, so will you be!'

'And if we are, what good'll that do to any of us? We are young, we want to live.'

Just then we heard a terrific explosion, louder even than any which had preceded it. The ground shook; it seemed as though hell were let loose.

'Do you hear that?' he went on, when there was a moment's quiet. 'That's just a foretaste of what's coming. That's one of the big new guns, and there are hundreds of them, hundreds. Well, if you won't, you won't.'

'What do you want us to do?' and one of the Germans spoke excitedly.

'I tell you I know a way by which I can lead you out of this. I know the

country round here, inch by inch; I have made it my business to study it; and I give you my word I will take you back to the British lines unhurt. And then your life as an English prisoner will be just a picnic.'

'Your word!' said one of them scornfully, 'what is it worth? You are only a Tommy.'

'Yes, my word,' and he spoke it in such a way that they felt him to be their master. It was one of those cases where one personality dominated thirty.

'Are you an officer?' said one of the Germans after a pause. 'You speak like a gentleman, but your uniform is that of a Tommy.'

'No matter what I am, I give you my promise, and I never broke my promise yet.'

Again it was not the words which affected them, it was the manner in which he spoke them. He might have been a king speaking to his subjects.

'Now then, which shall it be?' he went on; 'if we stay here, in all probability we shall every one of us be killed. Listen to that! There! there! don't you feel it?—the whole earth is trembling, I tell you, and all these fortifications of yours will be nothing but so much cardboard! And our men have mountains of munitions, man, mountains! I have seen them. It will be rather a horrible death, too, won't it? Whether we are buried alive, or blown up by bombs, it won't be pleasant. It seems such a pity, too, when in ten minutes from now we can be in safety.'

The man was working a miracle; he was accomplishing that which, according to every canon of common sense, was impossible. He was a prisoner in the power of thirty men, and yet he was persuading them to become his prisoners. Even Sergeant Smith, who could not understand a word of what was being said, knew it. He knew it by the tense atmosphere of the place, by the look on the faces of the German soldiers.

We had become so interested, that neither of us dared to move; we just sat and listened while the unknown man, with quiet, persuasive words, was working his will on them.

As I said, I could not see his face. For one thing, the light was dim, and for another his features were turned away from me; but I could hear every word he said. Even above the roar of the artillery, which sounded like distant thunder, and in spite of the trembling earth, every tone reached me, and I knew that his every word was sapping the Germans' resistance, just as a strong current of water frets away a foundation of sand. What at first I had felt like laughing at, became to me first a possibility, then a probability, then almost a certainty. So excited did I become that, more than once, I longed with an intense longing to join my persuasions to that of the stranger. But when I tried to speak, no words came. It might have been as though some magician were at work, or some powerful mesmerist, who mesmerized his hearers into obedience.

'I say, you fellows,' said one of the Germans to his companions, 'what do you

say? Our life here is one prolonged hell,—what is the use of it? Our officers tell us to hold on, hold on. And why should we hold on? Just to become fodder for cannon? I had four brothers, and every one of them is killed. Who's to look after my mother, if I am dead?'

Three minutes later he had accomplished the impossible. He was leading the way out of the dug-out towards the open. Sergeant Smith and I went with him like men in a dream.

When we came out in the open air, the night had again fallen. More than twelve hours had elapsed since I had been taken prisoner; most likely I had been unconscious a great part of the time. I did not know where we were going. The guns were still booming, while the heavens were every now and then illuminated as if by some tremendous fireworks.

'Sergeant,' I whispered, 'the man's a magician.'

'Never heard of such a thing in my life, sir. I'm like a man dreaming. Who is he? He's got a Tommy's togs on, but he might be a field marshal.'

All this time I had not once caught sight of our deliverer's face, but the tones of his voice still haunted me like some half-forgotten dream. I had almost forgotten the wonder of our freedom in the excitement wrought by the way it was given to us.

When at length we entered the British trenches, and the German prisoners had been taken care of, I saw the face of the man who had wrought the miracle, and I recognized him as the stranger whom I had met at Plymouth Harbour many months before, and who had adopted the name of Paul Edgecumbe.[1]

---

[1] The incident related above is not an invention on the part of the author. It was told me by a British officer, and it took place as nearly as possible as I have described it.

CHAPTER VI
PAUL EDGECUMBE'S MEMORY

'You!' I exclaimed.

He stood like a soldier on parade, and saluted me.

'Yes, Captain Luscombe. I hope you are well, sir.'

He spoke as though nothing out of the ordinary had taken place.

'But—but—this is great!' I gasped. 'Tell me, how did you do it?'

But he had no time to answer the question, as at that moment orders came for us to report ourselves.

Never had I seen a man so excited as the colonel was when the story was told to him. First of all he stared at us as though we were madmen, then laughter overcame his astonishment, and he fairly roared with merriment.

'The brigadier and the divisional general must hear of it at once!' he cried. 'Why, it is the greatest thing since the war began! And you did nothing, Luscombe?'

'Nothing,' I said; 'this man did it all.' And I enlarged upon the difficulties of the situation, and the way Paul Edgecumbe had overcome them.

'Well, Edgecumbe,' I said, when at length I had an opportunity of speaking to him alone, 'give me an account of yourself. Where have you been? what have you been doing? and how have things been going with you?'

'All right, sir. As to where I have been, and what I have been doing, it's not worth telling about.'

'You don't mind my asking you awkward questions, do you?'

'Not a bit. Ask what you like, sir.'

'Has your memory come back?'

A shadow passed over his face, and a suggestion of the old yearning look came into his eyes.

'No,—no, nothing. Strange, isn't it? Ever since that day when I found myself a good many miles away from Bombay, and realized that I was alive, everything stands out plainly in my memory; but before that,—nothing. I could describe to you in detail almost everything that has taken place since then. But there seems to be a great, black wall which hides everything that took place before. I shudder at it sometimes because it looks so impenetrable. Now and then I have dreams, the same old dreams of black, evil faces, and flashing knives, and cries of agony; but they are only dreams,—I remember nothing.'

'During the time you were in England training,' I said, 'you went to various parts of the country?'

‘Yes, I was in Exeter, Swindon, Bramshott, Salisbury Plain.’

‘And you recognized none of them, you’d no feeling that you had seen those places before?’

‘No.’

‘Faces, now,’ I urged; ‘do you ever see faces which suggest people you have known in the past?’

He was silent for two or three seconds.

‘Yes, and no,’ he replied. ‘I see faces sometimes which, while they don’t cause me to remember, give me strange fancies and incomprehensible longings. Sometimes I hear names which have the same effect upon me.’

‘And your memory has been good for ordinary things?’

He laughed gaily. ‘I think that whatever I went through has increased my powers of memory,—that is, those things that took place since I woke up. If you will ask the sub., or the drill sergeant who gave me my training, they will tell you that there was never any need to tell me anything twice. I forget nothing, I never have to make an effort to remember. When I hear a thing, or see a man’s face, I never forget it. I worked hard, too. I have read a good deal. I found that I knew nothing of mathematics, and that my knowledge of German and French was very hazy. It is not so now. Things like *that* have come to me in a miraculous way.’

‘Have you tried for a commission?’

‘No. I have been offered one, but I wouldn’t have it. Something, I don’t know what, told me not to. I wouldn’t even have a corporal’s stripe.’

‘And you have no more idea of who you really are than you had when I saw you first?’

‘No, not a bit.’

‘Let me see if I can help your memory,’ I said. ‘Devonshire, think of that word, now, and what it represents,—does it bring back anything to you?’

‘Nothing, except that yearning. I have a feeling that I know something about it,—a great longing to—to—I hardly know what.’

I tried him a little farther. ‘Granitelands,—does that mean anything to you?’

Again he hesitated. ‘No, nothing.’

‘Can you ever recall any remembrance of, or has the name of Maurice St. Mabyn any interest for you?’

I asked this because, even in spite of what Captain Springfield had told me, vague fancies had come to me that perhaps there might be some mistake, and—and——but I dared not bring my thoughts to a conclusion.

‘Maurice St. Mabyn,’ he repeated, ‘Maurice St. Mabyn. It might be a name I heard when I was a kiddy, but—no.’

‘Norah Blackwater.’ I uttered the name suddenly, impressively, and I thought I saw his lips tremble, and certainly his eyes had a far-away look. He was like a man trying to see in a great darkness, trying to outline objects which were

invisible to the natural eye.

'That seems like a dream name. Who is she? Why do you ask about her?'

'I am trying to help you,' I said. 'She is a lady I met at the house of Sir Roger Granville. She must be about twenty-five, perhaps not quite so old, a tall, stylish-looking girl. I expect by this time she is engaged to a fellow called George St. Mabyn. He is a brother to Maurice, who was killed in Egypt.'

'Maurice killed in Egypt!' he repeated.

'Yes. I think Maurice had a friend called Springfield.'

'I remember that,—Springfield. Springfield,—Springfield.'

For a moment there was a change in his voice, a change, too, in the look of his eyes. At least I thought so. I could fancy I detected anger, contempt; but perhaps it was only fancy, and it was only for a moment.

'A tall, dark fellow. He has rather a receding forehead, black hair streaked with grey, a thin, somewhat cadaverous-looking face, deep-set eyes, a scar on his cheek, just below his right temple.'

He laughed again. 'By Jove, sir,' he said, 'you might be describing a man I know. I seem to see his face as plainly as I see yours. I don't think I like him, either, but—but—no, it has gone, gone! Have you any suspicions about me? Have *you* found out anything?'

'No,' I said, 'I have found out nothing. But I have a hundred suspicions. You see, you interested me tremendously when I saw you first, and I wondered greatly about you. I was awfully disappointed when I could not find you.'

'Why should you want to find me?' he asked.

'Because I told some one about you, and she got tremendously interested. She got angry with me because I had lost sight of you.'

'Who was she, sir?'

'Her name is Lorna Bolivick, and, I say,—I have something to show you.' And I searched in my tunic until I had found the previous year's diary in which I had written the promise.

'There,' I said, and opened the diary at May 29.

'And this girl was interested in me, was she?'

Our conversation suddenly terminated at that moment, as an urgent message reached me that my colonel wanted to see me. A few minutes later I learnt that little short of a calamity had befallen us; that the Germans had broken into some trenches which had lately been taken, and that there was imminent danger of some of our best positions falling into their hands.

Twelve hours later, the danger was averted; but it was at a frightful cost. It was reported to me that a battalion was largely decimated, and the positions which we ought to have gained remained in the hands of the enemy.

I saw that the colonel looked very perturbed; indeed his face, which was usually ruddy and hopeful, was haggard and drawn.

‘Anything serious the matter?’ I asked.

‘Serious!’ he replied, ‘it is calamitous!’

‘But we’ve cleared them out, haven’t we?’

‘Cleared them out! Why, man!’ and he walked to and fro like one demented. ‘There’s sure to be an inquiry,’ he said at length, ‘and there’ll be no end of a row; there ought to be, too. But what could one do?’

‘What is the trouble, then?’ for the look in his eyes had made me very anxious.

He made no reply, but I could see that his mind was busily at work.

‘You remember that chap who got you out of that hole the day before yesterday?’ he asked.

‘What, Edgecumbe? I should think I do!’

‘I hear he is missing.’

‘Edgecumbe missing? Taken prisoner, you mean?’

‘I don’t know. I have not heard particulars yet. I should not have heard anything about him at all, but for the way he brought himself into prominence over that affair. But it seems he was last seen fighting with two Huns, so I expect he is done for. Terrible pity, isn’t it? I was going to recommend him for decoration, and—and other things.’

In a way I could not understand, my heart grew heavy; I felt as though I were responsible for it, and that I had failed in my duty. And I had a sort of feverish desire to know what had become of him.

‘Good night, colonel,’ I said suddenly, and I hurried away into the darkness. I felt that at all costs I must find out the truth about Paul Edgecumbe.

CHAPTER VII
A CAUSE OF FAILURE

In spite of all my inquiries that night, I could discover nothing of a satisfactory nature. The reports I obtained were conflicting. One man had it that he was wounded badly, and left dying on No Man's Land; another told me he had seen him taken prisoner by two Germans; another, still, that he was seen to break away from them. But everything was confused and contradictory. The truth was, that there was a great deal of hand-to-hand fighting, and when that is the case it is ofttimes difficult to tell what becomes of a single individual. The fact remained, however, that he was missing, and no one knew anything definite about him.

As a battalion officer, moreover, I had many duties to perform, and in spite of my desires, I had to give up my inquiries about him, and attend to my work.

The following day I was sitting in my quarters, and was on the point of writing a letter to Lorna Bolivick, telling her what had taken place, when my orderly informed me that a soldier wished to see me.

'He gave me this, sir,' added Jenkins, handing me a slip of paper.

No sooner did I see it than, starting to my feet, I rushed to the door, and saw Paul Edgecumbe, pale and wan, but standing erect nevertheless.

I quickly got him into the room of the cottage where I was billeted, and then took a second look at him.

'You are ill—wounded, man! You ought not to be here,' I said, scarcely realizing what I was saying.

'The wound's nothing, sir. I lost a little blood, that's all; and I got the M.O.'s consent to come and see you. I shall be right as ever in two or three days.'

'You are sure of that?' I asked eagerly.

'Certain, sir.'

I laughed aloud, I was so much relieved. I need not send my letter to Lorna Bolivick after-all.

'I've wasted a lot of good sentiment over you, Edgecumbe,' I said. 'I've heard all sorts of things about you.'

'I did have a curious experience,' he replied, 'and at one time I thought my number was up; still I got out of it.'

'Tell me about it,' I said.

'It's very difficult, sir. As I told you, my memory has been specially good since the time when——but you know. In these skirmishes, however, it's difficult to carry anything definite in your mind, things get mixed up so. You are fighting for your life, and that's all you know. Two German chaps did get hold of me, and

then, I don't know how it was, but we found ourselves in No Man's Land. The Huns were two big, strong chaps, too, but I managed to get away from them.'

'How did you do it?'

'You see they were drugged,' he replied.

'Drugged?'

'Yes, drugged with ether, or something of that sort, and although they fought as though they were possessed with devils, their minds were not clear, they acted like men dazed. So I watched for my opportunity, and got it. I spent the whole day in a shell hole,—it wasn't pleasant, I can tell you. Still, it offered very good cover, and if my arm hadn't been bleeding, and if I wasn't so beastly faint and hungry, I shouldn't have minded. However, I tied up my arm as well as I could, and made up my mind to stay there. I got back under the cover of night, and—here I am.'

'I saw nothing of the affair,' I said. 'I had a job to do farther back, and so was out of it. I wish I had been in it.'

'I wish you had, sir.' There was a change in his voice, and he looked at me almost pathetically.

'What's the matter?'

'Of course I have no right to say anything,' he said. 'Discipline is discipline, and I am only a private soldier. Are you busy, sir? If you are, I will go away. But, owing to this scratch, I am at a loose end, and—and—I'd like a chat with you, sir, if you don't mind.'

'Say what you want to say.'

He was silent for a little while, and seemed to be in doubt how to express what he had in his mind. I saw the old, yearning, wistful look in his eyes, too, the look I had noticed when we were walking on The Hoe at Plymouth.

'Has your memory come back?' I asked eagerly. 'Has it anything to do with that?'

'No,' he replied, 'my memory has not come back. The old black wall stands still, and yet I think it has something to do with it. I am afraid I forget myself sometimes, sir, forget that you are an officer, and I am a private.'

'Never mind about that now. Tell me what you have to say.'

'This war has shaken me up a bit, it has made me think. I don't know what kind of a man I was before I lost my memory; but I have an idea that I look at things without prejudice. You see, I have no preconceived notions. I am a full-grown man starting life with a clean page, that's why I can't understand.'

'Understand what?'

'I don't think I am a religious man,' he went on, without seeming to heed me. 'When we were in England I went to Church parade and all that sort of thing, but it had no effect upon me; it seemed to mean nothing. Perhaps it will some day, I don't know. At present I look at things from the outside; I judge by face values. Forgive me if I am talking a great deal about myself, sir, and pardon me if I seem

egotistical, I don't mean to be. But you are the only officer with whom I am friendly, and I was led to look upon you as a man of influence in England. The truth is, I am mystified, confused, bewildered. Either I am wrong, mad; or else we are waging this war in a wrong way.'

'Yes, how?'

'While I was in the training camps, I was so much influenced by that speech which you gave in Plymouth, that I determined to study the causes of this war carefully. I did so. I gave months to it. I read the whole German case from their own standpoint. I thought out the whole thing as clearly as I was able, and certainly I had no prejudices.'

'Well?' I asked.

'If ever a country ought to have gone to war, we ought. If ever a country had a righteous cause, we had, and have; if ever a Power needed crushing, it was German power. Prussianism is the devil. I tell you, I have been physically sick as I have read the story of what they did in Belgium and France. I have gone, as far as I have been able, to the tap-roots of the whole business. I have got at the philosophy of the German position. I have studied the resources of our country; I have tried to realize what we stand for. I fancy I must have been a fairly intelligent man before I lost my memory. Perhaps I was tolerably well educated, too. Anyhow, I think I have got a grasp of the whole position.'

I did not speak, but waited for him to proceed.

'I am saying this, sir, that you may see that I am not talking wildly, and my conviction is that Germany ought to have been beaten before now; but it's nowhere like beaten, the devil stalks about undaunted.'

'You forget that Germany is a great country,' I answered, 'and that she is supported by Austria, and Turkey, and Bulgaria. You forget, too, that she had all the advantages at the start, and that she had been preparing for this for forty years. You forget that she had the finest trained fighting machine in the world, the biggest and best-equipped army ever known. You forget, too, that she took the world practically unawares, and that all her successes, especially in the West, were gained at the beginning.'

'No, I do not forget,' he replied, and there was passion in his voice; 'I have gone through all that; I made allowance for it. All the same, they ought to have been beaten before now. Anyhow, their backs ought to have been broken, and we ought to be within sight of the end.'

'I am afraid I don't understand. The whole resources of the country have been strained to the utmost. Besides, see what we have done; see the army we have made; think of all the preparations in big guns and munitions!'

'Yes, yes,' he cried, 'but man-power is the final court of appeal, and we have been wasting our man-power, wasting it,—wasting it!'

'What do you mean by that? A finer lot of men never put on uniform than we

had.'

'In a way you are right. No one could admire the heroism of our fellows more than I do. You have to get farther back.'

'How can we get farther back?'

'You have to get back to the Government. Look here, Luscombe,' and evidently he had forgotten the difference in our ranks, 'let me put the case into a nutshell. I was sent over here, to France, in a hurry. Never mind how I found out what I am going to tell you,—it is a fact. Two battalions of ours were urgently ordered here; our men here were hardly pressed, the Germans outnumbered us. Our chaps hadn't enough rest, and the slaughter was ghastly. So we were ordered over to relieve them, and the command was that we were to travel night and day, so urgent was the necessity.

'What happened? The boat by which I came was held up in the harbour for twenty-four hours. Why? I am not talking without my book,—I know, I have made investigations, and I will tell you why. The firemen were in public-houses, and would not come away. And the Government allowed those public-houses to be open; the Government allowed those firemen to drink until they were in an unfit condition to take us across. The Government allowed the stuff that robbed them of their manhood, and of their sense of responsibility, to be manufactured. The Government allowed private individuals to make fortunes out of that stuff! Just think of it! There we were, all waiting, but we could not go. Why could not we go? Why were we held up, when the lives of thousands of others depended upon us? when the success of the war probably depended upon it? Drink! there is your answer in one word.

'Here's this affair of the last two or three days; it didn't come off. Ammunition was wasted, men's lives were wasted, hearts were broken; but it didn't come off. Why was it?

'What are we fighting? We are fighting devilry, inhumanity, Prussian barbarism. Search your dictionary, and you can't find names too bad to describe what we are fighting. But in order to do it, we use one of the devil's chief weapons, which is robbing us of victory.

There was a strange intensity in his voice, and I think he forgot all about himself in what he said.

'Look here,' he went on, 'you remember how some time ago we were crying out for munitions. "Let us have more guns, more munitions," we said. The Germans, who had been preparing for war for so many years, had mountains of it, and as some one has said, thousands of our men were blown into bloody rags each day. And we could not answer back. We had neither guns nor shells. Why?'

'Because we were not properly organized. You see——'

'Yes, it was partly that, but more because our power was wasted, in the gun factories and the munition factories. You know as well as I do that it was on the

continual and persistent work of the people in those factories that our supplies depended. What happened? Hundreds, thousands of them left work at noon on Saturdays, and then started drinking, and did not appear at their work until the Tuesday or Wednesday following, and when they came they were inefficient, muddled. Work that required skilled hands and clear brains had to be done by trembling hands and muddled brains. The War Minister told us that there was a wastage of 10 per cent. of our munition-making power. He told us, too, that between thirty and forty days of the whole working force of the country were lost every year,—what by? Drink.

'And meanwhile our chaps out here were killed by the thousand, because of shortage of munitions. Is it any wonder that the war drags on? Is it any wonder that we are not gaining ground? We were told months ago that we should shorten the war by blockading Germany, by keeping food from the nation. Now I hear rumours that there is going to be a shortage of food in our own country. Whether that will be the case or not, I don't know. If there is a shortage, it will be our own fault. I see by the English newspapers that bread is becoming dearer every day, and people say that there'll soon be a scarcity, and all the time millions upon millions of bushels of grain intended for man's food is being wasted in breweries and distilleries. Hundreds of thousands of tons of sugar, which are almost essential to human life, are utilized for man's damnation; and all by the consent of the Government.

'When the war broke out, the King signed the pledge, so did Lord Kitchener, so did the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Did the people follow? They only laughed. I tell you, Luscombe, every distillery and every brewery is lengthening the war, and I sometimes doubt whether we shall ever win it,—until the nation is purged of this crime! Yes, we are making vast preparations, and we have raised a fine Army. But all the time, we are like a man trying to put out a fire by pouring water on it with one hand, and oil with the other.'

'But, my dear chap,' I said, 'these brewers and distillers have put their fortunes into their business, and they employ thousands of hands. Would you rob them of their properties, and would you throw all these people out of work?'

'Great God! man,' was his reply, 'but the country's at stake, the Empire's at stake! Truth, righteousness, liberty are at stake! If we don't win in this war, German devilry will rule the world, and shall the country allow the Trade, as it calls itself, to batten upon the vitals of the nation? That's why I am bewildered. I told you just now that perhaps I look at things differently from what I ought to look at them. I have lost all memory of my past life, and I judge these things by their face value, without any preconceived notions or prejudices. I have to begin *de novo*, and perhaps can't take into account all the forces which have been growing up through the ages. But, Heavens! man, this is a crisis! and if we are going to win this war, not only must every one do his bit, but all that weakens and

all that destroys the resources of the nation must be annihilated!'

Our conversation came abruptly to an end at that moment, caused by the entrance of my orderly, who told me that a gentleman wished to see me.

'Who is it, Jenkins?' I asked.

'Major St. Mabyn, sir.'

He had scarcely spoken when, with a lack of ceremony common at the front, George St. Mabyn entered.

'Ah, there you are, Luscombe! Did you know that both Springfield and I have had a remove? We got here last night. I fancy there are going to be busy times. I was awfully glad when I heard you were here too.'

'No, I never heard of your coming,' I replied, 'but this is really a great piece of luck.'

I had scarcely uttered the words, when I turned towards Paul Edgecumbe, who was looking steadily at St. Mabyn. There was no suggestion of recognition in his eyes, but I noticed that far-away wistful look, as though he were trying to remember something.

Instinctively I turned towards George St. Mabyn, who at that moment first gave a glance at Edgecumbe. Then I felt sure that although Edgecumbe knew nothing of St. Mabyn, his presence startled the other very considerably. There was a look in George St. Mabyn's eyes difficult to describe; doubt, wonder, fear, astonishment, were all there. His ruddy cheeks became pale, too, and I was sure his lips quivered.

'Who—who have you got here?' he asked.

'It's a chap who has got knocked about in a scrap,' I replied.

St. Mabyn gave Edgecumbe a second look, and then I thought his face somewhat cleared. His colour came back; his lips ceased twitching.

'What did you say your name was, my man?'

'Edgecumbe, sir.'

'D.C.L.I., I see.'

'Yes, sir.' He saluted as he spoke, and left the room, while George St. Mabyn stood looking after him.

CHAPTER VIII
I BECOME AN EAVESDROPPER

For some seconds he was silent, while I, with a score of conflicting thoughts in my mind, stood watching him. I had often wondered how I could bring these two men together, for, while I had but little reason to believe that they were in any way connected, I was constantly haunted by the idea that had been born in my mind on the night I had first met George St. Mabyn. I had imagined that if they could suddenly be brought together, my suspicions could be tested, and now, as it seemed to me, by sheer good fortune, my wishes had been gratified; but they had led to nothing definite.

'Who is that fellow, Luscombe?' he asked presently.

'Don't you remember?' I replied. 'He is the man whom I met at Plymouth Harbour, the man who had lost his memory.'

'Oh, yes. Funny-looking fellow; he—he almost startled me,' and he laughed nervously.

'Do you know him? Did you ever see him before?' I asked.

'No, I never saw him before.'

'I thought you looked as though you—you recognized him.'

'No, I never saw him before.'

He spoke quite naturally, and in spite of everything I could not help being convinced that he and Paul Edgecumbe had met for the first time.

'Have you heard from Devonshire lately?'

'No,' I replied.

'Then you don't know the news?'

'What news?' I asked eagerly.

'Miss Blackwater and I are engaged.'

'Congratulations,' I said; 'you'll be the envy of all the marriageable men in Devonshire.'

'Shan't I just! Yes, I'm the happiest man in the British Army, and that's saying a great deal.'

'I suppose it is publicly announced?' I said.

'No, not yet. Norah wants to wait a bit. I would like to have got married before I came out this time, but—but there's no understanding women. Still, if I live through this business, it'll come off in due time.'

'Where do you hang out, exactly?' I asked.

'At a village about two miles up the line. You can't miss the house I am billeted in; it's the first decent house on your right-hand side, at the entrance to the

place. Springfield is with me. We are a bit quiet just now, but there'll be gay doings in a week or so. You must look me up, Luscombe, when you have a few hours to spare. By the way, you remember that Miss Bolivick you saw at the Granville's? She's out here in France somewhere.'

'What, nursing?'

'Yes, I suppose so.'

'A remarkably fine girl,' I ventured; 'if I am a judge of character, she's capable of doing anything.'

'Is she? Lorna and I never hit it off somehow. She was great pals with my brother Maurice, although she was only a kid at the time. She—she didn't congratulate me on my engagement. You'll be sure to look me up down at St. Pinto, won't you, Luscombe?'

When he had gone, I sat a long time thinking. It is true I no longer believed that Paul Edgecumbe could be his brother; but it set me wondering more than ever as to who Edgecumbe could be. I wondered if the poor fellow's memory would ever come back, and if the dark veil which hid his past life would be removed.

Before going out, I scribbled a line to Lorna Bolivick, telling her of my meeting with Edgecumbe, and of the wonderful way he had helped me to escape from the German trenches. It was true that, according to St. Mabyn, she was in France, but I imagined that her letters would be forwarded to her.

After that, several days elapsed before I had opportunity to pay my promised visit to St. George Mabyn. It was a case of every man to the wheel, for we were making huge preparations for the great Somme push which took place immediately afterwards. Still, I did at length find time to go, and one evening I started to walk there just as the day was beginning to die. It had been very hot and sultry, I remember, and I was very tired.

St. Pinto was well behind the lines, but I could hear the booming of the big guns away in the distance. I had no difficulty in finding the house where St. Mabyn was billeted, for, as he said, it was the first house of importance that I came across on the outskirts of the village.

I was disappointed, however, in finding that neither he nor Springfield was in. I could not complain of this, as I had not sent word that I was coming. But being tired, and having decided to walk, I did not relish the thought of my tramp back, especially as I had not taken the trouble to change my heavy field boots.

Not a breath of wind blew, and the air was heavy and turgid. On my way back, I had to pass a little copse which lay in a dell, and having noticed a little stream of water, I climbed over the fence in order to get a drink. Then, feeling deadly tired, I stretched myself at full length on the undergrowth, and determined to rest for an hour before completing my journey.

I think I must have fallen asleep, for presently I suddenly realized that it was quite dark, and that everything had become wonderfully still. The guns no longer

boomed, and it might seem as though the conflicting armies had agreed upon a truce. I imagine that even then I was scarcely awake, for I had little consciousness of anything save a kind of dreamy restfulness, and the thought that I needn't hurry back.

Suddenly, however, I was wholly awake, for I heard voices close by, and I judged that some one was standing close to where I was. I was about to get up, and make my way back to my billet, but I remained quite still. I was arrested by a word, and that word was 'Edgecumbe.'

I did not realize that I was playing the part of an eaves-dropper, and even if I had, I doubt if I should have made my presence known. Anything to do with Edgecumbe had a strong interest for me.

The murmur of voices continued for some seconds without my being able to detect another word. Then some one said distinctly:

'You say he has been down at our place to-night?'

'Yes,' was the reply, and I recognized St. Mabyn's voice; 'he called about an hour before I got back.'

'What did he come for?' It was Springfield who spoke.

'Oh, that's all right. I asked him to look us up, and I expect that he, being off duty, came down to smoke a pipe with us.'

'I don't like the fellow.'

'Neither do I.'

Again there was low murmuring for several seconds, not a word of which reached me. Then I heard Springfield say: 'I shan't sleep soundly till I'm sure.'

'You weren't convinced, then?'

'I didn't see him plainly,' was Springfield's reply. 'You see, I had no business there, and we can't afford to arouse suspicions.'

'I tell you, Springfield,' and George St. Mabyn spoke as though he were much perturbed, 'I don't like it. I was a fool to listen to you in the first place. If you hadn't told me you were certain about it, and that——'

'Come that won't do, George. We are both in it together; if I have benefited, so have you, and neither of us can afford to have the affair spoilt now. You are squire, and I am your friend, and you are going to remain squire, whatever turns up, unless,' he added with a laugh, 'you are potted in this show.'

'What do you mean by that?'

'I mean that if it is he, he must never go back to England alive. It wouldn't do, my dear fellow.'

'But he remembers nothing. He doesn't even know his own name. He doesn't know where he came from; he doesn't know what he did.'

'Yes, but if it is he, what would happen, if his memory suddenly came back? Where should we be then? It won't bear thinking about!'

'But he knows nothing. Besides, who would take his word?'

‘Are you sure Luscombe has no suspicions?’ and Springfield asked the question sharply.

‘How can he have? and yet—oh hang it all, Springfield, it hangs like a millstone round one’s neck! But mind you, I am going to have no foul play.’

Springfield gave an unpleasant laugh. ‘Foul play, my son?’ he said, ‘we are both too deep in this business to stick at trifles. You can’t afford it, neither can I.’

A few seconds later, I heard them trudging back towards St. Pinto, still talking eagerly.

I lay on the thick undergrowth for some minutes without moving. The scraps of conversation which I had heard, and which I have set down here, gave me enough food for reflection for a long time. I was not yet quite clear as to the purport of it all, but I was clear that villainy was on foot, and that not only was Paul Edgecumbe’s life in danger, but my own as well, and if the truth must be told, I feared Springfield’s threat more than I feared the danger which I had to meet every day as a soldier at the front in war time.

The next day I received the following note:—

‘My Dear Luscombe,—

‘I was awfully disappointed to learn, on my return to-night, that you had looked us up in our show here, and had not found us. Why didn’t you, like a decent chap, let us know you were coming? We would then have made it a point to be in. Springfield was even more disappointed than I at our absence. Can’t you come over on Thursday night and have a bit of grub with us? We will both make it a point to have the entire evening at liberty, always supposing that the Boches don’t pay us special attention. Let me have a line by bearer.

‘Yours, with the best of regards

‘George St. Mabyn.’

‘Yes,’ I reflected, ‘I will go. But I’ll have another talk with Edgecumbe first.’

CHAPTER IX
EDGECUMBE IS MISSING

On the following Thursday I again made my way to St. Pinto, where I received an almost effusive welcome from St. Mabyn and Springfield. Both expressed great vexation at being away when I had called before, and seemed to vie with each other in being friendly. In fact they overdid it. After all, I had barely known them in England, and there seemed no reason why they should act as though I were a long lost brother in France.

'By the way, Luscombe,' said St. Mabyn after dinner, 'Springfield is awfully interested in that experience of yours. He says it's one of the greatest jokes of the war.'

'By Jove, that's true,' added Springfield. 'That fellow,—what do you call him?—must be a great chap. I should like to hear more about him.'

'He is a great chap,' I replied. 'I don't believe he knows what fear means, and the way he talked over those Boches was nothing short of a miracle.'

Almost before I realized it, I found myself submitted to a keen examination as to what I knew about Edgecumbe. As I reflect on it now, I can see that Springfield's methods were very clever. He asked no direct questions, but he led the conversation into channels which led me, almost in spite of myself, to divulge my thoughts about him. Still I do not think I committed any grave error, and when at length I left them, I felt fairly satisfied with the interview.

During my walk back to my billet I felt sure I was being followed and watched. It was true I neither heard nor saw anything out of the ordinary, but I seemed to be possessed of a sixth sense, and that sixth sense made me conscious of an unfriendly presence. But nothing happened, and presently when I reached my quarters without molestation or happening of any sort, I laughed at myself for harbouring baseless impressions.

I found Edgecumbe awaiting me, as I had previously arranged.

'Been here long?' I asked.

'About an hour,' and then he looked at me eagerly.

'No,' I said, noting his glance, 'I've nothing to tell you—-yet.'

I could see he was disappointed. I had aroused his curiosity and he had been wondering what I had in my mind.

'Then I may as well be going,' he said, after a few seconds' silence.

'No, not yet.'

I could see the eager questions in his eyes, so I went on. 'I can't tell you anything yet, Edgecumbe; it would not be fair to you, and it might not be fair to

others. It may be I'm only following the will-o'-the-wisp of my fancies; all the same I want you to stay with me at least an hour. I think it will be the safest plan. I will send a note with you that will answer all questions, and meanwhile I'll get these shutters closed.'

It was quite midnight when he left me, and I watched him as he walked away from my billet. He had not gone more than two minutes when I heard the sound of angry voices, and as far as I could judge they came from the spot where he was likely to be. Then coming from the same locality there was the sound of a pistol shot.

Without hesitating a second, I ran towards the spot from which I thought the sound came. It was not a very dark night, but there was not light enough to discern anything very plainly. For half an hour I searched and listened, but I could discover nothing.

I tried to persuade myself that what I had heard was only fancy, nevertheless I did not sleep well that night. As soon as morning dawned I hurried to the spot again, but if there had been a struggle the rain which had fallen had washed the traces away. Neither was there anything suspicious to be seen.

Later in the day, however, news came to me that Private Edgecumbe was missing, and as he had last been to my billet, I was to be questioned as to whether I knew anything of his whereabouts.

As may be imagined when these questions were asked I could give no satisfactory answers. I could not say that I suspected foul play without giving my reasons, and those reasons were not good enough to give. I could only say that he had come to me bringing a message from Captain Wilkins, that he had left me about midnight bearing my reply. That about two minutes after he had left I heard the sound of angry voices, as well as a pistol shot, but beyond that nothing.

'Have you no idea where he is?' I asked anxiously.

'Not the slightest. I have made every inquiry—in vain. The fellow has disappeared as though he had deserted.'

'He hasn't done that,' I replied. 'He's not that sort.'

'Then what's become of him?'

I shook my head. I was very anxious, but I could say nothing. I dared not impugn two brother officers on such evidence as I had. Nevertheless, as may be imagined, I thought a great deal about what had taken place.

CHAPTER X
THE STRUGGLE IN THE TRENCHES

The events I have been writing about took place towards the end of May, 1916, and, as I have before stated, we were at this time making huge preparations for the Great Advance. As fortune would have it, moreover, I was, two days after my parting with Edgecumbe, given a job five miles further south, and then life became such a rush, that to make anything like satisfactory inquiries about a missing soldier was absolutely impossible. I imagine that few newspaper readers at home, when they read the first accounts of the battle of the Somme, and noted that we took a few villages and a few thousand prisoners on the first days of the battle, little realized the tremendous preparations which had to be made. So hardly were we kept at it, that oftimes we had scarce time for food or rest.

During the month of June, I received a letter from Lorna Bolivick, in reply to the one I had sent her informing her of my meeting with Paul Edgecumbe. It was so characteristic of her that I will insert it here.

> ‘Now please confess at once,’ she wrote, ‘that it was because I witnessed your promise to tell me all about him, that you sent that letter, otherwise you wouldn’t have thought of writing to a poor silly girl. And wasn’t it interesting! I told you he was a wonderful man, and you see how he has paid you already for the little kindness you showed him. Why, in all probability he saved your life! And now I want you to do something else for me; I want you to send me his photograph. I have conjured up a picture of what I think he is like, and I am anxious to see if I am right. Aren’t I taking a lot of liberties with you! But you see I like you,—I do really. I fell in love with you when you came to Granitelands with Sir Roger Granville that day. Oh, no, there’s nothing romantic about it, I can assure you! But you looked so kind, and trustworthy, and strong, that I took to you from the very first moment. Father tells me I am wrong to take violent likes and dislikes to people at a first meeting; but I can’t help it, I am made that way. Of course you are not a bit attractive in the ordinary way. You don’t say sharp, clever things, and you don’t flatter. Besides, you’re old. Now don’t be angry. Every girl looks upon a man who is getting on for forty as old. But I am fond of you all the same. There’s a sense of security about you; I am sure I could trust you, just the same as I trust my father.
>
> ‘Send me that photograph of your friend as soon as you can, I am

anxious to get it. I am awfully busy here in this hospital, and there are such a lot of wounded men, many of them with a limb shot off. Do you know, I am tremendously interested in a poor Tommy who has lost both his legs. Horrible, isn't it! But he's the most cheerful man in the place, and keeps us laughing all day long.

'He wrote a letter to his mother yesterday, and told her to get him a pair of patent-leather dancing shoes.

'You will be sure to be careful, won't you?—I can't bear the idea of anything happening to you; and although I know you are old enough to be cautious, and not to take foolish risks,—that is, in the ordinary way,—I am sure you are one of those men who forget everything like caution when you are aroused. This is awfully silly, isn't it? so I'll stop. I command you, write me at once, and do as I tell you.

'Yours obediently,

'LORNA BOLIVICK.'

I answered this letter at once. I was in a dug-out at the time, and I remember a lump of mud falling on the writing-pad and making a huge smear, and explaining to her what the smear meant. As it happened, too, I was able to send her Paul Edgecumbe's photograph. It was not a very good one; it had been produced by one of his comrades who was an amateur photographer. But it gave a fair idea of him. I obtained it from him the last evening we were together. I did not tell her that he was missing, even although my fears concerning him were very grave; I thought it better not;—why, I don't know.

At length the great first of July arrived, and it was impossible to think of anything clearly. For days there had been a cannonade such as the world had never witnessed before; the whole countryside shook, the air was thick with shrieking shells, the ground trembled with bursting bombs. Every breath one drew was poison; the acrid smells of high explosives were everywhere. Then, after days of bombardment, which I will not try to describe, for it beggars all the language I ever learnt, the attack commenced.

I have been sitting here trying to conjure up a picture of all I saw that day, trying to find words in order to give some general impression of what took place; but I simply can't. As I look back now, it only seems a combination of a vast mad-house and a vast charnel-house. I have confused memories of bodies of men creeping up behind deadly barrages; I can see shells tearing up great holes in the earth, and scattering mud and stones around them. I can see, too, where trenches were levelled, just as I have seen pits which children make on the seashore levelled by the incoming tide. Now and then there come back to my mind dim, weird pictures of Germans crawling out of their dug-outs, holding up their hands, and piteously crying, 'Kamerad! Kamerad!'

I have recollections, too, of the great awkward tanks toiling along their cumbersome way, smashing down whatever opposed them, and spitting out flame and death on every hand. But I can record nothing. Men talk about the history of this war being written some day; it never will be,—the whole thing is too tremendous, too ghastly.

Personally, there are only a few incidents which I can recall clearly. In the main, the struggle comes back to me as a series of bewildering, chaotic, and incomplete events. Scraps of conversation come back to me, too, and those scraps have neither sequence nor meaning.

'Fricourt taken, is it?'

'Yes, and La Boisselle.'

'No, La Boisselle is not taken.'

'Yes, it is, and Contalmaison too.'

'Nonsense, you fool! that's miles on.'

'The French are doing very well, too. Fritz is having a hot time. We'll be in Bapaume in no time.' And so on.

My general impression was that our men were doing very well south of the Ancre, up as far as Thiepval, but north of the Ancre we were not so successful. The Germans were putting up a tremendous resistance, and I, unfortunately, was north of the Ancre. I will not give the exact locality, nor the name of the village which was our objective; but this village had been, as we thought, bombarded with such intensity that our work ought to be easy. Our casualties were very heavy, and I shall never forget the heartaches I had when I knew that many of my men whom I had learned to know and to love were lying in nameless graves, torn, battered and unrecognizable, while many more would linger for a few hours in agony, and presently a little mound would cover them, and a little wooden cross would indicate their last resting-place.

I never saw braver men. Even now my heart thrills at the abandon with which they rushed into every kind of danger, not grimly and doggedly, so much, as gaily, and with a laugh. They mocked at danger. I have seen men crossing No Man's Land, with machine-gun bullets flying all round them, stop coolly to light their cigarettes, and then go on again humming a song.

The advance had been in progress some days, at least I think so, but I am not sure,—one day seemed just like another. We had been at it for many hours, I remember, and we were all dead tired. I could see that some of the poor lads were half asleep, and ready to drop, through sheer weariness. We had taken a difficult position, but we were assured before we took it that our success would mean certainty to the accomplishment of the larger plan. Our objective was the taking of a fortified village a little farther on.

Heavy-eyed and heavy-limbed, the boys still stuck to it, and looked eagerly forward towards the accomplishment of their work. It is true our ranks were

terribly decimated, but the enemy had suffered far worse than we, and therefore we were confident. Then the news came that we were to be relieved. Fresh battalions had come up to take our places, and we were told that we might get back and rest.

Our boys were disappointed at this, although they were glad of the reprieve.

'Anyhow, we've done our bit,' said one.

'A dirty bit, too,' said another. 'Still, the job's easy now, and a fresh lot of men should take it in a couple of hours.'

'I'd rather go on with it,' said a third. 'I don't see why these other blokes should have the easy job, and we have the hard one.'

'Cheer up, old sport,' said another, 'what do we care who does the job, as long as it's done? We're not here for a picnic.'

And so on, while we retired. How far we went back, I don't know. I have a confused remembrance of the fellows throwing themselves down on the ground, almost sleeping as they fell, and not waiting for the food which was provided for them, while others ate ravenously.

'Anyhow, we've given Fritz a twisting up to-day, and we've left the other blokes a soft job,' were the last words I heard as I dragged my weary legs to the place where I promised myself a good long sleep.

How long I slept I don't know, but it did not seem to me two minutes, although it might have been as many hours.

