J. E. B. SEELY

FEAR, AND BE SLAIN

ADVENTURES BY LAND, SEA AND AIR

Title: Fear, and be Slain--Adventures by Land, Sea and Air
Date of first publication: 1931
Author: John Edward Bernard Seely (Baron Mottistone) (1868-1947)
Date first posted: Aug. 28, 2023
Date last updated: Aug. 28, 2023
Faded Page eBook #20230854

This eBook was produced by: Al Haines, Pat McCoy & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at https://www.pgdpcanada.net

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ADVENTURE

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ADVENTURES BY LAND, SEA AND AIR

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J. E. B. SEELY

C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

"To fear the foe, since fear oppresseth strength,
Gives, in your weakness, strength unto your foe,
And so your follies fight against yourself.
Fear, and be slain; no worse can come to fight:
And fight and die is death destroying death;
Where fearing dying, pays death servile breath."

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON
WARWICK SQUARE, E.C. 4

First printed November 1931
Reprinted December 1931
This Cheaper Edition first issued July 1932

Printed in Great Britain for Hodder and Stoughton, Limited,
by Richard Clay & Sons, Limited, Bungay, Suffolk.

TO
MY WIFE

FOREWORD

"Safety first" is a vile motto. Men should rule themselves, and not be caught by catchwords; if such maxims be needed for human conduct, "Duty First," "King and Country First," above all, "Christ's Teaching First," may form the basis for a rule of life; "Others' Safety First" is the germ of a good maxim, though it is clumsily phrased; but "Safety First" is soul-destroying, a pestilent heresy which will rob the race of man of all incentive and spell doom to the British Empire. It is, indeed, really a euphemism for not facing facts, for lack of confidence in oneself or one's principles. Imagine Nelson fettered by that doctrine; or Florence Nightingale turning back from the Crimean horrors to her sunny garden and Safety First!

In this book are recorded some experiences of one individual over a long period of years, experiences as varied in nature as in date, but all alike in showing that "Safety Last" would be a better motto than "Safety First." In most of the episodes this doctrine is clear to see, but even in others, such as "A Message from the Sea," the same truth can be discerned; the "Last Words of a Dying Man," whatever the full story may have been, show clearly his desertion of the woman he loved in hope of gain or in fear of society.

In my book "Adventure" I described my continued efforts to overcome that useless failing of mankind—fear, showing that, though I have never succeeded, the conscious effort had helped me all my life. In this book I have recorded events as I knew them and as I remember them. As I peruse it for the last time before offering it to my readers, I see clearly the moral which all these experiences convey: Fear, and be slain: Believe, and live.

J. S.

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CHAPTER I

SEA AND STORM

I. THE MATE'S BROTHER

My home is on a lonely coast, jutting out into the Channel, facing south-west and meeting the full force of the great waves which roll up from the Atlantic all through the winter months. The whole coast would have been washed away long ago but for submerged ledges of rock, lying from a mile to a mile and a quarter out to sea. They are known as Brooke Ledges, Brightstone Ledges, and Atherfield Ledges, and are dreaded by mariners in thick or stormy weather; in my lifetime many a good ship has been lost on them. If the stoutest ship sticks fast on the outer ledges in a storm, she soon breaks up. I have seen it happen more than once; first one mast goes: then another: then, as Ben Jacobs, the cox of our lifeboat, used to say: "They opens like a book," and break up so completely that nothing but small wreckage comes ashore.

Many years ago—it was the third week in October 1891—there was a great storm, lasting from the 14th to the 17th of the month. Many ships were wrecked, and many lives lost off other parts of the coast, but none near us. The Solent and Spithead were crowded with vessels taking refuge from the storm. Amongst these, lying in Ryde Roads, was a little French brigantine of 450 tons, named *Henri et Léontine*. She was homeward bound to Nantes, lightly loaded, and just managed to creep into shelter on the night of the 17th.

On the morning of the 18th, a precisely similar vessel sailed in from the eastward and dropped anchor close by. It was her sister ship, the *Plombec*. They were owned, and had been built, by two brothers named le Talec twenty years before. Although they hailed from the same port they had not seen each other for over five years, being engaged in different trades.

Towards midday of the 18th the wind dropped to a gentle breeze, the glass went up, and the sun shone brightly. The masters and crews of the two vessels foregathered, and there was great rejoicing. The mates of the two vessels were brothers and many of the crews were related.

That evening it was almost calm, with a light northerly breeze, so they decided to sail home to Nantes together, starting soon after midnight. With a

fair wind they drew slowly past the Nab, and as dawn was breaking found themselves about three miles east of St. Catherine's. Then the wind shifted and began to blow hard from the west; then it backed with ever-increasing force first south-west and then south-east. All the time there was a heavy sea rolling in from the south-west. The little vessels managed to round St. Catherine's on the port tack, and set a course straight down Channel.

I have good reason to remember that morning of the 19th October, 1891. It takes a great deal to wake me up—indeed I have slept through many storms at sea and numerous heavy bombardments on the Western Front—but I was awakened early that morning by a wind of such velocity that the windows rattled like pistol shots, and our old stone-built house, with walls 3 feet thick, shook in the violence of the storm.

Meantime, the little French vessels sailed along in company, with shortened sails, heading south-west with a strong beam wind, but pounding heavily into the big head sea. At 6.30, when they were about four miles from the shore at Atherfield, the wind veered to south-south-west and blew with great force. They flattened their sheets, sailing as close to the wind as they could on the port tack; but, even so, their lee-way drove them ever nearer to the land. The *Plombec* put about first, with the intention of sailing back round St. Catherine's Point to seek shelter once more at Spithead. The *Henri et Léontine* weathered Atherfield Ledge, put about off Brightstone, saw that she could not fetch round St. Catherine's, so put about again in the hope of getting round the Needles and finding shelter there. But with the wind dead on shore she was embayed and could weather neither point.

The coxswain of our lifeboat, who had been watching from the top of the cliff, fired the maroon and summoned the crew. When I joined the coxswain on the cliff there was the poor doomed little vessel, just visible through the blinding rain, about a mile and a quarter from the shore. "She must strike in a quarter of an hour," he said; "we had better try to launch the boat." We ran down to the lifeboat road, but it was plain that to get the boat out would be well-nigh impossible. It was within an hour of high water; the great seas were breaking right up against the cliff and running fifty yards up the lifeboat road.

While waiting for the horses and crew to assemble, we went back to the top of the cliff; so thick was the rain that we could see nothing of the ship. In five minutes or so it cleared for a few seconds, and we saw her plainly, only half a mile away, with one of her topmasts gone.

We pushed the lifeboat on her carriage down the lifeboat road bow on, and launched her from the foot of the road. She got clear away, but the first big wave caught her as it broke, lifted her up, and hurled her back under the cliff. By some miracle, nobody was killed or swept out to sea, but all hope of effecting a rescue with the lifeboat was gone. So we ran along the cliff edge about half a mile, to where the vessel lay, now about five hundred yards from the shore. How I managed to get on board of her has been told elsewhere.

The captain was a strange sight when I got down below. He had been gripping the wheel at the moment when the rudder of his ship struck a rock on the outer ledge. It takes about three turns of a wheel to deflect the rudder to its maximum; it can be imagined how swiftly the wheel span round when the rudder was thus turned in a second of time by impact on the rocks. So he was thrown right over the wheel, his head crashing against the edge of the bulwarks on the opposite side of the ship. The whole of his scalp had been taken off and was hanging down the back of his head. As I saw him lying in his bunk in a pool of blood, I thought for a moment that I was looking at a decapitated man. Above his bunk was a medicine chest and in it I saw a bottle of Friar's balsam. I took this and poured the greater part of it on top of his head, in the hope that it would stop the bleeding. This it did in most miraculous fashion, for the oozing blood stopped completely. I then took his scalp, fitted it on to his head, tied my handkerchief from the back round his brow, and a piece of rope from the top under his chin. It was rather elementary surgery, but the doctor who attended him afterwards said that it saved his life. Anyway, my excuse for this brutal method must be that the ship was rolling as only a ship aground in a really heavy sea can roll.

A little time later I was joined on board by my great friend, Tom Hookey, fisherman, a farmer and blacksmith, afterwards coxswain of the lifeboat. Together we got the captain out of his bunk and on to the deck. An hour or two later, when the vessel had been driven further in and the tide had receded, we managed with an improvised breeches buoy to get him ashore. He lay at our house semi-conscious for many weeks, but finally recovered sufficiently to go back to his home in France.

But to return to the sister ship. When I got ashore about one o'clock, the mate of our wreck told me the story of how they had met in Ryde Roads and had cruised in company until the violence of the storm parted them. The news had come through from the coastguard station that the *Plombec* had struck about five miles east along the coast, and every soul had been

drowned except one man. “Could that man be my only brother, whom I love very dearly?” said the mate to me. I answered I would go and see.

I went home, changed my clothes, ordered my horse, had a bite of food, and started to ride along the lonely coast road on the unlikely errand of finding the mate’s brother. At Brightstone they told me that the ship had disappeared; three miles further on I received the same story. I was very tired, but (not knowing that a rib had been driven into my lung) went on. At Blackgang I heard what had happened.

The coastguards with the rocket apparatus were watching the vessel drifting in; the water is deeper at this point than further west, and vessels sometimes come right on to the beach. When she was about three hundred yards from the shore, a gigantic wave lifted her up—my informant told me that she was poised on a sort of pinnacle of water with bow and stern clear of the wave—then down she crashed, the water went right over her, and, a few moments later, nothing but black specks appeared floating on the sea. The thin rocket line was fired over the wreckage, on the off-chance that somebody might catch it. One of the crew did catch it and was slowly hauled ashore, quite unconscious, but with the rocket line gripped in his teeth. He was restored to consciousness and taken to St. Catherine’s Lighthouse. With this news I rode on another two miles. By this time it was dark and I was nearly done. I tied up my horse; the lighthouse keeper met me at the door and took me to the little room where the unfortunate man was lying. His face was terribly battered and many bones were broken. Against every probability he was indeed the mate’s brother.

I told him that his brother had been saved, and he muttered something about “le bon Dieu.” The brother had written on one of my cards: “Très cher frère. Nous sommes tous les deux dans le malheur, mais comme moi j’espère vous êtes sauvé.” I asked the lighthouse keeper if there was any chance of his being able to read this message, but he told me that the doctor had said that there was but little hope left. So I tried to tell him the substance of it. Poor fellow! he swooned away, and I thought it best to leave him, taking the card with me with the intention of returning next morning. That night he died; I have the card still; it lies before me as I write these words, a reminder of one of the most fearful storms and strangest chances that it has been my lot to see.

II. A MESSAGE FROM THE SEA

In the winter of 1903 an old woman, walking along the beach at our home at Brooke looking for driftwood, saw a bottle lying on the sand which had just been washed in by a big ground sea. She picked it up and took it to her home, a thatched cottage near the lifeboat house. Holding it up to the light, she saw there was a paper inside. Very fortunately, instead of trying to open the bottle herself, she took it to the Rectory and showed it to the Rector, Mr. Leslie Morris. He, having some knowledge of old documents and how to preserve them when first exposed to light and air, brought it up to our home, Brooke House, and showed it to my father. I was told to fetch a hammer, some milk, and some gum, for the bottle was so securely corked that it would have been difficult to open. We cracked it open, and a yellowish paper with faded ink was disclosed. The Rector skilfully unrolled the paper with the aid of his mixture without breaking it. This was the message that we read:

> Ship, *Morning Star*, latitude 52.20 South, longitude 45.30 West, at sea, sinking fast, June 18th, 1899.
>
> "Whoever you are who find this message, I charge you by all you hold sacred to see that it is delivered to the person here named at the address given—
>
> Johanna Mosky, 29, Albrechtstrasse, Berlin.
>
> To Anna,
>
> The last words of a dying man—
> Remember and forgive."

For obvious reasons, I have altered the names of the ship and of the woman. The rest is exactly as we read it that night.

My father always said that he counted the moment when he read the dead man's message as almost the strangest and most awe-inspiring of his life.

We copied it out, and next morning my father took it to London, went to Lloyd's and inquired about a ship *Morning Star* afloat at that date. Sure enough, the full-rigged ship *Morning Star* had cleared from Callao early in May 1899, homeward bound. She had never been heard of since, and was duly declared lost at sea. She carried a full crew and a supercargo, whose name I do not give, who was part owner of the ship.

Thence my father went to the German Ambassador, who promised to do his utmost to see that the message was delivered, asking my father to come back in a week or two's time. When he returned, the Ambassador showed him the following report:—

> "Between the years 1895 and 1899 a tall young woman, very handsome and of Finnish birth, lived alone with a little boy at No. 29, Albrechtstrasse, Berlin. The little boy's age was given as one year old when she first came to Berlin and received her police permit. The woman was very fair, with steel-blue eyes and aquiline features. The little boy was also very fair and of singular beauty. The neighbours adored him, but they found it very difficult to make friends with the mother. She was visited from time to time, during her four years' stay, by a woman who was understood to be her elder sister, and who always addressed her as Anna. In June 1899 she left Berlin with her little boy, then five years old, telling the neighbours that she was going away for a short visit. She disappeared completely, and all the efforts of the police to trace her have, so far, been unavailing."

My father thanked the Ambassador and begged to be informed if any trace of Anna were ever found, but from that day to this no news has come.

I confess that this episode has impressed and puzzled me ever since, and I have often tried in my own mind to reconstruct the whole story. Some things are pretty clear. The *Morning Star* found desperate weather in rounding the Horn from west to east. In spite of every effort the water gained. Five hundred miles from land in that stormy sea, where gigantic waves roll round the world from west to east in endless succession, in a wind which varies from 40 to 90 miles an hour, only rarely falling below the lower figure, it would be almost impossible to launch the boats, and even if launched, they would soon be swamped. All this the supercargo knew as he sat in his cabin, but for the moment he had plenty of time to think over the past; plenty of time to write his last message; plenty of time to seal up the bottle so securely.

As for the bottle containing the supercargo's last words, one knows that through four long years, sometimes buffeted by huge seas, sometimes lying motionless in the oily waters of the doldrums, it still remained afloat, carrying its strange, sad message to the lonely shores of the south-west coast of the Isle of Wight. Then, finally, one can imagine the ever-increasing roll

of the water-logged vessel, until, at last, over she goes and the sea closes above her.

III. DILEMMA

Life has set me many problems, and demanded from me many quick decisions. Amongst the quandaries I have perforce resolved, I remember a very painful one, which happened some years ago, when I was alone at my home in the Isle of Wight. One October evening I walked down to the shore to look at the sea, which was making an unusually loud roar. When I got to the beach I saw by the light of the moon that heavy seas were breaking on the ledges a mile to seaward; but, it being low water, there was little surf breaking on the beach. I knew that a mile further to westward, beyond Brooke point, there was a place where, owing to a gap in the ledges, the big seas roll straight in and break on the beach; so I walked along to watch them there.

It was about 11 o'clock when I got to the point in Compton Bay, just short of where the white cliffs join the red. The moon was still up, but scurrying clouds mostly obscured it from view. I stood and watched the waves for a few moments, and was just about to retrace my steps, when I distinctly heard a cry out to sea. Looking at the spot from whence came the cry I saw a black object floating, and, as an approaching sea reached it, I saw an arm flung up in the air, and another loud cry reached my ears through the noise of the surf. I was sure, as indeed anyone would have been, that it was a swimmer in distress who had seen me in the moonlight and was crying out for help.

Then came a moment of agonizing indecision. The drowning man was quite four hundred yards out. That is a long way in a heavy sea; moreover, the sea is very cold in October. Nor could any help possibly come to either of us if I became exhausted. There was no human habitation within sight, and the nearest boat was on Brooke beach a mile and a half away. If I responded to the cries for help, I should almost certainly be drowned. If, on the other hand, I ran to get a boat from Brooke, first of all it might well be impossible to launch it through the heavy surf, and, secondly, long before the swimmer could be reached the flood tide would float him further east, where the heavy breakers would soon pound him to pieces.

Then came a louder cry, and again the arm shot up into the air. Hardly knowing what I did, I undressed with all speed, took a run, jumped under an oncoming breaker, and was safely out to sea. I just got over the second wave

before it broke, and then I started to swim. Of course, I have swum much further than a quarter of a mile—as every swimmer must have done—but it is surprising how baffling big waves are, even if they do not break, and I confess I was extremely exhausted when I got close to the black object. Still, I knew that it would be easier swimming back with the waves; for, although unless a wave breaks it does not bring one any nearer to the shore, it is much less trouble to swim on the flatter side of a wave when one is approaching the shore than it is to swim up against the steep side when one is going out to sea. I thought, therefore, that I might perhaps succeed in getting ashore with the exhausted swimmer, who was still crying out.

Even when I was within ten yards of the dark object I was still certain that it was a man in distress crying for help; but when about five yards away the moon came out from behind the clouds, and I saw that what I had been swimming for was a round log of wood with a string of seaweed attached. The oncoming sea caused the log to roll, and the seaweed—which was of the peculiar kind which grows in the West Indies, is very light, and is carried towards our coast—was flung into the air at intervals. A wandering sea-gull had found this object, and was engaged in eating the seaweed. Whenever the log rolled over the gull gave a loud cry of anger at being disturbed. I swam on and touched the log; indeed, I held on to it for two or three minutes to rest. The disappointment was so great that my strength seemed to ebb from me. Could I possibly cover the distance back to the shore? It was no good waiting, for I knew that every moment the chill water was sapping my strength. I therefore set out on my return swim. As I struck out the sea-gull returned and with a loud cry sat down on the log again.

I shall never forget that swim. As each succeeding wave lifted me up I could see the line of white surf on the shore; then I would sink into the trough and even the cliffs were obscured from view. When I was about fifty yards from the shore I very nearly gave up and sank. My exhaustion was extreme; but the love of life is so strong in a healthy man—indeed, we do things which seem quite impossible when imminent death stares us in the face—that, with a supreme effort, I started to swim again. Then a great bit of luck befell me. When I was just at the right distance, an exceptionally big wave caught me. It got me just in the right place on its crest and threw me with great force so far up the beach that the retreating wave left me high and dry. I could not possibly have got myself out again had I been sucked back—as an object generally is before it is finally cast up—for I was terribly bruised and battered by the force of my fall on to the beach. I managed to roll over two or three times nearer to the cliff, and then lay there naked and utterly exhausted for, I should think, a quarter of an hour. At last with

chattering teeth I sat up. I saw that I was bleeding from both elbows and both knees—as often happens when one is hurled on to a shingly beach by a big wave—but they were only big scratches and not real wounds, and I lost very little blood.

The next trouble was to find my clothes. I knew that the flood tide would have sent me to the eastward; but, having no watch, I had no idea how long my enterprise had taken and how far I had come. Heavy clouds had covered the moon, which was setting, and it was very dark as I stumbled along the beach towards the white cliffs. However, I duly found my clothes about four hundred yards from where I was cast ashore. I dressed and, utterly weary, started to walk home. The rising tide and increasing sea meant that I should be unable to get round Brooke point. At the first low part of the cliff, therefore, I climbed up it and managed to find my way home.

Our old white-haired butler, Lingard, was waiting up for me, even though it was past two o'clock. He was extremely wrath with me, and all the more angry when he saw that I had a cut over my left eye. He asked me what I had been doing and I told him. He told me that I ought to have been ashamed of myself. What was the good of going into the sea after a total stranger? This struck me as such a humorous view that, with the aid of hot whisky and water and lemon, I soon revived.

Many years afterwards I was in a famous racing yacht, when, just as the race had finished, a man in front of the mast was knocked overboard; indeed, he was shot about twelve feet into the sea by the block of the foresheet. I was the only person who saw him go, and, of course, jumped after him with a life-buoy. There was no element of risk involved, for although it was blowing hard there were plenty of boats about near the finishing line. I got to the man almost at once with the life-buoy. He soon recovered from the shock, and before a boat arrived to pick us up I discovered that he was a better swimmer than I was.

I tell this story because of the extraordinary comment of the owner of the yacht, now, unfortunately, no longer with us. It was exactly similar in nature to that of our white-haired butler. When I got on board he said:

"That's all very well; but you ought not to have done that. You are a passenger; why do you go after a paid hand?"

I suppose his theory was that passengers rescued passengers, that regular members of the crew rescued each other, and that there should be no interchange.

However, to return to my midnight swim. I often wonder what really was my duty. I think what I did on the spur of the moment was right as long as I had a reasonable chance of getting to the drowning man. Also, be it observed, had I not swum out I should never have known that the drowning man was not real. I should have stood and watched until the invisible seagull became tired of its meal and flew away, and then with a heavy heart I should have walked home, convinced that I had witnessed the drowning of a fellow man; and all my life I should have carried a secret shame for what I had failed to do.

CHAPTER II

WRECK AND RESCUE

I. THE END OF THE *IREX*

This is a narrative which begins where most tales of the sea end; with a wreck. At seven o'clock in the evening of January 25th, 1890, the full-rigged, three-masted ship *Irex*, 2200 tons, drove hard on to the rocks, four hundred yards south-east of the Needles Lighthouse, in a great storm, and remained fast. The rocket apparatus was summoned and went to the extreme westerly point of the Tennyson Cliffs. It seemed hopeless to send a line over the wreck at such a distance; but great waves were breaking over the ship and the crew of twenty-three and a boy could be seen in the rigging, some just above the cross-trees on the main-mast, others on the fore-mast. It seemed probable that at any moment either the masts would fall, or the vessel break up, or both, so the rocket was fired. I believe it still holds the record as the longest successful shot of a life-saving rocket ever made. The line fell close to the main-mast, one of the crew caught it; a thicker line was hauled to the vessel, by the united efforts of the crew on the main-top-mast, and then the pulley with the endless rope and the breeches buoy attached.

The height of the cliff was some four hundred feet, and the distance from the cliff to the vessel was just over four hundred yards. One by one the members of the crew were hauled across these four hundred yards of raging water, at that dizzy height, in the breeches buoy, and safely landed on the cliff. Those on the fore-mast had a perilous time in coming down from the rigging, jumping on to the deck, running to the rigging of the main-mast, and clambering up it before the next big wave swept over the vessel. Three men were washed overboard and drowned and the rest were hauled to the cliff top.

There was a misty rain, and it was hard to see the vessel clearly from the cliff. But just as all concerned were congratulating themselves that everyone had been transferred from the vessel to land, someone discerned a small form sitting athwart the cross-trees on the fore-mast. Through glasses it was seen that this was the cabin boy, who, in his fright, had climbed higher than the others and been left behind. It was clear that the only chance of saving the lad was for someone to go back again in the breeches buoy, go down the main-mast, thence to the fore-rigging, clamber up it, retrieve the boy, up the main-mast again, and so back in the breeches buoy one by one. The man in

charge of the rocket apparatus said the task was hopeless, as the main-top-mast was already seen to be sagging.

At that moment a man stepped forward, jumped into the breeches buoy, and shouted: “Haul me off.” He was a negro. He was hauled off to the main-mast. He clambered down, and waited nearly ten minutes before making his run along the deck to the fore-rigging, for by this time the sea had increased in violence. But he got there, and while the onlookers held their breath, clambered up the rigging, just in time to escape a huge wave. They saw him untie the boy, who had lashed himself to the mast, take him on to his shoulders, and clamber down the shrouds to the bottom of the fore-rigging. He waited, as before, with the boy on his back. He ran again and clambered into the main rigging. A wave swept over and obscured them, but when it had passed they saw him still holding on, the boy with his arms round his neck. Up the main-mast the negro went, put the boy into the breeches buoy, and, although by this time the main-topmast was cracking, the onlookers saw him waiting there while the cabin boy was hauled to the top of the cliff. The breeches buoy was sent back; the negro stepped into it and was hauled to the top of the cliff. My father told me that he led the cheering, as the negro was lifted out of the breeches buoy, exhausted, and laid down on the ground. Almost immediately after he landed the rope parted.

Now comes the strangest part of the story. The negro got up and elbowed his way into the crowd. They were busying themselves trying to revive the boy, who was blue with cold and half dead. When he showed signs of life people said: “Where is the nigger?” He had disappeared, and has never been seen to this day. What had happened on board the *Irex* nobody will ever know. That there had been some form of mutiny was clear. The vessel had met the full force of the storm at the mouth of the Channel, and the crew had taken charge and insisted upon the vessel putting about and running before the wind up Channel. What had happened to the officers nobody seemed able or willing to tell. What part the negro had taken in the mutiny was also unknown, but certainly he has to his credit one of the most remarkable feats of bravery ever recorded.

There seemed to be a fate about the *Irex* for me, for I was concerned in a curious sequel to her wreck.

She did not break up at once as had been expected, but remained for some months with her masts standing and only one or two spars gone. One day in October, with my two great friends Ben Jacobs, fisherman and then coxswain of the Brooke lifeboat, and Tom Hookey, blacksmith, who also was coxswain of the lifeboat for a few years, we decided to sail to the wreck

of the *Irex*, look over her, and fish for bass, which abound in those waters. The bass were not to be found, so we climbed on board the *Irex*, and started to eat a sandwich lunch, sitting on the deck of the derelict. Just as we were half-way through our sandwiches, Ben Jacobs, who was facing the bow, said, looking along the deck: "She's wriggling like a snake." We laughed at him, and said he was seeing things; but when we turned round, sure enough the long Atlantic swells which had begun to roll in were causing the vessel to move from side to side, both bow and stern, so that the decks could be seen to wriggle like the movements of a loose wire.

We lost no time in getting into our boat and rowed ashore at Scratchells Bay to finish our lunch. The sea was breaking on the shingle, but not heavily, as we jumped ashore and hauled the boat up. I thought it a good opportunity to climb up the pathway from Scratchells Bay to the top of the cliff. This pathway had been made a hundred years before, whether for smugglers, or for soldiers manning a fort, or both, we did not know; certainly it had not been used for many years. The cliffs at Scratchells Bay are slightly less than the vertical at the western end, becoming vertical in the middle, and overhanging at the eastern end. The pathway was scooped out in the overhanging part for the first 100 feet, and then continued up another hundred and fifty feet in the vertical part. When I got up this two hundred and fifty feet, I discovered the reason that the path was disused. About 4 feet 6 inches of it was broken away altogether. I had been scrambling about cliffs all my life and had climbed high mountains in Switzerland, so without much concern I took a little run and jumped across the gap. It was uphill and quite easy. Then I continued my way to the top, laid down and looked at the wreck of the *Irex*, wondering how soon she would break up. I could see our little boat too, looking like a tiny speck on the beach, four hundred feet below. I saw my friends waving to me and started to come down. When I got near to the gap I saw them waving to me much more vigorously and pointing at the sea. I understood at once that the ground swell had increased, and that they were anxious to get away before the waves were too big for us to push our boat off the beach; so I hurried downhill to the gap.

Just as I was going to jump across, it dawned upon me that as I was jumping downhill, and the cliff at the far side jutted out a little, if I landed sufficiently fast to compel me to run forward, as I had intended, I was bound to hit the face of the cliff, and go dithering down the vertical fall of two hundred and fifty feet to the rocks and shingle below. For the first, and I hope the last, time in my life I had the sensation known as losing one's head. I was filled with uncontrollable dread, my knees shook, perspiration broke out on my forehead and the palms of my hands. I turned my face to the cliff

—the pathway throughout was from eight inches to a foot broad, so it was difficult to sit down—and tried to calm my nerves. By degrees my knees ceased to shake, and in what seemed like a year, but what I suppose was two or three minutes, I recovered. Then I had to think out what to do. I could climb up to the top again, make my way to Yarmouth as fast as I could, and try to get a steam launch to round the Needles and pluck my friends off the beach. I was not sure whether there was a steam launch available, but, even so, by that time the sea might have become so high that we should have been unable to approach the beach. Again, without my help, the two of them might not be able to get the boat off. In any case, they would surely wait until I came to them, so I saw that the only thing to do was to go on down the path and chance it.

Without looking at the beach below, I took two steps down the steep pathway and landed across the gap with hardly any way on; indeed I very nearly fell backwards. I walked past the projecting point and soon reached the beach. My friends had no idea of the ordeal I had been through, but I can truly say that I was far more frightened in those brief moments than I have ever been in the whole of my life.

We launched the boat and nearly got filled with water as we did so; but Ben Jacobs was the most extraordinary man in an open boat that I have ever seen. He was six feet four inches in height, of immense strength, and could wield an oar standing in a boat in the steepest waves. We ran home under a close-reefed mainsail before an increasing westerly wind, just managed to dodge the breakers on the outer ledge, and, landing on a good-sized wave in Brooke Bay, ran right up the beach to safety. By then it was getting dark, but from the cliff we could still see the masts and hull of the *Irex*. Next morning, however, not a trace of her was to be seen. The swift currents of the Needles swept all vestiges away, and she had vanished as completely as though she had never been there.

II. A WHITE SQUALL FROM VESUVIUS

Many years ago, my brother Frank and I went on a cruise in the Mediterranean in what would now be called a small ship of something less than three thousand tons. We visited the Mediterranean ports from Gibraltar to Constantinople, often leaving the vessel for some days and rejoining her by train further on. We made a vow that we would ride a horse at every place we visited, and we kept it, though at Corfu we were reduced to cab horses temporarily released from their servitude in the shafts.

We stayed in Naples for many days. My father knew some of the people in our Embassy at Rome, and as a consequence we were allowed to inspect the actual digging operations being conducted at Pompeii. It was thrilling to see the workmen shovelling away the earth from a wall in a little house about as big as a small country cottage and by degrees disclose a painting on the wall. I remember very well a particular room which we saw excavated during the two hours we stood there. The walls had been painted pale blue to represent the sky and a darker blue to represent the sea, with an almost black line marking the horizon. On the sea were swans, and girls bathing. It was fascinating to see the uncovering of a picture which had lain under the earth for nearly two thousand years, with its colours as fresh as when they were first painted.

From Pompeii we went to Sorrento, one of the most beautiful places in the world, having arranged to sail back to Naples the next morning. Our craft was a big open boat, rather narrow for her length, with four little masts, each with what we then called a "leg-of-mutton" sail, but which, in these more refined times, we call a "Bermuda" sail. We took with us a basket full of sandwiches, a bottle of Pommery-et-Greno, and two glasses. The Bay of Naples was sapphire-blue. There was a steady breeze from the south-west, and as we walked down from the hotel towards the beach where the boat was waiting I remember thinking that no prospect in the world could be so fair as that on which I gazed. In front of us lay the great city of Naples with its white palaces, towers, and domes looking like a city in Fairyland. A little to the left the beautiful village of Pozzuoli, and further to the left the wide sweep of the bay, ending in a promontory with umbrella pines, were silhouetted against the blue sky. We set sail on all four masts in our little boat, and were soon bowling along at about five or six knots. When we were half-way across the bay, heading for Pozzuoli, close-hauled on the port tack, Frank suggested we might eat our sandwiches. I agreed, and accordingly he opened the basket. I was steering, but in the steady breeze the boat steered herself while I busied myself in taking the wire off the Pommery. Then an extraordinary thing happened. The wind fell light, not gradually but all at once remaining in the same quarter. The captain of the boat uttered a cry of extreme terror, while he and the two men with him cowered kneeling in the bottom of the boat with hands uplifted, saying "Ave Maria." I looked to leeward and there saw the cause of their terror, and, even as I looked, I not only saw but heard it.

About half a mile away there seemed to be a wall of white water, apparently 4 feet high, composed of a mass of foam dancing about with incredible swiftness, with occasional wisps of misty white water going

straight up 40 feet or more towards the sky. From this white wall came a loud roar like the sound of an express train thundering down an incline on a calm night. I put back the Pommery in the basket and ran to the captain, imploring him to help me lower the sails. He refused to do anything, and continued to pray, saying over and over again "Ave Maria." I shouted to Frank to join me, and by great good fortune we had time to lower all the little sails. Then I put a clove-hitch with the painter round the middle of one of the oars and threw it over the bow, hoping it would act as a sea anchor in the squall. By this time we were in a flat, sultry calm, with the white wall three hundred yards away. The strange thing was that although the actual wind in the squall must have been of a velocity round about 100 miles an hour, its advance towards us was quite slow. I got back to the stern and found a baler and an empty tin. I gave Frank the baler, saying:

"Now we had better drink the champagne before the squall strikes us."

With that I uncorked the bottle and we just had time to drink about half of it before the crash came. Although we had had time to envisage the violence of the wind, when it actually came it was incredible. The boat spun round and round like a top, and in a moment was half full of water. The marvel was the speed of the wind. If one endeavoured to hold up one's hand, it was as though it were being pressed down by some quite hard body. We lay in the bottom of the boat, all five of us, and Frank and I kept on baling as the water kept coming in; but after the first two attempts my baler was blown clean away by my lifting it too high above the gunwale of the boat. I see it now, sweeping up into the sky and disappearing into the mist 200 yards away. Very soon the gunwale of the boat was almost level with the water; but constant baling, and lying otherwise quite still in the centre of the bottom of the boat, saved us from capsize. It seemed like many hours, but I believe it was only about ten minutes, when the squall swept away from us, and there we found ourselves, lying flat in the water with the half-submerged boat beneath us and the sun shining brightly in a cloudless sky. We managed to clear the boat of water; the south-westerly wind again sprang up, and, shivering with cold in spite of the hot sun, we safely arrived at Naples.

We afterwards heard that we were the only small boat out in the Bay of Naples that day that had not been capsized and every soul drowned.

This particular type of squall is peculiar to the Bay of Naples. It may arise at any time, but is specially likely to occur when, as on this occasion, Vesuvius is in violent eruption. I remember that as we sailed along we could see with the naked eye great rocks, looking like large black specks, being

hurled up into the smoke cloud high above the crater and falling back into it again. The next morning my brother and I went up the mountain, watched the molten lava slowly pouring down a valley, then climbed up the cinder-covered cone, the funicular railway being out of action, and watched the awe-inspiring spectacle of a great eruption from the lip of the crater on the windward side.

From the vast crater hundreds of yards in diameter rose unceasingly great clouds of yellow, curling, sulphurous smoke. Then, all at once, the earth would quiver, as though shaken by some huge giant, from the bottom of the crater would come a roar as from thousands of caged beasts, the yellow cloud would be pierced by long tongues of red flame, and great black rocks would be shot three hundred feet into the air. As we lay there watching we understood something of the forces which could produce the great vortex of wind which had been the doom of many the day before and from which we had been so miraculously saved.

CHAPTER III

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY once played the part of Providence in my life very effectively, and I have often reflected on that singular incident, which all but ended my career of adventure and misadventure.

Nearly forty years ago a kind friend invited me to go duck shooting with him; we were in Australia at the time. I gladly accepted and the plans were made. A little eighteen-ton sailing yacht was chartered and sent round the coast to a remote bay. The weather was fine and a cargo steamer bound for Sydney towed her to the mouth of the Bay. We had arranged to go overland two days later.

The party consisted of my host, aged about fifty, his son, aged twenty-five, and myself, a few years younger.

We travelled a short distance by ordinary train; then, it was explained to me, we should go by a political line. In my innocence I had no idea what a political line was. I found it to consist of a deserted railway track almost completely overgrown with grass and jungle, and a light engine which my host had chartered to carry us and our stores as far as it could get. We took with us two hydraulic jacks. These, as I was told, were to lift the engine on to the line if she went off, as she probably would. We stacked gun-cases, cartridges, provisions, and our bags alongside the wood in the tender and started hopefully.

It was a strange experience steaming along apparently through the heart of the jungle. But there were no big trees barring our path and we got on very well for four or five miles. Then, without warning, the engine ran off the track. We all got off and helped in the process of jacking her up and getting her back on the rails. This being done, we spiked the rails again. The engine-driver said: “She will be good for seven or eight miles now, I think,” and off we started again. I suppose we averaged about five miles an hour.

Although it was autumn the heat was intense. We heard afterwards that it reached 112 degrees in the shade at the observatory in Melbourne on that day, and no doubt the shade temperature where we were was considerably more. The heat from the sun was such that it was impossible to touch anything made of metal without risk of a blister.

After another few miles we ran off the line again. This time the engine turned over on its side, so we reluctantly decided that we must continue the rest of the journey on foot. We left the engine-driver half a bottle of whisky, and as he had unlimited water from the engine he proclaimed himself a perfectly contented individual. He was going to walk back to civilization in the cool of the evening, he said, and get a gang to hoist the engine back on to the line.

So we started to walk along the sleepers and the grass-covered track. We had to carry all our gear—terribly hard work. When we had gone about three miles we came upon a solitary shack, standing back fifty yards from the derelict railway. As we were almost tired out, we stepped across to it and deposited our gear on the stoop. We entered the single living room, found nobody there, made some tea, and were soon much refreshed.

Presently, in came the owner of the shack, a gaunt, hollow-eyed, sad man. He greeted us warmly, expressing no surprise at seeing us, and hoped that we would stay the night if it suited us.

We said, "No, we must get on to our boat."

He replied that his native labourer would help us if he could find him.

I went out with him and we walked across the clearing to find the native. As we went I asked our new friend many questions about his mode of life. He said that he had bought a plot of land during the boom, having paid several pounds an acre for what he believed to be wonderfully fertile land abutting on to the lake. When he got there four years before he found alternate jungle and desert infested with poisonous snakes of many different varieties. He had worked very hard, but confessed that Nature had beaten him. I asked him if he had any neighbours, and he answered that he had none within twelve miles. Then I questioned him about his frontage on the lake; he laughed and said: "You wait till you get there. It ain't no sanatorium, that ain't." "Do you ever go there?" I asked. "No," he replied, "I know too much."

This was not a bright prospect for our duck-shooting expedition, but the landowner told us that if we drank a bottle of whisky a day and took enough quinine one of us might escape fever.

In due course we found the native, who emerged from a little hut of wattle thatched with leaves. A strange creature, more like a monkey than a man. I could not help thinking what an awful life my new friend must have with this queer, misshapen creature as his only companion. Indeed, I said so

to him, but he replied that he was really quite happy. There was a certain dignity about the man. Life was terribly hard owing to the great heat and the bad dust storms, but he had become immune from fever, he told me, and although he was as thin as a rail he was upright and looked fit and well.

Then we resumed our walk along the railway track, with the help of our friend and the native to carry our belongings.

The sun was sinking when we reached the bay. It was a scene of surprising beauty, but with something strangely sinister about it, too. The blue waters of the bay spread almost to the horizon, dotted with little islands with low trees coming down to the water's edge. At our feet was a broken-down wooden pier, and half a mile to seaward our little cutter riding at anchor with the dinghy astern.

We gave a united "Ship ahoy!" and a head appeared from below just forward of the mast. It was the boy who had been left in charge to await our coming. While he rowed the dinghy to us I had time to study the surroundings. The trees which fringed the shore were mangrove trees growing in the water. Their trunks and branches had the fantastic shapes one sees in a nightmare. They grew out of a muddy ooze, round which buzzed myriads of mosquitoes. This was before the days of Sir Ronald Ross, and, indeed, at that time nobody had any idea that the mosquito was the chief germ-carrier and foe of man. Anopheles was a nuisance, of course, because he raised lumps when he bit you and bunged up your eyes, but that this hard bite was not only the chief but the only means of transmitting malaria from one human being to another was then quite unknown. However, I confess it all looked unhealthy to me; but I soon forgot all ideas of this kind when my host pointed out to me that the inlet on the extreme left, which we could see through our glasses, was literally black with duck.

The boy brought the dinghy alongside the derelict pier and it was decided that we must make two parties. I went off with all the gear, leaving my host and his son to be fetched on the return trip. The boy and I each took an oar and we rowed swiftly to our little ship. The sun was setting in purple and gold in our wake. A thin white mist was rising from the mud, which soon obscured my companions on the pier from view. It was all very uncanny, but amazingly beautiful. Nevertheless, the beauty of the scene could not obscure the sensation that in this remote spot Nature was an enemy and not a friend of man. I could not help comparing the scene to my home in the Isle of Wight, where Nature seems to be, and truly is, so friendly and so kind.

I climbed on board our cutter, the cosiest little vessel I had ever been in. There was one big cabin with comfortable seats all round, and a swing table in the centre, with a lamp hanging from a beam above the table. There were mosquito nets over every porthole and a double mosquito netting in the little alleyway leading through our cabin to the forecastle.

The boy told me that the two men who had come with him had gone on to Sydney with the steamer that towed them there. He was a nice-looking, sunburnt lad of about sixteen, with fair hair bleached by the sun and dark brown eyes. He showed me where to stow the gear and then rowed back to fetch my two shipmates. As he rowed off he shouted to me: "Brush the mosquitoes off. They bite very hard." He need not have told me this, for one of his eyes was completely bunged up. But I forgot all about his injunction, and about the luggage and stores, while I stood with my back to the mast and surveyed the scene in the dusk through my field glasses. Yes, there were indeed plenty of duck, as I had been told. I have never seen so many since in any part of the world. Even as I watched more came sweeping in, one particular flight passing about a hundred yards from me must have numbered tens of thousands. They dropped on the water more than a mile away, and even at that distance one could hear the commotion and splashing as they settled in the bay. In addition to duck of every variety, there were hundreds of black swans.

Before my friends joined me it was nearly dark, for there is but little twilight in those latitudes. Father and son were expert campers, and in less than no time the gear was stowed, the lamp lit, the stove set going, and we sat down to a wonderful dinner of tinned foods cunningly prepared, and tea from the inevitable Australian "billy" so black and strong that it would make an English doctor faint with horror. My host said: "I like my tea and my grog so that the spoon will stand up in it by itself." I had been living on this beverage for six months, and certainly it had done me no harm.

The elaborate arrangement of mosquito nets worked well, a cool breeze had sprung up, and we sat and smoked in the cabin, making plans for the great shoot next morning. Then we turned in. I was woken by the son at three o'clock. He said: "I am afraid the boy is very ill and the 'old man' is none too well. Will you help me make some tea, and then we will have a go at them with your medicine chest?" I went forward to the forecastle, and there, lying in his bunk, was the unfortunate boy, tossing from side to side and groaning, obviously in a high fever. We took his temperature and found it to be 105 degrees. We looked at the labels on the Burroughs and Wellcome medicine chest which I carried, and mixed and gave him a Dover

powder. Then we went to see the "old man." This stalwart pioneer was also in a high fever; his temperature turned out to be 103 degrees. He protested that he had never been ill in his life, but we told him to lie still and gave him a Dover powder too. Then we warmed up the tea in the billy, gave them each a drink, and went to sleep again. At daybreak we got up, had breakfast, launched the duck punt over the side, gave the boy another Dover powder, told the "old man" to lie still for a couple of hours, and set forth to shoot the ducks. My friend said he had better row and I would sit in the stern with both guns ready loaded. After he had rowed about a quarter of a mile he said: "I am feeling so desperately tired. I don't think I can go on." I looked at him narrowly and guessed at once that he had got the same fever as his father and the boy. I said: "We had better get back at once and take a rest." So we came back on board and I induced him to allow me to take his temperature also. Sure enough it was 103 degrees. I put him to bed, gave him the Burroughs and Wellcome remedy, came back on deck, and wondered what on earth I should do. Here was I in one of the most remote spots in the world with three men, all in a high fever. I went round and had a look at them, did what I could for them, and then rowed off in the dinghy and got a shot at the duck.

It was very hot, but that I didn't mind, for I was in robust health. The duck were comparatively confiding, and by rowing round little inlets and shooting quick I gathered five. Then I rowed back to our little ship and clambered on board. It was about half-past nine and there was not a breath of air. The profound silence was only broken by the groans and the mutterings of the boy.

I must confess that, although I had made a vow as a little boy that I would never despair, despair was very near to me that morning. What possible way out was there for me in the dilemma in which I was placed? Each one of the patients lying in the stifling heat below the deck of our ship implored me, the only living thing with which they had contact, not to leave them—especially the boy, with the wide open, apprehensive eyes of those dying of fever, saying to me at each visit: "You won't leave me, sir, will you?" So, if I listened to his exhortations and theirs I would stay on board with ever-diminishing supplies of medicine, of food, and, above all, of water, of which tepid stuff I had ascertained that we had not more than two days' supply.

I was afraid that the poor boy could not live through the day, nor were the other two in much better case. I could row ashore to seek help, but the horrid thought dawned upon me that I might well lose my way in trying to

find the one Englishman and the two human beings within twenty miles of where I stood. If I lost my way, as I probably should, I should find myself in this snake-infested area; able, no doubt ultimately, to find our nearest neighbour with the aid of the compass I could take with me, but with the problem of carrying food and drink for twenty-four hours. What would happen to my three patients during that time, one of them raving, one comatose, the third almost incapable of movement, all suffering from virulent malaria?

All this I thought while I stood on deck with the high sun of early noon beating down upon me. It seemed plain that my only course was to stay on board the ship, and act as nurse after making sure of the one essential to life, fresh water. How well I remember making up my mind to that course, going to the stern of the cutter where the dinghy and the duck punt were lying side by side with a painter on each quarter, hauling the dinghy alongside, and rowing off to the derelict pier in search of fresh water.

I tied up the boat and started on my voyage of discovery. As I rowed in I had looked for any signs of a stream but had seen none. Stretching each side of the pier was an interminable row of mangrove trees, with their fantastic shapes emerging from the slimy ooze from which they grew. I had brought with me a pocket compass so as to be sure of my direction and then walked north looking for water.

I had been for many months in the bush in New Zealand, but always I had had someone with me who really knew the country. Moreover, water was not a problem in New Zealand; there were streams and rivers everywhere. Here, in Australia, it was different. I had gone about a quarter of a mile from the pier when I came upon a boggy patch. My left leg went in up to the knee, and in trying to recover it sank even deeper. I threw myself on my back and with great difficulty managed to extricate the leg from the black mud underlying the green undergrowth on which I was walking. When my leg was free I remained lying on my back looking up at the sky, and, for the first time, the full horror of my position dawned upon me. I should die of heat and exhaustion long before I could find water. The country was quite flat; it was impossible that there could be a spring welling out of the ground, nor could there be a stream running into this huge flat bay, unless it were into the head of the inlet, which must certainly be twelve miles from where I stood, round the bends of the salt water.

And so I lay in this remote spot, with one leg blackened by the slime of the ooze from which I had pulled it. The sun beat down on me with great power. I felt my bare arms tingle from the unusual heat. Once more I

remembered the vow I had made years before at my home that I would never permit myself to be frightened, for the obvious reason that being frightened did no good. I remember sitting up and being amused at having one black leg and one white one, and saying, "I will not be frightened. It does no good." No doubt I still was frightened of impending fate, but the conscious thought of the folly of fear helped me to size up the position. Clearly it was no good to go further in search of water. Even supposing a stream to run into the bay further to the north, I could not carry enough water that long distance by land to keep four people alive. The only possible chance in that direction was to go there by water in the dinghy, and then, if the wind served, to sail the cutter under her head sails as near to the stream as her draught would allow. So much for the north. It was very unlikely that water would be found to the south, for I had seen that the land there was quite flat, and, without doubt, boggy. On the other hand, our friend with his aboriginal labourer certainly had water, for I had seen him fetch it from somewhere to replenish our billy of tea. True I might never find him, but it was the only hope, so I made up my mind to return to our little ship, do the best I could for the patients, find out just how much water we had left, and start off early the next morning to find our nearest neighbour. I knew I could not get to him that day; the midday sun in the Australian bush was an effective obstacle.