'The Boches have broken through!' Those were the words that came to my stupefied brain.

'What!' I exclaimed, 'it is impossible!'

'Yes, back at once!'

There was no time to ask questions, no time to argue. The poor fellows who had been fighting so long and bravely were with difficulty roused out of their sleep, and all had to retrace their weary steps towards the positions for which we had fought, and which we had won.

'Why is it? why is it?'—'There must be a mistake!'—'Why, we had got 'em on toast.'—'I tell you, we left 'em nothing but a picnic!'

The men were angry, discontented, grumbling, but they went back to their job determined to see it through nevertheless.

After that, I have but a dim recollection of what took place, except that it was grim, hard, stern fighting. The air was sulphurous, the ground hideous with filth, and blood, and dead bodies.

I don't know how it came about, but the Germans were more numerous than we. It was not we who were taking prisoners, but they, and then suddenly I found myself alone, with three Germans before me. One, I remember, had a rag saturated with blood tied round his head. He had a great gash in his cheek, too, and was nearly beaten; but there was the look of a devil in his eye. Had I been a private

soldier, I expect I should have been killed without ado, but they called upon me to surrender. I was mad at the idea. What, surrender after we had won the position! Surrender to the men whom we had sworn to conquer! The Army which had set out to make an advance must not surrender!

I was dog-tired, and a bit stupefied; but that was the feeling which possessed me. I remember that a dead German lay in the trench close behind me, and that his rifle had fallen from his nerveless hand. Seizing the rifle by the barrel, I blindly and recklessly attacked them; I had a grim sort of feeling that if I was to die, I would die fighting. I remember, too, that I comforted myself with the thought that no one depended on me, and that I had no near relatives to bemoan my death.

It may be that my position gave me an advantage, otherwise they, being three, must have mastered me easily, although one of them was badly wounded; still, one desperate man can do much. I was thirty-nine years of age, and although not bred a soldier, I was an athlete. I was an old rowing blue, too, and that means good muscles and a strong heart. I weighed only a little over twelve stone, but I had not an ounce of spare flesh, and I was desperate. I had a little advantage in reach, too; I am over six feet in height, and long in limb.

But it was an unequal battle, and I knew they were bearing me down. One of my arms was numb, too; I expect it was from a blow, although I never felt it. I saw the look of murder in their eyes, as little by little they pressed me back. Then a change came.

It seems like a fantastic dream now, and the new-comer appeared to me more like a visitant from another world than tangible flesh and blood. I expect it was because my eyesight was failing me. My strength was gone, and I remember panting for life, while sparks of fire flitted before my eyes. I fell against the side of the trench, and watched the new-comer, who leapt upon two of the Germans, and hurled them from him as though they had been five-year-old children. It seemed to me that I had never seen such a feat of strength. A second later I knew that my antagonists would never fight again, and then my own senses departed.

‘It’s all right, sir, it’s all right! You’ll be as fresh as a daisy in a few minutes. There, that’s better. You’ve fought a great fight!’

The voice seemed to stir something within me, and I felt myself in my right mind with a flash. Moreover, he had taken me to a place of comparative safety.

‘Edgecumbe!’ I cried, ‘how in Heaven’s name——!

‘I’ve turned up like a bad penny, sir, haven’t I? I was just in the nick of time, too.’

‘This is twice you’ve saved my life,’ I said.

‘That’s nothing,’ was his reply. ‘I have found more than life.’

I looked at him curiously. His clothes were torn and caked with mud; here and there I saw they were soaked with blood. His face looked haggard and drawn, too, but in his eyes was such a look as I had never seen before. The old wistfulness and

yearning were gone; he no longer had the appearance of a man grieving because he had lost his past. Joy, realization of something wonderful, a great satisfaction, all revealed themselves in his eyes, as he looked at me.

'His memory has come back,' I said to myself.

I did not think of what had become of him on the night I had dined with Springfield and St. Mabyn, that was not worth troubling about. His past had come back, and evidently it was a joyous past, a past which gave all sorts of promises for the future!

'I have great things to tell you!' he cried excitedly.

CHAPTER XI
EDGECUMBE'S STORY

But my new-found strength was only fitful. He had barely spoken the words, when I heard a great noise in my ears, and I knew that my senses were becoming dim again. I heard other voices, too, and looking up I saw my own colonel standing near, with three or four others near him. And then I have a faint recollection of hearing Paul Edgecumbe telling him what had taken place. I know, too, that I was angry at his description. He was telling of the part I had taken in the struggle in glowing colours, while keeping his own part in it in the background. I was trying to tell the colonel this, when everything became black.

When I came to myself again, I was in a rest-station behind the lines. I remember feeling very sore, and my head was aching badly, but no bones were broken. I could move my limbs, although with difficulty; I felt as though every inch of my body had been beaten with big sticks. Still, my mind was clear, I was able to think coherently, and to recall the scenes through which I had passed.

I lay for some minutes wishing I could hear news of what was going on, when a brother officer came to me.

'Hullo, Luscombe, awake? That's right. You've had a rough time; you were lucky to get out of it so well.'

'I am in the dark about everything,' I said. 'Tell me what has happened.'

He mistook my meaning, and replied with a laugh:

'Oh, you were saved by that chap who took thirty Boches British prisoners. He seems to be a guardian angel of yours. He's a great man, too, there's no doubt about that. Ah, here's the M.O. coming!'

The doctor and I were good friends, and when he had examined me, and pronounced me a fraud for being in bed, I eagerly questioned him, and the sub. who still remained, as to how we were doing.

'Very well indeed, below Thiepval,' was his reply, 'but up here badly.'

'Have we taken Thiepval?'

He shook his head gloomily. 'That'll need a bit of doing. It's a regular fortress, man! Of course we shall get it in time. Our new guns are tremendous; but we ought to have done better up this way. We've thrown away our chances, too.'

'I don't understand,' I said. 'When we were relieved, we had practically won the key to the position we set out to get.'

'That's the mischief of the whole thing,' he replied moodily. He used language which I will not set down here; it was too strong for polite ears.

'What's the matter?' I asked.

‘Oh, we’re supposed to say nothing, but——’

‘But what? Come, let us know. We hadn’t been relieved long, when we were called back again, and we found the Boches in the very place we had taken.’

‘Still, we are doing well south of the Ancre, and that’s what the dispatches will be jubilant about, and that’s what the people at home will know of. If we’d taken G——, we should have had the key of the whole position here, too. But there, I must be off. Cheer up, and look perky, my boy. There’ll be no obituary notices about you this time. Yes, you can dress and get up when you want to, although I don’t think you *will* want to. You will be fit for duty in two or three days.’

‘By the way, do you know how Edgecumbe is?’

‘He’s all right. Wonderful chap! I hear he’s to be recommended for all sorts of things.’

‘He deserves them,’ I said; ‘he ought to have a commission.’

‘I hear that’s coming, too. Good-bye, old man.’

The next day I came across Edgecumbe. His face looked more like parchment than ever, but the wonderful look still remained in his eyes.

‘You are better, sir. You are all right!’ he exclaimed eagerly.

‘Oh, yes, I am all right,’ I replied. ‘Now let us hear about the great things you have to tell me of. Your memory’s come back, hasn’t it?’

He laughed gaily. ‘Better than that,’ he cried, ‘better than that, a thousand times! I have no past, Sir, but I have a future!’

I looked at him wonderingly. A doubt even crossed my mind as to whether he was quite sane.

‘Tell me about it, anyhow,’ I said.

‘I have so much to tell you that I hardly know where to begin.’

‘Better begin at the beginning. What have you been doing since that night you were at my billet over at St. Pierre?’

‘Oh, yes, I’d forgotten all about that. I say, you were right there; I should imagine that some people think I am in their way. Anyhow, I’d hardly left your place when I suddenly found myself surrounded by three men, who went for me. They pretended to be drunk, but I am sure they were not.’

‘Were they soldiers?’

‘I don’t know. It was too dark to tell. But I am pretty handy with my fives, and I gave one something to remember, and then thinking discretion was the better part of valour, I bolted. That was lucky, for they were trying to grab me. As you may remember, it was pretty dark, but still not so dark as to keep one from seeing things. I hadn’t gone more than a few steps before a bullet whizzed by me. It didn’t touch me, but as the road on which I ran was open, I turned up a narrow track,—I thought it might lead to a farmhouse, or something of that sort.’

‘And then?’

‘Then I had bad luck; The track led to a quarry, an old disused quarry. Then I must have had a very bad fall, for I was stunned and I sprained myself badly. When I came to myself, it was daylight, and I couldn’t move; at least, I couldn’t move without awful pain.’

‘And what happened then?’

‘I lay there a jolly long time. You see the blessed quarry had got overgrown, and all that sort of thing, and it was a long way from the road. I yelled, and yelled, but no one came. Then I saw that it would be all up with me, if I could make no one hear. That seemed silly.’

‘And what did you do?’

‘It was a bit of a tussle; you see I’d bruised and sprained myself so badly; but I got out after a bit, and—and—made an old man who was passing down the main road with a horse and cart hear me. The rest was very simple.’

‘Did you get any punishment?’

‘Oh, no, sir. I have to thank you for that. The statement I made tallied so exactly with yours that I got off all right. Besides, I was jolly shaken up. At the end of a fortnight I was able to get around again. Still, it’s worth thinking about.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Oh, there’s no doubt some one is having his knife into me. Of course I can’t help reflecting on what you said. In fact, it was your advice to look out for squalls, that made me a bit prepared when I left you. Would you mind telling me the grounds you had for your suspicions?’

‘Go on with your story first. What happened after that?’

‘What happened after that!’ he cried, ‘everything—everything! What happened after that has made a new man of me; life has become new, the world has become new!’

‘You are talking riddles. Explain.’

‘It’s no riddle, sir,—it’s a solution of all the riddles. I will tell you. While I was convalescing, I went to a Y.M.C.A. camp. I had never been to one of these places before; I don’t know why I went then, except that the time hung a bit heavy on my hands. You see, every man was up to his neck in work, and there was great excitement in making preparations for the push, and I couldn’t do anything. Not but what I had always respected the Y.M.C.A.,—what the British Army would have done without it I don’t know. In my opinion, that body is doing as much to win the war as the War Office is—perhaps a bit more. They have kept thousands upon thousands of our chaps steady and straight. They have done more to fight the devil than—but there, I’ll come to that presently.

‘Well, one night I made my way into the Y.M.C.A. hut. At first I did nothing but read the papers, but presently I realized that a service was going on. The hall wasn’t full by any means. Before this push it was full every night; but you see the boys were busy. Presently I caught sight of the man who was speaking, and I liked

his face. I quickly found out that he was an intelligent man, too, and I went up nearer the platform to hear what he had to say. He was not a chaplain or anything of that sort, he was just one of the Y.M.C.A. workers. Who he was I didn't know then,—I don't now, although I have an idea I shall meet him some day, and I shall thank him as a man was never thanked yet.'

'Why?' I asked.

'He made me know the greatest fact in the world,' and he spoke very earnestly. 'He made me realize that there was a God. That fact hadn't come within the realm of my vision,—I hadn't thought anything about it. You see,' and I could see he had forgotten all about military etiquette and the difference in our ranks, 'as I have said to you before, I have been like a man beginning to write the story of his life at the middle. Having no memory, I have had no preconceived notions, and very few prejudices. I suppose if some one had asked me if I believed that there was a God, I should have said yes, although I should have been a bit doubtful. Perhaps I should have thought that there was some great Force which brought all that we see into being, and then I should have said that, if this great Force were intelligent, He'd made an awful mess of things, that He'd found the Universe too big a thing to manage. But I didn't know; anyhow, the thought of God, the fact of God, hadn't troubled me, neither had I thought much about myself in a deeper way.

'Sometimes, when my pals were killed, I wondered in a vague way what had become of them, and whether they were really dead; but there was nothing clear or definite in my mind. But that night, while listening to that man, I woke up to the fact that there was a God; it came to me like a flash of light. I seemed to know that there was an Almighty Power Who was behind everything,—thinking,—controlling. Then I was staggered.'

'Staggered? How?' I asked.

'He said that a Man called Jesus Christ told us what God was like,—showed us by His own life and death. I expect I was a bit bewildered, for I seemed to see more than his words conveyed.'

He did not seem excited, he spoke quite calmly, although there was a quiver in his voice which showed how deeply he was moved, and his eyes glowed with that wonderful new light which made him seem like a new man. That he had experienced something wonderful, was evident. What I and thousands of others regarded as a commonplace, something which we had heard from our childhood, and which, I am afraid, did not hold us very strongly, was to him a wonderful reality, the greatest, the divinest thing in the world.

'I got a New Testament,' he went on, 'and for days I did nothing but read it. I think I could repeat those four Gospels. Man, it's the most wonderful thing ever known,—of course it is! Why——'

At that moment a change came over his face. It was as though he were

attacked by great pain, as though indeed his body were torn with agony. His fists were clenched and quivering, his body became rigid, his face drawn and bloodless.

'Hark, what's that?'

'I hear nothing.'

'Yes, but listen—there!'

It was a curious cry I heard; it sounded partly like the cry of a seagull, mingled with the wail of a wounded animal. It was repeated once, twice, and then there was a laugh.

'I've heard that before, somewhere. Where?—where? It's back behind the black wall!'

I looked, and saw half hidden by a small belt of brushwood, a group of officers, and I could hear them laughing.

'Is that an Indian cry, Springfield?' some one said.

'Yes, there's a legend that it is always heard the night before there's a kind of vendetta.'

Springfield's voice reached us quite clearly, and I looked instinctively towards Paul Edgecumbe.

'I know that voice! I know it!' and the intensity of his feeling was manifested in every word he spoke.

'Silence,' I whispered, 'and come with me, quickly!'

I drew him to a spot from which, without being observed, he could see Springfield's face.

'That is he, *that's* he,' he whispered hoarsely. 'I know him,—I know him!'

'Who is he?' I asked.

'I—oh!—no,—I don't know.'

From pain, almost amounting to agony, the expression on his face had changed to that of intense loathing, of infinite contempt.

'Let's get away,' he said; 'this air is polluted.'

A few minutes later, we had come to the rest-house where I had been brought after my shaking-up, and I saw that the letters had come.

'Wait a minute,' I said. 'I want to hear the end of your story.'

There was only one letter for me, and I saw at a glance that it had come from Lorna Bolivick. It was a long, newsy epistle, only one part of which I need quote here. It referred to Paul Edgecumbe's photograph.

'Thank you,' she wrote, 'for sending me that picture of your protegé. What a strange-looking man! I don't think I ever saw a face quite like it before, and hasn't he wonderful eyes! I felt, even while looking at it, that he was reading my very soul. I am sure he has had wonderful experiences, and has seen things undreamed of by such as I. I had a kind of feeling, when I asked you for it, that I might have met him, or seen him somewhere; but I never have. His face is like no other I have

ever seen, although, in spite of its strangeness, it is wonderfully striking. If ever you have a chance, you must bring him to see me. I am sure I should like to talk to him. A man who has a face like that couldn't help being interesting.'

Here was the final blow which shattered all my suspicions. In spite of repeated assurances to the contrary, I retained the impression that Paul Edgecumbe and Maurice St. Mabyn were the same person. Now I knew that it was impossible. Lorna Bolivick's testimony was final, all the more final because she had no thought of what was in my own mind.

And yet I knew that Paul Edgecumbe was in some way associated with Springfield and St. Mabyn; everything pointed to that fact. Springfield's evident fear, St. Mabyn's anxiety, added to Edgecumbe's strange behaviour when he heard the peculiar cry, and saw Springfield's face, made me sure that in some way these men's lives were bound together, in a way I could not understand.

CHAPTER XII
THE STRUGGLE ON THE SOMME

I was not fated to hear the end of Edgecumbe's story. I had barely finished reading the letter, when events happened in quick succession which made it impossible for me to hear those things which he declared made all life new to him.

It must be remembered that we were in the early part of July, when the great battle of the Somme was gaining intensity at every hour, and when private experiences were at a discount. Each day the tornado of the great guns became more and more terrible, the air was full of the shrieks of shells, while the constant pep-pep-pep of machine-guns almost became monotonous. Village after village south of the Ancre fell into our hands, thousands of German prisoners were taken, while deadly fighting was the order of the day. It is no use trying to describe it, it cannot be described. Incidents here and there can be visualized, and to an extent made plain by words; but the movement as a whole, the constant roar of guns, the shriek of shells, the sulphur of explosives, the march of armies, the bringing in of prisoners, and our own wounded men, cover too vast a field for any one picture.

It was not one battle, it was a hundred battles, and each battle was more intense than the other. Position after position was taken, some of which were lost again, only to be retaken, amidst the thunder of guns and the groans of dying men.

If ever Tennyson's martial poem were true, it was true in that great struggle. Not that cavalry had much to do with it, neither was there any pageantry or any of the panoply of war. It was all too grim, too ghastly, too sordid for that. And yet there was a pageantry of which Tennyson never dreamed. The boom of guns, the weird light of the star shells, the sulphurous atmosphere, the struggle of millions, formed a pageant so Homeric, and on such an awful scale, that imagination reels before it.

It was towards the middle of July when my battalion was ordered south of the Ancre. What had become of Edgecumbe I did not know, and it was impossible to find out. Each battalion, each company, and each platoon, had its little scene of operations, and we knew nothing of who might be a few hundred yards from us. As an infantry officer, I was, during the advance, for the most time in the trenches. Then, after the artillery had done its work, we leapt the parapets, and made our way across the open, oft-times through a hailstorm of bullets, while shrieking shells fell and exploded at our feet. Now we were held up by barbed wire, which here and there had not been swept away by our artillery, or again we stumbled into shell holes, where we lay panting and bruised. But these are only small incidents in the advance.

I think it was toward the end of July when a section of my battalion lay in the trenches not far from Montauban. We had been there, I remember, a considerable time; how long, I can scarcely tell, for hours and sometimes days passed without definite note being taken. Above our heads aircraft sped through the heavens, mostly our own, but now and then Germans! We saw little puffs of cloud forming themselves around them, as shells exploded in the skies. Now and then one of the machines would be hit, and I saw them swerve, as I have seen birds swerve before they fall, at a shooting party. Behind us our guns were booming, while a few hundred yards away in front of us, the German trenches were being levelled. It was a fascinating, yet horrible sight. More than once I saw machine-gun emplacements, with the gunners, struck by the projectiles from our great howitzers, and hurled many feet high.

Not that we had it all our own way, although our artillery was superior to that of the enemy. If we had located their positions, so had they located ours, and their shells fell thick and fast along our lines, decimating our ranks.

How long we had waited, I don't know. We knew by the artillery preparations that the command for advance must soon come, and we crouched there, some quivering with excitement, others cracking jokes and telling stories, and most of the men smoking cigarettes, until the word of command should pass down the line. We knew what it meant. It was true our barrage would make it comparatively safe; but we knew, too, that many of the lads who were joking with each other, and telling stories of what they did in pre-war days, would never see England again, while many more, if they went back, would go back mutilated and maimed for life. Still, it was all in the day's work. The Boches had to be beaten, and whatever might happen to us we must finish our job.

The soldiers talked calmly about it, and even joked.

'Think your number's up, Bill?'

'I don't know. I've been home to Blighty twice. Perhaps I shan't have such good luck next time. But what's the odds? We're giving Fritz a rare old time.'

'Fritz ain't got no more fight in him.'

'Don't you be so sure of that, old cock. Fritz is chained to his guns, that's what *he* is.'

'Is it true the Kaiser and old Hindenburg have come up to see this job, I wonder? Wouldn't I just like to take 'em prisoners!'

And so on, minute after minute, while the heavens and the earth were full of the messengers of death.

The command to go over came at length, and I heard a cheer pass down the line. It sounded strangely amid the booming of the guns, and the voices of the men seemed small. All the same, it was hearty and confident. Many of them, I knew, would have a sense of relief at getting out into the open, and feel that they were no longer like rabbits in their burrows. Helter, skelter, we went across the open

ground, some carelessly and indifferently, others with stern, set faces. Here one cracked a joke with his pal, while there another stopped suddenly, staggered, and fell.

The ground, I remember, was flat just there, and I could see a long way down the line, men struggling across the open space. There was no suggestion of military precision, that is in the ordinary sense of the word, yet in another there was. Each man was ready, and each man had that strange light in his eyes which no pen can describe.

We took the first trench without difficulty. The few Germans who remained were dazed, bewildered, and eager to surrender. They came up out of their dug-outs, their arms uplifted, piteously crying for mercy.

'All right, Fritz, old cock, we won't hurt you! You don't deserve it. But there, I suppose you had to do what you was told.'

Now and then, however, no mercy was shown. Many of the machine-gunners held up one hand, and cried for mercy, while with the other they worked the guns. However, the first line of trenches was taken, a great many prisoners captured, and then came the more difficult and dangerous business. The second line must be taken as well as the first, and the second line was our objective.

By this time we did not know where we were, and we were so mixed up that we didn't know to what battalion or regiment we belonged. In the gigantic struggle, extending for miles, there was no possibility of keeping together. The one thing was to drive the Germans out of the second line of trenches, or better still to make them prisoners. But every inch of ground became more dangerous. German shells were blowing up the ground around us, and decimating our advancing forces.

It was here that I thought my number was up. A shell exploded a few yards from me, shook the ground under my feet, threw me into the air, and half buried me in the *débris*. It was one of those moments when it seemed as though every man was for himself, and when, in the mad carnage, it was impossible to realize what had happened to each other. I was stunned by the explosion, and how long I lay in that condition I don't know.

When I became conscious, I felt as though my head were going to burst, while a sense of helplessness possessed me. Then I realized that, while my legs were buried, my head was in the open. Painfully and with difficulty I extricated myself, and then, scarcely realizing what I was doing, I staggered along in the direction in which I thought my boys had gone.

Evening was now beginning to fall, and I had lost my whereabouts. Meanwhile, there was no cessation in the roar of artillery. As I struggled along, I saw, not fifty yards away, a group of men. And then I heard, coming through the air, that awful note which cannot be described. It was a whine, a yell, a moan, a shriek, all in one. Beginning on a lower note, it rose higher and higher, then fell

again, and suddenly a huge explosive dropped close where the men stood. A moment later, a great mass of stuff went up, forming a tremendous mushroom-shaped body of earth. When it subsided, a curly cloud of smoke filled the air. I was sick and bewildered by what I had passed through, and could scarcely realize the purport of what I had just seen. But presently I saw a man digging, digging, as if for his life.

Half mad, and bewildered, I made my way towards him. In different stages of consciousness I saw several soldiers lying. When I arrived close to the spot, I recognized the digger. It was Paul Edgecumbe. Never did I see a man work as he worked. It seemed as though he possessed the strength of three, while all the energy of his being was devoted to the rescue of some one who lay beneath the heap of *débris*. In a bewildered sort of way I realized the situation. Evidently the enemy had located it as an important spot, for shell after shell dropped near by, while the men who had so far recovered their senses as to be able to get away, crawled into the shell hole.

'Come in here, you madman!' one man said. 'You can't get him out, and you'll only get killed.'

But Paul Edgecumbe kept on digging, heedless of flying bullets, heedless of death.

'He can't get him out,' said a soldier to me in a dazed sort of way; 'he's buried, that's what he is.'

'Who is it?' I asked.

'Captain Springfield,' replied the man. 'Come in here,' he shouted to Edgecumbe, 'that fellow ain't worth it!'

Scarcely realizing what I was doing, and so weak that I could hardly walk, I crawled nearer to my friend.

'You have a hopeless task there,' I remember saying. 'Leave it, and get into the hole there.'

'Is that you, Luscombe? I shall save him, I am sure I shall. I was buried once myself, so I know what it means. There, I have got him!' He threw down the tool with which he was digging, and with his hands pulled away the stones and earth which lay over the body.

I don't quite recollect what took place after that. I have a confused remembrance of lying in the shell hole, while the tornado went on. I seemed to see, as in a dream, batches of soldiers pass by me in the near distance; some of them Germans, while others were our own men. Everything was confused, unreal. Even now I could not swear to what took place,—what I thought I saw and heard may not be in fact a reality at all, but only phantoms of the mind. Flesh and blood, and nerves and brain were utterly exhausted, and although I was not wounded, I was more dead than alive.

I have an indistinct remembrance of a dark night, and of being led over ground

seamed with deep furrows, and made hideous with dead bodies. I had a fancy, too, that the sky was lit up with star shells, and that there was a continuous booming of guns. But this may have been the result of a disordered imagination.

When I came to consciousness, I was at a clearing-station, suffering, I was told, from shell shock.

'You're not a bad case,' said the M.O. to me, with a laugh, 'but evidently you've had a rough time. From what I can hear, too, you had a very great time.'

'A great time!' I said. 'I scarcely remember anything.'

'Some of your men do, anyhow. Yes, the second line was taken, and the village with it. Not that any village is left,' he added with a laugh. 'I hear that all that remains is one stump of a tree and one chimney. However, the ground's ours. Five hundred prisoners were taken. There now, you feel better, don't you? It's a wonder you are alive, you know.'

'But I was in no danger.'

'Weren't you? One of your men, who couldn't move, poor chap, because of a smashed leg and a broken arm, watched you crawl out of a great heap of stuff. He said that only your head was visible at first; but the way you wormed yourself through the mud was as good as a play.'

'I knew very little about it,' I said.

'Very possibly. Corporal Wilkins watched you, and shouted after you, as you staggered away; but you took no notice, and then, I hear, although you were half dead, you did some rescuing work.'

'I did rescuing work!' I gasped.

'Why, of course you did, you know you did.'

'But I didn't,' I replied.

'All right then, you didn't,' and the doctor laughed again. 'There now, you're comfortable now, so be quiet. I'll tell some one to bring you some soup.'

'But I say, I—I want to know. Is Captain Springfield all right?'

The doctor laughed again. 'I thought you didn't do any rescuing work?'

'I didn't,' I replied, 'it was the other man who did that; but is Springfield all right?'

'He's very bad. He *may* pull through, but I doubt it.'

'Private Edgecumbe,—what of him? He did everything, you know.'

'I think he has gone back to duty.'

'Duty!' I gasped. 'Why—why——'

'The fellow's a miracle, from what I can hear. No, he wasn't wounded. The man who told me about it said that he might have a charmed life. He's all right, anyhow. Now be quiet, I must be off.'

For the next few days, although, as I was told, I was by no means a bad case, I knew what it was to be a shattered mass of nerves. A man with a limb shot away, or who has had shrapnel or bullets taken from his body, can laugh and be gay,—I

have seen that again and again. But one suffering from shell shock goes through agonies untold. I am not going to *try* to describe it, but I shall never forget what I suffered. As soon as I was fit, I was moved to another hospital nearer the base, and there, as fortune would have it, I met Edgecumbe's colonel. By this time I was able to think coherently, and my spells of nerves were becoming rarer and less violent.

'Yes, my boy, you are a case for home,' said Colonel Gray. 'You are a lucky beggar to get out of it so well. I was talking with your C.O. yesterday; you are going back to England at once. I won't tell you what else he told me about you; your nerves are not strong enough.'

'There's nothing wrong, is there?'

Colonel Gray laughed. 'No, it's all the other way. Don't your ears tingle?'

'Not a tingle,' I said. 'But what about Edgecumbe?'

'He's a friend of yours, isn't he?' asked the colonel.

'Yes,' I replied.

'Who is he?'

'I don't know,—I wish I did.'

'He's a wonderful chap. I've had my eye on him for a long time, and I haven't been able to make him out. What really aroused my interest in him was the way—but of course you know all about that, you were in that show. I never laughed so much in my life as when those Boches were brought in. Of course you know he's to get his decoration? It couldn't be helped after that Springfield affair.'

As it happened, however, I did not cross to England for several days, but stayed at a base hospital until, in the opinion of the M.O., I was fit to be removed. Meanwhile the carnage went on, and the great battle of the Somme developed according to the plans we had made, although there were some drawbacks. At length the day came when I was to go back to England, and no sooner had I stepped on board the boat than, to my delight, I saw Edgecumbe.

'I *am* glad to see you!' I cried.

'Thank you, sir.'

'Got it bad?'

'A mere nothing, sir. Just a bruised arm. In a few days I shall be as right as ever.'

It was a beautiful day, and as it happened the boat was not crowded. I looked for a quiet spot where we could talk.

'You didn't finish telling me your story when we met last,' I said presently. 'I want to hear it badly.'

'I want you to hear it,' was his reply, and I noted that bright look in his eyes which had so struck me before.

CHAPTER XIII
EDGECUMBE'S MADNESS

'After all, it's nothing that one can talk much about,' he continued. 'I've become a Christian, that's all. But it's changed everything, *everything*!'

'How?'

'I find it difficult to tell you, sir; but after I'd got back from the Y.M.C.A. meeting I got hold of a New Testament, and for days I did nothing but read it. You see it was a new book to me.'

He hesitated a few seconds and then went on. 'Loss of memory is a curious thing, isn't it? I suppose I must have read it as a boy, just as nearly all other English boys have, but it was a strange book to me. I had not forgotten how to read, but I had forgotten what I had read. I seemed to remember having heard of some one called Jesus Christ, but He meant nothing to me. That was why the reading of the New Testament was such a revelation.'

'Well, go on,' I said when he stopped.

'Presently I began to pray,' and his voice quivered as he spoke. 'It was something new to me, but I did it almost unconsciously. You see, when I left the Y.M.C.A. hut, I had a consciousness that there was a God, but after I'd read the New Testament——; no I can't explain, I can't find words! But I prayed, and I felt that God was listening to me, and presently something new came into my life! It seemed to me as though some part of my nature which had been lying dormant leapt into life. I looked at things from a new standpoint. I saw new meanings in everything. I knew that I was no longer an orphan in the world, but that an Almighty, All-pervading God was my Father. That He cared for me, that nothing was outside the realm of His love. I saw what God was like, too. As I read that story of Jesus, and opened my life to Him, my whole being was flooded with the consciousness that He cared for me, that He watched me, and protected me. I saw, too, that there was no death to the man in whom Christ lived. That the death of the body was nothing because the man, the essential man lived on,—where I did not know, did not care, because God was.'

He looked across the sunlit sea as he spoke, and I think he had almost forgotten me.

'I had an awful time though,' he went on.

'How? In what way?'

'It was when I read the Sermon on the Mount. I could not for a time see how a Christian could be a soldier. The whole idea of killing men seemed a violation of Christianity.'

‘It is,’ I said.

‘Yes, in a way you are right, and when I read those words of the Lord telling us that we must love our enemies, and bless them that cursed us, I was staggered. Where could there be any Christianity in great guns hurling men by the thousand into eternity?’

‘There isn’t,’ I persisted.

‘That’s what I believed at first, but I got deeper presently. I saw that I had only been looking at the surface of things.’

‘How?’ I asked. I was curious to see how this man who had forgotten his past would look at things.

‘I found after a daily study of this great Magna Charta of Jesus Christ, that He meant us to live by the law of love.’

‘There’s not much living by the law of love over yonder,’ I said, nodding in the direction of the Somme.

‘Yes there is,’ he cried. ‘Oh, I realize the apparent anomaly of it all, but don’t you see? *It wouldn’t be living by the law of love to allow Germany to master the world by brute force*! This was the situation. Prussianism wanted to dominate the world. The Germans wanted to dethrone mercy, pity, kindness, love, and to set up a god who spoke only by big guns. They wanted to rule the world by brute force, devilry. Now then, what ought Christians to do? It would be poor Christianity, it would be poor love to the world, to allow the devil to reign.

‘You see,’ he went on, ‘Christ’s law is, not only that we must love our enemies, but we must love our neighbours too. We must live for the overthrow of wrong and the setting up of His Kingdom of truth, and mercy, and love. But how? Here were Germany’s rulers who were bent on forcing war. They were moral madmen. They believed only in force. For forty years they had been feeding on the poison of the thought that might was right, and that it was right to do the thing you *could* do.’

‘And what is war but accepting that idea. It is simply overcoming force by force. Where does Christianity come in?’

‘You don’t argue with a mad dog,’ he said. ‘You kill it. It’s best for the dog, and it’s essential for the good of the community. Germany’s a mad dog, and this virus of war must be overcome, destroyed. Oh, I’ve thought it all out. I believe in prayer. But it’s no use praying for good health while you live over foul drains, and it’s just as little praying for the destruction of such a system while you do nothing. God won’t do for us what we can do for ourselves. That’s why this is a holy war! That’s why we must fight until Prussianism is overthrown. We are paying a ghastly price, but it has to be paid. All the same, we are fighting this war in the wrong way.’

‘How?’ I asked.

‘Because we’ve forgotten God. Because, to a large extent, we regard Him too

much as a negligible quantity; because we have become too much poisoned with the German virus.'

'I don't follow,' I said.

'I will try to make my meaning plain. In this war we have the greatest, the holiest cause man ever fought for. We are struggling for the liberty, the well-being of the world. We are fighting God's cause; but we are not fighting it in God's way. We are fighting as if there were no God.'

'How?'

'We started wrongly. Were our soldiers made to realize when they joined the Army that they were going to fight for God? Did the country, the Government ever tell them so? Oh, don't mistake me. I am a private soldier, and I've lived with the Tommies for a long time, and I know what kind of chaps they are. A finer lot of fellows never lived. Braver than lions, and as tender as women many of them; but does God count with the great bulk of them? Is Tommy filled with a passion for God? Is he made to feel the necessity of God? Does Tommy depend primarily on God for victory?'

'Well, do we depend on God for victory?' I asked.

'If God is not with us we are lost!' he said solemnly. 'And that's our trouble. I've read a good many of our English papers, our leading daily papers, and one might think from reading them that either there was no God, or that He didn't count. "How are we to win this war, and crush Germanism?" is the cry, and the answer of the British Government and of the British press is, "Big guns, mountains of munitions, conscription, national service, big battalions, and still more big battalions!" '

'Well, isn't that the only way to win? What can we do without these things?' I asked.

'Big guns by all means. Mountains of munitions certainly, and all the other things; but they are not enough. If we forget God, we are lost. And because we do not seek the help of God, we lose a great part of our driving power.'

He was in deadly earnest. To him Christianity, religion was not some formal thing, it was a great vital reality. He could not understand faith in God, without seeking Him and depending on Him.

'We have chaplains,' I urged. 'We are supposed to be a Christian people.'

'Yes, but do we depend on God? Do we seek Him humbly? When Tommy goes into battle, does he go into it like Cromwell's soldiers determined to fight in God's strength? Oh, yes, Tommy is a grand fellow, take him as a whole, and there are tens of thousands of fine Christians in the Army. But in the main Tommy is a fatalist; he does not pray, he does not depend on God. I tell you, if this battle of the Somme were fought in the strength of God, the Germans would have fled like sheep.'

'That's all nonsense,' I laughed. 'We can destroy brute force only by brute

force.’

‘That’s the German creed,’ he cried, ‘and that creed will be their damnation.’

‘No,’ I said, more for the sake of argument than because I believed it, ‘we shall beat them because we are better men, and because we shall be able to “stick it” longer.’

‘Have you been to Ypres?’ he asked quickly.

‘No,’ I replied.

‘I have. I was there for months. I read the accounts of the Ypres battles while I was there, and I was able to study the *terrain*, the conditions. And Germany ought to have won. Germany *would* have won too, if force was the deciding power. Why, think, they had four men to our one, and a greater proportion of big guns and munitions. Humanly speaking, the battle was theirs and then Calais was theirs and they could dominate the Channel. But it is “Not by might, nor by power; but by My Spirit, said the Lord of Hosts.” I tell you, Sir, no one can read the inwardness of the battles of Ypres without believing in Almighty God. By the way, did you ever read Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables*?’

‘Years ago. What has that to do with it?’

‘He describes the battle of Waterloo. He says that Napoleon by every human law ought to have won it. But Hugo says this: “Napoleon lost Waterloo because God was against him.” That’s why Germany didn’t take Ypres, and rush through to Calais. That’s why they’ll lose this war.’

‘And yet the Germans are always saying that God is on their side. They go to battle singing—

“A safe stronghold our God is still." ’

‘Yes, they are like the men in the time of Christ who said “Lord, Lord,” and did not the things he said. I tell you, sir, if we had fought in God’s strength, and obeyed God’s commands, *the war would have been over by now*. German militarism would have been crushed and the world would be at peace.’

‘Nonsense,’ I replied with a laugh.

‘It’s not nonsense. This, as it seems to me, is the case: We are fighting God’s cause, but God counts but very little. We are not laying hold of His Omnipotence; we are trusting entirely in big guns, while God is forgotten. That is why the war drags on. I tell you,’ and his voice quivered with passion, ‘what I am afraid of is this. This ghastly carnage will drag on, with all its horrors; homes will be decimated, lives will be sacrificed all because we believe more in material things than in spiritual things. More in the devil than in God. I think sometimes that God will not allow us to win because we are not worthy.’

‘Come now,’ I said, ‘it is very easy to speak in generalities about such a question; but tell me how, in a practical way, faith in God, and religious enthusiasm would help us to win this war?’

‘How?’ he cried. ‘Don’t you see that in addition to what I will call the spiritual power which would come through faith in, and obedience to the will of God, you add a practical, human force? Let there be this faith, this enthusiasm, and the people, the soldiers, would be ready for anything. Our workpeople would cease going on strike, employers and tradespeople would no longer be profiteers, grumbling and disunity would cease. We should all *unitedly* throw ourselves, heart and soul into this great struggle, and nothing could withstand us.’

‘But tell me why we are not worthy of victory, now,’ I urged.

CHAPTER XIV
EDGECUMBE'S LOGIC

He was silent for a few seconds, and then went on quietly: 'You will forgive me, sir, if I seem assertive, but I look on you as my friend—and—and you know all about me—that I know myself. As I have said before, I naturally look at things differently from others. I have to be always beginning *de novo*. But tell me, sir, what do you think are the greatest curses in the British Army? What ruins most of our soldiers, body and soul?'

I hesitated a second, and then replied, 'Drink and—and impurity.'

'Exactly; and how much is the latter owing to the former?'

'A great deal, I dare say.'

'Just so. Now go a step further. Did not one of England's most prominent statesmen say that he feared drink more than he feared the Germans?'

'That was a rhetorical flourish,' I laughed.

'No, it was a sober considered statement. Now think. Before I—I—that is before God became real to me, I looked at this question from the standpoint of policy. I considered the whole thing in the light of the fact that it was sapping our strength, wasting our manhood. But I have had to go deeper, and now I see—— great God, man, it's ghastly! positively ghastly!'

'What is ghastly?' I asked.

'Look here, sir,'—and his voice became very intense,—'I suppose you are typical of the educated Britisher. You stand half-way between the extreme Puritan on the one hand, and the mere man of the world on the other. Tell me this: Do you regard the body as of more importance than the soul? Do you think material success more vital than the uplifting of the real man? Do you look upon any gain won at the expense of a man's character as a good thing?'

'No,' I replied, 'I don't. I am afraid that, as a people, we are gripped very strongly by the material side of things, but theoretically, at all events, yes, and in a deeper way, too, we know that character is of more importance than material advancement.'

'Go a step further, sir. Supposing we could win this war at the expense of the highest ideals of the nation; supposing we could crush German militarism, and all the devilry which it has dragged at its heels, by poisoning our own national life, and by binding ourselves by the chains which we are trying to break in Germany; would it be a good thing?'

'Very doubtful, at all events,' I replied; 'but why are you harping on that?'

'Because I am bewildered, staggered. Don't mistake me; I have not the

slightest doubt about the righteousness of our cause. If ever there was a call from Almighty God, there is a call now, and that call is increasing in its intensity as the days go by. If Germany won, the world would not be a fit place to live in; it would be crushed under the iron heel of materialism and brutalism. All that we regard as beautiful and holy, all that the best life of the world has been struggling after, would be strangled, and the race of the nations would be after material gain, material power, brute force. The more I think of it, the more I realize this,—we are fighting for the liberty of the world. But aren't our own men becoming enslaved while they are fighting? Aren't we seeking to win this war of God at the price of our own manhood?'

He was so earnest, so sincere, that I could not help being impressed. Besides, there was truth, a tremendous amount of truth, in what he was saying.

'Either this is God's war,' he went on, 'and we are fighting for God's cause, or we are not. If it is simply a matter of meeting force by force, devilry by devilry then there is not much to choose between us. But if we as a nation,—the pioneer of nations, the greatest nation under the sun,—are fighting for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, then we should eschew the devil's weapons. We should see to it that no victory is won at the cost of men's immortal souls. Besides, we gain no real advantage; I am certain of that. I have been in this war long enough to know that the stamina of our men, the quality of our men, is not made better by this damnable thing. It is all the other way. Our Army is a poorer army because of it, and we have lost more than we have gained by the use of it. That is looking at it purely from the physical standpoint. But surely, if a man believes in Almighty God, he has higher conceptions; when a man fights in the Spirit of God, and looks to Him for strength and for guidance, he has Omnipotent forces on his side. That is why we ought to have won months ago. In reality, this war at the beginning, was a war of might against right, and we have been making it a war of might against might, and we have been willing to sacrifice right for might.'

'But surely,' I said, 'you who have seen a lot of fighting, and have been over the top several times, know that the conditions are so terrible that men do need help. You know, as well as I do, that an artillery bombardment is hell, and that it needs a kind of artificial courage to go through what the lads have to go through.'

'And that brings me back to the point from which I started,' he cried. 'Are we willing to win this war at the cost of men's immortal souls? Mind you, I don't admit your premise for a moment; to admit it would be to impugn the courage of tens of thousands of the boys who have all along refused to touch it. Do you mean to tell me that the abstainers in the Army are less courageous than those who drink? Does any one dare to state that the lads who have refused to touch it have been less brave than those who have had it? To say that would be to insult the finest fellows who ever lived. But here is the point; we admit that drink is a curse, that it is a more baneful enemy than the Germans, that it is degrading not only the

manhood of England, but cursing British womanhood, and yet we encourage its use. Now, assuming that our victory depends on this stuff, are we justified in using it? It may be rank treason to say so, but I say better lose the war than win it by means of that which is cursing the souls of our men. But we are not faced with that alternative. Our Army, brave as it is, great as it is, glorious as it is, would be braver, greater, and more glorious, if the thing were abolished for ever. And more than that, by making a great sacrifice for the sake of our highest manhood, we should link ourselves to Almighty God, and thus realize a power now unknown.'

'Is that what the New Testament teaches you?' I said at length. 'Is that the result of your becoming a Christian?'

'Yes,' he replied eagerly. 'I have read through the New Testament again and again. Every word which is recorded of our Lord's sayings I have committed to memory, and I am sure that what I say is right. Either Christianity is a dead letter, a mockery, or we have been fighting this war in a wrong way. We have not been trusting to God for strength, and what is more, the best men in our Army and Navy realize it. Take the two men who, humanly speaking, have the affairs of this war most largely in their hands: Admiral Beatty and Sir William Robertson. What did Sir William Robertson say to one of the heads of the Church of Jesus Christ in England? "Make the men religious, Bishop," he said, "make the men religious." Have you seen that letter he wrote? "We are trusting too much in horsemen and chariots, trusting too much in the arm of flesh, and when the nation depends more on spiritual forces, we shall be nearer victory." What did Admiral Beatty say in that remarkable letter he wrote only a little while ago? "When England looks out with humbler eyes, and with prayer on her lips, then she can begin to count the days towards the end." Does England believe that? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Does the British Government believe that? Do the people believe it? Do the Churches believe it?'