Having made my plan I was quite happy, and started to walk back to the pier. It seemed quite three times as far as the outward journey, and I was tired and faint when I sat down on the green planks and hauled the dinghy alongside by pulling the painter with my legs. I jumped in, cast off, and remember very well seeing how vertical was my shadow as I started to pull off to the cutter.

I was desperately thirsty and the first thing I did was to dive into the little forecastle and pump some water through the tap to get a drink. The water came all right, but it was of a strange colour. I drank a little, but the taste was so odious that I could hardly swallow it. I afterwards learnt that in great heat the galvanized tanks of that period, especially if the galvanization was old, formed a chemical combination making water undrinkable and, indeed, poisonous.

Again I was afraid. True there were three bottles of whisky and eleven bottles of soda water on board, but the boy in the bunk not far from where I stood was moaning out for water. No doubt the other two were in similar case. It seemed that my plan would not work. There was not enough fluid on board to keep those three alive if I delayed the search for our nearest

neighbour until dawn of the following morning. I nearly became desperate, but not quite. I went to see the boy, who was already pale and drawn, and clearly not far from death. I opened one of the bottles of soda water and gave him half of it. Then I returned to the cabin. The heat was stifling. I went to the son, who was still in a comatose condition. He woke when I spoke to him, sat up and hit his head against the bulkhead, then fell back with a groan. I think it was a lucky thing that he hit his head that way; it made him swear, and in some strange way revived his vitality. I gave him a wine-glassful of the precious soda water. Then I turned to the old pioneer. He was lying very still with his eyes wide open. I had the glass and the bottle in my hand. Without moving he said: "I don't want that. We shall be very short, but I am getting better. Give me one of your powders. By to-night I can look after the other two while you go and fetch that blighter and his native labourer with six pannikins of water."

It was wonderful to see that old man lying there, unable to move because of the pains completely paralyzing his lower limbs, but with his mind clear and vigorous, seeing the essential point of the extraordinary situation in which we stood.

I managed to persuade him to drink the last glass of the bottle of soda water, telling him that a man like himself, who had spent forty years in the most remote parts of New Zealand and Australia, must be got fit to advise me what to do. Then a strange thing happened. His strength was already beginning to fail again, but he wanted pencil and paper. There was a large sheet of blotting paper on the cabin table and I found a pencil in my pocket. He said: "Put your head nearer. I will draw you a plan of where that sundowner lives." Bending over in his bunk, with infinite care he traced a little map showing the pier in the centre and then the track. He shaded certain parts and drew little arrows towards them. Bending over him I heard him say: "Deep bog." The track followed a devious course, occasionally marking a big tree, until it joined the end of the derelict railway seven or eight miles from the coast. His hand was getting shaky, but resolutely he drew a straight line approximately to scale, banging the pencil down on that straight line to mark the spot; then half sat up, while with immense effort he drew a rough circle marking on it True North and Magnetic North. Then he fell back in a dead faint. He lay so still, and his breathing was so imperceptible, that I thought he was dead, but as I felt his hand, which was lying outside the coverlet, it got no colder, so I knew he must be alive. I fetched a little whisky and lifted his head, but he could not drink it. Perhaps it was just as well; but a little trickled into his mouth through his clenched teeth, and then he heaved a sigh, and I knew that his crisis was passed.

I went on deck and surveyed the scene which had filled me with a sense of its beauty the night before. There was no beauty now to my eyes. A bronze sea, a pale yellow sky, a great shimmering shade of heat haze covering everything, and all the while the muttering of the delirious boy. I was more alone than I have ever been in all my life and I should like to record that what I said was something worthy of this desperate occasion. What I did say aloud, as I am not likely to forget, is: "Well, I will have a good whisky and soda and a whole tin of sardines, and then we will see what happens." And I went down below and opened a tin of sardines. Let no man ever despise the sardine. Neither heat nor cold can spoil it. I sometimes think it is one of the greatest inventions of modern man. Then came a desperate temptation to drink the whole bottle of soda water, for I was terribly thirsty. I compromised by drinking two-thirds of it, and I ate a whole tin of sardines and half a loaf of very dry bread. Then I studied the blotting-paper map in front of me while I smoked a cigarette—studied it with great care.

Although it was hot in the cabin it was quite comfortable. The mosquitoes, like my three shipmates, were all fast asleep. The combined influence of the whisky and soda and sardines had set me at peace with all the world. My wise host had told me just what to do. It was obviously the only course. Why worry! True, there were only nine bottles of soda water, and if I failed to find my way, I and they must inevitably be dead within forty-eight hours. But, still, that was that. There was only one way out. I again went to the pump and took some water in a glass. It was a dull cloudy yellow, and the smell was worse than when I had tried it an hour and a half before. Certainly it was undrinkable for a healthy man, clearly fatal for the invalids. Yes, nine bottles of soda water, divided amongst four, three of them with burning fever only to be alleviated by copious draughts of fluid. Then I must start at once. But had I the strength to walk seven miles in that intense heat, along a track which I didn't know, and could only follow by a faint pencil-marked map on a sheet of blotting paper? I wondered. I might do it in the cool of the evening, when the fierce sun ceased to sap one's strength. I could almost certainly do it if I started at the first streak of dawn, when the ever-growing light made my path easier and the heat increased but little. But could my shipmates last that long? When I found our neighbour, how quickly could I return? But would I find him? Had he not told me that he spent most of his day in what he pathetically called his "back block," four miles away, where there was running water and his sheep? No, if I started at dawn next day I could not be back with help before the evening. It was clear my companions could not live for thirty-six hours on nine bottles of soda

water. Then I must start now, and chance the burning heat and the danger of fainting on the way. So I got up and went on deck, wondering whether it would be right to take two of the bottles of soda water in my pocket so as to help me to get through. I went down to look for my wise adviser the pioneer, but he was sleeping peacefully, and I knew it was best not to awaken him. So I compromised upon one of the bottles of soda, poured about a wine-glassful into a little flask which I carried with me, drank another half wine-glassful, left the rest on the table, picked up the pocket compass and the blotting paper, and, with one last lingering look, stepped on deck determined to pursue my course in the search for our nearest neighbour.

Those who read this story may be tempted to think that the coincidence is too remarkable to be true, but my life has been full of escapes so extraordinary and indeed miraculous that this happening does not seem strange to me, and I can only ask my readers to believe it.

I had got the dinghy alongside, and was stepping into it by swinging myself round the starboard shroud in order to step backwards on to the centre thwart. As I swung round I saw to my astonishment what looked like a little black cloud in the southern sky at the entrance to the bay. As I watched the cloud extended, and I realized it must be the smoke from a steamer funnel. In those days no ship ever entered this bay except when specially sent; indeed, my host had told me that it was probable that no ship would enter for months, even years. But as I stood holding on to the shroud, through the haze I distinctly saw the outline of a vessel about ten or twelve miles away. I ran to the cabin, fetched my field glasses, and standing in the bow with my back to the mast watched the approach of this vessel. Yes, she was coming straight in through the haze. In ten minutes she took shape, a single funnel, two masts, a burgee at the fore, some kind of ensign on the staff in the stern. It seemed years as I watched her approaching. Was she a fishing vessel just passing in, ready to steam round and go out again? I had seen such an episode in New Zealand, and my heart sank as I thought that this was the explanation. No, she came on, nearer and nearer. When about four miles away I saw that she slowed down. The air was so still that I could hear the thud of her propeller. Then the sound ceased, and then—oh! joy of joys, one of the supreme moments of my life—I heard the rattle of the hawser as she let go her anchor. Then I knew that we were saved.

The rest is soon told. I could not remember the way of showing a signal of distress except hoisting an Ensign upside down, and we had not got an Ensign; or lighting a flare on deck which, of course, could not be seen in the bright sunshine. But I guessed that the commander of the vessel would be

interested to see a lone vessel in this region, and remembering what we did yacht racing, I tied a towel in the rigging; we call it a “protest” flag. Then I watched.

A boat was lowered; a four-oared gig was manned. All this I clearly saw through my field glasses. The gangway was lowered, a man stepped on board, and with swift strokes the gig approached us.

When two hundred yards off a jolly voice shouted: “What’s up?” I shouted back: “Come aboard. I have three very sick men here, but I can give you a whisky and soda.” “Good for you,” he shouted back.

I saw that he was very young. As he jumped aboard he said: “I suppose this is the first you have seen of the Royal Australian Navy?” I said: “Yes, and I suppose there is no man alive so glad to see you as I am.”

In less time than it takes to tell he had sized up the situation. He told me that there was room for the three sick men in his sick bay. They had no steam pinnace, so we had to send all three off in the gig, rolled in blankets, while he and I stayed on board. When this was done I gave him the whisky and soda which I had promised and told him my story.

Then I said: “Have you been sent to look for us?”

“Good gracious, no,” he answered. “It is entirely by chance. We were coming on a training cruise, and it occurred to me this morning that it might be a useful thing to take further soundings in this remote bay.” I said: “Do you mean to tell me that you only decided this morning?” He said: “Yes, It was just after taking sights at midday when we fixed our position that I said: ‘Now I will give you lads a little practice in hydrography.’ ”

The gig came back. We were taken on board. The surgeon said that the boy was desperately ill, but that the others would certainly recover.

We stayed in the bay for twenty-four hours in the hope that the boy would have a better chance in calm water. By happy fortune all three recovered, and so I returned home.

Providence takes strange shapes; I see no reason why the Royal Australian Navy should not be counted in her service.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY BATTLES

The most delightful man I have ever known, Mr. Arthur Balfour, said to me one day after a bad round: "The sorrows of golf far outweigh its joys." The exact contrary has been the case in my life, for the joys have far outweighed the sorrows. But to this rule there was one exception, my first term at a preparatory school. There I was most miserable, as the majority of the other boys were also. I well remember the day, more than fifty years ago, when my father took me down to this famous establishment and handed me over to the care of the headmaster. It was a school renowned for its teaching. Nearly all the boys went on to either Eton or Harrow, where they often forgot most of what they had learned before. The headmaster looked benevolent, but he had a sly look too, which seemed to me to augur ill for my future. After my father had gone, the headmaster said: "Run out into the playground and see the other boys." It was a fine September afternoon, and a bright sun shone on the green grass and on the big elms at the far end of the playground. Near one of the elms I saw four boys and walked towards them. One of them shouted: "Here's one of the new boys." Four more evil-looking human beings I had never seen. They looked to me enormously tall and strong; I was soon to find out how strong they were. The boy who had first spoken then addressed me. "What is your name?" I told him. "Who is your father, and what does he do?" I said: "He is a Member of Parliament." "That's bad," said the boy. "A Conservative, of course?" "No," I said proudly, "he's a Liberal." The boy's face darkened, making him look more evil than ever. He had black, straight hair, shifty light brown eyes, and very large hands with warts on them. He said: "Liberals are the curse of the country; they are all traitors." Then, quite fiercely, he said to me: "You spawn of Satan!" I did not quite know what that meant, but the attack upon my father filled me with such unreasoning rage that I flew at the boy and hit him as hard as I could upon the jaw. He staggered from the blow, but the other three at once caught me, knocked me down, and one of them knelt upon my chest. "Well," said the leader of the band, "that's settled it; he's for the crate, anyhow." They tied my hands behind my back with a handkerchief, carried me to the other side of the elm tree, and dropped me into an ordinary crate. Then they turned it upside down, one boy sat upon the top, while the others fetched hedge stakes and proceeded to prod me with some violence with the pointed ends. It hurt badly. Finally, the leader jabbed me in the cheek—the spike went in deeply and blood poured out. "Pull him out quick," said one of them. "We shall get into trouble if he

bleeds to death." So they took the crate off, untied my hands, and tried to stop the bleeding with the handkerchief. I pulled out my own handkerchief and held it to the wound. Then the leader gave me a rousing kick, and said: "Run away now and stop it with cold water." When I got into the school buildings, by good fortune I saw the matron and told her I had cut my cheek falling down. She took me to her room and dressed the wound, asking me how I had come to cut my cheek so deeply. I answered that I supposed I had fallen upon a stone. I remember very well how she looked at me questioningly, and said: "It does not look like a cut from a stone." At that moment, a bell rang and we all filed in to tea.

There were about twenty new boys amongst whom I sat. They all looked at my plastered cheek and asked me what had happened. I said that I would tell them later on. After tea we were told that there would be no lessons that evening and that we could run away and play until bedtime. The headmaster and the assistant masters then left us alone. My enemy, whose name I remember but we will call him Sinister, came up to us little boys with his attendant satellites and said to his friends: "Well, we had better send these brats over the jumps." Then turning to us he said: "You stay where you are and we will come and fetch you when we are ready." The other boys then filed out and one of them said as he passed: "Well, it is hard luck, but don't cry out, whatever you do; it will only make it worse." So there we sat, twenty little boys, frightened to death, and wondering what was in store for us. After about half an hour, one of the four bullies came back to us and said, with a horrid grin: "All ready, come along." We filed out, down a long passage to the covered playground, a large room with a concrete floor. Set out at intervals were four improvised jumps, about 2 feet high, making the playground look like a miniature steeplechase course. Sinister was standing in the middle, armed with a strap. To my dismay, I observed that he held it by the end with the holes in it, with the buckle at the far end. The other three were similarly armed, and there was one of them to each jump. "We will begin with the spawn of Satan," said Sinister; the others roared with laughter, one of them saying: "Yes, let's have a go at the Liberal." I was told to go over the jumps. I said: "I can't jump that, it's too high." "You had better have a try," said Sinister, and caught me a whack with the strap. Again I flew at him; but, of course, he was waiting for me, quickly tripped me up, and sat on my head, while the others came along and gave me a good basting with their straps. Then they pulled me into a corner and ordered me not to move. The command was hardly necessary, for I was so battered that I could scarcely stand up. There I sat, with my back to the wall, while the four brutes flogged those unfortunate little boys round the course. As the boys

approached each jump a bully would catch them a crack with his strap, of course putting them out of their stride, with the inevitable result that, nine times out of ten, they fell over the jump. It began to dawn upon me that, unless we could meet force with force, we little boys were going to have a pretty desperate time for the rest of the term. Then and there I thought out a plan. In the end, bruised, weary, utterly home-sick, and miserable, I crept into the bed assigned to me in a large dormitory. The lights were turned out, and at last I could cry. So I cried myself to sleep.

In the morning, except for the wounded cheek, which was rather painful, I felt quite well. Of course, I was stiff and sore from the proddings and beatings of the previous day, but I did not mind this, for I was full of my plan. I told each boy that I had thought out a way by which we could avoid being flogged round the course. I told them, also, to meet me at some place I would find, where we could talk it over. I found the place and an appropriate time, namely, when the big boys were in school and we were out. It has been my good fortune to plan and carry through many attacks in war; this was the first and not the least successful. First of all, I asked each boy if he was prepared to take the risk, saying that I wanted fifteen to help me in my plan. There were twenty of them, and they all volunteered; so I chose the fifteen who seemed the strongest and looked the most resolute. I swore them all to secrecy by a terrible oath, which they each took; then I expounded the plan. We were to be divided into four groups of four each—one group for each bully. On the next night that we were to be flogged over the jumps, we would try as far as possible to get each group near to its selected bully. On a signal which I would give, the four would fly at their man. One, the leader, would catch him by the throat, another would throw his arms round his legs, and hold on tight, so that he would fall to the ground; the other two would take an arm each. Then the leader would beat the head of the bully on the concrete until he cried out for mercy. These gallant little boys accepted the plan without demur. “I expect they will kill us if we do not succeed,” said one of them, “but anything is better than going over the jumps for the rest of the term.” I showed them the way to make the attack, and each group practised it several times over on one of the boys not selected, only omitting the beating of the head upon the ground. Then I impressed upon them the need for ruthless violence and absolute loyalty; confided to them the signal, which was to be the word “fight” shouted loudly by me; told off each group to their victim, taking Sinister for myself. Then we shook hands all round. It was a thrilling moment. Just as thirty-eight and a half years later, I knew that my valiant Canadians would not fail in our desperate onslaught on the

victorious Germans in front of Amiens, so I knew that those little English boys would not fail in what seemed to them to be just as desperate a venture.

The next night there was no flogging round the course, but we managed to find out that we were for it on the following night. When the time arrived, we filed, as before, into the covered playground. Sinister was there with his strap and the others too. Quickly we grouped ourselves about the four bullies, I edging up close to Sinister with my three comrades. He turned to me and said: "Hullo, spawn of Satan." "Fight," I screamed, and in a moment each group grabbed its man. Oh! the joy of feeling Sinister falling backwards to the ground, his legs held tightly by my number two. I fell with him and on top of him. His head hit the concrete, but not hard, so holding him by the neck, I gave him an extra tap. "Help," he shouted. I said: "There is no help unless you give in," and gave his head another crack. Holding him still tightly by the throat, I looked round. There were the other three bullies lying flat on the concrete floor, equally helpless in the grip of their opponents. "Now," I shouted, "you four bullies, we have got you, and unless you give us your solemn promise, each one of you, that you will never bully us again, we will knock your brains out." And to my comrades, "Give them another tap on the head." This was done. I looked into the eyes of Sinister. I have never seen such concentrated hate, even in war. Then the light seemed to fade out of his eyes as he realized that he was powerless, and he said: "I promise." I answered: "Do you swear?" and he said: "Yes, I swear." "On your honour?" "Yes, on my honour." The same question was put to each of them. They all promised on their honour. "Now, boys," I said, "let them go." We stood aside and the four bullies filed out. There was no more "flogging round the course" during my time at school.

But although the four bullies had thus been put into subjection in dramatic fashion, my life at this school remained profoundly unhappy. I like to think that to-day very few elementary schoolboys in the whole of England are so cold or so hungry as we were. We got out of bed at 6 a.m., washed in cold water, and assembled outside the class-rooms at 6.20, where we received a mug of cold water and a small slice of stale bread. We were blue with cold by the time we started our lessons at 6.30. The lessons went on until 7.30. At 7.45 we trooped into breakfast in the dining-hall, shivering with cold and desperately hungry. Then came a refinement of cruelty. Eighty to a hundred boys sat at two long tables, with ten masters at intervals. We boys had bread and scrape and tea, a greyish-looking liquid which, served in thick mugs, was generally half cold by the time we got it. The masters, on the other hand, had nice hot tea, and a maid or man would come round and bring them eggs and bacon or sausages. As I write this, I see before me the

spectacle of ten little pairs of eyes at the opposite side of the table following each movement of the fork of a master as he placed a portion of food in his mouth. But it was not really the hunger or the cold which worried me so much as the complete lack of freedom. I had been brought up in the country. I loved horses, had had a little pony to ride for years past, dogs, woods, fields; above all, I loved trees and the sound of the wind in their branches. Now all at once I was confined within high red brick walls on three sides and a railway line on the other, with no chance of escape from my prison, except for an occasional walk with a row of other boys, under the supervision of a master, through a suburban village. My whole life was a misery. It was not that I was a failure at my lessons—on the contrary, I found them easy, especially on the classical side, and rapidly rose in my place in the school. My success in classics was entirely due to the fact that my mother had taught me Latin. If any mother who reads these pages has doubts of the wisdom of trying to teach her son anything herself before he goes to school, let me implore her to disregard everything that any future master may tell her and to teach her son all she can. However little she may know of the subject, her son will learn more from her, if he loves her, than he will ever learn from anybody else.

My longing to escape from this prison became so insistent that I began to make plans for escape. There was one person at this school whom I liked during this first term and one whom I loved—indeed, she was my first love. To the first, a boy called Young, I confided my plan, but not to the second, for, after deep thought, I decided that it was not fair to ask her to share in our perils, nor even to let her know of our desperate plan. So Young and I sat together in corners while I expounded to him the way to escape from our intolerable fate. His parents were abroad and a strange pride, which I think most boys have shared, prevented me from appealing to my parents to take me away.

This was the plan. We were to escape through a gap which I had found in the wire near the railway at dusk one evening. We would walk towards London across the fields, sleeping the night in a barn which I had observed from the train about four miles from London. The next morning we would continue our walk, reach London, walk through the city, and get to the docks at nightfall. There we would get into a dinghy at a place I knew of near the Tower, row off to a ship in the dark, climb up a hawser or the cable, stow ourselves away in a sail-locker in the bow with the food and drink which we had bought on the way, and the next day find ourselves safe at sea. Then we would have to trust to the kind heart of the captain or the mate to allow us to work our passages as cabin boys, ultimately returning to England with

money in our pockets and throwing ourselves on the mercy of our parents, having shown our readiness to earn our own living and our determination to escape from the prison which we hated.

The scheme was not so fantastic as my readers might suppose; indeed, looking back upon it with the knowledge I now have, I think that if we had got clear away it would have been successful. I had been about in boats all my young life, so there was no difficulty in getting on board at night, given the ship in the stream and the dinghy tied up to the steps. This, too, I knew something about, for the following reason. My father was a member of a House of Commons Committee inquiring into something connected with ships and harbours. He had gone to the Pool of London to see things for himself, and had taken me with him. We had chartered a boat from a waterman at the steps near the Tower of London, had rowed out to a ship, and had got on board. I had noticed that there were several other boats tied up to the rings in the wall and at the side of the steps. I went to this very place a few months ago, and there were the boats as they were fifty years ago. Such was my plan, with which Young cordially agreed. The only requisite was enough money to buy food for the twenty-four hours which we were to spend in getting to the ship in the Pool of London and sufficient stores to keep us going until the ship was out at sea. From our joint funds, we made up a sum of 14*s.* 7*d.*, which would have been ample. Then came the question of choosing the day. I borrowed *The Times* newspaper from one of the masters and tried to make out the sailings from the shipping intelligence, but could make neither head nor tail of it. Still, as I told Young, ships were leaving at every tide, and I promised him I would know from the look of her if the ship we chose was likely to sail before long. It was early November. We knew we could not find our way across country in the dark, so we had to leave about three o'clock in the afternoon. It had to be a dry day, otherwise we should get clogged with mud in crossing the wide, flat fields. The ideal day came. There had been no rain for four or five days—the playing fields were dry, and therefore we knew that the open fields would be dry also. We crept away while football was in progress, got through the gap in the wire, ran along the railway line a short way, then up a little embankment and so into the country. I shall never forget the glory of that moment when at last I was free again. In single file we walked along the hedge which led us gradually away from the railway. Then we crossed a lane. I knew the direction and saw that we had best walk straight across country. So away we went across a big stubble field. We were so sure that our departure had not been observed that we made no further attempt at concealment and just trudged along towards our destination. We thus

crossed about four fields and entered a fifth. In the centre was a large haystack, with a man on it cutting hay. We were about a hundred yards from the stack when for some reason I turned round and looked back. Two fields away, I saw a man on a horse, galloping. My heart sank within me, for I knew who the man was. Amongst the masters at this school there were two of peculiar interest to us boys. One was the French master, whom we all adored; he was tall, very athletic, a wonderful fencer; he had served with distinction in the Franco-German War, where he had been badly wounded; he was full of kindness and good humour; he would tell us stories of that campaign with vivid description, and stories of his own experiences, but always with a modesty and restraint which appealed to his little hero-worshippers in an extraordinary degree. The other personality was of the opposite type. He was harsh, cruel, vindictive—a thick-set man with small eyes like a pig's—his one hobby was riding, which would have been a point in his favour, but that he consistently ill-treated his unfortunate horse, flogging it with a heavy wooden crop which he always carried. As I looked I saw that it was this man who was pursuing us. I guessed—and, as it appeared afterwards, rightly—that he had not seen us, but was only following by the route he knew we were likely to take. "Come on, Young," I said, and we ran, bending down, to the haystack. There was a ladder leaning up against the stack on the far side from our pursuer. Up this ladder we climbed and threw ourselves, breathless, on to the hay. Quickly I explained to the man who was cutting hay that we were escaping from school, begging him to go down from the stack, lay the ladder down on the ground, walk away, and tell anyone who asked him that he had not seen us. He said he would do this. In all my life I have been betrayed only twice—this man was my first betrayer. We lay upon the hay, and, peeping over the rim of the stack, saw the approaching horseman. He approached the low hedge through which we had passed, two or three hundred yards to the right of where we had come. In spite of our agonized apprehension, we both shouted for joy when, as he jumped this hedge, his horse pecked and he nearly fell off. Meantime, our agricultural friend was half-way from the stack towards the edge of the field. The rider recovered himself and galloped up to the man. They were three hundred yards from where we lay, so of course we could hear nothing that was said. We saw the rider bending down questioning the man. Then we saw him raise his heavy crop and threaten him. The man cowered a little. Then we saw him turn and point to our haystack. "He has betrayed us," said Young. "Yes," said I, "but there is just a chance that if we hide under the hay he will not see us." Quickly we dug ourselves in, which was not difficult, and lay half suffocated under a foot of hay. Then we felt the stack shiver as something heavy seemed to mount it, and in a moment a

fierce voice shouted, “Come out, you young devils; I know where you are.” The game was up, because as he walked forward on the hay he trod upon my leg. I put my head up and Young followed suit. The man was in a blazing passion. He gave us both a cut with the whip, ordered us down from off the stack, and then made us run before him towards the school.

It was dark by the time we returned. We were taken at once to the headmaster, who sent us straight to bed, informing us that he would flog us in the morning. I remember that screens were put around our beds as though we were dead. The next morning we went to school as usual, being told that the headmaster would see us at three o’clock that afternoon, this being regarded as the appropriate time for castigation at that establishment. Accordingly, at three o’clock I was marched, alone, into the headmaster’s study, Young waiting outside. “Boy,” said he, “what excuse can you give for your wicked conduct?” I replied: “I am miserable at your school, sir, and I decided to run away to sea.” He said: “It will be my duty to flog you in order to mark my sense of the ingratitude you have shown for all the kindness you have received here, and thereafter to keep you under punishment for the rest of this term. I shall write to your father and tell him of your wicked behaviour. Now get ready.” I have had many extraordinary escapes in my life and many strange coincidences, but this, though a small affair, no doubt, was not the least remarkable. I got ready. The headmaster was selecting from a cupboard, very much like the locker in which people nowadays keep their clubs at a golf club, the appropriate instrument. Even as he did so, I heard the sound of horses’ hoofs and the grinding of carriage wheels on the gravel outside. Looking up at the window from my kneeling position, I saw the well-known form of my grandmother’s coachman, Keeley, on the box, and then in a flash, my grandmother herself, seated in the open carriage. The headmaster ran to the window, and said to himself. “God bless my soul! It is his grandmother.” “Button up, boy,” said he to me, and swiftly left the room. I hardly had time to obey before my beautiful grandmother, with the silvery curls, swept into the room, and said: “My dear little Jack,” and clasped me in her arms. “And how has he been getting on?” said she to the headmaster. To my astonishment he replied: “Oh, a charming boy, a little mischievous sometimes, but boys will be boys. Doing very well at his lessons, and I am sure he will be a credit to the school.” My grandmother, though exceedingly benevolent, was quite acute. She said: “I am glad to hear this. May I take little Jack for a short drive?” He said: “Certainly, but you will bring him back in time for tea.” “Yes,” she said, “certainly I will.” As we walked through the hall together, I saw two brace of pheasants lying upon the table. I climbed into the big old-fashioned carriage, the coachman said: “Glad to

see you, Master Jackie," and away we drove. Once in the street of the village, my grandmother clasped me in her arms, and I burst into tears. She said: "I saw you were unhappy when I came in; tell me all about it." Then I made a clean breast of the whole thing. To my shame, it was she who said, and not I: "But what about Young? Keeley, drive back to the school." So back we went. My grandmother marched in again, and I do not know exactly what happened, but when she came back I said: "Were you in time?" She said, "Oh, yes, in plenty of time. Your friend will come to no harm." Then we went for a drive round the country. She bought me a cake with sugar on the top, and a little of this we shared together. It was like going straight from Hell to Heaven. I remember she said: "I won't tell your grandfather about this. He is so busy just now (he was, at the time, the oldest Member of the House of Commons), but I will see Emily (my mother) and I think I can see to it that you will have a happier time. Now we must go back, but I will tell the headmaster that I will come again next week." She had a few minutes' conversation with the headmaster and drove away. He said to me: "You have had a lucky escape, but who can flog a boy with a grandmother like that! Still, you thoroughly deserved it, and I shall expect better behaviour in future."

Though the headmaster had forgiven us, the fierce master who had caught us had not. He was like some animal baulked of his prey, and he really gave me a very bad time. One day he boxed my ears so hard that he knocked me off the form and I was deaf for weeks afterwards. Still, times were better and, after all, the term was drawing to a close.

Now comes the strangest part of this story. I have said that in this grim and apparently heartless place there was one human being whom I loved. After the lapse of more than fifty years I still see the most beautiful woman, except two, whom I have ever known. She had fair, wavy hair, parted in the middle, and eyes of that wonderful blue that one seldom sees except sometimes in Italy and often in the West of Ireland. She was tall, slender, and graceful. Her wonderful smile and kindly words warmed the hearts of us tiny little boys. Her name was Mary. She was the head housemaid. Of course, we all adored her, especially the little boys; but, naturally enough, the grown-up people found her irresistible too. Most especially, the brilliant French master and my enemy, the fierce man. One afternoon, when I had sprained my knee and could not play football, I was walking towards the carpenter's shop, where there was a lathe which I was allowed to use for turning. I had made two egg-cups, one for my mother, which I knew she would accept, and one for Mary, which I hardly dared to ask her to take from me. In the corridor, I passed Mary. Very shyly I said to her: "Will you come

with me to the lathe, because I have made you an egg-cup. I do hope you will let me give it to you." She laughed and came with me, and I duly presented her with the cup. At this moment the French master joined us, asked after my knee, then, turning to Mary, at once engaged her in earnest conversation. They paid no attention to me, but I could not help hearing what they said, for I could not get past them from the corner of the workshop. He was telling her that he loved her, that he would marry her, that he was a Protestant, and that his family were rich enough to enable him to marry, that he must go back to France almost at once. She hung her head and would not reply. He put his arm round her waist, drew her towards him, and kissed her on the lips. They were both so fair to see, his words in broken English were so eloquent, the way they looked at each other was so beautiful, that I was thrilled at the scene. At that moment there was a heavy step, the fierce man bounded in through the doorway and with a shout of "Cad!" struck the Frenchman a violent blow with his heavy wooden crop across the cheek. Then followed one of the most extraordinary scenes I have ever witnessed. The Frenchman eyed his antagonist for a second, then, with cat-like swiftness, sprang upon him, twisted an arm till the big bully screamed with pain, and taking him by the collar, shook him while he landed blow upon blow with the crop which he had wrenched from the other's hand. Every part he could hit he hit, but mostly his head and his tail; then, finally, he threw him to the ground, an inert mass. He broke the crop across his knee, threw the two ends at his victim, said the one word "Canaille!" bent low over Mary's hand as he kissed it, and walked out of the door. Mary and I stood there hand in hand for a moment while the fierce man lay still. I remember whispering to her: "Better come away; he's only shamming dead." So, very frightened, I limped out into the playing field and Mary disappeared.

I learned that evening that the Frenchman had gone straight out of the house, leaving word that the butler was to send his belongings after him. The beautiful Mary followed the next day, and I have heard, and I am sure it is true, that they lived happily ever after.

CHAPTER V

CAMBRIDGE ADVENTURES AND MISADVENTURES

I. SIXTY-SIX TO ONE

Not all perils are affairs of life and death. All through my time at Cambridge my most intimate friend, after Tom Conolly, was Victor Cavendish, now Duke of Devonshire. We both had a set of rooms in Trinity Great Court, where we lunched and dined together many times a week. We hunted with great vigour with the Cambridgeshire and the Oakley, and occasionally we would ride over to Newmarket on ponies provided for us by our benevolent parents.

On one occasion we rode over to see the Cambridgeshire. The Duke of Portland's horse Donovan was entered, and had never been beaten. We had managed to amass £10 between us for the only bet we were going to have that term, and as we cantered along the long straight road from Cambridge to Newmarket we speculated as to how best to invest the money. I said that Gentleman Hoppitt, the hall porter, had told me that Donovan was certain to win and that he was always right. Victor replied that the betting would be at least 3 to 1 on so that we should only get £3 6*s.* 8*d.* by risking the whole of our ten pounds.

When we arrived on the course on the opposite side to the grand stand, Victor discerned his uncle, then Lord Hartington, strolling through the paddock, and said: "That's a bit of luck. Perhaps my uncle will give me a tip."

I held his pony, handed him over my fiver and told him to invest according to the advice given. After about ten minutes Victor returned with the news that his uncle had told him that he disapproved of young men betting, but that nevertheless there was an off-chance of making a bit on this Cambridgeshire. He knew the owner of a chestnut horse called Laureate. This owner had told him that his almost unknown horse had got such a marvellous turn of speed that he thought it extremely probable that he might beat Donovan. Victor had gone to the bookmaker whom his uncle recommended to him, and had invested our ten pounds at 66 to 1.

Victor was greatly excited, and so indeed was I as we cantered to the other end of the course to see the start, as we had often done before. It is

great fun seeing the start in this way at Newmarket. On fast ponies for a short time one can keep almost level with the field, then, all at once, the horses streak away from you as if you were standing still.

We could see Donovan striding along ahead of the field, looking as if he could win by a quarter of a mile if he tried. Our chestnut was going well among the others. Then we lost sight of them and, sure that our tenner had disappeared, cantered quietly to the finishing point.

We had noticed that there was an ominous silence at the end of the race instead of the usual cheering, and wondered what had happened. Victor jumped off and ran across the course to his bookmaker. In five minutes he was back again with a look of wonder, almost of awe, upon his face. I said: "What has happened?" He said: "Let's get away out of this quick." He jumped on and we rode away about a quarter of a mile. Then he got off, and said: "Get off, Jack." From his breast pocket he produced a huge bundle of five pound notes. He said: "That's six hundred and seventy pounds." And so it was.

"Whatever shall we do with it?" said Victor.

I said: "I'm afraid the banks will be shut, but never mind, we will find a place to put it in somehow. The great thing is that we have had the most marvellous success that ever befell two fellows."

So, as we rode back to Cambridge, we built castles in the air over the wonderful things we would do with the three hundred and thirty-five pounds apiece. We would begin by paying off all our bills. We would each buy a horse. I would buy a sailing boat and Victor another gun.

Arrived at Cambridge we locked the £670 up in my desk; my rooms were next to the Master's lodge, and we thought that this fact made the money safe. We then each wrote to our mothers to tell them the great news. I made it a rule to tell my mother everything, the only wise rule of life that I have ever consistently followed.

Next morning we put the money in Mortlock's Bank to a joint account and then wrote round to all the tradesmen we could think of asking them to send their bills.

That night we entertained our friends to dinner in my rooms, and there was much rejoicing.

The following morning I found a letter in my father's handwriting lying on my plate at breakfast. I was always rather afraid of those letters, for although my father was a most generous parent, I had recently tried him

rather high in the financial line. However, the last crisis had been safely passed, so I prepared to open the envelope without misgivings. At that moment Victor came in with a look of genuine alarm on his good-humoured and chubby countenance. He said: "Look at this letter which I have received from my grandfather." I said: "Well, I have just got a letter from my father. We had better read each other's letter."

Victor's ran as follows:

"My dear Victor,

"I happened to see the letter which your mother received from you this morning announcing with apparent delight that by betting on a horse you had won the sum of £335. I am constrained to write and tell you at once that betting on horses has more than once nearly brought our family to ruin, and that to show my displeasure I shall find it necessary to stop your allowance. I regard betting as immoral in the highest degree. In addition to which you ought to know that our family cannot afford the losses which you will undoubtedly sustain if you persist in your evil course."

My letter was curiously similar:

"My dear Jack,

"I happened to see the letter you wrote to your mother in which you told her that you had won £335 by betting on a horse called Laureate. You know my views about gambling, so I can only say that if you insist on endeavouring to make a living by these means you cannot expect me to continue to contribute to your support."

You can imagine we two boys sitting on opposite sides of my little breakfast table ruefully wondering what to do next. Victor first suggested that we should each send our winnings to the enraged letter-writers, with a promise to abstain from betting in the future. After much cogitation we decided to make the promise, but to announce that we proposed to make, as a first charge on our winnings, the payment of all our outstanding liabilities. We accordingly concocted identical letters on these lines with the happiest results. My father and Victor's grandfather both wrote to us by return of post announcing their forgiveness, and, curiously enough, saying in each case that they would not accept a promise made under threat, but hoped, nevertheless, that we would restrain our gambling proclivities within the

narrowest limits possible. I do not believe that they wrote these letters in collaboration, but they certainly had the desired effect.

II. ALONE WITH HOUNDS

Amongst other horses I rode at Cambridge was one Kildare, the famous horse who ran three times second in the Grand National and was beaten by a length only on two occasions. After his third race in the Grand National he broke down and was bought by a dealer in Cambridge, who got him comparatively well again. Tom Conolly and I hired him between us for the season, and it was while hunting with the Oakley Hounds that I had almost the most exciting experience in my life. Why it should be I cannot tell, but all who have been out hunting will agree with me that the feeling of delight at being alone with hounds, on a good horse, with a good scent, in a good country, is almost unequalled in human experience, except, of course, for love and war, which stand alone in this respect.

This is how it happened to Kildare and me. Kildare was a wonderful horse over a country, and would jump most temperately, provided he was in front or nearly so. If he got left behind at the start it was almost impossible to stop him until he had got up again. On this occasion the Oakley Hounds, a very good pack with a fine huntsman, drew a large gorse spinney on top of a hill. The fox, closely followed by the pack, stole away unobserved except by the huntsman and a dozen others, and the rest of the field, including myself, were left a quarter of a mile behind. When Kildare espied twelve galloping horses two fields ahead of him he went perfectly mad. We jumped over two fences without mishap at Grand National speed. Then in and out of a road, a hair-raising experience at thirty miles an hour, and found ourselves in a large grass field with the twelve horsemen all grouped round a gate in the far corner. Two were off their horses, and, as Kildare and I came thundering along, I saw that they were trying to break the padlock and untwist some wire. I knew I could not stop Kildare, for he could see the hounds streaming away in the next field; so I waved and shouted to the people at the gate to get out of the way, commended my soul to heaven, and went most unwillingly at the gate. It was quite unbreakable, made to open towards the way I was going, and over 6 feet high. I afterwards learned that the one farmer in the country who disapproved of hunting had wired in the whole of this great grass field, erected this unjumpable gate, and securely padlocked it. It would probably have been an impossible jump to any horse, even going at the moderate pace necessary to jump really high timber; but at Kildare's amazing speed it was, of course, inconceivable that he should clear it. He

made a magnificent bound and I should think propelled himself nearly six feet in the air, but he hit his knees on the top bar and over we went. I was shot clear quite twenty yards and jumped up shaken, but unhurt. I ran back to Kildare who was lying quite still; for one moment I thought he was dead, but as I got hold of the reins he woke up, reared himself up on his fore-feet for a moment or two, shook his head, and stood up. I clambered on and followed the line where I had last seen the hounds. Of course, nobody attempted to follow me, because where the famous Kildare had fallen no other horse in the hunt had a chance of success.

Just round the corner of a little spinney I saw the hounds in the same field with me. As I galloped towards them they took up the line, and from that moment for four and a half miles measured in a straight line they ran at top speed without a check. The cause of the momentary check had been that the fox had turned at right angles, straight in the teeth of a strong wind, a very unusual thing. As a consequence, when the huntsman and the field at last got out of the wired trap in which they had been, they looked for us down wind, and nobody except myself ever saw the hounds again that day.

It was a wonderful ride. Kildare was going perfectly and temperately, clearing each fence with consummate ease. The hounds went so fast we could only just keep up with them. For some miles they ran with glorious music, then, as they got nearer their fox, they ran mute. Finally, after we had gone about four miles in a straight line, as we afterwards measured it, I viewed the fox about a hundred yards in front of the flying pack. Wild with excitement I waved my hat and cheered them on. I have been told that this was a great mistake on my part. Anyway the hounds crashed through a little fence where the fox had gone half a minute before. On the other side was a stream perhaps four feet broad. The hounds flashed across the stream and far beyond it. I could only look on and wonder where the fox had gone. In a moment or two I saw him creeping up a fence not a hundred yards to the right. He had run about sixty yards up-stream, then clambered out in order to run along the cross fence. He could only just crawl, but in vain I tried to get the hounds on to the line. They resolutely refused to pay the least attention to cajolery or imprecation. Presently, at the top of the hill, I saw a man holding up his hand. I galloped forward, and he showed me the place where the fox had run into a drain. That was the end of a marvellous hunt. The farmer and I managed to get the hounds to the place where the fox had gone into the drain, and after they had satisfied themselves with much baying that he was there, we induced them to go into the barn. I then sent a telegram addressed to the huntsman at the kennels, eighteen miles away, telling him where the hounds were to be found and started on a thirty mile ride back to

Cambridge. We got home at nine o'clock that night, and next day Kildare was none the worse. It was a wonderful hunt.

III. CAMBRIDGE MANŒUVRES, 1912

Cambridge was, if not quite the scene, the background (many years after the Kildare jump) of the most uncomfortable day I ever spent; one which was full of minor disasters, but illumined by the forbearance of my Sovereign, and one good story, the humour of which, especially to Cambridge men, will redeem it from any charge of irreverence.

In the autumn of 1912, when I was Secretary of State for War, army manœuvres were held in the Eastern Counties, the headquarters of the chief umpire, Sir John French, being established at Cambridge. The opposing sides were commanded by General Sir Douglas Haig and General Sir Thomas Grierson respectively. To these manœuvres I had invited General Foch, on the advice of Sir John French—then Chief of the Imperial General Staff—and Colonel Henry Wilson, Director of Imperial Operations. The day, as I have said, was a series of misadventures, not only for myself, but also for Haig and the representatives of Canada and South Africa.

It had been arranged that I should meet the King at a point not far from Babraham, where the Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Charles Adeane, then lived, as, happily, he still does to-day.

The first trouble was that my beautiful and docile black thoroughbred charger had suddenly gone lame. The Remount Department was ordered to produce the best possible horse for me to ride. Above all, it was to be absolutely quiet, so that it might not disturb the King while he was riding round the troops. There was some delay in producing the horse, and His Majesty was kept waiting for a moment or two—an unpardonable thing. However, a good-looking bay was produced, and the King forgave me, for the first time that day.

I told His Majesty that it was arranged that he should first see the representatives of Foreign Powers, India, and the Dominions, who would be assembled about three miles away. We cantered away for about a mile or two, when the King reined up in order to ask me who were the representatives of the Dominions whom he was about to meet. While I was explaining to His Majesty that amongst those present in the group of visitors, which we could see near a clump of trees, was the representative of South Africa, I heard an angry cry. Looking round I saw that my remount

had bent his head round and caught His Majesty securely by the foot. The King said:

"I wish you would stop your horse eating my foot."

I jabbed the animal in the mouth and he let go. Although I ascertained afterwards that the horse had bruised the King's foot severely, His Majesty forgave me for the second time that day.

I asked permission to gallop forward to tell the group of officers that the King was coming. His Majesty was, naturally, delighted to agree to my going, following at a slow canter not far behind. Imagine my consternation, as I approached the group, to see two men, both in khaki uniform, actually engaged in a fierce boxing match. Some of the others stood apart, while one or two were trying to separate the combatants. I galloped into the midst of them and told them to be ready at once to receive the King. Nevertheless, General Sam Hughes, for he was one of the combatants, with a shout of "Traitor!" managed to land a tremendous blow on the ear of his antagonist, General Beyers, the representative of South Africa. I rode my horse between the two men, while Beyers shouted:

"Let me get at him."

There was only just time to quell the disturbance before the King arrived. Of course, he had seen the whole thing, and, after all the officers had been presented to him, directed me to find out the cause of the trouble. It appeared that Beyers had said to Sam Hughes that one South African was equal to ten Britons when it came to a fight, and that Sam Hughes had replied that one Canadian was equal to twenty South Africans, and that if Beyers liked to repeat his allegation they could soon see who was the better man. That was how the fight began.

Both these men were Ministers of Defence in their respective countries and retained that position until the declaration of the World War. General Hughes organized the Canadian Expeditionary Force, with which I served throughout the greater part of the War. Beyers led the rebellion in South Africa against the Government at the outbreak of the World War. It was he who seduced Delarey from his allegiance. Botha swiftly crushed the rebellion; Delarey was accidentally shot, and Beyers was drowned in the Vaal.

Of course this fight was not my fault; but it was a third misadventure for me.

Further: during the course of the day, Haig was quite out-manœuvred by Grierson—so much so that, in spite of the efforts of the umpires and the directing staff, the proposed climax was a hopeless anti-climax. Grierson had so completely achieved his purpose in the scheme which had been set that there was nothing left to fight about. This was, in my judgment, the only sham fight which I have ever seen that had any relation to actual warfare, the reason being that Grierson had realized the value of concealment from air observation, whereas Haig had not. There were but few aeroplanes flying about, for the Royal Flying Corps was then in its infancy; but there were enough for Grierson to ascertain from air reports the position of Haig's forces, while he had so cunningly concealed his men that Haig had no notion of his whereabouts. Satisfactory though this doubtless was to Grierson, from the spectacular point of view the thing was a failure, and, therefore, misadventure number four.

At the conclusion of the operations my kind friends Charles Adeane and Lord Albemarle, the latter having been attached to the Staff for special duty, consoled me for my four mischances, Adeane sending me back in his own motor-car to Cambridge. I was not sorry to be rid of the carnivorous beast that had bitten the King's foot.

The authorities of Trinity College had been kind and thoughtful enough to allot me the rooms in Great Court, near to the Master's Lodge, which I had occupied when I was an undergraduate at the College. Arrived at these rooms I found the Quartermaster-General, Sir John Cowans, with a mass of papers for consideration, decision, and signature. We worked away together until a quarter to eight. Even then the work was not done, and while I dressed he continued to read papers to me. The moment came to run across to the Master's Lodge, just before the arrival of the King. As I left Cowans I told him of my four misadventures, and he replied:

"I am sure you will not have to crave forgiveness of your Sovereign for the fifth time in one day."

Alas! he was wrong.

The Sovereign holds a special position and authority in regard to Trinity College, Cambridge. As a consequence, he presided over the banquet in Hall, where French, Haig, Grierson, and all those concerned with the manœuvres, officers and civilians, were assembled. The Master, Doctor Butler, was on the King's right. I was on the King's left. On my left was the Master of St. John's.

In order to understand the point of this story, I must explain to those unfortunate human beings who have not had the privilege of being undergraduates at Cambridge that the two biggest colleges in point of numbers at Cambridge are Trinity and St. John's. In my day there was an emulation, a rivalry, and a jealousy, acute to the last degree, between the two colleges. I am told that now the trouble is abated; but in those days the word "bitterness" could almost be added to the catalogue.

Doctor Butler, the Master of Trinity College, was a scholar of renown. As Headmaster of Harrow he became world-famous; as a conversationalist he was remarkable; as an after-dinner speaker he was, by common consent, unique.

As the dinner proceeded, Doctor Butler engaged the King in conversation, to His Majesty's evident delight. My neighbour on the left, the distinguished Master of the rival college, could not but observe this fact. Towards the end of dinner I remarked to him:

"What a wonderful man the Master of Trinity is. He was my Headmaster at Harrow, and I never realized, much as I admired and feared him, that he was a man who could fill any role, make any speech, engage in conversation any man, even the King of England, to his delight and interest."

The Master of St. John's replied, in the undertone in which he had to talk in order not to interrupt the conversation between the King and the Master of Trinity:

"The other night I had a dream about the Master of Trinity."

Then, in a whisper, he told me the story of his dream. The concluding words were, to me, such a shock of delightful humour that I gave a shout of laughter so loud that it resounded through the great hall. The King turned to me and said:

"That was a very loud laugh."

Still bubbling over with merriment, I managed to say, for the fifth time that day:

"I beg your pardon most profoundly, Sir; but it was a very funny story. Will you please forgive me?"

For the fifth time he forgave me, adding the condition that I should tell him the story. I begged that I might postpone it, a request that was granted.

Here is the dream of the Master of St. John's and my readers, especially those of Cambridge University, must decide whether my Sovereign's

forgiveness was just. I tell the dream in almost the exact words of the Master of St. John's.

"I dreamt that I was present at the Last Judgment. The Supreme Being was dividing mankind into the sheep and the goats. Each one was judged and put to right or left of the Throne, in accordance with the catalogue of vices and virtues, faults and failures, read out by the Recording Angel. At last this final division was completed, and I remember thinking that at this august and supreme moment no human voice could possibly be raised.

"I was wrong. Almost at once I heard the silvery tones, which I knew so well, of the greatest after-dinner orator of my time. Looking across to the opposite side of the vast assembly, I saw the Master of Trinity standing up, having risen, of course, from amongst the sheep" (here the Master of St. John's tone was extraordinarily acid). "This is what he said:—

" 'Sir, I cannot allow these proceedings to come to a close without expressing—on behalf of all those present, and, perhaps I may be permitted to add without offence, especially those amongst whom I am standing—the appreciation which we all feel for the patience, skill, and, above all, the unerring judgment with which, Sir, you have conducted these proceedings.'

"There was a terrible hush while the whole world listened, and I remember saying to myself: 'Just for once he cannot get away with it.' I was wrong, for he went on:

" 'And I may add, that to some of us, and especially to myself, this is not surprising, seeing that you, Sir, are, in a sense, a Trinity man.' "

CHAPTER VI

BLUFF

I. THE BLUFF THAT FAILED

In April, in the year 1900, I was commanding a squadron of the Hampshire Yeomanry attached to General Rundle's Eighth Division. It so happened that Lord Kitchener—whose cooks I had stolen before we started on a wild gallop, which he accompanied, through Prieska to the Orange River—had arranged with me to mount a party of scouts who, he said, knew the whole country from De Aar junction to Harrismith.

Having provided the horses I was in special relationship to these scouts, and they were attached to my little command. We arrived at Thabanchu a few days after the disaster when the redoubtable De Wet came clean through our lines to surround and capture some of our most famous regiments and battalions. De Wet had disappeared with his prisoners and his booty; but still a few parties of men would approach our lines and fire at us at night. Mounted infantry from Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, joined up with us, and we moved off to the east towards Basutoland. We had no tents at this time and slept under the stars. It was bitterly cold at night; indeed, the temperature often fell ten degrees below freezing point; but at this high altitude—six thousand feet above the sea—the sun was of astonishing power at midday. Two months after the episode I describe I actually saw infantrymen laid out in a dead faint from the heat on the side of a track, while my pony was trying to beat a hole through the thick ice in the spruit alongside the road in the vain endeavour to get a drink of water.

I was rolled up in a blanket one of these bitter nights, with my head inside the saddle to keep off the cold south wind, when a man appeared in the moonlight and said in a whisper:

"Is that Captain Seely?"

I said: "Yes, who are you?"

He sat down near me and replied: "I think you know me; I am the Intelligence Officer of the Eighth Division."

Intelligence Officers have a hard time with the British Army. Everyone laughs at them; nobody believes anything they say. A classical friend of mine said at the time that their description as Intelligence Officers was based on the Latin saying "Lucus a non lucendo," the explanation of the joke being

that “Lucus” is the Latin word for a particularly dark grove, supposed to be derived from the opposite of “Lucendo,” a tense of a word meaning “dazzling light.”

In the highest ranks at the head of this service we have had a series of men of great capacity, culminating in one whose brilliant intuitions made him by common consent the greatest Intelligence Officer of the late war. It is pathetic to remember that in that war the ordinary Intelligence Officers were given special badges, green hats, and green tabs. All of us in the front line knew quite well that the basis of intelligence was that nobody should know who was collecting information. He might be a private, a corporal, a colonel, or a general; but, above all, his function must be unknown. We all knew that we British people had a supreme advantage in intelligence work, in that we had more people than were to be found in any other country whom we could trust in this dark business, without any fear of their selling themselves to the enemy. To our amazement, we saw a band of officers, invested with special badges, announcing not only to our own army, but to all the spies whom we knew to be in our midst, that they were the particular persons designed to secure secret information. Perhaps there was some reason for this odd proceeding; but we never found it.

However, in this case, the Intelligence Officer had intelligent information. He was, in fact, a man of the highest intelligence and the greatest quality, as his subsequent career has proved—Sir George Aston. He whispered in my ear that news had just reached him that the commandant of the biggest Boer commando opposed to us was in a farm about twenty miles away, having gone there to meet his wife and his youngest son, a lad of about twelve years of age. He was a kinsman of Wessels, that heroic man who had led the storming party which captured Majuba Hill in the first Boer War. It was known that not only was he a skilful commander who had played a leading part in the Natal campaign, but that he was also one of the Boer leaders who was of one mind with Botha, Delarey, Smuts, and Hertzog in being determined to continue the struggle, even should Pretoria be captured, as opposed to Prinsloo and others, who believed that peace should be made at the first opportunity.

The place where this doughty warrior was said to be was known to the spy who had brought the information. It was probable that at least one of the scouts whom Kitchener had added to my command would know the way by moonlight. The approximate position could be seen on the very rough maps that we had. Could I get twenty volunteers and an officer to attempt to capture this man?

All this the Intelligence Officer told me in a whisper while I lay with my back against the wheel of the Cape cart. I whispered back to him that it should be done; that we would start in twenty minutes, and that he must send his man to my Cape cart on foot within that time and I would provide him with a horse. Then Aston crept away in the darkness. As soon as he was gone I woke up Christopher Heseltine, my second in command, who was sleeping against the other wheel of the Cape cart, told him I was going on a reconnaissance with twenty men and an officer, and that he would be in command of the squadron during my absence. I next awakened Smith, my orderly, and told him to saddle my pony and his own. I found one of my subalterns, Bobby Johnson (now Sir Robert Johnson, Master of the Mint), and said he must get his troop saddled at once for a special reconnaissance. Then I went to Kitchener's mysterious men. They had a loose organization; but there was a man calling himself a sergeant-major who said he had with him a man familiar with the country to the north of where we lay. The moon was in the third quarter and was just rising. It was the strangest thing to move about in the incredible silence and peace of a night on the High Veldt, giving these instructions for what was no doubt a pretty desperate enterprise. The whole thing was well done. Except for Bobby's troop, the horses were not disturbed and all the men except those whom Bobby had silently summoned remained fast asleep. My horse, together with the rest, was led away two hundred yards north of the camp, and also a pony for the Intelligence Officer's man. Kitchener's scout met me at the appointed place, a sharp-pointed rock which could be seen in the rising moon, and told me that he knew the farm quite well, and had often been there.

It was about two o'clock when we started. The scout said that the farm was at least thirty miles away. I knew then that it was almost hopeless to surprise the farm before daylight. Still, we must try. We moved off silently at a slow walk, I leading with Kitchener's scout and the Intelligence man behind me. We crossed a spruit and then started to canter. There was no track. The grass was long, and more than once the horses fell into the ant-bear holes which covered the High Veldt. However, we made good progress, and Bobby, who rode up to me at intervals, reported that the horses had still plenty of go in them after we had covered about twenty miles. Then we came to a deep ravine—not an ordinary spruit, but more like the score in the country made by a big Scottish burn. It took us a long time to get over it; but when we came up on the other side, the spy told me that we were within three miles. Kitchener's scout pointed to a little kopje with some trees just appearing below it and said:

"Yes, that is the farm."

I knew that the fact that we could see it so clearly in the dawn must mean that we would fail in our purpose. Still there was nothing for it but to go forward as quickly as we could on the off-chance that the faithful scouts that all Boer commanders had ever at their disposal might for once be asleep. I had arranged for the horses to be watered at the bottom of the gorge and to be off-saddled for a quarter of an hour. I had seen some of them rolling on the sandy edge of the spruit—a sure sign that they were good for another twenty miles. Some of the horses, however, I saw to be nearly all in. The men, who had no idea of the purpose of this swift night march, were all bright, alert, and fearless. We assembled just under the lip of the gorge while I explained to them what we meant to do, namely, to encircle the farm, the top of the trees of which they could see, and capture one of the most redoubtable leaders. I told them that, if we succeeded, our return to our own lines would be safe, because no one could know that we had come, for none could have observed us in the darkness, and the only witnesses would be our captives.

We jumped on our horses, and away we went at a gallop. Everyone who knows the High Veldt will agree that once one is awake there is no moment comparable with the dawn for vivifying horses and men. The country was quite easy and the manœuvre was simple. Five men were to gallop round the left of the farm, as we saw it; five round to the right; while the rest of us galloped in. We all had to go as hard as we could. My Arab pony, Maharajah, always rose to the occasion. It was with difficulty that I prevented him outstripping the encircling parties. Even Bobby Johnson's weedy South African country-bred was inspired by the occasion and his rider's zeal to keep up with the hunt. We descended into a slight hollow, with the flanking parties getting a bit ahead of us on each side; then we crested a rise, and below us we saw the farm not a mile away. The right-hand flanking party was almost abreast of the farm, while the left-hand party was held up for a moment by a small spruit. I was convinced that after all we had succeeded in surrounding all those who might be in the farm, when I saw three men, or two men and a woman—I do not yet know which—jump on to horses and gallop away to our left front. I saw that the left-hand flanking party could not cut them off, so shouted to my men to follow as I pursued. I shouted to Bobby to stay with his ten men in the farm, while I followed the way that the horsemen had gone. Alas! it was of no avail. We arrived at the top of the ridge beyond the farm to see the three horsemen a good mile away, galloping two yards to our one. I sent the faithful Smith to tell both flanking parties to leave a scout at the top of the hills on each side, and rode back to the farm. There I found Bobby with his men and an

extraordinarily good-looking Dutch lad of about twelve years of age standing with them. On my way back to the farm I had realized that the hunters had become the hunted, and that unless we could find out where the commando lay we were almost bound to be intercepted and killed, or, worse still, captured.

Kitchener's scout, of course, spoke the taal, and I had picked up a little of the language, so conversation was quite easy. I said to the boy:

"Who are you?"

He replied: "I am the son of my father, whom you have failed to capture."

It was impossible not to admire the fearless demeanour of this South African boy surrounded by twenty of his country's enemies. I said:

"Where has your father gone?"

He replied: "To rejoin his commando."

"I know that," I said. "Where is his commando? Will you please point to me where it lies?"

The boy bent his head down and looked straight at the ground while one might count ten; then he looked up slyly and said:

"I do not think I can tell you that."

I was trustee of my twenty men. I knew that, unless the boy would tell us which way the enemy lay, our chance of returning safely to the British lines was remote, for, after all, we knew there were some four thousand of them round and about us, and the sun would soon rise. So I said to the boy:

"You must tell me, otherwise you will be shot."

At that he lifted his head and said: "No, I don't think I can."

I wonder if I did right. Nothing on earth would have induced me to hurt a hair on the head of this gallant lad; but I think it was justifiable to attempt to terrify him into speaking the truth and so save the lives of my men. The whole episode took less than three minutes. I said:

"Well, if you won't say, we will put you up against that wall and shoot you."

I said to the sergeant: "Get out your firing party," and whispered to him: "Of course we won't really shoot the boy."

Two men came forward and put him up against the wall. Six men knelt down and loaded their rifles. I am quite sure that the boy had no idea of the secret instructions that under no circumstances should the men shoot. Then I said to him, as he stood there with his head slightly bent:

"Now, tell me quickly where does your father's commando lie?"

He shook his head. I said to the sergeant: "Load!" The six men loaded. "Ready!" they brought their rifles to the ready.

"Now," I said, "tell me quickly before they fire."

Then I saw one of the most beautiful things that I have ever seen in my life. The boy was transfigured by patriotism and devotion. He lifted his head, looked me straight in the face, put his hands behind his back, and said in a loud clear voice:

"Ich sall ne sag."

I went forward, took the boy by the hand and said: "I hope one day we will meet again."

We jumped on our horses, and although we had a scrap on our return by another route, we were supported by our own people at the critical moment, and with a few casualties got safely back to our own lines.

As long as I live I shall never forget that wonderful moment when love of father, home, and country triumphed over imminent and apparently certain death; nor shall I forget the look in the face of that boy, as with head erect and glistening eyes he said:

"Ich sall ne sag."

II. THE BLUFF THAT WORKED

One of the strangest episodes of the South African War was the surrender of Prinsloo with more than four thousand burghers against the orders of Botha, who was already technically in command of all the burgher forces, and in spite of the violent protest of the redoubtable De Wet, who, with two thousand men, formed part of Prinsloo's force. It was patent to Botha, who had daily reports—as he has since told me—still more was it patent to De Wet, who was with the force, that Prinsloo and his commando were being gradually shepherded into an enclave with the British troops in a loose semicircle around them on the one hand, and the Caledon River with Basutoland beyond it, on the other. It would have been very easy for

Prinsloo to break through, for the disparity in numbers was not great, and, indeed, Prinsloo had a considerable superiority in mounted men, whose mobility made one horseman equal to ten men on foot. In spite of repeated warnings, Prinsloo quietly retreated towards Fouriesburg.

I had been with Rundle's Eighth Division for three months. We had a certain amount of fighting, and in one conflict at Biddulphsberg we experienced what were regarded as heavy casualties in the South African War. However, the real trouble with our side was the lack of food and water. After a time our force was on half rations, and later, for some weeks, on quarter rations. The mounted troops managed to forage for themselves to some extent; but the infantry—comprising, amongst others, the 2nd battalion of the Grenadiers, the 2nd battalion of the Scots Guards, a battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment and of the Leinster Regiment, and many others—suffered the extreme pangs of hunger.

The contrast of heat and cold was quite extraordinary. In the Drakensberg mountains, close to Fouriesburg, I saw a wall of ice on a cliff facing due south a hundred feet high, and, I was told, twenty feet thick, while on the opposite side of the valley, on which the sun shone each day, the heat at midday was almost unbearable. However, it was a fairly fertile land, and Prinsloo in his own country had food for his men and for his horses. Moreover, friendly farms sheltered most of them. His men were inured by long habit to the extremes of heat and cold; our men were not. With all these advantages—with De Wet at his side, whose genius for guerilla warfare had already been proved again and again, and with repeated orders from Botha and the other Boer leaders—Prinsloo nevertheless elected to remain quiescent.

I was just a captain commanding a squadron of yeomanry; but I had been at the war for many months, and, moreover, had the advantage of knowing well a certain Colonel Aston—now the famous writer on military subjects, Lieut.-General Sir George Aston—who was on the Intelligence Staff of the Division with which I served. I could not understand what our enemies were at. Now I know all about it, not only from official and other histories of the war, but from many long and intimate conversations which I had with General Botha when he became first an acquaintance, and, in the end, a close personal friend.

It appears that Van Prinsloo—to give him his full title—had formed the idea that powerful England was now quite certain to win the war, and that the only way to secure a decent peace was to maintain a force of fighting burghers in being as a means of negotiation. He believed that if he attempted

to escape to the north his whole force would be captured piecemeal; while if they held together he could negotiate an honourable surrender. De Wet would have none of this doctrine, and it so happened that from the top of a kopje, which I was holding with difficulty against severe rifle fire from Prinsloo's rear-guard, I saw De Wet and his two thousand men go straight through between a portion of our widely-spread line with hardly a single casualty. Any resolute man could have taken, not only Prinsloo's force, in addition to De Wet's, but any number of thousands into the wide stretches of the veldt with practically no loss, and thus have escaped the net that was spread around them. However, Prinsloo had his way, and kept his five thousand men after De Wet had gone with his two thousand.

Then we advanced yet nearer to the Basutoland border. Basutoland was, in that phase of the South African War, just what Holland was in the World War fourteen years later. Holland outnumbered by twenty to one by the main combatants, nevertheless remained like an angry bear confronted by twenty wolves, whom neither side dared to attack. To compare small things with great, so it was with Basutoland. The Basutos were a warlike race who had accepted our protection; above all, they were superb horsemen, with a wonderful breed of ponies of incredible strength and endurance. Prinsloo could have crossed the Caledon River any day and walked into Basutoland without serious opposition from rifle fire. But in dealing with fierce warlike tribes who are practically unarmed, though it is all easy enough in the daytime, strange things happen at night.

So it was that Prinsloo with nearly five thousand doughty warriors refused to follow De Wet in his break through to the west, and hesitated to make their escape through Basutoland on the east.

It was at this moment that I received a confidential order informing me that there was a possibility that the enemy might cross the Caledon River at a series of fords some fifteen miles north-east of our main body; that I should take my squadron, together with a body of scouts placed under my command for that purpose, and proceed by forced march to occupy the fords, denying them to the enemy and endeavouring to get in touch with the native Basuto chief across the Caledon River. To this chief, whose name was given to me, I was to convey the assurance that he and his people would remain perpetually under the protection of Queen Victoria, and that the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces trusted to him to protect his borders from any incursion by the Boer forces now in arms against Her Majesty. I received this order at about 7.30 in the morning. We had no tents or shelter of any kind at this time. We had marched most of the night. The

horses were in five “rings”—as we termed them—their heads linked together, most of them lying down, but the sick ones standing up. The men were sleeping on the ground, sheltering their heads behind their saddles from the slanting rays of the rising sun.

After many months of this kind of warfare, it is astonishing how swiftly a well-found unit will awaken and get on the move. There is no packing up to be done. In order to travel light we had discarded even the wallets on our saddles. We just carried what we needed in the pockets of our coats. As I write this I see before my eyes the result of the order I gave to my sergeant-major after I had read the urgent message. Officers jumping to their feet; the sergeants running round to the men and waking them up; a man running past me with his saddle on his head, his bridle over his arm, his tiny store of personal belongings in one hand and two hard biscuits in the other. Within ten minutes every horse was saddled up and the men were standing by their horses waiting for the order to mount. Then away we went, one troop, as advance guard, at a canter, with scouts in pairs galloping out to get two or three miles in advance fanwise. The remaining three troops followed at a walk, until the advance guard had got four miles ahead, when they also cantered on in column of troops, with their own scouts a couple of miles distant each side of them. Following them were Driscoll’s Scouts, recently attached to my command. I was in the centre of the fan of scouts, as was the good custom in that war.

I had not the least idea whether we should meet the enemy, and, if so, whether we should fall upon the main body in overwhelmingly superior numbers, or just a small flank guard. Aston’s intelligence report told me that it was believed that the main body of the enemy was several miles north of our north-easterly route; but that, of course, it was impossible to tell what movement the enemy had made during the night.

For the first eight miles the ground was undulating with occasional deep spruits mostly parallel with our course. Before us loomed a steep escarpment with only one pass through it. I knew from the primitive sketch map, which was all we had, that through that gap we should find a steep descent to the Caledon River. We were still cantering along at the nine-mile-an-hour lope which South African ponies can manage, even when exhausted, almost indefinitely, with occasional walks for a quarter of an hour and halts for ten minutes. I sent back word to the second troop to occupy the heights to the left of the defile, and to the third troop similarly to seize the heights to the right, and then halted the advance fan and the leading troop until they came up level with us. Our tiny force thus covered a front of four miles. Then,

when in line, we all advanced together at the best speed we could. From my instructions I knew that there was no time to indulge in the various feints and ruses that months of guerilla warfare had taught us to employ to avoid casualties. I know now from the Boer side that it was our swift movement which alone saved us from complete annihilation. The troop on the left was received by considerable long range rifle fire from its left; but they managed to scramble up on to the heights still mounted and return the fire. Still cantering on to the defile, I sent back word to the fourth troop to reinforce the second and push the enemy back along the mountain top, telling Driscoll's Scouts to follow on in the centre as my remaining reserve. To the sound of much rifle fire, and the humming of hundreds of bullets far away over our heads, I galloped through the gap in the hills with the leading troop and down the steep pathway to a point where I saw the Caledon River foaming along its course a thousand feet below.

On the opposite side of the rushing torrent I saw a great number of men assembled in a kind of natural amphitheatre, with horsemen dotted about to right and left and far beyond. The track down towards the river became so steep that more than one horse fell, and with his rider rolled over and over like a shot rabbit. I jumped off my Arab pony Maharajah and ran and stumbled down the steep rocky track in front of him, he following me like a dog, as he always would. All the time I was wondering whether the two troops on my left would get the best of it and enable me to complete my mission. Clearly, if any substantial proportion of Prinsloo's men were engaging them we must be overwhelmed; but just as I reached a natural plateau of rock two hundred feet above the river the firing began to slacken and the hum of enemy bullets died away almost to nothing. I halted the leading troop at the plateau, sent a man to right and left to get the reports, told the remainder to lie down and rest, mounted Maharajah again, and with Bobby Johnson, who was commanding the leading troop, and my faithful orderly Smith, rode down the track, which, though still steep, was just rideable, towards the river.

I could see that there was a ford across, because the ground was worn on the opposite side, and, indeed, there were fresh hoof-marks. The days had been exceptionally hot during the previous week, and the melting snow from the high mountains made the Caledon brim full. However, we three just managed to get across, the water not rising above our horses' bellies, and up the steep bank on the other side, to where I saw the concourse of assembled Basuto warriors which I had observed from the top of the pass. They were in a great semicircle, grouped around a fierce-looking fat man seated on a rock. I rode into the middle of the semicircle, jumped off my pony, advanced to

the chieftain sitting on the rock, and held out my hand. He looked at my hand as if it were some curious specimen, then looked up at me and shook his head. I addressed him in English; but again he shook his head. A thousand naked warriors, all armed with spears, and a few with rifles, listened to my words, and observed the menacing shake of the head of their chief. There was a murmur—not a friendly murmur—and the semicircle came nearer to me. I turned about and shouted:

"Is there anyone here who speaks English?"

There was no answer. It was a tense moment, and I did not see a way out, when, all at once, a voice from the back of this great concourse of fierce-looking savages shouted out in a strange, piping squeak:

"Moi, je parle le Français."

Those who have never had a similar experience—but I know many who have—can hardly realize the intense relief of knowing that there was at least one human being with whom I could establish contact of some kind; for observe that in my brief three minutes' conversation with the chief I had done everything I could, in English, in Dutch and by making signs. The only result in the mind of the chief, and in the minds of those looking on, was, as I afterwards ascertained, to make them quite certain that I was an enemy who was threatening them, and to make them decide, therefore, that they had better do away with me at once before I could communicate with my friends, their enemies, on the opposite side of the river. However, the voice from the back of the crowd altered the whole position. I shouted out to him in French to come forward, which he did. I shook hands with him, which impressed the bystanders, and asked him how he came to speak French. He explained that he had been in Mauritius for several years, and had now returned to his own people.

Then with him as interpreter I explained to the chief that I was the advance guard of a vast host, the army of Queen Victoria, their Sovereign, their Protector, and their Friend. Loud grunts greeted this announcement, translated to them by my French-speaking friend. I said that, speaking on behalf of the Queen, I would guarantee their perpetual liberties under her protection; that a few misguided Boers were still in arms against us; but that we knew that they would shortly surrender, and that the war would come to an end. Nevertheless, there was the danger that these few Dutchmen—who did not yet realize the advantages of the beneficent rule of Queen Victoria—might endeavour to cross their boundary, and so make their escape and rejoin their other misguided allies in the north. I said that I relied upon the

great chief, and the valiant soldiers whom I saw before me, to line the banks of the river and make certain that no invasion of their country by the enemies of Queen Victoria, their Protector, should be possible, not only by day, but, above all, during the ensuing nights. If they would do this, the surrender of these misguided men was certain, and the fact that they, the Basutos, had assisted us would never be forgotten by the Great White Queen and those who served her. At this there were loud guttural shouts of applause; but I saw that the old chief was not at all certain that I was speaking the truth. Whether he thought that I was a Boer spy, or that, after all, it would be rather rash to make terms with three men, when he knew that five thousand of the other side were within a few miles of him, I shall never know; but the fact remains that to my great disappointment, in spite of the plaudits of his warriors, he replied, through the interpreter, that this was a very serious matter, which he would go into with his council, and that, in the meantime, he had given us no permission to cross into his territory, and he requested us to return across the river forthwith.

Many books have been written about the psychology of the crowd, notably, the well-known work of Gustav le Bon. Here you had the whole thing displayed with dramatic swiftness. At one moment a thousand fierce warriors were loudly acclaiming the representative of the Great White Queen; then, within two minutes, the same crowd, with grumbling, guttural curses, saying—as my interpreter told me afterwards—"Yes, that's better. Send them out quick. Across the river with them. Off they go."

It was a critical moment; but clearly there was only one thing to be done. I told the interpreter to say this to the chief:

"When I told you just now that Queen Victoria was your Protector and Friend I spoke the truth. I told you to guard your frontier, and that the Queen and those who served her would never forget what you had done; but I have also to say this. Following me there are fifty thousand men, soldiers of the great Queen. Within the next hour you will see their bayonets and their lances coming down that track. If you obey all will be well. Unless you give me your promise now and at once, when they come here—for I have been sent here by their chief, and they know I am here—terrible things will happen to you, and the waters of the Caledon may well be red with your blood."

There was a long silence after the interpreter had said these words. Then in the silence, for the first time the chief stood up, made a bow, and then made a long speech to me in his own language. Translated to me it was as follows:

“I only delayed in order to make sure that you are indeed an emissary from the Great White Queen, for there have been many spies amongst us during these months; but now I know that what you say is true. We will do all we can to help you. The frontier shall be guarded by day and night until you tell us that the danger is over. Meantime you are welcome to stay here or to return. If you want food we will send it to you. All that we have is at your service.”

Bobby Johnson whispered to me:

“You made the best speech you have ever made in your life. Shall we go or stay?”

I replied to him: “I think we had better go, and tell him to send food to us.”

I offered the chief my last remaining cigarette, which he refused with a bow. The only other thing I had in my pocket was a meat lozenge, which I gave to him, explaining through the interpreter, that it was a wonderful new invention which would sustain life for twenty-four hours. This was a false step, for after sucking it for a bit he uttered an imprecation and spat it out. However, no harm was done, for already the warriors had dispersed to line the river banks in accordance with the instructions that he had given them.

Then with what dignity we could assume we bade farewell to the chief by a wave of the hand, mounted our ponies, and directed the interpreter to inform the warriors that we would gladly pay adequate sums for any food they might bring us until the great army came up with our supplies. We then rode down to the river and across the ford again.

Arrived back at my plateau I found reports from all the troops. The enemy force to the north, which had been considerable, had retired, presumably being only a rear-guard, and my patrols were following them up. To the south there had been no sign of the enemy. From Driscoll, who was holding the pass, came the rather disquieting news that there was no sign of supports coming up. We did not require military support; but, indeed, we did need food. I therefore sat down and dictated to Bobby Johnson a despatch, explaining the position we held and the success of our negotiations with the Basuto chief. I added that we wanted no reinforcements, but that, having no transport, and therefore no rations, the necessary supplies would be gratefully received.

Just as I was finishing this dictation, I looked up at the sound of clattering hoofs. Then we saw a marvellous feat of horsemanship. A Basuto,

stark naked, bestriding one of those wonderful Basuto ponies with the little, round, unshod feet which can grip on to any rock or stone, was going down to the river from the opposite side, riding bareback, with just a leather thong round the pony's neck. Under his left arm the Basuto held a live pig as he galloped at full speed down the stone track into the ford. Still at full speed, he rode through the water, over the boulders, up the other side, and without his pony ever slackening his pace from its all-out gallop arrived at the plateau, leapt off, and presented us with the pig. One Corporal Foot deftly tied the fore- and hind-legs of the pig with the raw-hide thong, which we all carried, and drew the poor, doomed animal away. I then tried to induce my naked friend to accept some money in return. With great dignity he refused, leapt on to his pony again, and galloped back at the same break-neck speed to the other side of the river. The chief sent us other presents of pigs and mealies, which I managed to distribute to my little force. There was enough dry wood in the crevices of the rocks to enable us to cook some of the food; but no message came for us from the main body, and as night came on we realized that, apart from the danger of an attack from the enemy—who might elect to move south—there was that terrible enemy Zero Fahrenheit impending.

It was indeed a bitter night. General Campbell told me that his thermometer went to five degrees below zero that night, although his camp was several hundred feet lower than ours. We were all lightly clad in khaki clothes, mostly full of holes. Some of us had blankets, but not all. I managed to avoid being frozen by walking round the whole of my outpost line; but towards dawn I was so exhausted that I could walk no farther. I crept into a little cave, near the plateau where I had established my headquarters, and lay there to the sound of the rushing river and the incessant chattering of my teeth. At times like these it is a matter of exhaustion. Many men in the infantry died of exposure that night, for they were exhausted by their long march. None of my men died, for they had been riding, not walking in the heat of the day; but some of the horses were too exhausted to move the next morning, and we had to shoot them to end their sufferings.

During the World War I learned much of the problem of intense cold from the Canadian officers and men whom I commanded. It is fatal to try to keep warm in really bitter cold by taking violent exercise when the temperature falls below zero. To perspire is fatal. Many a man has died by getting out of his sledge and running alongside of it in his furs in order to keep warm. Before long exhaustion will make him climb back into his sledge; but the perspiration engendered by his run will freeze on him, and in an hour or two he will be dead.

In my own case, I now know that it was, of course, my duty to go round my outposts; but I should have ridden and endured the cold, and not walked and run as I did to get warm. It was only the rising of the sun soon after the chattering of my teeth began that saved my life.

Sir George Aston has told me that our gallop to the Caledon River was well worth while; for although Prinsloo probably intended to surrender in any case, there were many doughty men in his command who hated the policy, and who might well have broken out to the south had we not intercepted them in good time. I like to think that this may be true, for certainly the Hampshire Yeomanry had a hard time that night.

CHAPTER VII

CONCERNING INVENTORS

I HAVE had much to do with inventors in both my official and private capacities during the last twenty years. In the summer of 1913, when I had already been nearly two years at the War Office, I was attending an official function a long way from London. Whilst there, a man of great and acknowledged eminence took me aside and said:

"I would have come specially to London to see you but for the fact that I knew I should meet you here. I have seen a man who claims to have made a discovery which would revolutionize modern warfare, and might well give victory to the side which possessed it. He so far convinced me that what he said was true that I gave him a considerable sum of money, in five figures, in order to obtain the option of his invention for this country."

I said: "What sort of invention is it?"

He replied: "An arrangement by which any internal combustion engine can be stopped, and probably damaged almost beyond repair, at a range of at least one mile."

I had heard of the idea, and had been told by my scientific friends that such a thing was impossible. On the other hand, the eminent man was not only a household word on account of his distinction in many walks of life, but was also possessed of considerable scientific attainments. He begged me to see the man, who would, he said, only see me alone, and, if I was convinced, as he was, of the value of the invention, to acquire it exclusively for this country. I told him quite frankly that, from such information as I had of these subjects, the claim was completely impossible; but that I would certainly see the inventor. He thanked me, and said that under no circumstances would he receive back a penny of the considerable sum of money he had paid. It was the least he could do for his country.

On my return to London I saw Sir John French and David Henderson—the latter was then at the head of our newly-formed Flying Service—and told them of the claim made by the inventor. Although naturally predisposed to disbelieve his claim, they were tremendously impressed by the fact that so eminent a man was so certain that the thing was of value that he had already put up a large sum of money. I told them that, for my part, I did not believe it; but that it was quite easy to try it out with no expense to the State, because our aeroplanes were flying every morning at dawn on the north side of Salisbury Plain, and army lorries were constantly passing.

That same morning at 12 o'clock the inventor duly appeared. He was a wild-looking man with dark hair and about twenty-three years of age. He brought with him another man of similar appearance, but younger, whom he introduced as his brother. I introduced him to Sir John French and David Henderson, and suggested that he should tell them all about his invention there and then. As I anticipated, he said he could only communicate a secret of such vast importance to him and to the world when he was quite alone with me. I was certain then that the whole thing was a plant; but, of course, I agreed, and French, Henderson, and my private secretary left the room. The inventor then spoke as follows:

"I have made an invention by which all enemy aircraft coming in within a range of one mile must immediately be brought down. Similarly, all motor-cars and lorries will also be stopped. I have given demonstrations on a small scale to one of England's greatest men, and have convinced him that my claim is true. Indeed, he has informed me that he has told you so himself. Now I am not an Englishman; but I sympathize with England, and I prefer that she should have this invention. At the same time, my brother and I have spent our entire fortune—which was a large one—on perfecting this invention, and for various private reasons it is essential for us to be recouped for the greater part of our loss. If you will give me £100,000 down we will place ourselves and our invention unreservedly at your disposal. If not, we shall be obliged to go elsewhere, and I have reason to believe that more than one other country is ready to put up a much larger sum, without further inquiry."

I replied: "I appreciate your wish to help England in a future war, and I can say at once that if by practical demonstration you can prove your claim, there will be no difficulty about the £100,000; but it must be proved, and it can very easily be done in complete secrecy. You told me that your apparatus could be put on an ordinary three-ton lorry. Therefore, you can take it to a place where aeroplanes will be flying over within a mile, and lorries will be passing along the road within the same distance. Colonel Henderson will be present, and if the aeroplanes and the lorries stop when he gives the word and you press your button, we will buy your invention for the sum you name."

The inventor said: "But I have convinced a man of the highest character and attainments; surely it would be wiser for you to waste not a moment in securing an invention of such overwhelming value in war?"

I replied: "If you are serious in what you first told me you cannot object to the plan I suggest, for the whole thing can be settled in twenty-four hours

from now. Indeed, if you refuse after what I have promised, an entirely new set of circumstances must arise."

He turned to his brother and whispered to him in rapid sentences which I could not understand. Then he looked me straight in the face and said:

"You are right. We will do the experiment and prove our case."

I knew then that the whole thing was all humbug, and that they were only saying this to avoid my having them arrested at once for having obtained money under false pretences. However, I rang the bell and asked my private secretary to bring in David Henderson, who at once said that an army lorry was going to Salisbury Plain in the ordinary course that evening; that he had already selected the place between Lark Hill and Upavon; that he was going to Upavon himself in any case, and would be glad to meet the inventors there; that four aeroplanes would be flying around for practice in the ordinary way, and that two or three lorries would pass up and down. The inventors said they would be glad to avail themselves of this offer; that their invention was contained in two large boxes which they would themselves bring to the place from which the lorry was starting; that they would go down in a motor-car with the lorry, and would meet Henderson at 5.30 a.m. at the place named. They then left the room.

I said to Henderson: "I should like to bet one hundred to one that we shall never see either of them again." However, I should have lost that actual bet, because the two men duly turned up with the large boxes, and did accompany the lorry to the spot on Salisbury Plain, arriving there late in the evening. The boxes were unloaded and covered with tarpaulin. The inventors had said they were going to sleep the night with their precious possession in the little tent which they had brought with them; but that they would first go into Salisbury to get some supplies. They disappeared in their motor-car, and from that day to this have never been traced.

The following morning David Henderson turned up at the rendez-vous, but there was no sign of the two inventors. He waited for half an hour and then returned for breakfast, leaving a motor cyclist to come and tell him if the men returned. He then telephoned to my private secretary asking him what should be done with the boxes. The reply was that he should go with an officer and a couple of mechanics, open the boxes, and see what was inside. Sure enough, they were full of every kind of rubbish: quantities of old bits of machinery, lead piping, and a great many coils of wire.

They must have been clever tricksters and conjurers, for I believe that the demonstration they gave to the eminent man was most convincing.

Various kinds of motors were stopped instantly when they pressed the button. No doubt they had buried wire containing an ordinary electric circuit. The extraordinary part of the story is that they should have so completely imposed upon a great man, who was, I think, almost the most level-headed being I have ever met.

The case of Lemoine, the man who claimed to be able to manufacture diamonds of considerable size and of perfect water, will occur to everyone. He, it will be remembered, so completely imposed upon the credulity of one of the chief men in De Beers that, first and last, he managed to draw several hundreds of thousands of pounds and to get a considerable factory erected and equipped. I have seen the factory, which is now turned into a gas-works. The whole thing was a complete swindle, and Lemoine finally went to jail.

The two young men to whom I have referred were more fortunate, for, so far as I know, they got clear away.

In those now far-off days before the War, I had visits from all kinds of people with ideas—some fantastic, some extraordinarily valuable.

We had written off all idea of using gas, in either clouds or shells, owing to The Hague Convention, where the signatories unanimously agreed not to make use of this weapon. But we knew a great deal about it, and, as is now known, in the end had the most formidable gas equipment of any of the combatants.

I was begged to permit the manufacture of tear gas for shells, on the ground that it could not be described as a lethal gas, for it does no harm to the eyes, only causing temporary blindness. But the Army Council and the Board of Admiralty quite rightly decided it would be an infringement of the spirit, if not of the letter, of The Hague Convention, so there was no manufacture of this comparatively harmless stuff.

Every kind of new invention for aeroplanes was submitted to me, but very few were of any real value. One was a plan for enabling the pilot to fire with a machine-gun through the propeller of an aeroplane in flight by fixing a very strong metal groove in the propeller, so that those bullets which did not go through between the blades would be deflected by the groove, without breaking the propeller. This invention worked, and was used during the early stages of the War, but was superseded by the ingenious Constantinesco Interrupter Gear. This enabled a pilot to fire directly in front between the revolving propeller blades, the firing of the shots that would have hit the propeller being stopped by the mechanism. That worked perfectly.

I never knew an inventor to be a normal man—with the brilliant exception of Admiral Bacon, to whom I shall refer later.

Then the War came, and during the first few weeks of the retreat, the Battle of the Marne and the moving of the British Army from the Aisne to the north gave no time for the voice of the inventor to be heard. But no sooner had we settled down to trench warfare than ingenious people flocked to us.

One summer's day in 1915 I received a message from Sir John French's aide-de-camp, Captain Freddie Guest, that a man had arrived with a new form of catapult for throwing bombs into the enemy's trenches, and that General Headquarters wished me to try it in my sector. Of course I agreed, and that afternoon Freddie Guest arrived with a lorry containing the invention. My headquarters were in a ruined farm about twelve hundred yards behind the front line, but, being close under Hill 63, not under enemy observation. The inventor proceeded to erect his contraption in an adjoining field, and a strange affair it was—pulleys, wires, strings, elastic, all were there, as might have been expected. It was wound up with a ratchet which worked noiselessly, and the claim was that it would hurl a large bomb three hundred yards. A special advantage was supposed to be that the missile had its velocity imparted to it so much more gradually and smoothly than in the case of any gun or mortar that an extremely sensitive fuse could be attached to the bomb, so that it would burst practically on impact, even on fairly soft ground.

The inventor wound up his machine, a dummy bomb was placed in the revolving arm, and, sure enough, it was hurled away to a distance well over two hundred and fifty yards. But it was a crazy-looking thing, and although these trial shots were fairly successful I doubted whether it was really going to work. However, I made all arrangements for the machine to be taken up to my Front Line after dark and installed at the point of a salient where the enemy trenches were within easy range of such a weapon. All this was duly done, and at 10.30 I arrived with my Brigade-Major and my aide-de-camp at the arranged spot where the catapult was in position, just behind the Front Line parapet. The inventor walked up with me and talked volubly about the terrible destruction which this bomb would cause to the enemy. The Front was very quiet, occasional rifle shots, but very few shells. I had given orders that all patrols should be in by eleven o'clock, and at that hour, having satisfied myself that none of our men were out in "No Man's Land," I told the inventor to go ahead. He walked up to his machine as he had done that afternoon; the bomb, which was about the size of an association football,

was put in position and the sensitive fuses were carefully screwed in. We knew the exact range and the inventor fixed his catapult to the required angle, as shown by a dial and pointer. When all was ready I gave him the order to fire—whizz-bang, went the bomb. To my horror I saw that it had gone absolutely vertically into the air. I shouted to everyone to get out of the way, and we just had time to run round into the next traverse before the bomb started to fall. As I peeped over the traverse I could see it falling; there was a shattering bang, and we were all covered with earth and stones. The Germans, hearing the bang, thought it as well to open up with rifle and machine-gun fire, and also with a considerable number of "whizz-bangs," as we called them, fired from a concealed battery of "seventy-sevens" at close range under the Messines Ridge. Our poor parapet, which was not very strong, was breached in many places, though, fortunately, very few men were hit; still we had to stand-to anxiously and return the fire, while we replaced some of the sandbags. At last the firing died down, and I returned with the inventor to the traverse at the salient where the catapult had been. It really was one of the most extraordinary things that I saw in that extraordinary war. The bomb had dropped within a yard of the instrument which had fired it, and had blown it all to bits. The inventor stood surveying the scene and said never a word. I said: "Well, you have made a mess of my parapet." For, indeed, it had been quite blown away for a breadth of ten or fifteen feet. A crescent moon had just risen and by its light I saw the inventor with a face so woebegone that my anger melted away. All he said was: "Believe me, sir, it was not the fault of the instrument. It was entirely my own. The instrument will still win this war." He wanted to stay in the Front Line till dawn, so that he might pick up the bits of his precious invention, but I sent him down to my headquarters with instructions that he was to be properly regaled with supper and sent back to General Headquarters. I promised that we would return him any pieces of his machinery which we could find. We were all night repairing the damage done, and at dawn we looked about for the bits of the shattered catapult. We found one of the ratchet wheels embedded in the parados, a large piece of elastic further back, and that was all. So far as I know this form of catapult was never seen again.

Meantime, an extraordinary man called Newton was busy inventing various forms of hand grenade. He had managed to induce his Corps Commander to allow him to start a factory for these things at Armentières. He produced hand and stick grenades in this little factory, within three miles of the German artillery, which were ten times more efficient and at far less cost as compared with the production of the same things at Woolwich

Arsenal. He had spent many months in the Front Line and knew just what was wanted. The factory he installed was a Heath Robinson affair, but it produced things which soldiers could use. Great was the rage of the Home authorities when the independent Corps Commander, who supported Newton in his efforts, informed the War Office that he wanted nothing more from Woolwich, and would they please help him to produce all that he required from Newton's factory at Armentières. Of course, in the end, Woolwich with its immense resources, produced Mills bombs and Stokes mortars in surprising quantities and in efficient style, but it was Newton and his Corps Commander who showed the way.

About this same period we Canadians started inventing things. The Fort Garry Horse, with the aid of the Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lord Strathcona's Horse, invented a collapsible bridge which could be carried on a horse, would bear a horse and man, and would bridge the widest trench. The invention was of value because it had already become apparent—though for some extraordinary reason the lesson seems to have been forgotten—that in real war, as distinct from peace manœuvres, it is the horse that counts. All the elaborate mechanical devices—every petrol-driven vehicle—soon broke down within the actual battle zone when the issue was fairly joined. The great volume of artillery fire, rendered possible by industrial development, makes it certain that after the first few weeks the outer crust of the earth will be churned up into mud which only men and horses can traverse. Consequently, after a brief period, the men carry the rifles and the horses carry the rations and the shells.

All of us who were on the Western Front will remember the inevitable sequence of all offensives: first the lorries lumbering up the newly-made roads, then the efforts of vast numbers of labour battalions with great rollers to make good the roads, loosened by shells and churned into mud, and soon after the abandonment of the effort, and the long strings of horses and mules carrying on their backs what could no longer be transported on wheels.

A few miles back the same phenomenon happened a little later. Lorries with rations and stores operating smoothly for the first week or two, then with greater and greater difficulty, and finally horse-drawn guns and horse-drawn vehicles alone capable of meeting the needs of the army.

I have been watching these things now for thirty years, and the experience is invariable. As peace continues and real war recedes further and further into antiquity more and more fantastic are the theories which are evolved. In peace time the pundits decide that armies and guns shall move quicker and quicker; guns shall be smaller and swifter; mechanical

contrivances shall become more and more important—what is now termed "mechanization." But in real war armies move slower and slower, guns become bigger and bigger and slower and slower, and all the mechanical devices, after the first thirty-six hours, fail and are scrapped in favour of the only means of transport that really survives in the Front Line in war—the men and the horses. So we kept on trying in my little Command, which varied from three thousand to eight thousand, but always men who had been horsemen, to find means of helping the horses.

I had a strange experience with another new invention. One winter's morning in 1917, having been relieved from an arduous spell of duty, my Brigade was going into immediate reserve close behind the Front Line; my Staff-Captain, Docherty, had gone on early to find accommodation. He rode back to me when I was about two miles from our destination and reported that he had found billets for all the units, but that he had failed to find a suitable headquarters. The only place available was occupied by a strange-looking major with two young officers, who asserted that he had instructions direct from General Headquarters to keep himself entirely apart. Docherty had pointed out to him that there was plenty of room for all my staff as well as his, and that there was nowhere else for us to go. But he remained adamant. So I rode on to the place, and, sure enough, found the strange man standing in the doorway. I jumped off my horse and offered him a cigarette, which he grimly refused. I said: "Let us go inside and sit down and talk this over." In spite of his protests couched in picturesque language I marched in. I looked at the place and found that it would suit admirably. Then I said to him: "I am extremely sorry, but I must occupy this house. We may be going back into action at any moment; I must be close to my men, and there is nowhere else." The pale and gloomy major sat on a table swinging his legs. Then he said: "I shall telephone to General Headquarters." I replied: "You will do no such thing until I have installed my own field telephone." I gave the necessary orders, in a few moments we were installed, and my signallers were busy laying out our wires.