'But we must have might, and we must have power,' I urged.

'Of course we must. No one would think of denying it. But primarily, *primarily*, our great hope, our great confidence is not in material forces, but in spiritual. That is the point to which we as a nation must get back, and when we do, the hosts of German militarism will become but as thistledown. That is the call of God in these days, that is what this war should do for our country, it should bring us back to realities, bring us to God. Is it doing that, Captain Luscombe?'

'You know as well as I,' I replied. 'I have not been home for a long time.'

'I shall see presently,' he said, for by this time the shores of England were becoming more and more plain to us. 'Of course, while I was at home during my training, I did not realize things as I do now; my eyes had not been opened. But I shall study England in the light of the New Testament.'

'You will have a busy time,' I laughed.

'I suppose I am to have a commission, sir,' he said just before leaving the boat,

‘and I am to go away into an Officers’ Training Corps at once. But I have your address and you shall hear from me.’

That same night I wrote a letter to Lorna Bolivick, telling her of my arrival in England, and informing her that in all probability Edgecumbe would be in the country for some time. I wrote to Devonshire, because I had been previously informed that she had been obliged to return home on account of her health.

Three days later I got her reply.

‘ "Dear Captain Luscombe,” she wrote, “I am awfully interested to hear that you are back in England; of course you will come and see us. Father insists that you shall, and you must *be sure* to bring your friend. *I shall take no refusal*. If you can give me his address, I will write to him at once, although, seeing we have never met, I think it will be better for you to convey my message. Tell him that I *insist* on you both coming as soon as possible. I have heaps of things to tell you, but I can’t write them. Besides, as we shall be seeing each other soon, there is no need. Telegraph at once the time you will arrive, and remember that I cannot possibly hear of any excuse whatever from either of you." ’

Edgecumbe having informed me of his whereabouts, I went to see him, and showed him the letter.

‘Why on earth should she want to see me?’ he asked.

‘I don’t know, except that I told her about our meeting,’ I replied. ‘She took a tremendous interest in you. Don’t you remember?

For a few seconds there was a far-away look in his eyes, then evidently he came to a decision.

‘Yes, I’ll go,’ he said, ‘I will. I—I—think——’ But he did not finish his sentence.

A few days later, we were on our way to Devonshire together, I little realizing the influence our visit would have on the future.

CHAPTER XV
DEVONSHIRE

Before leaving for England, I had learned that Captain Springfield was at a base hospital, and that although he was in a bad way, and not fit to return home, there were good hopes of his recovery. Of St. Mabyn I had heard nothing, but I imagined that very possibly Lorna Bolivick would have news of him. As I have said before, Lorna's letter, written on receipt of Paul Edgecumbe's photograph, had dispelled whatever ideas I had entertained about his being identical with Maurice St. Mabyn. Of course it was unthinkable, after what she had said. She had been so pronounced in her statement that Edgecumbe's face was altogether strange to her, and that she had never seen one like it before, that I was obliged to abandon all my former suspicions; and yet, at the back of my mind, I could not help believing that Edgecumbe and Springfield were not strangers.

Of another thing, too, I was certain. He had been an officer in the Army. On the night before we started for Devonshire I had a talk with the C.O. of the Officers' Training Corps to which Edgecumbe was attached. He had been under his command only a few days, but the attention of the C.O. had already been drawn to him. This man happened to be an old acquaintance of mine, and he talked with me freely.

'You say you know Edgecumbe?' he asked.

'Yes,' I replied; 'he is a friend of mine.'

'I had a long report of him from France, where he seems to have done some fine things,' said the colonel. 'Of course you know he is to be decorated?'

'I had a hint of it before I left France,' I replied.

'Would it be an indiscretion to ask you to tell me what you know of him?'

'I don't know that it would,' was my answer. 'Only I should like you to understand that what I am going to tell you is in confidence. You see, the situation is rather peculiar, and I do not think he wants his mental condition known.'

'Why? Is there anything wrong about him?'

'Oh, no, nothing.' And then I repeated the story of our meeting in Plymouth.

'And his memory's not come back?' said Colonel Heywood.

'No.'

'I can tell you this about him, though. He is an old artillery officer.'

'How do you know?' I asked.

'The thing is as plain as daylight,' was the reply. 'The man may have no memory for certain things, and the story of his past may be a blank to him, but he knows his job already.'

‘You mean——?’

‘I mean this,’ interrupted the colonel, ‘no man could have the knowledge he has of an artillery officer’s work, without a long and severe training. If he had forgotten it has come to him like magic. You know what our work is, and you know, too, that gunners are not made in a day. But he had it all at his fingers’ ends. The major drew my attention to it almost immediately he joined us, so I determined to test him myself. He is fit to be sent out right away; he could take charge of a battery, without an hour’s more training. There is not the slightest doubt about it. I shall take steps to try and find out particulars about our Indian Army, and whether any officers have been missing. The fellow interests me tremendously. Why, he has almost a genius for gunnery! He is full of ideas, too,’ and the colonel laughed. ‘He, a cadet, could teach many of us older men our business. Some day I’m inclined to think there’ll be a romantic revelation!’

It was through Colonel Heywood’s good offices that I was allowed to take Edgecumbe to Devonshire with me, as of course he, only having just joined the corps, was not entitled to leave so soon. As it was, he was allowed only a long week-end. I thought of these things on our way to Devonshire, and I wondered what the future would bring forth. Anyhow, it was a further blow, if further blow were needed to my suspicions. Neither Captain Springfield nor Maurice St. Mabyn was an artillery officer, and if Colonel Heywood was right, even although they had known each other, they had belonged to different services.

‘I feel awfully nervous,’ said Edgecumbe to me, after the train had left Exeter.

‘Why?’

‘I am acting against my judgment in accepting this invitation; why should I go to this house? I never saw this girl before, and from what you tell me, you have met her only once.’

‘For that matter,’ I said, ‘I feel rather sensitive myself. The fact that we have only met once makes it a bit awkward for me to be going to her father’s house.’

‘Did you fall in love with her, or anything of that sort?’ he asked.

‘No-o,’ I replied. ‘I was tremendously impressed by her, and, for such a short acquaintance, we became great friends. The fact that we have kept up a correspondence ever since proves it. But there is no suggestion of anything like love between us. I admire her tremendously, but I am not a marrying man.’

‘I wonder how she’ll regard *me*?’ And Edgecumbe looked towards the mirror on the opposite side of the railway carriage. ‘I am a curious-looking animal, aren’t I? Look at my parched skin.’

‘It is not nearly as bad as it used to be,’ I replied; ‘it has become almost normal. You are not so pale as you were, either.’

‘Don’t you think so? Heavens, Luscombe, but I must have had a strange experience to make me look as I did when you saw me first!’ Then his mood changed. ‘Isn’t this wonderful country? I am sure I have seen it all before.’ And he

looked out of the carriage window towards the undulating landscape which spread itself out before us.

'It is a glorious country,' he went on, like one thinking aloud. 'France is like a parched desert after this. Think of the peacefulness of it, too! See that little village nestling on the hillside! see the old grey church tower almost hidden by the trees! That is what a country village ought to be. Yes, I'll go to Bolivick, after all. If I am uncomfortable, I can easily make an excuse for leaving. But I want to see her; yes, I do really. You've made me interested in her. I feel, too, as if something were going to happen. I am excited!'

'Well, you won't be long now,' I replied, for just then the train drew up at South Petherwin station.

An old servant in livery approached me as we alighted. 'Captain Luscombe, sir?' he queried in a way which suggested the old family retainer.

'Yes,' I replied.

A few minutes later we were seated in an open carriage, while a pair of spanking horses drew us along some typical Devonshire lanes.

'This is better than any motor-car, after all!' cried Edgecumbe, as he looked across the richly wooded valleys towards the wild moorland beyond. 'After all, horses belong to a countryside like this; motor-cars don't. If ever I——' but he did not complete his sentence. He was looking towards an old stone mansion nestling among the trees.

'That's it, that's surely it,' he cried.

'Is that Bolivick?' I asked the coachman.

'Yes, sir.'

'You might have been here before, Edgecumbe,' I said.

'No, no, I don't think I have—and yet—I don't know. It is familiar to me in a way, and yet it isn't. But it *is* glorious. See, the sun's rim is almost touching the hill tops,—what colour! what infinite beauty! Must not God be beautiful!'

The carriage dashed through a pair of great grey granite pillars, and a minute later we were in park lands, where the trees still threw their shade over the cattle which were lying beneath them.

'An English home,' I heard him say, 'just a typical English home. Oh, the thought of it is lovely!'

The carriage drew up at the door of the old mansion, and getting out, I saw Lorna Bolivick standing there.

'I am glad you've come,' and she gave a happy laugh. 'I should never have forgiven you if you hadn't,' and she shook my hand just as naturally as if she had known me all her life. Then she turned towards Edgecumbe. 'And this is your friend,' she said; 'you don't know how pleased I am to see you.'

But Edgecumbe did not speak. His eyes were riveted on her face, and they burned like coals of fire. I saw, too, by the tremor of his lips, how deeply moved

he was.

CHAPTER XVI
LORNA BOLIVICK'S HOME

For a moment I thought that Lorna Bolivick was somewhat annoyed at the intense and searching look which Edgecumbe gave her. Her face flushed somewhat, and a suggestion of anger flashed from her eyes. But this was only for a moment; probably she remembered Edgecumbe's mental condition, and made allowance accordingly.

Edgecumbe still continued to look at her steadily, and I noticed that his eyes, which, except at the times when they were wistful, were quiet and steadfast, now shone like coals of fire. I saw, too, that he was unable to govern his lips, which were trembling visibly.

'Why do you look at me like that?' she said nervously; 'any one would think you had seen me before somewhere.'

'I have,' he replied.

'Where?'

He hesitated a second, and then said, 'In my dreams,'—and then, realizing that his behaviour, to say the least of it, was not ordinary, he hurriedly went on, 'Please forgive me, Miss Bolivick, but I never remember having spoken to a woman before.'

She looked at him in astonishment. I suppose the statement to her seemed foolish and outrageous.

'It is quite true,' he went on earnestly; 'ever since I met Captain Luscombe at Plymouth I have been in the Army, and I am afraid I have not been a very sociable kind of character. I have lived with men all that time, and have been somewhat of a hermit. Of course I have seen women, in England and in France,' and he laughed nervously. 'But—but—no, I have never spoken to one.'

'And how do I strike you?'

'You seem like a being from another and a more beautiful world,' he replied gravely. 'I don't know, though, the world as one sees it here is very beautiful'; and he glanced quickly across the park away to the moors in the distance, which the setting sun had lit up with a purple glow.

At that moment Sir Thomas Bolivick, Lorna's father, came to the door, and in a hearty West Country fashion gave us both a warm welcome.

'Awfully good of you to come, Captain Luscombe,' he said. 'Granville has spoken so much about you, that I feel as though you were an old friend. Nonsense, nonsense!'—this in reply to my apologies for accepting the invitation. 'In times like these, we can't stand upon ceremony. You are a friend of Granville's, and you

are a British soldier, that's enough for me. Whatever this war has done, it has smashed up a lot of silly conventions, it has helped us to be more natural, and when Lorna here told me about you, I wanted to see you. You see, I have read reports of your speeches, and when I saw that you were mentioned in the dispatches, I wanted to know you more than ever. So let there be no nonsense about your being a stranger.'

Soon after, we were shown to our bedrooms, and after dressing for dinner I went to Edgecumbe's room.

'I—I—had forgotten,' he gasped. 'How—long have I been here?'

'Twenty minutes. Aren't you going to put on your new togs?'

He looked at me like a man in a dream. 'I had forgotten everything,' he said, 'except——'

'Except what? What's the matter, old fellow?'

'I have no business to be here. I ought not to have come. Who am I?—what am I? Just a poor wreck without a memory.'

'A poor wreck without a memory!' I laughed. 'Don't be an ass, man. Look at that ribbon on your new tunic! Think of all the flattering things that have been said about you, and then talk about being a poor wreck without a memory!'

'I am an old man before my time,' and his voice was unnatural as he spoke. 'Look at my face, seamed and lined. I am here on sufferance, here because you have been a friend to me. I have no name, no past, and no—no future.'

'That's not like you, Edgecumbe,' I protested. 'You've always been a jolly, optimistic beggar, and now you talk like an undertaker. Future! why, you're a young fellow barely thirty. As for your name, you've made one, my boy, and you'll make a bigger one yet, if I'm not mistaken. You are a welcome guest here, too,—there is not the slightest doubt about that.'

'Yes, but what have I?'

'Come now, get into those togs quick; we mustn't keep them waiting, you know; it would not be courteous on our part, after all their kindness, too.'

A sudden change swept across his face. 'You are right, Luscombe,' he said; 'I'm ashamed of myself. After all—— I'll be ready in five minutes. There's one thing about a soldier's togs, it doesn't take long to put 'em on.'

It was a very quiet dinner party. The two Bolivick boys were away at the front, and Lorna was the only one of the children at home. Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick were there, but beyond Norah Blackwater, Edgecumbe and I were the only guests.

It was evident to me that Edgecumbe was an entire stranger to Norah Blackwater. Her face did not move a muscle at his appearance; and although he sat next to her at table, she seemed to find no interest in his conversation. He was very quiet during dinner, and although Sir Thomas tried to draw him out, and make him describe some of the scenes through which he had passed, he was

peculiarly reticent.

As I sat at the opposite side of the table, I was able to watch his face closely, and I could not help being impressed by the fact that, although he was very quiet, he was evidently under great excitement. I saw, too, that sometimes for seconds together he, forgetful of Norah Blackwater, would gaze steadily at Lorna Bolivick, as though she fascinated him. I was afraid Sir Thomas did not like him, and as presently the conversation led to our experiences at the front, I determined that, although Edgecumbe might feel uncomfortable, I would show the baronet the kind of man he really was.

'Talking about tight corners,' I said, 'I got out of one of the tightest corners ever I was in, in a peculiar way.'

'Do tell us, Captain Luscombe,' cried Lorna, who had evidently been uncomfortable under Edgecumbe's gaze. 'We have heard nothing about your experiences, and I should like to hear something.'

'It's a story of how one Englishman took thirty Germans prisoners,' I said with a laugh.

'One Englishman took thirty German prisoners!' cried the squire. 'Good old English bull-dog! But how did he do it? Man, it's impossible!'

'Nothing is impossible to a man who keeps his head cool, and has a ready wit,' was my answer. I thereupon, without mentioning Edgecumbe's name, described how I had been taken prisoner, and how I found myself in the German trenches.

'But how did you get out of such a hole as that?' cried the squire.

'As I told you,' I said, 'I found myself with my sergeant in a huge dug-out with thirty Germans. Of course our position was apparently hopeless. They had got us, and meant to keep us. I had been unconscious for a long time owing to a nasty knock I had got, and therefore I was tremendously surprised when I presently heard an English voice talking to the Germans. Evidently another English prisoner had been brought in.'

'Then you were three against thirty,' laughed the squire.

'Three against thirty if you will,' I replied, 'but only one in reality. I was no good, and my sergeant had no other hope than to be buried in a German prison. The new-comer, however, evidently meant business. All the time the English guns were booming, and our explosives were tearing the Boches' trenches to pieces. As it happened, we were too deep for them to reach us, although the danger was that we might be buried alive. That gave this chap, whose face I could not see, his chance, and he began to tell the Germans what idiots they were to stay there in imminent danger of death, when they could get to safety. He described the jolly times which German prisoners had in England, and of the absolute certainty of their being licked on the battle-field. Of course at first the Germans laughed at him, but he went on talking, and in a few minutes he had got every one of them to surrender.'

‘But that’s impossible!’ cried the squire.

‘It’s a fact,’ I said. ‘Never in my life had I realized the effect which a cool, courageous man could have upon a crowd of men. Call it a miracle if you like,—indeed I always shall think of it as a miracle,—but without once losing his nerve, or once revealing the slightest lack of confidence, he worked upon the fears and hopes of those Boches in such a way that he persuaded them to follow him, and give themselves up in a body as prisoners. It was one of the most amusing things you ever saw in your life, to see this one man lead those thirty Boches, while they held up their hands and cried “Kamerad." ’

‘By George, sir!’ said the squire, ‘that’s great, great, sir! No one but an Englishman could do a thing like that. Ah, the old country is the old country still! But who was he, an officer or a private?’

‘A private,’ I replied.

‘And he rescued you, and took the whole thirty Huns as prisoners? By Jove, I should like to know that man! Is he alive now?’

‘Very much alive,’ I laughed.

‘Where is he, then?’

I nodded my head towards Edgecumbe, who all the time had been sitting in silent protest.

But my story had done its work. The squire’s apparent dislike was over, and, acting upon the generous impulse of the moment, he started to his feet and rushed to Edgecumbe’s side.

‘Give me your hand, sir,’ he cried; ‘I am proud to know you, proud to have you sitting at my table!’

What Edgecumbe would have said, I do not know. He had been protesting all the time as much as a man could protest with his eyes, and I knew that like all men of his class he hated to have such deeds dragged into the light of day, although I had done it with a set purpose. But as it happened, there was no need for him to say anything. At that moment the butler came behind Lady Bolivick’s chair and spoke to her.

‘Captain Springfield!’ she cried, ‘and Charlie Buller. Oh, I am so glad. Charlie’s evidently better, then. He wrote, telling me, when I asked him to come over to-night, that he was afraid he wouldn’t be well enough.’

I do not know why it was, but at that moment I looked towards Lorna Bolivick, and I saw her face flush with excitement. Evidently the mention of the new-comers’ names meant a great deal to her.

Then I looked at Edgecumbe, and I saw that he too had been watching her.

CHAPTER XVII
A NEW DEVELOPMENT

Charlie Buller, as Lady Bolivick had called him, was a young fellow about twenty-four years of age, and was first lieutenant in the Devonshire yeomanry. He had been wounded in France, and some time before my return to England had been in a hospital in London. Only a few days before he had been discharged from the hospital, and had now returned to his Devonshire home on leave. He was the only son of a squire whose lands joined those of Sir Thomas Bolivick, and was, as Norah Blackwater told me during the evening, a suitor for Lorna Bolivick's hand.

'I think it is as good as settled,' she said to me, 'although no engagement has been announced. He will be a splendid match for her, too, and owns one of the finest estates in Devonshire. Didn't you see how excited Lorna became when she heard that he had come?'

This was the first time I had seen Springfield since I had helped Edgecumbe to dig him from under a heap of rubbish in France.

They had both dined early, they said, and the night being fine, had motored over, Charlie Buller's home being only four miles from Bolivick.

Buller was a good-looking boy, fresh-coloured, curly-haired, and although in no way remarkable, quite likeable. Springfield I liked less now than when I had first seen him. His face looked paler and less wholesome than ever. The old scar which I had noticed on our first meeting revealed itself more plainly, while his somewhat sinister appearance repelled me.

Sir Thomas, however, gave him a hearty greeting, and welcomed him to his house with great cordiality. Sir Thomas had dined well, and was by this time in great good humour.

'This is splendid!' he cried, 'four men in khaki here all together! Ah, don't I wish my boys were at home to complete the party! But there, never mind, please God they'll come back.'

Springfield was introduced to Edgecumbe as though he were an entire stranger, and neither of them gave the slightest indication that they had ever met before. I wondered, as I saw them, whether Springfield had been aware of the name of the man who had, in all probability, saved him from death. I did not quite see how he could have been ignorant of it, and yet, from the way he greeted Edgecumbe, it might have been that he was in entire ignorance.

But one thing was evident to me. He hated him, and what was more, feared him. I could see his face quite plainly, and there was no mistaking the look in his eyes. The conversation I had heard while lying in that copse in France months

before flashed back to my mind, and I knew that in some way the life of Captain Springfield was linked to that of Edgecumbe, and that if the truth were known evil forces were at work. What they were, I could not divine, but that they existed I had no doubt whatever.

I soon realized, too, that he exercised a great influence over young Buller. That ruddy-faced, fair-haired young fellow was but as wax in his hands. There seemed no reason why I should be disturbed at this, but I was. I was apprehensive of the future.

Another thing struck me, too. In a way, which I could not understand, he was wearing down Lorna Bolivick's former repugnance to him. As my readers may remember, she had greatly disliked him at their first meeting, and had told me in confidence that he made her think of snakes. Now she listened to him eagerly, and seemed fascinated by his presence. I had to admit, too, that the fellow talked well, and although he was anything but an Apollo in appearance, he possessed a charm of manner which I could not deny.

I must confess that I felt angry at this. In spite of my admiration of his strength, I disliked him intensely. I was sure he wore a mask, and that some dark mystery surrounded his life. So angry was I, that I determined if possible to turn the tables upon him. And so, at the close of one of his stories, I broke in upon the conversation.

'Yes, Captain Springfield,' I said, 'what you say is quite true. The quiet heroism shown by fellows whom the world regarded as entirely commonplace is simply wonderful, and a great deal of it has never come to light. By the way, you wouldn't have been here to-night but for the heroism of a man whose action you seem to have forgotten.'

'Is that so?' he asked. 'It is quite possible, although I am not aware of what you are thinking.'

'Surely you must be aware of it?' I replied.

He looked at me curiously, as though he were in doubt whether I was friendly disposed towards him.

'I wish you'd tell me exactly what you mean,' he said.

'Surely you are aware of what happened to you, and why you were sent to hospital, and why you are home on sick leave now?'

'To tell you the truth, I know precious little,' he replied. 'All I remember is the shriek of a shell, the noise of ten thousand thunders, absolute blackness, and then coming to consciousness in a hospital.'

'Then you don't know what happened between the noise of the ten thousand thunders and awaking in the hospital?'

'No,' he replied, 'I don't. I do remember inquiring, but I was told to be quiet, and when, on my becoming stronger, I was removed to the base, no one seemed to be able to tell me what had happened to me. I should be jolly glad to know.

Perhaps you can tell me'; and there was a suggestion of a sneer in his voice.

'Yes,' I replied, 'I can.'

By this time there was a deathly silence in the room. In a way which I had not imagined I had changed the whole atmosphere of the place.

'As it happened,' I said, 'I had a curious experience myself, close to where you were. A shell had exploded not far from me, and I was half buried, besides receiving a tremendous shock. I managed to drag myself out from under the *débris*, however, and was in a confused kind of way trying to find my men. You know what an awful day that was; the Germans had located us to a nicety, and were sending tons of explosives on us. It was one of the hottest times I have ever known.'

'Heavens! it was,' he said, and I thought he shuddered.

'We had passed the Germans' first line,' I continued, 'and I was struggling along in the open, hardly knowing what I was doing, when I saw some men whom I thought I recognized. I heard the awful whine of a shell, which fell close by, and it was not a dud. It exploded with a tremendous noise, and for some time I was wellnigh blinded by dust and sulphurous smoke. A great hole had been torn in the ground, and a huge heap of rubbish hurled up. After a bit I saw a man digging as if for very life. He was right out in the open, and in the greatest danger a man could be. The men who were still alive shouted to him to get into the shell-hole, but he went on digging.'

I was silent for a few seconds. I did not know how best to conclude the story.

'Well, what happened?' he asked.

'He dug you out,' I replied.

'How do you know it was I?'

'Because I helped to carry you to a place of safety.'

'By Jove! I knew nothing about it. But who was the chap who dug me out? I should like to know.'

'Surely you know?'

'I told you I was unconscious for several days,' was his answer, 'and when I asked questions, was told nothing. Who was the chap who dug me out? I—I should like to thank him.'

'He is there,' I replied, nodding towards Edgecumbe, who seemed to be deeply interested in Bairnfather's *Five Months at the Front*.

'What!' he cried. 'Did—did——' The sentence died in an unintelligible mutter. He seemed to utter a name I could not catch. All the time I was watching him intently, and never shall I forget the look that passed over his face. He had been very pale before, but now his pallor was ghastly. For a moment he looked almost like a dead man, save for the gleam in his eyes. He was like one struggling with himself, struggling to obtain the mastery over some passion in his own heart.

It was some seconds before he spoke again, and then, in spite of my dislike for

him, I could not help admiring him. The sinister gleam passed away from his eyes, and a look of seemingly great gladness came into his face. A second later, he had crossed the room to where Edgecumbe was.

'I say, Edgecumbe,' he said, 'was it you who did that for me?' and he held out his hand with frank heartiness.

'Did what?' asked Edgecumbe quietly.

'What—what Luscombe has been talking about. You heard, of course?'

For a moment Edgecumbe looked at him awkwardly. For the second time during that evening I had subjected him to an experience which he hated.

'I wish Luscombe wouldn't talk such rot,' he replied; 'after all, it was nothing.'

'Oh, but it was!' was Springfield's reply. 'Give me your hand, man,—you saved my life. The doctors told me afterwards I had a near shave, and—and—there, you understand, don't you?'

Seemingly he was overcome with emotion, and for some time he lapsed into silence. The others in the room were greatly moved, too—too moved to speak freely. There were none of those effusive congratulations which might seem natural under the circumstance. In a way the situation was dramatic, and we all felt it.

Although he promised to come over on the following day, he seemed very subdued as he bade us good night, though I thought he struggled to speak naturally. It was only when he parted with Edgecumbe, however, that he showed any signs of emotion.

'Good night,' he said, as he grasped his hand. 'I shan't pretend to thank you. Words fail, don't they? But I shall never forget you, never—never; and if ever I can pay you back——'

He stopped short, and seemed to be struggling to say more, but no words escaped him. A minute later he had left the house.

I had barely entered my room that night, when Edgecumbe knocked at the door which led from his apartment to mine. 'May I come in?' he asked.

I opened the door, and scarcely noticing me he staggered to an arm-chair, and threw himself into it.

'I want to tell you something,' he said.

'Well, what is it?'

But he did not speak. He sat staring into vacancy.

'Come, old man,' I said, after a lapse of many minutes, 'what is it?'

'If I weren't sure there was another life,' was his reply, 'I—I should go mad.'

'Go mad! Why?'

'Because this life is such a mockery, such a ghastly, hollow mockery!'

'Don't be silly. Why is it a mockery?'

‘I don’t suppose you can understand,’ he said, ‘not even you. Oh, I am a fool!’

‘How has that fact so suddenly dawned on you?’ I asked with a laugh.

‘I was mad to come here, mad to see her. Why, just think,—here am I, without name, without home, without—without anything! But how did *I* know! Am *I* to blame? I couldn’t help falling in love with her.’

‘Falling in love with her! With whom?’

‘You must know; you must have seen. It is driving me mad, Luscombe! I would,—I would,—oh, God knows what I would do to get her! But think of it! Think of the ghastly mockery of it! There she is, young, fair, beautiful, a fit mate for the best in the world, and I—think of what I am! Besides, there’s that man,—I know him,—I know him, Luscombe.’

CHAPTER XVIII
A TRAGIC HAPPENING

I must confess I was staggered. The thought of Paul Edgecumbe falling in love had never entered my mind. I do not know why it should have been so, but so it was. He had seemed so far removed from all thoughts of the tender passion, and had been so indifferent to the society of women, that to think of him falling in love at first sight seemed pure madness. But I did not doubt his words; the intensity of his voice, the look in his eyes, the tremor of his lips, all told their tale. Of course it was madness, but the fact was patent enough.

'You can't be serious,' I said, although I knew I was speaking foolishly.

'Serious! It's a matter of life or death with me. Besides, there's that man. I know him, I say,—I know him.'

'Of course you know him,' I replied. 'You saved his life, and pretty nearly got killed yourself in doing it.'

'I wish I had been. But no, I don't; He must never have her, Luscombe, never! It would be a crime, and worse than a crime. Why, he is——' Then he stopped again, and with wild eyes seemed staring into vacancy.

'Come, come,' I said, 'this won't do. He has no thoughts about Lorna Bolivick.'

'Did he tell you so?'

'Of course he didn't; there is no reason why he should; but Miss Blackwater told me it was as good as settled that she should marry young Buller.'

'No, the danger doesn't lie there. Why, you could see that, if you had eyes. Didn't you watch him while he was talking during the early part of the evening?—didn't you see how he looked at her? He's a bad man, I tell you! Have you ever seen a serpent trying to fascinate a bird? I have—where I don't know, but I have. He was just like that, and she yielded to his fascination, too; you must have noticed it! Buller is a nonentity, just a harmless, good-natured, weak boy. He could be a tool in another man's hands, though,—Springfield could make him do anything.'

He did not look at me while he spoke; he seemed to be staring at some far distant object.

'You say you know Springfield,' I said; 'what did you mean by that?'

'I mean,—I have met him before somewhere.'

'Where?'

'I don't know. I only know I have. Do you remember that time over in France, when he made that strange noise?'

I nodded.

‘It was an old Indian cry. It was a cry that always means vengeance. It was he who made it,—do you remember? Afterwards I saw his face. I knew then I had seen him somewhere, but where, I don’t know. Oh, if only this thick veil of the past could be turned aside, and I could see! Oh, if I could only remember!—but I can’t. I tell you, that man knows me—he remembers. Did you watch his eyes when he looked at me? And I am helpless, helpless!—and she is so young, so beautiful, so pure. I can’t understand it at all, and yet, when I saw her this evening for the first time, as she stood in the doorway with the light of the setting sun upon her face—— I am so helpless,’ he continued. ‘I can do nothing. Besides——’

As I have said, I had learnt to love Paul Edgecumbe, and although I realized his madness as much as he did, I wanted to lift the weight of care from his life.

‘If what you told me some months ago is true, there is no room for despair,’ I urged.

‘What did I tell you?’

‘You told me you had found a great secret,’ I replied; ‘that you had become sure of Almighty God. If that is true, there is no room for hopelessness; despair’s out of the question.’

He sat quietly for a few seconds, and then leapt to his feet. ‘You are right,’ he said; ‘there is no chance in the world, there is no such thing as luck. I can’t explain it a bit, but there isn’t. God never makes a mistake. After all, I could not help falling in love with her, and my love has a meaning. Of course she is not for me,—I am not worthy of her; but I can defend her, I can see that no harm happens to her. Yes, I see, I see. Good night, Luscombe, I—I want to be alone now’; and without another word he passed back into his own room.

The next day was Saturday, and we spent the morning roaming through the countryside around Bolivick, and climbing a rugged tor which lay some distance at the back of the house.

As we neared the house after our long morning’s walk, Lorna Bolivick broke out abruptly: ‘I am disappointed in your friend, Captain Luscombe.’

‘Why?’ I asked.

‘I don’t know. I think I admire him—in fact I am sure I do. He possesses a strange charm, and, in a way, he’s just splendid. But why does he dislike me?’

‘Does he dislike you?’ I asked.

‘Can’t you see? He avoids me. When for a few minutes we are together, he never speaks.’

‘That doesn’t prove he dislikes you.’

‘Oh, but he does! He acts so strangely, too.’

‘You must make allowances for him,’ I said. ‘You must remember his history. He told you last night that you were the first lady he ever remembered speaking to. It seemed an extravagant statement, but in a way it is true. What his past has

been I don't know, but since I knew him his life has never been influenced by women. Think what that means to a man! Besides, he is sensitive and shy. I can quite understand his being uneasy in your presence.'

'Am I such an ogress, then?' And she looked into my face with a laugh. 'Besides, why should he be sensitive about me?'

'Might not his peculiar mental condition make him afraid of offending you?' I asked. 'Of course it is not for me to say, but I can quite understand his being very anxious to impress you favourably. And because he thinks he is awkward, and uninteresting, he is afraid to be natural, and to act as he would like to act.'

'I wish you could let him know,' said Lorna in her childlike outspokenness, 'that I admire him tremendously. I had no idea he had been such a hero. The way he saved Captain Springfield was just beyond words. Oh, it must have been horrible for you all!'

'In a way it was,' I replied. 'But do you know, in spite of the horror of everything, most of the men look upon it as great sport. You are altering your opinion of Captain Springfield, aren't you?'

'How do you know?' And I saw that her face flushed.

'When we met him over at Granitelands, you told me that he made you think of snakes.'

'Yes, but I was silly, and impulsive. Even you can't deny that he is fascinating. Besides, I always admire mysterious, strong men.'

'Will you promise me something, Lorna?' I ventured after an awkward silence.

'Of course I will if I can. What is it?'

But I had not time to tell her; we had come up to the house at that moment, and I saw both Springfield and Buller, who had come over to lunch, hurrying towards us.

Our greetings were scarcely over, when Edgecumbe and Norah Blackwater came up. Immediately Springfield saw them a change came over his face. He had met Lorna Bolivick with a laugh, but as he saw Edgecumbe the laugh died on his face, while the scar on his cheek became more pronounced.

As far as I can remember, nothing of special note happened during the afternoon, but in the evening, just before dinner, I saw a ghastly pallor creep over Edgecumbe's face, and then suddenly and without warning he fell down like one dead.

CHAPTER XIX
A MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS

Of course Edgecumbe's sudden illness caused great commotion. Nearly every member of the family was present at the time, and confusion prevailed. Buller asked foolish questions, I was nearly beside myself with anxiety, Sir Thomas hazarded all sorts of guesses as to the reason of his malady, Norah Blackwater became nearly hysterical, while Lorna Bolivick looked at him with horror-stricken eyes.

The only two persons who seemed to retain their senses were Captain Springfield and Lady Bolivick. The former suggested that in all probability it was a sudden attack resulting from the life he had led in India, and also suggesting that a doctor should be sent for at once, while Lady Bolivick summoned the servants to carry him to bed immediately. Both of these suggestions were immediately acted on. A groom was dispatched to the nearest doctor, who lived at South Petherwin village, while a few minutes later Edgecumbe lay in bed with a look of death upon his face.

The whole happening had been so sudden, that I was unable to view it calmly. That morning he had looked more than usually well, so well that I could not help reflecting how much younger he appeared than on the day when I had first seen him. He had taken a long walk, too, and showed not the slightest sign of fatigue on his return. He had eaten sparingly, and had drunk nothing but water with his lunch, and a cup of tea at four o'clock. Yet at half-past six he had the stamp of death upon his face, he breathed with difficulty, and his features were drawn and haggard.

As I sat by his side, watching him until the doctor came, I remembered that for perhaps an hour before his attack he was very silent, and had moved around as though he were lacking in energy, but I had thought little of it at the time. Now, however, his condition told its own tale. To all appearances, he was dying, and we were all powerless to help him.

Of course dinner, as far as I was concerned, was out of the question, although, as I was afterwards informed, Captain Springfield made an excellent meal.

It was nearly eight o'clock when the doctor arrived, and never surely was a man greeted with more eagerness than I greeted him. For, as I have already said, I had grown to love Edgecumbe with a great love; why it was, I will not pretend to explain, but no man ever loved a brother more than I loved him, and the thought of his death was simply horrible.

Perhaps the suddenness of everything accounted for my intense feeling;

anyhow, my intense anguish cannot be explained in any other way.

Dr. Merril did not inspire me with any great hope. He was a middle-aged man of the country practitioner's type. I judged that he could be quite useful in dealing with ordinary ailments, but he did not strike me as a man who looked beneath the surface of things, and who could deal successfully with a case like Edgecumbe's. Evidently no particulars of the case had been given to him, and from the confident way I heard him talking to Sir Thomas, who brought him up to the room, he might have been called in to deal with a child who had a slight attack of measles.

When he saw Edgecumbe, however, a change passed over his face. The sight of my friend, gasping for breath, with what looked like death-dews on his agonized face, made him think that he had to deal with a man in his death agony.

A few minutes later I altered my opinion of Dr. Merril. He was not so commonplace, or so unobservant as I had imagined. He examined Edgecumbe carefully, and, as I thought, asked sensible questions, which Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick, both of whom had come into the room, answered readily. Although he did not speak to me, he doubtless noticed how interested I was in his patient, and more than once I saw that he looked at me questioningly.

'I admit I am baffled,' he said at length.

I took this as a good sign as far as he was concerned; anyhow, he was not a man who professed to be wise, while he was in actual ignorance.

'I gather from what you say,' he went on, speaking to Sir Thomas, 'that Captain Luscombe knows most about him.'

'That is so, Merril,' replied Sir Thomas. 'I have explained to you the circumstances under which he came here.'

'That being so,' and the doctor spoke very gravely, 'I think it would be best for you all to leave me, except Captain Luscombe.'

'There is something here beneath the surface,' said Dr. Merril when we were alone, 'something which I cannot grasp. Can you help me? Evidently you have been thinking a great deal.'

'I have,' I replied.

'As far as I can judge, he has sufficient vitality to keep him alive for a few hours. I should judge him to be a man of remarkable constitution and great physical strength.'

'You are quite right there. His power of endurance is extraordinary.'

'What I can't understand,' said the doctor, 'is that there is no apparent cause for this, and yet there is some force of which I am ignorant undermining the very citadel of his life. I have never met such a case before, and unless help comes, he will die in less than twelve hours. I am speaking to you quite frankly, Captain Luscombe; from what I know of you, you are quite aware of the limitations of a medical man's power, and my experience during the time I have lived in this district has not been of a nature to help me in such a case as this. Will you tell me

what you know of your friend?'

As briefly as I could, I gave an outline of what I have written in these pages, while the doctor, without asking a single question, listened intently.

'You say he does not drink?' he asked, when I had finished. 'He gives not the slightest evidence of it, but it is necessary for me to know.'

'Intoxicants have not passed his lips for more than a year,' I replied.

'And his food?'

I detailed to him the food which Edgecumbe had eaten since he came to the house, and which he had partaken of in common with the rest of the members of the household.

'And you have been with him all the day?'

'All the day.'

'And you say you thought he became somewhat lethargic about five o'clock?'

'That is so. Not enough to take particular note of at the time, but in the light of what has happened since, I recall it to mind.'

'Now think,' he said presently, 'has he not, say since lunch, shown any symptom of light-headedness or anything of that sort?'

'Thank you for asking that, doctor,' I replied. 'You have reminded me of something which I had forgotten. It may mean nothing, but at a time like this one reflects upon the minutiae of life. We were walking through a field this afternoon, which was dotted with rough granite rocks. I fancy he must have hitched his foot in one of them; at any rate, he would have fallen heavily but for Captain Springfield, who just in the nick of time helped him up. But he showed no signs of light-headedness, not the slightest. We were all acting like a lot of children, and romped as though we were boys home from school. The happening seemed perfectly natural to me at the time, and but for your question I should not have mentioned it.'

'I am going to speak to you in an entirely unprofessional way, Captain Luscombe,' said the doctor. 'I am not sure, and therefore I speak with hesitation. But it looks to me as though your friend had been poisoned. I don't know how it could have happened, because, as far as I can judge, you account for almost every minute of his time since this morning. But all his symptoms point in that direction.'

'May they not be the result of some slow-working malady which has been in his system for years?' I asked.

Dr. Merril shook his head. 'Hardly,' he replied; 'if the malady were slow-working, it would not have expressed itself so suddenly. In the case of a slow-working poison, too, his suffering would have been of a long drawn-out nature. This is altogether different. A few hours ago he was, according to your account, active, buoyant, strong. He was playing games with you in the fields, as though he were a boy. Now,'—and the doctor looked significantly at the bed.

‘Can you suggest nothing?’ I asked again.

The doctor shook his head. ‘It is just as well to be frank,’ he replied. ‘The thing is a mystery to me. His symptoms baffle me. He has drunk nothing but what you have told me of, he has eaten nothing except what has been consumed by the whole household. I don’t know what to say.’

‘And yet he’ll die if nothing’s done for him.’

‘If symptoms mean anything, they mean that,’ he replied. ‘Something deadly is eating away at his vitals, and sapping the very foundations of his life. You see, he can tell us nothing; he is unconscious.’

‘Is there no doctor for whom we could send, with whom you could confer?’

Again Dr. Merril shook his head. ‘We are away from everything here,’ he replied; ‘it is fifty miles to Plymouth over rough, hilly roads, and——’

‘I have it!’ I cried, for the word Plymouth set my mind working. I had spent some time there, and knew the town well.

‘Yes, what is it?’ asked the doctor eagerly.

‘Do you happen to know Colonel McClure? He is chief of the St. George’s Military Hospital in Plymouth.’

‘An Army doctor,’ said Merril; ‘no, I don’t know him. I have heard of him. But how can he help? He has been most of his life in India. I imagine, too, that while he may be very good for amputations and wounds, he would have no experience in such cases as this. Of course I shall be glad to meet him, if you can get him here; but that seems impossible. No trains to Plymouth to-night, and to-morrow is Sunday.’

‘May I ring for Sir Thomas?’ I asked.

‘By all means.’ And a minute later not only Sir Thomas, but Lady Bolivick, again entered the room. Evidently the old gentleman was much moved. The thought of having a dying man in his house was like a nightmare to him.

‘There’s no getting to Plymouth to-night!’ he cried.

‘Haven’t you got a motor-car here?’

‘Yes, but no chauffeur. My car hasn’t been used for weeks, as my man has been called up. That is why I am obliged to use horses for everything. You see, my coachman can’t drive a car.’

‘Didn’t Springfield and Buller come in a car?’ I asked.

‘Yes. But if I remember right, it was in a two-seater.’

‘Never mind what it is, as long as it will get to Plymouth. Let us go and speak to them.’

We found the two men with Lorna Bolivick and Norah Blackwater in the library. They had evidently finished dinner, and Springfield was in the act of pouring a liqueur into his coffee as I entered.

‘How is the patient?’ he asked almost indifferently.

‘Very ill indeed,’ I replied. ‘Unless something is done for him soon, he will

die. Could you,' and I turned to Buller, 'motor to Plymouth, and fetch a doctor I will tell you of? I will give you a note for him.'

'Awfully sorry,' said Buller, 'but I daren't drive. My left leg is so weak that I couldn't work the clutch. Springfield had to run us over here to-day. There's barely enough petrol to take us back, either.'

'I have plenty of petrol,' interposed Sir Thomas.

'I could never get that little bassinette of yours to Plymouth to-night!' broke in Springfield. 'You see, I am still suffering from my little stunt in France, and I am as weak as a rabbit. Besides, Buller's machine isn't fit for such a journey.'

'My car is all right,' cried Sir Thomas. 'But I can't drive, and I haven't a man about the place who can.'

'Do you know the road to Plymouth?' I asked Buller.

'Every inch of it,' he replied.

'Then I'll drive, if you will go with me to show me the way.'

I felt miserable at the idea of leaving Edgecumbe, but there seemed no other way out of it.

'Surely you will not leave your friend?' interposed Springfield. 'He may not be as bad as you think, and to-morrow the journey could easily be managed.'

'It is a matter of life and death,' was my reply. 'Merril says that unless something is done for him at once there is no hope for him.'