At last the major said to me: "Sir, would you mind taking a walk with me?" I said: "Not at all, come along." We walked forward to where a communication trench began and he suggested that we might walk some little way to a point where we should be quite alone; but I said: "No, let us walk along the top; then we shall be still more quiet." At last we got to a very lonely place: he looked round and said: "Now I can speak. I am in charge of a new invention and it is to be tried out the day after to-morrow for the first time. I will describe the method in a moment, but you will see that it is not unimportant when I tell you that if it all goes off right all human

and animal life will be exterminated over an area of about four acres." I was not so surprised as he expected, because I had heard a whisper of the plan when last I had been at General Headquarters. He then explained the method.

Several hundred tubes were to be placed in racks, like organ pipes, tilted towards the enemy. In these tubes were canisters full of phosgene—that deadly gas which attacks the nerve-centres, and in sufficient concentration causes almost instant death. Our own Front Line was to be evacuated; the tubes were to be connected by electric current, and at the given moment, which was to be about midnight, all were to be discharged at the same time and enough phosgene spread over a small area to ensure the destruction of every living thing in the zone.

I listened with interest to his very lucid exposition of the plan, and then said: "Well, I was told to be in immediate reserve behind this sector because something might happen. What puzzles me is why you will not allow me to occupy your headquarters. Surely there are no secrets there which all the troops will not know when you move your apparatus into position." "Ah," he said gloomily, "it is not that, but under those tarpaulins stacked all round the house is the whole of the phosgene; one shell dropping on them would wipe out everybody within several hundred yards." I said: "Then your objection to my coming was entirely for love of me and my staff."

He said: "Yes, exactly; I don't see why more than three of us should die. That a whole Brigade Staff should be blotted out would seem a needless tragedy." I burst out laughing, but he was deadly serious. I explained to him that during the last three years we had had to take our chance of being blotted out by a big shell every day of the week for weeks on end. In vain did I tell him that four of my headquarters had been completely destroyed by shell-fire, and the phosgene store really made no difference whatever. He kept on saying that it was a terrible death and that he could not be a party to it. However, I walked him back to the headquarters, where luncheon was already set out, and induced him to fall to. He drank the greater part of a bottle of Burgundy, which the ingenious Docherty had managed to secure. Then I told him we should be very happy together, and I would keep the reason for his presence a profound secret. We spent a very pleasant time for the next twenty-four hours.

Then came the great evening. A very light air blew from our trenches towards the enemy's. At 12.40 there was a terrific roar and all those hundreds of projectiles rushed through the air and fell on and behind the German trenches. A few hours later we received urgent orders to move to

another part of the Line where an attack was in progress, so I never saw the result of the first use of phosgene by this method. But I heard that the effect was as complete as my friend had prophesied; even the rats were found dead in the doomed area. Of course these things were not operations of war of any magnitude: one could not instal such a plan along the entire Front; but they certainly spread alarm and despondency among the enemy, for the gas masks they then possessed afforded no protection against the high concentration of phosgene, which thus surprised and killed them as they slept.

I also heard that the very headquarters which we had occupied were struck by a big shell the next day and knocked to bits; had this happened two days sooner the whole of the phosgene containers would, of course, have exploded as my melancholy friend had feared.

All the time we were busy perfecting the new weapon which, although it could only operate for a few brief hours, might nevertheless produce decisive results in the siege warfare to which the folly of the leaders on both sides had committed us.

The tank was a wonderful weapon for this unique and ridiculous form of international struggle. Why the combatants stood or sat in front of one another at two hundred yards' distance, or less, along a four hundred mile front was a mystery which we combatants on the Western Front found difficult to answer, and which history, I am sure, will find it impossible to solve. The whole proceeding was clearly so foolish and at the same time so reckless of human life that, looking back on it, no ordinary process of reasoning can explain how it can ever have happened. But still it did happen, and a great force of otherwise enlightened opinion—they were called the "Convinced Westerners"—was devoted to ensuring that the lunacy should continue. That being so, intelligent persons who saw that they could not break through the wall of folly which had been erected decided to make use of the position by calling science to their aid. Hence the evolution of the tank.

I know a good deal about tanks. I was close to the first tank used in warfare when it went through the ruined village of Flers in the early days of the Somme battle in July 1916. I cantered along behind a tank during the brilliant success of the first Battle of Cambrai on November 20th, 1917, right up to the Canal de l'Escault, four miles beyond the German Front Line. Unfortunately, the tank fell into the canal, and our wild dash for Cambrai was completely frustrated. Still I saw in that uncanny mechanical battle the

wonderful things that tanks can do if people are foolish enough to sit down in front of each other for a year or two in rigid trench life.

It fell to my lot when invalided home to become President of the Tank Board, under the energetic and wise direction of Mr. Churchill, then Minister for Munitions. It was he who had pressed forward the production of tanks, and it was to me that he confided the task of increasing their numbers from hundreds to thousands. Had the War gone on till 1919 the combination of tanks and gas shells would have meant a destruction of human life—mostly the enemy's—on a scale unparalleled in the history of mankind; for the inventors had been busy, and by that time the inventive genius had been so organized that the wheat was soon winnowed from the chaff. Every death-dealing thing was pursued with skill and useless ideas were scrapped.

I was not only President of the Tank Board, but, as Vice-President of the Ministry of Munitions, was placed at the head of what was termed the Warfare Section, which included the Inventions Branch, controlled by Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon. This extraordinary man said to me one day towards the end of the War: "I have come to the conclusion that anything can be invented if you are prepared to spend the money. There is hardly a limit to what can be done now that we have all the resources of the State behind us." I said: "Well, let us take one problem. Could you produce a tank which would go under the water, climb out the other side, and open fire at once?" He replied: "Oh, indeed, I have thought of that and have made some preliminary drawings. It is a complicated problem, but not in the least insoluble." I asked: "Will it float on the surface or walk on the bottom?" He blandly answered: "Either or both." We went into the matter further, had expert opinion, and it was apparent that such a machine could be constructed and would be a most formidable weapon of war under the circumstances then prevailing.

No doubt under Bacon's guidance, and with the help of the French Inventions Branch, we could have produced other deadly methods of killing, wounding, dazzling, asphyxiating, and otherwise discomfiting the enemy. He would have been similarly engaged, but we had the overwhelming advantage of more or less unrestricted supplies of rubber—a valuable commodity when dealing with lethal gases, for it is the only substance which can effectively protect the mouth and nose from direct contact with the air. The astonishing dynamic power of the Ministry of Munitions in England dominated more and more the death-strewn battlefields of Europe. Yes, it was a merciful thing that Foch signed the Armistice on November 11th.

Before I close this chapter on inventions I feel bound to say two things in the interests of truth.

The first: That it is a profound error to assume that, because the nations of the world know how deadly war can be made, there will be no wars in the future. I often hear people say that the proletariat of every nation, having learnt the horrors of war either by actual experience or by reading about it, have decided that they will refuse to take part in any future struggle. I am sure that this is a complete delusion. That they would continue for years the prolonged horrors of trench warfare is extremely unlikely; the troops on both sides would rebel when invited to take part in such a game. But they would not be so invited. They would be told, as they are now being told in many countries in Europe, that the next war will be short, sharp, and decisive; and if one of the nations thinks it is sure to win no amount of horrors of war will prevent the people from joining in the struggle. In this matter, as in so many others, Britain stands in a quite distinct position. As things are to-day we can never wish to attack our neighbours, because we have everything we want in the way of land possessions, and conditions of life are happier and better here than in any other country of the world. Moreover, if we have sense, without talking too loudly about it, we shall never relax our sea supremacy, by which alone we live. The moral seems to be that, while by all means we should support the League of Nations and every pact for peace, we should be ready for the emergency which may come upon us at any moment.

The second fallacy is the idea that by "Mechanizing" our forces—a hateful, ungrammatical word, but it seems to have crept into the language—we can create a powerful force with fewer men. I am persuaded that this is a delusion as profound as the theory that there will be no more war. War is a rough-and-ready business, a case of making things do. All the elaborate arrangements dependent upon petrol supplies may give one a good start, but nothing more, when the real clash of arms comes. In moving warfare, as before, the infantryman will walk on his feet and carry his rifle; the cavalryman will bestride his horse, which moves him swiftly from place to place, can keep alive in most countries with but little help, and, itself almost immune from gas poisoning, can transport him safely above the lethal gas, which must float within a few feet of the ground. Woe be to the country which trusts solely to a mechanized army!

CHAPTER VIII

FLYING

I. PRE-WAR FLIGHT

For many months before the Great War broke out I went at frequent intervals to fly in the new types of aeroplanes which were being evolved. As Chairman of the Air Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence it was my duty to do so. By this means I was kept in actual touch with all of those on whose skill and energy the success or failure of our Air Force in the coming War was to depend: the abstract scientist and mathematician; the business man providing the capital; the man at the Treasury who could provide the wherewithal for State experiments on an adequate scale; the designer; the constructor; and, above all, the flying man. All of these had to be known and understood, so far as it was possible in those few months before the cataclysm, when the whole organization so evolved would be put to the agonizing test of War in the Air.

So it came about that duty took me to many places; to many men; and, as a consequence, to flights in many aeroplanes. Each flight was more of an adventure then than it is to-day; but the difference is not so great as most people suppose. The risks were in some respects greater; but in other respects less. When the art and science of flying were so new, mechanical risks were greater, because, as this story will show, many of those risks could only be discovered by trial and error. On the other hand, the difficulty of a forced landing in our enclosed country was no greater, and in some machines less, then than it is to-day. A Maurice Farman of that day could be landed with ease by a good pilot in the usual five-acre field of the South of England. That would be a hazardous enterprise to-day, where speeds are so much greater and landing speeds approach the same proportions.

However, I, and those who were working with me, were not concerned in those days with the problem of safe landing. Our purpose was: First, to provide an organization which could be expanded when the time came without dislocation so as to produce sixty squadrons on the same lines as were then producing six. Secondly, to find the means of training pilots to be better men at the job than those of our probable enemies. Thirdly, to produce aeroplanes of superior quality in the air.

When the World War began it was found that we had succeeded in the first two of these problems. The third remained in doubt. Our aeroplanes had

certain advantages not possessed by those of the other combatants; but, on the other hand, theirs had some qualities which ours did not have. In the end, I think the British Empire may claim that it had established real air superiority in all respects in every theatre of War.

Amongst the many problems to be solved was that of stability. Some thought that what was termed "automatic stability"—that is to say, stability provided by mechanical means—was the best solution. Others claimed that "inherent stability"—which, being interpreted, means that the aeroplane, if left to itself, will continue to fly without crashing—was a possible solution. Britain may claim that the brains of her designers, the skill of her constructors, and the courage of her pilots provided her with the first inherently stable aeroplane.

One day, not long before the War began, I received a message from Farnborough that it was believed that an aeroplane had been evolved, and had been actually flown, which was inherently stable. To this information the request was added that I should come to the place named and see the tests. Accordingly it was arranged that the next day I should be passenger in this aeroplane.

It was an ideal afternoon for such a test: a clear day, with sufficient wind to make the experiment a real one. My pilot was that wonderful "bird man," Busk. It is not too much to say that he was one of the five most remarkable flying men in the world at that time. Before I got into the aeroplane he told me that he had tried it out three times, adding:

"At last I have flown in something that really flies itself."

We arranged to get to an appropriate height; that Busk should then touch me on the shoulder when he let go the controls, and that we should fly for ten minutes, leaving the aeroplane to itself. Up we went, and in long circles rose ever higher and higher; an occasional wobble; sometimes a drop, as we went over a ploughed field or a wood—we used to call them "air pockets" in those days—and so, at last, to between three and four thousand feet up, where the experiment was to begin.

Our aeroplane was flying at about sixty-five miles an hour. I felt a tap on my shoulder, turned round, and saw my valiant friend Busk holding both hands up. Aeroplanes were very badly screened in those days, and the rush of wind was very great. I nodded to Busk, and turned back to watch the progress of our aircraft over the country below, and to see how the varying wind currents deflected her course. Then, all at once, while I was intently surveying the country in front of me, a great splash of fluid struck me in the

face, just as though a man had thrown a pint of water out of a jug straight at me. Before I had time to think, the propeller had stopped and we were nose-diving straight to the ground. Within a few seconds we had attained an incredible speed. My most vivid recollections are clutching the sides of the cockpit to avoid falling forward, the violent uprush of air, and the almost unbelievable shriek of the wind tearing through the struts and the wires of the aeroplane. How fast we went in that straight dive I do not know. A scientific friend of mine, who understands aeronautics, said to me:

"You were falling at rather more than half the rate of a big howitzer shell."

Anyway, it was pretty fast—certainly over three hundred feet a second; but, even so, I had time to think. At first, of course, I presumed that some accident had happened which had put the aeroplane out of control and that we were falling straight to the earth, preparatory to the inevitable spin. However, when two or three seconds had passed and we continued to dive straight down, I realized that Busk was still in command of our frail craft. I tried to turn my head to look at him; but the violence of the wind made me bend my head down again. For a few seconds more I saw the earth rushing up to meet us; then one had the sensation of terrific strain as we flattened out. There were loud clacks and twangs, a tremendous bump, and I found myself still in the aeroplane half upside down. Without much difficulty I clambered out, followed by Busk, who was behind me. As he climbed out, the aeroplane, which had been standing on its head, rolled over on its side.

We laid down on the heather and spoke not a word for, I suppose, two or three minutes. Then Busk said, with a happy smile on his pale face:

"Well, I can't explain that."

"What?" I asked.

He said: "Why we did not catch fire."

I replied: "I suppose it was petrol that flew into my face?"

"Yes," he said; "I saw it fly and switched off on the instant. Even so, there is such a mass of hot metal round the engine that a big splash of petrol must mean ignition. I thought there was just a chance, though a remote one, that we might reach the ground before we were frizzled up."

What had happened was this. The petrol feed pipe had broken off or burst at the entrance to the petrol tank, and the big splash of petrol had escaped. Busk was right in saying that the bursting of the petrol into flame was practically a certainty; but his instantaneous action in cutting off the

ignition and then turning the aeroplane into a nose-dive—thus giving the tremendous cooling effect of a two hundred-mile-an-hour fall—had just saved us from certain death.

We walked back together over the heather and grass to the nearest road and stopped a passing car, whose owner kindly gave us a lift back to the aerodrome. We reported the occurrence to those concerned, and I returned to London. Only my private secretary knew what had happened. I like to think—indeed to know—that the mishap enabled an error to be detected which may have saved the lives of many brave flying men.

My memory is charged with two sad sequels to this adventure. Experiments continued on the same lines to produce inherent stability, and less than a month before the War broke out I flew over Aldershot and the neighbourhood for the required ten minutes without the controls being touched.

Just about a year later, when I was in command of a sector of the line just south of the Ypres Salient, one of my men in the Front Line—when I was making my usual daily tour—drew my attention to an aeroplane flying in wide circles, round and round, at a height of about five thousand feet. He said he had watched it for some time, and that it had kept on rising slightly in these wide circles of about a mile and a half in diameter for the last ten minutes. So we watched it together, and, sure enough, it continued its circular course, rising slowly. There was an easterly wind blowing, and although it had been well over the German lines when we first observed it, it passed over our heads. Soon after it had crossed our front line the noise of the engine stopped. It continued its wide sweeps, now slowly falling.

Its behaviour seemed extraordinarily strange; clearly it was not observing artillery fire, nor taking photographs. Why did it continue to circle round in wide sweeps, as one sometimes sees hawks do on the South Downs when a high wind is blowing? It got nearer and nearer to the ground, until, finally, it disappeared from view about five miles from where we stood.

I found out what had happened. It was this. The aeroplane was an inherently stable machine similar to the one in which I had had my experience with Busk. When near to the ground over the enemy lines both pilot and observer had been shot through the head by rifle fire and killed instantly. The aeroplane had continued to circle and climb until the petrol ran out, when it circled and descended. Finally, it made quite a respectable landing, and those near to it ran forward to find the machine intact with the two occupants lying dead in the cockpit.

So much for the aeroplane; but what of Busk, the gallant test pilot, whose technical skill and marvellous intuition had done so much to render possible the evolution of this great advance in aeronautical science and practice? Alas! he continued to give the same service to the State, and, to the infinite grief of all who knew of the wonderful services he had rendered, he was burnt in mid-air by the bursting of his petrol tank.

II. "X"

When I went to the Air Ministry in January 1919 with the duty of attending the Peace Conference as representing the Air arm of Britain, and at the same time reducing our great force to peace dimensions, I told Sir Hugh Trenchard that I thought it would be best if I did all my official journeys by air. He agreed and arranged for two aeroplanes—a Bristol Fighter and a D.H.9A.—to be at my disposal at Hendon Aerodrome; he also asked me if I would like to have as aide-de-camp and chief pilot one whom we will call X, as he is still in the Service, who had greatly distinguished himself in the War. I saw him, and at once decided that he would be the very man.

The story of this extraordinary, courageous, diverting and, above all, most loyal man, is worth recording.

A good-looking lad of adventurous spirit is staying at a house in Oxfordshire when War is on the point of being declared. The other male guests belong to famous regiments, and all dash off to London to rejoin. All ordinary roads to the War are blocked for many months, for no one can be taken who has not a commission or service in the Regular or Territorial Forces. He discovers that the Royal Red Cross will find him a way to the Front. He places himself and a big, fast motor-car at their disposal and arrives in France in time for the Battle of the Marne. He is attached to French Headquarters at Compiègne and is of real value to French G.H.Q., not only in removing wounded, but in taking officers of all ranks to the front line on Red Cross business.

Sir Henry and Lady Norman, Lady Muriel Paget, and others, could tell a story of suffering, difficulty, and privation that would fill a book. After the *débâcle* of August 18th, 1914, the French realized that they had not got the time or the energy to cope with both problems—the fighting men and the wounded men. Rightly, as I think, they concentrated on the fighting men. The casualties had been enormously greater than anyone in the French General Staff had ever dreamed of. Whether it was the French plan of attack, "le plan dix-sept," or the onward encircling drive of Von Kluck's army,

which completely capsized the French plan of defence, no one will ever know; but in the result not fewer than 300,000 Frenchmen were laid low by death, wounds, or capture in the first phase of the War.

It can be imagined that an alert and fearless young man with a powerful car, ready to go anywhere or do anything, was of peculiar value to the French Red Cross. So it was with X, as French soldiers of all ranks have told me. However, he chafed, of course, at not being a combatant officer. The man who is destined to win every cross for valour in War except the Victoria Cross, which he did undoubtedly earn—the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Force Cross, and, the rarest of all War decorations, the Italian Gold Cross for valour—was not likely to be contented so long as he wore the non-combatant red cross on his armlet.

In the New Year of January ’15 he received a nomination for the Grenadier Guards and was sent to London to be interviewed. His relatives had arranged this for him; but he had a notion that flying was his *métier* in war; so although the nomination for the Grenadiers came through on January 4th, on January 5th he went to the recruiting office in Whitehall of the Royal Naval Air Service. He drove there in the same 60 h.p. car which he had taken to France nearly four months before. He drew up at the side of the road, stopped the car, and started to walk into the recruiting office. Out came a naval officer who asked him in picturesque language what he meant by blocking the traffic. Just returned from France, he answered this officer in language more forcible than polite. The officer said:

“The man who has got the nerve to talk to a man like me in the language you have used may be of value to us in the Royal Naval Air Service. What do you know about flying?”

X replied: “I can learn anything.”

“Are you prepared to go off to-day to learn to fly within a fortnight, and then go straight off to Dunkirk to fly over the enemy lines?”

“Of course,” he replied.

It was all settled in five minutes, and X left the Admiralty with the promise of his commission in the Royal Naval Air Service. Of course, he really knew nothing about flying, although he knew a great deal about internal combustion engines and swift movement on the road.

Odd things happened to him, as they always did. Early in his flying career, before he went to France, he was practising night flying and just before dawn crashed one hundred miles from his aerodrome in a grass field.

I have learned from an impartial source how the vicar's wife—for it was on their glebe that he had landed—went up to him as he was lying on his back in the grass and said:

"I will kiss his poor, dear, dead face," and did so.

I confronted X with this fact, and he did not deny it. He said: "I dimly remember my horror at thinking that I must have such a scrubby beard at that hour in the morning."

All these little things are of interest in the career of a man who afterwards had such astonishing experiences, and a real effect on the course of the War.

The same impartial informant tells me that, a little later, X achieved a record. He was asked to take up a new form of fighting machine from the aerodrome near Yeovil to test it. I remember seeing the first of these aeroplanes arrive in France, where I then was in command of a Brigade. They were so much faster and climbed so much quicker than any of the army machines that all my friends in the Army Flying Service were terribly jealous, and begged me to intervene with Trenchard to get this type for them. Well, X took up this new machine. There was a slight mist, and the aeroplane went so much faster than anything he had been accustomed to that he soon lost every familiar land-mark. He knew that he could only land with any chance of safety at a fairly large aerodrome. He had been driving east when he lost his way, so he thought it best to go along the South Coast, so that he might pick up some headland he knew and land either on Salisbury Plain, or on the Downs above Winchester, which he also knew. The mist came on thick; but at over one hundred miles an hour he flew on, climbing ever higher to try to get out of the clouds. After an hour and a half, when he knew that his petrol would soon give out, he came down through the clouds to find out where he was. He saw an aerodrome and made a perfect landing. The Commanding Officer came up to him and said:

"Well, I am very glad to see you. This is the type of machine we were expecting. Who are you?"

"Probationary Flight-Lieutenant X," was the reply.

"Well, you are not the man we expected; but you have brought the aeroplane we want."

"Where am I?" X asked.

The officer answered: "Dunkirk, France."

Shortly after this occasion X flew to France on purpose and landed where he meant to; but, of course, nothing really normal happened to him, as this flight proved. X had an uncle, a quiet, old gentleman of academic distinction, who was rector of a lonely parish not very far from the aerodrome where he was testing aeroplanes and flying them to France. One day, when he was to fly a new and very fast machine to France, this uncle turned up in a pony and cart. He said that he had never been in a flying machine and would it be possible for his well-beloved nephew to take him up for five minutes. He added that his wife did not know of this adventure, and that he hoped that she would not be told. X was just about to start, and said: "Jump in."

There was a strong wind blowing across the aerodrome, and he was only just able to clear the trees. Indeed, I have been told that it was only an exceptionally skilful pilot who could have done so. Moreover, in front of him he saw a rain cloud. However, he decided to chance it, and went on roaring through the air at one hundred and twenty miles an hour on his compass course for the coast and so to Dunkirk. He had a most difficult journey, for the rain turned to mist and he had to fly quite close to the sea and follow the line of the coast. He got to Dunkirk all right, to the surprise and delight of the officer commanding, who ran out to congratulate him on his success. The officer said the aeroplane was just in time, for they were going out on a big bombing raid at dawn the next morning, and this exceptionally fast machine would be of value in meeting the fast German scouts in the air. When he had said all this, the commanding officer looked at the back seat and exclaimed: "Whatever is that black thing you have got in there?"

Then up sat the reverend uncle, whose existence X had completely forgotten when he so narrowly missed the trees.

"What on earth are you doing there?" the officer asked.

He replied: "My nephew kindly promised to take me up for five minutes; but I suppose he was too busy flying to remember to land me until now."

Great was the surprise and delight of the members of the squadron, who had clustered round the aeroplane, when they saw this dear old clergyman, with grey beard and steel-rimmed spectacles, climb out of the new machine which they had all so anxiously expected.

Despite his enforced and unexpected absence from his home circle, he had nothing to complain of in the reception accorded to him at Dunkirk. He was given the best accommodation available in a small hut, and invited to

dine in the mess two hours later. X—who had thus conveyed a civilian without a passport from England to within a few miles of the Front Line trenches—wondered what would happen to him. The commanding officer was a personal friend, however, and undertook to protect him from all consequences; but he added that X would not be able to look after his uncle, as orders had just come through from the Admiralty for a captured German aeroplane to be taken back to Hendon forthwith. This X accordingly did. By great good luck he managed to obtain another aeroplane at Hendon, in which he flew back the same night, arriving at Dunkirk aerodrome at 11 o'clock to find his uncle sitting at the head of a long table in the mess, taking the bank at roulette. I am told that his was a name to conjure with for many months in that squadron, as the old gentleman insisted on paying out double to all the winners and forgetting to collect the losers' money.

At midnight the squadron twin-engine night bombers were due to leave for a raid across the lines, and gradually the players slipped out of the mess one by one. An officer of the squadron wrote to me a little time ago about this episode, ending his letter with the following words:

"I have a vivid recollection of the old gentleman, who insisted on shaking hands with everyone before they started, standing at the far end of the aerodrome to wave and cheer the pilots as they got away at three minute intervals. I can see him now, cheering away in the pitch dark at us lads as we sat in our cockpits one hundred feet above him with a 750 h.p. engine deafening us on either side. Anyhow the old boy wouldn't turn in until the whole lot had got back, which mercifully we did, four hours later."

The uncle was returned to Yeovil the following morning.

The next time that this strange man delivered an aeroplane from Yeovil to Dunkirk a characteristic adventure befell him on his return journey. Being thirsty, he landed at the aerodrome at Dover to get a cup of tea. Just as he was beginning his meal the news came that a flight of German bombers were approaching. X asked the commanding officer of the aerodrome if he had an aeroplane for him, as the one he was flying back to Yeovil had no machine-gun. An aeroplane was duly provided, and he started off with the rest of the squadron. It turned out that the machine that had been lent to him was a new one, and much faster than anything else on the South Coast. X, therefore, very soon found himself in the middle of three German bombers. He shot down one, missed the other two, returned to Dover, and continued his flight to Yeovil.

When he got back to Yeovil he was told to fly an aeroplane from there to Taranto, via Rome. I suppose the authorities thought that it might be worth while to take advantage of the fact that wherever X went some adventure happened. He flew to France on the route he knew so well; then started on his long trip to the Mediterranean coast near Marseilles, and thence along the Riviera to Rome. When he had got about one hundred miles from Dunkirk, he flew into a dense mist, from which he utterly failed to extricate himself. After flying about for an hour and a half, during which time he knew he must have travelled about 140 miles through the air, he dived through the clouds and discerned a possible landing ground. He made a good landing, and immediately, to his horror, there rushed towards him two hundred Germans in uniform. At first he was sure that his compass had gone hopelessly wrong and that he had landed somewhere in Germany; but when he saw, following the Germans, one hundred Chinese, he was convinced that he was really dead, and, as he put it to me, had gone straight to Hell. The real fact was that he had landed in the middle of a German prison camp at a place called Roanne. The French authorities treated him kindly, filled up his aeroplane with petrol, and gave him good quarters for the night.

The next morning he started off in clear weather, flying due south towards the valley of the Rhone.

This time he was more fortunate. He crossed the mountains to the Rhone Valley, and followed that river until he could see the Mediterranean in the distance; but his troubles were not yet over. The strong head wind, against which he had been flying all day, had made him run short of petrol long before he anticipated, so that when he was over Nice, after a few ominous coughs, his engine stopped. He circled twice over the Promenade des Anglais, waving his hands in warning to the people walking about below, then turned again and landed on that well-known thoroughfare. The people scattered in all directions, and by miraculous good fortune nobody was hurt. X sat in his cockpit marvelling at his escape, and in a few minutes saw a procession approaching him, consisting of the Mayor, with a sash across his chest, and some officials and members of the Nice Town Council. The Mayor addressed him in an eloquent speech, conveying the greetings of the town to the British Air Force, and said that he was exceedingly grateful to the British authorities for sending a special aeroplane to greet him. X thought it best to assume that his landing was intentional, and, I have been told, made a most impressive speech in reply.

In landing he had hit a lamp-post and struts and wires had been broken. X, therefore, accepted the invitation of the Mayor to a public luncheon in his

honour to be held the next day, during which time his aeroplane could be repaired. The following day after the banquet he continued on his course. Ever after this he was greeted wherever he landed—first in France and then in Italy—by huge crowds and given civic welcomes. It was a strange experience for this young man to be flying all alone, for what was then the longest flight ever made, and being acclaimed at each place at which he stopped as the representative of his country. I have been told, however, by several of those who met him at the time that he carried it off with complete aplomb, modestly making nothing of the great risks he ran in each flight. It was, of course, a most hazardous business.

After a great reception in Rome, he flew on to Taranto, there to take up a far more perilous duty—the bombing of the German submarines on the opposite side of the Adriatic at Cattaro. The distance from Taranto to Cattaro is one hundred and eighty miles. These lads of the Royal Naval Air Service had aeroplanes with a maximum duration in still air of four hundred and twenty miles. It was obvious that if they met a strong head wind on the outward journey, and a calm on the way back, or *vice versa*, or even a continuous strong beam wind, they were bound to fall into the sea, with no chance of rescue. Moreover, the bombing of Cattaro was, in itself, an operation fraught with danger. Cattaro lies at the head of a tortuous inlet, and is surrounded by mountains. Just above it is Mount Lovchen, some seven thousand feet high. When I went there after the Great War in Sir Warden Chilcott's yacht, I marvelled, not at the loss of life that ultimately attended this operation, but that our airmen had ever succeeded in their task.

The first time X led his men across, all went well. They were received with much gun fire as they approached Cattaro, but all were untouched and managed to release their bombs on the target with good results. They all got safely back to Taranto and carried out another successful raid a week later. However, when they returned for the third time, they found that the Austrians had installed an anti-aircraft gun on the top of Mount Lovchen. This was disconcerting. They were accustomed to being fired at from Cattaro itself and the low hills near by; but to be fired at from a height of seven thousand feet as well is an awkward dilemma. However, they dived down quite near to the water, released their bombs, and again all escaped, with a good many bullet and shrapnel holes through their wings, but with sufficient petrol to carry them back to the Italian coast. For his part in these operations, X received the Italian Gold Cross for Valour.

His next adventure was, perhaps, the most extraordinary of all. He was sent to Mudros and told that, if he liked, he could go by himself and bomb

Constantinople. Of course, he said he would. It was a very long way, and the feat had never been achieved before. However, he had a reserve petrol tank fitted and started off. He was fired at at intervals during nearly the whole course of his journey. When he arrived over Constantinople he flew down low and dropped his bomb with great accuracy, as he thought, on the place described to him. In fact, I believe, the bomb fell on the late Sultan's harem with disastrous results to the ladies there immured; but I have been told that this single bomb had a most remarkable effect. Turkey had already suffered severely, not only in Gallipoli, where most of her regular army were engaged, but more recently in Palestine and Mesopotamia, where she had endured crushing defeat. The dropping of this bomb on the capital city completed their discomfiture, and from well-informed sources I have learned that it had a material effect in shortening Turkey's resistance.

Then came the Armistice, and, in due course, X flew home.

It was this strange, gallant "bird man" with whom I was to fly constantly for nearly a year, first flying to the Peace Conference, often twice a week; then to all parts of this country and to France in the work of demobilization; and, finally, to many parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland urging the purchase of War Savings, that great National Movement now called National Savings, of which for the last five years I have been Chairman. The aeroplane in which we mostly flew was a D.H.9A., capable, all out, of a speed of about one hundred and ten miles per hour.

One evening when I arrived in Paris I had to meet Lord Balfour (Mr. Balfour as he then was), in order to discuss the next day's proceedings at the Air Sub-Conference, where I was England's representative. Mr. Balfour said to me after a few minutes' conversation:

"My dear Jack, I wish you could contrive to use some method of conveyance which would enable you to hear something of what I say and to prevent you deafening me with your loud roar."

Of course, after a long flight in a fast machine the noise of the engine makes one very deaf for some hours. X, therefore, contrived a silencer which was duly fitted to the machine. Some people said it was dangerous, because the fuselage along which the silencer lay was liable to catch fire; but we coated the fabric with a non-inflammable mixture, and although it was slightly scorched at times, no accident ever happened. We also elected to fly much slower.

However, one day we could not fly slowly, because we were caught in a northerly gale with driving rain, making it essential to cover the distance in

the least possible time, before conditions got worse. We flew in a Bristol Fighter that day, and did what was then a record flight. We got up from Manston Aerodrome in one of the Squadron machines with a Squadron pilot in a stiff breeze. As we approached the Channel we saw from the sea that pretty nearly a whole gale was blowing. We crossed the Channel in seven and a half minutes. From the Lighthouse at Cape Grisnez to the Eiffel Tower took us fifty-six minutes. I believe our average speed worked out at one hundred and fifty-seven miles an hour; but at times we must have been going over the land at quite one hundred and eighty miles an hour.

One extraordinary thing happened during this flight showing the kind of spirit which imbued these young airmen. We were flying along the Route Nationale at about four hundred feet, in order not to lose our way in the driving rain. When we were about half-way to Paris we passed one of our own aerodromes and, to our surprise, we saw an aeroplane in the air. They had been warned that we should be passing; but I did not expect to see anyone up in the air in such weather. The light-hearted boy who was flying the aeroplane had got up in the air to greet us, and as we approached him he deliberately turned upside down and flew along just below us, waving his hand, for quite three hundred yards. Then he looped her over and, I afterwards learned, made a safe landing.

Our landing near Paris was an interesting experience. The wind was so strong that when we had throttled the aeroplane down a bit, coming down we were actually blown backwards, although we must have been travelling not less than fifty-five miles an hour through the air, in order to retain stability. On our arrival in Paris we found that my friend Lord Riddell had organized a luncheon to all the foreign air delegates, which resolved itself into a rejoicing over our record flight.

It is curious to look back on those times and to realize how slow has been the progress of air travel compared with the anticipations that were formed. Individual achievements have outshone what we then foresaw. Every ocean has been crossed—the Atlantic, and even the wide Pacific. Every continent has been linked with another by direct flight. Not only has this been done by powerful aeroplanes piloted by two men, like Alcock and Brown, who first crossed the Atlantic; but, all alone in the air for thousands of miles, not only men, but women, have crossed vast tracts of land and sea. However, in the days of which I speak most of the delegates, not only to the Air Conference, but to the larger Peace Conference, believed that the era of air travel had set in, and that within ten years a large proportion of the passengers and mails would be carried by air. Bonar Law, for instance,

always flew to the Peace Conference and back, although he saved but little time by so doing, telling me that it was as well to get accustomed as soon as possible to the future means of locomotion.

Of course, we were all wrong. Although individual achievement has transcended our expectations, the total amount of passengers and mails carried by air is not one hundredth part of what we expected. There are many reasons. One is that, after the War people like those who attended the Peace Conference had ceased to care for comfort and ease. All those on the allied side had been through such an agony of impending disaster, and in the end had been so miraculously delivered, that as far as their own souls and bodies were concerned they were filled with the spirit of careless adventure.

It was not always plain sailing going to and from the Conference by air. On one occasion we had a few hours to spare, so X and I started in good time from Hendon with the intention of flying down the Thames, landing at Marquise for lunch, then flying along the Channel to Havre, and up the Seine to Paris. It was a beautiful, fine, calm morning as we flew down the Thames over the great quantity of shipping that thronged the waterway. We flew low past the Nore and landed at Marquise, where several things had to be done and settled. Then we started off again on our placid journey along the coast. We were flying a double-controlled machine, and I was steering. X had fallen asleep. Flying well below our maximum speed, perhaps at eighty miles an hour, with a good silencer, I reflected that it was really an ideal method of travel. We passed places and headlands that I knew well. I steered her close past the hospital at Le Treport, where I had received such wonderful treatment after being badly gassed a year before during the great German offensive. Then I flew straight on towards the next headland, in bright sunshine over a calm sea, X sleeping peacefully in the seat in front of me.

I suppose we were about six miles out to sea, and about twelve miles from Dieppe, when, all at once, there was a loud twang. I looked round and saw a long wire trailing behind us in the wind. I was sufficiently well acquainted with the construction of the aeroplane to know that we had broken a landing wire, and that it was extremely likely that another wire would go, and the wing break off. Moreover, I knew that any sudden movement would precipitate this catastrophe. The problem was, how to awaken X and get him to take control, without his doing so in his usual method. He was a real “bird man,” and when he took over the aeroplane from me he always twisted and turned her about to make sure that the controls were working freely, rejoicing, too, as he did, in the sensation of

flight. I therefore took out my writing pad, let the machine fly itself, and wrote as follows:—

"DEAR . . .,

"I am rather bored with flying your machine; but do try and take over so carefully that I shall hardly know that you have done it. I do not want my nerves disturbed.

"P.T.O. Incidentally, bits of string are floating around."

Then I tapped X on the shoulder and handed him the note. I shall never forget his expression—first of amusement, then of interest; then his quick glance to his left; then his taking control, and with infinite care, and the smallest possible bank, turning us straight towards the land.

The rest of the voyage was a sustained thrill. Of course, hundreds of pilots have had a similar experience, especially during the Great War; but to the ordinary layman there was a certain novelty in flying along for hours on end well knowing that any sudden turn, or any considerable air bump, must certainly involve the breaking of a wing and swift death.

I remember quoting to myself part of the famous Latin line: "Momento cita mors venit," and thinking ruefully that in this time of peace one could not add the end of the line "aut victoria laeta." I suppose the translation would be "In the twinkling of an eye comes speedy death, or welcome victory."

X saw that our only chance was to fly as slowly as was possible, in order to minimize the inevitable bumps, while not going so slowly as to let the aeroplane get out of control and fall like a leaf from a tree. So he nursed her along at a height of about three hundred feet towards the land. It was no good flying round the coast to Havre and up the Seine, for darkness would fall before we could cover the distance. We therefore had to cut off the corner to Rouen. We just topped the cliffs near Dieppe, and flew over the rolling country until we struck the Seine. To add to our troubles a mist was rising, and there was every danger of our losing our way at this abnormally low speed; we constantly pancaked a little in our efforts to avoid putting any undue strain on the half-broken wing. Then came a wearisome time, while we followed the Seine past Rouen towards Paris. In a straight line from Rouen to Paris is only about seventy-seven miles; but the windings of the river make the distance more than twice as great. Yet on this misty evening we did not dare to leave the river out of sight. Be it observed, that the problem of landing under these circumstances is extraordinarily acute. One

must approach the ground in a long, steady glide, for any sudden movement, down or up, will inevitably break the wing with fatal results. So there must be a big open space with no trees surrounding it. We were still about twelve miles from the outskirts of Paris. The gathering darkness, combined with the rising mist, made it essential for us to land. Round and round we circled, looking for the long open space we needed, for we could not possibly touch the ground at less than fifty miles an hour, and we must have a long run to pull up. We thought we had found the place; but as we began our downward glide, when two hundred feet from the ground, we saw a stout wire fence with iron standards running across the middle of the field. Slowly we climbed up again, and circled away to the south of the river.

The whole country was wooded and thickly enclosed, and a landing anywhere meant disaster of some sort. I remember vowing that I would give up pheasant shooting, for I have so often seen a pheasant with a pellet through its wing in the same dilemma, trying to find a way to get down, and ending up with a crash, either against a tree or into a hedge. So we two, like the wounded pheasant, managed to rise slowly again and circle still further to the south-east. Then, just as darkness was falling, I saw a large round-topped shape half a mile away to our right. I tapped X on the shoulder and pointed to it, and above the hum of the propeller I heard him shout "God be praised!" It was an airship hangar, and as we approached it we saw a long aerodrome. In half a minute we were near to it, and turned ever so carefully into the wind and glided down. As we approached the ground we saw a post and rail fence in front of us—we afterwards learned that the aerodrome had been disused for some months. X swerved; I heard a crack; in a few seconds we touched the ground, and as we ran forward, with a loud twang, our port wing collapsed. We spun round but did not turn over, and climbed out of the aeroplane. We walked across the dew-laden grass together saying never a word, and at last met a figure coming towards us in the mist, which turned out to be a French civilian in charge of the disused aerodrome. I explained to him what had happened, and asked him where the nearest place was where we could find a telephone and something to eat and drink.

I have always found Frenchmen kind and alert in a real emergency. All through the War it was so. At moments of great crisis they would not fail, although at ordinary times our people often complained that the French were bored and aloof. This Frenchman was no exception to the rule. He showed us the way to a group of houses; then ran across the grass to a shed where his two comrades were, in order that he might tell them to guard the broken machine. Then he joined us, and, at last, we arrived at a little estaminet. By this time it was nearly dark; but our French friend managed to induce the

proprietor of the tiny restaurant to produce poached eggs and a bottle of real Burgundy. I wrote out a message to be telephoned to Paris explaining our non-arrival and asking for a motor-car to be sent to fetch us. Then we sat down at a little table in the open air, while by the light of a single candle, which did not flicker in the still air, we discussed the food and the Burgundy. During all this time X had not said a word; but when he had eaten one mouthful and drunk just a taste of the Burgundy, he looked up into the mist and said:

"This is the happiest moment in my life."

Nor could I induce him to say anything else for several minutes. Then again he spoke; and these were his words:

"Isn't it wonderful? Kind friends, food, and drink; all real and in this world."

I said: "What do you mean by that?"

He replied: "Because I thought I knew for certain, three hours ago, that death must be our fate within five minutes."

III. FIRST MUTTERINGS OF WAR

My own flying experiences have been extremely varied. I have flown in almost every country in Europe, and have known well—many of them intimately—the pioneers of flying, such as Bleriot, Graham-White, Paulhan, Moore-Brabazon, and, on the military side, Henderson, Trenchard, Sykes, Maitland, Murray-Suetar, Sampson, and many others.

Chief amongst those who encouraged the art, though themselves too old to fly, was Alfred Harmsworth. Not long before the War Lord Northcliffe (as he then was) told my private secretary that he very much wished to see me, and an interview was arranged at his house in St. James's Place. It was an embarrassing meeting. He held one view about the future of flying. I held another. I appreciated the enormous services he had rendered to aviation by the great prizes he had given and by his consistent support in his newspapers and in other ways; but I wanted his help in a particular direction, and I feared that I could not get it. I held the view then, which I hold now, that the proper way to develop flying for civil purposes was not only different from, but almost opposite to, the method to be pursued for military ends. In the latter case what was wanted was speed and ever more speed, quick climbing and ever quicker climbing, high ceiling and ever higher ceiling—in other words, the ability to fly at great heights and to maintain great speed at these

heights. All these things, I was certain, would be developed almost automatically by both public and private enterprise to meet the needs of actual or impending war. On the other hand, the things essential for the progress of flying if it were really to play its part in civil and commercial life were things which would not come of themselves. A slow speed, say, ten miles an hour, should be the maximum in enclosed countries like Britain for rising and for landing with safety, so that a man or woman could make a very clumsy beginning or a very clumsy end to a journey without risk of serious injury. Comfort, meaning amongst other things sufficient absence of noise to enable one to converse with one's neighbour as in the case of other means of transport, should be assured. We were very far away from safety and comfort in those days and, in spite of great progress in many directions, we are far away now. Speed in the air has been multiplied by five, endurance in a similar degree, safety and comfort in far less degree. As a consequence, while the military and naval air arm has become one of the most vital necessities of any State, from the point of view of commerce and peaceful journeying, air travel, though astonishing in individual achievement, is but a small factor in the real life of the community. With these thoughts and anticipations in my mind I went to see Lord Northcliffe in 1914. We talked for a few moments about my work on the Committee of National Defence on the military side, and then he turned to commercial aviation. He was sure that in a few years everyone would fly. It would be the usual method of locomotion for all busy men, and all fairly well-to-do people would have their aeroplane in addition to, or instead of, a motor-car.

Then it was my turn. I said I did not agree, using the arguments which I have set out above. I clinched the matter by saying that, as he was so generous as to think of giving another great prize for civil aviation, the way he could serve the cause best was to give a prize, not for the fastest, but for the slowest aeroplane.

He said: "Do you really mean to tell me that I should advance the cause of aviation if I gave a prize for the aeroplane which would take the longest time to go, let us say, from London to Paris?"

I said: "Yes, I do think so. Of one thing I am sure. You would do much more good by offering such a prize than by offering a prize for the aeroplane that would do the journey in the shortest time; for speed will come of itself, owing to the fear of war, while the safety that can only be obtained by the ability to hover like a bird will not come, except by some special inducement." He was frankly impatient, and said my idea was fantastic, but as I left him he said: "Well, at least it's an original idea. I will think it over."

Shortly after this interview I went to Italy with my daughter. I had heard that they had developed their seaplanes at Venice on a somewhat novel line, and it seemed a good plan to combine seeing something of their aviation with finding out, as far as it was possible, how far they were likely to help us in the event of a war with Germany. Everything was arranged and we arrived at Venice on a fine summer's morning, not very long before the murder of the Archduke at Sarajevo. Whilst I was finishing breakfast, my daughter, who was standing at the window of the hotel, looking over the Grand Canal, gave a cry of delight. "Come quick," she said, "here's the most beautiful boat arriving at the hotel, with the grandest man you have ever seen sitting in it." The description was quite accurate. The naval Commander-in-Chief at Venice holds a special position of authority, and is provided with a gondola of great luxury and beauty. In a few moments the Commander-in-Chief came into our sitting-room. He said that he welcomed me to Venice and hoped I would see all I wished of their navy and their aviation. I thanked him profoundly, and said I would like to fly in one of their seaplanes. He at once sent his aide-de-camp to arrange this, saying that, at the same time, I might like to see the experiments they were conducting, with a view to discovering the different depths at which a submarine could be observed from the air in calm weather. He was a charming man of great intelligence, had been all over the world, and had seen a good deal of other navies. The conversation naturally came round to the possibility of war. He said that, speaking entirely for himself, he thought that war was certain, that we were bound to be involved, but that the sentiment of affection for England in his country was so strong that no Government, even if it wished to do so, could bring Italy into a war against us. Indeed he went further and said that events would assuredly bring Italy in on our side. He then asked me where we were going from Venice, and I told him Riva on Lake Garda. "But that is in Austrian territory," he said. I said: "Yes, that is exactly why I am going there. My plan is to return to England by coach through the passes, and so home through Austria." He said: "Will you forgive me if I make a suggestion? It is that if certain forebodings, which have been reported to me confidentially, should prove to be well founded, I should send you a message, saying that I have arranged for your return by Desenzano, Switzerland, and France. If I were the Austrian General Staff, and war were just about to break out, I think I should find means to delay the journey of any man occupying the position you now hold." I expressed my grateful thanks and arranged with him the form of the message.

Later in the day a fast naval launch called for me and took me to their seaplane station in the Royal Dockyard. Awaiting me there was a seaplane,

into which I climbed. It was a very calm day, and I asked the pilot if he would have any difficulty in leaving the water. He said: “No, not with this new type.” And so it proved, for, after taxi-ing over the water for less than a hundred yards, we soared into the air, and were soon flying over the Adriatic. About ten miles out was a cruiser, with two submarines conducting under-water exercises near by. We soon spied one of the submarines, but the other we could not discern. We then flew on at a height of about four thousand feet, from whence we had a clear view of the Adriatic coast, the head of the Gulf of Venice, and the mountains beyond. The pilot throttled down his engine, and, waving his arm to the north and east, said to me: “We all dream that that will be ours one day.” Then we flew back over Venice. My kind pilot was so busy indicating to me the different points of interest that we very nearly ran into the wires of the wireless station, diving under them just in time; and so up the Grand Canal back to the arsenal. It was one of the most interesting flights I have ever had.

After a few days in Venice, during which time the Commander-in-Chief and others showed us much kindness, my daughter and I left for Riva. I had ordered a motor boat to be ready at Desenzano at the south end of the lake, and in it we started, in the evening light, for our destination. The man in charge of the motor boat, who was an Italian, said that we should have to stop at a little place on the west side of the lake, where Austrian territory began. I told him, as was indeed the case, that I had a special pass, but he said that the Austrians had suddenly become extremely strict, and that, during the last few days, no boat had been allowed to cross into Austrian waters without first calling at the landing-stage which marked the frontier.

Garda is one of the most beautiful lakes in the world, more or less open on its southern shores, but at the northerly (that is, the Austrian) end, running up into the heart of great mountains, which slope precipitously to the water. On these mountains were numerous forts, and big guns were engaged in firing practice. As we sped over the waters of the lake I asked the Italian boatman what they were firing at. He said: “I don’t know. I only know it is part of their plan to terrify us.” I said: “Why?” “Oh,” he said, “we know that there will soon be a war, and they want to frighten us into coming in on their side.” I said: “Will you?” He said: “Never!”

It was nearly dark when we approached the Austrian portion of the lake. Searchlights were playing from each side, so that we could not have gone through unobserved. At the little frontier station I had the greatest difficulty in getting permission to proceed. I showed my various papers, but the official still demurred. Finally the Italian boatman came to the rescue and

made a long impassioned speech, as a result of which the Austrian took off his hat with a low bow and begged us to proceed upon our voyage to Riva. I asked the Italian what he had said. He replied: "I explained to him that you did not wish to disclose your identity, but that I knew you were a prince of some great royal house, going to see the Emperor Francis Joseph."

At about 9.30, with the last of the evening glow still flooding the north-western sky above the dark mountains, we arrived at Riva. There were no other English people in the hotel, but a number of Austrians and some Germans, including half a dozen Austrian and three or four German officers. They were all in boisterous spirits, but clearly looked on me with some disfavour. Before going to bed I explained to the manager the route we proposed to take the next day but one, and he then and there ordered the necessary carriages. I explained that I preferred to drive rather than go by motor through the wonderful Alpine passes we were going to traverse.

The next morning we climbed up the mountain behind Riva, and saw one of the most heavenly prospects on which my eyes have ever rested. To make the scene quite perfect, the grass on which we lay was carpeted with wild frezias. In the afternoon we rowed and sailed about the lake. Big guns were still practising, some of them firing at targets in the lake. That evening we packed our clothes so as to be ready for an early start in the morning. After dinner, while I was walking up and down in the hotel garden bordering on the lake shore, the manager came up to me, saying that he had just received an important letter, which he gave to me. I guessed what it was, put the letter in my pocket and thanked him. When he had gone I opened it, and by the light of a match read the words: "Urgent Desenzano." I went back into the hotel and found the night porter—fortunately, a very friendly Italian. I told him that I might wish to leave by the early steamer the next morning, but that for reasons which I preferred not to disclose I did not wish anybody to know that we had gone until the steamer had left. Could he have the luggage transported to the boat unobserved? He at once became most mysterious, obviously greatly enjoying the intrigue. He said yes, it could be done. There was an early steamer leaving long before anyone's breakfast time. There would be nobody about, and he, with a friend of his, also an Italian, would see the luggage on to the boat. My daughter and I could step on board just before the steamer left. I told him so to arrange. Then I found the manager, thanked him warmly, and paid the bill. The next morning we stepped on board the steamer, being the only passengers. The night porter was there to see us off, and pointed to a heap covered with a tarpaulin in the stern of the boat. I expressed my gratitude to him, gave him a hundred lire, and away we went. We arrived without incident at Desenzano, and caught a

train, which took us to Lake Como. From there I sent my thanks to the Commander-in-Chief at Venice. What the element of risk of my being detained in Austria was I do not know, but certainly it was not negligible. My grateful thanks must always be due to my distinguished Italian naval friend. We returned to England from Como; a few days later the Archduke was assassinated at Sarajevo, and the signal for the Great War had been fired.

I resumed my work at the Committee of Imperial Defence, much of it dealing with aviation, both military and civil, but already the mutterings of war were getting louder. Speed and climb occupied a higher place in our thoughts than safety and comfort. Then came the War, and safety and comfort disappeared from aviation as from everything else. Types of aeroplanes and of seaplanes were designed in quick succession, each swifter in flight than the last. Still more wonderful, a breed of young men was evolved capable of flying these falcons of the air with comparative ease. During the four years I served on the Western Front I watched with special interest the development of the machines and of the men. I kept in close touch with the Flying Corps, which, as Chairman of the Committee, I had had some share in founding before the War. First Henderson and then Trenchard, who succeeded him, allowed me to fly over any portion of the German line opposite to which my command might be stationed. Thus I observed at close quarters one of the most marvellous achievements in history—the building up of the British flying service. I say without hesitation that, astonishing as was the development of the machines, the development of the men was far more extraordinary.

Soon after the War had ended I found myself at the Air Ministry. That very remarkable man, Lord Weir, "handed over" to me. I could not help telling him how much the British flying service owed to his extraordinary zeal and acumen, and expressed a wonder that he did not carry on.

"No, no," he said, "I must get back to my pumps." And back to his pumps he went, leaving a record of achievement at the Air Ministry which few men can hope to rival.

The next adventure was coping with the Mad Mullah of Somaliland. I took a great interest in this man, because it was during my time at the Colonial Office that I had to defend in the House of Commons the evacuation of the whole of the interior of Somaliland, made necessary by the activities of this remarkable potentate. Why he was called "The *Mad* Mullah" has always been a mystery to me, for he was one of the most astute men I have ever had anything to do with. Before agreeing to the evacuation I

had got the consent of Lord Crewe and Mr. Asquith (then Prime Minister) to the sending out of Sir Reginald Wingate to investigate the position on the spot. He went there, and, by mysterious methods known only to exceptional men like himself, got into touch with the Mad Mullah. He returned and told me that, unless we could send larger reinforcements very quickly we had better get out of the interior. It was impossible to get the required troops there in time, so the only thing to do was to clear out. The retirement was executed with great skill and without loss. But I always remember sitting on the steps of the Throne in the House of Lords, the place where Ministers of the Crown sit to hear debates in that chamber, while Lord Curzon, in a passage of lofty eloquence, denounced me by name for having surrendered this outpost of Empire and lowered our prestige in the eyes of the whole world. This happened in 1909.

One day in 1919 Trenchard came to me, and said: "I am quite sure that with our Air Force we could do in your friend, the Mad Mullah. But the trouble is that the War Office insists that, if anything is to be done, there must be a much more elaborate expedition than the two abortive expeditions which we sent against the Mullah before the War. They say that the last two expeditions failed because they were not big enough, so this time no such mistake should be made. On the other hand, I am convinced that we can manage the whole thing on our own with the help of the Resident and a few camels."

I saw Mr. Lloyd George and told him this. He said: "If you can convince Milner, on whose judgment of everything connected with Egypt and the surrounding districts I greatly rely, you may go ahead." So we had a conference with Lord Milner. He overcame all opposition, a thing he could do more skilfully than any man I know, and gave us "carte blanche" to proceed.

The whole thing was an astonishing success. The aeroplanes located the Mullah in a region which, the Resident had ascertained, he could not leave because of his numerous flocks and herds, and where there were no caves in which he could hide. Messages were dropped telling him to come and surrender, or take the consequences. He sent away his wives, but continued his depredations on friendly tribes. Then came the day. The aeroplanes circled round for half an hour, killing more than half his followers by bombs and machine-gun fire. The Mullah himself escaped on a fast camel. Our camel men came up and dispersed the remainder; thus at a cost of less than one-hundredth of that of the previous expeditions, the Mullah's power was broken for ever. He died shortly afterwards as a result of wounds received

during the air bombardment. A curious fact was related to me by Sir Reginald Wingate only a few weeks ago. When Captain Archer, our Resident, galloped into the camp just after the Mullah's escape he found amongst his belongings a packet of papers wrapped in an oilcloth cover. These were the very letters written to him twenty years before by Sir Reginald Wingate when he went to Somaliland at my request. Surely another case of the Sibylline books.

IV. ANSWERING QUESTIONS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY AIR

When I went to the Air Ministry soon after the War and took over the Administration from that great man, Lord Weir, I found Trenchard in charge of the military side and Sykes of the Civil. They were men of widely diverging temperaments, but alike in the fact that each had rendered outstanding services to aviation, before, during and after the World War. Both had supremely difficult tasks; Trenchard had to demobilize the great military Air Force which we had built up during the War—it left us finally far and away the most powerful nation in the air—and to build up therefrom a small compact Air Force, capable of service in all parts of the globe. By common consent Lord Trenchard, as he now is, did his task well.

The problem for Sykes was of a totally different order, but nevertheless equally difficult of solution. It was to build up civilian aviation from military material.

During the War the military heavier-than-air machine had diverged in an ever-increasing degree from the type required for commercial purposes. Most people then thought that it would be easy to build up passenger and mail-carrying services which would very soon become self-supporting. These hopes were doomed to disappointment in all countries, but, I think, under Sykes' direction we made a better start than most. Certainly in proportion to the difficulty of our task we asked the State for less subsidy than other countries found necessary.

I remember my opposite number in France, Monsieur Flandin, saying to me some years later, when I asked him how civil aviation was progressing in France: "Comme partout les peuples sont fatigués, les pilotes sont fatigués et surtout, malheureusement, les gouvernements sont fatigués."

Sykes threw himself into his task with much zeal and energy. The problem of landing-places, both for land and sea planes, was acute, the rapid demobilization of the military Air Force rendering it more serious as time

went on. One of his ideas was that we should make use of the Thames at Westminster as a landing ground. In this connection it was arranged for me to go on a certain day to Messrs. Short's works on the Medway and fly round in one of their fast seaplanes, looking at the different landing-places and finally landing on the Thames. It so happened that I had a number of questions to answer in the House of Commons that day and it seemed difficult—as it usually is for any Minister—to fit things in. I bethought me of the plan of making an early start for my tour of inspection and landing in the Thames at half-past two, with top hat and tail coat complete, in time to answer my questions at five minutes to three. I got permission from the Speaker to land at his steps, and everything else was duly arranged. Having inspected Messrs. Short's works, after a hasty lunch I got into one of their fast seaplanes and started to fly back to London, leaving the other investigations for a future occasion. We had only half an hour to do the trip, but fortunately we had a fair wind from the south-east, so there should be plenty of time. The pilot was one of our most brilliant flyers. He asked me if I minded flying over the land in a seaplane and I said "No, not at all." We circled up to eight hundred feet and then, without flying down to Rochester and following the course of the Thames, flew straight across country to a point a little below Greenwich. I have very often flown over the London river and I recommend the trip to anyone who has the opportunity. It is then only that one realizes how much the greatest waterway in the world the Thames is. In a few minutes we were approaching the Tower Bridge, flying at a height of about five hundred feet. When about eight hundred yards from the bridge the engine seemed to stop and we nose-dived steeply towards the water. The river was crowded with craft of every kind, and I did not see how we could make a landing. I remember saying to myself: "We are really done for this time." But even as I said this the engine boomed out again at full throttle, the pilot flattened her out and we flew straight for the bridge. I had taken off my flying helmet a few moments before and had put on my top hat; even at this moment of intense fear I could not help being amused in reflecting on the comical sight I must present dashing straight for the bridge at a hundred miles an hour in a top hat! The pilot made a wonderful shot and we rushed through the bridge well under the foot bridge at the top and, I suppose, about twenty feet above the traffic moving on the roadway below us. The people on the tops of the omnibuses, I perceived, covered their heads with their hands as we roared through; in another three minutes we were at Westminster. My indomitable pilot circled three times round Big Ben, passed close over Westminster Bridge, and made a good landing just opposite the Victoria Tower. While the launch which was to take me off was approaching I said to my pilot: "What on earth made you go through the

Tower Bridge?" He answered: "I thought you would like it, sir." I said: "I like it very well now it is all over, but I didn't like it at the time. Moreover, I issued a stringent regulation only a week ago against low flying over the Thames." He was most contrite, and it was impossible to be angry with so skilful and charming a pilot.

The launch took me to the Speaker's steps. I waited to see my pilot extricate himself from his rather difficult position between Westminster and Lambeth bridges. He got out all right, with not much to spare and, waving his hand, flew down river on his journey back to the Medway.

Having answered my questions I returned to the Air Ministry. There I found Sykes, who had seen me land and who was highly delighted with the success of the experiment. He said it would be a splendid advertisement for civil aviation. For an hour or two we worked away together, while successive copies of the evening papers were brought to us giving glowing accounts of the new method of arriving at Westminster by air. In fact all seemed to have gone well when, at six o'clock, my private secretary came in with a long face, saying that the Lord Mayor's secretary had arrived with an urgent letter to which an immediate reply was demanded. As I feared, the letter contained the report of the Chief Constable of the City to the Lord Mayor on the flying through the Tower Bridge of an aeroplane, believed to be the property of His Majesty's Government, and of the alarm that had been caused by this performance to persons crossing the bridge. There was a statement from two men, who had been riding on the top of an omnibus, that the aeroplane had actually knocked their hats off. The Lord Mayor demanded that I should make an example of the two occupants of the aeroplane. This was a little embarrassing, for I knew the Lord Mayor well, and, quite apart from his exalted position, was particularly anxious not to offend him. So I wrote him a letter in my own hand, saying that I was already aware of the passage; that I had administered a severe reprimand to the person in the aeroplane who was responsible; that I would undertake that there should be no repetition of the annoyance, and I trusted that his Lordship would be satisfied with this explanation and my expression of deep regret.

After the Lord Mayor's secretary had departed with my letter and a verbal message I told my private secretary to place on record the fact that I had administered to myself a severe reprimand.

The pilot did not suffer unduly for this escapade, for, indeed, he was so skilful that the element of risk was exceedingly small. Nevertheless, I hope

and believe this is the last time that anyone will fly through the Tower Bridge.

CHAPTER IX

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

I. A REBUKE

The arrival at Havre of that portion of the British Expeditionary Force which I accompanied in early August 1914 was a gloriously mysterious affair. Everybody had been kept clear of the docks before we arrived, and, of all strange and interesting things, the people who showed us where to go were French boy scouts and scout-masters in Baden-Powell's well-known uniform. Nobody knew we were coming, nor did anyone know when or where we were going. Extraordinary as it may seem, it is the fact that published German documents show that the whole of the British Expeditionary Force was in line with the French near Mons long before the German General Staff knew that it had left England.

I, of course, knew our destination, and had arranged to leave Havre early the next morning in my own motor, Captain Guest coming at the same time in his open Rolls-Royce together with several other members of the Headquarters Staff. Having invited General Sir James Grierson to dine with me, I decided to go down to the beach to bathe. The beach was quite deserted; but at last I found an old French gentleman, who lent me a bath towel and a bathing suit. As I was coming out of the water after my swim I accidentally trod on a piece of broken glass and cut my toe rather deeply. I wrapped the towel, which I had left on the beach, round the toe very tightly to stop the bleeding, which it did; but, of course, I was now without anything on which to dry myself. The French gentleman, who had observed the episode, ran down to me, and putting one hand on his heart and holding the other outstretched said:

"Bravo, mon Colonel. Vous avez déjà versé votre beau sang Anglais pour la France."

I thanked him for his kind words, and said that I would be very glad if he could give me another towel. This he could not procure, so I did my best with my handkerchief, and returned to the hotel with my foot still wrapped in the towel. It was a clean cut, soon healed, and bothered me no more.

That evening, as arranged, Grierson and his staff dined with me. Sir James Grierson, who was commanding the 2nd Division, was a very remarkable man. It was he who had completely outwitted Haig at the 1912 manœuvres; but he had other than military attainments. He was a first-class

linguist, and could speak both French and German, especially the latter, almost as well as a native of the country. He made friends wherever he went. Incidentally, when attending German manœuvres as our military representative, he made great friends with the Kaiser, and perhaps understood his mind better than any other Englishman.

Grierson and I talked much together about the probable course of the War. He reminded me of the memorandum I had written about the German army after attending their manœuvres. He, of course, had far more intimate knowledge of the German army than I had, and I was, therefore, interested when he told me that he had formed exactly the same conclusions as myself about the probable course of events, so far as German strategy and tactics were concerned. Grierson said that the Germans had the most extraordinary delusions as to the possibility of attack; but that they were very intelligent people, not so slow as was supposed, and that they would very soon abandon daylight attacks against troops and machine-guns in position. Moreover, he said that the French suffered from the same delusion in a more acute form; he boldly prophesied to me that the French would attack in the next few days all along the line, and would be bloodily repulsed everywhere by the German second line of defence, even if they succeeded in taking the first. He foretold our own retreat, and, most extraordinary of all, said that the only hope for Paris was the possibility of vacillation on the part of the German higher command; for, although Grierson had a very high opinion of the German army as a fighting engine of war, he had a poor opinion of the German Great General Staff.

The event proved that Grierson's theories were sound in every particular. It is interesting to reflect that, had he lived, his prestige, enhanced by prophecy proved to be true, might well have enabled him to make his views prevail, thus altering profoundly the whole course of the War. Alas! it was not to be.

The following evening Grierson started by train, having spent a most exhausting day in the great heat seeing his troops entrained. The temperature in the train was excessive. Grierson, who was a man of portly build, was overcome, and died in the train. Of all the men in the Expeditionary Force I think he was the one who could least well be spared.

I had told my friend Lord Riddell, before I left England, that the War would last for some years and that hundreds of thousands of Englishmen would be killed. That careful man recorded this opinion in his diary. Seeing

how many bad shots I have made in my life, it is a melancholy satisfaction to reflect how right I was on this occasion. As Secretary of State I had been told by all the leading financial authorities that the expected War, on the scale which we already knew it must assume, could not last very long; certainly not more than two years. The reason was, in their view, that at the end of that period every country, even England, then much the wealthiest country in the world, would be compelled to repudiate both its internal and external debts. Being, therefore, unable to get money by any means, the countries involved could neither pay nor feed their soldiers, nor provide them with munitions of war.

With these thoughts in my mind I joined Sir John French's headquarters, to which I had been appointed as the Special Service Officer. The rank I held was Colonel in the Reserve. The headquarters was at Le Câteau. On my way thither from Havre, where we disembarked, I met General Robb, commanding the Lines of Communication, walking up and down the road ten miles north of Amiens. He, too, made a good shot about the future. He told me the news of the German advance in Belgium, and said:

"Although our Expeditionary Force and the French on both sides of us are planning a victorious advance to drive back the Germans through Belgium, I should like to burn all stores that I have collected, for I know that I shall not have time to get them away."

I asked him on what he based his opinion. He told me that the reports he had received made it clear to him that the German advance could not possibly be stayed, at any rate until the length of their lines of communication prevented their getting up their ammunition and stores sufficiently rapidly to enable them to continue. He thought they might just not reach Paris; but that by continuing to move round our left flank we should certainly be forced back that far. His prescience was so uncanny, and in such complete contrast to the optimism which was generally prevailing, that in justice to him I am glad to record this conversation.

I went on to Le Câteau, where most of the Staff were assembled, but not Sir John French, who had been retained in London for final consultations. Amongst others I found the Duke of Westminster, also attached to the Staff, with two Rolls-Royce cars and two admirable chauffeurs. That night I told him, in the strictest confidence, of my conversation near Amiens with General Robb, and suggested to him that it might be a good plan to employ the next day, with his fast open Rolls-Royce, in finding out just where the Germans were to the east of us. We knew that they had not crossed the Meuse, and that the French believed that it was impossible for them to do so.

Early the next morning we started for the Meuse; Bend'or, as he is perhaps best known, driving, I by his side, and the chauffeur with a carbine sitting behind, nearly blown to bits by the speed at which we travelled. It was an extraordinary journey. All the villages were *en fête*. The approach to each one reminded me of entering a town where there was a flag day in progress. As we slowed down at the entrance to each village the whole population turned out and lined the road, waving little Union Jacks and tricolour flags, the Union Jack predominating, and crying out in chorus "Vive les Anglais," with occasional shouts of "A Berlin! A bas les Boches!" Women and children of all ages and old men were all that were left. Mobilization had been so complete that hardly an able-bodied man was to be seen. At last we approached the Meuse, and I noted that, in the village which we passed some four miles from Pont Ivoir, our first destination, the cheering was less loud and few flags were to be seen. We stopped here and inquired from the Mayor whether he had heard any firing. He said:

"Yes, distant artillery like the rumbling of thunder, but nothing near, certainly not rifle fire."

So on we went at our usual rate of seventy to eighty kilometres an hour to a point where the road turned sharply to the left and dipped steeply into the valley of the Meuse. Up till this time we had seen very few French soldiers; but on the outskirts of the little village of Pont Ivoir we found a half company of a famous French regiment with an officer in the middle of the road holding out both hands to stop us. As our car drew up he came forward to us, and with an air of great suspicion wished to know who we were and what papers of identity we had. I managed to persuade him that we were officers of the Headquarters Staff of the British Army, but one glance at his face had told me that things were not going too well.

Down the hill we went to the place where we were told we should find the Colonel commanding the Brigade. We were several times stopped by sentries, but went on as far as a little house about one hundred yards from the river. Bend'or and I got out and walked through a wicket gate into the garden with a straight path leading to the door of the house. Suddenly from behind a bush jumped out an officer who placed his revolver within six inches of my head, saying "Rendez-vous." From behind the same bush another officer and an orderly appeared, who volubly said something. I caught the word "espion." They, also, had revolvers, and the officer presented his at Bend'or's head. I stood quite still and recounted to the officer—it was the Brigade Commander himself—my name, regiment, and official duty on the Headquarters Staff, and conveyed the compliments of

the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces, Le Maréchal French. He listened to it all, still with the revolver pointing at me with his finger on the trigger. I think Bend'or broke the spell by saying:

"It seems rather rough luck for these people to shoot us just when we have come such a long way to cheer them up. Couldn't you ask the Colonel to give us a drink instead?"

I translated this to the Colonel and saw a flicker of a smile; but he still covered me with his revolver, and, backing towards the door, told us both to follow, saying that he would telephone to verify our statements. We stood in a little, unfurnished room while the Colonel talked volubly on the field telephone. At the end of the conversation he said that we could return under escort to our motor-car; but that the zone in which we were was prohibited to everyone. I had seen all I wanted to see, and we walked back to the car and got into it. While Bend'or was turning the car round in the narrow road the Colonel sent the orderly off to the house. He came back with a bottle of red wine and four glasses. The French Colonel said:

"Well, whether you are spies or not—but I think you are—I cannot allow two thirsty men to leave my headquarters without a drink."

I said: "It is very good of you to drink our health. I will send you a further message from Sir John French to-morrow."

At that moment I saw that he was convinced that we were not spies. He begged my pardon for his mistake, told me that he was expecting an attack that night or the next morning, and that he had been specially warned to look out for German spies dressed in English uniforms. He was confident he could hold off an attack in his own sector; but he felt pretty certain, from the reports he had received, that his left flank would be turned. We drank his health in his red wine, accepted a loaf of bread which he popped into the car, and drove back by the way we had come.

As soon as we were out of earshot I said to Bend'or: "Now we had better go further south to Dinant, and see what the position is there."

He said: "By all means, but are you sure we shall not receive an equally hostile welcome?"

I replied: "Oh no; I know how to begin now."

So to Dinant we went, munching the Colonel's bread on the way. It was there that I heard the first shot fired in the Great War. Long range rifle fire had already begun. We were cordially welcomed by the commander of the first regiment whom we found near to the bridge. His regiment had been

heavily engaged, but had got the best of a rear-guard action. He said his men were in fine form, and as I walked about amongst them I realized that his words were true.

There is some unfortunate fate which prevents the average Englishman from understanding the average Frenchman, and *vice versa*. All unconsciously the barrier of centuries of fighting rises between them; but my experience of nearly four years on the Western Front taught me that the doubts and distrusts between the two nations were rapidly dispelled when they came into actual contact on the battlefield. Not that they ever understood each other. Their minds, their thoughts, and their actions were all so different. The French soldier was less enthusiastic, strangely enough much more phlegmatic, more obviously bored, more cynical, and more critical; but, as I can testify with all my heart and soul, in supreme moments they were brave as lions and devoted as saints.

All this I saw and dimly appreciated during the hour or so that Bend'or and I were amongst them. I was given the fullest information by the officer commanding. The enemy were still some way off. As at Pont Ivoir, the officer was confident that he could hold his own against any attack. With warm, mutual good wishes we left Dinant to return to make the long journey back to Le Câteau. We got back about 10 o'clock, and after a hasty meal I wrote out a full report of our journey. At about midnight I handed in my report and went to sleep.

The next morning I received a message to say that the Field-Marshal wished to see me at once. At the door of the little château I found Bend'or, who had received a similar summons.

He said: "I think there is going to be a row."

I replied: "On the contrary, we are going to be congratulated on a most valuable report."

Henry Wilson ushered us into Sir John French's room, and there I saw the great little man, sitting at his desk with a face black as thunder.

He said: "Where were you yesterday?"

I replied: "Have you not received my report? I took a great deal of trouble in writing it, and believe it may be of some value."

"No, I have not received your report," he said, "and don't want to. All I know is that I have received a violent protest from French G.H.Q. to the effect that you have penetrated the French lines without authority. My proper course is to send you and Westminster straight back to England."

I confess I was never so taken aback in my life. The last time I had seen French was in London the week before, when we had dined together and he had told me how useful I could be to him in keeping in constant touch with the French Front Line. Moreover, we were great friends, had been on the Army Council together as Secretary of State and Chief of Staff for years, and had resigned together only a few months before, with the avowed determination that we would never let one another down. Just for once I said nothing and looked at Bend'or. French turned on him and said:

"What have you got to say to excuse your scandalous conduct? It may well be that Seely being the senior officer told you to go with him; but that is no excuse."

A bland smile spread over Bend'or's face, but he said nothing. French repeated his question more than once, but not a word could he extract from my comrade. After a tense silence, which must have lasted quite three minutes, French said:

"I will communicate my final decision to you in half an hour," and we got up and walked out. Henry Wilson said to me:

"The Chief's in a towering rage, but I think you will find that within an hour or two he will be conveying his thanks to you for your report."

Bend'or continued his enigmatic silence. When we were out of earshot he said:

"It looks to me as if the Belgians were knocked out and the French have had a bad biff."

So, crestfallen, we went to breakfast.

That night French asked me to go and see him. He thanked me for my report, saying it was just what he hoped I could continue to do for him; that I had, of course, made a mistake in not letting the Staff know exactly where I was going; but that too much zeal was a good fault, especially at that moment. He proceeded to give me a full account of the situation as he saw it, and his forecast for the future, which very nearly proved true. From that day until the evening when he left France, fifteen months later, hurt and sore, we never had a word of disagreement, but constant vows of friendship which became ever closer and closer until his untimely death. He was truly a great little man. Of course, he made mistakes—who does not in War, or, indeed, in Peace?—but he made fewer than most, and with it all he had that one vital and essential quality in a commander of men, the power to make his men love him. As he moved about amongst the troops during the retreat,

in the glorious advance on the Marne—above all, in the desperate days of the first battle of Ypres—he brought fresh heart into his men wherever he went.

Foolish people think, and, indeed, have said, that in modern war a commander cannot impress himself upon his men by personal contact. This is a complete delusion. It is easier in modern war than it was in the wars of old. French proved it; so did Gouraud, and many other less famous French and English commanders. Indeed, not only is it easier, but it is more essential; for modern war, though it may not be more expensive in casualties, is a harder trial to the individual: not because gas, tanks, and aeroplanes are more terrifying than the cutlass or the musket at close range, but because the ordeal is more prolonged and each man has a greater freedom of choice as to whether he should press forward like a man or lag behind like a cur. Every stimulus of patriotism is needed, and the greatest of all—after a belief in the justice of his cause—is the example of his supreme commander.

II. THE MONK OF MONT DES CATS

Philosophers and theologians have written much about the human soul unable to escape from its self-imposed chains. I saw such an episode in dramatic circumstances in October 1914.

After the fall of Antwerp, whither I had been sent by Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in France, and from whence I was the last combatant to escape, I rejoined the Headquarters of our Army at St. Omer. The first task which Sir John gave to me was to go to the advance guard of our Army, get in touch with the French troops on its right and left, make an appreciation of the situation as I saw it, call on General Foch, commanding the Northern Army of France at Cassel, on the way back, and report to him verbally and in writing that night. I drove through Arcq on the road to Cassel, then turned to the right, and, by a narrow road, struck the main road from Cassel to Bailleuil, about half-way between those two places. All the time one had heard the mild bombardments of those early days of the War, and soon rifle fire. Our advance guard of cavalry, closely supported by infantry, was driving the German rear-guard back.

By the time I got close to the Front Line, a little battle, which had been raging around Mont des Cats, had ended in our favour. I was fortunate enough to reach the front line at this moment; at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, to hear from the commanders of regiments and squadrons just

what had happened, and to see the position we had occupied. To my left and just behind us was Mont des Cats. It is quite a small hill, but looms large in that flat country. Built on the apex of the hill is a monastery. A friend of mine in the cavalry, who had passed close by it during the fighting which had just died down, told me that the Abbot had come out of the gate in the midst of the battle and had held up a warning hand to both combatants; that he had passed close to him, and that the Abbot had said that a curse would rest upon anybody who violated his sanctuary. I said to him: "I am bound to make a rough sketch map, and that is the only place from which I can see all round." He replied: "All right, old boy, but I would sooner face any number of Germans than the curses of that Abbot."

I drove as near as I could to the entrance to the monastery, and then walked up to the main gate, which faced east towards the temporary line which the Germans were holding, about 1200 yards away. Stray bullets flew about, but none of our troops were on the hill, so there was no aimed rifle fire to worry one. I arrived at the gate, a massive oak door, with the usual bell on the right; I rang the bell, which pealed loudly, with the sound of a bell clanging in a large empty hall. After I had rung it perhaps a dozen times, I heard echoing steps approaching the door. The little square grille was opened, a pair of eyes looked through, and a voice said in French "What do you want?" I replied: "I must see the Abbot." The voice answered: "I will tell him." Presently I heard a slower step approaching, again two eyes looked at mine, and a big, resonant voice said: "Who are you, and what do you want?" I replied: "I must enter. You will regret it if you refuse." I could see the eyes looking to right and left of me; I could guess that the man inside saw that I was alone. Then bolts were shut back, locks turned, the door opened a little way, and I put my foot in the crack thus made. Through the slightly open door I saw a commanding figure in a long, white robe. I said: "I am alone. Let me enter." Without a word he opened the door wide enough for me to pass. I walked in, he shut the door and turned the lock. Two monks with him then shut a bolt at the top and another at the bottom of the door. The Abbot turned, and walked a few feet to the entrance of a vast hall; it seemed to me in the semi-darkness as big as Westminster Hall, but, of course, really it was far smaller. Still, it was a huge place, with an arched wooden roof similar in plan to Westminster Hall. I followed the Abbot to the middle of the hall. At the far end were grouped perhaps thirty monks, from their gestures in great excitement, but uttering no sound. Then the Abbot turned and faced me. He said: "How dare you enter this sacred building? We have been surrounded on all sides by German, French, Belgian and, lastly, English soldiery; none but you has dared to violate this sacred place." I

replied: “It will be best for you and your monastery if you allow me to go to your roof, so that I may observe the whole battlefield.” He said: “Why?” I answered: “That I cannot tell you, but what I say is true.” And, indeed, so it was, for this monastery was destined to be within the British lines and under the protection of our troops for four long years. We stood facing each other while one might have counted fifty. Then he said: “I will send a brother with you to the roof; do not forget that the curse of God will rest upon you for any wrong you do to this house or those who live in it.” He turned and gave a signal with his finger. One of the monks came forward, to whom he gave whispered instructions. The monk then beckoned to me, and I followed him to a corner of the hall, up a long winding stairway to an upper corridor, then a little way along the corridor and up more stairs to a trap door opening on to the roof.

It was a brilliant autumn afternoon, with bright sun and a light haze to the east and south. I had my telescope with me and was soon absorbed in noting the exact positions of the opposing forces, which could be clearly seen from this height. One could see the line of our men and of the Germans lying down and firing. Our batteries just below me were plainly visible. I made rapid notes of all I could see, then turned to my companion, to whom I had not previously spoken, and asked him if he spoke French or Flemish. He gave a furtive look to right and left, to make sure that we were alone, and then replied that he spoke French. I said: “Now, very quickly you must take me to the roof on the other side, so that I may look to the north and east.” Without a word, he took me down a flight of stairs; we ran round the topmost corridor and emerged again upon the north side of the roof. Here the view was surprisingly clear. One could see the forest of masts of the sailing ships in Dunkirk Harbour, perhaps thirty miles away, and the glitter of the westerly sun on the sea between Dunkirk and Nieuport. But there was less to see close at hand, and at that moment a considerable burst of artillery and rifle fire broke out on the side we had just left. So I asked my guide to take me back by the way we had come. There had been no change in the position of the combatants, except that one of our batteries had moved up closer to our front line. Then the firing died down. It was clear that I had seen all that could be useful, and that I must continue my journey to the north towards Ypres, and thence back to Foch at Cassel.

As I turned to go, I saw the face of my companion lit up with a strange light. He was surveying the lines of fighting men and listening to the sound of the bullets with the look of a hungry animal. Then followed the most strange conversation that I have ever had in my life. I said to him: “You want to be there with the fighting men?” He turned his blazing eyes upon

mine, and said: “Yes, I must go and join them; it is my country which is bleeding to death. Whatever my views, I know that Jesus would tell me to join my countrymen in their sacrifice.” I said: “Yes, of course that is true. You and I are both Christians, and know that Christ would never forgive us if we chose the easy path of safety when our countrymen are suffering.” Still with his eyes intently fixed upon mine he said: “May I come with you to the fighting?”

I said: “Yes, let us go together.”

For a moment he paused irresolute, with his elbows upon his knees, and his hands clasped before him upon his white robe. He looked down, and said: “But how shall I get a soldier’s uniform? How shall I be accepted in the army of my country?” Quickly I explained to him how easy it all would be; that every man was needed in this desperate struggle; that I was on the Headquarters’ Staff of the British Army, and could guarantee, with certainty, that everything could be arranged; that in the immediate future he could come with me in my motor-car which was waiting; that I would drive him to our headquarters, where his own people attached to our Staff would receive him with open arms.

He sat still, looking at the ground, and I could see his hands gripping each other while his mind was coming to its decision. Then he looked up at me with a calm face, his eyes no longer blazing, but with a certain pathetic look of resignation. He said: “I abjure my vows that I may save my country.” “Come quickly, then,” I said.

Down the two little flights of stairs we went—how well I remember running along the corridor; down the bigger staircase into the hall, which seemed to be deserted. I walked swiftly towards the door, he close behind me. I had almost reached it, when from behind the inner projecting archway appeared the Abbot, with three monks behind him. He held up his right hand and shouted loudly “Stop!” I replied: “Open the door at once, I can delay no longer.” He replied, “You I will let go, but what is our brother doing behind you?”

How he knew I do not know—probably someone had been listening to our conversation all along—but that he did know there was no doubt. I whispered to the monk over my shoulder: “Follow me through the door; I am armed, and they will not dare to molest you.” The Abbot looked at us both; then with his own hands he turned the lock, withdrew the bolts, and opened the great door wide. As he did so, I jumped forward, brushed the

Abbot aside, and stood outside. There was my comrade, the monk, standing alone in the doorway confronted by the Abbot with uplifted hand.

I went back, and said: “Come on, the others have run away, and you and I are a match for the Abbot. Come on.” The Abbot just pointed at the man. He turned on his heel, and walked away. Enraged, I said to the Abbot: “Call him back, let him be free.” He answered, “It is not God’s will, and he knows it.” As I wondered what I could do to free this poor soul from his chain, tempted to rush after him, as he was vanishing in the grey twilight of the great hall, a dozen monks appeared as it were from nowhere, and gathered around the Abbot. I saw that the task was hopeless. I said hard words to the Abbot about the wickedness of denying freedom to this imprisoned soul. I could see that he was angered, but he kept his temper, and only answered: “It is not the will of God.”

The Roman Catholic faith is a comfort to mankind in peace, and, above all, in war, as all Front Line men know. I had often thought—and from the moment I have described I have been sure—that if the Pope would decree as he well could do, for it is no part of the early Christian faith, the abolition of monasteries and nunneries, that Church could rule the world.

CHAPTER X

ST. QUENTIN, 1914

DURING the retreat from Mons there were two days and nights which I am not likely to forget. They were crowded with moments of vivid experience.

I returned from the Front Line, whither I had been sent by Sir John French, with news of the first actions which were fought in the campaign twenty-five miles north of Le Câteau. I was at once sent off with an autographed letter from French to the Commander of the fortress of Maubeuge, telling him that it would be necessary for the British Army to fall back on both sides of the fortress early the next morning, giving detailed times of the movements, and begging him to cover the retirement by fire from the fortress as best he could. I was given a map showing the disposition of our troops and their intended movements and was told to find the Commander himself and explain the matter to him, so that he might give precise instructions to his artillery and make certain, as far as was possible, of distinguishing friend from foe. I was also to convey to the Commander verbally Sir John French's cordial assurance that he hoped before long to advance again and relieve the fortress. I was to add that he could tell all under his command that if they would hold on they might be certain that not only the French, but also the British Army, would make every sacrifice to come to their relief.

I had the immense advantage on this mission of again having with me the Duke of Westminster, with his fast car and his iron nerve. I was told before I started that it was quite likely that our troops might have retired behind Maubeuge, and that the fortress would already be invested by the Germans before I could get there. We therefore drove very quickly, at times faster than I have ever travelled before or since. It was past midnight when we arrived at Maubeuge. We passed several French sentries, and with some difficulty convinced them of our identity. At last we arrived at the gate of the fortress. Though so much larger, it reminded me of the entrance to the Needles fort near my home, the same drawbridge over the seat, the same iron gate, and the same bell to ring. I rang the bell and it echoed inside the thick walls; but no one came. I suppose I rang for five minutes. Then my chauffeur Anthony, who had accompanied us, came with his carbine and banged on the gate. It was opened at last just a few inches, and a sentry asked what we wanted. After much explanation and the showing of the letter which I had brought I was admitted alone, the door being securely locked

behind me. One of the guards was awakened, and in the darkness we went together to the Commander's quarters. Here again we had difficulty in getting an answer to the ringing of the bell; but eventually a light appeared under the crack of the door, and to my profound astonishment, when the door opened I saw standing there an amiable-looking old French lady in a dressing-gown. I told her I had a letter of vital importance from the British Commander-in-Chief, and that I must see the Commander of the fortress. She replied gravely:

"I am his wife. He has a very bad cough and cannot be disturbed."

I stepped into the doorway; whereupon the lady shut it to and locked it. It was a strange experience thus to be doubly locked in. The flickering light of the candle which the old lady was carrying was the only illumination. She took me up to a room on the first floor, sat down opposite to me, and said:

"Now these are difficult times. My husband cannot be expected to conduct the defence of this fortress unless he has proper rest. Whatever documents you have you can leave with me, and he shall see them first thing in the morning."

I saw it was no use trying to browbeat this cool, collected lady; so, with great gravity, I expounded the importance of the letter and the map, and the impossibility of showing either document to anyone but the Commander, in view of my instructions.

She said: "May I take the letter to my husband?"

I replied: "If you please."

I shall never forget her remark as she walked away with her candle, leaving me in complete darkness—"Mon Dieu, ces Anglais!" I struck a match and looked round the barely furnished room. There was no other candle, so I had to sit there in the darkness. Presently I heard the sound of violent coughing, and in a moment in walked the fortress Commander, muffled up in a thick dressing-gown, and, as his wife had truly said, with a dreadful cough; but he soon became quite alert and alive. The wife fetched more candles, and in five minutes a Staff Officer appeared. We spread the map on the table and I explained the whole situation as it had been given to me by Henry Wilson a few hours before. By the time we had finished our conference it was about two o'clock in the morning. We could hear the rumble of artillery fire throughout our conversation, and we could tell that it was coming ever nearer. I gave the Commander Sir John French's message,

promising the utmost energy in return for his support. He replied with a wan smile:

"Well, one never knows, especially in war. Still, tell your Commander-in-Chief that we shall do our best to hold out in this old-fashioned fortress, not very well designed for defence against modern heavy artillery."

Indeed he was right. Visible defences, unless of immense strength and thickness, are hard to hold against eight-inch shells directed by modern methods of observation and direction. The truest saying of modern war is —"Invisibility is better than protection."

I shook hands with the Commander and his Staff Officer. I heard his wife telling him to go and rest, and shouting a farewell to her I ran down the stairs, and with the aid of the Staff Officer got through both the inner and outer doors. Then at top speed, with the message which the Commander of the fortress had given me, both in writing and verbally, I started to return to Le Câteau. I arrived there at dawn, and found much commotion at Headquarters. By this time it was clear that Von Kluck was enveloping our left flank, that the French troops on our left were few in numbers and could not withstand the onslaught, and that swift retreat on our part was inevitable. Henry Wilson took the message I had brought and begged me to return at 8 o'clock. I had an hour's sleep, a shave, and some breakfast prepared by Prince Antoine of Orléans—afterwards to become my aide-de-camp, intelligence officer, and most faithful and valued friend—and then returned to Headquarters.

Henry Wilson said when I returned to him:

"I have another job for you now. We must organize a defensive line on the road between here and Cambrai. There are several hundred civilians already on the ground with picks and shovels. Here is a rough sketch of the trenches which they are to dig. You will be in charge of the party."

Off I went again with Westminster, and found the civilians assembled in groups on the south side of the Cambrai road, each batch with an old officer, or a non-commissioned officer, of the French army in charge. They soon understood where they were to dig, and set to work with a will. My instructions were to see that the work was started and then return and report. I watched the work proceeding for half an hour, and I well remember saying to a French officer who was standing with me:

"These visible trenches will be more fatal to the defenders when the German artillery begins to fire with effect than cover in the bushes dotted

about, providing concealment without protection."

He replied: "If they can get down five feet they will be safer; but I doubt if they will have the time."

I said: "Even if they get down five feet they will lose more than by adopting the other plan, unless they can make the trenches invisible."

The officer replied: "Perhaps you are right."

I asked him to try to secure the invisibility of the trenches, and returned in accordance with my orders to report. The sequel is interesting.

On my return to Le Câteau, after a short interval I was sent to Landrecies with an important message for Sir Douglas Haig. Haig was moving about amongst his troops on the outskirts of Landrecies. His Staff were taking turns to sleep and to work. Very alert was Malcolm, who took the message, gave me the answer, and added that if I were to get it back to Sir John French I had better be quick. As he spoke we heard the continual roar of rifle fire.

The really heroic stand of the Guards and their comrades at Landrecies will be remembered by everyone. I left Landrecies in a hail of bullets. The road by which we had come was already occupied by the Germans; but we got through without serious risk by another. At Le Câteau the Headquarters Staff had already started to move. I went along the road to see what progress had been made with the trenches, the commencement of which I had been ordered to superintend earlier in the day. There they were, plainly visible. From two miles away one could not mistake the line of these visible entrenchments. Now comes the sequel to which I have referred.

The German artillery fire in the early phases of the War was extraordinarily accurate. Their forward observers with telephones were most skilful, and their small howitzers, which accompanied the advance troops, fired with great precision. As time went on, and guns got worn and shells and fuses were less carefully made, the German fire, fortunately for us, became less precise; but at the start everything was as perfect as it could be. When the Germans advanced on these trenches, which were held by Smith-Dorrien's corps, the howitzer fire commenced. After a very few rounds they got the range with surprising accuracy. One officer said that he believed that one in every ten rounds actually dropped in, or lipped, the trench. They tapped along the trenches from left to right. One could hear the men saying: "It will be our turn soon." The effect on the defenders was disastrous. Their losses were very great. I commend to all military thinkers that if one cannot

have both—and one seldom can—invisibility is far better than protection. The choice of invisibility, rather than protection, has again and again made the difference between defeat and victory.

I rejoined Headquarters at St. Quentin. From thence I was sent with a message from Sir John French to Smith-Dorrien, French's faithful aide-de-camp and friend, Fitz-Watt accompanying me. We found Smith-Dorrien cool and collected, directing his rear-guard action. I have said elsewhere that I am sure that he had no option but to stand and fight. We returned to St. Quentin with our report—a gloomy report indeed—that already the German advance guard was right round Smith-Dorrien's left flank. Indeed, it seemed certain that a great part of his force must be cut off. After a few hours' rest—I had started at three o'clock that morning, after only one hour's sleep—I was sent with a further message to Smith-Dorrien. I found him standing on the side of a long straight road, along which his troops were retiring as fast as they could go. It was their only chance, as Smith-Dorrien explained to me, to avoid encirclement. He asked me if it was necessary for me to return at once. I told him that it was not, for I had nothing to report other than what Sir John French already knew. The situation was as he presumed it to be. Smith-Dorrien asked me to go back towards his rear-guard in my car—for the moment, he had not a car available—and report back to him how far the Germans had advanced, so far as I could see or learn.

After I had driven some distance I left my car behind a cottage and walked north along the lane by which I had travelled. I shall never forget walking up to a young lieutenant of artillery commanding a section of eighteen-pounders. I said to him:

"Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien has sent me to find out just where the Germans have got to."

The young man smiled and said: "Well I am firing at fourteen hundred yards, and if you will wait a minute I expect you will see me shorten to a thousand."

A bright evening sun was shining; but there was much dust, and there were heavy, dark clouds to the north and east. The lieutenant looked through his glasses and then said:

"There they are."

Sure enough there they were. German infantry in great numbers about nine hundred yards away. He shouted out the necessary orders, and his two guns opened fire at nine hundred yards' range. He said to me:

"Well, if you are going to report back you had better report quick."

I said: "What is going to happen to you?"

He replied: "I am going to stay where I am, and I am going to stop a terrible lot of Germans. They may find it difficult to come any nearer. If you can send me up any more ammunition, so much the better."

A few unaimed bullets flew about as I shook hands with him. There was no time for emotion in those days; but I well remember that my eyes were filled with tears as I jumped into my car and drove back along the road. I felt a coward to leave him, although reason told me that my only duty was to get back and report, and the only help I could possibly give him would be to get ammunition and support for him if available. When I had gone a little way I saw the Battery Commander and spoke to him. Then I found Smith-Dorrien and reported the position to him. He, with the greater part of his force, was already two miles further south. He told me to go back quickly to St. Quentin and tell Sir John French the position as I had seen it.

I afterwards heard that this brave young gunner officer stayed by his guns, ultimately firing straight over the sights, until he and every man in his section was killed or mortally wounded. As an eye-witness, I can swear that his self-sacrificing action must have saved from death or captivity certainly hundreds, possibly thousands, of the retiring army.