'What does he think is the matter with him?'

I did not reply. Something seemed to seal my lips. I saw Springfield's features working strangely, while the scar under his right ear was very strongly in evidence.

'Look here,' he said, as if with sudden decision, 'it's a shame for you to leave your friend under such circumstances. If Sir Thomas will lend his car, I will drive to Plymouth. You just write a letter, Luscombe, giving your doctor friend full particulars, and I'll drag him here by the hair of the head, if necessary.'

I had not time to reflect on his sudden change of front, and I was about to close with the offer, but something, I cannot tell what, stopped me.

'It's awfully good of you,' I said, 'but I think I'll go myself, if Buller will go with me to show me the way.'

I found Dr. Merril, who had been giving some instructions as to things he wanted, and I led him aside.

'You will keep near Edgecumbe, won't you?' I said hurriedly. 'Don't let any one but Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick enter the room. I have particular reasons for asking this.'

'What reasons?' And I could see he was surprised.

'I can't tell you, but I don't speak without thought. Perhaps later I may explain.'

A few minutes later I had started for Plymouth.

CHAPTER XX
A STRANGE NIGHT

‘I say, Luscombe, you’re a nice fellow to drag one out in the middle of the night in this way!’

Colonel McClure had just entered the room where I had been shown.

‘I wouldn’t have done it without reason,’ I said. ‘I have travelled fifty miles to-night to get to you, and I want you to come with me to Sir Thomas Bolivick’s at once.’

‘Sir Thomas Bolivick? I don’t know him. Why should I come with you?’

‘At any rate, hear what I have to say, and then judge for yourself.’

He listened attentively, while I told him my story. At first he seemed to think lightly of it, and appeared to regard my visit to him as the act of a madman; but when I related my conversation with Dr. Merril, I saw that his face changed colour, and his eyes contracted.

‘Tell me the symptoms again,’ he said abruptly.

I described to him as minutely as I was able everything concerning my friend, and then, without asking another question, he unlocked a cabinet, took out a number of things which were meaningless to me, and put them in a bag.

‘Go and get your car started again,’ he said, ‘and wait for me.’

In an incredibly quick time, he had made himself ready for the journey, and insisted on taking his seat by my side.

‘You sit behind,’ he said to Buller, so peremptorily that he seemed like a man in anger. Then turning to me, he said, ‘Drive like blazes!’

For the first hour of our return journey, he did not speak a word. He was evidently in deep thought, and his face was as rigid as marble. Then, suddenly, he began to ask questions, questions which at first seemed meaningless. He asked me to describe the scenery around Bolivick, and then he questioned me concerning Sir Thomas Bolivick’s household, after which he asked me to give him details concerning every member of the family.

‘Have you made up your mind concerning the case?’ I asked presently.

‘How can I tell until I have examined the man?’

‘But you heard what I have told you?’

‘And you have told me nothing.’

‘It seems to me I have told you a great deal, and I tell you this, McClure,—if it is within human skill to save him, you must.’

‘Aren’t I taking this long, beastly midnight journey,’ he replied, like a man in anger, ‘do you think I am doing this for fun? I say, tell me more about this

Edgecumbe; it is necessary that I should have full particulars.'

After I had described our meeting, and our experiences in France, he again sat for some time perfectly silent. He took no notice of what I said to him, and did not even reply to direct questions. But that he was thinking deeply I did not doubt.

'That's South Petherwin church,' I said, as the car dashed through the village; 'it's only a mile or two now.'

'That Dr. Merril seems a sensible chap. You say you asked him to admit no one into the room but Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick. Why?'

'I hardly know,' I replied. 'I think I acted on impulse.'

'A very good thing, sometimes.' And after that he did not speak another word till we reached the house.

When I entered Edgecumbe's room I found him still alive, but weaker. I noticed that a kind of froth had gathered around his mouth, and that his eyes had a stony stare. He was still unconscious, and had not uttered a coherent sentence since I had left.

'Will every one kindly leave the room except Dr. Merril?' And Colonel McClure looked towards Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick as he spoke.

'Do you wish me to go too, Colonel?' I said.

'I think my words were plain enough,' and he spoke like a man in a temper.

'I suppose every one has gone to bed,' I remarked to Sir Thomas.

'No, Lorna is still up. She is a silly girl,—of course she can do no good.'

'And Captain Springfield?'

'He left about midnight. He asked to be allowed to see the patient, but Merril wouldn't let him go into the room. I thought he behaved to the captain like a clown.'

'In what way?'

'Well, Springfield's a clever fellow, and has seen many curious cases of illness while he has been in the East. He said that Edgecumbe's condition reminded him of the illness of an orderly he once had, and wanted to tell Merril about him. But doctors are all the same, they all claim to be autocrats in a sick-room. My word, Luscombe, you must have had a weary night. My advice to you is to go to bed immediately.'

'Not until I have heard McClure's report.'

When we came into the library, we found Buller and Lorna Bolivick there. I thought the young squire seemed anxious and ill at ease, while Lorna was much excited. On seeing me, however, she asked eagerly for news of Edgecumbe.

'There is nothing to tell as yet,' I replied. 'By the way, how did Springfield get home?'

'Oh, he took the car.'

'And how did he imagine that Buller was to get back?'

'I expect he forgot all about Charlie,' was the reply, 'but—he seemed rather

excited, and insisted that he must return at once. Charlie will have to stay here until daylight, and then some one can drive him over.'

As may be imagined, after driving a heavy car for over a hundred miles at night-time, I was dead tired, but I offered to run Buller home. The truth was, I was in such a state of nervous tension that I could not remain inactive, and the thought of sitting still while McClure and Merril consulted about my friend's condition drove me to madness.

'Will you?' asked Buller. 'I—I think I should like to get back,' and I could see that he also was nervous and ill at ease.

'I can get you to your place in a few minutes,' I said, 'and by the time I get back I hope the doctors will have something to tell us.'

A few minutes later, as we were moving rapidly to Buller's house, I said abruptly, 'Was it not rather strange that Springfield should take your car?'

'I suppose it was,' he replied, 'but he is a funny fellow.'

'What do you know about him?' I asked.

'There is not much to know, is there?' and he spoke hesitatingly. 'The Army List will give you full particulars of his career. I believe he has spent most of his time abroad.'

'I have neither had time nor opportunity to study Army Lists. How long was he in India?'

'Not long; only two or three years, I think.'

'Is he any one in particular?' I asked.

I could see by the light of the moon, which was now high in the heavens, that the young fellow looked at me attentively, as though he was trying to read my motive in asking these questions.

'I think he expects to be,' was his reply; 'he is as poor as a church mouse now, but St. Mabyn says he is heir to a peerage, and that he will have pots of money some time.'

'What peerage?'

'I really never asked him. It—it wasn't quite my business, was it? He isn't the sort of chap to talk about himself.'

Sir Thomas was still up when I got back to the house, and the sight of his face struck terror into my heart. He, who was usually so florid, looked positively ghastly. His flesh hung loosely on his cheeks, while he was very baggy around the eyes.

'Have you heard anything?' I asked.

'I don't know, I am not sure,' he replied, 'but I think it is all over.'

'All over! What do you mean?'

'As soon as you had gone, I sent my wife and Lorna to bed. I wouldn't have them stay up any longer. You see, they could do no good.'

‘Have you seen the doctors?’

‘No. But I was frightfully nervous, and I crept up to the door of Edgecumbe’s room. I heard them talking together.’

‘What did they say?’

‘I could detect nothing plainly, but I am sure I heard one of them say, “It’s all over.” Oh, it is positively awful! I never had such a thing happen in my house before. Please don’t think I blame you, Luscombe; you didn’t know that such a thing would happen when you brought him here. But the thought of a guest dying in my house is—is—don’t you see——?’

‘I am going to know the worst, anyhow,’ I said, for, although I quite understood his feelings and was naturally upset at the thought of my being the occasion of his trouble, it was as nothing compared with my anxiety about my friend.

I therefore abruptly left him, and rushed upstairs to Edgecumbe’s room. I knocked, but receiving no answer I went in.

‘How is he?’ I asked.

Neither of them spoke, and from the look on their faces I judged that my worst fears were realized.

CHAPTER XXI
COLONEL McCLURE'S VERDICT

I moved quickly towards the bed, and in the dim light of the lamp which stood near saw that a change had come over my friend's face. A look of perfect peace and tranquility had taken the place of anguish.

'Tell me,' I cried, 'he isn't dead, is he?'

'He is out of pain, at all events,' and Colonel McClure spoke abruptly.

Unmindful of what they might say, I went close to Edgecumbe, and gazed at him steadily. As far as I could judge, there was no sign of life.

'Have—have you done anything for him?' I said, turning to the doctors. But neither of them spoke. They might have been waiting for something.

I noticed that Edgecumbe's hands were lying on the coverlet almost easily and naturally. Why I should have done it, I cannot tell, but I seized the lamp and held it close to them. They did not look like the hands of a dead man. In spite of everything, there was a suggestion of nervous energy in the long, capable-looking fingers. Then I put down the lamp, and took one of the hands in mine.

'He is alive,' I said; 'the right hand is warm, and it is not rigid.'

Still the doctors did not speak, but each looked at the other as if questioningly. They did not appear to resent my action; perhaps they made allowances for my anxiety; both of them knew how dear he was to me.

Then something struck me. I saw that one of his hands, although both were browned by exposure and hardened by labour, was different in colour from the other.

'Have you noticed that?' I said.

'Noticed what?'

'That his left hand is slightly blue. You can see it beneath the tan.'

'By gad, you are right!' It was Colonel McClure who whispered this excitedly, and I saw that my words had a meaning to him. What was in his mind I could not tell, but that he was thinking hard I was sure.

'He isn't dead,' I said excitedly; 'I am sure he isn't!' And again I took his left hand in mine, and lifted it. Then I saw something else. It was very little, but it meant a great deal to me. I remembered how that morning Edgecumbe had been using a pair of Indian clubs, and had rolled up his shirt sleeves. I had remarked to myself at the time the wonderful ease with which he had swung the clubs, and what perfectly shaped arms he had. They were large and hard, and firm, without a mark of any sort. Now, just below the elbow, in the lower part of the arm, was a blue spot. It was so small that it might have been covered by a threepenny-piece,

and in the dim light of the lamp would not be easily seen.

'Did you see this? Did you do it?' I almost gasped.

Colonel McClure examined the spot closely, and then nodded to Dr. Merril.

'Did you see this, Merril?' he asked.

'No,' replied Dr. Merril excitedly. 'As you know you—you——!' He stopped suddenly like one afraid.

Colonel McClure took a powerful glass from his case and examined the spot closely for some seconds. Then he said to his fellow doctor, evidently with satisfaction, 'By gad, we've done the right thing!'

'What does it mean?' I asked. 'Tell me.'

'I will tell you in an hour from now,' and I saw a new light in the colonel's eyes. Then I heard him mutter to himself, 'I was an ass to have missed that.'

I put my hand upon Edgecumbe's forehead; and I could have sworn that it was warm and moist. The moisture was different from the clammy sweat which had poured out on his face when first we had brought him to bed hours before.

Excitedly I told the doctors of my impression, and then McClure commanded me to stand aside, as if I were an interloper. Although I believe the old military doctor was as excited as I, he made no sign, save that his lips moved as if he were talking to himself.

'Do you know what it means?' I asked, as he left the bed.

'It means that you must get out of this,' he replied gruffly.

'I won't,' I answered, for I had wellnigh lost control over myself. Something, I could not tell what, made me sure that an important change was taking place in my friend's condition, and I forgot all about the etiquette of a sick-room. The experiences through which I had passed, my long, midnight journey, together with the feverish anxiety under which I was suffering, made me forget myself.

'I am his only friend,' I went on, 'and I have a right to be here, and I have a right to know everything. What is it? What have you done?'

Scarcely realizing what I was doing, I went to the window and pulled up the blinds. Day was breaking, the sky was clear, and the eastern horizon was tinged with the light of the rising sun. In the light of the new-born day, the lamp looked sickly and out of place. I remember, too, that it made a strange impression upon me; it seemed as though light were fighting with darkness, and that light was being triumphant.

'Don't be an ass, Luscombe,' said the Scotchman; 'I will tell you everything presently, but can't you see that——'

'I can see that he's going to live,' I interrupted. 'His face is more natural; it doesn't look so rigid. I believe there is colour coming into his lips.'

'Find your way into the kitchen, there are some servants there, and bring some hot water immediately.'

For the next hour, I scarcely remember anything that happened. I imagine that

I was so excited that my experiences left no definite impress upon my brain. I have indistinct remembrances of alternating between hope and despair, between joy and sorrow. I remember, too, that I was called upon to perform certain actions, but to this day I do not know what they were. I was more like an automaton than a man.

At the end of the hour, however, Colonel McClure accompanied me into my bedroom, which, as I have said, adjoined that of Edgecumbe.

'We've done it, my boy,' he said, and I noted the satisfaction in his voice.

'He will live, then?'

He nodded. 'Barring accidents, he will. But it's a mystery to me.'

'What is a mystery?'

'I hardly like to tell you. But you are no hysterical woman, and you have a steady head on you. Until an hour and a half ago, I was acting in the dark, acting blindly. Even now I have no proof of anything. You say your friend was in India?'

'I have told you all I know,' was my answer.

'I spent twelve years there,' went on the colonel. 'A great part of the time I was with native regiments, and I have had some peculiar experiences. India's a strange country, and in many things the people there can teach us Westerners a lot. Look here, why did you come for me?'

'Instinct,' I replied.

'But instinct has a basis in reason.'

'Has it? I am not enough of a psychologist to answer that question. Tell me why you are asking me all this.'

'Because I am afraid to tell you what is in my mind. Do you remember what Merril said?'

'Yes,' I replied; 'he said that according to symptoms my friend had been poisoned. But he didn't see how it could possibly be, and he said that the case was completely beyond him.'

'Exactly. When I went into that room, I of course had your words in my mind. India has a hundred poisons unknown to the West, many of them are subtle, almost undiscoverable. I called to my mind what I had learned in India, what I had seen and done there. Frankly, I don't understand your friend's case. Had it been in India, I should have understood it, and what was possible, ay, what would have amounted to certainty there, was utterly impossible in England—at least, so it seemed to me. But I acted on the assumption that I was in India.'

'You mean that you injected an antidote for a poison that you know of?' I ventured.

He looked at me steadily for a few seconds, but he did not speak.

'Now look here, Luscombe,' he said, after a long silence, 'I hesitated to tell you this, because it is a serious business.'

I nodded.

‘You see,’ he went on, ‘we are not in the realm of proof. But as sure as I am a living man, if your friend was poisoned, some one poisoned him, unless he had a curious way of trying to commit suicide.’

‘He didn’t try to commit suicide,’ I replied.

‘You remember that mark in the arm?’

I nodded.

‘In another hour it will be gone. If he had died, it would not be there. I was a blind fool not to have seen it. I examined his arm just before we came in here,—the discolourment has nearly passed away. In an hour there’ll be only a little spot about the size of a pin-prick. Do you feel free to tell me anything of your suspicions? Remember, they can only be suspicions. There can be no possible proof of anything, and even although you may have drawn conclusions, which to you are unanswerable, you might be committing the cruellest crime against another man by speaking them aloud.’

‘Then I’ll not tell you my suspicions,’ I said. ‘I will only recount certain incidents.’

Then I told him the things I remembered.

Colonel McClure looked very grave.

‘No,’ he said, at length, ‘this is something which we dare not speak of aloud. I must think this out, my boy, so must you, and when our minds are settled a bit we can talk again.’

When we returned to Edgecumbe’s room, my friend was sleeping almost naturally, while the relief of every member of the household, who had all been informed of Edgecumbe’s remarkable recovery, can be better imagined than expressed.

‘Have the doctors told you what is the matter with him?’ asked Sir Thomas eagerly.

‘No,’ I replied; ‘perhaps they are not sure themselves.’

‘But they must know, man! I gather that they performed a certain operation, and they wouldn’t do that without some definite object.’

‘The ways of doctors are very mysterious,’ I laughed; ‘anyhow, we are thankful that the danger is over. Merril tells me that Edgecumbe is sleeping quite naturally, while McClure is quite sure that in a few hours he will awake almost well.’

‘But that seems impossible, man! A few hours ago he despaired of his life, and now——’

‘The great thing is he is better,’ I interrupted. I did not want the old baronet to have the least inkling of my suspicion. After all, I could prove nothing, and indeed, as McClure had said, it might be a crime to accuse any man of having anything to do with Edgecumbe’s illness.

During the time I had been in the Army, I had heard of cases of men losing

their memory, and of a sudden shock bringing their past back to them. I wondered if this would be so in Edgecumbe's case. Might not the crisis through which he had passed, the crisis which had brought him close to the gates of death, tear aside the veil which hid his past from him? Might not the next few hours reveal the mystery of his life, and make all things plain?

CHAPTER XXII
EDGECUMBE'S RESOLVE

Some hours later I saw Colonel McClure again. He had become so interested in Edgecumbe's case, that he refused to go back to Plymouth until he was certain that all was well; and although Dr. Merril had left early that morning, in order to attend to his patients, he had arranged to meet him at Bolivick later.

'It's all right, Luscombe. Your friend's talking quite naturally with Merril. He is rather weak, but otherwise he's splendid.'

'May I see him?' I asked eagerly.

'Oh, yes, certainly.'

When I entered the bedroom, I found Edgecumbe sitting up in bed, and although he looked rather tired, he spoke naturally.

'I can't understand why I'm here,' he said, with a laugh, 'but I suppose I must obey orders. I was tremendously surprised about half an hour ago when on awaking I saw two men who told me they were doctors, and who seemed frightfully interested in my condition.'

Dr. Merril went out of the room as he spoke, leaving us together.

'Has anything particular happened to me, Luscombe? You needn't be afraid to tell me, man; I am all right.'

'Have you no remembrance of anything yourself?' I said.

'Nothing, except that I was attacked by a horrible pain, and that I became blind. After that I think my senses must have left me, for I can remember nothing more.'

I looked at him eagerly. I remembered Colonel McClure's injunction, and yet I was more anxious than I can say to ask him questions.

'Did you feel nothing before the pain?'

'I felt awfully languid,' he replied, after a few seconds' silence, 'but nothing more.'

He lifted himself up in the bed, and I could not help noticing that his face looked younger, and that his skin was almost natural. The old, parched look had largely passed away; it might have been as though a new and rejuvenating force had entered his system.

'Springfield and I are in for a big battle.'

I wondered whether he knew anything of my suspicions, and whether by some means or another the thoughts which haunted not only my mind, but that of Colonel McClure, had somehow reached his.

'Springfield means to have her, but I am not going to let him.'

‘You are thinking about Miss Bolivick,’ I said.

‘Who else?’ And his face flushed as he spoke. ‘When I saw her first, I was hopeless, but now——’

‘Yes, now,’ I repeated, as I saw him hesitate, ‘what now?’

For the moment I had forgotten all about his illness. I did not realize that I might be doing wrong by allowing him to excite himself.

‘Buller is not the danger,’ he cried; ‘he is but a puppet in Springfield’s hands. There’s something between that man and me which I can’t explain; but there’s going to be a battle royal between us. He means to marry Lorna Bolivick. In his own way he has fallen in love with her. But he shall never have her.’

‘How are you going to stop him?’ I asked.

I saw his lips quiver, while his eyes burnt with the light of resolution.

‘Surely you do not mean,’ I went on, ‘that you hope to marry her?’

‘I not only hope to,—I mean to,’ he said.

I was silent for a few seconds. I did not want to hinder his recovery, by saying anything which might cause him to despair, but the thing which had been born in his mind seemed so senseless, so hopeless, that I felt it would be cruel on my part to allow him to entertain such a mad feeling.

‘Surely you have not considered the impossibility of such a thing,’ I said.

‘Nothing’s impossible,’ he cried.

‘But do you not see the insuperable barriers in the way?’

‘I see the barriers, but they must be swept aside. Why, man!’ and his voice became stronger, ‘when I awoke a few hours ago, and saw those two doctor chaps, I was first of all bewildered, I could not understand. Then it suddenly came to me where I was, in whose house I was staying, and in a flash I realized everything. As I said, when I saw her first, I despaired; but no man who believes in God should despair. I tell you, the thought of it means life, health, strength, to me! I have something great to live for. Why, think, man, think!’

‘I am thinking hard,’ I replied. ‘I need hardly tell you, Edgecumbe, that I am your friend, and that I wish you the best that you can hope for. It seems cruel, too, after what you have gone through, to try to destroy the thought which is evidently dear to you, but I must do it.’

‘But I love her, man!’ and his voice trembled as he spoke. ‘When I saw her standing in the doorway, as we drove up the other night, she was a revelation to me,—she made all the world new. One look into her eyes was like opening the gates of heaven. Do you realize what a pure soul she has?—how beautiful she is? She is a child woman. She has all the innocence, all the artlessness of a child of ten, and all the resolution, and the foresight, and the daring of a woman. She seemed to me like a being from another world, like one sent to tell me what life should be. She made everything larger, grander, holier, and before I had been in her presence five seconds I knew that I was hers for ever and for ever.’

‘It is because she is so pure, and so innocent, that you should give up all such thoughts at once,’ I said.

‘But why should I? Tell me that.’

‘You will not think me harsh or unkind?’

‘I shall not think anything wrong,’ and he laughed as he spoke. ‘I will tell you why. Nothing can destroy my resolve.’

‘My dear fellow,’ I said, ‘evidently you don’t realize the situation.’

‘Well, help me to realize it; tell me what you have in your mind.’

‘First of all, a woman’s love may not be won easily,—it may be she cares for some one else.’

‘I will make her love me!’ he cried; ‘she will not be able to help herself. She will see that my love for her fills my whole being, and that I live to serve her, protect her, worship her.’

‘Many men have loved in vain,’ I replied; ‘but, assuming for the moment that you could win her love, your hopes would be still as impossible as ever.’

‘Rule out the word impossible. But tell me why you believe it is so.’

‘First of all, Lorna Bolivick is a young lady of position, she is a child of an old family, and when she marries she will naturally marry into her own class.’

‘Naturally; but what of that? Am I not of—of her class?’

‘Doubtless. But face facts. You have not a penny beyond your pay;—would it be fair, would it be right of you, to go to such a girl as she, reared as she has been, and offer her only poverty?’

‘I will make a position,’ he cried enthusiastically. ‘I’m not a fool!’

‘How? When?’ I asked.

‘For the moment I don’t know how, or when,’ he replied, ‘but it shall be done.’

‘Then think again,’ I went on, ‘you could not marry her without her parents’ consent, and if they know your purposes they would close their doors against you. Fancy Sir Thomas Bolivick allowing his daughter to marry a man with only a subaltern’s pay!’

‘Number two,’ he replied with a laugh; ‘go on,'—and I could see that he regarded my words as of no more weight than thistledown.

‘Yes, that is number two,’ I replied. ‘Now to come to number three. Do you think that you, alone, are strong enough to match yourself with your rivals?’

‘You mean Buller and Springfield? I have told you what I think about Buller; as for Springfield, he’s a bad man. Besides, if I am poor, is he not poor, too? He’s only a captain.’

‘Buller tells me he’s the heir to a peerage,’ I replied, ‘and that when somebody dies he will come into pots of money. And whatever else you may think about him, he is a strong man, capable and determined. If you are right about him, and you think there’s going to be a battle royal between you two, you will have a

dangerous enemy, an enemy who will stop at nothing. But that is not all. The greatest difficulty has not yet been mentioned.'

'What is that?'

I hesitated before replying. I felt I was going to be cruel, and yet I could not help it.

'You have no right to ask any woman to be your wife,' I urged—'least of all a woman whom you love as you say you love Lorna Bolivick.'

'Why?' and there was a tone of anxiety in his voice.

'Because you don't know who you are, or what you are. You are, I should judge, a man thirty years of age. What your history has been you don't know. Possibly you have a wife somewhere.'

I was sorry the moment I had uttered the words, for he gave a cry almost amounting to agony.

'No, no,' he gasped, 'not that!'

'You don't know,' I said; 'the past is an utter blank to you; you have no recollection of anything which happened before you lost your memory, and——'

'No, no, not that, Luscombe. I am sure that if I ever married, if I ever loved a woman, I should know it,—I should feel it instinctively.'

'I am not sure. You say you have no memory of your father or mother; surely if you remembered anything you'd remember them? Now suppose,—of course it is an almost impossible contingency, but suppose you won Lorna Bolivick's consent to be your wife; suppose you obtained a position sufficiently good for Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick to consent to your marrying her; and then suppose your memory came back, and the whole of your past were made known to you, and you discovered that there was a woman here in England, or somewhere else, whom you married years ago, and whom you loved, and who had been grieving because of your loss? Can't you see the situation?'

I could see I had impressed him. Instead of the light of resolution, there was a haunting fear in his eyes.

'I had not thought of that,' he murmured. 'Of course it is not so,—I am sure it is not so. Still, as you say, it would not be fair to submit her to a suspicion of danger.'

'Then of course you give up the thought?'

'Oh, no,' he replied. 'Of course I must think it out, and I must meet the situation; but I give up nothing—nothing.'

As I rose to leave him, McClure stood in the door of the bedroom and beckoned to me.

'Springfield and Buller are downstairs,' he whispered to me; 'they have come to lunch. Can you manage to get a chat with the fellow? It seems horrible to have such suspicions, but——'

'Yes, I understand,' I replied, noting his hesitation.

‘If what is in both our minds has any foundation in fact,’ he went on, ‘Edgecumbe should be warned. I hate talking like this, and it is just horrible.’

‘I know what you feel,’ I said, ‘but what can we do? As we both have to admit, nothing can be proved, and it would be a crime to accuse an innocent man of such a thing.’

‘Yes, I know; but the more I have thought about the matter, the more I am sure that—that—anyhow, get a chat with him. I must get back to Plymouth soon, but before I go you and I must have a further talk. This thing must be bottomed, man, must! I’ll be down in a minute.’

I made my way toward the dining-room, forming plans of action as I did so. I had by this time made up my mind concerning Springfield. Whether he were guilty of what Colonel McClure had hinted at, I was not sure, but a thousand things told me that he both feared and hated my friend. How could I pierce his armour, and protect Edgecumbe at the same time?

When I entered the dining-room, he and Lorna Bolivick were talking together. I watched their faces for a few seconds unheeded by them. I do not know what he was saying to her, but she was listening to him eagerly. In some way he had destroyed the instinctive feeling of revulsion which he had created in her mind months before. She seemed like one fascinated; he held her as though by a strong personality, a strange fascination. There was no doubt in my mind, either, that although he had come to Devonshire as the guest of young Buller, he was a rival for Lorna Bolivick’s hand. As much as such a man as he could love a woman, he loved Lorna Bolivick, and meant to win her.

CHAPTER XXIII
SPRINGFIELD'S PROGRESS

After lunch, I got my chance of a few minutes' chat with Springfield. I think I managed it without arousing any suspicions; certainly he did not manifest any, neither did he appear in the slightest degree ruffled when I talked with him about Edgecumbe's strange illness.

'You have been in India, I think, Springfield?' I said.

'Who told you that?'

'I have almost forgotten. Perhaps it was St. Mabyn, or it might have been Buller. Were you there long?'

'A couple of years,' he replied. 'I was glad to get away, too. It is a beastly part of the world.'

'I asked,' I said, 'because Edgecumbe had just come from India when I first saw him, and I was wondering whether you could throw any light upon his sudden illness.'

'My dear chap, I'm not a doctor. What does McClure say?'

'He's in a bit of a fog,' I replied, 'so is Merril.'

'Doctors usually are,' he laughed. 'For my own part, I think that a great deal of fuss has been made about the whole business. After all, what did it amount to?'

'It was a very strange illness,' I replied.

'Was it? Certainly the fellow was taken bad suddenly, and he fell down in a sort of fit, but that is nothing strange.'

'It is to a man whose general health is as good as that of Edgecumbe.'

'Yes, but India plays ducks and drakes with any man's constitution,' he replied. 'You see, you know nothing about Edgecumbe, and his loss of memory may be a very convenient thing to him.'

'What do you mean?

'I mean nothing, except this: Edgecumbe, I presume, has been a man of the world; how he lost his memory—assuming, of course, that he *has* lost it—is a mystery. But he has lived in India, and possibly, while there, went the whole hog. Excuse me, Luscombe, but I have no romantic notions about him. He seems to be on the high moral horse just now, but what his past has been neither of us know. As I said, life in India plays ducks and drakes with a man's constitution, especially if he has been a bit wild. Doubtless the remains of some old disease is in his system, and—and—we saw the results.' He lit a cigarette as he spoke, and I noticed that his hand was perfectly steady.

'Is that your explanation?' I asked.

‘I have no explanation,’ he replied, ‘but that seems to me as likely as any other.’

‘Because, between ourselves,’ I went on, ‘both McClure and Merril think he was poisoned.’

He was silent for a few seconds, as though thinking, then he asked quite naturally, ‘How could that be?’

‘McClure, as you know, was an Army doctor in India,’ I said.

‘Well, then, if any one ought to know, he ought,’ and he puffed at his cigarette; ‘but what symptoms did he give of being poisoned?’

I detailed Edgecumbe’s condition, his torpor, and the symptoms which followed.

‘Is there anything suggestive of poisoning in that?’ he asked, like a man curious.

‘McClure seems to think so.’

‘Of course he may be right,’ he replied carelessly, ‘but I don’t know enough about the subject to pass an opinion worth having. All the same, if he were poisoned, it is a wonder to me how he got well so quickly’; and he hummed a popular music-hall air.

‘The thing which puzzles McClure,’ I went on, ‘and he seems to know a good deal about Indian poisons, is the almost impossibility of such a thing happening here in England. He says that the Indians have a trick of poisoning their enemies by pricking them with some little instrument that they possess, an instrument by which they can inject poison into the blood. It leaves no mark after death, but is followed by symptoms almost identical with those which Edgecumbe had. During the time the victim is suffering, there is a little blue mark on the spot where the injection was made.’

I looked at him steadily as I spoke, trying to see whether he manifested any uneasiness or emotion. But he baffled me. I thought I saw his lips twitch, and his eyes contract, but I might easily have been mistaken. If he were a guilty man, then he was the greatest actor, and had the most supreme command over himself, of any one I had ever seen.

‘And did you find such a mark on your friend?’ he asked, after a few seconds’ silence.

‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘close to the elbow.’

He showed no emotion whatever, and yet I could not help feeling that he was conscious of what was in my mind. Of course this might be pure imagination on my part, and I do not think any detective of fiction fame would have gained the slightest inkling from his face that he was in any way connected with it.

Springfield took his cigarette case-from his tunic, and extracted another cigarette. ‘It seems a bit funny, doesn’t it? but I don’t pretend to offer an explanation. By the way, will he be well enough to go back to duty when his leave

is up?'

'I don't know,' I replied. 'McClure will have to decide that.'

'I should think you will be glad to get rid of him, Luscombe.'

'Why?' I asked.

'The fellow seems such an impossible bounder. Excuse me, but that is how he struck me.'

'You didn't seem to think so when you thanked him for saving your life,' was my reply.

'No, of course that was different'; and his voice was somewhat strained as he spoke. 'I—I ought not to have said that, Luscombe. When one man owes another his life, he—he should be careful. If I can do the fellow a good turn, I will; and since in these days anybody can become an officer in the British Army, I—I——' He stammered uneasily, and then went on: 'Of course it is different when you have to meet a man as an equal in a friend's house. But there,—I must be going. I have to get back to town to-night.'

In spite of what I had said to Edgecumbe, I was angry at seeing that Springfield spent two hours that afternoon with Lorna Bolivick. There could be no doubt about it, the fellow had broken down all her antagonism towards him, and was bent on making a good impression on her. I found, too, that Sir Thomas Bolivick regarded him with great favour. By some means or another, the news had come to him that Springfield was a possible heir to a peerage, and that while he was at present poor, he would on the death of a distant relative become a very rich man. This fact had doubtless increased his interest in Springfield, and perhaps had lessened his annoyance at the fact that Lorna had failed to fall in with his previous wishes concerning her.

'Remarkably clever fellow.' he confided in me; 'the kind of man who makes an impression wherever he goes. When I saw him at St. Mabyn's more than a year ago, I did not like him so much, but he grows on one.'

'By the way, what peerage is he heir to?' I asked. 'I never heard of it until yesterday.'

'Oh, he'll come into Lord Carbis's title and estates.'

'Carbis? Then it's not an old affair?'

'Oh no,—the present Lord Carbis was created a peer in 1890.'

'A brewer, isn't he?' I asked.

'Yes,' and I thought Sir Thomas looked somewhat uneasy. 'Of course there are very few old peerages now,' he went on; 'the old families have a way of dying out, somehow. But Carbis is one of the richest men in the country. I suppose he paid nearly a million for the Carbis estates. Carbis Castle is almost medieval, I suppose, and the oldest part of the building was commenced I don't know how many hundreds of years ago. Oh, Springfield will be in a magnificent position when the present Lord Carbis dies.'

‘Beer seems a very profitable thing,’ I could not help laughing.

‘Personally I have no prejudice against these beer peerages,’ replied Sir Thomas somewhat warmly. ‘Of course I would prefer a more ancient creation, but these are democratic days. If a man creates a great fortune by serving the State, why shouldn’t he be honoured? When you come to think about it, I suppose the brewing class has provided more peerages than any other during the last fifty years. Come now, Luscombe,’ and Sir Thomas looked at me almost angrily.

Just before Colonel McClure left, he drew me aside, and asked me if I had spoken to Springfield, and on my describing our conversation, he looked very grave.

‘I can’t make it out, Luscombe,’ he said. ‘If my twelve years’ experience in India goes for anything, your friend Edgecumbe was poisoned. He had every symptom of a man who had a subtle and deadly poison injected into his blood. And the way he responded to the treatment I gave him coincided exactly with what I have seen a dozen times in India.’

‘Might it not be merely a coincidence?’ I asked.

‘Of course almost anything is possible,’ he replied, ‘and I could not swear in a court of law that he had been poisoned. I gather you are fond of Edgecumbe,’ he added.

‘Yes,’ I replied; ‘it may be it is owing to the peculiar circumstances by which we were brought together, and from the fact that more than once he saved my life. And no man could love his brother more than I love him.’

‘Then,’ said Colonel McClure earnestly, ‘watch over him, my friend; guard him as if he were your own son.’

I spent a good deal of time in Edgecumbe’s room that night, but we scarcely spoke. He was sleeping most of the time, and I was warned against exciting him. The following day, however, he was quite like his natural self, and expressed his determination to get up. As Colonel McClure had encouraged this, I made no attempt to oppose him, and the afternoon of the Monday being fine and sunny, we walked in the park together.

‘Springfield’s gone to London, hasn’t he?’ he asked.

‘Yes,’ I replied; and then I blurted out, ‘He spent yesterday afternoon with Miss Bolivick. I am inclined to think you are right about his intentions concerning her.’

‘Do you think he has spoken to her?’

‘I shouldn’t be surprised, and for that matter I am inclined to think he has had a serious conversation with her father.’

I was almost sorry, when I saw the look on his face, that I had spoken in this way. He became very pale, and his lips quivered as though he were much moved. ‘Of course,’ I went on, trying to make the best of my *faux pas*, ‘it may be a good

thing for you.’

‘Why?’ he asked.

‘If he has been successful, it will make you see how foolish your thoughts are.’

‘Do you know me so little as that?’ he asked.

‘But surely, my dear fellow,’ I said, ‘in the face of what I said yesterday, you will not think of entertaining such impossible ideas?’

‘You mean about my having a wife somewhere,’ and he laughed.

‘I mean that, under the most favourable circumstances, no honourable man could, in your position, ask a woman to marry him.’

‘I mean to ask her, though,’ was his reply.

‘But, my dear fellow——’

‘Luscombe,’ and there was a steady look in his eyes as he spoke, ‘I have thought it all out. Almighty God never put such a love in a man’s heart as He has put in my heart for Lorna Bolivick, to laugh at him. At the very first opportunity I shall tell her everything.’

‘And if she refuses you,’ I said, ‘as most likely she will?’

‘I shall still love her, and never give up hoping and striving.’

‘You mean——?’

‘I mean that nothing will turn me aside from my determination, nothing,—nothing.’

‘But supposing you have a wife,—supposing that when you were a boy, before you lost your memory, you married some one, what then?’

‘Don’t talk rubbish, old man,’ was his reply.

‘After all,’ I reflected that night when I went to bed, ‘perhaps it is best that he should speak to her. She will regard his declaration as madness, and will tell him so. He never saw her until three hours ago, and if, as I suspect, Springfield has fascinated her, she will make him see what a fool he has been. Then he will give up his madness.’

That was why I left them together the next day. All the same, there was a curious pain in my heart as I saw them walk away side by side, for I knew by the light in his eyes that he meant to carry out his determination.

CHAPTER XXIV
A STRANGE LOVE-MAKING

Few men tell each other about their love-making, especially Englishmen. Mostly we regard such things as too sacred to speak about, even to those we trust and love the most. Besides, there is something in the character of the normal Englishman which is reserved and secretive, and the thought of telling about our love-making is utterly repugnant to us. Nevertheless, Edgecumbe told me the story of their conversation that afternoon almost word for word as it took place.

He spoke of it quite naturally, too, as though it were the right thing to do. He looked upon me as his one friend, and perhaps the abnormal condition of his life made him do what under other circumstances he would never have thought of. Anyhow, he told me, while I listened incredulous, but almost spellbound.

They had been but a few minutes together, when he commenced his confession. They had left the lane in which they had been walking and were crossing a field which led to a piece of woodland, now beginning to be tinged by those autumn tints which are so beautiful in our western counties.

It was one of those autumn days, which are often more glorious than even those of midsummer. The sweetness and freshness of summer had gone, and the browning leaves and shortening days warned us that winter was coming on apace. But as they walked, the sun shone in a cloudless sky. The morning had been gloomy and showery, but now, as if by a magician's wand, the clouds had been swept away, and nothing but the great dome of blue, illumined by the brightness of the sun, was over them. The rain, too, had cleared the air, and the raindrops which here and there still hung on the grass sparkled in the sunlight.

'It seems,' said Edgecumbe, 'as though the glory of yonder woods is simply defying the coming of winter. Do you see the colouring, the almost unearthly beauty, of the leaves? That is because the sun is shining on them.'

'Yes;' replied Lorna, 'but the winter is coming.'

'Only for a little while, and it only means that nature will take a rest. It's a glorious thing to live, Miss Bolivick.'

She looked at him earnestly for a few seconds. Perhaps she was thinking of the illness through which he had passed, and of his thankfulness at his recovery.

'I am so glad you're better,' she said. 'We were all heart-broken at your illness. I hope——'

But she did not finish the sentence. Perhaps she saw that he was not heeding what she said,—saw, too, that his eyes were far away.

For a few seconds they walked on in silence. Then he turned towards her

suddenly.

'I have something to tell you,' he said,—'something very wonderful.'

'You look awfully serious,' and she gave a nervous laugh as she spoke; 'I hope it is nothing to frighten me.'

'Perhaps it is,' he replied, 'but it must be said,—the words would choke me if I didn't utter them.'

She looked at him like one frightened, but did not speak.

'It is all summed up in three words,' he went on: 'I love you. No, don't speak yet; it would not be right. I never saw you until Friday night,—that is, I have no ordinary remembrance of seeing you until then. My friend had spoken to me about you; he had told me of your interest in me. He showed me the letter you wrote him. I did not want to come here, but something, I don't know what it was, made me. When I saw you on Friday evening, I knew. You stood at the doorway of your father's house, with the light of the setting sun upon your face. I could not speak at the time,—words wouldn't come. No wonder, for life begun for me at that moment,—I mean full life, complete life. When I saw you, the world became new. You thought I acted strangely, didn't you? I told you that I never remembered speaking to a woman until then. In a way, of course, it was foolishness, although in another it was the truth. My past is a blank,—that is, up to the time I awoke to a realization that I lived, away in India; and since then my life has been with men. But that wasn't what I meant. When I saw you, you were the only woman in the world,—you are now. You are the fulfilment of my dreams, longing, hopes, ideals. You are all the world.'

The two walked on side by side, neither speaking for some time after this. Perhaps Lorna Bolivick was frightened,—perhaps she was wondering how she could at once be kind, and still make him see the foolishness of what he had said.

'I am glad you are silent,' went on Edgecumbe, 'for your silence helps me. Do you know, when I came to England,—that is, when I saw Luscombe for the first time, I had no thought of God except in a vague, shadowy way. Something, I don't know what, had obliterated Him from my existence,—if ever He had an existence to me, and for months afterwards I never thought of Him. Then I went into a Y.M.C.A. hut in France, where a man spoke about Him, and I caught the idea. It was wonderful,—wonderful! Presently I found Him, found Him in reality, and He illumined the whole of my life. I read that wonderful story of how He sent His Son to reveal Him,—I saw His love in the life and death of Jesus Christ,—and life has never been the same to me since then. But something was wanting, even then; something human, something that was necessary to complete life. Then I saw you, and you completed it.

'I don't know whether men call you beautiful, or not,—that doesn't matter. You have not come into my life like an angel, but as a woman, a human woman. I know nothing about you, and yet I know everything. You are the one woman God

meant for me, you fill my life,—you glorify it. You mustn't think of marrying anybody else, it would be sacrilege if you did. Such a love as mine wasn't intended to be discarded,—mustn't be,—can't be.'

'Mr. Edgecumbe,' she said quietly, 'I think we had better return to the house.'

'No, don't let us go back yet; there are other things I want to say'; and he walked steadily on. She still kept by his side,—perhaps she was not so much influenced by his words, as the way he said them, for I knew by the look in his eyes when he told me his story, and by what I felt at the recital of it, that there was a strange intensity, a wonderful magnetism, in his presence.

'I am very ignorant,' he continued presently, 'about the ways of the world. I suppose I must have known at one time, for Luscombe tells me that I generally do what might be expected of a gentleman, although sometimes I make strange mistakes. The loss of one's memory, I suppose, has a curious effect, and I cannot explain it to you. There are certain things which are very real, and very plain,—others are obscure. For example, I speak German perfectly; but until I read it a few months ago, I knew nothing of German history. Forgive me for saying that,—it has nothing to do with what I want to tell you, and yet perhaps it has. Anyhow, it makes plain certain things I do and say. You are going to be my wife——'

'Really, Mr. Edgecumbe,—please,—please——'

'You are going to be my wife,' he went on, as if she had not spoken; 'some day, if not now, you are going to wake up to the fact that you love me, as I love you,—that just as you are the only woman in the world to me, so I am the only man in the world to you. That is not because of my worthiness, because I am not worthy, but because the fire which burns in my heart will be kindled in yours. This seems like madness on my part, doesn't it?—but I am not mad. I am only speaking because of a great conviction, and because my love envelops me, fills me, overwhelms me. Don't you see? Then this has come to me: I am poor, I am nameless, homeless,—but what of that? Love such as mine makes everything possible, and I am going to make a name, make wealth, make riches;—it won't take me long. Why,' and he laughed as he spoke, 'what is a great love for, but to conquer difficulties, to sweep away impossibilities?'