Long range bullets were flying about as I started to return to St. Quentin. Moreover, the dark clouds had over-shadowed the whole sky, and darkness was beginning to fall. I began to wonder whether I would get to St. Quentin before the German advance guard intercepted me; so I drove as fast as I could. Then an extraordinary piece of good luck befell me. A great gust of wind from the north came just before the rain began to fall and blew off my Staff cap. My faithful chauffeur, Sergeant Anthony, said:

"Stop, sir, and I will run back and pick it up."

I replied: "No; it would be a silly thing to be captured for the sake of a hat when we have got another one in the kitbag. See if you can get it out."

He leaned over to the back of the car and found an old Yeomanry hat of mine, which my servant had put in at the last minute when we left England. It was blue with a white cap band and a gold badge which made the peak stand up. As I drove into St. Quentin by a road along which I had not before travelled I noticed, in the fading light, that there were no signs of our soldiers anywhere. A huge flock of sheep was being driven into the town, and it was with difficulty that I made my way through them. The shepherd to

whom I spoke said to me: “Nous sommes trop tard tout les deux”—“Both of us are too late.” I did not quite understand this disquieting sentence, but drove on through deserted streets. It was dark and rain was falling in torrents when I stopped at the steps of the Town Hall which had been our headquarters when I left early that morning. There were no lights in the streets or in the square and none in the Town Hall except for a shaft of light coming through a long corridor leading to the interior of the building. I said to Sergeant Anthony: “General Headquarters seem to have cleared out of this, but I had better go and see who is left. Turn the car round, as I must go and visit the house where I left Sir John French; and keep the engine running or this heavy rain may get into the carburettor.” I ran quickly up the flight of steps and into the doorway. It was very dark; but I thought I saw a man standing not far from the entrance to the corridor. As I walked along it towards the dim light I passed another man standing in a wide passage, but could not see his face or uniform. When I got to the end of the corridor I saw a man whom I recognized as the Deputy-Mayor, sitting at a table with a candle in a bottle on one side of him. I heard him say in French:

“Non, absolument non.”

Standing with his back to me, facing the Deputy-Mayor was a tall figure. A horrid dread seized me when I heard swift German words:

“Ich muss den ganzen Ort verbrennen.”

In a flash I knew that the Germans had occupied the town, and, swiftly turning, I walked back by the way I had come. I passed the man in the corridor and saw that he was a German sentry. Arrived at the top of the steps I meant to walk slowly down; but the man whom I had first seen advanced towards me, so I ran down and with one bound jumped into the car.

“Go on,” I shouted to Anthony. I heard the man call:

“Er ist ein Engländer,” as we swirled away through the square in black darkness and driving rain. A shot rang out, and then a second, but, of course, they missed. So I drove up the road I knew to Sir John French’s house, a few hundred yards away.

I rang the bell and banged on the door, but for minutes no answer came. I knew that it could only be a small party of Germans who had occupied the town, but dreaded that a patrol might intercept me; nevertheless, I must make sure of the whereabouts of my Commander-in-Chief, and I knew that the housekeeper was a faithful Frenchwoman who would tell me the truth as she knew it. At last I heard approaching footsteps and the door was opened

two inches, while a tremulous voice said in French: “Who is that?” It was indeed good fortune that I had made friends with this old housekeeper the night before, for at once she recognized my voice, opened the door to let me in, then closed it again and said:

“The Germans are in the town. But it is only a squadron. My nephew tells me that many English troops in retreat are approaching from the north, and the Germans must soon clear out. Your Chief left four hours ago; he was writing a despatch when his Staff insisted on his leaving. He left a gold pencil on the table—I have not dared to touch it.”

I replied: “Show it to me quick.” And we ran together to the drawing-room of this French château. By the light of a candle which she carried I saw the writing table with sheets of paper lying about and a long gold pencil on the blotting paper. I hastily gathered up the paper, put the pencil in my pocket and said:

“Now I must go. Which will be my best way out of the town?” I see her still, as we stood just inside the front door, holding the candle in her right hand while with her left she held my arm tightly, giving me instructions to turn to the right where the road was narrow, where I could cross the main street at right angles. She had seen patrols of the enemy there who had lit a fire, but if I drove quickly into the narrow street opposite they would not have time to see me as I crossed the main road. Then not the first to the right but the second, which would take me to the broad street which led to the level crossing.

I offered her a present but she vehemently shook her head, saying:

“Oh, no, you will come back to save us—Que Dieu vous protège! Que Dieu vous protège!” Then she released my arm and kissed my hand. I remember kissing the grey hair that covered her forehead, and saying such words of comfort as I could in my bad French.

I ran down the five steps, jumped into the car, and following her directions sure enough saw the bonfires, not only at the corner of the street, but also along it to my right with groups of German cavalrymen with their horses standing round the blaze. My luck held and I reached the level crossing unchallenged; but the gates were shut! I knew that it would be a Frenchman in the signal box—indeed it was our only chance. I climbed over the gate, ran up to him and implored him to open the gates, telling him that I was an English Staff Officer. He said that he had his orders to keep them closed, but, like a good Frenchman, he quickly clambered down and opened them. I well remember his saying to me, as I shook his hand:

"Courage, mon vieux, tout va se rétablir."

It took four and a quarter long years for his words to come true; but, God be praised, true they were. I hope he is alive now to rejoice in final victory.

So I sped south, not knowing in the least where Headquarters had got to. Anthony remarked to me:

"I have always said that yeomanry hat of yours was just like a Uhlan's."

I replied: "Yes, Anthony, and that peculiar fact has saved my life."

As I drove on I wondered all the time whether I should bump up against a German advance guard and be confounded with the dread dilemma, whether to kill one or two Germans with my revolver and thus sell my life dearly—as Winston Churchill, Tom Conolly and I had vowed to do during the South African War—or tamely surrender when a dozen strong hands clutched me. Let it be recorded that there was no dilemma to Sergeant Anthony, my lone companion in this and many other adventures. He was the faithful friend of Sir John French, and at the close of the World War insisted upon rejoining his beloved Chief, then Viceroy of Ireland. He was driving the Viceroy when the well-devised and craftily-planned attack on his life was made at the northern exit of the Phœnix Park. Without doubt it was Sergeant Anthony's skill and courage that saved Sir John French's life that day. On this and on similar occasions during the Retreat, the Battle of the Marne, and at Antwerp he always held his carbine at the ready, and would say to me:

"Well, sir, I will kill one German before I am shot, and if every other Englishman says the same, we shan't do so badly in this War."

However, we were spared this anxious decision.

In front of us appeared the powerful headlights of an approaching car. The road was narrow and there was hardly room for two cars to pass. I blew my horn and continued slowly along the middle of the road; the advancing car uttered piercing shrieks from a Klaxon, or some such devilish contrivance, and, from the spray of water and mud shining in the headlights I could see that the car was travelling at sixty miles an hour. So I stopped in the middle of the road and continued to blow my feeble horn. At the last moment, with a scream of sound from the brakes and the skidding tyres, the big car came to a standstill within a yard of my radiator. The driver jumped out and, with a revolver pointing at my head, asked in voluble and blasphemous French who I was and why I did not get out of his way. I saw that he was a French officer and replied that I was one of the Headquarters

Staff of the British Army, and had just come from St. Quentin. He answered: —

"That is where I am going. Get out of the way, for I have an important message for the officer commanding that place." He was really very angry at being stopped. I said:

"I would not go to St. Quentin if I were you."

He asked: "Why?"

"Because the Germans are in occupation of the town." The light shone full on his face and mine from the headlights of his car, and he saw that I was speaking the truth. Hitherto the acrimonious conversation had been conducted in French; with a broad grin he said in English:

"Damn it, you are a good friend. I should have been caught but for you. I think your man (meaning Sir John French) has gone to Noyon."

In an instant he was back in his car and, with incredible swiftness and skill, turned it round in the narrow road by backing about three times, and so off again at sixty miles an hour in a cloud of mud and water. His name was Hennessey. He will remember the episode.

I ultimately found our Headquarters at Noyon, and, waiting up for me, that wonderfully faithful friend Westminster, with hot soup provided. He said:

"They said you had been captured, but I said, 'No, I will have some soup ready for him in case he should turn up.' "

Looking back on that period when farm after farm, town after town, fell into the hands of the advancing German host; when terrorism, deliberately employed, filled every woman's heart with dread, and every old Frenchman's heart with rage, I understand, as perhaps others do not understand, the attitude of the French people to-day. They talk of security, "Security First"; we think they are unreasonable. They increase their armaments; we think it unfair. They set up new fortifications on their frontiers; we think it absurd that a valiant people should so behave—surely they need have no fear. I suppose the critics are right, but all I can say is that had I been a Frenchman living in the neighbourhood of St. Quentin in August 1914 I should be sorely tempted to act as the French now do. It may not be a logical attitude; in fact, speaking as an Englishman, although I love France, I am sure it is not logical. But it is a natural sequence of events, and it may endure for generations to come.

CHAPTER XI

WAR

I. SAINT GEORGE

One of the strangest episodes in the World War was the flooding of the strip of Belgian territory on each side of the Yser in the autumn of 1914. It was strange from the nature of the thing itself, and from the method by which it had to be done; but still more strange from the controversies which arose before the final decision was made.

Long years ago—some whom I have consulted think as early as the twelfth century—plans were made to flood the valley of the Yser in order to bar the approach of an enemy advancing along the sea coast. When the neutrality of Belgium was proclaimed by the Powers early in the nineteenth century this method of defence engaged the attention of the newly-formed nation. From time to time improvements were made in the sluices, and when the World War broke out in 1914 an elaborate system of dock gates was in existence. The Belgian officer in charge of the works took me round in October 1914, and I made a brief report on the subject to Sir John French.

At that time it was the intention of the British, French and Belgian armies, who were sandwiched in together in the narrow strip between Nieuport, at the sea entrance of the Yser Canal, and the city of Ypres to advance on Roulers, and thence still further to the east. Indeed, for some days the orders from General Headquarters always commenced with the statement of intention to advance on Roulers. But swiftly came the German advance which culminated in the attack on that very line. Dixmude was captured after an heroic defence by Admiral Ronarck's force of French sailors, and Belgian infantry, but Nieuport held out. There followed the mass attacks on Ypres which failed. I saw much of this fighting. Without doubt it was the most stubborn battle of the whole War. Moreover, it was not so senseless as many of the later battles, for the Germans had a real objective—the capture of the Channel ports, with the prospect of a decisive result from success.

One would have thought that from the moment when the English and French commanders knew of the vast scale of the German attack they would have hastened to raise the sluices of Nieuport on the very first spring tide, so as to present an impassable barrier to the enemy, except for one road, in a belt extending from five to ten miles in breadth bordering the sea. Moreover,

there was every reason to take the decision quickly, for spring tides occur, of course, only once a fortnight. The rise of the tide in this part of the North Sea depends to some extent on the direction of the wind, so that one could not be certain that every spring tide would provide an adequate inflow; moreover, it was known that in the most favourable case it would take at least two spring tides to make the inundations complete. Nevertheless, hesitation continued. I was the bearer of many messages from Sir John French at his Headquarters at St. Omer to General Foch at his Headquarters at Cassel. I would discuss the matter with both of them, then go to Nieuport to meet Tom Bridges and Prince Francis of Teck, our representatives with the Belgian Army; then return again to Cassel and St. Omer. Still the order was not given to flood the area. First both of the Commanders believed they could advance, then French decided that advance was impossible, while Foch still hoped. All the time the enemy concentration of artillery and men was becoming more formidable, until at last it attained dimensions which would have overwhelmed any but the most stubborn opponents.

I have often thought that this episode conveys lessons bearing on the abiding controversy as to the wisdom, from the English standpoint, of building a Channel Tunnel. In many ways the position that arose was similar to the position which would be bound to arise if the Channel Tunnel were built—unless we can assume that perpetual peace is to reign henceforth between the nations of Europe. However much we may hope that this aspiration of all great minds will be fulfilled, to proceed as though it were certain of fulfilment would surely be the height of folly.

In Belgium—as in the case of the Channel Tunnel—here was a thing which could be flooded, and thus form an effective barrier to the enemy. Nevertheless, for months this precaution was not taken, during which time the enemy—as we all now know—could, by striking earlier, have captured the Channel ports, and by so doing, have dealt a shattering blow at the Allied cause. The question will at once be asked: “Why was it not done?”

The answer is twofold. First, because the damage done would be so great that those responsible hesitated before incurring so grievous a loss. Secondly, because the defenders were firmly convinced that they were shortly to become the victorious attackers, and wished to preserve a high road for their advance.

It seems to me possible, and indeed probable, that the same considerations would prevail in the case of the Channel Tunnel, and that, however elaborate the arrangements made for flooding it, it would, in fact,

never be flooded. For that reason, I have always been, and shall always be, opposed to the construction of the Channel Tunnel.

Let us look at it in this way. What every nation seeks is security: security for its frontiers and therefore its homes. England has got that security in a greater degree than any European nation, for the reason that she is an island and contains everything within her own borders for the making and maintaining of an adequate Navy.

A strip of water is a wonderful protection, especially in modern war. I remember discussing with Marshal Foch, at his Headquarters at Cassel, the position just north of Ypres at the height of the German attack in the autumn of 1914. Here the land on both sides of the Yser could not be flooded, although further north the inundation had been effected. Foch said: "There we can hold, though our troops are few. We have the Yser." I said: "It is only about thirty yards broad." "All the same," he replied, "c'est une barrière assez formidable." His forecast proved true, although the odds against us were overwhelming. The Yser is thirty yards broad, the English Channel twenty miles.

That same Navy which keeps the enemy out enables the food and raw materials to be brought in. A moment's reflection will dispose of the foolish thesis that the discovery of the aeroplane and the airship renders England no longer an island. War in the air is, and must continue to be for centuries to come, a war of retaliation. It cannot be a method of occupation. If a potential enemy builds an air force capable of destroying our capital city, it is quite easy for us to build an air force sufficient, with equal certainty, to destroy theirs. Once this becomes known the attempt will never be made; for no advantage to either side can possibly result from the operation.

England's position can be stated thus. She is, and must remain—if she is to survive as a nation—the predominant sea Power in Europe. Her frontiers being thus protected by the sea, she can dispense with a great army for home defence. On the other hand, her European neighbours having no impregnable frontier, are maintaining, and seem likely to continue to maintain, these great armies. This striking difference between England and her neighbours is exemplified, dramatically, by a comparison between the army of England and the army of tiny Switzerland.

If the necessary deduction for India and other overseas commitments be made, it will be found that England does not mobilize for her defence so large a force as Switzerland does for the defence of her small state. The

population of England (throughout I mean, of course, Great Britain and Northern Ireland) is 44,500,000; the population of Switzerland is 4,000,000.

It will be seen that we maintain an army for home defence relatively less than one-tenth in size of that of our smaller neighbour. I ask, then: Can it ever be wise, until all chance of war is over, or until we have multiplied our home defence army tenfold, to make a land connection of any kind between Britain and the Continent of Europe? There seems, to me, no possible answer but an emphatic and final "No."

It may be contended that elaborate arrangements can be made for flooding the Tunnel by pressing a button at this end; but elaborate arrangements were made for flooding the banks of the Yser, and the button was never pressed until long after it might have been too late.

Putting it at its lowest, it must be conceded that there is *some* risk that the button would not be pressed at the critical moment. It must equally be conceded that, in that event, disaster—utter, complete, irrevocable—might befall England.

Why, then, run that risk?

However, at last the Yser button was pressed, and the order was given for the inundation to be made. Then came strange happenings, most of which I witnessed. The sluice was raised, and in the water poured. The first people to be flooded out of their trenches were the Belgians instead of the Germans! Whether the lie of the land made this unavoidable, or whether a mistake had been made, or again whether one of the many great German shells which fell near the sluices diverted the flow of water, I do not know. What is certain is that it is impossible to exaggerate the stoical courage of the half-drowned Belgian infantrymen. I was sent to visit the scene at this time, and walked the whole distance from Nieuport to Pervyse. My companion on this strange journey through the flooded area, with close range bullets flying about all the time, was the Duke of Marlborough. He had brought important despatches and information from the War Office to Sir John French, and volunteered to accompany me to the inspection of the flooded area. He is not likely to forget the hours we spent wading through trenches three feet deep in water; sometimes clambering out and running along the little embankments, jumping down again into the water when machine-gun fire opened. For the moment the Germans were on comparatively dry ground. The Belgians were up to their waists in water; but they had to stand up and return the fire, in order to prevent the enemy from running across the intervening space, which was still dry, and

bayoneting them in their trenches. I should think it was a unique war experience, but all honour to the Belgians, who held on without a murmur of discontent.

In the end advance became impossible owing to the flooding of the German side; but, in the meantime, alas! many Belgian soldiers had been drowned.

At Pervyse we found the little British Red Cross Mission in charge of the indomitable Lady Dorothy Feilding. The cellar, in which they had attended so many wounded Belgian soldiers, was beginning to fill with water, and it was obvious that they must clear out that night. The English girl—for she was no more than a girl—had rendered services to the Belgian Army which have received unstinted praise. As an eye-witness of what she did I can say that no praise for her and her comrades can be too high.

My instructions were to visit the whole Front Line from Nieuport to the Dixmude Carrafour. After leaving Pervyse, to fulfil my promise and obey my instructions by visiting St. George was a difficult problem. The village of St. George was a group of battered houses reduced to heaps of bricks, standing as an island in a sea of flood from six inches to two feet deep. But it was thought vital to defend it, for German guns placed on this island would have taken the whole line north and south in enfilade. Moreover, it was not difficult for the Germans to approach St. George, for a slight rise of ground to the eastward made it easily accessible from that side; from our side of the line the only means of approach was by a causeway, the old road, still above the water level. Although the water on each side of the causeway was mostly shallow, to attempt to move along either side of it was impossible, for it was difficult to see the numerous intersecting ditches, in which one would fall into water well over one's head. Many men carrying up rations and ammunition had already been drowned in attempting to avoid the much bombarded causeway.

Marlborough and I arrived at the Belgian end of the causeway about half an hour before sunset. There I met the Belgian Company Commander and explained to him that I was ordered to go to St. George and write a report on the position. He replied that to make the attempt in daylight was certainly fatal, owing to accurate rifle and machine-gun fire. Every man who had attempted to crawl through with messages by day had been killed; the only thing to do was to wait till nightfall. Accordingly we started off just after sunset. It was a misty night, and I thought we might approach the place unseen; but when we had got about three hundred yards along the causeway we were spotted and a hail of bullets spattered about the stones at our feet.

In an instant we fell on our faces and rolled over into the water on the opposite side from which the bullets came. The embanked road was about three feet high with big stones on the edges. We got out of the water and lay on those stones, shivering with cold, till the fire died down; then we started clambering along the stones, sometimes slipping into the water, but keeping our heads below the level of the road. As we pursued our laborious way the mist increased and the darkness too. At last, exhausted, we clambered on to the causeway again and continued our walk. The enemy were pretty near, perhaps four hundred yards from where we started to walk erect again. I well remember how we walked on tiptoe, and, that when Marlborough hit his foot against a stone which rolled over, making a loud noise in the stillness of the evening, the machine-gun opened up again, the bullets fortunately striking about thirty yards behind us. But we did at last reach St. George, where we found the Belgian officer in command. I explained to him the reason of my coming and with him crept round the outside of the ruined village. We spoke in whispers to the men. They were worn out and weary, but buoyed up in a strange way by the knowledge which every one of them seemed to have, that they were in a unique position—the utmost outpost of their country's army.

I cannot understand some of the War books that have been written recently representing the soldiers in the Front Line as bestial animals. I hold no brief. I only record facts as I saw them. Here was a case of men who knew full well that most, if not all, of them were doomed to die. They were hungry, because the bringing of rations along the causeway by night made noise sufficient to enable the enemy machine-gun to sweep the road with deadly effect. By day all movement was impossible. I stayed an hour or more with them, and I can record that there was not one man of this little garrison who was not transfigured by courage and determination to hold on for the sake of his country in the desperate plight in which fate had placed him.

We told them all that we would do our utmost to bring them further help when we got back to their main body.

After saying good-bye to the officer we started to walk back along the causeway. The mist had cleared somewhat, and the first quarter of the moon as a crescent shone in the western sky. The officer said: "If you walk upright you will be shot for certain. The only way is to crawl." But I knew that in war at close range time is the main factor, so I said to Marlborough: "Our best chance is to run, chance the first bullet or belt of machine-gun fire and drop when they come. The Germans will not want to waste too much

ammunition over two silhouettes." So it proved. We were spotted twice, but at night even clamped machine-guns are erratic. Neither of us was hit, though many hundreds of bullets passed near us. But no doubt we were fortunate, for few of the little garrison we had seen survived. Nevertheless, they held on long enough to enable plans to be made to deny St. George to the enemy, and those that died assuredly did not die in vain. All honour to the defenders of St. George.

II. IF ONE HAD KNOWN

The extraordinary thing about war or, indeed, any form of crisis is the failure of men to see the obvious—things so plain that, looking back, one finds it hard to believe that the truth was not discerned. These speculations and reflections would be of no value if a remedy could not be found, but I am sure a remedy can be found, and that the more absurd errors can be eliminated. The way to eliminate them is to approach each problem as a puzzle entirely new in its nature, divesting one's mind of all preconceived theories, and, above all, of every maxim. Every really great commander pursued this method, and thus not only attempted, but achieved, what every text-book of his day pronounced to be impossible. What is equally important, though not so apparent, they did not attempt to do that which the text-books and the maxims declared possible, perhaps easy. As usual, Napoleon crystallized the truth in a phrase. He said: "There are no maxims of war which can usefully be applied to any problem, except those which are so obvious that they do not require to be stated: for example, 'In war brave men are better than cowards; wise men are better than fools.' "

I will endeavour to illustrate the truth of what I have written above by three examples, when I was in close touch with events at the actual critical point.

The first is an instance of a man not knowing that he had won and having his judgment deflected by the old military maxims, which Napoleon so rightly despised, and by rumours having no basis in fact. Lord D'Abernon has written a book of extraordinary interest on the Battle of Warsaw, 1920, which he entitles "The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World." It may well be so described, for it was in August 1920 that the impending wave of Communism, which might have submerged all Europe, was rolled back. But Lord D'Abernon is equally right in including the Battle of the Marne amongst the decisive battles. He makes Sedan, 1870, the sixteenth, to be added to Creasy's fifteen, the Marne, the seventeenth. It was not decisive in the sense that it finished the war, but it was decisive in that it turned what

had been certain defeat and disaster into victory. Nevertheless the defeat and the disaster were practically accomplished, had the German Commander-in-Chief had the nerve to allow Von Kluck to press forward just forty short kilometres that fateful day of August 1914.

In my book "Adventure" I gave an account, necessarily very brief, of what I saw with my own eyes on that same day on my journey from Lagny to Paris, and of my interview with General Gallieni, the Military Governor of the capital. I am now able to tell the whole truth. Plans had been already made for the British Army to retire with all speed, first to the south of Paris, then west to the Atlantic ports in the Bay of Biscay, there to re-embark and return to England. Sir John French had made up his mind that this was the only course to pursue, and the necessary bases for embarkation in the Bay of Biscay had already been prepared. When Sir John French told me this I bitterly protested. It was the first and only time that we had a violent and angry difference. He would not budge from his view, and, although an interview with Kitchener made him delay the actual orders for the journey to the coast, the southerly march of our army continued. I am sure no historian will deny that, had the Germans entered Paris, the whole movement would certainly have been carried out. The French would then have known that they had been deserted by their ally, and that the government of their country had been transferred, bag and baggage, to Bordeaux, the most distant city in France from the enemy host. That they could have continued effective resistance under these circumstances I do not believe. Here we are in the realm of surmise, but I shall be surprised if sound opinion can be found to refute my theory.

There remains the question of fact—whether Von Kluck could have entered and occupied Paris in force on the day. Here we leave the world of surmise and return to realities. I waited in my motor-car at Lagny, in accordance with French's instructions, until the German advance guard had got within rifle range. I saw them clearly, heard their rifle shots, and indeed stray bullets flew around where I was. Then I made for Paris with my messages for Gallieni. I have described elsewhere the vast crowds of refugees, old men, women and children, hurrying along this road. I was not pressed for time, for it was some hours before my appointment with Gallieni, but, in any case, the great throng of tens of thousands of men and women, with their carts and animals, would have prevented a rapid journey. Moreover, it was part of my duty to find any sign of French armed resistance. For miles I saw no sign of a soldier. At last, when about half-way to Paris, I came upon a small party of French troops on the left hand side of the road. An elementary trench had been dug, and the men were standing

about in little groups near by. At the top of a ridge about half a mile away I saw an officer standing. I made my way to him, and had with him the quaintest conversation I have ever had. General Louis Spears, whose brilliant book I commend to all those who wish to find new facts about this extraordinary episode, did not dissent from the adjective when I described the conversation to him a few months ago.

"Bon jour, mon Commandant," I said. "Je vois bien que vous défendez Paris. C'est bon!" With a charming and enigmatic smile, he replied: "Oui, mon Colonel. Je défend Paris, mais pas avec beaucoup de monde."

His description was accurate, for, as he explained to me, he had one hundred and twenty men and an officer. He had received no precise orders, but, as he put it, he might as well shoot a few Germans before he went back any further. From what I afterwards learnt, he may have had a long range shot or two at a German cyclist or cavalry patrol, but no German force ever passed the spot where he and I stood. And yet he was less than twelve miles from the gates of Paris, and there was no other French soldier to bar the advance of the enemy. Gallieni made it quite clear to me many hours later, when it was already known that Von Kluck had obeyed his orders to turn away to the left, that nothing could have prevented the triumphal entry of a victorious German army into the French capital.

"Had they elected to come on," he said, "Maunoury and my troops might have endeavoured to strike his communications, but we should have felt ourselves cut off, and heaven knows what peremptory orders I should have received from the government of Bordeaux; I had already been told 'Not a shot is to be fired in or near Paris.' But now we shall strike them in the rear. It will be the Germans who will feel themselves to be a retreating army, and anything may happen."

So indeed it proved, and there came the crowning mercy of the Marne.

Years afterwards I saw Von Kluck, in his little flat on the outskirts of Berlin. He agreed with all the conclusions I have advanced, and said: "Yes, if I had had a blind eye and a deaf ear like your Lord Nelson, I should not now be sitting, entertaining you in this humble lodging as a soldier of a defeated army." Why did Von Kluck not go on, when the road to Paris, towards which he had thrust with such amazing speed and success for so many victorious days, was clear and the prize lay in his grasp? He wanted to go on, but was prevented by orders from Headquarters. Why were these orders issued? We now know. One reason was the tyranny exercised over the dull military mind by maxims and axioms. "Strike at the main body of the

enemy wherever it can be found." "Disregard places, regard only the enemy's main body." "Safeguard your communications." "Never get in advance of your supplies." All these rules were valueless at this supreme moment in Germany's fate. Paris is not just a place on a map. It is the heart and soul and spirit of France. Once captured, the threat to communications vanishes. As for supplies, we all know now that there were enough supplies of every kind in Paris to have provided Von Kluck and the whole of his army with all they wanted for weeks to come. Another thing we know from German sources. The tiny little expedition of two or three thousand marines, led by Sir George Aston, and landed at Ostend on August 26th, had been magnified by the German Intelligence into eighty thousand, with further great reinforcements on the way from England and from Russia.

So Germany's first chance of winning the War was lost. She was to have another chance three and a half years later. Again vacillation prevailed, and France, England, Italy and Belgium were saved.

The second instance is less dramatic, but even more far-reaching in its results on the destruction of human life in war. In this case the mistake was ours, and not the Germans'. The German thrust had been defeated. The Marne had been crossed. I was fortunate in being attached to the leading brigade on that occasion. Sir George Macdonogh, assuredly the best intelligence officer the British Army has ever had, tells me that I was the first British soldier to cross the Marne; at any rate, on the left of our line. Although we had suffered very heavy casualties in the village of La Ferte-sous-Jouarre during the desperate street fighting, which lasted for more than a whole day and a night, when I crossed the bridge not a shot was fired at me. So I hope my readers will clearly understand that I make no claim to courage or enterprise of any kind on this occasion, only to a certain cunning born of long periods of exchange of rifle fire in the South African War, and a good deal of the same experience in the preceding month of continuous fighting in the World War. All that I can claim is first-hand knowledge of what really happened, and what the people, from the Commander-in-Chief to the private, really thought of the military prospect before us.

I accompanied the left advance from the Marne to the Aisne, reporting two or three times a day to Sir John French in person. Everyone was convinced that we were chasing the Germans back into Germany. That we were chasing them was true enough for forty-eight hours; then it ceased to be true. We had come up against a stone wall, which no force could knock down, or ever could have knocked down for years to come. This stone wall was the prepared position north of the Aisne.

How well I remember the crossing of the Aisne. The bridges had been blown up. I was ferried across in a boat by a young officer. I thanked him, saying that he had handled the boat very well. He replied: “Thank you, sir. But I suppose I ought to know how. We both come from the same island.” The ferryman was Lionel Tennyson. So through the villages of Venizel and Ste. Marguerite to the top of the precipitous hills on the north of the river. There we were met by machine-gun and rifle fire from the prepared position on the plateau, about five hundred yards beyond the crest. Having seen General Hunter Weston, the Brigade Commander, and General Wilson, Commanding the 4th Division, I crossed the river again, and made my report to Sir John French.

And here in justice to a very remarkable man, whose intuitions were again and again more valuable to his country and to the men whom he led than the carefully thought-out plans of others who have received greater honour, I am compelled to say this. Of all the men in our gallant little army, who, having borne the brunt of Von Kluck’s thrust, had played their part manfully in the counter-stroke, he suffered least from the delusion that we were rushing forward to final victory, or, in the alternative, that great German reinforcements might drive us back again. He said to me at his advanced headquarters between Fère-en-Tardenois and the river Aisne: “It is stalemate. We shall never get forward, and I don’t believe the Germans mean to cross the Aisne again. We had better get round to the coast and see what we can do there.” Nevertheless, Army Orders always announced that we were continuing our victorious advance, though nobody moved more than a few hundred yards either way during all the weeks we were there.

The following morning Sir John French sent for me as usual and instructed me to report on the point of junction between the English and the French armies. One of the bridges not completely blown up had been sufficiently repaired to enable a light car to cross. The Germans had a battery of eight-inch howitzers which made surprisingly good practice on the road to Venizel. These great shells in the early days were made with such care that detonation was always perfect, and they thus made craters about twenty feet in diameter and from ten to fifteen feet deep. Nevertheless, they never quite cut this road, so that traffic was always possible without going into the boggy ground on each side of the road. At the foot of the escarpment I went to see a friend of mine commanding a section of howitzers. He had just come back from the Front Line, where he had successfully installed a telephone, leaving his second in command to direct the fire from there. He said: “The enemy have been working very hard on their trench, which is so deep that the Germans manning it never show, but the trench itself is

beautifully visible, and I am perfectly registered on one or two places; on this calm day I believe I can lip the trench whenever I please." I walked on to the Front Line, and, before moving along to where the French joined us, went to see the Forward Observing Officer of the howitzer battery. A German aeroplane flew over me as I ran the last hundred yards and dropped a handful of steel darts. This was the first elementary effort to attack troops on the ground from the air. The pilot had these darts in a wooden box close to his hand, and threw them out when he saw a target. Of course, this method was soon superseded by machine-guns, firing first through a grooved propeller, and afterwards, more efficiently, by the Constantinesco interrupter gear. A few rifle shots were fired from the German trench, and I was thankful to jump into our improvised defence, some four feet deep, and creep along in safety to my friend, the howitzer officer's second in command.

He will remember a comic episode which followed. While I was carefully scanning the German front line trench some two hundred yards away, a number of Germans came running from behind their line and toppled into their trench. Our men were busy digging, and there was only time to fire a shot or two; but I noticed that the Germans were each carrying something fairly large and obviously quite light. The young howitzer officer and I speculated as to what they had brought with them, wondering whether it was worth while to drop a shell on the place where we had seen them disappear. But we had not many shells to spare—neither had the Germans, for that matter—and we decided that they would probably have run along the trench one way or the other, so that a shell dropped on that particular point might be no more effective than on any other. Both sides were reserving their ammunition against possible attack. In a few moments the mystery of what the Germans had been carrying was solved. It was a bright autumn morning in September, with a summer haze. No doubt the Germans had counted on the haze to enable them to get into the trench without serious loss. It was very still, not a breath of air, and sounds carried far. All at once from the trench just opposite came the sound of a first-class military band playing martial music. I listened for a moment, and heard the inspiring strains of what someone has described as the greatest tune ever written—Haydn's quartette, to which was sung the Austrian National Anthem, our own most beautiful hymn, and, of course, "Deutschland Über Alles." We could clearly hear the music and the Germans joining in the song. Some of them waved helmets from further along the trench. But not only could we tell from the sound just where the band was; we could also see portions of

the brass instruments, no doubt the trombones, going up and down above the trench.

This was too much for me and the howitzer F.O.O. He said: "We must stop this, sir." I took the field telephone from him and soon heard my friend's voice at the other end. I said: "Would you believe it? These Germans, by way of showing us that they are going to stay here for ever, have brought up a band into their front line trench and are playing 'Deutschland Über Alles.' From where we are we can see exactly where the band is. You said you were so well registered on parts of the Front Line that you could lip the trench. They are almost directly in front of us, only a few degrees to our right." The voice came back: "Is there a little tree with a broken bough nearly opposite to you?" I said: "Yes, and the band is just about thirty to thirty-five yards to the right of it. Your F.O.O. agrees." "What luck!" said the voice. "I am registered on that tree. I'll have a go."

Then came the most ridiculous episode that I have ever seen in war. We waited for a minute or two, and then heard the whine of the approaching shell. It passed over our heads with an increasing scream and fell with a glorious crash right at the place where the music was still proceeding. It was a marvellous shot, for we could see that it had fallen almost exactly on the trench. Wonder of wonders, we saw in amongst the *débris* and black dots that flew up into the air, plainly silhouetted against the summer sky, a large round trumpet—I am told it is called an ophicleide—which, an instant before, had been playing the bass of "Deutschland Über Alles." The music stopped, and, in a natural spirit of revenge, the German Front Line blazed out rifle fire, which did no harm and soon died down. So far as I know that was the last time that a military band was heard in a Front Line trench on the Western Front.

Now it is all over I can only record the hope that none of those German bandsmen were seriously damaged as a consequence of their gallant effort to show that they meant to stay where they were for as long as they pleased.

More than three years later, after a tour of duty in command of a cavalry division dismounted in the trenches, I received an invitation from one of the French Army Commanders, General Franchet d'Espery, to lunch with him at his headquarters on the south side of the Aisne, between Soissons and Rheims. When we arrived we found that he himself was visiting another portion of the Front Line, but that he had kindly detailed a Staff Officer to accompany me and my French aide-de-camp, Prince Antoine d'Orléans, to our old Front Line, north of Venizel. Sure enough, there was the line of trenches just as we had left them, so far as the position was concerned; but

elaborate concealed communication trenches and deep dug-outs had been constructed with infinite care and skill. I stood on the very spot where I had conversed with the howitzer officer, and over against us was the German Front Line; hardly visible, no doubt even more elaborate, than ours, but just in the same place as three years before. I told Franchet d'Espery's Staff Officer the story of the shell, the band and the ophicleide, and said: "Isn't it strange to think that the line has not moved a yard either way in all these years, although when we first got here everyone on our side thought we should soon break through?" He made a reply which I shall never forget. "Yes, we military men have been very stupid. Once war begins the ordinary processes of reasoning seem to disappear." I returned after some hours in these elaborate trenches to Franchet d'Espery's headquarters. It was only a few miles behind the Front Line, a portion of which he visited almost every day.

It was a critical time in the War. Russia had failed, and Hoffmann, having extorted the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk from Lenin and Trotsky, was transferring his legions from the Eastern to the Western Front. We knew that some great German attack must be impending. Moreover, we knew that the failure of the Nivelle offensive and the tragedy of Passchendaele had half undermined the indomitable spirit of the French and British troops. The Army Commander had been in the Front Line near Nîmes since dawn, with the senior members of his staff, and I knew that there was cause for anxiety. Nevertheless he and they were all bright, alert and gay at our luncheon party. He asked me what I had seen of the trenches we occupied in September '14, and I told him the story of the band. He signed to his aide-de-camp and said something to him, of which I could catch nothing but the concluding words. Then he said: "We will take our chance." The brief luncheon party went on and we talked much of the War and its prospects. Then all at once came the strains of a splendid military band, playing an air by the French composer Thomas.

Franchet d'Espery said: "I too have a band. Let us hope a shell will not strike us." Then he stood up, and proposed the toast of "The King of England." The band played "God Save the King." Again he stood up and proposed "France and the President." The band played the "Marseillaise." By a curious coincidence, as the music died away, and while we still stood, we heard the whine of shells—not one, but many. "Ha!" said Franchet d'Espery. "Music still invites attack. But on this front advance is slow. Nevertheless," he added, "what has lasted for three years will not last much longer. My Staff Officer was right when he said that we have been stupid. I admit it. But the end of the deadlock is very near."

Six months later Franchet d'Espery's line was broken in the last final thrust of the German army. That it was possible for the Germans to have won the War then I do not believe, but they certainly could have won it a few weeks earlier, when, on the 30th of March, the battle was at the gates of Amiens, and Foch described the situation as "*angoissante*." It was my great good fortune to be present at that moment, and to have decided to make the counter-attack, which, according to Foch's message, played a part in turning the fortunes of the day. But if only the German Commander-in-Chief had had the nerve to press forward; had he provided himself, as he easily could have done, with three fresh divisions of cavalry, he could have swept forward to Amiens; the French Army would have retreated on Paris, the British Army on the Channel ports. That the allied cause could have ever survived the complete severance of the British and French armies I do not believe; that the separation would have taken place as soon as Amiens had fallen there is abundant evidence to show. More than once I talked this over with my old friend, Foch, whom I met frequently after the War, even up to the time of his death. He did not dispute my theories. All he would say, with his rare smile, was: "God was very merciful to us that day."

What would have happened to us if Germany had won the War, either by entering Paris in August 1914 or entering Amiens in March 1918 is a matter of speculation. That our punishment would have been terrible and our empire shattered is quite certain. The same spirit that prompted the German people to say "Gott strafe England" as a pious aspiration every morning would have seen to it that England was indeed "strafed." We know something of the vast indemnity which it was arranged should be exacted from us—and from none of the other countries. There is also some evidence as to the partition of our non-self-governing colonies. That there would have been revolution and bloodshed at home is certain; that we should have survived as a dominant nation is doubtful. Some people often talk about it not mattering whether one wins or loses a war. At this moment the whole world is suffering from an economic crisis, but, by common consent, England is suffering least. Let these prating fools ponder on what England would have been like to-day had we lost the World War.

CHAPTER XII

WARRIOR

MEN who were with me during the World War on the Western Front for many successive years have said that I was the luckiest man in the British, or Canadian, Army—meaning by "lucky," escape, not only from death, but from any serious injury on the greatest number of dangerous occasions within rifle fire of the enemy. Although it is true that my good fortune on dozens, perhaps hundreds, of such occasions was exceptional, I do not think it is true I can claim first prize in this strange lottery. What I believe, however, I can truly claim is that I was, and still am, the fortunate owner of the luckiest horse on the Western Front.

Thousands of Canadians and British soldiers knew this gallant bay thoroughbred of mine during the four years and five months that he served continuously in France. They will be glad to know that at this moment, in June 1931, he is as fit and well as he has ever been. It may be that others who read this book will be interested to know the record of "Warrior."

He was born at Yafford, near my home in the Isle of Wight, in the spring of 1911. His mother was a coal black Irish thoroughbred, which I purchased in 1902, after my return from the South African War. She was fifteen hands one inch high, with perfect manners. She was a great pet, especially of my little children, whom she would follow about wherever they went, allowing them to climb up her foreleg, scramble on to her back and slide over her head or tail. They nicknamed her Cinderella; to them she was a friend, just like a large good humoured retriever dog.

Warrior's father was Straybit, an extremely good-looking and successful sire. Curiously enough, in view of his son's history, he was sold, not long before the War, to the Austrian Government and, I have ascertained, was the father of a great number of Austrian cavalry horses. It is possible, and, indeed, probable, that Warrior may have been often enough within a few miles of his half brother or sister on the battle front and, possibly, on March 30th, 1918, within a few yards.

When Cinderella's foal was due to arrive I was at the War Office with little time to spend at home. Doctor Jolliffe, a member of a famous Isle of Wight family of sportsmen, volunteered to look after Cinderella for the interesting event. His nephew, James, of whom more presently, took charge of the foal when he was born and brought him up, with infinite care, for the

first two years of his life. Then he returned him to me, the best looking colt I have ever seen.

Like his mother, although gay and light-hearted, he was as friendly to me and to my children as a retriever dog and indeed we so treated him. Riding him was an adventure, for he was incredibly strong and very fast; but at other times he would wander about the garden with the children *en bon camarade*.

At that time Captain Freddie Guest had a wonderful stable of horses and polo ponies at Burley-on-the-Hill, presided over by Major Douglas Hall, late Riding Master of the 1st Life Guards, one of the best horse masters of the time. Freddie offered to hand over Warrior to Major Hall, who, he said, would turn him into a perfect cavalry charger without spoiling either his courage or his friendly nature in the least degree. So all was arranged and Warrior commenced his education.

When he was just over three years old the War came. How well I remember the conversation with Freddie Guest! He had been chosen as personal aide-de-camp to Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force. I had been appointed the Special Service Officer on the Headquarters Staff. Freddie said to me: "You have arranged, as we all have, to throw everything into this War—yourself—all your personal servants, your sons, as they get old enough—your fortune. What about your three-year-old thoroughbred?" I said: "Is he not too young?" "No," he replied, "Hall says he is already as fit and strong as a four-year-old." "Bring him along," I said. So Warrior joined me on the steamer in which I sailed for France in the early days of August 1914; he returned to England on Christmas Day 1918, having survived a series of experiences to which I think there are few, if any, parallels in the life of a horse on the Western Front during those years of intense bombardment of gas, machine and rifle fire.

If Warrior had had a chance to speak and had muttered the words "Safety First," he could have pleaded youth and escaped the tornado of the Western Front for at least two years. As it was, he went straight into the battle front and, in the ensuing years, spent hundreds of days within rifle fire of the enemy.

His escapes were quite extraordinary; again and again he survived when death seemed certain, and, indeed, befell all his neighbours. It was not all hazard; sometimes it was due to his intelligence, his quiet courage and his power of making a great effort at a critical time.

Warrior's first narrow escape was on the most desperate day of the British retreat from Mons. Von Kluck's enveloping attack had reached its maximum speed and menace; for a few brief hours the British Headquarters were at Compiègne. I had returned by motor at two o'clock in the morning from the French Front, and had given my report to Sir John French. He told me that while the Germans were enveloping his left, he believed they would cross the Oise on his right before many hours were over. Indeed, the report that I brought him tended to confirm this view, for that night I had passed through a squadron of German cavalry in the fog within thirty miles of Compiègne.

It was decided to blow up the bridge at Compiègne early in the morning, and I was deputed to watch over this operation and report its completion at Headquarters, which was to retire in order to continue to supervise the rear-guard actions of both wings. As generally happened in the early stages of the War this great bridge, which had been carefully prepared for demolition, resisted the shock of discharge when the button was pressed. Henry Wilson, afterwards Chief of the Imperial General Staff, used to say to me: "The French have decreed that the bridges shall be made to jump, *faire sauter*, but they do not jump." On this occasion the French engineers were present in order to "make to jump" the bridge. News had come that the Germans had already crossed in small numbers five miles to the east, so there was hurry. There was a tremendous bang. For a moment large black objects were seen flying high into the air, but when it was all over a large portion of the bridge was still intact. Devoted men, both English and French, started at once to endeavour to lay fresh charges, but it was too late. Rifle fire could be heard to our right; roaring motor cyclists came up with the news that the Germans were across the river in force. It was time to go and we all went. My car was standing ready; my servant, Smith, sitting gloomy but unperturbed with my baggage at the back. As I jumped into the driving seat he remarked: "They have got us this time, sir." It was a near thing, for as we drove along the road through the forest, we passed within close range rifle fire of the German advance guard.

When we were just clear of the firing, at the edge of the wood I came upon a broken-down lorry. To my horror I saw it was one of the Headquarters lorries with boxes of correspondence. Standing by the lorry, endeavouring to assist the driver, whose head was inside the bonnet looking for the root of the engine trouble, was my groom, Thompson, and round his arm was the bridle of my beloved Warrior, whose ears were pricked listening to the approaching rifle fire. It was midday and there was a bright sun. I said to Thompson: "You see the sun?" He answered: "Yes, sir." I said: "Mount

Warrior and gallop as hard as you can straight for the sun for half an hour, then, and not till then, inquire for British General Headquarters." He jumped up and they disappeared in a cloud of dust. We piled all the confidential boxes into Freddie Guest's car and mine. The Germans got nothing of any value, but nearly everything else, except Warrior, in that little outfit fell into the hands of the enemy.

That night, after some adventures, I found the British Headquarters again, much nearer Paris. I also found Warrior, none the worse for his gallop.

And now I must recount a thing which may seem strange to those who do not understand how intelligent horses become if they live all their lives in close touch with human beings. I have said that Warrior's ears were pricked at the sound of approaching rifle fire. During more than four years that followed this horse became more and more accustomed to and, indeed, contemptuous of shell-fire. I have seen him, even when a shell has burst within a few feet, stand still without a tremor, just turn his head and, unconcerned, look at the smoke of the burst. Indeed, in the most violent bombardments in the latter stages of the war, when barrages were really intense, I have seen the horse remain quite unperturbed while hundreds of shells have burst in a space of a few acres in the midst of which he stood. But rifle- and machine-gun-fire always worried him. One could see him making an effort not to lose his head while trembling a little as the ping, ping, ping continued.

Of course he was right. Anyone who knows anything about real war must decide, if he is to enjoy reasonable peace of mind in the unusual conditions of the Front Line, to make a sharp distinction between ordinary war risks and dangerous risks. The first category, which includes all unaimed fire except what the French call *le tir de destruction*, must be absolutely disregarded, just as one disregards the chances of being struck by lightning in a thunderstorm. The second—fire aimed at oneself as a visible object—must be terminated at the first possible moment, either by getting out of sight or closing with the enemy.

At the risk of appearing fantastic, I state quite definitely that my horse apprehended this truth. He knew that it was idiotic to cringe, or run forward or back, in order to escape a rain of shells sent over by the enemy—again to quote the French phrase—*pour arroser le terrain*. He also knew that the swift singing, death-dealing bullet was generally aimed at him, for he had often seen so many of his neighbours fall from these comparatively silent messengers of death. Not once or twice but many a dozen times I have

ridden Warrior at a gallop up towards the Front Line; never did he swerve from a shell, always from a stream of bullets.

Fortunately I can call, in aid of this unusual claim for the uncanny intelligence of the horse in war, a man whose testimony will be received with respect by all who took part in the struggle, Sir Archie MacDonell, one of the most romantic figures of the World War. He owned a wonderful horse called Casey. This horse had been with MacDonell when he was commanding the North-West Mounted Police, coping with Indians, controlling the great gold rush, and finally his constant companion for four years in the World War. Casey, like Warrior—and they were often together within close range rifle fire of the enemy—had a complete understanding of the risks to be disregarded and those to be avoided if possible.

I know that MacDonell will verify every word that I have written.

But to return to the extraordinary good fortune of Warrior. After a series of remarkably lucky escapes—during the retreat from Mons; le Câteau; St. Quentin; Compiègne; Dammartin; Lagny, where so many good men and horses found their end—he survived the crowning mercy of the Marne.

My duty led me for so much of this time to the French Front that he was more often ridden either by Sir John French himself, or by members of his Staff, especially Freddie Guest. During these tremendous weeks from Mons to the Aisne I suppose it is not too much to say that four out of five of the horses were killed or died of wounds. But he survived to move to St. Omer with Sir John French, who had formed a real affection for him. Then he saw much of the first Battle of Ypres, and for the following reason. French and Haig, so different in almost everything, had this in common, a genuine, deep concern for the welfare of the men they commanded and a desire to be amongst them in their troubles and dangers. But the way they set about it was surprisingly different. I knew both of them well, before and during the War, and observed this strangely different attitude with great interest. The two of them, of course, knew that if you are to see numbers of soldiers, and be seen by them, you must ride on a horse. If you go on your feet you are lost in the crowd; if you go in a motor-car you either block the traffic on the road to which you are confined, or pass so swiftly that no one knows you are there. So both would have horses as close as possible to the Front Line, in order that they might move amongst the troops at critical times. But here comes the difference. French, having given his orders would mount his horse and rejoice in meeting his soldiers, without warning, in unconventional fashion. He would stop them for a moment in their march

and say words of encouragement to those whom his voice could reach, and then ride along with them, conversing with individual soldiers.

During the first Battle of Ypres French played a great part, not only as a Marlborough before the Battle of Blenheim, but as a Disraeli, a Gladstone, or a Chamberlain, heartening his followers in the milder conflict of a parliamentary contest. To Haig, this was hateful and impossible. Well do I remember meeting Sir Douglas Haig in the street of a little French village just recaptured from the Germans in 1917. Gravely and kindly he told me to convey his congratulations to the men under my command, who had been fortunate enough to take the leading part in the advance. But when about forty men, who had been to inquire at the Casualty Clearing Station for the wounded, gathered round and raised a cheer Haig was terrified, said: "I can't make a speech," jumped into his motor-car and sped away.

Well, it was Warrior that French often rode during the Ypres battle, and, sitting on that gallant horse, made many a little speech to the troops.

The fight at Ypres in November 1914 was so equally balanced, the beam swung so nearly to the German side, that I shall always be of opinion that but for the personal influence of French we should have lost the day. I like to think that Warrior played his humble part in that august event.

Shortly afterwards I was ordered home by Lord Kitchener to take command of the Canadian Cavalry and Auxiliary Forces, whom it was my privilege to lead for more than three years thereafter.

After a brief interval I returned to France with my command, and, of course, Warrior with me. Owing to the peculiar nature of my force—it was a self-contained unit, with its own artillery, engineers, Army Service Corps and supply units; owing also to certain theories which I had formed, many of which I had learnt from the French Army with which I had served for some weeks in the early phases of the War, Warrior found himself located for much of his time in a Battalion Headquarters.

Almost immediately after my return to France we were engaged in the bloody Battle of Festubert—a little battle for that War, but a very big one compared with previous wars in our history.

Warrior found himself living at Battalion Headquarters behind a haystack within rifle fire of the enemy. I rode him every day, and could not but be amused at the obvious disgust which he showed for his mean surroundings by comparison with his lordly abode as one of the equipage of the Commander-in-Chief.

After the Battle of Festubert had died down we took over a sector of the line under the Messines Ridge, which the Germans then held.

I put my headquarters in a farm on the side of the Wulverghem-Messines Road, which was quite undamaged, although in full view of the enemy, and within rifle range of their Front Line.

Warrior occupied a good stable facing east. My calculation, which proved to be well founded, was that the Germans, having elected not to shoot away this house, had some special reason for wishing to retain it and that it would take much provocation on our part to make them fire at it. I had learnt this plan from a friend of mine, the Duc de Rohan—a most ingenious student of the enemy's psychology. His theory was that if you put your headquarters, in his case Company Headquarters, in a most obvious place the enemy would never fire at you, because they would think it was a trick. Certainly it came off as far as he was concerned, for, although, alas! he was killed very gallantly making a night reconnaissance during the Somme battle of 1916, he survived for over two years in the Front Line as an officer, first of the cavalry then of the Chasseur à Pied, in many of the most desperate parts of the Front.

In the summer of 1915 I spent three weeks in this eccentric headquarters, and never a shell was fired at it, although all the rest of my front and the back areas were heavily bombarded.

It was during this period that Warrior took to accompanying me on my daily visits to the Front Line and the Reserve Regiments without saddle or bridle when I was riding on one of my other two horses. On the first occasion he jumped out of his box and followed me just like a dog; but more sensibly than any dog, because he never went more than twenty yards away from me. Thereafter, for months on end, whenever I was not riding him he came with me as a companion. My men rejoiced in this quaint proceeding and Warrior became their greatest pet. The fact is, although men of most European races will never understand it, that the horse, if properly treated from its youth up, is a better and more faithful companion to man even than the dog.

Many years ago, in the Desert of Upper Egypt, a hundred miles from the Nile, an Arab Sheik said to me: "The Arab's horse is like the Englishman's dog, but he is wiser, gentler and more faithful." We learnt something of the truth of this during the South African War. A near relative of mine has just sent me a letter which I wrote to her from the Orange Free State on Christmas Day 1900; in it I read these words: "You would love my ponies,

they are so wise, more like dogs than horses. If a national monument were to be erected it should be put up to the South African pony. English horses die; Hungarians go lame in two days; Argentines lie down unable to move; all of them turn it up except the South African pony. The only thing that can stop him is death from exhaustion, but being a canny little person that seldom happens. If there is a sack of mealies within a mile, he will go and find it for himself, open it somehow and eat half, then he will return to see whether you have been able to draw some rations for him through the proper official channel."

Warrior had many narrow escapes from shell-fire. On one occasion the horse belonging to my Brigade-Major, which was standing alongside, almost touching Warrior, was cut clean in half by a large fragment of shell. I saw the shell drop from where I was standing in the Front Line and feared that both horses must have been killed; but when I got to the spot I found my horse quite unharmed. The groom, who had been holding both animals by their bridles, was knocked down and much shaken, but otherwise none the worse. Both he and Warrior were, of course, covered in blood. I asked him what my wise horse had done at the moment of impact. He assured me that he had not even trembled, but looked down on the remnants of the other horse, as the man put it to me: "Saying as plain as you could hear, 'What a bloody war.' "

During this time my Staff-Captain, Docherty of Strathconas, who had been put in charge of our camouflage arrangements—wonderfully ingenious plans which reduced our casualties by seventy-five per cent.—conceived the idea of camouflaging our very visible headquarters. I told him this would upset the apple-cart, and sure enough it did! At daybreak next morning I was awakened by a shattering bang. Archie Sinclair ran in to my room, saying: "Get out quick, sir, most of the farm has fallen in and it is all on fire." Even as he spoke a shell went through the roof and ceiling and I was covered with plaster and tiles. I jumped out of the window in my pyjamas and bare feet just in time to see a shell burst right in the middle of the farm and blow down all the walls. Warrior was looking out of the top half of his box, about the only portion of the farm buildings still intact, and when he saw me whinnied loudly. I ran to the door and with the aid of my Signal Officer, de Haviland, opened it and Warrior bounded out. It was the closest thing I ever saw, for within two seconds of his getting out a shell burst right inside the box and blew the whole stable to bits.

This was my first experience of having my headquarters completely destroyed. I had many others later. My many friends who had similar

experiences will agree with me that there are few things more melancholy than wandering away across a bare field to find some suitable place to live in, having left the whole of your household goods, your signal apparatus, alas! many of your men and horses blown to bits. However, my groom had escaped with a saddle and bridle and I was soon on Warrior's back reconnoitring for an alternative home. We found it, rather nearer the Front Line, but screened from observation by a famous hill. There we lived very happily until some enthusiast elected to put his anti-aircraft battery close up against the hedge which bounded the farm! This was again too much for the Germans. This time they produced a howitzer battery which, within forty minutes, completely demolished our home. I was riding Warrior back from the Front Line along a screened road and surveyed the miserable spectacle from the safe distance of three hundred yards. The German shooting on this occasion was wonderful. They had a single aeroplane spotting for them and, marvellous to relate, got a direct hit on one of the anti-aircraft guns, smashing it to bits.

In the Somme battle Warrior nearly finished his life at Bray-sur-Somme in quite a different way. Whether the thing was done by accident or design, hundreds of tons of hay were found to contain sharp iron hooks about half an inch long. Many horses died from swallowing these things. Warrior got one in his intestines. Instead of surrendering to the pain he started to plunge, kick, rear, throw himself on his back in the effort to dislodge it. If anyone has never seen a really powerful thoroughbred horse with acute local pain he has an astonishing spectacle still to see. Our veterinary officer was an extraordinarily good man with horses and not afraid of anything, but even he had to clear out of the stable in which Warrior was performing amazing acrobatic feats. I just managed to escape by climbing into the hay-rack and getting astride a beam. The vet., who knew the cause of the trouble as he had attended several horses already and cut them open, said that as long as the horse struggled he might dislodge the hook; so in fact it proved and in a week or two Warrior had entirely recovered.

I rode Warrior in the first Battle of Cambrai on November 20th, 1917, cantering along for nearly four miles behind a big tank until it finally fell into the Canal de l'Escault. We lost hundreds of horses during the second and third days of that battle, but he was again unharmed.

I also rode him in the disaster of the second Battle of Cambrai on November 30th, when we were ultimately well nigh completely surrounded. I had two horses killed on this occasion, but again Warrior survived. And so back to the Omignon River front near le Verguier, where Warrior was

painted by Munnings in full view of the enemy—I should think an almost unique occurrence on the Western Front! The Germans were husbanding their ammunition for their great attack of March 21st; although they would endeavour to demolish a battery that annoyed them and, of course, fire at any considerable bunch of men, one could play all sorts of tricks with them if there were only one or two together. So Munnings and Warrior survived several sittings, although a German artillery officer with a telescope must have been watching the whole proceedings, no doubt highly amused at the whole episode.

Then came the crash and I found myself on Warrior directing rear-guard actions during those fateful days at the end of March 1918. On the 26th of that month, between Noyon and Montdidier, I stabled him in the drawing-room of a little French villa with a parquet floor, and remember very well giving him his corn on a little ormolu table.

This was the scene of his most curious escape. Early the next morning the Germans opened very accurate fire on the little village with a long range naval gun firing delay-action shells. Each small house that was hit went up with a tremendous bang. I was standing in the Square dictating written orders to Connolly, one of my Staff; there was a roar close over our heads and the shell hit the villa right in the middle with a terrific noise, blowing off the roof and one side of the house. I said: "I am afraid poor old Warrior is done at last," and ran forward to the smoking ruins. But I heard a whinney and poking his head out of the bricks was Warrior crouching down with a joist just resting on the middle of his back. I could see that one end was on the ground and the other just held up by the wall. I began to tug at the bricks, but even as I did so he made a great leap and bounded out. Almost at the same moment the rest of the house collapsed. He was a bit lame but otherwise quite unharmed.

Then finally I rode him on that desperate day, the 30th March, when my men attacked and recaptured the ridge and forest of Moreuil. I have been told that we lost eight hundred horses in less than an hour. Warrior was in the midst of them and, indeed, for part of the time was an especial mark; but again he escaped unscathed.

He returned home on Christmas Day 1918. Four years to a day after the Battle of Moreuil he won the Isle of Wight Point to Point.

This very morning I rode him over Mottistone Down. The gay old horse was fit and well and it took me all my time to hold him. But before we started to ride down the hill back to his stable I jumped off, threw the reins

over his head and lit a cigarette while I looked over the sea. Warrior bent his head down and rubbed it against my cheek. I patted his neck and he gave a little whinney of pleasure. Such can friendship be between man and horse.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PEACE CONFERENCE

At the Peace Conference of 1919, which I attended on behalf of the Air Ministry of Great Britain, I was thrown once more into the company of the politicians who were making and unmaking the affairs of Europe. Theirs was a great responsibility, too great for some. As I saw them all, to be quite frank, only a few really kept their heads. Chief among those few was Lloyd George. He was never rattled, never unbalanced, and that is the more remarkable seeing he had been through the greatest strain of all. President Wilson, as we know, collapsed under it. Clemenceau, with an extraordinary effort of will, preserved an air sometimes of cynical detachment, sometimes of brutal directness; but even he lost his balance, as his passages of arms with Marshal Foch clearly showed to those who, like myself, knew both men well. Foch kept his head and his temper all through; but I doubted then—indeed I told him so—whether his main thesis of the Rhine frontier was possible.

I well remember Foch's conversation with me two days after the swift aeroplane flight I have described in a previous chapter. He said: "Do you remember those days at Ypres, when my Headquarters were at Cassel? I told you then that, small as were our numbers, English and French, in comparison with the great host that Germany had brought against us, they would not get through to the Channel ports, and I told you that the reason was that the Yser Canal with a few resolute men to bar the passage, was 'une barrière assez formidable.' "

I replied to Foch: "Yes, I remember what you said and the exact words that you used. Indeed, I wrote them down in your presence."

He said: "Yes, that, too, I remember, and that is why I recall it to your memory. Now if that little Yser, with its sluggish stream not fifty yards broad, was a vital factor in the defence in those fateful days, what shall we say of the mighty, swiftly flowing Rhine? Believe me, the antagonism between the East and the West of Europe is too deep seated to be allayed by any League of Nations which can be set up. France is the trustee of Western European civilization. Providence has given her a natural frontier, the Rhine. Then let us seize this opportunity of victory to make secure that Western civilization, of which I hope and believe not only France but England will be the trustees for all time."

When Foch was moved, as he was on this occasion, he was most eloquent. He would be silent for a minute or more, and then his thoughts, perfectly phrased, would break out like an explosion. So it was then, and although my reason was not convinced, my understanding was overwhelmed.

On the very day that I write these words the last French soldier has left German soil. Reasonable men in all the allied countries are glad. The occupation has done no good, and it is well that it is ended. Moreover, to put the matter in one phrase, we know that so long as Von Hindenburg lives Germany will be true to her word.

But what of the future? For many a year to come men will say that Foch was quite wrong; but afterwards I am not so sure, for, be it observed, Foch was a very far-seeing man. He based his argument on a consideration of the more or less distant future. He envisaged the developments of warfare by land, sea, and air, and pointed out that, however far those developments might go, the natural land frontier would become more and more important. His argument ran this way. The air will become more and more powerful for destruction, but can never be a means of occupation of territory. "The eternal force of gravity prevents that," he said. No doubt he was right there.

"Therefore," he went on, "the battered foe, in order to survive, must have every possible advantage for keeping his frontier intact."

Such was Foch's argument, reinforced by a wealth of historical analogy. Truly he was a great man. I am sure that history will say that the three commanding figures in the World War were Von Hindenburg, Foch, and Lloyd George. I do not know in what order history will place them. Perhaps it will invert the order which I have given; but that it will name these three, I am sure.

But I saw much of others who played leading parts, all except President Wilson, who was seen but seldom. His brilliant brain and his masterful personality were already clouded with uncertainty. It was a real embarrassment to everyone that, as time went on, he became more and more aloof, so that interviews of vital importance, carefully arranged, had to be postponed, or sometimes abandoned. I will give an instance.

I was summoned one day to see Lloyd George in the Rue Nitti on some matter connected with the air. I was told that Mr. Lloyd George was waiting to see President Wilson. In the room with me I found Paderewski, that greatest of all pianists, who had become the first Prime Minister of Poland. He told me that he had been waiting an hour to see President Wilson, and

that the Peace Treaty could not possibly be completed until after this interview. So we sat together, and talked about the War, and about Poland and its future, of which Paderewski seemed, if I may so phrase it, mournfully hopeful. Half an hour went by—three-quarters of an hour.

Still, Paderewski waited for his interview. At last a polite private secretary came to explain that President Wilson could not see Monsieur Paderewski at all. The great pianist nearly lost his temper completely. He said:

"It is always like that. What can we do with a man who will never see us?"

It was arranged that I should see Lloyd George at 3 o'clock that afternoon, and I walked away with Paderewski, endeavouring to console him; but it was difficult. He said:

"What would they say of me if I had three thousand people waiting in a concert hall to hear me play and I just sent word to say that I would not come? But here there are millions of my countrymen waiting and this man refuses to see me."

However, the enraged musician was good enough to lunch alone with me while he gradually quieted down.

Mr. Balfour's attitude was, to me, the most arresting. He, who on so many occasions had been serene and hopeful when others were in despair—in Ireland, during the South African War; in English politics—always quietly resolute and optimistic; in this moment of victory so complete and so overwhelming that others were intoxicated by it; in some strange way he rebelled against happy fate, and was sunk in profound pessimism. Balfour had the greatest admiration for Lloyd George, and supported him then, and all through the post-war years, with unswerving loyalty. He said to me again and again that but for Lloyd George England would have been ruined by the Peace Treaties. As it was, in this melancholy business, Lloyd George had extricated us from numberless pitfalls. But, in Balfour's view, the whole thing was going awry. I could not understand his gloomy predictions, and, indeed, some of the fatal consequences he foresaw have not come to pass. In particular, the renewal of world conflagration is, one may hope, still far away.

When I was at Geneva with Balfour three years later I reminded him of the days of the Peace Conference. His comment was:

"The plant has not grown as I feared it would, but the seeds are still there."

However, to return to the Peace Conference, that extraordinary gathering which set out to rearrange the map of the world and secure perpetual peace. I was present at the signing of the Treaty with Germany. It was a terrible document. Germany acknowledged herself, not only defeated, but guilty. Rolled in the mud, bereft of all her oversea possessions; her two richest provinces; her Army; her Fleet; her Air Force all gone; condemned to pay an indemnity so huge that it clearly meant, not only impoverishment, but bankruptcy. There seemed nothing left for her but despair. However, there is an old German proverb: "Money lost, little lost; Honour lost, much lost; Courage lost, all lost." So it was proved in this case; for all was not lost to Germany just because the courage of her people survived. This was due to many Germans, notably Stresemann and, above all, to Von Hindenburg, whose courage has never faltered and whose loyalty has never failed.

Whether the Peace imposed upon Germany was too vindictive, we shall never know; but I remember we all wondered at the time whether, at the last, delegates would be found to sign it. As we waited in the Palace of Versailles for the delegates to come in, I whispered to Milner, who was next to me:

"I don't believe they are going to turn up."

Milner replied: "Brockdorf Rantzau, who has come to Paris, refused to sign the final draft last night; but I do not think the others will run out."

He was right, for, even as he spoke, the black-coated delegates walked in. Clemenceau was standing, erect and rigid, looking like some strange Mongolian god. The gloves on his hands seemed strangely out of place.

"You will sign," he said, and, in a dead hush, they signed. I confess that, passionately as I had longed that we should win the War and thankful as I had been for our astonishing deliverance from almost certain defeat fourteen short months before, nevertheless, I shuddered as the deed was done. I think it was in the minds of all of us that, although we had obviously tried to do the best, the seeds of other and more desperate conflicts were to be found in the Treaty which had been signed.

I was again present, a few weeks later, at the signing of the Treaty with Austria in the Trianon. This was, in some ways, even more tragic. A historic country was completely dismembered, and the most ancient dynasty in the world was overthrown. The demeanour of the Austrian delegates was strangely different from that of the Germans at Versailles. The Austrians

signed with obvious relief, apparently almost with pleasure. The Germans had been grimly and bitterly resigned to the inevitable. Again I sat next to Milner, and remarked on this difference to him. He said, contemptuously:

"When a man has lived all his life in a hovel, he likes signing a document which assigns him a palace in which to dwell."

It may be remembered that Austria, and especially Hungary, were practically in complete revolution at the time.

At last all was finished, if not settled, and the Conference broke up. Whatever may be said of the Peace Treaties, Lloyd George saw to it that Britain did not suffer.

The influence of Clemenceau on the Conference, and, therefore, on world politics, was profound. That his dynamic energy saved France in the World War none can doubt; but when the War was won he relapsed into the brilliant and adroit cynic who had twisted parties this way and that, and made and unmade Governments in his own country for nearly fifty years.

His effect on Lloyd George was curious. I should say that he ruined Lloyd George's perorations for the rest of his life. It was not so much that Clemenceau cared nothing for the Christian faith as that he despised all faith except his own in his own country. Wilson was completely baffled by him. His real gift of eloquence appeared at some moment in every conversation; but the comment or the retort of Clemenceau instantly pierced through the joints in the armour of this inspired knight of liberty.

Lloyd George, on the other hand, whose wit was almost as quick as Clemenceau's, was not baffled, but delighted, by his sallies. This man, to whom nothing but France was sacred, would say things of such irresistible wit that, whether one agreed or disagreed, one could not but applaud the coruscating intellect which produced the devastating phrase. I do not believe that Clemenceau did Lloyd George's character—and it is a very great character—the least harm; but he permanently cramped the flow of his Celtic eloquence, and, in so doing, injured him with his countrymen in the supremely difficult task of leading them along the right path after their glorious, and almost miraculous, victory.

However, to the other members of the Conference—and, be it observed, almost every nation in the world was represented—Clemenceau was a cynical enigma, enabling them all to laugh, but none of them to understand.

If my judgment of Clemenceau's influence at the Peace Conference seems harsh, and I admit it is coloured by his rudeness, and once his violent

brutality, to my friend Foch, it must be said that, like Lloyd George, he was a vigilant guardian of his country's interests. His anger with Foch was no doubt due to his belief that, in attempting to drive too far the advantage for future security, he feared France might lose all that had been laboriously gained.

The influence of the United States of America—still so potent in world affairs—was far greater then. She, alone of all the Great Powers, had emerged with wealth, not only unimpaired, but increased, and with a loss of manhood, though great and deplorable, not a tithe of that suffered by the rest.

I am sure that if Clemenceau had not presided at the Peace Conference, France would have made a much worse Peace.

Two others of our delegates were melancholy without the charm or the vision of Arthur Balfour. Milner—competent, alert, and slow to speak but swift to think, and Bonar Law—like a sad, disembodied spirit—both of them saying that we were witnessing the ruin of European civilization.

It was a relief to turn to Winston Churchill and Lord Birkenhead, who refused to be affected in the least by the underlying pessimism of the Conference. Winston's buoyancy upheld the interests of our country, and Birkenhead's practical sagacity saved her from many pitfalls; but above them all in these fateful days stands Lloyd George, of whom Lord Hardinge, then our Ambassador at Paris, said in a public speech in my hearing:

"He never let Britain down."

It was after our record flight that Mr. Balfour and Lloyd George dined with me. Lawrence of Arabia was there too, and several others. One of my most interesting experiences was to watch the behaviour of this extraordinary man on this occasion. Lawrence, at that time, was engaged in acute, indeed, violent controversy with Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George. He believed that King Feisal had contributed, in the first degree, to the final victory, and that the "Big Three" were letting him down. I do not know the rights and wrongs of the matter; but I do know that Lawrence fought his corner with a pertinacity which surprised the older statesmen. Indeed, he carried his opposition to such lengths that he regarded Feisal as his King and himself as an Arabian, and openly said so to small and great alike. All through dinner I saw Lawrence watching Lloyd George. He never took his eyes off him, and one could see that he was mentally recording every word that the English Prime Minister said. After dinner we sat in a small hall with pillars and listened to some very beautiful music. Lloyd

George and Balfour sat down in two arm chairs near to one of the pillars, and Lawrence was standing by. I went to ask the violinist to play some air which Mr. Balfour wished to hear, and when I came back Lawrence had vanished. I sat down near to Lloyd George and talked to him for some time on various subjects in the pauses between the music. After about ten minutes I looked down behind Lloyd George's chair, and there, squatting on the ground quite motionless, was Lawrence. I could not have seen him but for his eyes. I watched him for minutes on end; he was so motionless that it was impossible to see that he was breathing. I have been told that in the desert Lawrence had so trained himself that he could sit quite still for hours at a stretch, hearing and thinking. In the end he got part of his way; but he still thought that Feisal had been let down.

The appearance of Lawrence was quite unexpected. He looked just like an exceptionally healthy schoolboy; fair hair, blue eyes, placid features, charming smile—it was difficult to believe that he was more than seventeen or eighteen years of age, or that he had had any unusual experiences. Yet he had lived for long months at a stretch disguised as an Arab, literally carrying his life in his hand by day and night. Moreover, he was one of the most learned scholars in Europe. Whatever the merits of the Feisal controversy, from what I learned one thing is sure: namely, that to Lawrence, almost more than to any other one man, we owe the defeat of Turkey.

Among the many misadventures that befell President Wilson, not the least disconcerting was the presence of Mr. Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia, at the Conference. This strange man had the knack, possessed by none other, of knocking the President completely off his balance. As a natural consequence the President tended more and more to view any proposal from Australia with a somewhat unfriendly eye. Matters came to a climax one morning when Mr. Hughes appeared with the proposal that the Australian Mandate for outlying and adjacent islands should be extended. To everybody's surprise President Wilson opposed the suggestion with extreme vigour. Clemenceau said, acidly, that he could not see any reason for excitement. He believed these aborigines could settle their own affairs. Lloyd George while giving general support to Mr. Hughes, suggested a compromise. President Wilson would have none of it, and burst forth as one speaking *ex cathedra*: "Mr. Prime Minister of Australia, do I understand your attitude aright? If I do, it is this, that the opinion of the whole civilized world is to be set at nought. This Conference, fraught with such infinite consequence to mankind for good or evil, is to break up with results which

may well be disastrous to the future happiness or unhappiness of eighteen hundred millions of the human race, in order to satisfy the whim of five million people in the remote Southern continent whom you claim to represent."

Mr. Hughes, who was almost stone deaf, had moved his speaking and hearing apparatus quite close to the President and listened intently to every word. He then replied: "Very well put, Mr. President, you have guessed it. That's just so." The words were said with such detached serenity that the Conference burst out laughing, all except President Wilson, who was desperately offended.

The strange thing is that in the end Hughes got his way.

It is the fashion to say now in England, over which a strange wave of pessimism is spreading, that we made a bad Peace. I am sure that is quite untrue, and I watched all the proceedings with great care. I am sure that Britain and the Empire made the best Peace possible. There were countless pitfalls which were avoided; there were vital interests to be safeguarded, and to be quite frank the British Empire had not many friends. Why should the Empire have many friends? I have no doubt myself that it is a very fortunate thing for the world that our Empire controls a quarter of the world's land surface and a fifth of the world's population, but one cannot expect others to be enthusiastic about the position. So it proved at the Conference. We were fortunate in the *personnel* of our Delegation. From Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia and Newfoundland came men of real quality and determination. And from India too. Perhaps the outstanding figure was Botha, a man like Milner, his erstwhile bitterest opponent, described to me as a monument of uprightness.

A year later, in the summer of 1920, when I was again in Paris, I received a message late one night that Foch would like to see me in his office at 9 o'clock the next morning. On arrival there, I found him alone. He said to me:

"During the years of War I have described my ideas of attack and defence to you on many occasions. Sometimes I failed; sometimes I succeeded. Now I have been given an order by Monsieur Millerand and the Government to retrieve a situation which they consider desperate, but which, in comparison with those I have had to cope with before, is, I think, easy. I should like to think that my English friend of the War was with me when I gave the final orders to the man I am sending to organize complete victory."

I said: “Well, I have not heard your plans; but I presume that you are sending Weygand.”

Foch laughed, and said: “Yes, of course. He is waiting. When I have explained the matter finally we will all three go together to the station.”

Foch shouted for Weygand, who was next door. Then followed a description of the plans which Weygand was to carry out. It is interesting to look back upon, because it must be seldom in the career of any great soldier that forecasts made hundreds of miles away can be so completely fulfilled as happened in this case. There was a large map of Poland spread out on the table, held by drawing pins, with the positions of the different Polish and Bolshevik divisions duly set down in the usual form of military maps.

Foch stood up and gave a little shake of his shoulders—Weygand standing by him—and said:

“Here is the plan which I have already discussed with you. You see these three points? You will hold here, and here, and here,” pointing from left to right. “When you have four divisions there, capable of being used as a mass of manœuvre, you will fall back on the left, encouraging the enemy to follow. As he advances you will fall back the centre, and he will still follow. Then from in front of this right-hand point you will attack and destroy the enemy.”

“Entendu, mon Maréchal,” said Weygand. They clasped each other by both hands. “Allons,” said Foch.

We went down to the little courtyard where the motor-car was waiting; and the three of us went off to the station. Weygand’s departure had been kept quite secret, and the platform was clear. As we walked towards the carriage in which Weygand was to travel Foch continued to address him in the confident, staccato phrases of which he was a real master. In the carriage we found three other French officers who were accompanying Weygand. The station-master, who had been following us, held up his hand, and the train steamed out.

“Au revoir,” said Weygand, leaning out of the carriage window. “À la Victoire,” said Foch.

When the train had left the station Foch took my arm, and, as we walked along, said:

“I have no anxiety about this. Those Russians will not fight.”

I said: “No doubt you are right. The only thing is that I have been told that Lenin’s propaganda is so amazingly clever that any troops that get into the area where his agents can penetrate become imbued with the Bolshevik theory of shooting all the commissioned and non-commissioned officers and then refusing to obey anybody; so that even the best troops may turn out to be useless.”

Foch turned to me, with his happy smile, and said:

“Non, non. Bolshevisme: c’est une maladie des armées vaincues.” And so it happened. With Weygand’s arrival fresh heart was put into the Polish troops, commanded by that most remarkable man, Marshal Pilsudski. The counter-stroke was delivered; the enemy’s communications were cut; thousands of prisoners taken; and Bolshevism was driven back into its own frontiers. A wise man said to me at the time that although the victory was so easy, it was one of the most decisive in the world’s history. Certain it is that, had the Foch and Weygand plan failed, Bolshevism would have swept through Poland, and might have spread over a great part of Europe, with consequences almost too awful to contemplate. In backward Russia tens of millions of people died as a direct consequence of this plague, either by execution, murder, disease or starvation. In the complex civilization of Europe it is reasonable to assume that the consequences would have been far worse.

I sometimes think that when history is written one hundred years hence, with a true sense of perspective, Foch’s swift action at this time will be adjudged as having been of greater consequence to world history than his victory for the Allied cause in 1918 against the Austro-German combination.

This view is confirmed by high authority in Lord d’Abernon’s recently published book entitled “The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World.” Lord d’Abernon, who had just been appointed as our Ambassador in Berlin, was sent to Warsaw as the head of the British section of the joint Anglo-French Mission. He describes the events that led up to the crushing defeat of the Red Army in Poland in August 1920.

It is a book of absorbing interest, and I am persuaded that all who read it will agree that the title he gives it is just.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME DISTINGUISHED FIGURES IN THE WORLD WAR

I HAVE said that history will name three men as the outstanding personalities of the World War from 1914 to 1918, and in this order: Von Hindenburg, Foch, Lloyd George.

Von Hindenburg's place is, without doubt, secure. He saved his country from disaster on the East Prussian Front in August 1914. Universal belief in his character and courage sustained the German will to victory for the next three and a half years. Thereafter, when the *débâcle* came in the last hundred days, ending in the utter surrender by land, sea and air of November 1918, it was the name and fame of Von Hindenburg alone that saved the German army and people from the ruin that befell Austria, Hungary and, above all, Russia.

All through the War years and the years that followed, this faithful Prussian soul guided his country through countless perils, and when at last in June 1931 complete ruin stared Germany in the face it was Von Hindenburg who, by his appeal to the President of the United States, saved his country from irreparable disaster.

As an Englishman with every predilection in favour of my own countrymen and their Allies truth, as I see it, compels me to write that Von Hindenburg stands out head and shoulders as the great man of the World War. If he had never been born his country would have gone down into the abyss, dragging with it, in the long run, the whole European family.

I do not think my great friend, Marshal Foch, would have disputed what I have just written. His influence on the War, which in the end was decisive, was very different from that exercised by Von Hindenburg. To those who met and knew him he was a vital force. To the troops whom he commanded, when he moved freely amongst them as at the first Battle of Ypres and in the Battle of the Somme, he was an inspiration. On the other hand, to his countrymen as a whole he was never a legend like Von Hindenburg until the moment of supreme victory disclosed to them the might and power of the man's mind.

I have described Foch as my great friend for so, indeed, he became. The friendship began in 1912, when I invited him to our English manœuvres in

the Eastern Counties in the late summer of that year, and it continued without interruption until his death.

All through the War I would see him at very frequent intervals. He had his ups and downs, as the published controversies between him and Clemenceau have shown. He was very frank with me on these subjects. Having made me a prophecy of success, and failure having resulted, when I met him, instead of evading the point, he would begin the conversation at once by pointing out how utterly wrong he had been.

Then he would say: "I have learnt that lesson. We must keep on learning; but it is difficult for any man to learn quickly and surely enough in this War."

In his complete frankness he differed from almost any man I have ever met. Nearly all men endeavour to cover up their mistakes, either by trying to make their friends and contemporaries forget them, or else, by speech and writing, attempting to justify failure; not so Foch. The only great man who approached him in this respect was Jackie Fisher, the maker of the British Navy that fought the World War. Him, too, I knew most intimately. Like Foch, to his close friends he would own up to every mistake; like Foch, he had an abiding, simple faith in providence; in fact, though the parallel so far as I know has never been drawn before, the two men were surprisingly alike. Both made at least two good shots for every bad one—a rare thing with human kind in times of distress.

I saw Foch half-way through the Retreat on Paris in August 1914. The times were desperate, indeed, as all the world knows, if the German army had been properly directed they could have won the War out of hand. Foch was wonderfully cheerful. He said: "These Germans are blundering along without any proper direction. They will make so many mistakes in the next few days that we shall be able to attack them and drive them back." As the event proved, he was right in this prophecy; but truth compels me to say, and, indeed, Foch often reminded me of the fact afterwards, that he added: "The whole German military machine will then crumple up and we shall drive them back to the Rhine."

After Von Kluck turned aside from Paris there came the "crowning mercy of the Marne," which turned apparent certain defeat of the Allied cause into triumphant victory; but we were held up on the Aisne and soon after on the Yser. Still Foch believed in October that we could march straight through. Then came the fierce German attack with the Channel ports

as their objective. Foch had to rearrange his ideas and join with French in repelling that attack with far inferior forces.

As a rule Continental and American histories do far less than justice to the British Army, but in the case of the first Battle of Ypres less than justice has been done to the French share in that battle. At Nieuport, at Dixmude, at Ypres itself, French sailors, French infantrymen, French Cavalry bore their full share in the fight. When the battle died down and the line from Ypres to Nieuport was saved, Foch owned up to me with complete candour how utterly wrong he had been in his original forecast.

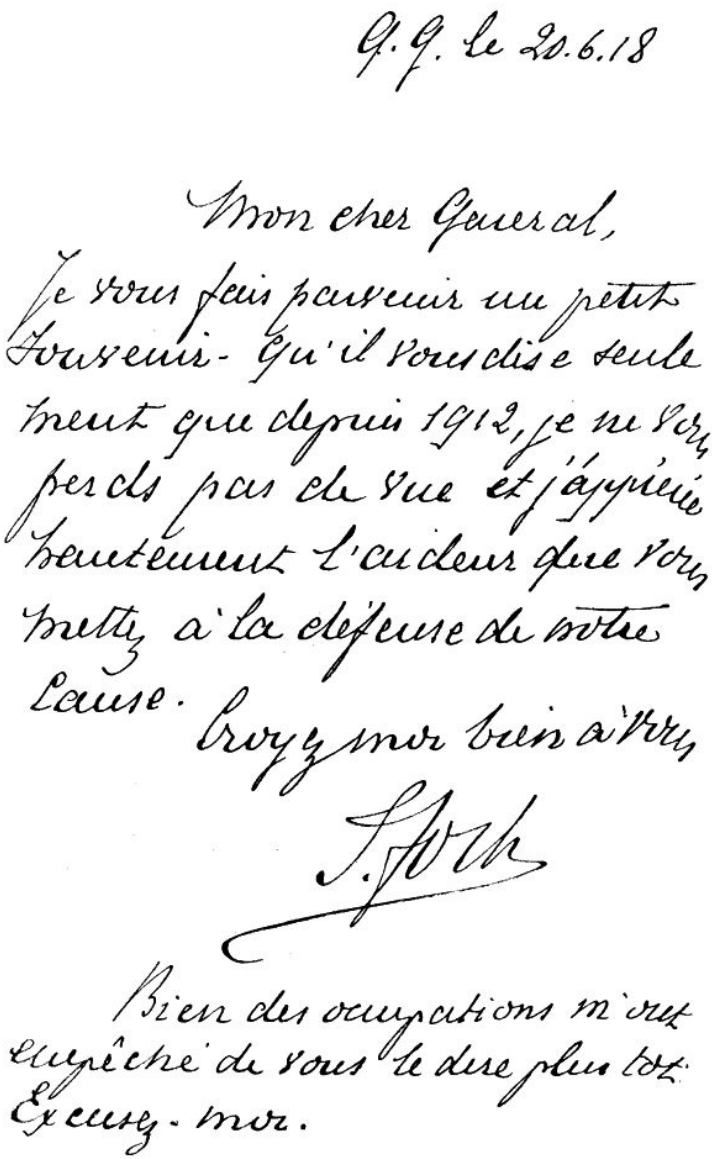
It is wonderful to reflect that this man, so completely devoid of all faults of arrogance and self-seeking, should in the end have been chosen by common consent of the Allies to save them from the doom which undoubtedly impended upon them in March 1918.

And here I can bring in a quality of the great French soldier not generally known: his constant thought for his friends. In those days of March when Foch became Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies I was commanding a small force, not much larger than a Brigade. In the closing phases of that great battle, like so many tens of thousands of others, I was very badly gassed and, although patched up for a time, was really a very sick man. Foch heard of this and wrote me, in his own hand, the letter which I reproduce opposite.

It is astonishing and most touching that a man with the overwhelming responsibilities that pressed upon him should find time to choose, and send, a present to a friend with a letter written in his own hand apologizing in simple terms for not having sent it sooner. It is curious how often great men have this trait in their character; the great Duke of Marlborough was one, as recently published letters show. Perhaps I may be forgiven for adding my eulogy to the character of Marshal Foch.

I have said that history will name Lloyd George with Von Hindenburg and Foch in a place by themselves, omitting all the other great army commanders, President Wilson, Clemenceau, and the statesmen, administrators soldiers and sailors of all the nations involved. I believe what I say is true, not because of the books or speeches I have read, but because of the spoken word of the soldier in the Front Line, and especially the French soldier during the last two and a half years of the War. I saw Lloyd George on only one occasion in France. His vigour, his determination, his quick grasp were astonishing. War is an exhausting business; nearly everyone gets tired; it is only a very few who have some kind of

“supercharger”—as we say of internal combustion engines—which enables them to be alert and vigorous at every essential moment. Lloyd George was one of these men. He made friends and he made enemies; he persuaded and he failed to persuade; he overcame opposition or he failed to do so, but every time, and all the time, he impressed everyone whom he met from the Prime Minister or Commander-in-Chief down to the humblest *poilu* marching up to the trenches at Verdun, with the feeling that they had met a being of such boundless vitality and energy that he could overcome all obstacles.


G. G. le 20.6.18

Mon cher General,

Je vous fais parvenir un petit Souvenir - Qu'il vous dise seulement que depuis 1912, je ne vous perds pas de vue et j'apprécie hautement l'ardeur que vous mettez à la défense de notre Cause.

Croyez moi bien à vous

F. Foch

Bien des occupations m'ont empêché de vous le dire plus tôt. Excusez-moi.

Handwritten Letter from Foch, 1918.

There have been some short accounts of a speech which Lloyd George made in the fortress of Verdun during the height of the battle. A French officer who was there described the effect as electrical. This surprised me, for the speeches of politicians to soldiers on the Western Front, in my experience, had been with one exception hopeless failures. What surprised

me much more was to find in my frequent conversations with French soldiers and junior officers that the opinion had spread through the Army as a whole that Lloyd George was the embodiment of victory. I make no comment on this—I merely record the fact. I had exceptional opportunities for knowing the point of view of the French soldier, because for long periods I was in command of a sector of the Front adjoining the French, my duty thus taking me day after day to French Brigade and Battalion Headquarters and thence to the French Front Line.

But there were some who played a decisive part in the World War whose services have never been quite understood. I will name two, both of them assailed by foolish professional jealousy. The first is the late Colonel Le Roy Lewis. Soon after the War broke out Lord Kitchener, just appointed Secretary of State for War, sent for Le Roy Lewis and said: "You are half a Frenchman. My French friends tell me that they are embarrassed because you talk French so much better than they do. Perhaps, therefore, you may understand them, or, at least, they will understand you. I have had a dramatic experience in my life, which taught me, first, the abiding danger of Franco-British hostility, and, secondly, the wonderful solvent that may be provided if, at the critical moment, there be one Englishman present who can really understand French and speak it in return without getting on the Frenchmen's nerves."

Le Roy Lewis, who was an old friend of Kitchener's, said: "I suppose the occasion you refer to is Fashoda; there have been others?"

"Yes," said Kitchener, "but Fashoda is the chief. I want you to go to Paris as Military Attaché to devote your whole mind to avoiding friction by the simple expedient of being the man who speaks their language and understands them. Report to me fully all the time; in any difficulty, rely on my support."

Le Roy Lewis told me of this conversation shortly after it occurred. I was interested in the phrase used by Kitchener as to the priceless value of an Englishman who could talk French to a Frenchman without getting on his nerves. For a great part of the War I had, as my aide-de-camp, Prince Antoine of Orléans, a man distinguished for high attainments in many fields, and especially for outstanding courage on numerous critical occasions in the Great War. He also knew both Lord Kitchener and Le Roy Lewis. I recounted the conversation to him and said: "Is it really true that the ordinary Englishman, however well instructed in the French language, gets on a Frenchman's nerves when he speaks French?" He replied: "Certainly, that is so; but for interest let me ask Weygand when we meet him at lunch

with Foch, which, of course, we shall do when we go out of the Line next week."

We were duly relieved and the lunch came off. Prince Antoine asked Weygand the question in this form: "Is it true that, as my General says, an Englishman is pleased when he hears a Frenchman trying to speak English, while for a Frenchman it causes embarrassment, and often pain, when an Englishman addresses him, however fluently, in the French language?"

Weygand answered: "Oui, malheureusement, c'est vrai. Pour moi ça m'agace les nerfs."

And so it came about that Le Roy Lewis, in ever-increasing degree, became the confidant of every good Frenchman who was trying to serve the common cause. Again and again, not only in small matters, but also in great, he cleared up misunderstandings which might have led to disaster, even to complete rupture between the two peoples and the two armies. His labours were unceasing; his zeal was indefatigable. Few could know the full extent of his services during well-nigh four years of constant toil, but those who do know will not deny that he rendered outstanding service to his country.

Another man was Winston Churchill. It is curious to reflect, but I am sure that it is true, that if he had foresworn politics and devoted his whole life to the Army, although he would thus have been far less adequately equipped for the task—for one learns more about men, and therefore about armies, in political life than anywhere else, as Cæsar, Marlborough, Wellington and Napoleon well knew and proved—he might nevertheless have commanded all the British Forces and, perhaps, the Allied Forces as well.

He was well suited to the position for a reason which I know better than others who have written on the subject. In a previous chapter I have described the one vital and essential quality in any great commander of men in real war, seldom referred to in critical analysis in official or unofficial histories; that quality is cool courage and unimpaired judgment under fire. By fire I mean not occasional sporadic long range bombardment from artillery on land or sea, or from the air, but the real hail of projectiles which must be endured by any commander who means to survey the battlefield, seeing his men, being seen by them, and at the same time gaining the knowledge which alone can enable him to give true direction, and inspire his troops with his own will for victory. Churchill had this quality in high degree. Real danger unnerves most men; it nerved him.

When he resigned his position in the Cabinet and accepted the appointment, after due probation, of Lieutenant-Colonel, commanding a battalion of a famous regiment on the Western Front, it was a strange dislike and dread of “politicians” which prevented him from rising to the highest positions in the Army in the Field.

This chance was missed, but his dynamic energy as President of the Munitions Council undoubtedly deflected the course of the World War. Both Clemenceau and Foch said this to me. I am sure they were right.

CHAPTER XV

COMPASS AND CHART

My reader (necessarily a patient one) will have seen from my earlier pages that I could never content myself with unrelieved life on land. I love the sea with an islander's love, and I have never lived for any length of time in any house not near salt water.

Two incidents, one before, one after, the War, rise irresistibly in my mind. The first takes me back forty years, to the time when I was recuperating in Egypt after the serious illness brought on by my participation in the wreck of the *Henri et Leontine*. Despite medical pessimism I was completely cured, and planned, on my return, to endeavour to pass the Board of Trade examination for a Master's certificate.

Accordingly, a kind friend found a cargo boat commanded by an amiable captain, who undertook to give me instruction in navigation and seamanship during the voyage home. She was a vessel of just under four thousand tons, well manned and found, carrying no passengers. For reasons which will transpire I do not give her name. I embarked—not at the usual port, and at once began my studies. I was allotted a watch, of course in company with one of the officers, and had to do all the duties that fall to the officers of a merchant ship as best I could, together with the task of taking sights of the sun, moon and stars, and working out the ship's position by observation and dead reckoning at the appropriate times.

We had a prosperous voyage as far as Gibraltar, when we ran into thick weather. Passing through the Straits we met a very heavy sea, with continuous rain and mist, which lasted until the thrilling moment I shall presently describe. We gave a wide berth to the Spanish coast, and having no sight of land or any observation of sun, moon or stars, were depending entirely on dead reckoning for our position. When we were off Finistère the westerly wind backed to south-west and blew a strong gale. She was a good ship, but rolled very heavily in the great swells. When we reckoned that we were about two-thirds of the way across the Bay and about one hundred and twenty miles from Ushant, the officers and myself met the captain in his cabin, in accordance with the daily routine, a quarter of an hour before noon.

The captain was a curious little, taciturn man, of few words and extremely plain speech, but of kindly disposition. The chief officer was a tall, masterful man, who thought the captain a crusty old woman. The second officer was a charming, dreamy individual, who looked like a poet,

and, indeed, was addicted to writing verses in his spare time. He was also a real expert in navigation, and I owe all that I know of that delightful art to his teaching.