'But this is madness, Mr. Edgecumbe,' replied the girl, finding her voice at last. 'I can't allow you to speak in such a way any longer; it would be wrong for me to do so. I do not wish to hurt you, and indeed I am very sorry for you. I never thought that you would think of me in this way; if I had, I would never have asked you to come here. But you must see how impossible everything is; our habits of life, our associations, everything, make it impossible. Besides, I don't love you,—never can love you.'

'Oh, yes, you can,' replied Edgecumbe, 'and you will. It may be you will have a great battle to fight,—I think you will; but you will love me. When I am away from you,—when I am over in France, facing death, you will think of me, think of

this hour, and you will remember that wherever I am, and whatever I am, I am thinking of you, loving you,—that my one object in life will be to win a position for you, to win a name for you. No, no, do not fear that I would ask you to marry me until, even in that sense, I am worthy of you. But you are young, and can wait, and, as you remember, perhaps in the silence of the night, that there is a man whom God made for you, thinking for you, striving for you,—you will learn the great secret.'

I fancy at that time Lorna Bolivick really thought his mind was unhinged; I imagine, too, that she was afraid, because Edgecumbe told me that a look amounting almost to terror was in her eyes. But he seems to have taken no notice of this, for he went on.

'You are thinking of other men who love you; that young fellow Buller is very fond of you in his own way, and perhaps Springfield has also made love to you. Perhaps, too, he has fascinated you. But that will not stop you from loving me. Even if you have promised him anything, you must give him up.'

'Perhaps you will finish your walk alone, Mr. Edgecumbe,' she said. 'I—I am going back to the house.'

'Not yet,' he replied. 'In a few minutes I shall have finished. I did not expect you to be as patient as you have been, and I thank you. But if you *have* any thoughts about Springfield, you will give them up. He is no fit mate for you; he is as far removed from you as heaven is from hell.'

At this she spoke passionately. 'You doubtless have forgotten many things,' she said, 'and one thing is that one gentleman never speaks evil of another.'

'I say what I have to say,' he replied, 'because life, and all it means, trembles in the balance. I do not pretend to know anything about Springfield, although I have a feeling that his life and my life have been associated in the past, and will be again in the future. But let that pass. You may be fascinated by him, but you can never love him,—you simply can't. Your nature is as pure as those raindrops, as transparent as the sky. You love things that are pure and beautiful,—and that man's nature is dark and sinister, if not evil. There is only one other thing I have to tell you, then we will return. You see,' he added, 'I am not asking you to promise me anything, or to tell me anything,—I only want to tell you. I suppose I am about thirty years of age, I don't know; how long ago it was that I lost my memory I can't tell; but my friend Luscombe tells me that perhaps, when I was younger than I am now—that is in those days which are all dark to me—I loved some woman and married her. Of course I didn't. But even when I have won a position worthy of you, and when my name shall be equal to yours, I will never think of asking you to wed me until even all possibility of suspicion of such a thing is swept aside. I thought it right to tell you this; how could I help it,—when the joy that should fill your life, the light which you should rejoice in, are all the world to me?'

‘Mr. Edgecumbe,’ she said, ‘you are my father’s guest, and—and—I want to think only kind thoughts of you,—but please drive away these foolish fancies.’

He laughed gaily. ‘Foolish fancies! Is the sun foolish for shining? Are the flowers foolish for blooming? No, no; I love you,—I love you, and day and night, summer and winter, through shine and through storm, my one thought will be of you, always of you, and then, in God’s good time, you will come to me, and we shall enter into joy.’

During the greater part of their journey back scarcely a word passed between them, and when at length they drew near the house again, he spoke to her of other things, as though his mad confession had never been uttered. He told her of the books he was trying to read, books which were new to him, and yet which he felt he had read before; told, too, of his thought about the war, and what we were fighting for, and what the results would be. He spoke of his friendship with me, and of what it meant to him; of his new life in the Artillery, and of his progress as a gunner, and when he came up to the door where I was waiting anxiously for them, he was telling her a humorous story about two soldiers at the front. Indeed, so much had he erased the influence of what he had at first said to her, that when Lorna Bolivick reached the house she was laughing gaily.

‘Had a pleasant walk?’ I asked.

‘Wonderful,’ replied Edgecumbe; ‘a walk never to be forgotten.’

As for Lorna, she went away to her room, and did not appear again until dinner-time.

That night Edgecumbe revealed himself in a new light. No other visitors were there, with the exception of Miss Blackwater. That was the reason, perhaps, he was able to speak freely, and act naturally. But, certainly, I never knew him such a pleasant companion as then, and he revealed phases of character which I had never suspected him of. This man, who was often wistful, and generally strenuous in his earnestness, became humorous and gay. Sometimes he was almost brilliant in his repartees, and revealed a fund of humour which surprised me. Sometimes he grew quite eloquent in discussing the war, and in telling what he believed the effects would be on the life of men and nations. He showed an insight into the deeper movements of the times, which revealed him as a thinker of no mean order, while his idealism and his patriotism were contagious.

Whether he had a purpose in all this, I cannot say, but certain it is he simply captivated the old baronet.

‘Dash it, man!’ cried Sir Thomas to me, just before I went to bed, ‘the fellow is a genius. I never dreamed of such a thing! With luck, he’ll make his mark. He—he might do anything. Upon my word, I am sorry he’s going to-morrow. I thought on Saturday he was nothing but a teetotal fanatic, but the fellow is wonderful. He has a keen sense of humour, too. I wonder who and what he really is. It is the most remarkable case I ever heard of in my life.’

‘For my own part,’ I said, ‘I almost dread his memory coming back.’

‘Why?’

‘There are times when a man’s past had better be buried and forgotten.’

‘On the other hand,’ broke in Sir Thomas, ‘it may be the beginning of a new life to him. Perhaps he has a name, wealth, position.’

Lorna Bolivick, who was standing by, did not speak, but I could see that her father’s words influenced her. Perhaps she was thinking of the mad confession which Edgecumbe had made that day.

The next day we returned to London.

CHAPTER XXV
‘WHY IS VICTORY DELAYED?

‘The war still drags on, Luscombe.’

‘Yes, it still drags on,’ and I looked up from the copy of *The Times* which I had been reading. ‘They seem to have had bad weather at the front. From what I can judge, the Somme push is practically at an end for this winter, unless better weather sets in.’

The train by which we travelled had just left Bristol, and would not stop until we arrived in London.

‘Of course,’ I went on, ‘it will be Haig’s policy to keep the Germans busy all the winter, but I don’t imagine that much more advance will be made before spring comes.’

‘That will mean another winter in the trenches, with its ghastly toll of suffering and sacrifice of human life.’

‘I am afraid so,’ I said, ‘but then we are at war.’

‘How long is this going to last?’ and there was a note of impatience in his voice.

‘Until the Germans are brought to their knees,’ I replied, ‘and that will be no easy matter. When a nation like Germany has spent forty years in preparation for war, it isn’t easily beaten. You see they were piling up mountains of munitions, while the Krupp’s factories were turning out thousands of big guns all the time we were asleep. Now we are paying the price for it.’

‘The same old tale,’ he laughed, ‘big guns, explosives, millions of men.’

‘It must be the same old tale,’ I replied. ‘This is a war of exhaustion, and the nations which can hold out longest will win.’

‘Then where does God come in?’ he asked.

I was silent. For one thing, I did not wish to enter into a religious argument, and for another I scarcely knew what to say.

‘You know those words in the Bible, Luscombe,—“Some trust in horsemen, some in chariots, but we will trust in the strength of the Lord our God.” How much are we trusting in God?’

‘It seems to me,’ I replied, ‘that God gives the victory to the biggest and best equipped armies.’

‘That’s blank materialism, blank atheism!’ he cried almost passionately. ‘We don’t give God a chance, that is why we haven’t won the war before now.’

I laughed good-humouredly, for even yet the mental attitude he had taken up seemed to me almost absurd.

‘I see what you are thinking, but I tell you what,—the materialism of the country is adding to this frightful welter of blood, to this ghastly holocaust. The destinies of men and nations are not decided primarily by big guns, or mighty armies, and until we, as a nation, get back to a realization of the necessity of God, the war will drag on. As I told you before, when I was up at Ypres, I was convinced that if big armies, and big guns, and poison gas shells, could have won the war, Germany would have won long ago. But she was fighting the devil’s battle, she was trusting in “reeking tube and iron shard,"—as Rudyard Kipling puts it. That is why she failed. With such a cause as ours, and with such heroism as our men have displayed, we should, if we had claimed the help of Almighty God, have won long since.’

‘Nonsense, my dear chap.’

‘Look here,’ he cried, ‘on what, in your opinion, do we depend for victory?’

I was silent for a few seconds before replying.

‘On the mobilization of all our Empire’s forces,’ I replied, ‘on steady, persevering courage, and on the righteousness of our cause.’

‘But supposing our cause hadn’t been righteous, what then?’

I saw what was in his mind, but I did not feel like yielding to him. ‘It’s no use talking this high-falutin stuff, Edgecumbe,’ I said. ‘We are at war, and war means in these days, at all events, big guns. It means the utilization of all the material forces at our command.’

‘Then you believe more in a big army, and in what they call our unconquerable Navy, than in Almighty God? Do you believe in God at all, Luscombe?’

‘Of course I do,’ I replied; ‘I am no atheist. All the same, it is our Navy which has saved us.’

‘Admiral Beatty doesn’t believe that,’ he replied, ‘and if any man knows what a navy can do, he does. Your position is identical with that of the Germans. Why, man, if God Almighty hadn’t been very patient with us, we should have been beaten long ago. Germany’s materialism, Germany’s atheism, German devilry has been our salvation as a nation. If the logic of big guns had been conclusive, we should have been annihilated. That chap Rudyard Kipling saw a long way into the truth.’

‘When? Where?’ I asked.

‘When he wrote that *Recessional*:

Far-famed, our navies melt away,
On dune and headland sinks the fire,
Lo, all the pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre.
God of the nations, spare us yet!
Lest we forget, lest we forget.

'And mind you, Kipling is a believer in force, and a believer in the utilization of all the Empire's resources; but he sees that these things are not enough. Why, man, humanly speaking, we stand on the brink of a volcano.'

'Nonsense,' I replied.

'Is it nonsense? Suppose, for example, that the Germans do what they threaten, and extend their submarine menace? Suppose they sink all merchant vessels, and thus destroy our food supplies? Where should we be then? Or suppose another thing: suppose Russia were to negotiate a separate peace, and free all the German and Austrian armies in the East, which I think is quite probable—should we be able to hold them up?'

'Do you fear these things?' I asked.

'I fear sometimes lest, as a nation, because we have forgotten God to such an extent, He has an awful lesson to teach us. In spite of more than two years of carnage and misery, we still put our trust in the things which are seen.'

'How do you know?' I replied. 'Aren't you judging on insufficient evidence?'

'Perhaps I am,' he answered. 'As you said some time ago, I know very little about England or English life, but I am going to study it.'

'How?' I asked with a laugh.

'As far as I can see, I shall be some months in England,' he went on, 'and as it happens, my brigade is situated near London. And London is the centre of the British Empire; it is at the heart of it, and sends out its life-blood everywhere. I am going to study London; I am going to the House of Commons, and understand the feeling of our Government. I am going to the places of amusements, the theatres, the music-halls, and see what they really mean in the life of the people. I am going to visit the churches, and try to understand how much hold religion has upon the people. I am going to see London life, by night as well as by day.'

'You'll have a big job.'

'That may be, but I want to know, I want to understand. You don't seem to believe me, Luscombe, but I am terribly in earnest. This war is getting on my nerves, it is haunting me night and day, and I cannot believe that it is the will of God it should continue. Mind you, Germany must be beaten, *will* be beaten,—of that I am convinced. That verse of Kipling's is prophetic of our future,—it cannot be otherwise. The nation which has depended upon brute force and lies, must sooner or later crumble; the country guilty of what she has been guilty of must in

some way or another perish,—of that I am sure. Else God is a mockery, and His eternal law a lie. Some day Germany, who years ago longed for war, brought about war, and gloried in her militarism, will realize the meaning of those words:

"Lo, all the pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre."

But we are paying the price of our materialism, too. Do you remember those words of our Lord, Who, when speaking to the Jews about the Galileans of olden times, said, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It is not pleasant to talk about, is it? but Rome and Byzantium fell because of their impurities, and they seemed as firmly established as the seven hills on which Rome stood. Germany will fall, because she has trusted supremely in the arm of flesh, with all that it means. Primarily it is righteousness that exalteth a nation, while the nation which forgets God is doomed to perish.'

'I might be listening to a Revivalist preacher,' I laughed, 'some Jonah or Jeremiah proclaiming the sins of a nation. But seriously, my dear fellow, do you think that because we do not talk so much about these things, that we have of necessity forgotten them? Besides, we have been sickened by the Kaiser's pious platitudes; he has been continually using the name of God, and claiming His protection, even when the country he rules has been doing the most devilish things ever known in history. I think that is why we have been sensitive about using the name of God. Perhaps the nation is more religious than you think.'

'I hope it is,' he replied, 'for of this I am sure, the secret of a speedy and triumphant victory lies in the fact of our nation being linked to God. The question with me is,—Germany is doomed, because it has depended, and is depending, on brute force. That poem of Kipling's describes them exactly. He might have had them in his mind when he wrote:

If drunk with thought of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boasting as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the law.

That is their history. The question is, isn't there a danger that it is becoming our history too?'

'One line describes them very well,' I laughed; 'certainly they belong to the "lesser breeds without the law." '

'I don't know. Just think of it,—Germany's defying the whole world. Speaking from the standpoint of a military power, Germany has reason for her boastfulness. For more than two years she has been holding back and withstanding the greatest nations of the world. Humanly speaking, they are a great people, but

they are scientific savages. If ever a people lived according to the doctrine that might is right, they have, and if that doctrine could be proved to be true, they'd have done it. But their creed is as false as hell, that is why they are doomed. But what of England, man, what of England?'

'You wouldn't have this war conducted in the spirit of a Revival meeting, would you?' I laughed.

'Why not? If it is God's war, it should be fought in the spirit of God. We are fighting to destroy what is opposed to God's will, therefore we should fight as He would have us fight. But here comes the question. Is it the supreme conviction of the nation that we are fighting God's battles? Is it the uppermost thought in our mind? I hate as much as any man the hypocrisy of calling upon God, while doing the devil's work; but are we not denuding ourselves of power by fighting God's battles as though He didn't exist?'

The train presently drew up at Paddington station, where we alighted.

'Look, Luscombe,' said Edgecumbe, nodding towards an officer, 'there's Springfield. I wonder what he's doing here?'

'Don't let him see us, anyhow,' I said quickly. 'Come this way.' And I hurried to the passage which leads towards the departure platform.

'Why didn't you want him to see us?' he asked.

I did not reply till we reached the restaurant, and then I spoke to him gravely.

'Edgecumbe,' I said, 'you were telling me just now that you intended to study the life of London, and that you meant to go to all sorts of places.'

'Yes,' he replied, 'what then?'

'Only this: take care of yourself, and don't let any one know what your plans are.'

'You must have a reason for saying that.'

'I have. You have told me more than once about your feeling that you and Springfield knew each other before you lost your memory.'

'Yes,' he replied, 'what then?'

'You say you had the feeling that Springfield was your enemy?'

'Yes, but I have no proof. Sometimes I am ashamed of harbouring such thoughts.'

'Self-preservation is the first law of life,' I said sententiously. 'Think, Edgecumbe,—some one shot at you in France,—why? You say you don't know that you have a single enemy in the world. Then think of your recent illness.'

'But—but——' and I saw a look of wonder in his eyes.

'I only tell you to be careful,' I interposed. 'Don't let any one know your plans, and whatever you do, don't have anything to do with Springfield.'

The words had scarcely passed my lips, when Springfield entered the room.

CHAPTER XXVI
‘WHERE DOES GOD COME IN?’

Springfield glanced around as if looking for a table, and then seeing us, came up quickly and held out his hand.

‘Awfully glad to see you,’ he said heartily. ‘I came to meet Buller, who I thought might be in your train. But as he wasn’t there, and as I saw you two fellows come across here, I thought I’d follow you. Left them all well down in Devonshire?’

There was no suggestion of restraint or *arrière pensée* in his tones; he spoke in the most natural way possible, and seemed to regard us as friends.

‘I will join you, if I may,’ he went on; ‘I hate feeding alone. By the way, what are you fellows doing to-day? If you have nothing on hand, you might come on to my club.’

‘I am afraid I can’t,’ I replied; ‘I am fixed up. As for Edgecumbe, he has to get back to duty.’

‘I am at a loose end,’ he went on. ‘Of course there are hosts of men I know in London; all the same, it’s a bit lonely here. I am staying at the——’ and he mentioned a well-known military club. Then he looked at us, I thought, suspiciously.

‘Was Miss Bolivick well when you left?’ he asked. ‘I—I am more than ordinarily interested in her’; and he glanced at Edgecumbe as he spoke. But Edgecumbe’s face did not move a muscle. Evidently he had taken my words to heart.

For a few seconds there was an awkward silence. Then he went on:

‘Edgecumbe, I feel I owe you an apology. It was only after I had left Devonshire that I fully realized what you had done for me. But for you, I should be a dead man, and I want to thank you. I am not much given to sentiment, I am not built that way, but believe me I am not ungrateful. At the risk of your own life you saved mine, and I feel it deeply.’

He spoke so earnestly, and there was such a ring of sincerity in his voice, that I felt ashamed of myself for thinking of him suspiciously. Still I could not forget the conversation which took place between him and St. Mabyn months ago, neither could I rid my mind of what had taken place since.

‘If I can be of any service to you,’ he continued, ‘I should like to be,—I should really. I happen to know your colonel, and I’d like to see more of you. If you will let me know how you are fixed, I will look you up. You haven’t any friends in London, have you?’

‘No,’ replied Edgecumbe; ‘no one excepting Luscombe.’

‘And you don’t know London?’

‘I am afraid not. I have no memory of it, anyhow.’

‘Then let me show you around. I could introduce you to a lot of men, too. You see, as an old Army man, I know the ropes.’

‘It’s awfully good of you, Springfield,’ I said; ‘but really I don’t think Edgecumbe is your sort, and it would be a shame to bother you.’

I felt awkward in saying this, because I spoke as though I were Edgecumbe’s guardian. To my surprise, however, Edgecumbe eagerly accepted Springfield’s offer.

‘I’ll let you know when I am free,’ he said, ‘and then, as you say, you can introduce me to some of the sights of London. But we must be off now, Luscombe, I have some things to do.’

‘What do you mean by that?’ I said, when we were alone.

He laughed gaily. ‘I am not such a simpleton as I look, old man. I am able to take care of myself.’

‘But do you really mean to say that you are going to let him show you round London?’

‘Why not? He knows London in a way which you and I don’t.’

‘But don’t you feel that he is your enemy, and that he has some ulterior purpose in all this?’

‘Of course I do, but it would be madness to let him know it. You needn’t fear, my friend; I will be a match for him. As I told you down in Devonshire, there’s going to be a battle royal between us. He looks upon me as a kind of fool, who can be easily duped. But I shan’t be.’

It was some days after this before I heard anything of Edgecumbe again. As I think I have mentioned, I was on sick leave at the time, and after leaving him I went to see some friends in Oxford. While there I got a letter from him, saying that he had been taken ill almost immediately on his return to duty, and that a fortnight’s leave had been granted to him. He asked me when I should be returning to London, as he would like me to accompany him on his peregrinations through the City. I curtailed my visit to Oxford, so as to fall in with his plans, and found that he had taken up his quarters at a Y.M.C.A. Hut, which had been erected especially for the use of officers.

He was looking somewhat pale and hollow-eyed, as I entered a comfortably fitted-up lounge in the building.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ I asked.

‘Oh, nothing much. I had a sort of relapse after I got back to work, and the M.O. declared me unfit for duty. Evidently Colonel McClure wrote to him about me. He seems to think I was poisoned.’

‘Did your M.O. tell you that?’

‘Yes, and in his opinion the poison was not quite eradicated from my system. Funny, isn’t it? Anyhow, they wouldn’t let me work, and here I am. What we poor soldiers would do without the Y.M.C.A., Heaven only knows! Anyhow, it shows that Christianity is not quite dead in the country, for if ever there was a Christian body, the Y.M.C.A. is one.’

‘You can hardly call it a body,’ I replied; ‘it is an organization representing the Christian spirit of the country.’

‘All right, old man; call it what you like. Anyhow, I am jolly thankful to its promoters. What I should have done but for the Y.M.C.A., Heaven knows, I don’t!’

‘I know what you are going to do,’ I replied.

‘What?’

‘You are coming with me to my hotel as a guest.’

‘You are awfully good, old man, but I am afraid I can’t. You see, this illness of mine has given me my opportunity, and I am going to take it.’

‘Opportunity for what?’

‘For seeing London, for studying its life. I mean to go everywhere, and I don’t want to interfere with your liberty in any way.’

‘Good,’ I replied, ‘I’ll go with you; and as we shall be staying at the same hotel, it will be more convenient to both of us.’

‘Do you really mean that, Luscombe?’

‘Of course I do. I, like you, am at a loose end, and I shall be only too glad to have a pal until I am sent back to the front again. Now not another word, Edgecumbe. I am not a Rothschild, but I have no one dependent on me, and I have more money than I need to spend. So pack up your traps, and come with me.

‘Have you seen Springfield since our meeting on Paddington station?’ I asked, when presently we had removed to the hotel.

‘Yes,’ he replied; ‘directly I got to the Y.M.C.A. Hostel, I wrote him at his club.’

‘Well?’ I asked.

‘Oh, he was jolly friendly, and seemed anxious to take me around.’

‘And have you been with him?’

‘Yes,’ he replied.

‘With what results?’

He hesitated a few seconds before answering me, and then he said quietly, ‘Oh, nothing much out of the ordinary. It—it was rather funny.’

‘What was rather funny?’

‘Our conversation. He hates me, Luscombe; he positively loathes me; and he fears me, too.’

‘You have discovered that, have you?’

‘Yes, there is no doubt about it.’

‘Did you go anywhere with him?’

‘Yes, a good many places.’

‘You ought not to have gone with him,’ I said doubtfully.

‘Perhaps not. But I was anxious to see the phases of life with which he is familiar; I wanted to know the class of men he meets with,—to understand their point of view.’

‘And what was your impression?’

‘I am not going to tell you yet. During the four days I have been in London I have been looking around, trying to understand the working motives, the guiding principles, of this, the capital of the Empire. I seem like a man in a strange country, and I am learning my way round. Oh, I do hope I am wrong!’

‘Wrong,—how? What do you mean?’

‘This war is maddening. Last night I couldn’t sleep for thinking of it,—all the horror of it got hold of me. I fancied myself out at the front again,—I heard the awful howls and shrieks of the shells, heard the booming of the big guns, smelt the acids of the explosives, heard the groans of the men, saw them lying in the trenches and on the No Man’s Land, torn, mutilated, mangled. It is positively ghastly,—war is hell, man, hell!’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘but we must see it through.’

‘I know, I know. But how far away is the end? How long is this carnage and welter of blood to continue?’

‘Let’s change the subject,’ I said. ‘We’ll get a bit of dinner, and then go to a place of amusement.’

‘I don’t feel like it to-night. Do you know any members of Parliament, any Cabinet Ministers?’

‘Yes, a few. Why?’

‘I want to go to the House of Commons. I want to know what those men who are guiding our affairs are thinking.’

‘Oh, all right,’ I laughed. ‘I can easily get a permit to the House of Commons. I’ll take you. As it happens, too, I can get you an introduction to one or two members of the Government.’

Two hours later, we were sitting in the Strangers’ Gallery of the House of Commons. I could see that Edgecumbe was impressed, not by the magnificence of the surroundings, for, as all the world knows, the interior of the British House of Commons,—that is the great Legislative Chamber itself,—is not very imposing, but he was excited by the fact that he was there in the Mother of Parliaments, listening to a debate on the Great War.

‘It’s wonderful, isn’t it?’ he said to me. ‘Here we are in the very hub of the British Empire,—here decisions are come to which affect the destiny of hundreds of millions of people. Here, as far as the Government is concerned, we can look into the very inwardness of the British mind, its hopes, its ideals. If this Assembly

were so to decide, the war could stop to-morrow, and every soldier be brought home.'

'I don't know,' I laughed. 'Behind this Assembly is the voice of the country. If these men did not represent the thoughts and feelings of the nation, they'd be sent about their business,—there'd be a revolution.'

'Yes, yes, I realize that. And the fact that there is no revolution shows that they are doing, on the whole, what the country wishes them.'

'I suppose so,' I replied.

After that, he listened two hours without speaking. I never saw a man so intent upon what was being said. Speaker after speaker expressed his views, and argued the points nearest his heart.

At the end of two hours, there was a large exodus of members, and then Edgecumbe rose like a man waking out of a trance.

'Have you been interested?' I asked.

'Never so interested in my life,—it was wonderful! But look here, my friend, do these men believe in Almighty God? Have they been asking for guidance on their deliberations?'

'I don't know. We English are not people who talk about that kind of thing lightly.'

'No, and I am glad of it,' he replied earnestly, 'but I must come again. In a sense, this should be the Power-House of the nation.'

'It is,' I replied; 'at this place supplies are voted.'

'Supplies,' he repeated thoughtfully.

'Come,' I said, 'I have arranged to meet Mr. ——; he is an important member of the Government, and he said he would be good for half an hour's chat after this Debate was over.'

A few seconds later, the member who introduced us took us into the lobby, where I met the Minister to whom I had referred, and who led the way to his own room. As it happened, I had known this Minister for several years. We had spent a holiday together before the war, and had often played golf together. I had more than once seen him after he had become a member of the Government, and he appeared very glad of a little relaxation after the stress of his work.

'What did you think of the Debate?' he asked. 'Of course things are different now from what they used to be. The time for making an impression by big speeches is over. I dare say, when the war comes to an end, we shall have the old party fights again, although the country will never be the same again, even in that way. Still, I thought it was interesting.'

'How do you think we are doing?' I asked presently.

'What, at the front? Oh, fairly well. We have to keep hammering away, you know, but the Germans are by no means done for yet. It is evidently going to be a war of exhaustion, and we have only just come to our strength. Of course the

Germans have given up all hope of winning. One of our weaknesses, if I may so say, lies in Russia. It is months now since they did anything.'

'Do you think there is any danger of their making a separate peace?' I asked.

'No, I don't think so; but there are some very uncertain elements to contend with, and the corruption there has been frightful. I should not be surprised at a big movement there in time. Still, we are doing very well; our forces are becoming well organized, and in another year or so I think the Boches'll begin to crumple up.'

Knowing what was in Edgecumbe's mind, I asked him several questions, which he, without betraying any Cabinet secrets, answered freely. He discussed the question in all its bearings, and revealed remarkable acumen and judgment. All the time Edgecumbe sat listening eagerly, without speaking a word. Then, suddenly, he burst out with a question.

'What do you think we must do to win this war?' he asked, and there was a strange intensity in his voice.

'I am afraid I don't quite understand.'

'What do you think we must do to win this war?' Edgecumbe repeated. 'Have we left anything undone that we could have done? Are there any forces to be brought into play which have not yet been used? Do you see any great dangers ahead? What must we do more? You see, I have been a long time at the front, and I know what fighting is; but naturally, as a soldier, my standpoint of vision is small and circumscribed. How does it appeal to you, who, as a statesman, must necessarily take a larger view?'

The Cabinet Minister seemed to be collecting his thoughts for a few seconds, then he said, 'Of course the question is a very big one. First of all, take the East. If Russia is freed from traitors, and if she holds together,—and if, with the help that we can give her, she can have enough munitions, I don't think we need fear anything there. Then, while our Salonica effort doesn't seem to amount to much, we are holding up a vast number of men, and doing good work. But I do not expect anything decisive from there. Then, in a way, we are doing valuable work in Mesopotamia and Palestine; by that means we are gradually wearing down the Turks. When we come nearer home,—Italy is doing very well. She'll make a big push in a few months, and we shall be able to help her. France is, of course, becoming a bit exhausted, but France is good for a long while yet. It is we who have to play the decisive game, and if we hold together, as I believe we shall if we have no Labour troubles, so that munitions and supplies may be plentiful, we shall be stronger in the field than the Germans are. We have beaten them in big guns, in explosives, and in men. Of course it'll be a long, tough fight, for the Germans realize that it is neck or nothing with them, and they'll hold out to the last. But we are the strongest side, and in the end they'll crumple up.'

'Then you think,' asked Edgecumbe, 'that our victory will depend on these

things?—on stronger armies, and a bigger supply of munitions?'

'That, and the ability of our generals. The German generals are very able men, but I think we beat them even there.'

'Then that is how you roughly outline our forces, and our hopes of victory?'

'Yes, that is it, roughly,' replied the Minister.

'May I ask whether that is the view of the Government as a whole?'

'What other view is there?'

'Then where does God come in?'

He asked the question simply, but evidently he was deeply in earnest. I recognized the intensity of his voice, saw the flash of his eyes.

The Minister looked towards me in a bewildered kind of way. I have an idea that he thought Edgecumbe was mad.

'I don't quite understand you,' he said. 'Will you tell me exactly what you mean?'

'I asked you,' said Edgecumbe, 'what you thought were the forces to be used in order to win this war, and you told me; whereupon I asked you where God came in.'

'God!' repeated the Minister; 'why, we are at war!'

'Exactly, that is why I ask. When the war commenced, the people of the nation were informed that we were going to fight a holy war, that we were going to crush militarism, do justice to small states, bring about an abiding peace in the world. We were told that it was God's war. May I ask where God comes in in your scheme of carrying it on?'

The Minister smiled. Evidently he had come to the conclusion that Edgecumbe was a harmless lunatic, and should not be taken seriously.

'The fact that we are fighting for a just cause,' he said, 'is sufficient to prove that it is God's war.'

'But is that all?'

The Minister looked at him helplessly. Evidently he did not think it worth while to carry the conversation further.

'Because,' went on Edgecumbe quietly, 'as far as I have watched the course of events, we have been fighting, as far as the Government is concerned, as though God did not exist. A great many appeals have been made to the nation, yet think what they amount to! First of all the country was appealed to for men, and the men volunteered. But that was not enough. A certain section of the press cried out for conscription, and demanded that Parliament should pass a Bill giving power to the authorities to compel every man of military age to join the Forces. That was done. Then there was the trouble about munitions, and power was given whereby many works were controlled, and huge factories were built all over the country for the production of big guns and explosives. In addition to that, there was appeal after appeal for money, and still more money. Then we were told that the whole nation

should serve, and there was a further appeal for a National Service. We were told that if these things were done victory was certain.'

'But surely you do not object to this?' said the Cabinet Minister in astonishment.

'Certainly not,' replied Edgecumbe. 'I agree with every one of them; but I asked where God came in. We pretend to believe in God, don't we?'

'Well, what then?'

'Has there been any appeal to the nation to repent of its sins? There have been Proclamations from the throne: has there ever been one calling upon the people of the British Empire to pray? Have we, as a nation, been asked to link ourselves to the power of Almighty God? Has the Government ever endeavoured to make the people feel that our victory is in God's hands, and that we must look to Him for help? Have we not, I ask, as far as the Government is concerned, been fighting this war as though God didn't exist?'

'But, my dear man,' said the Cabinet Minister, 'you as a soldier must know that chaplains are sent out with the Forces, that the soldiers have to attend Church Parade, and that prayer is offered by the chaplains for our victory? How can you say then that the war has been conducted as though God didn't exist?'

'I know what all that means,' replied Edgecumbe. 'I have been at the front for a good many months, and I know what it means. I recognize, too, all the splendid work that has been done by the chaplains; many of them are fine fellows. But I want to get a bit deeper. I want to know what steps have been taken to make the nation realize that primarily victory is in the hands of Almighty God. I want to know, too, what steps have been taken to make the soldiers know what they are fighting for. We have in the Army now several millions, and they are all being instructed in the use of rifle shooting, machine-guns, bayonet work, and so on. Have any steps been taken to instruct them as to the nature of the cause we are fighting for, and of our ultimate aims and purposes? Have they ever been imbued with the idea of what Germanism means, and of our ultimate aims and ideals? In a word, have the soldiers been instructed that this is God's war, and that they are fighting for a holy cause?'

The Cabinet Minister laughed. Edgecumbe's question seemed too absurd to answer. Then he said somewhat uneasily, 'Prayers are said in the churches every Sunday.'

'And from what I hear, only about one person in ten goes to Church.'

'What are you driving at?' and there was a touch of impatience in the Minister's voice.

'Only this,' replied Edgecumbe, 'if this is simply a war of brute force against brute force, then doubtless the Government is going on the right tack. But if it is more,—if it is a war of God against the devil, of right against wrong, of the forces of heaven against the forces of hell, then we are forgetting our chief Power, we are

failing as a nation to utilize the mightiest forces at our command. There might be no God, if one were to judge from the way we are conducting this struggle.'

'Nonsense!'

'That is scarcely an answer. Mark you, I am looking at it from the standpoint of the Government as expressing the thought and will of the nation. The Government is supposed to be the mouthpiece of the nation, and judging from the appeals of the men holding important offices under the Government, and the general trend of the daily press, while appeals are being made for all the material resources of the Empire, there has never been one appeal to the nation to pray, and to lay hold of the power which God is waiting to give.'

'You do not seem to realize, my friend,' said the Cabinet Minister, 'that war is primarily a contest between material forces.'

'No,' said Edgecumbe, 'I don't, neither do I believe it.'

'Our generals are not sentimentalists,' said the statesman; 'war is a stern business, and they see that it is a matter of big guns.'

'Not all,' replied Edgecumbe. 'If ever a man knew the meaning of big guns, and what big guns can do, it is Admiral Beatty. Perhaps you remember what he said: "England still remains to be taken out of the stupor of self-satisfaction and complacency into which her great and flourishing condition has steeped her, and until she can be stirred out of this condition, and until a religious revival takes place at home, just so long will the war continue." '

For a moment the statesman seemed nonplussed, and I could see that Edgecumbe was impressing him in spite of himself. He spoke quietly, but with evident intense conviction, and there was something in his personality that commanded respect. On his tunic, too, he wore his decorations, the decorations which proved him to be a man of courage and resource. There was no suggestion of weakness or of fanaticism in his manner. Every word, every movement, spoke of a strong, brave, determined man.

'Then what would you do?' he asked almost helplessly.

'It is scarcely a matter of what I would do,' replied Edgecumbe. 'I am here as an inquirer, and I came to the House of Commons to-night in order to understand the standpoint from which the Government looks at this tremendous question.'

'And your conclusion is——?'

'That God's forgotten. It is not looked upon as a religious war at all,—everything is reduced to the level of brute force. As far as I can read the newspapers, never, since the first few months of the war, or at least very rarely, has there been any endeavour to make the people realize this ghastly business from a religious standpoint, while the soldiers never hear a word from week end to week end of the purposes for which they are fighting.'

'You can't make soldiers religious if they don't want to be,' said the Minister, weakly I thought.

‘I don’t say you can,’ replied Edgecumbe, ‘but you can do something to lift the whole thing above its present sordid level, and give them a high and holy courage.’

‘They *have* courage,’ replied the Minister. ‘As you have been at the front, you know what a splendid lot of men they are.’

‘No man knows better,—a finer lot of fellows never breathed. But look at facts, think of the forces which have opposed them, and remember how they have been handicapped? Drink has been one of our great curses in this country; it has been one of our greatest hindrances. Even the Prime Minister insisted upon it almost pathetically. When we lacked munitions, and our men were being killed for want of them, drink was the principal interest to their manufacture. You of course know what Mr. Lloyd George said in 1915: “Without spending one penny on additional structures, without putting down a single additional machine, without adding to the supervision of the men, but on the contrary lessening the supervision, we could, by putting down the drink, by one act of sacrifice on the part of the nation, win through to victory for our country.” Yet the Government has only played with the drink question, as far as the country is concerned, and it has kept on supplying it to the boys abroad. Everyone knows it has lowered the standard of our national life, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. And yet the thing continues. Is that the way to fight God’s battles? Vested interests seem of more importance than purity and righteousness, while the men who make huge fortunes out of this traffic are coroneted.’

‘Good night, Luscombe,’ said the Cabinet Minister rising. ‘I must be going now. This conversation has been very interesting, but I am afraid I cannot see as your friend sees.’

A few minutes later, we stood outside the great Government building. We were in the heart of London, the great city which so largely focuses the life of our world-wide Empire. Close to us, the towers of the Abbey lifted their pinnacles into the grey sky, while St. Margaret’s Church looked almost small and diminutive by its side. Up Whitehall we could see the dim outlines of the great Government buildings, while the broad thoroughfare pulsated with the roaring traffic.

For some seconds Edgecumbe did not speak, then he burst out excitedly. ‘It’s a wonderful old city, isn’t it? The finest, grandest city in the world! Do you know, it casts a kind of spell upon me. I sometimes think there is more good in London than in any other place.’

‘Any one would not think so, judging by your conversation just now,’ I laughed.

‘But there is,’ he said. ‘Why, think of the kindness and loving service shown to the returning soldiers! Think of the thousands of women who are giving their lives to nursing them and caring for them! Come on,’ and he moved towards Westminster Bridge.

‘That’s not the way back to the hotel.’

‘I am not going back to the hotel yet,’ he said.

‘Where are you going, then?’

‘To Waterloo station. There will be trains coming in from the coast. I want to see what happens to the soldiers who are coming back from the front.’

CHAPTER XXVII
SEEING LONDON

I am not going to write at length on what we saw at Waterloo station, and in its vicinity. In a way, our experiences were interesting beyond words, and while there was much which made one rejoice, there was also much to sadden. While we were there, a train came in laden with troops. Hundreds of men had come home on leave, and they had now arrived at this great terminus. What rejoiced me was to see the number of Y.M.C.A. workers, as well as others from various Christian bodies, who met the men and welcomed them. Of course there were numbers who were eagerly welcomed by their friends; others had evidently made their plans to get back to their homes quickly, while many more seemed bewildered and lonely. Lads who had originally hailed from Canada and Australia, and who knew nothing of London, looked around the huge station as though not knowing what to do, and if ever I felt glad because of the work of the Y.M.C.A., I felt it then. They seemed to have a kind of genius for knowing the men who were without friends, and for giving them a hearty welcome back.

I knew that, scattered all over London, were Huts and Hostels which they have provided for these lads who were strangers in a strange city, and that many of them would be taken to these places, given a hot supper, and provided with a comfortable bed. I know, too, while the lads were under the influence of the Y.M.C.A., no harm would happen to them, that they would be surrounded by good and healthy influences, and that as many of them who had no homes in England could stay at the Hostels during their leave.

But there were other influences at work. Not only were there these noble bands of workers, who existed for our soldiers' comfort and salvation,—there were scores of evil women who hovered around waiting like vultures to swoop upon their prey.

It is difficult to write about, difficult to contemplate. Scores of these boys, who for months had been away at the front, living without many refining influences, living, too, under strict discipline amidst all the stress and horror of war, were suddenly given their liberty, and let loose in our great City. Most of them would have plenty of money, for there are few opportunities of spending at the front, and they would be freed from all restrictions. Then their danger began. Lads, many of them inspired by no religious ideals, excited by their liberty, with no restraint of any sort placed upon them, became an easy prey to those who looked upon them as victims. The angels of light were there to help them, but there were also many creatures of darkness who lured them to destruction, and these creatures of

darkness were allowed to ply their ghastly trade often without let or hindrance.

I could not help feeling the tragedy of it. These lads who had been living from hour to hour, and from minute to minute, amidst the roar of great guns, the shriek of shells, the pep-pep-pep of machine-guns, never knowing when death would come, were suddenly and without preparation thrown upon the bosom of our great modern Babylon; and on their return they were met by these creatures.

'It is ghastly, it is hellish!' said Edgecumbe, as we returned across Waterloo Bridge.

'What can be done?' I asked helplessly.

'These fellows should be safeguarded,' he replied. 'Oh, I know the difficulties, but those creatures should be dealt with with a strong hand; they should not be allowed in such places. The boys coming home from danger and death should be protected from such temptations. It is not a thing to talk about, not a thing to discuss in public; but think of the inwardness of it, think of the ghastly diseases, the loss of manhood, the corruption of soul, that follows in the train of what we have seen,—and it is going on all over London.'

'You can't put down vice by Act of Parliament,' I replied.

'No, but a great deal more can be done than is done,' was his answer. 'People don't talk about these things in their drawing-rooms, or in their social circles, but they exist,—my God, they exist! And this is supposed to be a holy war! Still, thank God for the good that is being done, for the organizations which exist for men's comfort and salvation.'

And then he did not speak another word until we reached the hotel.

The next day was Saturday, and directly after lunch we started to go together to a matinee, for Edgecumbe had stated his determination to visit the places of amusement and see how London enjoyed itself.

We begun by going to one of the largest and most popular music-halls in the City, where a revue which was much commented on was produced for the delectation of all who cared to see it.

I was informed that this particular place was much patronized by soldiers, and that the entertainment was one of the most popular in London. The prices of the seats varied from half a guinea, plus the War tax, to a shilling, and as we entered we found a vast concourse of people, among whom were many men in khaki. I discovered too that the management had been generous, for there were numbers of wounded soldiers, many of them in the stalls, and who had been given free admission.

'After all, it is fine,' I said, as we waited for the curtain to rise, 'that these lads should have a place of brightness and amusement to go to.'

'Yes,' replied Edgecumbe, 'in a way it is splendid.'

'The people of the country are wonderfully good,' I went on; 'soldiers in the hospitals, as well as others home on leave, are constantly being given hospitality

by the best and kindest people in England. I hope these chaps'll have a good laugh this afternoon, and be able to forget the horrors through which they have passed. They have had enough of the tragedy of life, poor chaps. I hope they'll get some comedy this afternoon.'

'I hope they will,' he replied.

I will not attempt to give a description of the revue they witnessed that afternoon. I suppose it was similar to a score of others that might be seen in various parts of the metropolis. There was an excellent orchestra, the music was light and pleasing, the whole atmosphere of the place was merry. The lights were dazzling, the dresses were gay, the scenery almost magnificent. As a spectacle it would, I suppose, be regarded as gorgeous. Apparently, too, most of the auditors enjoyed it, although a look of boredom was on some faces. As to the revue itself, while one could not help admitting that some of the songs were humorous, and some of the repartee clever, the thing as a whole was cheap and silly and vulgar.

I do not say there was anything positively wrong in it, but there were a great many vulgar suggestions and unpleasant innuendoes. As a dramatic critic said in my hearing a day or two later, when discussing the popular entertainments of London, 'Most of these shows consist of vulgar, brainless twaddle.' Still, the audience laughed and cheered, and when the curtain finally fell, there was a good deal of applause. Certainly the entertainment would be a great contrast to the experiences which the lads who were home on leave had been going through. But as I reflect on it now, and think of the great struggle through which the nation was going, and the ideals for which it was fighting, I cannot remember one single word that would help or inspire. Of course places of amusement are not intended to instruct or to fill one with lofty emotions. All the same, I could not help feeling that laughter and enjoyment were in no way incompatible with the higher aims of the drama. In fact, what we saw was not drama at all; it was a caricature of life, and a vulgar one at that. Indeed, the author's purpose seemed to be—that is, assuming he had a purpose—to teach that virtue was something to be laughed at, that vice was pleasant, and that sin had no evil consequences.

Indeed, while I am anything but a puritan, I felt sorry that the hundreds of lads home from the front, many of whom were wounded, had no better fare offered to them. God knows I would be the last to detract from their honest enjoyment, and I would make their leave bright and happy; but after all, the nation was at war, life was a struggle, and death stalked triumphant, and this was but a poor mental and moral food for men who, for months, had been passing through an inferno, and many of whom would, in a few weeks or days, go back again to see 'hell let loose.' If those men had been merely fighting animals, if they were mere creatures of a day, who went out of existence when the sun went down, then one could understand; but they were men with hopes, and fears, and longings; men into whose nostrils God had breathed the breath of His own life, men destined for

immortality. And this show was pagan from end to end.

When the entertainment was over, I led the way to a fashionable hotel for tea, where a large and handsomely decorated room was set apart for that purpose. A gay crowd of some hundreds had already gathered when we arrived, so that there was a difficulty in obtaining a table. This crowd had evidently, like ours, come from the various places of amusement in the immediate vicinity, and had managed to get there earlier than we.

The men folk were mostly officers, while the women were, I imagine, in the main their relatives and friends. The latter were very gaily and expensively dressed. As far as I can remember, the cost of a very poor tea was half a crown for each person. Every one appeared in great good humour, and laughter was the order of the day.

'Not much suggestion here that the country's at war, eh?' I said, looking round the room, 'and but few evidences that the appeals to the public to economize have been taken very deeply to heart.'

'No,' replied Edgecumbe, 'except for the khaki, it would be difficult to believe that the country is at war. Still, I suppose it is natural. Most of these lads are home on leave, and their women folk want them to enjoy themselves. This is their way of doing it.'

'It shows that money is plentiful,' I said; 'we are a long way from bankruptcy yet.'

'But the big bill will have to be paid, my friend. There are no signs of it now, but the country can't spend all these millions every day without suffering for it later on,' and I saw a thoughtful look come into his eyes as they wandered round the room.

After tea we went for a walk along the streets, and then, at half-past seven, I took him to another fashionable hotel, where I had ordered dinner. Again we saw a similar crowd, met with similar scenes. Whatever London might be feeling, the fashionable part of it had determined to enjoy itself. At night we went to another theatre, which was also packed to the ceiling with a gay throng. Here also were crowds of soldiers, many of whom were, I judged, like ourselves, home from the front.

Edgecumbe passed no opinion on the play, or on the spectators. That he was deeply interested, was evident, although I think his interest was more in the audience than the performers.

'I am tired,' I said, when the entertainment was over; 'let's get to bed.'

'No, not yet, I want to see London by night. All this, to you, Luscombe, is commonplace. I dare say it would be to me if my memory came back. As it is, it is all new and strange to me. It is exciting me tremendously. I am like one seeing the show for the first time.'

By this time London was at its busiest, crowds surged everywhere. 'Buses,

taxi-cabs, and motors threaded their way through the streets, while the foot pavements were crowded. Places of amusement were emptying themselves on every hand, and although the streets were darkened, it seemed to have no effect upon the spirits of the people. The night was fairly clear, and a pale moon showed itself between the clouds.

'What a city it is!' said Edgecumbe, after we had been walking some time. 'Think of it, the centre of the British Empire, the great heart which sends its life-blood through the veins of a mighty people! But is the life-blood pure, my friend?'

We passed up Charing Cross to Leicester Square, and then on through Piccadilly Circus up Regent Street, then we came down again, through the Haymarket, into Pall Mall. I am not going to describe what we saw, nor tell in detail the experiences through which we passed. That ghastly story of gilded vice, and of corruption which is not ashamed, was too sad, too pathetic. The Empire might be in danger, even then there might be Zeppelins hovering in the near distance, waiting to drop missiles of destruction and death. Less than two hundred miles away our armies were fighting, guns were booming, shells were shrieking, men were dying. But here in London, on the eve of the Day of Rest, the tide of iniquity rolled. Young men were tempted, and falling; many of the very lads who had done heroic deeds were selling their souls for half an hour's pleasure.

In spite of the drink regulations, too, it was easy to see that numbers, both men and women, had been able to obtain it, often to their own degradation.

'Come on,' said Edgecumbe presently, 'let's get back to the hotel. I've had enough.'

CHAPTER XXVIII
SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

During the remainder of Edgecumbe's leave we spent our time in seeing and trying to understand London. As he had insisted, London was the centre of the British Empire; the great heart which sent its life-blood throughout the veins of four hundred millions of people. To understand London, therefore, was to understand the aims, hopes and ideals of the British race. Of course I urged that London was not England, much less the Empire; but I could not help admitting that there was much truth in his contention.

Naturally we did not see our metropolis in its entirety. To know London means a lifetime's study; but we did get a superficial glimpse of its life, and we tried to understand the inwardness of that life.

On the day after the incidents described in the last chapter we visited several churches; we also made our way into Hyde Park, and heard the orators. We interviewed several ecclesiastics both of the Established and Nonconformist order, and if ever a man was depressed it was Edgecumbe.

'These religious organizations do not touch a tithe of the people,' he said to me. 'London is called a Christian City, but it is far more pagan than Christian. The people are not interested in religious things, and even among churchgoers everything seems unreal.'

He was led to modify this opinion later. He saw that while the City was in one sense largely godless, it was in another deeply religious. He realized that, in spite of apparent religious indifference, the teachings of the Founder of Christianity, and the truths for which He lived and died, had, through the centuries, created an atmosphere which influenced every phase of thought and life.

But he did not feel this during the two Sundays we spent together. As far as we could see, only a small fragment of the people entered the doors of the churches, and that even this fragment was filled with no mighty religious hope or enthusiasm.

One sermon, however, struck him forcibly. It was preached by a young man who took for his text, 'And they that were ready went into the marriage feast.' The argument of the sermon was that God gave neither individuals nor nations the highest of blessings until they were ready, and he urged that until England was ready for peace God would not give it her. That until we became less materialistic, less selfish, until we ceased to exploit the war as a means for advancing our own interest, and until we turned to God and kept His commandments, real peace would be a far-off dream.

But I must not stay to describe this at length; indeed, a volume would be necessary to give any true idea of our experiences. We saw London by night as well as by day. We went to munition factories and to night clubs, to hospitals and to music-halls, to seats of Government and to haunts of vice. We talked with hundreds of people of all kinds, and from the drift of their conversation tried to understand the spirit of the City.

I shall never forget the look on Edgecumbe's face after our visit to a hospital for soldiers who suffered from a disease which shall be nameless. The horror in his eyes and the absolute nausea and loathing which possessed him has haunted me ever since.

But there were sights which rejoiced him also. The splendid sacrifices which unnumbered people, both men and women, were making, and the great broad-hearted charity which abounded on every hand, made him realize not only the bad but the good, and led him to realize that beneath the mad whirl of evil passions which was too evident, was a life sacred and sublime.

Presently, however, our peregrinations came to an end. Edgecumbe had appeared before a medical officer, and was declared fit for duty again. He had also received orders to return to his battery, while I daily waited instructions as to my future course of action.

'We have had a wonderful time, Luscombe,' he said. 'I little dreamt, when we started out to see London, what it would be like.'

'Well, what do you think of it all?'

'I am bewildered,' he replied; 'it is all too big to co-ordinate. I want to get a grasp of everything. I want to see things in their true proportion. I want to understand.'

We had just come from the Crystal Palace, where so many thousands of our sailors are quartered, and had been talking with the workers of the Y.M.C.A. concerning their activities there.

'You will never be able to co-ordinate it, Edgecumbe,' I said. 'No man can understand fully the life of a great city like this.'

'No, I suppose not. Still, I am trying to think my way through it.'

'Anyhow,' I said, 'you have to return to duty tomorrow. Let us forget the serious things of life for once. By the way,' I added, 'have you heard from Miss Lorna Bolivick?'

For some seconds he did not reply, and I thought he did not hear what I said. His face was a curious study at the time, and I wondered what he was thinking about.

'No,' he replied presently, 'I have not heard from her. Naturally I did not expect to.'

During the whole time we had spent in London together, he had never once referred to her, and I imagined, and almost hoped, that he had seen the madness of

the determination he had expressed when we were down in Devonshire.

'You have given up all thought of her, then?'

'Given up all thought of her? Certainly not. You know what I told you?'

'Yes, but I thought you might have seen how foolish you were.'

'I shall never give up hope,' he replied; 'that is, until hope is impossible. Whatever made you think of such a thing?'

'But do you not see the madness of your plan?'

'No, there is nothing mad in it. By the way, Luscombe, I am awfully hungry. Let us go in here and get some dinner. Don't think, old man, that I can't see your point of view,' he said when we had taken our seats in the dining-room of the restaurant, 'I can. From your standpoint, for a man in my position, without name, without home, without friends, without money, to aspire to the hand of Lorna Bolivick, is to say that he is fit for a lunatic asylum. But I can't see things as you do. God Almighty didn't put this love in my heart for nothing, a love which has been growing every day since I saw her. Why, man, although I have said nothing to you, she is everything to me, everything! That is, from the personal standpoint. If I did not believe in God, I should despair, but, believing in Him, despair is impossible.'

'God does not give us everything we want,' I replied; 'it would not be good for us if He did. Possibly He has other plans for her.'

'That may be so,' he replied calmly, 'but I am going to act as though He meant her for me.'

I looked across the dining-hall as he spoke, and saw, sitting not far away from us, a party which instantly attracted my attention.

'I should not, if I were you,' I said.

'Why?'

'Look!' I replied, nodding towards the table I had noticed.

He gave a start, for sitting at the table were Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick and their daughter Lorna. Sitting beside the latter was Springfield.

'Does not that suggest the answer?'

His face never moved a muscle, and he looked at them as though he were but little interested.

'If ever a man had the appearance of a successful lover,' I went on, 'Springfield has. There, do you see how he is looking at her? Do you see how his every action suggests proprietorship? Then watch her face, see how she smiles at him. It would seem, too, as though her father and mother are very pleased.'

He continued to look at them for several seconds, then he said quite casually, 'They have no idea we are here.'

'No, evidently not. But I think I will go and speak to them.'

'Don't, Luscombe,' and he spoke quickly; 'it will be better not. I don't want that man to know where I am.'

‘You are convinced that I was right about him, then?’

‘I am convinced there will be a battle royal between me and that man,’ he said, and there was a far-away look in his eyes. ‘Perhaps—perhaps—I don’t know,—the ways of Providence are strange. There is going to be a terrible fight; I can see it coming.’

‘What, between you and Springfield?’

‘Yes; but there is something more than that, something greater. But I must fight,—I must fight.’

I did not understand the look in his eyes, or the tone of his voice.

‘What, to protect yourself against Springfield?’ I said.

‘To save a woman’s soul,’ was his reply. ‘Would you mind if we didn’t talk about it any more just now?’ He went on with his dinner as though nothing had happened, and if a stranger had been sitting by, he would have said that Edgecumbe had no interest in the party close by.

‘I think I must go and speak to them,’ I said; ‘it would seem discourteous to be so near, and not speak to people who have shown me so much kindness.’

‘Go if you like,’ was his answer, ‘but don’t let them see me. I am going back to the hotel.’

I waited until he had left the room, and then turned towards Sir Thomas Bolivick’s table.

CHAPTER XXIX
CROSS CURRENTS

I received a hearty welcome as I came up, and Sir Thomas tried to persuade me to spend the evening with them, and to accompany them to the theatre. As far as I could judge, however, neither Springfield nor Lorna seconded his proposal. I thought she preferred Springfield's company to my own. They were now sitting over their coffee. Sir Thomas was smoking a huge cigar, while Springfield lit cigarette after cigarette and threw them away before they were half consumed.

'When did you come up?' I asked.

'Oh, we have been here four days. Captain Springfield—oh, I beg his pardon,—Colonel Springfield, has to go to the front the day after to-morrow, and I was anxious to see him before he went.'

' "Colonel"?' I said. 'Have you been gazetted?' and I turned to Springfield as I spoke.

'Sir Thomas is a little premature,' he replied with a smile. 'My name was down for my majority before I returned home wounded, and I was gazetted two months ago. As to my being colonel,—but there, it is no use making a secret of it, I suppose I am to have my battalion immediately on my return.'

'Yes, I saw General —— at the War Office yesterday,' and Sir Thomas smiled benignantly. 'Such services as Springfield has rendered can't go long unrewarded, and in these days seniority does not count so much. By the way, what has become of our eccentric friend Edgecumbe?'

'Don't you know. Have you heard nothing about him?' and I turned quickly to Springfield as I spoke.

'I saw him nearly three weeks ago,' he replied; 'it seems he was not fit for work, and came to London on leave. I saw him twice, I think, and took him to one or two clubs. Since then I have lost sight of him.'

'And heard nothing about him?' I asked, looking at him steadily.

'Nothing at all. Sir Thomas, it is nearly time for us to go, but there is time for another liqueur. We can meet the ladies in the vestibule.'

I accompanied Lorna Bolivick a few steps down the room, while Lady Bolivick went a little ahead.

'Am I to congratulate you, Lorna?' I said. 'Forgive me, I am taking you at your word.'

She gave me a quick look, which I could not understand, and then replied, 'I start nursing again next week.'

'You know what I mean,' I persisted, and I laughed as I spoke. 'Springfield

looks a very happy man.'

'Don't speak that way.' she replied; 'at least not yet.'

'Why?' I asked; and then, overstepping the bounds of good taste, I went on, 'Edgecumbe told me all about it.'

'Did he? I am so sorry. But—but—come and see us, won't you? We are staying at the Carlton. We shall be there three days more. I want to talk to you. Good night,' and she rushed away.

When I returned to the table, I found that the waiter had replenished the liqueur glasses, and I saw, not only by the empty champagne bottle, but by Springfield's eyes, that his libations had been liberal.

'By the way, Luscombe,' he said, 'do *you* know where Edgecumbe is? Has he returned to duty?'

Before I could reply, Sir Thomas, fortunately I thought, burst in with another question, 'What do you really make of that fellow Edgecumbe?'

'One of the bravest, finest, and most conscientious men I ever met,' I replied.

Springfield laughed mockingly.

'Why, is not that your opinion?' and I looked at him steadily.

'A man is bound to think kindly of a man who has saved his life. Because of that I tried to be friendly to him. He was staying at that Y.M.C.A. show for penniless officers, and I thought I'd do him a good turn, but—but——' he hesitated.

'But what?' I asked.

'Of course I know little of him. I never saw him until I met him down at Sir Thomas's place. But if you weren't so certain about his sanctity, Luscombe, I should be inclined to look upon him as a criminal madman'; and there was a snarl in his voice.

'Surely you must have reasons for that,' I said.

'Yes, I have.'

'What are they?'

'I don't think I am obliged to tell,' he replied truculently.

'I think you are,' I said. 'To say the least of it, you owe him your life,—I can testify to that, for he exposed himself to almost certain death while digging you out from under a big heap of *débris*; none of the others who were there would have done it. And it is hardly decent to call one who has done such a thing a criminal madman, without having the strongest reasons.'

'I *have* the strongest reasons,' he replied, and I saw that his libations had made him less cautious than usual. 'I do not think any one can doubt his madness, whilst as for the criminality,' and he laughed again, 'evidently he does the pious when he is with *you*; but when he gets among men of his own ilk, his piety is an unknown quantity. But the ladies are waiting, Sir Thomas; we must be off.'

I did not seek to pursue the conversation further. I did not think it wise. And

certainly the dining-room of a popular restaurant was not the place for a scene.

I went back to the hotel very slowly, and having taken a somewhat roundabout course it was not until an hour after I had left the restaurant that I arrived there. I went into all the public rooms, and looked for my friend. But he was nowhere visible. Then, feeling somewhat uneasy, I went to his bedroom door, and was much relieved at hearing him bid me enter. I found him sitting in an easy chair with a handful of notes, which he had evidently been reading.

'What have you got there?' I asked.

'Oh, each night after we came back I wrote down my impressions,' he replied, 'and I have been looking at them.'

'Well, you are a cool customer!' I laughed.

'Thank you. But what has led you to that tremendous conclusion?'

'Why, you see the woman with whom you pretend to be in love taken away by another man, and never show the least desire to play your game! If it were any one else but Springfield, I should not wonder so much, but knowing your opinion of him, I can hardly understand it.'

'Yes, I hardly understand myself,' he replied; 'in fact, I am rather a mystery to myself.'

'Do you really love Lorna Bolivick?' I asked.

'Excuse me, old man, but I don't quite understand you.'

He looked at me steadily for a few seconds, and then went on quietly, 'I fancy there is no need to tell you about that.'

'And yet you stand by and see Springfield carry her off before your eyes, and Springfield is a rotter.'

'Yes, that's just what he is. But he can't harm her yet.'

'What do you mean by "*yet*"?'

'I can't put it into words, Luscombe. My first impulse when I saw them together just now was to go to the table and denounce him,—to warn her against him. But it would have been madness. The time is not yet come.'

'Meanwhile, he will marry her,' I said.

'No, he won't. I am afraid he has fascinated her, and I am sure he means to marry her,—I saw it down in Devonshire. But there is no danger yet; the danger will come by and by,—when or how I don't know. It will come, and I must be ready for it. I will be ready, too. Meantime, I have other things to think about. I am worried, my friend, worried.'

'What is worrying you?'

'I am going back to duty to-morrow, but from what I can hear I am to be treated as a special case. My colonel has said all sorts of kind things about me, I find. But that's not what I am thinking about now. This war is maddening me,—this constant carnage, with all the misery it entails. You asked me some time ago what I thought about the things we had seen,—what my impressions were, and I

told you that I could not co-ordinate my ideas, could not look at things in their true perspective. I say, Luscombe, Admiral Beatty was right.'

'What do you mean?'

'Do you remember what he said?—"Just so long as England remains in a state of religious indifference, just so long as the present conditions obtain, will the war continue." '

'Don't let us talk about that now.'

'But I must, my dear chap. I am going back to duty to-morrow, and I want to realize the inwardness of all we have seen. One thing I am determined on.'

'What is that?'

'To fight this drink business as long as I have breath. It is doing us more harm than Germany. I am told there is danger of a food famine. It is said that bread is going to be scarce,—that people may be put on short rations. Of course we only hear hints now, but there are suggestions that Germany is going to pursue her submarine policy with more vigour, so as to starve us. A man I met in the hotel a little while ago told me that they were going to sink all merchant ships at sight, regardless of nationality. Of course you know what that means.'

'There are always rumours afloat,' I said.

'They *might* do it. Germany is capable of anything. But we could laugh at that, but for this drink business. Think of it! Four million tons of grain wasted in making drink since the beginning of the war, and there is a talk about a shortage of bread. Three hundred thousand tons of sugar have been used in making drink since the beginning of the war, and it is difficult for people to buy sugar for the common necessities of life! And that is not the worst of it. Why, man, you know what we have seen during these last weeks,—all the horror, all the misery, all the devilry! What has been at the bottom of nine-tenths of it? Night after night, when we have come back from seeing what we *have* seen, I have been studying these questions, I have been reading hours while you thought I was asleep. And I tell you, it would not be good for us to have victory, until this thing is destroyed. And I doubt whether God Almighty ever *will* give us victory, until we have first of all strangled once and for ever this drink fiend.'

'Don't talk nonsense! You are becoming a teetotal fanatic.'

'Think, Luscombe,' and he rose from his chair as he spoke, 'suppose God were to give us victory to-night? Suppose the Germans were to cave in, and tell us that we could dictate the terms of peace? Suppose our armies were to come back while things are as they are, and while the thought and feeling of the nation is as it is? Don't you see what would follow? When trouble was first in the air, Asquith said that "war was hell let loose." Would not hell be let loose if victory were to be declared? Think of the drunkenness, the devilry, the bestiality that you and I saw! Think what those streets round Waterloo station are like! Think of the places we went to, and remember what took place! And these are grave times,—times of

struggle and doubt, and there are only a few odd thousands home on leave. But what would happen, with all these public-houses standing open, if hundreds of thousands, intoxicated with the thought of victory, came back? You have told me what took place during the Boer War; that would be nothing to the Bacchanalian orgies we should see if victory were to come now.'

'Then you don't want victory?'

'Don't want victory! I long for it! Why—why I get almost mad as I think of what is daily taking place. Here in England people don't really know what is happening. No hell ever invented is as bad as war. It is the maddest and ghastliest crime ever known, the greatest anachronism ever conceived. It mocks everything high and holy; it is the devil incarnate! But one can't close one's eyes to facts. You remember what that preacher man said in his sermon. He told us that Almighty God often kept things from men and nations until they were ready, and that if, as sometimes happened, things came before a people were ready, they proved curses and not blessings. For my own part I believe we shall have victory as soon as we are ready for it; but are we ready?'

'Then what do you believe will happen?'

'I am afraid we have dark days before us. As a nation we are putting material gain before moral fitness. The people who are making fortunes out of our national curses are fighting like death for their hand, and the nation seems to believe in a policy of *laissez faire*. If a man is in earnest about these things, he is called a fanatic. Purge England of her sins, my friend, and God will give us the victory.'

'That's as shadowy as a cloud, and has about as much foundation as a cloud,' I retorted.

'Perhaps events will prove that I am right. Don't let us imagine that God has no other means of working except through big guns. I have read a good deal of history lately, and I have seen that, more than once, when men and nations have been sure that certain things would happen, Almighty God has laughed at them. God answered Job out of the whirlwind; that's what He'll do to England.'

I laughed incredulously.

'All right,' he went on. 'It is very easy to laugh, but I should not be at all surprised if Russia were to make a separate peace with Germany, or if something were to happen to disorganize her forces. Would not that make a tremendous difference to the war?'

'Of course it would, but Russia will make no separate peace, and nothing will happen. Russia's as safe as houses, and as steady as a rock. Don't talk nonsense, old man, and don't conjure up impossible contingencies to bolster up your arguments.'

He was silent a few seconds, then he turned to me and said quietly, 'You know the country pretty well, don't you?'

'Pretty well, I think.'

‘Do you think the condition of London represents the nation as a whole?’

‘Yes, I think so. I don’t say that such things as we witnessed down by Waterloo or in those so-called studios around Chelsea can be seen anywhere except in the big towns and cities, but otherwise I should say that London gives a fair idea of the condition of the country.’

‘Let me ask you this, then. Bearing what we have seen in mind, the good as well as the bad, do you think we are ready for victory?’

I was silent for some seconds, then I said somewhat weakly I am afraid, ‘You cannot expect us all to be saints, Edgecumbe. Human nature is human nature, and —and—but there is a great deal of good in the country.’

‘Doubtless there is. When I think of the quiet determination, the splendid sacrifices, the magnificent confidence of our people, added to the unwearying kindness to the wounded and the needy, I feel like saying we are ready for victory. But could not all that be matched in Germany? With the world against them they have gone straight on. Have we been determined? So have they. Have we made sacrifices? So have they. Have we been confident? They have been more so. I dare say too that with regard to kindness and care for their wounded and dying they could match us. But Germany can’t win; if they did, it would be victory for the devil. It would mean a triumph for all that was worst in human life. God Almighty is in His Heaven, therefore whatever else happens German militarism will be crushed, and the world rid of an awful menace. But this is what has impressed me. We as a nation have a unique position in the world, and if history ever meant anything at all, we are called to lead the world to higher things. Our opportunity is tremendous; are we ready for it? I do not close my eyes to all the good there is in the country, and I am sure there are millions who are leading godly, sober lives. But as far as the Government and the great bulk of the country are concerned, we are spiritually dead. I have been studying the utterances of our statesmen, and I have looked too often in vain for anything like idealism and for a vision. You know what the old proverb says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish,” and that is what we lack.’

‘You are very hopeless,’ I laughed.

‘No, I am not. I can see that out of this upheaval will come a new England, a new world. But not yet. We are not ready for the Promised Land, not ready for the higher responsibilities to which God is calling us. That is why the victory is delayed. Great God! I wish we had a few men like Admiral Beatty in the Government. We want to be roused out of our sleep, our indifference, our lethargy. When the nation gives itself to God, victory will come.’

I did not pursue the conversation any further. I could see what was in his mind, and I did not think that he looked at facts in their right perspective, although I could not help feeling the tremendous amount of truth in what he said.

The next day he went back to duty, while I was informed that for some time

my work would lie at home. A fortnight later Edgecumbe wrote me a letter, telling me that he was ordered to the front. It seems that his colonel was more than ever impressed by his evident knowledge of artillery work, and he was made a special case.

A week later he had left England, while I, little dreaming of what the future would bring forth, remained at home.

CHAPTER XXX
THE MARCH OF EVENTS

The events which I have now to record bring this narrative into this present year of grace 1917. When I started writing, I had but little idea of the things I should have to narrate. The drama was then only partially acted, the story was not complete. As the reader may remember, when I was in Exeter, shortly after I had first met Edgecumbe, and had been telling Sir Roger Granville what little I knew of his history. Sir Roger was much interested. He said that the whole case promised great things, and that anything might happen to him, that he might have a wife living, and that he might be heir to big possessions, and that when some day his memory was restored to him many romantic things might come to pass.

Although I did not say so at the time, his words aroused my imagination, and when, months later, I fell in with Edgecumbe again, having some little time at my disposal, I set down as well as my memory would serve the story of our meeting, and what had happened subsequently.

The remainder of this narrative will, to an extent, be in the nature of a diary, for so close are some of the events at the time of which I am writing, that their recital becomes a record of what took place only a few weeks ago. It is many months ago since first I took pen in hand to set forth Edgecumbe's story, and now, as I draw near to what, as far as this history is concerned, is its ending, I am almost afraid to write of certain things in detail, for fear of wounding some of the people who are yet alive, and who may feel sensitive that I am making their doings public.

The year 1916 was drawing to an end when I received Edgecumbe's first letter after he had returned to the front.

'It's miserably cold, miserably wet, and frightfully unpleasant out here,' he wrote; 'still, it is better for me than it is for many others. Would you believe it, Luscombe, but Colonel —— has said so many kind things about me that I find myself a marked man. I have already got my full lieutenancy, and am down for my captaincy. Not long after I came here, I was brought before a very "big pot," whose name I dare not mention, but who is supposed to be the greatest artillery officer in the British Army. He put me through the severest examination I have ever had, and I scarcely knew whether I was standing on my head or my heels. He was very kind, however, and by and by we got talking freely, and I suppose I must have interested him in certain theories I had formed about artillery work. Anyhow, I am to be given my captaincy, and all sorts of important work is being put in my hands. There are big movements on foot, my friend,—what they are, I dare not tell

you, but if they are successful they will, from a military standpoint, form an epoch in the history of this war.

'With regard to our prospects out here, I am exceedingly optimistic. The men are splendid, and although the conditions are hard, our health sheet is exceedingly good. From the standpoint of military preparedness, things look very rosy; but concerning the other things about which you and I did not agree I am not at all happy. I am a soldier, and I am inclined to think that as a boy I was trained for a soldier. I judge, too, that I have some aptitude in that direction. I believe, too, that the Almighty is using our military powers for a purpose, but I am sure that if England believes that this tremendous upheaval is going to be settled by big guns, —much as I realize the power of big guns, England will be mistaken. Unless we recognize the moral forces which are always at work, we shall not be ready in the hour of crisis.'

When I replied to this letter, I took no notice whatever of these reflections; indeed, I scarcely saw what he meant. I congratulated him most heartily on his phenomenally rapid promotion, and told him that he would soon be colonel, and that this was only a step to higher things.

As all the world knows, the events of the 1917 have followed each other with startling and almost bewildering rapidity. Indeed, from the time when Edgecumbe returned to the front, it is almost impossible to estimate the far-reaching results of what was taking place. The evacuation of large tracts of land by the Germans, the giving up of their Somme front, was more significant than we at the time realized. Then came the fulfilment of the German threat that on February 1 there would be unrestricted murder at sea, when vessels of all nationality, whether neutral or otherwise, would be attacked. At first we could scarcely believe it, it seemed too horrible to contemplate. War had ceased to be war; 'rules of the game' were no longer known as far as the Germans were concerned. Then came the Prime Minister's statement that the food supplies of the country had become very low, and that the strictest economy would have to be used. Appeals were made to the nation to conserve all our food resources, while the Germans jubilantly proclaimed that in three months we should be starved into submission.

'I suppose,' Edgecumbe wrote, 'that it is bad form on my part to say "I told you so"; but I saw this coming months ago. Indeed, no one could have an intelligent appreciation of German psychology without knowing that it must come. I am told that food is now only obtainable at famine prices at home, and that there is a cry on every hand,—"Eat less bread." But think of the mockery of it, my friend! While there is a threatened bread famine, beer is still manufactured. And that which was intended to provide food for the people is being used to make beer. If the Germans bring us to our knees, it will be our own fault. If the resources of the nation had not been squandered in this way, we could laugh at all the Germans say they are going to do.'

Then news came which staggered Europe and set the world wondering. The Revolution had broken out in Russia,—the Czar and Czarina became practically prisoners, the Russian bureaucracy fell, and although the Revolution was practically bloodless, that great Empire was reduced to a state of chaos. Of course our newspapers made it appear as though everything were in our favour; that the old days of corruption and Czardom were over, and that the people, freed from the tyranny and the ghastly incubus of autocracy, would now rise in their might and their millions, and would retrieve what they had lost in the Eastern lines. Some prophesied that the Revolution in Russia was but the beginning of a movement which should destroy all autocratic Governments and, with the establishment of that movement, the end of war would come. Then little by little it leaked out that liberty had become a licence,—that the Russian Army had become disorganized,—that the Socialistic element among the Russians had demanded peace at any price. Soldiers refused to fight, men deserted by the thousand, while Russian soldiers fraternized with the Germans.

'Aren't we living in great times,' Edgecumbe wrote to me,—'surely the greatest times ever known! They stagger the imagination,—they leave our minds bewildered,—they shatter our little plans like a strong wind destroys castles of cards made by children. God is speaking, my friend. Will England be wise, and hear His voice? Will we learn that, although the voice of great guns is loud, and the power of explosives mighty, yet they are not final in the affairs of men and nations? Why, our plans out here have been blown to smithereens by what has taken place many hundreds of miles away! We had everything in readiness, and, humanly speaking, it seemed as though nothing could have stopped our advance. We had the Germans on toast,—we took Vimy Ridge, and Lens was in our grasp,—we had advanced miles along the Douay road, and Lille seemed but the matter of a few days. Then God spoke, and Ecco! what were the plans of men? The Huns, of course, took advantage of the new situation, and removed vast hordes of men and guns from the East to the West, and now we are held up. Of course I am disappointed;—looking at the matter from the standpoint of a soldier, it seemed as though nothing could withstand us. But what are the plans of men when God speaks?

'Of course you will say that I am seeming to prove that God is on the side of the Germans and, seeing this Russian Revolution has meant our being held up here, that God Almighty meant that we should not advance. No, my friend, I am not such a fool as to pretend to understand the ways of the Omnipotent, but I have no doubt that this wide and far-reaching movement in Russia will eventually be on our side. It must be. But why will not England learn the lesson which is so plainly written from sky to sky? Why do not the people turn to God,—look to Him for wisdom, and fight in His strength? Then victory would come soon, and gloriously.

'As I said, I am disappointed at our temporary check, but I am convinced it is

only temporary. God does things in a big way. He staggers our poor little puny minds by His acts. The world is being re-made; old systems, hoary with age, are being destroyed. The birth of new movements is on foot, new thoughts are in the air, new dreams are being dreamed, and the new age is surely coming. But sometimes it seems as though we have ears, and hear not,—eyes, and see not. God is speaking to us aloud, calling us to repentance, and yet we do not hear His voice, or seek His guidance. Still, we are on the eve of new movements, and out of all the confusion will come a great order, and men will yet see the hand of the Lord.'

His letter had scarcely reached me, when the news came that America had declared war on Germany, and was to act on the side of the Allies. This great free people, numbering a hundred million souls, made up of all nationalities, yet welded into one great nation, had spoken, and had spoken on the side of freedom and righteousness. Even the few who had been downhearted took fresh courage at America's action. The thought that the United States, with its almost illimitable resources of men, of money, and of potentialities, was joining hands with us, made everything possible. I was not surprised at receiving another letter from Edgecumbe.

'At last we have had a prophetic utterance,' he wrote. 'Wilson has spoken, not merely as a politician, or as the head of the American nation, but as a prophet of God. His every word made my nerves tingle, my heart warm. As an Englishman, I felt jealous, and I asked why, during these last months, there had been no voice heard in England, proclaiming the idealism, the inwardness of this gigantic struggle? But as a citizen of the world, I rejoiced with a great joy. I am inclined to think that Wilson's speech will form a new era in the history of men. That for which he contends will slowly percolate through the nations, and peoples of every clime will know and understand that nothing can resist the will of Almighty God.

'What pigmies we are, and for how little do the plans of individuals count! God speaks, and lo the pomp of the Czar becomes but as chaff which the wind drives away! Who would have believed a few months ago that all the so-called glory of the Imperial House of the Romanoffs would become the dream of yesterday? All the long line of Royal sons no longer counts. Czardom with all it meant has gone for ever. The man, whose word a few weeks ago meant glory or shame, life or death, is to-day an exile, a prisoner. His word no more than the cry of a puling child! And to-morrow? God may speak again, and then Kaiserism will fall with all its pomp and vanity.

'Of course I am but a poor ignorant soldier, and my word cannot count for much; but I have a feeling that before many years are over,—perhaps it may be only a matter of months—the Kaiser will either die by his own hand, or else God, through the millions of bereaved and heart-broken people, will hurl him from his throne.

'What is the power of autocratic kings? Only the moaning of night winds.

Yesterday it was not, and tomorrow it will not be. But God lives through His people, and that people is slowly moving on to liberty and power. That is why I believe the end of war is drawing near. It is never the *people* who long for war; it is the kings, the potentates who are ever guilty of making it. Thus when they cease to rule, war will cease, and there will be peace and brotherhood.

'Anyhow, President Wilson has spoken, and he has expressed the highest feelings of the American nation, and although the end of this war may not come as we expect, it will come in the overthrow of Junkerdom and military supremacy.'

After this I did not hear from Edgecumbe for some time, and I began to grow anxious at his long continued silence, then when June of this year arrived, an event took place which overcame me with astonishment.

I had had a hard day at the training camp, and was sitting outside the mess tent, when I felt a hand upon my shoulder, and heard a cheery voice close by me.

'Hulloa, Luscombe, why that pensive brow?'

I looked up and saw my friend standing by me, with his left arm in a sling, looking pale and somewhat haggard, but with a bright light in his eyes.

'Edgecumbe!' I cried. 'Ay, but I am glad to see you! Where did you spring from, and what have you been doing?'

'That's what I've come to tell you,' he said quietly.

CHAPTER XXXI
EDGECUMBE'S RETURN

'You are wounded,' I stammered, scarcely knowing what I was saying. His appearance was so sudden, and unexpected, that I could scarcely believe that it was really he who stood there before me. 'It's not bad I hope?'

'No, not bad. Not enough to make a fuss about;—it might have been, though'; and I noticed that his voice became grave.

'How? What do you mean?'

'I'll tell you some day—soon perhaps. Are you busy?'

'No, my work is over for the day. I *am* glad to see you, old man. Are you home for long?'

'Yes, a few weeks I expect. You see—I've had a rough time rather—and am a bit knocked about. But I shall pull through.'

His manner was strange; and while he spoke quietly, I felt rather than thought that something out of the ordinary had happened.

He dragged a rough seat up to the side of the tent, and looked across the field where a number of men were encamped.

'Have you heard from *her*?' he asked suddenly. 'Do you know how she is?'

'No. Directly after we saw her last she returned to her hospital work. I wrote to her once; but she has not replied.'

'Have you heard anything?'

'I know Springfield has been home, and that he's been to see her. I heard from Buller that they were engaged.'

'You mean that it's settled? Has it been publicly announced?' His voice was tense.

'I don't think so. At any rate, I've not seen it in the papers.'

Again he was silent for a few seconds, and noting the far-away look in his eyes, I waited in silence.

'Springfield is still afraid of me,' he said presently.

'Why? Have you seen him?'

'Yes. He and St. Mabyn are still as thick as peas in a pod. They were both at Vimy Ridge, and afterwards at Ypres and Messines.

'Did you speak to them?'

'Rather,' and he laughed curiously. 'I had to.'

'How? What do you mean?'

'You asked me just now why I had not written you for some time. I had my reasons for silence. I was under a cloud for a time, and I wanted things cleared up

before telling you anything.'

'Don't speak in riddles, Edgecumbe. What has been the trouble? Tell me quickly.'

'Oh, it's all over now, so I can speak fairly plainly, but for some days it was touch and go with me. Of course they kept in the background, but I was able to trace their handiwork.'

'What handiwork? Come, old man, don't keep me in suspense.'

'Oh, it was the old game. You remember how it was when you were in France, and some fellows shot at me. You remember, too, how I nearly died of poisoning at Bolivick, and that but for you I should have been done for. You said you traced Springfield's hands in everything. He's been trying on the same thing again,—only in another way.'

'What other way?'

He laughed quietly. 'I fancy he thought that when you weren't by I should be easy game, that I should be too simple to see through his plans. But I happened to keep my eyes skinned, as the Americans say. It was this way: by some means or another, some important information went astray, and got into the German lines. Of course the Huns made the most of it, and we suffered pretty heavily. As it happened I was at that time in the confidence of the General in command of the D.H.Q., and there seemed no one else on whom suspicion could fall. But I was warned in time. I had been told that both Springfield and St. Mabyn had been in close confab with the General, and I knew that if they could do me a nasty turn, they would. So I checkmated them.'

'How? Tell me the details.'

'I'm afraid I mustn't do that. You know how military secrets are regarded, and as even yet the scheme I discussed with the General is not completed, my lips are sealed. But I found that Springfield had suggested to the General that my loss of memory was very fishy—a mere blind in fact to cover up a very suspicious past. He also told him he was sure he had seen me, in pre-war days, in Berlin, wearing the uniform of a German officer. Had I not been able to show an absolutely clean sheet I should have been done for. As it was, there was a time when I wouldn't have given a sou for my life. I was, of course, shut off from the General's confidence, and pending the results of the inquiry was practically a prisoner.'

'I say, old man, you can't mean that?'

'Fact, I assure you. Still as nothing, absolutely *nothing* wrong could be traced to me, and as——'

'Yes, what,' I said as he hesitated.

'Oh, a little thing I was mixed up in came off rather well—very well in fact.'

'What? Don't keep me in suspense, old man.'

'Oh, nothing much; nothing worth talking about. Still I may as well tell you as it's bound to come out. It seems I am to get the D.S.O.'

‘The D.S.O.! Great, old man! I congratulate you with all my heart. Tell me about it,’ I cried.

‘It was really nothing. Still I had concocted a scheme which gave us a big advantage. It was rather risky, but it came off so well that—that—it got to the notice of the G.H.Q. and—and—there you are. When the details of my little stunt became known to the Chief he—he said it was impossible for its author to be anything but a loyal Englishman, that I was a valuable man, and all that sort of rot.’

Of course I read between the lines. I knew Edgecumbe’s reticence about anything he had done, and I was sure he had accomplished a big thing.

‘It came in jolly handy to me,’ he went on, ‘for it spiked Springfield’s guns right away, and I was regarded as sort of tin god. Congratulations poured in on every hand and—and, but there’s no need to say any more about it.’

‘And what did Springfield say then?’

‘Oh, he was louder in his congratulations than any one. It makes me sick to think of it!’

‘But didn’t you expose him?’

‘I couldn’t. You see, I only learnt in a roundabout way that he had tried to poison the General’s mind against me, and he very nearly covered his traces everywhere. Oh, he’s a clever beggar. Still, you see the situation. It was jolly sultry for a time.’

‘I see you have had another move,’ I said looking at his uniform.

‘Yes, I’ve had great luck; but don’t let’s talk any more about me. How are *you* getting on? And can’t you get some leave?’

‘I have some due,’ I replied, noting the far-away look in his eyes, and wondering what was in his mind. ‘Why do you ask?’

‘Big things are going to happen,’ he said after a long silence.

‘What do you mean? Tell me, Edgecumbe, has your memory come back? Have you learnt anything—in—in that direction?’

He shook his head sadly. ‘No, nothing. The past is blank, blank. And yet I think sometimes——I say, Luscombe, I wonder who I am? I wonder——’

‘And do you still persist in your mad fancies?’ I blurted out after a long silence.

‘Persist! Mad fancies!’ he cried passionately. ‘As long as my heart beats, as long as I have consciousness, I shall never cease to—to——I say, old man, get some leave and go with me.’

‘Why?’ I asked. ‘If your mind is made up, seek her out wherever she is. I know she is at a V.A.D. Hospital not far from her home; so your way is plain. You can go to her on more equal terms now. You are a distinguished man now. In a few months you have risen from obscurity to eminence.’

‘Don’t talk rot. I can never meet her on equal terms.’

‘Then why bother about her?’

‘Because God has decreed that I shall. But you must go with me, my dear fellow. In ways I can’t understand, your life is linked to mine. It was not for nothing that we met down at Plymouth Harbour; it was not without purpose that I was led to love you like a brother.’

‘Well, what then?’

‘You must go with me. In some way or another, your life is linked to mine, and you must go with me.’

Of course I applied for leave right away, and as I had been working hard all the while Edgecumbe had been in France I was able to get it without difficulty.

‘My word, have you seen this, Edgecumbe?’ I cried the next afternoon, immediately we had left Salisbury Plain, where I had been stationed.

‘What?’ he asked.

‘This in *The Times*. They’ve been cracking you up to the skies.’

‘Oh, that,’ he replied. ‘Yes, I saw it this morning. I see they’ve made quite a sensational paragraph. I hardly recognize myself.’

As I read the article a second time, I wondered at his indifference. Seldom had such a eulogy appeared in that great newspaper. Evidently the writer had taken considerable pains to get at the facts, and had presented them in glowing colours. There could be no doubt about it that from the standpoint of the Army, his future, if his life was spared, was assured. Not only was he spoken of as a man whose courage was almost unparalleled, but his abilities as a strategist, and his grasp of the broad issues of military affairs were discussed, and recognized in no sparing terms. It seemed impossible that a man who a few months before was a simple private, should now be discussed in such glowing panegyrics.

Greatly elated as I was at the praise bestowed upon my friend, I little realized what it would mean to him during the next few hours.

CHAPTER XXXII
THE GREAT MEETING

‘Can’t we go down to Devonshire to-night?’ cried Edgecumbe, as our train reached London.

‘Impossible, my dear fellow,’ I replied.

‘But why not?’ and I could see by the wild longing look in his eyes what he was thinking of.

‘Oh, there are a dozen reasons. For one thing, she may not be able to get away from the hospital; for another—I don’t think it would be wise.’

‘I simply must go, Luscombe! I tell you something’s going to happen, something great. I feel it in every breath I draw. We must go—go at once.’

‘No,’ I replied. ‘I wrote her last night, and told her that we should step in London at the National Hotel till we heard from her. If she wants us to come we shan’t be long in getting her reply.’

He gave a long quivering sigh, and I could see how disappointed he was, but he said no more about the matter, and when we arrived at the hotel he had seemed to have forgotten all about it.

‘Look here,’ he cried, pointing to a paragraph in an evening newspaper, ‘that’s on the right lines. I’m going.’

The paragraph which interested him was a notice of a big meeting that was to be held that night for the purpose of discussing certain phases of the Army, and consequently of the war, about which newspapers were usually silent. The fact that a Cabinet Minister of high rank, as well as a renowned general, were announced to speak, however, caused the news editor to give it prominence.

‘It’s on the right lines,’ he repeated. ‘Yes, I’m going.’

‘Better go to some place of amusement,’ I suggested.

‘Nero fiddled while Rome was burning,’ was his reply.

A little later we found our way to a huge hall where some thousands of people had gathered. It was evident that the subject to be discussed appealed strongly to a large portion of the population, and that the audience was much interested in the proceedings.

I could see, however, that Edgecumbe was disappointed in the meeting. None of the speakers spoke strongly and definitely. Each enlarged on the difficulties of the situation, and spoke of the impossibility of making men pure by Act of Parliament, but no suggestion was made whereby the evils mentioned might be grappled with and strangled. While all admitted that a frightful state of things existed, and declared that something ought to be done, no one had the courage to

demand drastic reforms, or strike a prophetic note. The Cabinet Minister enlarged in a somewhat stilted fashion upon what the Government had done to check drunkenness, while another speaker told of the magnificent work of the Y.M.C.A., and of the hostels and huts which had been provided, both in England and on the Continent; but all felt that the heart of the matter had not been touched. It was not until the General spoke that the audience was anything like aroused, and even he failed to get at close quarters with the evils which all admitted.

Indeed I, who could not see how more could be done than had been done, felt that the meeting was a failure, and as, when the General sat down, the reporters were preparing to leave, and the audience grew restless, I felt that the whole thing was in the nature of a fiasco.

'Let's go, Edgecumbe,' I said.

'No, not yet,' and I saw that he was much excited.

'But the meeting is practically over. There, the chairman is going to call on somebody to propose the usual vote of thanks.'

But he took no notice of me. Instead he rose to his feet, and his voice rang clearly throughout the hall.

'My lord,' he said addressing the chairman, 'I am a soldier just home from the front. May I say a few words?'

It was only then that I realized what a striking figure Edgecumbe was, and although I was almost stunned by his sudden action, I could not help comparing him, as he was now, with the first occasion on which I had seen him. Then, with his nondescript garments, his parchment-like skin, and the look of wistful indecision in his eyes, he was a creature to be pitied. Now, in the uniform of a major, he stood stalwart and erect. In spite of the fact that his left arm was in a sling, there was something commanding in his attitude. His eyes no longer suggested indecision, and his bronzed skin was no longer wrinkled and parchment like. He looked what he was—a tall, strong, capable man, instinct with life and energy.

There was something, too, in the tones of his voice that aroused the interest of the audience, and thousands of eyes were turned towards him.

The chairman adjusted his eye-glasses, and looked at Edgecumbe, who still stood erect, the cynosure of all eyes.

'I am sure,' said the chairman, 'that in spite of the fact that it is growing late, we shall be glad to hear a few words from a soldier just back from the front. Will he kindly come to the platform.'

The audience, doubtless noting Edgecumbe's wounded arm, gave him a cheer as he left his seat, while the reporters, probably hoping for something good in the way of copy, again opened their note-books.

'I asked permission to say a few words, my lord,' he said, 'because I have been deeply disappointed in this meeting. This is a great audience, and it is a great

occasion; that is why the lack of an overwhelming conviction, the lack too of anything like vision of the inwardness of the problem under discussion is so saddening. I had hoped for a message to the heart of the nation; I had waited to hear the Voice of God, without which all such gatherings as this must be in vain.'

He hesitated a second, and I feared lest he had lost thread of his thought, feared too lest after his somewhat flamboyant commencement his appearance would be only a fiasco. I saw, too, that the chairman looked at him doubtfully, and I had a suspicion that he was on the point of asking him to sit down.

But his hesitation was only for a moment. He threw back his shoulders as though he were on the battlefield and was about to give an important command.

'I speak as one who has been a soldier in the ranks, and who knows the soldier's hardships, his temptations, his sufferings. I also speak as one who knows what a fine fellow the British soldier is, for believe me there are no braver men beneath God's all-beholding sun than our lads have proved themselves to be.'

He had struck the right note now, and the audience responded warmly. There was something magnetic in Edgecumbe's presence, too, something in his voice which made the people listen.

'I want to say something else, before getting to that which is in my heart to say,' he went on. 'We are fighting for something great, and high and holy. We are contending against tyranny, lies, savagery. Never did a nation have a greater, grander cause than we, and if Germany were to win——'

In a few sentences he outlined the great issues at stake and made the audience see as he saw. It was evident, too, that the occupants of the platform became aware that a new force was at work.

Then followed the greatest scene I have ever seen at any public gathering. For some time Edgecumbe seemed to forget who he was, or to whom he spoke; he was simply carried away by what seemed to him the burning needs of the times. He spoke of the way thousands of young fellows were ruined, and of the facilities which existed for their ruin. He told of scenes he had seen in France, scenes which took place when the men were 'back for rest,' and were 'out for a good time.' He described what we had witnessed together in London. He showed, too, in burning words that the two outstanding evils, 'Drink and Impurity,' were indissolubly associated, and that practically nothing was done to stem the tide of impurity and devilry which flowed like a mighty flood.

'I say this deliberately,' he said, 'it is nothing short of a blood-red crime, it is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God, to call men from the four corners of the earth to fight for a great cause like ours, and then to allow temptations to stand at every corner to lure them to destruction. Some one has described in glowing terms the work of the Y.M.C.A., and I can testify the truth of those terms, but ask Y.M.C.A. workers what is the greatest hindrance to their work, and they will tell you it is the facilities for drink, drink which so often leads to impurity, and all the

ghastly diseases that follows in its train.

'How can you expect God's blessing to rest upon us, while the souls of men are being damned in such a way?'

'What would you do?' cried some one, when the wild burst of cheering which greeted his words ceased.

'Do?' he cried. 'At least every man here can determine, God helping him, to fight against the greatest foe of our national life. You can determine that you will leave nothing undone to strangle this deadly enemy. Personally, after seeing what I have seen, and knowing what I know, I will make no terms with it. Even now, if a fortune were offered me, made by drink, I would not benefit by it. But more, you can besiege the Government, you can give it no rest until it has removed one of the greatest hindrances to victory.

'What England needs is to realize that God lives, and to turn to Him in faith and humility. Just so long as we remain in a state of religious indifference, just so long will the war continue; and just so soon as we give our lives to Him, and put our trust in Him, just so soon will victory be seen. God has other ways of speaking than by big guns. God spoke, and lo, all the pomp of the Czars became the byword of children! God will speak again, and all the vain glory of the Kaiser will become as the fairy stories of the past!'

I know that what I have written gives no true idea of Edgecumbe's message. The words I have set down give but faint suggestions of the outpourings of a heart charged with a mighty purpose. For he spoke like a man inspired, and he lifted the whole audience to a higher level of thought, and life, and purpose. People who had listened with a bored expression on their faces during the other speeches, were moved by his burning words. Club loungers who had been cynical and unbelieving half an hour before, now felt the reality of an unseen Power.

Then came the climax to all that had gone before. No sooner had Edgecumbe sat down than the chairman rose again.

'You wonder perhaps,' he said, 'who it is that has been speaking to us. You know by his uniform that he is a soldier, and you know he is a brave man by the decoration on his tunic, but few I expect know, as I have just learnt, that this is Major Edgecumbe, the story of whose glorious career is given in to-day's newspapers.'

If the meeting was greatly moved before, it now became frenzied in its enthusiasm. Cheer after cheer rose, while the great audience rose to its feet. All realized that he spoke not as a theorist and a dreamer, but as a man who had again and again offered his life for the country he loved, and the cause in which he believed—a man, not only great in courage, but skilful in war, and wise in counsel.

When the excitement had somewhat ceased, an old clergyman, who had been sitting at the back of the platform, came to the front.

‘Let us pray,’ he said, and a great hush rested on every one, while he led the multitude in prayer.

When the meeting finally broke up, the General who had spoken earlier in the evening came and shook Edgecumbe by the hand.

‘This meeting is worth more to win the war than an army corps,’ he said.

CHAPTER XXXIII
THE LIFTED CURTAIN

The following morning the papers contained lengthy reports of the meeting, and spoke in no sparing terms of the influence of Edgecumbe's words on the great crowd. He appeared to be depressed, however.

'It may be only a passing sensation,' he said. 'Still, I couldn't help doing what I did.'

We had barely finished breakfast when a telegram was brought to me,

'Come at once and bring your friend. Wire time I may expect you.
—BOLIVICK.'

'There,' I said, passing it to Edgecumbe, 'there's dispatch for you.'

A few minutes later we were in a taxi, on our way to Paddington, and a few hours later we arrived at Bolivick.

We had barely alighted from the conveyance when Edgecumbe gave a start.

'Look,' he said, 'both Springfield and St. Mabyn are there.'

'Yes,' I replied lightly, 'and Lorna too. Don't you see her in her nurse's uniform?'

His face was set and rigid as the greetings took place; but he had evidently put a strong check upon himself, and spoke naturally.

'Glad to see you, Luscombe,' cried Sir Thomas, 'and you too, Major Edgecumbe. Let me congratulate you on your wonderful career. It's almost like a fairy story!'

'Let me add my congratulations,' cried Springfield. 'I pay my tribute, not only to the soldier, but to the orator.'

I could not fail to detect the sneer in his voice, even although he seemed to speak heartily. A copy of *The Times* was lying on the lawn, and I imagined that Edgecumbe's speech had been read and discussed.

'We shall be quite a party to dinner to-night,' said Sir Thomas to me presently. 'Of course you must expect scanty fare, as we are carrying out the rationing order to the very letter. But it's an important occasion all the same. Lord Carbis

is coming by the next train. Please don't say anything about it. No one knows but my wife and myself. I want to give a surprise to both Lorna and Springfield.'

My heart became as heavy as lead, for I knew what he had in his mind, and I looked towards Edgecumbe, wondering if he had heard anything. It was evident he had heard nothing, however; he was talking to Norah Blackwater, who was again a visitor to Bolivick.

'By the way,' went on Sir Thomas, 'that fellow Edgecumbe has developed wonderfully, hasn't he? Of course what he said last night was so much nonsense. I quite agree that it's very sad about—that—is—some of the things he talked about, but as to the rest,—it was moonshine.'

'You wouldn't have said so if you'd been there, Sir Thomas,' I ventured.

'Something's going to happen, Luscombe,' Edgecumbe said to me as presently we found our way to our rooms.

'Why do you say so?'

'I don't know. But there is. It's in the air we breathe. I know I'm right.'

'What's the matter with you?' I asked, looking at him intently.

'Nothing. Yes there is though. I'm feeling mighty queer.'

'Are you ill?'

'No, nothing of the sort. But I'm nervous. I feel as though great things were on foot. The air is charged with great things. Something big is going to take place.'

He was silent a few seconds, and then went on, 'I had a long talk with a doctor in France a few days ago.'

'What doctor? What did he tell you?' I asked eagerly.

'One of our men out there. He had a big practice as a consulting physician in Harley Street until a few months ago, when he offered himself to the Army. He is a nerve specialist, and years ago paid great attention to brain troubles. He was so kind to me, and was such an understanding fellow that I told him my story. He was awfully interested, and said that he never knew but one case where loss of memory had continued so long as it had with me.'

'Did he give you any hope?' I asked.

He shook his head doubtfully. 'He would not say anything definite. He seemed to think that as my general health had

been good for so long, and as my memory had not come back, it might be a very long time before there was any change. All the same, he felt sure that it was only a matter of time. He seemed to regard my trouble as a kind of artificial barrier which divided the past from the present, but that time would constantly wear away the barrier. He also said that if some very vivid and striking happening were to take place, something that was vitally connected with my past, it might suddenly pierce it—tear it aside, and let in the light.'

'And—and——?'

'No, Luscombe,' he interrupted, as if divining my thoughts, 'I know of nothing, I remember nothing. But there was something else he told me which makes me have faith in him. It was so true.'

'What was that?'

'That loss of memory often gave a kind of sixth sense. He said he should not be surprised if I had very vivid premonitions of the future. That I had a kind of knowledge when something out of the common were going to happen. That's what makes me afraid.'

'Afraid?'

'Yes, afraid. I seem to be on the brink of a great black chasm. I feel that I am able to save myself from falling, only I won't. I say, what's that?'

'It's a motor-car,' I replied. 'Sir Thomas told me he had other guests coming.'

'What guests? Who are they?'

'How can I know?' I replied, for I feared to tell him what our host had told me about Lord Carbis's relations to Springfield, and that probably Lorna's engagement might be announced in a few hours.

We were both dressed ready for dinner a quarter of an hour before the time announced, and together we found our way downstairs into the reception hall. Early as we were, we found that not only was Lorna Bolivick there, but George St. Mabyn was also present and was talking eagerly to Norah Blackwater. Springfield also came a few seconds later, and went straight to Lorna's side and spoke to her with an air of proprietorship.

I felt that Edgecumbe and I were *de trop*, and I moved away from them, but Edgecumbe went to St. Mabyn and Norah Blackwater, as if with the purpose of speaking to them.

I thought, too, that there was a strange look in his eyes.

'You are not much like your brother Maurice,' he said suddenly.

'My brother Maurice!' said St. Mabyn, and I thought his voice was hoarse. 'What do you know of him?'

'What do I know of him?' repeated Edgecumbe, and he spoke as though his mind were far away.

'Yes. You can know nothing of him. He's dead.'

'No,' replied Edgecumbe, 'he's not dead.'

'Not dead!' and St. Mabyn almost gasped the words, while his face became as pale as ashes. 'Not dead! You must be mad!' Then he laughed uneasily.

'Oh, no,' and Edgecumbe still spoke in the same toneless voice. 'I knew him well. He was—where did I see him last?'

Before we could recover from the effect of what he said, I knew that we were joined by others. In a bewildered kind of way I noticed that Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick were accompanied by a tall, distinguished-looking man about fifty-five years of age, by whose side stood a sweet-faced, motherly-looking woman.

'Lorna, my dear,' said Sir Thomas, 'I want you to know Lord and Lady Carbis.'

Lorna moved forward to speak to her visitors, but they did not notice her. Both of them had fixed their gaze on Edgecumbe, who stood looking at them with a light in his eyes which made me afraid.

'John!' cried Lady Carbis, her voice almost rising to a scream. 'Why, it's Jack! our Jack!'

Never shall I forget the look on my friend's face. He seemed to be in agony. It might be that he was striving to keep himself from going mad. His eyes burnt with a red light, his features were drawn and contorted. Then suddenly he heaved a deep sigh, and lifted his shoulders, as though he were throwing a heavy weight from him.

'Mother!' he said hoarsely. 'Mother! When——? that is —— Why, I'm home again!—and the little mater——'

Unheeding the fact of his damaged arm, he held out both his hands and staggered towards her.

A second later, unconscious of watching eyes, they were in each other's arms, while Lady Carbis murmured all sorts of fond endearments.

‘My dead boy come back to life!’ she cried. ‘My little Jack who—who—oh, thank God, thank God! Speak to me, Jack, my darling, speak to your mother! Oh, help! What’s the matter? Can’t you see that——’

I was only just in time to keep my friend from falling heavily on the floor, and when a few seconds later I succeeded in lifting him to a sofa, he lay like a dead man.

CHAPTER XXXIV
MEMORY

For some minutes wild confusion prevailed. Lady Carbis knelt by the sofa, and called wildly on my friend to speak to her. Lord Carbis talked incoherently, and made all sorts of impossible suggestions. Evidently he was beside himself with joy and fear. Sir Thomas Bolivick looked from one to another as if asking for explanations, while Lorna Bolivick, with pale, eager face and wild eyes, stood like one transfixed.

But she was the first to recover herself. Swiftly she went to the sofa, and caught Edgecumbe's hand. Then she knelt down and placed her ear to his heart.

'He is alive,' she said; 'his heart beats. I think he will soon be better.'

'Yes, yes,' stammered Lord Carbis. 'He was always a strong boy—hard as nails, hard as nails. Oh, it's wonderful, wonderful! It's my son, my only son, Sir Thomas. I'd given him up for dead. It's years now since—since he was last seen. Ah, look, his eyelids are quivering! Stand back and give him air. But I can't understand. Where's he been all this time? Why hasn't he let us know where he was? It's not like him. He was always such a good boy, and so fond of his mother. I got a paper from India, too; announcing his death. I can't understand it all. Perhaps you can explain, Sir Thomas——'

Thus he went on talking, scarcely conscious of what he was saying. Evidently the shock had almost unhinged his mind, and he was merely giving expression to the fugitive thoughts that came to him.

As Edgecumbe's eyes opened, I felt a strange quiver of joy in my heart. What I saw was no madman's stare, rather it suggested placid contentment. For a few seconds he glanced from one to another, as if trying to comprehend, and co-ordinate what had taken place; then he heaved a deep sigh, half of satisfaction, half of weariness.

'It's all gone,' he murmured like one speaking to himself.

'What is gone, my darling?' asked Lady Carbis.

'The mists, the cobwebs, the black curtain,' he replied.

I heard her gasp as if in fear. I knew of what she was thinking; but she spoke no word. Instead she continued looking at him with love-lit eyes.

For a few seconds he lay like one thinking, then he rubbed the back of his right-hand across his eyes, and laughed like one amused.

'Oh, little mother,' he said, 'it is good to see you again! Good to know—there kiss me. That's right; it makes me feel as though I were a kid again, and you were putting me to bed like you did in the old days.'

Lady Carbis kissed him eagerly, calling him all sorts of endearing names.

'It's your old mother!' she murmured. 'Are you better, Jack, my darling?'

'Yes, heaps better. Why, there you are, dad! You see I've turned up again. Oh, I *am* glad to see you!' and he held out his hand.

'Jack, Jack,' sobbed his father, 'tell me you are all right.'

On considering it all, afterwards, it seemed to me that it was not a bit what I should have expected him to say, but facts have a wonderful way of laughing at fancies.

'I feel better every second,' he said. 'Everything came back so suddenly that I felt like a man bowled over. You see, I couldn't grasp it all. But—but I'm settling down now. I—I—oh, I'm afraid I'm an awful nuisance. Forgive me. Thank you all for being so good.'

I saw his eyes rest on Lorna, and his lips twitched as if in pain, but only for a moment.

'Where's Luscombe?' he asked. 'Ah, there you are, old man. You must know Luscombe, little mother. He's the truest pal a chap ever had. But for him—but there we'll talk about that later.'

A minute later Edgecumbe was led by his mother into the library, while Lord Carbis walked on the other side of his newly-found son.

Never in all my experience have I sat down to such a strange dinner party as on that night. We were all wild with excitement, and yet we appeared to talk calmly about things that didn't matter a bit. What we ate, or whether we ate, I have not the slightest remembrance. Personally I felt as though I were dreaming, and that I should presently wake up and find

things in their normal condition again. But it was easy to see that each was thinking deeply. Especially did Sir Thomas and Springfield show that they were considering what the evening's happenings might mean.

Strange as it may seem, little was said about the happening which had created such a consternation. Of course it was in all our minds, but to speak about it seemed for some time like trespassing on forbidden ground.

'Anyhow,' said Lady Bolivick presently, 'the dear things will want some dinner, James,' and she turned to the butler, 'see that something fit to eat is kept for Lord and Lady Carbis, and Major——that is their son.'

'Yes, my lady.'

'It's all very wonderful, I'm sure,' went on Lady Bolivick. 'I hope—that is—they won't be disappointed in him. Of, course he's had a wonderful career, and done unheard-of things, but if he sticks to what he said about never taking a penny of money made by drink—there—there'll be all sorts of difficulties.'

'Yes, but I imagine he'll chuck all that,' and Springfield seemed like a man speaking to himself.

'Oh, I hope not,' said Lorna.

'You hope not!' and her father spoke as if in astonishment.

'Yes,' cried the girl. 'It was so fine—and so true. When I read his speech in *The Times*, I felt just as he did.'

'Nonsense, Lorna! Why, if he stands by his crazy words, he'll still be a poor man with nothing but his pay to live on. He'll sacrifice one of the finest fortunes in England.'

Almost unconsciously I looked towards George St. Mabyn, whom I had almost forgotten in my excitement, and I saw that he looked like a haunted man. His face was drawn and haggard, although I judged he had been drinking freely through dinner. I called to mind the words Edgecumbe had uttered just before Lord and Lady Carbis came into the room, and I wondered what they meant.

'No,' said Sir Thomas, who was evidently thinking of his daughter's words, 'he'll not be fool enough for that. What do you think, Luscombe?'

I was silent, for in truth I did not know what to say. In one sense Sir Thomas had reason on his side, for such an act would seem like madness. But I was by no means sure. I had known

Edgecumbe for more than two years, and I did not believe that even the shock which led him to recover his memory, could change his strong determined nature.

The ladies left the room just then, but a few seconds later Lorna Bolivick returned and came straight towards me.

‘He wants you,’ she said, and I saw that her eyes burnt with excitement.

I made my way to the library, where my friend met me with a laugh. ‘You mustn’t keep away from me, old man,’ he said, ‘I want you—want you badly.’

CHAPTER XXXV
AFTERWARDS

We were alone in the library, Lord Carbis, Lady Carbis, Edgecumbe and myself, and certainly it was one of the strangest gatherings ever I experienced.

The excitement was intense, and yet we spoke together quietly, as though we lived in a world of commonplaces. But nothing was commonplace. Never in my life did I realize the effect which joy can have, as I realized it then. Years before, Lord and Lady Carbis had received news that their son had died in India. What that news had meant to them at the time I had no idea. He was their only son, and on him all their hopes had centred. They had mourned for him as dead, and his loss had meant a blank in their lives which no words can describe.

Then, suddenly and without warning, they had come into a strange house, and found their son standing before them. As I think of it now, I wonder that the shock did not do them serious harm, and I can quite understand the incoherent, almost meaningless words they uttered.

To Edgecumbe the shock must have been still greater. For years the greatest part of his life had been a blank to him. As I have set forth in these pages, all his life before the time when he awoke to consciousness in India had practically no meaning to him. And then, suddenly, the thick, dark curtain was torn aside, and he woke to the fact that his memory was restored, that he was not homeless or nameless, but that his father and mother stood before him.'

'Jack has told me all about you,' Lord Carbis said, as I entered the room; 'told me what you did for him, what a friend you have been to him! God bless you, sir! I don't know how to express my feelings, I—I hardly know what I am saying, but you understand,—I am sure you understand.'

'Isn't it a lark, old man,' Edgecumbe said with a laugh, 'isn't it,—isn't it?—but there—I can't put it into words. Half the time I seem to be dreaming. Things which happened years ago are coming in crowds back to me, until half the time I am wondering whether after all I am not somebody else. And yet I

know I am not somebody else. Why, here's dad, and here's the little mater'; and he looked at them joyfully.

I could not help watching him anxiously, for after all he had just gone through an experience which happens to but one man in a million. It seemed to me as though I dimly understood the strange processes through which his brain must have gone in order to bring about the present state of things. During the earlier part of the day, all his past had been a blank, now much of it was real to him. He had been like a man with his life cut in two, one half being unknown to him; and now, as if by a miracle, that half was restored. I wondered how he felt. I feared he would not be able to stand the shock, and that he would suffer a terrible reaction afterwards.

'You are all right, aren't you, old man?' I said. 'You—you don't feel ill or anything of that sort?'

'Right as a skylark,' he said gaily, 'except that I am a bit tired.'

'You are sure, Jack, my darling?' said his mother, looking at him anxiously. 'Sure there is nothing we can do for you? Oh, I wish we were home!'

'Do you?' he said. 'I am not sure I agree with you.'

'Oh, but I do. You see, we don't know the Bolivicks very well, and—and—we didn't come expecting anything like this, did we, John?'

'Anything like this!' ejaculated Lord Carbis, 'anything like this! Why—why,—Jack, my boy!'—and he rubbed his eyes vigorously.

'I am sure Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick are only too glad to have you here,' I said, 'and nothing will be regarded as a trouble. Besides, I am not sure that your son does not want to be here. But tell me, old fellow, don't you think you ought to get to bed?'

A look of fear came into his eyes. 'No, not yet, not yet,' he said. 'I think I am afraid to go to sleep; afraid lest when I wake up I shall find that great black cloud lying at the back of my mind again.'

'Then wouldn't it be wise to send for a doctor? The man who lives here is not at all a bad chap;—you know that.'

Again he laughed gaily. 'I want no doctor. The little mother is all the doctor I want.'

Lady Carbis leant over him and kissed him, just as I have

seen young mothers kiss their firstborn babies.

'I will sit by your bed all the night, my darling,' she said, 'and no harm shall come to you while you are asleep.'

'But I don't want to sleep just yet,' went on Edgecumbe. 'I feel as though I must tell you all I can tell you, for fear,—that is, suppose when I wake the old black cloud is there? I—I want you to know things'; and there was a look in his eyes which suggested that wistful expression I had noticed at Plymouth Harbour when we first met.

'You felt something was going to happen, you know,' I said.

'Yes, I did. All through the day it felt to me as though some great change were coming. I did not know what it was, and the curtain which hid the past was as black as ever, but I had a kind of feeling that everything was hanging as in a balance, that—that—eh, mother, it is good to see you! to know you, to—to—have a past! It was just like this,' he went on: 'when I came downstairs, and saw George St. Mabyn, I felt that the curtain was getting thinner. I remembered Maurice St. Mabyn,—it was only dimly, and I could not call to mind what happened to him; but something impelled me to speak to him.'

'Don't talk about it any more, old fellow,' I said; 'you are not well enough yet. To-morrow, after you have had a good night's rest, everything will seem normal and natural.'

'It is normal and natural now,' he laughed; 'besides, it does me good to talk about it to you. It is not as though you were a stranger.'

'No,' cried his mother, 'he has told us all about you, sir, and what you did for him.'

'Perhaps, after all,' went on Edgecumbe, 'I had better not talk any more to-night. You—you think I'll be all right in the morning, don't you? And I am feeling tired and sleepy. Besides, I feel like a kid again;—the idea of going to bed with the little mother holding my hand makes me think of——'

'There now, old man,' I interrupted, 'let me go with you to your room. You are a bit shaky, you know, and you must look upon me as a stern male nurse.'

Half an hour later, when I left him, he was lying in bed, and as he had said, his mother sat by his side, holding his hand, while Lord Carbis was in a chair close by, watching his son with eager, anxious eyes.

After a few words with Sir Thomas, I made my way to the village of South Petherwin to find the doctor. Truth to tell, I felt more than a little anxious, and although I had persuaded Edgecumbe that when morning came everything would be well, I dreaded his awakening.

As good fortune would have it, I found the doctor at home, who listened with great eagerness and attention to my story.

'It is the strangest thing I have ever heard of,' he said, when I had finished.

'Do you fear any grave results?' I asked.

'Luscombe,' he replied, 'I can speak to you freely. I will go with you to see him, but the whole business is out of my depth. For the matter of that, I doubt if any doctor in England could prophesy what will happen to him. All the same, I see no reason why everything should not be right.'

Without waking him, Dr. Merril took his temperature, felt his pulse, listened to the beating of his heart.

'Everything is right, isn't it?' asked Lord Carbis anxiously.

'As far as I can tell, yes.'

'And there is nothing you can do more than has been done?'

'Nothing,' replied the doctor; 'one of the great lessons which my profession has taught me is, as far as possible, to leave Nature to do her own work.'

'And you think he will awake natural and normal to-morrow morning?' whispered the older man.

'I see no reason why he should not,' he said. All the same, there was an anxious look in his eyes as he went away.

CHAPTER XXXVI
EDGECUMBE'S RESOLUTION

In spite of my excitement, I slept heavily and late, and when I awoke I found that it was past ten o'clock. Dressing hurriedly, I rushed to Edgecumbe's bedroom and found him not only awake, but jubilant.

'It's all right, old man,' he said. 'I am a new man. Merril has already been here. He advises me to be quiet for a day or two, but I am going to get up.'

'And there are no ill effects? Your mind is quite clear?'

'Clear as a bell. There is just one black ugly spot; but it doesn't affect things.'

'Black ugly spot?' I asked anxiously.

'Yes, I'll tell you about it presently. Not that it matters.'

Throughout the day I saw very little of him, as neither his father nor mother would allow him out of their sight. It was pathetic the way they followed him wherever he went. I saw, too, that they were constantly watching him, as if looking for some sign of illness or trouble. I imagine that their joy was so sudden, so wonderful, that they could scarcely believe their own senses. It was evident, too, that they gloried in his career since I had met him more than two years ago. The thought that he should have, without influence or position, surmounted so many difficulties, and become the hero of the hour, was wonderful beyond words. More than once I caught Lord Carbis scanning the newspapers which contained references to him, his eyes lit up with pride.

In spite of all this, however, I foresaw difficulties, saw, too, that if Edgecumbe had not become radically changed, he would be a great disappointment to his father. Would he, I wondered, stand by the words he had uttered at the great public meeting? Would he refuse to participate in the wealth which his father had amassed through his connection with the trade which he believed was one of the great curses of humanity? For it was evident that Lord Carbis was a man of strong opinions. He had built up a great and prosperous business by enterprise, foresight and determination. To him

that business was doubtless honourable. Through the wealth he had amassed by it, he had become a peer of the realm. What would he say and do if his son took the stand which, in spite of everything, I imagined he would?

Other things troubled me, too. Springfield, who was staying with St. Mabyn, motored over early, and immediately sought Lorna Bolivick's society. Of course Edgecumbe saw this, and I wondered how it would affect him. I wondered, too, how Sir Thomas would regard Springfield's suit, now that the future of his life was so materially altered. I tried, by a study of Lorna Bolivick's face, to understand the condition of her heart. I wondered whether she really cared for the tall, sinister-looking man who, I judged, had evidently fascinated her.

It was not until after tea that I was able to get a few minutes' chat with her alone. Indeed, I had a suspicion that she rather avoided me. But seeing Springfield and St. Mabyn evidently in earnest conversation together, I made my way to her, and asked her to come with me for a stroll through the woods.

'Real life makes fiction tame and commonplace,' I said, as I nodded toward Lady Carbis and Edgecumbe, who were walking arm in arm on the lawn.

'Real life always does that,' was her reply; 'the so-called impossibilities of melodrama are in reality the prosiest of realism.'

'I can't quite settle down to it yet,' I said. 'I can't think of Edgecumbe as Lord Carbis's son, in spite of all we have seen. To begin with, his name isn't Edgecumbe at all.'

'No,' she replied; 'don't you know what it is? You know who Lord Carbis was, I suppose?'

'I know he was a brewer; but really I have not taken the trouble to study his antecedents.'

'He was called Carbis before he was made a peer,' she replied. 'I suppose he was largely influenced to buy the Carbis estates by the fact that they bore his own name.'

'So that my friend is called Jack Carbis. There is so much topsy-turvyism in it that I can hardly realize it.'

'I think Paul Edgecumbe is a much nicer name,' she said suddenly. 'I hope—I hope——; but if—if——'

'Do you realize,' I said, 'what it will mean to him if he stands by what he said at that meeting the other night?'

‘Yes, he will still be a poor man, I suppose. But what then? Isn’t he a thousand times bigger man now than he was as the fashionable Captain Jack Carbis?’

‘Perhaps you don’t realize how he would wound his father, —-destroy all his hopes and ambitions.’

‘Yes, that would be rather sad; but doesn’t it depend what his father’s hopes and ambitions are?’

‘Lorna,’ I said, ‘are you and Springfield engaged?’

She did not answer me for a few seconds; then, looking at me steadily, she said, ‘Why do you ask that?’

For the moment I almost determined to tell her what I believed I knew about Springfield, and about the things of which I had accused him. But I felt it would not be fair. If that time ever came, he must be there to answer my accusations.

‘I think you know why,’ I replied. ‘The change in my friend’s circumstances has not changed my love for him. Do you know, Lorna, that he loves you like his own life?’

She was silent at this, and I went on, ‘He spoke to you about it months ago; there in yonder footpath, not half a mile away,—he told you he had given his heart to you. It was madness then, madness,—because he had no name, no career, no position to offer you. His past lay in a mist,—indeed his past might have made it impossible for him to marry you, even if you had loved him. You refused him, told him that what he asked was impossible; but things have changed since then,—now he is a rich man’s son,—he can come to you as an equal.’

‘But—but——’ and then noticing the curious look on her face, I blurted out:

‘You’re not going to marry Springfield, are you?’

‘Yes,’ she replied, ‘I shall marry Colonel Springfield, if—if——but there,'—and she stopped suddenly,—‘I think it is scarcely fair to discuss such things.’

After that she refused to talk about Springfield at all,—indeed I could not understand her. She seemed as though she had a great problem to solve, and was unable to see her way through it.

I had no opportunity of talking with my friend till the next day. His father and mother monopolized him so completely that there was no chance of getting a word alone with him. But when Lord Carbis informed me that he had made arrangements for Lady Carbis and his son to return home, I

made my way to him.

'Do you feel well enough for a chat?' I asked.

'Oh, quite,' he replied. 'I was waiting all yesterday for an opportunity, but none came.'

'Edgecumbe,' I said,—'you will forgive me for still calling you that, won't you?—but for the life of me I can't fasten on that new name of yours.'

'Can't you? It's as natural as anything to me now. But call me Jack, will you? I wish you would. Do you know, when I heard the old name the night before last, I—I—but there, I can't tell you. It seemed to open a new world to me,—all my boyhood came back, all those things which made life wonderful. Yes, that's it, call me Jack.'

'Well, then, Jack,' I said, 'I have been wondering. Are your experiences at that Y.M.C.A. hut real to you now?'

'Of course,' he replied quietly; 'why, they are not a matter of memory, you know; they went down to the very depths of life.'

'And the convictions which were the result of those experiences? Do you feel as you did about drink and that sort of thing?'

'Exactly.'

'And you will stand by what you said in London the other night?'

'Of course,—why shouldn't I?'

'I was only wondering. Do you know, Jack,—you will forgive me for saying so, I am sure, but you present a kind of problem to me.'

'Do I?' and he laughed merrily as he spoke. 'You are wondering whether my early associations, now that they have come back to me, are stronger than what I have experienced since? Not a bit of it. I did a good deal of thinking last night, after I had got to bed. You see, I tried to work things out, and —and—it is all very wonderful, you know. I wasn't a bad chap in the old days, by no means a pattern young man, but on the whole I went straight,—I wasn't immoral, but I had no religion,—I never thought about it. I had a good house-master when I went to school, and under him I imbibed a sort of code of honour. It didn't amount to very much, and yet it did, for he taught me to be an English gentleman. I was always truthful, and tried to do the straight thing. You know the kind of thing a

chap picks up at a big public school. But that night, at the Y.M.C.A. hut, I got down deep. No, no,—early associations can't destroy that.'

'And you still hold to what you said at the meeting?'

'Absolutely. Why?'

'I was wondering how it would appeal to your father. You remember you said that you would never benefit by, or participate in, any gain made by drink, and your father has made most of his money as a brewer and distiller. I wondered how you regarded it now?'

'That is quickly settled,' he replied; 'I shall not benefit by it, of course.'

'Do you mean that?'

'Of course I mean it. Mind, I don't want it talked about,—that is a matter between my father and my own conscience, and one can't talk about such things freely.'

'Surely you are very foolish,' I said. 'Why should you not use the money which will naturally come to you?'

'I don't say I won't *use* it,' he replied, 'but I will not benefit by it.'

'You mean, then——?'

'I mean that I was a poor man, with nothing but my pay, and that I *am* a poor man, with nothing but my pay. Thinking as I think, and feeling as I feel, I could not become a rich man by money got in—that is, by such means.'

He spoke quietly and naturally, although he seemed a little surprised by my question.

'What will your father say when he knows?'

'I think he *does* know. He asked me whether I stood by what I said in London.'

'And you told him?'

'Of course I told him.'

'And he,—what did he say?'

'He didn't say anything.'

'Jack,' I went on, 'you must forgive me talking about this, but I only do it, because—you see, we are pals.'

'Of course we are pals. Say what you like.'

'It is all summed up in one name—Lorna.'

A new light came into his eyes immediately, and I saw that his lips became tremulous.

'Yes, what of her?'

‘Springfield still means to have her,’ I blurted out.

A curious look passed over his face, a look which I could not understand. ‘Do you know,’ he asked eagerly, ‘if she is engaged to him?’

‘I gather, that so far, there is no engagement, but I believe there is an understanding. He had obtained Sir Thomas’s consent, but they were both under the impression at the time that Springfield was your father’s heir. Of course, your turning up in such a way makes it a bit rough on Springfield.’

‘I shall have a good deal to tell you about Springfield presently,’ he said, ‘but you have something in your mind. What is it?’

‘It is very simple,’ I replied. ‘If there is no engagement between Lorna and Springfield, and if you come to her as your father’s heir, you will of course be an eligible suitor. If you hold by your determination, you are just where you were. How could you ask her to marry you on the pay of a major in the Army? It would not be fair; it would not be honourable.’

‘If she loves me, it would be honourable,’ he said.

‘How could it be honourable for you, with just a major’s pay, to go to a girl reared as she has been,—a girl as attractive as she is, and who has only to hold up her finger to a man like Buller, who will own one of the finest estates in Devonshire? You have no right to drag her into poverty, even if she cared for you.’

He rose to his feet, and took a turn across the lawn. ‘I see what is in your mind, but my dear Luscombe,'—and then he burst out into a laugh, a laugh that was sad, because it had a touch of hopelessness in it,—‘I am afraid we are talking in the clouds,—I am afraid Lorna doesn’t love me. If she does, she has shown no sign of it.’

‘But are you going to let her go without a struggle?’

He looked at me with flashing eyes. ‘I thought you knew me better than that,’ he said. ‘No, I am going to fight for her, fight to the very last. But if she will not have me as I am,—if she will not have me without my father’s money, which I will not take, then—then——’

‘You’ll see her marry Springfield? I say, Jack, you know all we have thought and said about Springfield?’

‘I have something to tell you about Springfield,’ he said quietly.

CHAPTER XXXVII
MAURICE ST. MABYN

‘You don’t know Maurice St. Mabyn, do you?’

I shook my head.

‘Spent all his life soldiering in the East, and knows more about Eastern affairs than any living man. Yes, I mean it. He knows any amount of Eastern dialects; speaks Arabic and Turkish like a native, and has a regular passion for mixing himself up in Eastern matters. He can pass himself off as a Fakir, a Dervish—anything you like. He knows the byways of Eastern cities and Eastern life better than any man I know of, and obtained a great reputation in certain official quarters for discovering plots inimical to British interests. That’s Maurice St. Mabyn. A jolly chap, you understand, as straight as a die, and as fearless as a lion. A diplomatist too. He can be as secret as an oyster, and as stealthy as a sleuth-hound. He has been used more than once on delicate jobs.’

‘But—but——’ I interjected.

‘In the July of 1914,’ he went on without noticing my interruption, ‘I was sitting alone in my show in Bizna where I was then stationed, when who should come in but Maurice. He looked as I thought a bit anxious and out of sorts. I hadn’t seen him for more than a year, and he startled me.

‘I asked him what he was doing in India, and he told me a curious yarn. He said that he’d been mixed up in a skirmish in Egypt, and that Springfield had tried to murder him.’

‘You are sure of this?’ I gasped.

‘Sure! Of course I’m sure. He said that Springfield, who was also in the show, had for some time acted in a very suspicious way, and that during the row with the natives, the greater part of which had taken place during the night, Springfield had pounced upon him, stabbed him—and—and left him for dead. By one of those flukes which sometimes takes place, St. Mabyn didn’t die. He turned up, weeks afterwards, and saw General Gregory.

‘Now follow me closely here. It so happened that only that day Gregory had received a message telling him that German

trouble was probable, and that reports were wanted from certain quarters where it was feared the Huns were trying to stir up trouble.'

'In India?' I asked.

'In the East; it was not for me to know where; and Gregory wanted a man who knew the East, in whom he could trust lock, stock and barrel. Directly he saw St. Mabyn, he fastened on him as his man, and he clung to him all the more tightly when St. Mabyn told him his story.

' "I'll keep Springfield, and his little game in mind, St. Mabyn," he said; "but for the time you must remain dead. This is an important job, and it must be done quietly."

'That was why he came to India, and why the story which I imagine Springfield got into the papers was never contradicted. On his way to his job, however, he got thinking things over. Naturally he wanted not only his brother to know, but his fiancée, Miss Blackwater. So knowing where I was, he looked me up and told me what I have told you. It seems he had heard I was due to return home, and he asked me to look up his brother and Miss Blackwater, and to tell them that his death was by no means certain, and that he might turn up all right.

'Not long after, fresh drafts of men came to Bizna, and on the day they arrived I asked a young chap called Dawkins who they were. He mentioned several names, and among them was Springfield's.

' "What Springfield?" I asked, for I remembered I had a distant relative of that name.

' "Oh, he was in Upper Egypt. His family came from Devonshire, and he was a great friend of Maurice St. Mabyn who was killed. Poor chap, when he told us the story he nearly broke down. I never knew he had so much feeling in him."

'I don't know why it was, but I lost my head. I suppose the fellow's hypocrisy disgusted me so that I blurted out what St. Mabyn told me to keep quiet.

' "The blackguard," I said "he deserves to be shot, and will be shot, or hanged!"

' "Who's a blackguard?" asked Dawkins.

' "Springfield," I replied. "Grieving about the death of Maurice St. Mabyn! Why, the coward, he—he—; but Maurice St. Mabyn will turn up again, and—and——"

‘ "But St. Mabyn’s dead!” cried Dawkins. “I saw it reported myself.”

‘ "He isn’t dead?” I blurted out.

‘ "But how can that be?” asked Dawkins.

‘ "Because I believe in my own eyes and ears,” I replied.

‘After that, I was under the impression that I was watched and followed. More than once when I thought I was alone I heard stealthy footsteps behind me, but although I tried to verify my suspicions I could not. However, I did not trouble, for in due time I started for home. I arranged to break my journey to Bombay at a place where I had been stationed for six months. It was only a one horse sort of a show, but I had some pals there, and they had insisted on my spending a day or two with them. It took me three days to get there, and on my arrival I found a long telegram purporting to be from my colonel, requesting me to go to an outpost station where important information would be given me. It also urged me to be silent about it.

‘Of course, although I was on leave, I was anxious to fall in with my colonel’s wishes, and so, instead of going straight on to Bombay, when I left my pals, I went towards this outpost station.’

‘Were you alone?’ I asked.

‘Except for my native servant whom I had arranged to take back to England with me. We had not gone far when my servant stopped. “There is something wrong, master,” he said. “Let us go back.”

‘He had scarcely spoken, when there was the crack of a pistol, and several men pounced upon me. I was thrown from my horse, and very roughly handled.’

‘Did you see the men?’ I asked.

My friend was silent for a few seconds, then he replied, ‘I can swear that one of them was Springfield. Some one had given me a blow on the head, and I was a bit dizzy and bewildered; but I am certain that Springfield was there.’

‘Then you believe——’

‘The thing’s pretty evident, isn’t it?’ he said. ‘He had a double purpose to accomplish. If I were dead I could no longer be a danger to him as far as St. Mabyn was concerned, and ——’

‘He was the next in succession to your father’s title, and

would naturally be his heir,' I interrupted. 'But what happened to you after that?'

He shuddered like a man afraid. 'I don't like to think of it,' he said. 'As I told you there was one black spot in my past which I couldn't remember clearly. That's it. But I have dim memories of torture and imprisonment. I know I suffered untold agonies. I have only fitful glimpses of that time, but in those glimpses I see myself fighting, struggling, suffering until a great blackness fell upon me. Then I remember nothing till I came to myself on the road to Bombay, with my memory gone. The rest you know.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII
A BOMBSHELL

After this followed a series of events, startling, almost unbelievable and utterly unexpected, such as only take place in real life. Had this story been the outcome of my own imagination, I should never dare to relate them; but because I have undertaken the task of writing what actually took place I can do no other.

This was how they happened:

We were sitting together after dinner that night in the most commonplace fashion imaginable. Lord and Lady Carbis had announced their intention to leave early on the following morning, and their son had promised to go with them. George St. Mabyn and Springfield were there, having accepted Lady Bolivick's invitation to spend the evening with them. Norah Blackwater, who had been a guest at the house for some days, was also there.

'I think as I am leaving to-morrow,' and Jack only slightly raised his voice, 'that I ought to tell you all something, something—important.'

Instantly there was a deathly silence, and with a quick movement every one turned to the speaker.

'I imagine my motives may be questioned,' he went on. 'I am sure, too, that what I say will be denied; but that doesn't matter.'

He hesitated a second as if doubtful how he had best continue, but the tone of his voice and the purport of his words had done their work. Even Lady Bolivick dropped her knitting, and looked quite disturbed.

'This is what I have to tell you,' he said. 'Maurice St. Mabyn is alive; at least he was in July, 1914, months after he was announced to be dead.'

I saw George St. Mabyn start to his feet, his lips livid, while Norah Blackwater gave a cry which was not far removed from a scream.

'Perhaps I ought to have told this in a different way,' went on my friend. 'Perhaps, directly my memory came back to me,

and the events of the past became clear again, I ought to have sought out George St. Mabyn, and especially Colonel Springfield, and told them privately what I know. However, I have thought a good deal before speaking, and—and as this is a family party, I have adopted this method.'

'Why should you tell Colonel Springfield?' and George St. Mabyn seemed to be speaking against his will.

'Because he is most deeply implicated, and because he will have most to explain.'

I heard Springfield laugh at this, a laugh half of derision, half of anger.

'I am afraid,' he said quietly, 'that although we have all congratulated Lord and Lady Carbis on the return of their son, that his loss of memory has disturbed his mental equilibrium in other ways.'

'Oh, no,' said Jack quietly, 'I am quite sane. No doubt it would simplify your course of action very much if I were not, but as a matter of fact my mind was never clearer. My father and mother will tell you that I was never given to hysterics, and I am no great hand at imagination.'

'But—but if you have—have proof of this,'—it was George St. Mabyn who spoke, and his voice was hoarse and unnatural,—'why—why'——? by heaven, it's monstrous!'

Springfield laughed like one amused.

'I do not wish to wound any one's feelings,' he said, 'but I suppose many madmen think they are sane. Of course we sympathize with Lord and Lady Carbis, but I am afraid there is only one conclusion that we can come to. Only on the night when his father and mother came here, before this marvellous change in his memory took place, he said something similar to this, and—and of course we can only regard it as the hallucination of an unbalanced mind. Let us hope after a few months' quiet, things will be normal again.'

'Of course I knew you would take this attitude, Colonel Springfield,' replied Jack quietly. 'You have reason to.'

'What reason?' he snarled.

'Are you sure you wish me to tell?'

'Yes, tell anything, everything you can! Only be sure it's the truth. Else by——!' he remembered himself suddenly and then went on: 'But this is madness, pure madness!'

'I'll not deal with motives,' went on my friend, still

speaking quietly; ‘they will doubtless come out in good time. For that matter I would rather say no more at present. I have only said what I have to give you a chance—of—of clearing out.’

Springfield gave me a quick glance, and then for a moment lost control of himself.

‘Oh, I see,’ he said. ‘This is a plot. Luscombe is in it. He has been discussing things with this—this lunatic, and this hatched-up absurdity is the result.’

I think Springfield felt he had made a false move the moment he had spoken. Directly my name was mentioned, it became evident that the plea of my friend’s madness broke down.

‘At any rate,’ he went on, ‘I am not to be intimidated, and I will not listen to any hysterical slanderings.’

‘Pardon me,’ said Jack quietly, ‘but Luscombe knew nothing whatever of my intentions. You are sure you want me to go on?’ he added quietly.

‘Go on by all means. Doubtless you will be amusing. But mind,’ and Springfield’s voice became threatening, ‘I am a dangerous man to trifle with.’

‘I have grave reasons for knowing that,’ was Jack’s reply; ‘but let that pass. About three years ago news arrived in England that Maurice St. Mabyn was dead—killed in a skirmish in Egypt. Some time afterwards Colonel or Captain Springfield as he was then, came to Devonshire, and gave a detailed account of his death. He said he was with him during his last moments, together with—other interesting things. From the account given Maurice St. Mabyn died in April, 1914, and Colonel Springfield came, I think, in September, or October. By this time George St. Mabyn had not only taken possession of his brother’s estates, but had also become the suitor for the hand of his brother’s fiancée.’

‘Surely,’ cried Springfield, as if in protest, ‘there is no need to distress us all by probing the wounds made three years ago. Personally I think it is cruel.’

‘It would be cruel but for what I am going to say,’ replied Jack Carbis. ‘As it happens, Maurice St. Mabyn was not dead at the time. I saw him,—spoke with him in Bizna in the July of that year.’

‘You saw Maurice in July, although he was reported dead

in April!' cried Sir Thomas. 'Why—why——; but it can't be true! That is—are you sure? I say, George, wasn't the news definite—concise? Yes, I remember it was. I saw the Egyptian newspaper account.'

'I suppose you don't expect any one here to believe in this cock-and-bull story,' and Springfield laughed uneasily. 'But may one ask,' he continued, 'why we are regaled with this—this romance?'

'Yes,' replied Jack, 'you may ask; but if I were you I wouldn't. I'd make myself scarce.'

I saw Springfield's eyes contract, and his whole attitude reminded me of an angry dog.

'You must tell us all what you mean by that,' he snarled. 'I'm sorry, Lady Bolivick, that such a scene as this should take place in your house, but I must defend myself.'

'Against whom? Against what? What charges have been made?' and Jack Carbis still spoke quietly and naturally.

Again Springfield lost control of himself. 'Oh, I know,' he cried, 'that you and Luscombe have been plotting against me for years. I know that you would poison the mind of——; that is—why should I deny it? I love Miss Bolivick. I have loved her from the first hour I saw her. I have sought her honourably. I would give my immortal soul to win her, such is my love for her. I know, too, that you, Edgecumbe, or Carbis, or whatever you may call yourself, are jealous of me, because you are madly in love with her yourself. By unproved, unprovable because they are lying, statements, you are trying to poison the mind of the women I love against me. You are suggesting that I sent home and brought home false accounts of Maurice St. Mabyn's death for some sinister purpose. You are hinting at all sorts of horrible things. Great God, haven't you done enough to thwart me? Oh, yes—I'll admit it, I expected to be Lord Carbis's heir. I had reason. But for you I—I——but there, seeing you have robbed me of what I thought was my legitimate fortune, don't try to rob me of my good name. It's—it's all I have!'

At that moment I looked at Lorna Bolivick, and I thought I saw admiration in her eyes; I felt that never was Springfield's hold upon her stronger than now.

'Tell us plainly what you want to say,' continued Springfield; 'formulate your charges. Tell me of what I am

guilty. But by the God who made us, you shall prove your words. I will not be thrust into a hopeless hell by lying innuendos and unproved charges.'

For the first time I thought my friend looked confused and frightened. It might be that the personality of the other had mastered him, and that although he had gone several steps forward in his attack, he now desired to turn back. He seemed about to speak, then hesitated and was silent.

'Why force me to tell the truth?' he said lamely. 'I do not wish to say more. Take my advice, and leave while you may.'

'I am a soldier,' cried Springfield, 'and I am not one to run away—especially from vague threats. Nay, more,' and he turned to Lorna Bolivick, 'Miss Bolivick—Lorna, to prove how I scorn these vague threats, I ask you here and now, although I am only a poor man, and have nothing to offer you but the love of a poor soldier, to give me the happiness I have so longed and prayed for.'

CHAPTER XXXIX
SPRINGFIELD AT BAY

But Lorna did not speak. That she realized the situation no one could doubt. The sea in which the bark of her life was sailing was full of cross currents, and in her excitement she did not know the course she ought to steer.

It was here that Sir Thomas Bolivick thought it right to speak. I gathered that he was not pleased at Springfield's avowal, for while he doubtless favoured his suit while he was to all appearances the heir to Lord Carbis, events had changed everything.

'Why have you told us this now, and—and in such a way?' he asked, turning to my friend.

Jack hesitated a second before replying. He realized that nothing could prejudice his cause in Lorna's eyes more than by attacking his rival.

'Because I want to save Miss Bolivick,' he said.

'From what? Tell us plainly what you mean!'

'From promising to marry a man who is unworthy of her, and who would blacken her life.'

'Prove it. You have said too much or too little. Either prove what you have said, or withdraw it.'

Springfield laughed aloud. 'Surely,' he said, 'we have had enough of this! You see, after all his bluster, what it really amounts to.'

'Just a minute, please,' and Jack's voice became almost menacing. 'I am not in the habit of blustering. I have warned you to go away from here, and as you have forced me to go into details I will do so. You insist, then, that I lie when I say that I saw Maurice St. Mabyn alive in the July of 1914?'

'I do not say that, but I do say that you are suffering from an hallucination,' replied Springfield. 'You may have recovered your memory, but in doing so you suffer from remembering more than ever took place.'

'You insist on that?'

'Certainly I do. I can do no other. If you are not mentally deranged, you are a—— I would rather not use the word,' he

added with a laugh.

'You see,' went on Jack, 'that he is very anxious to prove Maurice St. Mabyn to have been killed in a native uprising. I'll tell you why. He tried to murder him, and it was only by the mercy of God that he failed to do so.'

'Murder him! How dare you say such a thing?' gasped Sir Thomas.

'Maurice told me so himself—told me in India in 1914.'

'Great God, you shall prove this!' and now Springfield was really aroused. 'If he was not dead in July, 1914, where has he been these three years? Why has he sent no word? What has become of him? Who has seen him since April of that year when he was killed?—I mean besides this madman?'

'General Gregory, to whom he reported himself.'

'Do you mean to say that he reported himself to General Gregory?' His voice was hoarse, and I saw him reel as though some one had struck him.

'I do mean to say so. He told me so himself. If I have told a lie, you can easily prove it by communicating with him.'

Springfield laughed again, and in his laugh was a ring of triumph.

'It is easy to say that, because Gregory is dead. He died two years ago. A dead man is a poor witness.'

'I don't ask any one to accept my words without proof,' said Jack Carbis. 'Proof will not be wanting. You say that Maurice St. Mabyn was killed in a skirmish, that you saw his dead body, and that you had no hand whatever in it?'

'I *do* say it,' cried Springfield hoarsely. 'I swear by Almighty God that your charges are venomous lies, and——'

But he did not finish the sentence. At that moment I heard the murmur of voices outside the room, the door opened, and a tall, bronzed but somewhat haggard-looking man entered the room.

'Maurice!'

It was George St. Mabyn who uttered the word, but it was not like his voice at all.

The new-comer gave a quick glance around the room, as though he wanted to take in the situation, then he took a quick step towards Lady Bolivick.

'Will you forgive me for coming in this way, Lady Bolivick?' he said quietly. 'But I could not help myself. I only

got back an hour or two ago, and the servants were so upset that they lost their heads entirely. But they did manage to tell me that George was here, so I took the liberty of an old friend and——; but what's this? Is anything the matter? George, old man, why—why——' and he looked at George St. Mabyn and Norah Blackwater inquiringly.

But George St. Mabyn did not speak; instead, he stood staring at his brother with terror-stricken eyes.

'You thought I was dead, eh?' and there was a laugh in Maurice St. Mabyn's voice. 'I'm worth a good many dead men yet.'

Again he looked around the room until his eyes rested upon Springfield, who had been watching his face from the moment of his entrance.

'By Jove, St. Mabyn,' he cried, and I could see he was fighting for self-mastery; 'but you have played us a trick. Here have we all been wasting good honest grief on you. But—but—I am glad, old man. I—I——'

His speech ended in a gasp. His words seemed to be frozen by the cold glitter of Maurice St. Mabyn's eyes. Never in my whole life have I seen so much contempt, so much loathing in a man's face as I saw in the face of the new-comer at that moment. But he did not speak. He simply turned on his heel, and addressed Sir Thomas Bolivick.

'You seem surprised, and something more than surprised at seeing me, Sir Thomas,' he said; 'but you are glad to see me, aren't you?'

'Glad!' cried the old man. 'Glad! Why, God bless my soul, Maurice! I—I—but—but glad?'—and he began to mop his eyes vigorously.

'I think there'll be a lot of explanations by and by,' went on Maurice,' especially after I've had a chat with my old friend, Jack Carbis, over there. Jack, you rascal, you've a lot to tell me, haven't you? By the way, George,'—and he gave Springfield a glance,—'I understand that this fellow is a guest at St. Mabyn. Will you tell him, as you seem friendly with him, that my house is not good for his health.'

Springfield looked from one to another like a man in despair. The coming of Maurice St. Mabyn had been such a confirmation of all that Jack Carbis had said, that he saw no loophole of escape anywhere. But this was only for a moment.

Even in his defeat the man's character as a fighter was evident.

'St. Mabyn,' he said hoarsely, 'I swear by Heaven that you are mistaken! Of course I was mistaken—and—and no one is gladder than I—that you have turned up. Give me fair play,—give me a chance—give me time, and I'll clear up everything!'

'Will you tell the fellow,' and Maurice St. Mabyn still spoke to his brother, 'that a motor-car will be placed at his disposal to take him to any place he chooses to go. Tell him, too, that I do not propose to—to have anything to do with him in any way unless he persists in hanging on to you; but that if he does, the War Office and the world shall know what he is, and what he has done.'

Still Springfield did not give in. He turned again to Lorna Bolivick, and as he did so I realized, as I never realized before, that the man really loved her. I believed then, as I believe now, that all his hopes, all his plottings, were centred in one desire, and that was to win the love of this girl.

'Miss Bolivick, Lorna,' he said hoarsely, 'you do not tell me to go, do you? You believe in me? I will admit that things look against me; but I swear to you that I am as innocent of their charges as you are; that—that——' He ceased speaking suddenly, as though his words were frozen on his lips, then he burst out like a man in agony, 'Why do you look at me like that?' he gasped.

But she did not speak. Instead, she stood still, and looked at him steadily. There was an unearthly expression in her eyes; she seemed to be trying to look into his soul, to read his innermost thoughts. For a few seconds there was a deathly silence, then with a quick movement she turned and left the room.

Again Springfield looked from face to face as if he were hoping for support; then I saw pride flash into his eyes.

'Lady Bolivick, Sir Thomas,' he said quietly, 'I am deeply sorry that this—this scene should have taken place. As you know I am not responsible. Thank you for your kind hospitality.' Then he turned and left the room, and a few seconds later we heard his footsteps on the gravel outside.

CHAPTER XL
MAURICE ST. MABYN'S GENEROSITY

Of what happened afterwards, and of the explanations which were given, it is not for me to write. They do not come within the scope of this history, and would be scarcely of interest to the reader. One thing, however; specially interested me, and that was the large-heartedness of Maurice St. Mabyn. He refused to allow his brother to attempt any explanation, although I felt sure he understood what his brother had done.

'Of course you could not help believing me dead, George,' he said with a laugh. 'That fellow Springfield sent home and brought home all sorts of circumstantial evidence, and you naturally took things over. No, not another word. The fellow has gone, and I'll see that he stays away.'

'But—but why didn't you write, Maurice?' stammered the other.

'Couldn't, my dear chap. For more than two years I was away from civilization; for six months I was a prisoner among the Turks; and when at length, after the taking of Baghdad I was released, I was too ill to do anything, Besides, I thought Jack Carbis would have set your minds at rest. But there, I shall have a great yarn to tell you later.'

To Norah Blackwater he was coldly polite. That she had become his brother's fiancée within a few months of his reported death evidently wounded him deeply, although he made not the slightest reference to it. For my own part I was almost sorry for the girl. I do not believe she had ever cared for George St. Mabyn, although there could be no doubt of his fondness for her. Even when she had accepted him, her heart belonged to Maurice, but being desperately poor, and believing George to be the true heir to the St. Mabyn estates, she had given her promise. But this is only conjecture on my part. Nevertheless, it was impossible not to pity her. Her eyes, as she looked at Maurice, told their own story; she knew that she loved him; knew, too, that she had lost him for ever.

I was not present during the long conversation Maurice St. Mabyn and Jack Carbis had together that night, but before I

went to sleep the latter came into my room.

'This has been a great night, Luscombe,' he said.

'Great night!' I repeated. 'I can hardly believe that I have not been dreaming all the time.'

'But you haven't,' he replied with a laugh. 'All the same, I almost believed I was losing my head when Maurice St. Mabyn came into the room. Isn't he a splendid chap though? No noise, no bluster, no accusations. But he understood.'

'Understood what?'

'Everything.'

'And you believe that Maurice knows of George's complicity in Springfield's plans?'

'Of course he knows. But he'll not let on to George. He realizes that Springfield played on his brother's weakness and made his life one long haunting fear.'

'But what about Norah Blackwater?'

'Ah, there we have the tragedy!'

'Why, do you think Maurice cares for her still?'

'I'm sure she cares for him. But he's adamant. He'll never forgive her, never. I wonder—I wonder——'

'What?'

He started to his feet and left the room.

I hadn't a chance of speaking with him the next day, for he left by an early train with his father and mother. They had naturally insisted on his returning to his home with them, and although they asked me to accompany them, I was unable to do so, as I had to report myself to my C.O. on the following day. I had arranged to catch the afternoon train to London, and then motor to the camp in time for duty.

About eleven o'clock I saw Lorna Bolivick leave the house and make her way towards a rosery which had been made some little distance away.

'Lorna,' I said, 'I have to leave directly after lunch; you don't mind my inflicting myself on you, do you?'

She looked at me with a wan smile.

'It's splendid about Maurice St. Mabyn, isn't it?'

'It's wonderful,' she replied, but there was no enthusiasm in her tones.

There was a silence between us for some seconds, then I said awkwardly, 'His—his—coming was a wonderful vindication of my friend, wasn't it?'

‘Did he need any vindication?’ she asked.

‘I imagined you thought so last night—forgive me,’ I replied, angry with myself for having blurted out the words.

I saw the colour mount to her cheeks, and I thought her eyes flashed anger.

‘It might seem as though everything had been pre-arranged,’ I went on, ‘but I’m sure he could not help himself. Never did a man love a woman more than Edgecumbe—that is Jack Carbis, loves you. He felt it to be his duty to you to expose Springfield. He knew all along that he was an evil fellow.’

She did not speak, and again I went on almost in spite of myself.

‘I have thought a good deal about what you said. Surely you never thought of marrying him?’

‘Yes, I did.’

‘Because you loved him?’

She shook her head. ‘No, I never loved him,’ she replied quickly, angrily. ‘The very thought of——’ she stopped suddenly, and was silent for a few seconds; and then went on, ‘I cannot tell you. It would——; no, I cannot tell you.’

‘I know it’s no business of mine,’ I continued,’ and yet it is. No man had a better friend than Jack, and—and—owing to the peculiar way we were brought together perhaps, no man ever felt a deeper interest in another man than I feel in him. That is why——; I say, Lorna, I’m afraid he’d be mad with me for telling you, but—but—he’d give the world to marry you.’

‘I shall never marry him,’ and her words were like a cry of despair.

‘But—but——’

‘I shall never marry him,’ she repeated, still in the same tones.

At that moment we heard Sir Thomas Bolivick’s voice, and turning, saw him coming towards us with a look of horror on his face.

‘I say, this is ghastly,’ he said.

‘What is it, dad?’ asked Lorna anxiously.

‘It’s terrible, simply terrible,—and yet—you see—Maurice St. Mabyn has just telegraphed me. He says he has just received a message from Plymouth. That man Springfield was

found dead an hour or so ago.'

'Found dead!' I gasped.

'Yes, in his room in the —— Hotel. Committed suicide.'

I looked at Lorna's face almost instinctively. It was very pale, and there could be no doubt but that she was terribly shocked by the news. And yet I felt sure I saw a look on her face which suggested relief. But beyond her quick breathing she uttered no sound.

'It's terrible,' went on Sir Thomas, 'but after—after last night I'm not sure—it's—it's not a relief to us all. Evidently the fellow——; but—but it's terrible, isn't it? Of course the hotel people wired St. Mabyn, as he told them at the bureau that he had just come from his house.'

'How did he die?' I asked.

'Poison,' replied Sir Thomas. 'He seems to have injected some sort of Indian poison into his veins. Evidently he had it with him, as the doctor says it is unobtainable anywhere in England. He left a letter, too.'

'A letter? To whom?'

'I don't quite know. To George St. Mabyn I expect. Awful, isn't it?'

I saw him look at Lorna; but her face told him nothing. She appeared perfectly calm, although I felt sure she was suffering.

'I am awfully sorry your visit should have ended like this, Luscombe,' said Sir Thomas three hours later; 'but you must come down again when you can get a day or two off. Don't wait for a formal invitation; we shall always be glad to see you.'

'Thank you, I'll take you at your word, Sir Thomas; meanwhile you'll keep me posted up with the news, won't you?'

'You mean about—— Yes, I'll let you know what happens. Where are you going, Lorna?'

'I'm going with Major Luscombe to the station, if he'll let me,' was her reply.

'You've something to tell me, Lorna,' I said when we had started.

She shook her head.

'You are sure? Has Springfield's death made no difference?'

'No,' she replied, then she hesitated, and repeated the

word.

‘Jack’ll ask you again, Lorna. Of course he’s not told me; but he will. He is one who never gives up. Never.’

‘It’s no use,’ she said wearily. ‘It’s impossible, everything’s impossible.’

‘Nothing’s impossible to a chap like Jack. You don’t mean to say that Springfield——’

‘Don’t,’ she pleaded. ‘You don’t know; he—he doesn’t know; if he did——,’ and then she lapsed into silence.

‘I’m coming down again soon,’ I said as I entered the train. ‘I promised your father I would.’

‘Do, do,’ and she held my hand almost feverishly.

CHAPTER XLI
THE NEW HOPE

Nothing more than was absolutely necessary appeared in the newspapers about Springfield's death. In a letter which he wrote before taking his life he explained his action in a few characteristic words.

'Life's not worth living, that's why I'm going to die. I do not wish any question asked of any one why I intend to solve the "great secret," very suddenly. I'm tired of the whole show. That's enough explanation for any one. I am quite sane, and I hope no fool set of jurymen will bring in a verdict about my taking my life while in an unsound mind. I am reaping as I've sown, and I dare say if I had been a pattern young man things might have ended differently. But there it is. The game, as far as I am concerned, is not worth the candle. Besides, the game's played out. I am grateful to those of my friends who have been kind to me. The personal letters I am writing must be regarded as private and confidential. By that I mean they must not be read to satisfy the vulgar curiosity of the gaping crowd, and no questions must be asked of their recipients. Their contents are meant only for those to whom they are addressed.'

According to the newspaper reports, no awkward questions were asked of Sir Thomas Bolivick, or any members of the party with whom he had dined the night before he died, and the twelve jurymen who brought in a verdict of suicide said nothing about an 'unsound mind.'

Mention was made, however, of a sealed letter, placed by the side of the one I have copied. This letter bore no address, and nothing was written on the envelope but the words: 'This package must *not* be opened within a week of my burial.'

Comparing this instruction with the 'open letter,' I judged that the package contained more than one letter, but no further information was given.

At the beginning of August two letters arrived by the same post. One was from Lorna Bolivick, and the other was from my friend. The latter was simply a command to get a few days

off, and to come and see him. He wanted a chat badly, he said, and if I could not get away, he would come to me, but surely I was not so important that I couldn't be spared for a week-end, if not more. He also insisted that I must send him a wire at once.

On opening Lorna's letter, I found practically the same request. The doctor had forbidden her resuming her nursing work for some months, she said, and had suggested that she should go to the seaside. But this she had refused to do, as she hated leaving her home. Besides, her brother Tom might come home on leave almost any day, and she wanted to be there to meet him.

'But you said you promised dad to pay us another visit as soon as you could,' her letter concluded, 'and I am writing to remind you of your promise. You told me you had some leave still due to you after your last visit, so why not come at once? The sooner the better.'

She gave no special reason for asking me to come, but I read into her appeal a desire to tell me something, and perhaps to ask my advice. I therefore had a chat with my C.O., with the result that I started to see my friend the same day.

On arriving at the station I found him on the platform awaiting me.

'Now this is sensible,' he cried with a laugh. 'This is something like dispatch. Come on, I have a motor outside. I suppose you will trust me to drive you.'

'You look fit, anyhow,' I said.

'Fit as a fiddle,' he replied. 'I go back to the front in four days.'

He looked years younger than when I had first seen him. The old wistful look in his eyes had almost entirely gone, while the parchment-like skin had become almost as smooth and ruddy as that of a boy.

'Oh, it has been glorious,' he said. 'I've taken the little mother to all sorts of places, and dad declares she looks twenty years younger. More than once we've been taken for lovers.'

'And your memory, Jack?'

'Sound as a bell. Wonderful, isn't it? Sometimes I'm almost glad I went through it all. After—after—years of darkness and loneliness, to emerge suddenly into the light! To have a mother, and a father, and—a home!'

‘And you and your father get on well together?’

‘Yes, in a way. But I have a lot to tell you about that. Here we are!’

I shall not attempt to describe Jack Carbis’s home, nor the welcome I received. Had I been their son, Lord and Lady Carbis could not have received me with greater joy.

It was not until late that Jack and I were able to be alone, but at length when the others had gone to bed we found ourselves in a kind of snuggery which had been especially set apart for his own personal use.

‘It’s great, having you here,’ he cried, as he threw himself into an arm-chair; ‘great to feel alive, and to remember things. Have you heard from Bolivick?’

‘Yes, Sir Thomas sent me a line, also a newspaper containing a report of the inquest. Have you?’

He shook his head. ‘We wrote immediately after we left, and Lady Bolivick has written to mother, but—nothing more.’

‘Of course you got particulars about Springfield. It seems he left a sealed packet. Did it contain a letter for you?’

‘No, nothing. I often wonder who he wrote to. Do you know anything?’

‘Nothing. But I propose going to Bolivick to-morrow; perhaps they’ll tell me.’

‘To-morrow! I say, old man, have you heard from her?’

I nodded. ‘No, her letter contained nothing that would interest you,’ I continued as I noted the look of inquiry in his eyes. ‘Why don’t you go with me? It would seem quite natural, seeing you are off to the front so soon.’

He hesitated a second, and then shook his head. ‘No, Luscombe,’ he said, ‘she’ll send for me if she wants me.’

‘That’s not the way to win a girl. How can she send for you?’

‘I seem to have lost confidence since my memory came back,’ he replied. ‘When I told her I loved her, although I didn’t seem to have the ghost of a chance, I felt confident, serene. Now I’m sure of nothing.’

‘Nothing?’ I queried. ‘Do you mean to say that—that your faith in God and that kind of thing is gone?’

‘No, no,’ he replied quickly. ‘That remains. It’s the foundation of everything, everything. But God doesn’t do things in the way we expect, and when we expect. After all,

our life here is only a fragment, and God has plenty of time. He's never in a hurry. It's all right, old man. She'll be mine some time. If not in this world, in another.'

'If I loved a girl, I'd move heaven and earth to get her in this life.'

'Yes, don't fear that I'm not going to do my bit; but I've had a little time for thinking, and I've had to adjust myself to —to my new conditions.'

'With what results? How do things strike you now?'

'What things? The war?'

'Yes, that among others. Have you the same views you had? After our peregrinations through London, you were not optimistic, I remember. You seemed to regard England as in a bad way. You said we were not fit for victory. What are your views now?'

He was silent a few seconds before replying.

'I expect I was a bit of a fool,' he said presently. 'I'm afraid my outlook was narrow and silly. You see, I had no experience to go on. I had no standards.'

'No standards?' I repeated. 'You mean, then, that you've given all your fine sentiments the go-by?'

'And if I had?' he said with a smile. 'Should you be sorry or glad?'

I was silent. As I have stated I had not agreed with him, and yet I should have been sorry had he become like many another of his class.

'I see,' and he laughed gaily. 'No, old man, I've given nothing the go-by. No doubt, I overstated things a bit. No wonder. I saw things only in the light of the present. But in the main I was right.'

'Then what do you mean by saying that your outlook was narrow and silly?'

'I mean this. I looked on life without being able to compare it with what it was before the war. When I went with you through London, and saw the things I saw, when I saw the basest passions pandered to, when I saw vice walking openly, and not ashamed, I said, "God is keeping victory from us because we are not fit for it." In a sense I believe it still. Admiral Beatty was right. "Just so long as England remains in a state of religious indifference, just so long will the war continue. When the nation, the Empire comes to God with

humility and with prayer on her lips, then we can begin to count the days towards the end." And that's right. The nation itself, by its lack of faith in God, by its materialism, by its want of prayer, by its greed, and its sin, has kept victory from coming. I tell you the great need of the age is prophets, men of God, calling us to God.'

'And do you stand by what you said about drink?'

'To every word. That phase of our national life has been and is horrible. While vested interests in this devilish thing remain paramount, we are partly paralysed. You see, it is the parent of a great part of the crime of the country. Oh, yes, I stand by that. All the same I was wrong.'

'Why wrong?'

'Because I did not look deep enough. Because I was not able to see the tremendous change that has been wrought.'

'I don't understand,' I said.

'It's this way. You, because the change which has come over the land has come slowly and subtly, have hardly been able to see it. But when, a few weeks ago, my memory came back to me, I realized a sort of shock. I saw how tremendous the change was, and is. A few years ago I was home for a long leave, and I went a good deal into society. What did I see? I saw that the women of England were in the main a mass of useless, purposeless butterflies. I saw that the great mass of the young men of our class were mere empty-headed, worthless parasites. The whole country was given over to money getting and pleasure seeking. I didn't realize it then; but I do now. On every hand they were craving for unnatural excitement, and doubtless there was a great danger of our race becoming decadent. But these last few weeks I've realized the difference. Why, our people have been glorious, simply glorious! See what an earnest tone pervades all life. Think of what the women of all classes have done, and are doing! Think of their change of outlook! Instead of being mere bridge-playing, gambling, purposeless things, finding their pleasures in all sorts of silly fads and foolishness, they've given themselves to service—loyal, noble service. The young fellows who filled up their time by being mere club-loungers, empty-headed society dudes, whose chief talk was women, the latest thing in neckties, or their handicap at golf, are now doing useful work, or fighting for the best in life. As for the rank and file, life has

a new meaning to them, and they've become heroes.

'Mind you, we've still a long way to go; but we are on the right road. God is speaking out of the whirlwind and the fire. Religion may not be expressing itself in Church-going, but it is expressing itself in deeper, grander ways. I failed to see it; but I see it now. Oh, man, if England will only be true to the call of God, we can become the wonder and glory of the world!'

'Then you believe we are ready for victory?'

'I do not say that; but we are getting ready. God has been putting us through the refining fires, and I can see such a democracy emerging out of this world upheaval as was never known before.'

'And yet the war does not appear to be coming to an raid,' I urged. 'Think of Russia. Russia is a wild chaos, the victim of every passing fancy. Anarchy is triumphant, and the great army which should be a tower of strength is a rope of sand. If Russia had been true, we should have been——'

'Don't be in a hurry, my friend. God never is. Things will brighten in that direction. I don't say the war will be ended on the battlefield. Sometimes I think it won't. God does things in big ways. Surely the history of the last few months has taught us that. With Him nothing is impossible. People say that Kaiserdom stands more firmly than ever. What of that? The Kaiser may become more autocratic than ever, but his doom is written for all that. What is happening to his invincible legions? They will never save him. We are going to have a new world, my friend, and the pomp of the Kaiser will become a thing of yesterday.'

He was silent a few seconds, and then went on.

'There is something else, too. Russia has failed us, failed us because of corruption, and injustice. But God does not fail. No sooner did Russia yield, than America spoke. Her voice was the voice of the new Democracy. America's action is one of the greatest things in the world. Without thought of gain and realizing her sacrifice she has answered the call of God, and thrown herself into this struggle for the liberty and justice of the world. Had our cause not been righteous America would not have done this, but because it is God's Cause she could not resist the call to give her all. Yes, my friend,

‘The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small.’

CHAPTER XLII
AN UNFINISHED STORY

I left Jack Carbis the following day, and made my way to Bolivick. I did my best to persuade him to come with me; but he would not.

'No, not yet,' he said in answer to my entreaties, and yet I knew that he longed to come.

We had talked far into the night, and he had opened his heart to me as never before; but it is not for me to tell all he said.

When I reached Bolivick I found Lorna looking pale and ill, and I felt sure something was preying on her mind. The house was nearly empty, too. Her brother had not yet arrived from the front, and there were no visitors. I was glad of this, however, as it gave me a chance of talking with her alone.

'I have just come from Jack,' I said, as we left the house for a walk after dinner.

She did not speak, but I knew by the quick catch in her breath what interest my words had to her.

'He's going to France in three days,' I went on. 'He is reported fit for general service. I tried to persuade him to come with me.'

'I dare say he has much to occupy him,' she said coldly.

'It's not that,' I replied. 'He wanted to come; but he thinks you do not want him. He said he would not come till you sent for him.'

'And does he think I'll do that?' she asked, a little angrily I thought.

'No, I don't think he does. But he's sensitive, and—and of course he heard what Springfield said. He remembers, too, what you told him—that is, just before Maurice St. Mabyn came.'

'Does he think I—I cared for—for that man?'

'I don't know. It would be no wonder if he did. I say, Lorna, I don't understand your relations to Springfield. Was there anything between you?'

'Yes,' she replied.

‘He asked you to marry him; of course that’s no secret. You’ll forgive my speaking plainly, won’t you?’

‘What do you want to say?’

‘What was his power over you? I am taking advantage of our friendship, even at the risk of being rude and impertinent.’

‘He had no power over me,—in the way you think.’

‘That sounds like an admission. Is it?’

‘Yes, if you like.’

‘Then what was his power?’

She looked at me for a few seconds without speaking.

‘I can’t tell you,’ she replied presently.

For some time we walked on in silence; I thinking what her words might mean, she apparently deep in thought.

‘According to the newspaper,’ I said after we had gone some distance, ‘Springfield left a sealed packet containing letters. Was one of them for you?’

‘Yes.’

‘You do not feel disposed to tell me what it contained?’

‘I would if I could, but I—can’t.’

‘Then I’m going to see George St. Mabyn, and get it out of him.’

‘George does not know.’

Again there was a painful silence between us, and again I tried to understand what was in her mind.

‘Lorna,’ I said, ‘I want to tell you something. It has been in my mind a long time, but if there’s one thing you and I both despise it’s speaking ill of another. But I can’t help myself. You must know the truth.’

Thereupon I told her the whole of Springfield’s story as I knew it. I related to her the conversation I had heard between Springfield and George St. Mabyn. I described the attempts made to kill Jack Carbis. I told her what Colonel McClure had said, both in our conversations and in the letter he wrote me after Springfield’s death.

‘Why have you told me all this?’ she asked, and her voice was hard, almost bitter.

‘Because I do not think you understand the kind of man Springfield was.’

‘Excuse me, I understand perfectly.’

‘You knew all the time! Knew what I have just told you?’

‘No, I knew nothing of that; but I knew he was a bad man,

knew it instinctively from the first. That's what makes everything impossible now.'

'I don't understand.'

'No, of course you don't. Oh, I wish I could tell you.'

'Then do. I wouldn't ask you, only my friend's happiness means a lot to me.'

She caught my arm convulsively. 'Do you think he cares for me still?' she asked. 'Do you really?'

'I'm sure he does,' I replied.

'And you do not believe that the change in his life has made any difference to—to that?'

'Not a bit.'

'Oh, I have been mad—criminally mad!' she burst out passionately. 'No one despises me more than I despise myself. You say he loves me, but he would hate me, scorn me if—if he knew.'

'Knew what?'

'I can't tell you. I simply can't.'

'But you *will*!' I said grimly; 'you will tell me now.'

'Major Luscombe!'

'Yes, be as angry as you like, I am angry too. And I tell you plainly that I am not going to allow my friend's life to be ruined because of the vagaries of a silly child. For you *are* a silly child. You have got hold of some hare-brained fancy, and you are magnifying it into a mountain. You've got to tell me all about it, because I'm sure it stands in the way of my friend's happiness.'

'But you don't understand. I've been—oh, I'm ashamed of myself!'

Some men perhaps would, on listening to this outburst, have imagined some guilty secret on her part. But knowing her as I did, it was impossible for me to do so.

'You are going to tell me about it,' I said. 'What is it?'

'But you'll not tell him; promise me that.'

'You must trust me,' I replied, 'and your trust must be complete. What power had Springfield over you? What did he say to you in that letter?'

She was silent for a few seconds, then she said, 'You remember what I said about him when I first saw him?'

'Yes, you said he made you think of snakes. You told me you disliked him.'

‘That’s why I’m so ashamed. I knew he was a bad man, and yet he fascinated me. I was afraid of him, and yet he almost made me promise to marry him.’

‘Go on,’ I said when she hesitated, ‘tell me the rest.’

‘When—when—your friend came here for the first time, he—he——’

‘Fell in love with you. Yes, it is no use mincing words. The moment he saw you, he gave his life to you. He told me so. He told you so.’

‘I knew it before he told me.’

‘How did you know?’

Her tell-tale blush, her quivering lips, told their own story, and I could not help laughing aloud.

‘Don’t be cruel!’ she cried.

‘I am not cruel, I am only very happy. I am happy because my friend is going to be happy.’

‘But you don’t know all.’

‘I know that love overcomes all difficulties, and I know that you love each other.’

‘Yes, but listen. He—that is, that man—told me that although you did not know who your friend was, he knew. He said that he had been guilty of deeds in India, which if made known would mean life-long disgrace. That he, that is Colonel Springfield, had only to speak and—and oh, I can’t tell you! I’m too ashamed!’

‘I don’t need telling,’ I laughed. ‘I know. He bound you to secrecy before telling you anything. He found out that you loved Jack, and he used your love as a lever. Like the mean scoundrel he was, he tried to make you promise to marry him, by threatening to expose Jack if you wouldn’t. And you, because you were a silly girl, were afraid of him. You were the victim of an Adelphi melodrama plot.’

‘Oh, I am ashamed,’ she cried; ‘but—he showed me proofs, or what seemed to be proofs of his guilt. He said his loss of memory was real, but that he, Colonel Springfield, knew who he was, and—oh, I am mad when I think of it!’

‘And that’s all!’ I laughed, ‘Why, little girl, when Jack knows, he’ll rejoice in what you’ve told me.’

‘No, he won’t,’ she cried piteously. ‘Don’t you see, he made me believe it! That is why—why I’m so ashamed. What will he think when he knows I believed him guilty of the most

horrible things?'

'I know what he'll think when he knows that in order to save him you were ready to——'

'Besides, don't you see?' she interrupted, 'I refused him when he was nameless, and—and all that sort of thing, while now as Lord Carbis's son——'

But she did not finish the sentence. At that moment Jack Carbis leapt over a stile into the lane where we were walking.

With that quick intuition which I had so often noticed, he seemed to divine in a moment what we were talking about. He looked at us both for a few seconds without speaking, while both of us were so startled by his sudden appearance, that I think we were both incapable of uttering a word.

'How did you get here?' I gasped presently.

'I motored over,' he said. 'After you had left this morning —I—I—thought I would. It was only a hundred and fifty miles. They told me at the house which way you had gone, and ____'

'You followed us,' I interjected. 'Jack, I think you have something to say to Lorna, and I fancy Sir Thomas and Lady Bolivick may be lonely. I shall see you presently, shan't I?'

Lorna looked at me with frightened eyes, as if in protest, then she turned towards my friend.

'Will you come with me?' said Jack, and his voice was tremulous, 'I say, you will come, won't you?'

She hesitated a second, and then the two walked away together in the quiet Devonshire lane, while the shadows of evening gathered.

I did not go into the house on my return. Instead I sat on the lawn and awaited them. Darker and darker the night shadows fell, while the sky became star-spangled. Away, two hundred miles distant, the guns were booming, but here was peace.

The mystery, the wonder of it all came to me as I sat thinking. On the long battle line the armies of Empires were engaged in a deadly struggle, while close by a man was telling a girl that he loved her, while she would be foolishly trying to explain what required no explanation.

The moon was rising as they came back. The first beams were shining through the trees as I saw them approach.

‘Well, Lorna?’ I said as they came close to where I was.

She looked at me shyly, and then lifted her eyes to Jack’s. In the pale moonlight I saw the look of infinite happiness on her face.

‘May I, Jack?’ I said. ‘This morning you called me your brother, and as Lorna is to be my sister, may I claim a brother’s privilege?’

For answer, she threw her arms around my neck and kissed me.

‘I say,’ cried Jack with a happy laugh, ‘you are coming it a bit thick, aren’t you? I didn’t get one as easily as that.’

‘Of course not—you didn’t deserve to. But where are you off to?

‘I’m going to beard the lion in his den. I’m going to have a serious talk with Sir Thomas. Will you look after Lorna till I return?’

[The end of The Pomp of Yesterday by Hocking, Joseph]