On this occasion the ship was labouring heavily; we had not had a vestige of a sight of any celestial or terrestrial object for two whole days and a night, and nobody was in the best of tempers. In accordance with custom, each of the three of us produced our calculations of the position which we assumed our vessel to occupy on the chart and the course proposed to be steered. All three agreed pretty closely, and the course proposed in each case would leave Ushant about fifteen miles to the right of our course on the starboard hand, after making a big allowance for lee-way and an insetting current. The captain produced his chart, the little round circle with the dot in the middle showing his estimate of the ship's position, and the line showing the course for the next twenty-four hours, diverging entirely to the left of the course that the other three of us had proposed. The chief officer surveyed the chart with obvious irritation, with a pair of compasses measured the distance from Ushant to the nearest point of the proposed course and said: "Well, sir, I am all for caution, but you are taking your old packet forty-three miles west of Ushant, with no chance of our ever seeing the light or getting a sounding. We shan't know where we are, and in avoiding Ushant, you may pile her up on something else." The captain's weather-beaten face assumed a ferocious look. I see him now, holding on to the arms of his chair, as the vessel lurched and rolled, half rising from his seat and saying, very quietly in a kind of terrifying husky whisper: "Do you other two agree to what the chief has said?" The second officer said: "I think you are giving Ushant too wide a berth." The little man's eyes narrowed into tiny slits as he turned to me and said: "What do you say?" "Well——" I began. He said: "It isn't well, tell me what you think." I replied: "I agree with the chief." He banged his fist on the table and said: "I will see you all in Hell: there is her course." Out of his cabin we went, with our tails between our legs, and, when we got clear away, had a good grumble.

That night at 11 o'clock the wind had increased in violence but the rain had stopped and the mist was not so thick. I was on the bridge with the chief officer. He said to me: "That blasted old woman has robbed us of all chance of ever finding our position to-night. We might have sighted Ushant in this weather, if we had gone within fifteen miles of it." I said: "How would it be if I shinned up the fore-rigging and sat on the cross-trees? I might see the loom of the light over there." He said: "Yes, all right, go." I put a pair of night glasses in my pocket, climbed up the ratlines and sat on the fore cross-trees. With glasses and without, I strained my eyes to the right of our course

forrard, abeam and aft, looking for any sign of the light we so badly wanted to see. After a quarter of an hour I sang out to the chief officer: “I don’t see a sign of a light.” He shouted up to me: “Come down; you must be perished with cold; you’ll be thrown off by this rolling old tub if you don’t watch it. Besides, there isn’t a ghost of a chance of seeing the light.” As I turned round to prepare to clamber into the rigging on the weather side I distinctly saw the double wink of a light far away to the left of our course. I had learned the periods of the three lights of the island of Ushant and committed them to memory. I watched, counting the seconds of interval as best I could, two flashes and then a pause, and sure enough the periods coincided with the famous Ushant light. I roared out to the chief officer, seventy feet below me on the bridge:

“Ushant light broad on the port bow.”

“Impossible,” he shouted.

I roared back: “It is, why not stop her?”

He shouted back: “All right, I will send a quartermaster to verify.”

I saw him go to the telegraph to stop the engines: the quartermaster came running up the ratlines and, as I looked down, I saw the light of the captain’s cabin as he flung open his door and bounded out on to the bridge. I shouted to the quartermaster: “Look, there is the light,” and when he was only half-way up the rigging he turned and shouted down: “Yes, sir; flashing light on the port bow.”

“Full speed astern,” roared the captain, and I felt the vessel tremble with the strain of reversing the engines at full speed with a vessel going ahead at seven or eight knots. I clambered down the rigging and crept on to the bridge. I did not dare to go near the captain, who was conning the chart. My friend, the second officer, whispered to me: “He is going astern in the wake we have made as long as he can see it, then continuing astern by compass course the way we have come, on the off-chance of missing the rocks.” I said: “I suppose we must be in the middle of them.” He said: “Yes. How we came not to strike on our way in I do not know, but it seems to me fifty to one against our getting out.”

So astern we went for half an hour, with big seas breaking over our taffrail. Then we steered due west, still going astern, at half-speed, for about twenty minutes. Then we turned her round. By then I was on the bridge again. The captain turned to the chief officer. In the darkness I could not see

his face, but, from his voice, I could hear what he would have liked to say. As it was, with great restraint, he said:

"Chief, the course is due west for thirty miles; call me when you have run the distance," went into his cabin and slammed the door.

We looked at the chart. Certainly we had had a miraculous escape. Ushant is an island, and just inside it there is a narrow channel through which small ships may go in daylight. But east of this narrow strait is a mass of rocks, surrounding the Ile de Molène, and it was through these rocks we had come heading straight for that island of ill omen to seamen. How we came to miss them all must for ever remain a mystery. Had we struck the vessel was doomed, and us with it, for the sea was very heavy and the tide violent in the extreme. It may be remembered that not very long after the time of which I write the *Drummond Castle* made precisely the same error, and drove on to the Ile de Molène, nearly every soul on board being drowned.

When dawn broke we had run our thirty miles at half-speed. Our captain emerged from his cabin and said: "Lay a course for the Start"; the weather moderated and we reached our destination safe and sound. The chief officer said: "Well we must confess the old woman was right that time." The second officer said: "I am very glad to have had that experience; it will make a good poem." As for me, I thanked my stars for another lucky escape.

My second memory of compass and chart concerns a voyage from the Baltic to the Solent in a fourteen tonner.

In the year 1923 a friend told me that the Royal Danish Yacht Club would welcome a British yacht at their regattas at Copenhagen and Helsingör. My little yacht *Izme II*, a cutter of nine tons register, fourteen tons Thames measurement, thirty-one feet water-line, and a mast sixty feet high, had just been built. She looked like the King's yacht *Britannia*, seen through the wrong end of a telescope, but with a mast slightly higher in proportion. My friend Sir Thomas Royden told me at the time I was building her that within a few years they must of necessity build a great new Cunarder. I told him that if he followed the design of my yacht he would certainly get speed. He asked me the dimensions: to which I replied would he give me the length of his proposed boat.

He said: "I presume about one thousand feet long."

I replied: “Good; then on my design your new boat will have a mast eighteen hundred feet high.”

Anyway the *Izme II* was a delicious little craft and is still afloat, her mast having been considerably shortened.

I had to attend an important meeting four days before the regatta at Copenhagen began, so the only way was to send my little boat on by steamer to Hamburg in charge of Frank Downer and John Hookey, two young sailormen born near my home in the Isle of Wight, and join her there. All this was accordingly arranged by kind shipping friends at Southampton. The sixty-foot mast was unstepped, and the hull securely lashed on the deck of a little steamer of twelve hundred tons bound from Southampton to Hamburg. Directly the meeting was over I with my architect son John joined the Canadian Pacific *Empress of Scotland* at Southampton bound for Hamburg. She was a splendid vessel, surrendered to us by the Germans under the terms of the Peace Treaty. She was built as the *Kaiserin Augusta Victoria* and it was her first visit to a German port.

Near the mouth of the Elbe we passed the little vessel with *Izme II* on her deck. She had been delayed by head seas and was still making rather heavy weather of it. The captain of our great ship kindly steered close to her and we waved to Frank Downer and John Hookey, who were standing on the deck close to *Izme II's* hull. My son John and I felt extremely uncomfortable at thus leaving our two friends labouring along in the slow vessel while we steamed by on even keel in the great ship which was carrying us. The captain consoled us by telling me that they would be in calm water in a few hours and would be at Hamburg not half a day later than ourselves.

Strange things happened as we neared Hamburg. The coming of this great ex-German liner was known to all, and when about four miles from Hamburg we met river steamers crowded with excursionists waving German flags and jeering at us as we passed. This unconcealed resentment culminated dramatically. The berth assigned to us involved our making a turn to starboard at more than a right angle. Even with the starboard propeller reversing at full speed, and the port propeller going slow ahead with the helm hard over, it was only just possible to turn the great vessel round the sharp bend. On our starboard hand there was a large shed which prevented one from seeing into the inlet up which we had to go. I was standing right up in the bow to watch this manœuvre which the captain and the pilot had explained to me. Just as I was able to get a view of the inlet I saw a steamer of about three thousand tons charging down towards us at about ten knots. We had, perhaps, six knots of headway; our displacement

was more than thirty thousand tons. To stop our ship was impossible. The pilot and the captain saw the other ship bearing down on us at the same moment that I did. The only thing to do was to go ahead full speed with the port propeller, in order to swing round and cross the bows of the oncoming vessel. That she meant to ram us I then had no doubt, and now have none whatever; a strong ebb tide was coming out which helped to swing round our stern, while it brought on the other vessel at great speed. She could not port her helm and stand right across the stream without being obviously held responsible for the disaster in any maritime court. So she kept her course while our stern swung round, as it seemed, almost as quickly as a racing yacht going about. She passed so close that she actually touched the aftmost boat on our starboard quarter. We continued our way and berthed safely.

Who was responsible for this mad venture I do not know, but the position in Germany was then so desperate that the marvel is that more wild, mad things were not done. Looking back on that time, and what I saw and heard then and two years later when I went to Germany again, I can only record my view that Von Hindenburg achieved a miracle—for it was he who did it—in bringing Germany through the agony of despair to the comparative safety which she now enjoys.

I said good-bye to the captain of our ship with infinite regret, and, for some strange reason, asked him if he would give me a copy of the "Channel Pilot" for the North Sea, which I saw lying on his table, saying that I proposed to take my little boat back from the Baltic to the Solent, and that I knew that I had forgotten to bring a copy myself. He very good-humouredly gave it to me, and it so happens that if he had not done so I doubt if I should now be alive to recount our experiences.

Hamburg, unlike most great seaports, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world; but it was then a city of the dead. John and I noticed that we did not see one single private motor-car the whole two days we were there. This was not surprising, for we were there just at the moment when the mark finally collapsed, as the following incident will show. The *Izme II* duly arrived that same evening on the little vessel that had brought her from Southampton. We saw the manager of Messrs. Blum and Voss, one of the greatest shipyards in the world, who kindly arranged to disembark her, step her mast, and get her ready for sea. I invited him and his wife to dine with me the next evening. All next morning we were busy with *Izme II*; then to lunch at a famous hotel. We ordered lunch and a bottle of good hock. In this great restaurant there were only two other people lunching. The particular hock we ordered was priced at a hundred thousand marks a bottle, and the

exchange which was written up in the hall showed that this represented ten English shillings. The lunch took a long time in coming, but when it came it was very good. So was the hock. By the time we had finished lunch about an hour and a half had elapsed. The manager came to me and said:

"I must ask you to forgive me. I have just come from the bourse, and the bottle of wine which you are now finishing should be priced at two hundred and fifty thousand marks, in order that I may not lose on the transaction."

Of course I said that it was so good that nobody ought to bother about the price; but that a rise of one hundred and fifty per cent, in an hour and a half seemed rather unreasonable.

To this the manager replied: "Well, shall we agree to two hundred thousand marks?"

I laughed and said: "Yes, by all means," and paid the bill with two English pounds, receiving great packets of one thousand mark notes in change. During that day the mark fell from one hundred thousand to five hundred thousand to the pound.

By this time the *Izme II* was ready to start the following morning, and the manager of the great shipyard with his wife and niece duly came to dine with us on the shores of the lake on a beautiful summer's night. Before they came John and I rowed about in a boat and admired the singular beauty of the surroundings. During dinner the manager confided to me that in the course of the day the whole of his life savings had disappeared—not a fall of twenty or thirty per cent.; but everything in the way of savings had vanished. It was a strange and tragic experience. I am glad to know that this man and his family survived the shock; but not so with others. I was told two years later, on the best authority, that not tens, or hundreds, but thousands of well-to-do Germans had died in a few weeks of starvation in Berlin alone. Many more thousands had hastened their end by voluntary means. What could they do? In a civilized country in normal times there is always public assistance or private friendships to prevent actual starvation. Here there was no public assistance, for there were no funds available; no help from private friends, for all those private friends were starving too.

Leaving these strange scenes in fine weather and with a good easterly breeze, we soon found ourselves at Copenhagen—although the smallest, one of the most delightful capital cities in the world. The Royal Yacht Club provided us with a mooring and the first thing that happened was an invitation from the King of Denmark to dine on his yacht that evening. We accepted with gratitude, then rowed off to the Yacht Club in our dinghy and

made our number. On our return we found that another English yacht, rather bigger than our own, had brought up close to us. If I remember rightly, she was of about twenty-five tons. Frank Downer had been on board and found that they were short of stores of all kinds, and very exhausted after a bad crossing in the North Sea. I rowed across to them and there found Captain Dean, V.C., with a friend of his, a commander in the Royal Navy. They had left England five days before in fine weather, and when a few hours out had encountered one of those fierce storms that arise so suddenly in the North Sea. They had had a very bad time, and even those two exceptionally hardy and fearless men were pretty well all in. The wind had blown with a velocity of over fifty miles an hour from all points of the compass in turn. The steep, confused seas of the North Sea had compelled them to batten down everything, rendering sleep impossible and food difficult to cook. Finally, they had fetched up against the coast of Norway, one hundred miles north of Helsingfors, with a westerly gale blowing them on to a lee shore. Dean told me that their captain, a hardy East Coast mariner, had introduced him to a new method and a new phrase, which saved the ship and, presumably, their lives too. His friend the naval officer confirmed this view, and the captain, who was fetched along into the little cabin later, explained it.

He said: “We were all too tired and too cold to shift sail so the only thing to do was to lash the tiller and lace her along.”

I inquired what “lacing her along” meant, and the method was explained to me. The foresail must be drawn absolutely taut—not to windward, as when you heave to, or to leeward, as when you are close-hauled, but right amidships—that is to say, in line with the keel of the vessel. This is done by hauling it very tightly and lashing it to the mast with two or three turns of the stoutest rope you can reeve through the cringle. The effect, they told me, is that the vessel keeps pegging along just off the wind, but always making slightly to windward in her progress. Moreover, they told me that she shipped far less water and made better weather of it than by any other method of sailing, and that when a really big wave hit her bow and knocked her clean off her course she came back again by herself. However that may be, they had managed to sail their yacht right down the coast, just weathering each headland with a few miles to spare.

I have wandered about the world, north, south, east and west, in vessels of all sizes, including quite small yachts—at home, in the Mediterranean, in Australia, and in New Zealand—and for the benefit of others I record the information that the North Sea is a place to be avoided. The great oceans are far preferable in a very small sailing vessel.

The King and Queen of Denmark were most kind to us at dinner. We discussed yachting. The World War was too near to be a congenial topic of conversation. After dinner, when the King was conversing with others, I had the opportunity of talking to several leading men in Denmark who had also been invited to dinner. Of course, we talked about Free Trade and Protection. Denmark is a Free Trade country with an agriculture which flourishes with every apparent disadvantage in comparison with her neighbours. Not only had she a less fertile soil and a less congenial climate, but there is no sheltering tariff. To my surprise, all those with whom I conversed said that they doubted whether the Free Trade system in Denmark would survive. Although themselves responsible for the system, they advanced the arguments with which the late Lord Melchett made us familiar. They said the result of the War must be to force great aggregations of industry, both agricultural and other, in order to make use of the diminished amount of capital available. Another result, however, would be to compel each nation to follow England's lead in providing insurance benefit for all unemployed people. As a consequence of this the whole Free Trade theory would break down because, instead of employers and employed turning to other industries when foreign competition assailed them—as happened in the past—they would be stereotyped by the big Trusts of the capitalists and the insurance of the workmen in the trades in which they had hitherto made their living. As it was obviously cheaper and wiser to pay people to do something rather than to pay them to do nothing, it was better to put on a tariff sufficiently large to keep them at work, however economically unsound the system might be.

I recorded the conversation at the time, and, looking back on it, I see how right these men were in their forecasts. Throughout the world everything has happened as they foretold. In effect, each nation has adopted a sliding scale of tariffs to keep their men going in the jobs to which they have grown accustomed. England is an exception; but only a partial exception, for the Safeguarding Duties, as they are called, have provided the beginnings of the same system. I now wonder where the truth of the matter lies; but I am inclined to think that, although I regard the Free Trade doctrine as the most unassailable truth in human experience—put simply, that one's power to tax ends with one's own borders, and that one can no more make one's country richer by putting on taxes than one can lift oneself up when one is standing in a stable bucket by pulling at the handle—the Free Trade principle and National State Insurance cannot go together without disaster to the State.

The following day we started for Elsinore—as we English call it, and always shall call it because it was there that Hamlet talked with the ghost on the parapet. We raced there under handicap, on a brilliant summer's day, and the King's yacht won. *Izme II* went well, but did not save her time. However, as I had presented the cup and could not win it, John and I were quite consoled. That night we dined at the Yacht Club with cheery Danes—I suppose the race nearest akin to us. Certainly it was so that night. I made a speech; but, so far as I recollect everyone else did too.

The next morning there was a gale, and such a gale. We had been up half the night tending the anchor and throwing out first another anchor and finally our kedge. The whole of the narrow strait between Helsingör and Helsingfors, the opposite port in Sweden, was white with foam. The start was postponed, and I was told that the anemometer on the castle registered forty-eight miles an hour. We went over the castle at Helsingör and were shown the exact spot where Shakespeare's Hamlet talked with the ghost. It is strange how much more real Hamlet is to all the world than any real Prince of Denmark.

At two o'clock we were told the race would start at three, and my same informant told me that the anemometer was only registering forty-two miles an hour. John and I got on board and helped Frank Downer and John Hookey to take down three reefs in the mainsail; but, of course, our sixty feet built-up mast could not be reefed, and we wondered if she would stand up to it. As we manœuvred for the start we saw that most of our competitors had found it impossible to get under way. The King's yacht and two others were standing off and on, lying almost flat on the water. To our huge joy we found that *Izme II* stood up to it far better than the others, and that if the wind held we were the only manageable vessel of the lot. Just as we were nearing the line I put her about. Whether it was an exceptionally violent blast, or whether we were slow in letting go the lee runner, I do not know, but with a crash our beautiful hollow boom broke in half, and there were the two jagged ends flapping about in a forty-knot wind just above our heads. I took a coil of the main sheet and threw it at the end of the broken boom. By a miracle, it made itself into a hitch and held on. While I was holding on she came into the wind, we let go the halyards, and down came the sail. Downer threw over the anchor and let go the whole of our cable, and the anchor just held when we were within twenty yards of a lee shore. It was a very near thing, for if we had touched the ground we should have been pounded to pieces in that violent wind in less than half an hour. It was a great disappointment that we could not race; but we had saved our ship. The wind moderated a bit while the other boats went round, and we were towed off

and safely moored. Fortunately, we had a spare boom at Copenhagen, and this was brought to us during the night, so that we were enabled to race back with the fleet from Helsingör to Copenhagen. We were only just beaten in a good race, and that night we dined again on the Royal yacht with the King and Queen.

The next morning we started off on our long voyage from Copenhagen to Cowes. The most astonishing good luck attended us, and it was a wonderful cruise. I commend to all those who may meditate a voyage in a small cruiser to follow the route which I will now describe; but they must have a pilot from Copenhagen to Kiel. We sailed south along the coast of Denmark in a northerly breeze to a point about half-way down, and then into the narrow waters which lead through shallows and islands to a point only some thirty miles from Kiel. We were drawing six feet ten inches with all our water and stores on board, and at times we were in less than nine feet of water; but our pilot, a famous Danish gentleman who has a property in these regions, knew the place so well that we never made a mistake and never touched the ground. We had a little auxiliary engine in the *Izme II*, and an arrangement to detach the propeller when racing, but although we had fixed on our propeller before leaving Copenhagen, we hardly ever used the motor, having a fair wind all the way. When we emerged from our narrow waterways we landed our kind friend, the pilot, on the southerly point of Denmark and sailed across to Kiel in a spanking breeze from the north-east. There was the great harbour, the home of the German fleet that challenged our own, with not one single warship of any kind to be seen.

Arrived at the entrance to the Kiel Canal, our most amusing experiences began. We were flying the white burgee of the Royal Yacht Squadron, and the man in charge of the entrance told us that we were entitled to a free passage. After what our friend at Hamburg had told us I thought it better to say that I would prefer to pay. The man made out an elaborate bill and when I gave him an English pound note he solemnly presented me with the equivalent of 18*s.* 7*d.* in change. Our whole journey through this wonderful canal—for wonderful indeed it is—cost us 1*s.* 5*d.*

We then took on board a pilot, who asked us what speed we could steam. I told him five knots. He said:

"Then you must be towed."

"Oh, no," I replied, "we can sail at nine."

He said: "Very good, we will try. At the same time, you had better have plenty of petrol so that when the wind changes we can steam to where we

can pick up a tug."

During this time I had been looking at an inscription recording the opening of the new deep canal by the German Emperor in June 1914—as it seemed to me, the sure precursor of the World War.

All the Germans to whom I talked at this time were half dazed; some surly; some civil; but all hungry, and all dazed—no other word describes it.

The great lock gates were just opening when the man came along with the petrol. I shall not make the same mistake a second time; but I accepted the proffered tins and paid for them with a huge wad of hundreds of thousands of marks. In a moment we were towed through, set sail, and started on a wonderful voyage averaging about seven knots under sail all through the canal. It was evening when we started and we sailed through the night. The whole canal was brilliantly lighted by electricity, and there was a perpetual stream of vessels going through each way at about eight knots. Twice there were warning sounds and red lights shown and everyone had to tie up while a vessel went through. These vessels carried explosives or petrol. In the morning we approached Brunsbüttel and soon were tied up to a wharf. We slept for two or three hours and then went ashore to get a bath and breakfast. They were equally difficult to find, for the disappearance of the mark had affected them here as elsewhere. We were looking for a pilot to take us from Brunsbüttel into the Zuider Zee. One of the pilots had been down to see our yacht, and I ascertained at once that when they saw the height of our mast and the size of our ship they made up their minds that even starvation in Germany was preferable to a voyage in my vessel in the North Sea.

Meantime I had told Frank Downer to keep a close watch on the ship; but also to take such stores as he could get of eggs, milk and butter—two incompatible instructions, as the event proved. We had lunch at the only little hotel that was open in Brunsbüttel. While there, a corpulent gentleman turned up, said that he was the only pilot available, and that he was prepared to come with us for a fee of ten pounds. It struck me that he did not look much like a seafaring man; but on his assuring me that he lived at Brunsbüttel and knew the sea well, I engaged him.

At two o'clock we went on board, Frank Downer met me and told me the awful news that while he was buying the eggs, the butter and the milk, some unknown person had come on board and taken away all our charts. Of course, at sea without a chart one is really helpless. How else can one possibly know which way to steer in strange waters? Still, we had our pilot

and a good fair wind, so I elected to start. While we were heaving up the anchor John went round the quay trying to buy a chart; but it was of no avail. We cast off; with our great mainsail setting beautifully, we ran through the water at eight knots. Soon we saw the leading marks astern which our obese pilot informed us marked the exit into the main channel. A small steamer had gone out about four hundred yards in front of us. We followed on the leading marks and in her wake. When we had sailed a little way I observed that the steamer ported her helm and turned to her right, heading out to sea. I was steering and when we got to the point where the steamer had turned, I said to our fat friend, who was sitting to leeward, obviously very much alarmed at the angle of our ship:

"Don't I luff up and follow the steamer?"

He said: "No, no; keep on the leading marks."

We talked together in a mixture of English and German.

I carried on for a few hundred yards; the water seemed to change colour; and I shouted to the pilot: "Surely we must follow the steamer?"

He replied: "No, no," pointing backwards, "you keep on those marks."

I roared out to Frank: "Heave the lead." He made a cast and shouted out, "One and a half fathoms." In a moment I luffed up and put her about; but, even so, we stirred up the mud with our keel. We sailed back almost on our course for two or three hundred yards, and then, when I could see that I was in the wake of the steamer, put her about again, eased off the sheets, and sailed away at great speed towards the open sea. Then I turned to the pilot, who had fallen into the cockpit when we went about, and asked him in every language I could summon what on earth he meant by nearly putting us aground, and what did he really know about the channel. To this he made a most surprising reply.

"Never have I been so fast in any ship in my life, nor so near the water."

"But," I said, "are you not a pilot?"

He answered with these dreadful words: "No, no: but my wife and children they starve. I am a gardener."

And so indeed he was. He had made one voyage long before the War in a timber ship to the Baltic in some capacity; but he knew nothing whatever about the Channel, or any ship, or any sea. We could not miss the chance of the wonderful breeze that was sending us along at nearly eight knots, so I told him to sit down at the bottom of the cockpit and we would look after

him and land him at our first port of call. He thanked me very much, said he hoped he was not in our way, and curled himself up on one of the bunks in the saloon. During the rest of the voyage he suffered terribly from sea-sickness.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when we settled on our course. There was an eighteen knot breeze on our starboard quarter, and *Izme II* roared along in the calm water as fast as most tramp steamers could go. Then came the question of how to find our way home, for we had far to go. I pointed out to John that we were in for rather a remarkable adventure. The imperturbable John replied that I had forgotten that we had a Continental Bradshaw on board, and that the map contained therein would give us great assistance. It was only when it was getting dusk that I suddenly remembered the kind present of the captain of the *Empress of Scotland* of the appropriate volume of the "Channel Pilot." I asked Frank to look in one of my bags which he had not unpacked, and, sure enough, he found the precious volume. True there are no charts in this book; but there are sailing directions, courses, and descriptions of coasts of priceless value. So with the continuing favourable breeze we sailed out into the North Sea. Frank cooked us a wonderful omelette and opened two tins of sardines, and steered for the lightship while we enjoyed our meal. We were very happy, but I confess that it seemed to me rather a baffling problem to find our way in a fourteen-ton racing yacht with the Continental Bradshaw map and the "Channel Pilot—Part II." But the same good luck that had befallen me so often favoured us on this occasion. The wonderful easterly breeze held all through the night. We took turns at the helm, and I snatched an hour or two's sleep. At dawn we were out of sight of land. A thin mist covered the sea and the wind began to fall light. By ten o'clock we were in a flat calm. Our tank was half full of petrol and we had one spare tin which had come all the way from England. We also had the twenty-four tins bought at Kiel. I observed that the glass had fallen about a tenth since midnight, and it seemed likely that we were in for a head wind, from the west. We started up the engine and continued on a westerly course.

There was a long westerly swell, so that *Izme II* drove her bows into each oncoming wave and only did about three knots through the water. I began to wonder whether it was worth while to keep on pegging into the sea and whether it might not be better to lie to, and wait for a breeze. However, we had twenty-five tins of petrol as I believed, so I elected to keep the engine running and make what headway we could.

Soon a large steamer loomed out of the mist, astern of us, and very nearly ran us down. Not long after, another steamer, going the opposite way, passed us uncomfortably close. So we decided to steer away from the land in order to get a mile or two north of the great ocean highway, which leads from all the rest of the world to the port of Hamburg. When we had steered north for about two miles, we decided to replenish our tank with the remaining tin of petrol which we had brought from England. By some extraordinary piece of good fortune which I cannot explain we left about two pints of petrol in the tin. The mist had lifted slightly, and we could see several ships to the south of us, so we resumed our course towards the North Helder Lightship, from whence we hoped to make the entrance to the Zuider Zee. John had bought a gramophone and some records in Hamburg for six hundred thousand marks, and rejoiced my heart by playing Bach's Air on the G String, by Kreisler, and Gounod's "Ave Maria," by Heifetz. Then the engine stopped for lack of petrol and we filled up with one of the twenty-four tins we had bought at Kiel. In vain did we try to start the engine again; it would give an occasional cough, but that was all. Then Frank Downer said: "It doesn't smell like petrol to me." Nor did it, for, in fact, as we soon found, it was paraffin, and nothing we could possibly do would make it move our engine with a carburettor designed only for petrol.

So there we lay becalmed, far out of sight of land, in the North Sea, in a small racing yacht with a sixty-foot mast, a long westerly swell, and a rapidly falling glass. There was no sound except the creak of the rigging as we rolled in the swell and an occasional groan from the poor seasick gardener, curled up in a hammock in the fo'c'sle. Frank Downer cooked us a wonderful meal, while brandy and water was administered to the gardener. Still not a breath of air stirred. The sun went down in a golden mist and the swell abated. All night we could hear the thrash of the propellers of steamers passing to the south of us. Occasionally, fog rolled over, and the air was alive with the sound of horns and sirens. In the morning, there was still the flat oily calm, and we thought it wise to take careful stock of our provisions. We found that there was plenty to eat, but we only had water at full rations for another twenty-four hours. The glass had risen slightly, but was still low. Our situation was not entirely favourable, but my theory that things always turn out right in the end was again proved to be sound. At half-past ten we sighted the first ship we had seen for twenty-four hours. She was a three-masted schooner, with no sail set, coming up astern of us under power at about seven knots, or, at least, so we estimated from her bow wave. On the course she was steering, she would pass about a mile to the north of us, and she was only three miles astern. Now was the time to use the last of the real

petrol. We poured the precious pint and a half into our tank, started the engine and set a course to intercept the schooner. It was a desperate race, but we just won, and even as we got alongside of her, with a cough, the engine stopped. We shouted to the captain, whom we saw pacing the deck, to throw us a rope, but he paid no attention. "Throw my bow rope to that chap in the stern," I shouted to Frank. He threw the coil, and for a moment the man did not stoop to pick it up. At the last second, he put his foot upon it. The captain had slowed down to avoid colliding with us, but his vessel was still moving through the water at about three knots. The seaman on the schooner made fast his end of the rope, and it was an anxious moment when the strain came on the little bollard on *Izme II's* bow. But Frank skilfully eased off the rope, and only took the final pull when we had come to the end of it. There was then a frightful strain upon the rope and an ominous crack, but it just held, and there we were, in tow. I handed the helm to John, went up into the bow, and tried to persuade the captain to give us a tow as far as the entrance to the Zuider Zee. He said he could not possibly do that, as he was late already. He agreed to tow us for a couple of hours, and that was all. I asked could he pass us a stout rope for ours was very thin. After some further argument, they passed us a nice new light hawser. "Make that fast," I said to Frank, and whispered to him: "Now we are all right; he will tow us as long as we like, for he will never cut his new hawser!" So it turned out. All through that day and part of the night, at frequent intervals, the captain told us to let go, but we turned a deaf ear to his entreaties. I had already told him that I would pay him the full value of the towage (as I did in due course) and as we made hardly any appreciable difference to his speed, I had no compunction. As dawn was breaking the next morning we recognized the North Helder Lightship. Profusely thanking the captain, we cast off his rope, and the four of us gave them three loud cheers as they went on their way. The crew of the schooner cheered back, but the captain shook his fist.

We lay becalmed for an hour, and then a light southerly breeze sprang up. It will be remembered that we had no chart. We sailed south, and in half an hour saw low-lying land. My plan was to come in by the easternmost of the three entrances, but it was hard to find out which it was. Soon we were in two fathoms of water, then in one and a half. In the light air, we were moving through the water at about one knot, so John and I got into the dinghy with a lead line, and he rowed while I sounded. It took us a long time to find a channel, but at last we were successful, and in due course sailed between low sandbanks into the Zuider Zee. There was a thin mist, but to our right we could dimly see rising ground and houses, so still rowing ahead in the dinghy, and constantly sounding, followed by *Izme II* half a mile

astern, we came up to a charming little seaport with good worthy fishermen standing about on the little quay, who received us with great kindness. Here we landed the gardener. He was so overjoyed to see dry land that he jumped ashore almost before *Izme II* was alongside. I gave him the promised ten pounds and explained to one of the fishermen that he wanted to get back to Brunsbüttel. "That is easy," said the fisherman, "provided he has a passport." The gardener's face fell—he had no passport. I said to the gardener: "Shall I take you with me to Amsterdam, where I may be able to help you to get a passport?" He thought for a time; then looked at the *Izme II*, surveyed her tall mast and her tiny hull, and said: "No, she is beautiful, but I like to be off her." So we shipped one of the fishermen, who kindly volunteered to pilot us to Amsterdam, and sailed away, leaving the gardener pensively regarding us from the quay.

We had a fortunate voyage with a favouring breeze through the intricate navigation of the Zuider Zee to Amsterdam. We berthed in the yacht anchorage, and received every kindness from the Royal Netherlands Yacht Club. The captain of a local yacht volunteered to pilot us to Flushing through the canals. A wonderful pilot he was. Through small canals and big ones he took us, always under sail, the easterly wind still holding, to Dordrecht; then by big canals to Flushing. He knew the tide and currents so well that on one day we carried the stream with us for eleven hours; there was a strong wind, and at times the current ran at seven knots. We covered one hundred and thirteen miles in the eleven hours, I should think a record for so small a craft.

We left Flushing in the early afternoon of a glorious summer's day. The same easterly wind held, the tide was fair and we ran close past the land inside the sandbanks at a good nine knots over the ground. We were bound for Dover, and it seemed as though we should get there without incident some time that night. As we passed Zeebrugge, we stood in as close as we dared. Steering with one hand, with the other I pointed out the Mole, where Roger Keyes and his brave men had made the famous raid. I remember that I was just saying to John and our pilot: "That must be just the place where my friend, Hilton Young, had one arm shot off, but cheered on his men with the other," when Frank sung out from the bow: "Black squall on the starboard bow, sir, coming this way." It was indeed a black squall, and from the direction of the falling rain it looked as though the wind in it was north-west, and so dead on shore. I luffed up to get more sea room, and the pilot said: "I think it will pass to seaward." But just for once that wary seaman was wrong; it came straight at us at a great speed. I sung out to Frank to lower away the main halliard, hoping to get a reef in before the squall struck

us. But even when she was shaking head to wind, the little trams, which hold the sail and slide up and down the mast, would not come down. The only thing to do was to make the halliards fast again, and bear away to get steerage way on before the squall struck us, and thus hope to be able to luff up in the old wind quick enough to avoid being blown on to our beam ends by the new wind.

As nearly always happens before a violent squall strikes one, the old wind died away rapidly, and a minute before the new wind struck us we were in a flat calm. We had way enough for me to luff up to a point which I thought would make the wind strike us about forty-five degrees on the bow. By great good luck, this is what happened, otherwise I should not be writing this story now. Even as it was we were blown almost flat, so that water poured into the cockpit; still, the gear held, she rapidly gathered way and slowly righted herself a little. But we were still nearly flat upon the water, and kept shipping more water. The wind was extremely violent—the pilot said afterwards he thought well over sixty miles an hour—and the rain beat upon one's face and hands with such force as to cause acute pain. Moreover, one could not see half the length of the ship. So we tore through the water just off the wind for twenty minutes or more. Of course, we had not the least idea as to which way we were going, for the wind always shifts in these squalls. Every moment the sea increased, until we were charging into little steep waves eight or ten feet high. I was thankful that I had insisted upon all the standing rigging being made double the ordinary strength.

At last the wind abated, and by degrees the rain became less violent. In about an hour from when the squall struck us the rain ceased, and we saw that we were running along the land and much too close to it, close-hauled on the starboard tack. I put her about and stood five miles out to sea, pounding heavily into the waves. Then we went round again. But the wind was by now nearly dead ahead, and I saw that we should only just about fetch Nieuport. The wind had moderated to a stiff breeze, but the sea was increasing. When we got about half a mile from Nieuport, our pilot said to me: "The weather is getting worse; the wind will soon veer, and blow dead on shore. In this sea we cannot make to windward; my advice is to run into Nieuport." I said: "But it is nearly dead low water, there is only five feet over the bar and we are drawing seven." "Well," he said: "it is our best chance; the seas will lift her over the bar, and even if she breaks up, we shall be able to swim ashore in the calm water inside." This was a gloomy thought, for I loved my little ship; so I said: "I do not care how hard it blows; I can make to windward enough to keep us off the shore," and, against his advice, I put her about, and stood out to sea. It was indeed

fortunate that I did so, for after we had sailed about ten miles, of course getting further from Dover all the time, the wind began to moderate once more. We put her round again, and sailed along with decreasing wind and sea past Dunkirk. It was dark by then, but clear, and we could see all the lights. And so with a steady breeze from the north we sailed all night, and made Dover on a misty morning at 7 o'clock. There I landed the pilot with the grateful thanks of us all. Incidentally, at Dover we heard that the black storm which had struck us the previous afternoon had been the same great thunderstorm which had deluged London, filling up Underground stations and causing immense damage. It swept away into the North Sea, and after passing us, travelled into Germany, where it did more damage before it finally dispersed.

We sailed on to Folkestone, where I landed John, and then set sail for Cowes, with replenished stores, at 6 o'clock in the evening. I thought my troubles were over, and—so far as serious danger was concerned—they were. But at nightfall, when we were off the Royal Sovereign Lightship, Hookey was seized with violent pains. While Frank was attending to him, he was attacked by the same malady. So I had to heave my little ship to, tuck them both up in their hammocks, give them a sedative draught each and take charge of *Izme II* alone. And so I sailed all through the night. It was very beautiful, but the trouble was to keep awake. When morning broke, we were off Bognor; Frank had somewhat recovered, and gave me a helping hand. We sailed through the Looe, were becalmed for a few hours on the Portsmouth side of that narrow channel, but in the afternoon a breeze sprang up, and we sailed into Cowes picking up our moorings at 7 o'clock, after the most interesting voyage I have ever had in any ship.

When I landed at the Royal Yacht Squadron I found my two old friends, Sir William Portal, the Vice-Lieutenant of Hampshire, and Sir Philip Hunloke, who races the King's yacht *Britannia*. A month before they had chaffed me about the height of my mast and the great spread of canvas which I carried, telling me on no account to go outside the calm waters of the Solent. Hunloke said to me: "Well, I hope you have taken our advice and have not come from further than Portsmouth." I said: "I have come from the Baltic." So they drank to the health of my stout little ship and her crew.

CHAPTER XVI

MOTTISTONE MANOR

THOSE who have read anything of what I have written, either in this book or elsewhere, will have perceived that my philosophy is that every peril has its providence; that in some mysterious way what appears to be a disaster may well prove to be a blessing, and, over and over again, things which seem hopeless come right in the end. There could not be a better instance than the story of the old house in which I live.

Mottistone is part Tudor built in the middle of the reign of Henry VIII and part early Elizabethan; the date on the little porch which is the latest addition reads 1567. Certainly it is a gracious building. Sir Edwin Lutyens used to lecture about it to his class of students, and, with his inextinguishable desire for a pun on any subject, would say: "Here is a picture of Mottistone Manor. This is what a dwelling-house should be like. Why is it that it so appeals to the eye? It is because it is 'modest in manner.' "

I have often asked my architect friends why it is that the people who built houses in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seemed to find it impossible to build an ugly thing, whilst nowadays it seems to be so easy. I have never found a satisfactory answer. But whatever the reason may be, of the fact there can be no doubt. Even in the small space of the Isle of Wight there are six or seven manor houses, built at the time of, or soon after, the completion of Mottistone Manor—Northcourt, Westcourt, Arreton, Billingham, and, above all, Wolverton—each a delight for the eye to rest upon. Of course, I love Mottistone the best, for I have known it all my life.

Moreover, it is completely unspoiled and, indeed, unaltered. I like to think that if Elizabeth's Lord Burghley came here again—as he did in 1570 to claim his first bride—his comment would be: "I am glad to see you have kept the old place up"; for, indeed, nothing has been changed externally since his time. This is, of course, extremely unusual in the case of Tudor and Elizabethan houses. The temptation of successive owners to renovate and improve has nearly always been irresistible, thus depriving the structure of the extraordinary interest attaching to a house untouched for three or four hundred years.

Now comes the question: How is it that Mottistone remains the same as the day upon which it was finished? The answer is this. A misadventure of the first magnitude befell the house when it had been standing for nearly two

centuries. The exact date of this mishap to Mottistone is not recorded; but it is certain that it happened in the first twenty years of the eighteenth century. It is possible, indeed probable, that it was the result of the great storm which destroyed the British Fleet and practically all shipping in the Channel, an earthquake accompanying this phenomenal disturbance. Whatever the exact date, this is what happened.

Mottistone stands at the foot of a wooded glade, stretching about six hundred yards due south from the hills above the sea. The glade starts as a narrow gorge, then broadens out to two or three hundred yards; then narrows again, so that where the house stands it is only about sixty yards between one steep bank and the other. About one hundred yards south of the house stands Mottistone church, and the glade then spreads out and is lost in the open fields which stretch for three-quarters of a mile to the waters of the Channel.

On the day or night of the disaster over a thousand tons of sandy earth were dislodged from the high bank to the east and north of the house and fell down upon it, covering it almost up to the eaves. The owners of the house at that time were the Dillingtons, who occupied Mottistone between the time when the Chekes left it and when it came into the possession of my family. Whether they lacked the initiative, or the money, or both, to cope with the disaster, I do not know; but the fact remains that for more than two hundred years the house stood with its beautiful, simple southern façade facing the sun, and the whole of the back of the house buried in earth. Viewed from the courtyard the house looked just the same as before; but, in fact, it had been converted into a kind of cave dwelling with no windows at the back. It ceased to be a manor house and became a farmhouse, the local squire migrating to another house not far away. The sunk garden became a farmyard, and the greater part of the garden and all the orchard became merged in the long wooded dell which stretches from the manor house up to the druidical stones on the top of the range of sand hills. As a consequence of the house being buried in earth at the back, although built on sandy soil, it became excessively damp.

When I was a very little boy I used to come each morning to get a glass of milk from the farmer’s wife, a charming old lady who was very kind to me. Her husband, Mr. Charles Brown, was a great character and one of the best farmers in the Isle of Wight. He farmed six hundred acres with great success. He had wonderful teams of cart horses with tinkling bells and several stalwart sons. I remember my father telling me that he said to

Charles Brown: “I have got three sons and I find it rather difficult to get them up in the morning. Now how do you manage that, Mr. Brown?”

He answered in broad, Isle of Wight dialect: “I ’lows, Masr Charles, as I gets they up with a pitchfork.”

I remember one day Mrs. Brown took me into a dark room at the back where the beer, cider and ginger wine were kept. Water was standing on the flag stones, and she said that nothing would keep it out. However, all the time concealed behind the successive layers of rubble and plaster, which had been put on inside in order to try to keep the water from oozing through, there was a splendid Elizabethan wall of squared stone, four feet thick, with two mullion windows. This gloomy room is now light and airy, and, like all the rest of the house, remarkably dry.

When I decided to dig out the house and go to live in it, I had nearly everybody against me except my son John, now well known as an architect, but then just commencing his career after his return from the World War. My local friends told me that no purse would stand the cost of digging and taking away this great mass of earth, shoring up the walls, if any, or building new ones, and putting in a damp course all round. To this my son’s reply was that if we set to work with local labour the actual cost would not be very great; that a house with such a beautiful façade must have good stout walls all round; that far from the whole building falling down when the earth was removed—as many prophesied—it would help it to stand up for centuries to come; that damp courses were a modern fad and quite unnecessary, and that it would turn out to be an exceptionally light and dry house. My son was proved to be right in every particular.

The digging out of the house was a great adventure, like an excavation at Pompeii. Altogether thirteen hundred tons were removed, and there were disclosed strongly-built walls and beautifully carved mullion windows, undamaged, and indeed, apparently preserved by the sandy earth which had rested against them for more than two hundred years.

I was sustained in my belief, which my son shared, that we should find the house intact, by some knowledge of the family who had built it—The Chekes of Mottistone Manor. I reasoned that people who had done so much in other ways would be sure to build a sound, strong house, designed to stand for hundreds of years. One of the first of the Chekes of Mottistone was Governor and Captain of the Isle of Wight in the middle of the fourteenth century. Then followed a succession of Chekes, all of whom appear to have taken a leading part in Isle of Wight affairs. Some of them went to London,

where, also, they did well. But the best known of the family was Sir John Cheke, Secretary of State and Privy Councillor, whose sister Mary married Sir William Cecil (afterwards Lord Burghley) as his first wife, and thus became ancestress of the present Marquess of Exeter.

Local legend has it that the men of the Cheke family of that day were very tall and the women very beautiful. It seems probable that the theory that Mary was of great beauty has some foundation in fact. Sir William Cecil had high ambitions, and would, naturally, if his heart were not affected, choose as a wife a lady of wealth or position, or both. The Chekes, no doubt, were a gentle family; but we know that Mary had no money, for, after the death of her father, she lived with her mother, who had a small post at the University, in a lodging in Cambridge, with very little of this world's goods. I therefore think that Sir William Cecil must have been swept off his feet by Mary's beauty. I had a curious confirmation of this view. It may be remembered that this ancestress of the Exeter family died after her boy was born and that not long afterwards Lord Burghley married a wealthy lady from London. Lord Robert Cecil has told me that amongst the manuscripts at Hatfield is a letter from the great Lord Burghley to his eldest son by his second marriage, who afterwards became the first Lord Salisbury. In this letter the father advises his son about marriage. He says: "You may wonder whether it is best to marry for money or for beauty. I know about this from my own experience; and I recommend you to marry for money."

Fortunately for the Cecil family this advice was frequently disregarded.

However, to return to Sir John Cheke, whose tragic story is now well-nigh forgotten. It was after he had been some years at Cambridge University that he formed a close friendship with Sir William Cecil, and together, for a time, they swiftly climbed the ladder of success. Cheke, who was born in the year 1514, excelled in the Classics, especially in Greek, and took a high degree. He was made a Fellow of his college, St. John's, in 1529, at the early age of fifteen. It was then that he became an ardent reformer, protesting against the claims of the Pope; he wrote and spoke much on this theme. We know that he corresponded with Erasmus and Martin Luther. Perhaps this was the reason why, when the chair of Greek was founded at Cambridge in the year 1540, Henry VIII appointed him the first Regius Professor.

Cheke seems to have been a combative character, for as Regius Professor he introduced the new method of Greek pronunciation which survives to this day. There was much opposition to his method, and no less a person than Bishop Gardiner, the Chancellor of the University, led the revolt

against Cheke's innovation. Nevertheless, the indomitable Cheke got his way.

Shortly before the death of Henry VIII in the year 1547 Cheke was chosen to be tutor to Prince Edward. He imbued his young master with his love of the classics, especially Greek. The curious will find a reference to this in one of Milton's odes. On the death of Henry VIII Cheke was confirmed as adviser to the young Sovereign, who succeeded as Edward VI. He became member for Bletchingley in the year 1547. He resigned his seat on being appointed Provost of King's College in 1548. In 1552 he was knighted, and in 1553 was sworn of the Privy Council and appointed one of the principal Secretaries of State.

Then came Cheke's downfall, ending in pathetic tragedy. On the death of Edward VI in 1553, his Protestant zeal impelled him to join the Duke of Northumberland in placing Lady Jane Grey on the throne. He was duly sworn in as principal Secretary of State, and so acted during Lady Jane's brief reign of nine days. Then the ruthless Mary beheaded Lady Jane Grey, threw her Secretary of State, Sir John Cheke, into the Tower and confiscated all his estates and property of every kind. It was assumed by his friends that he would share the fate of his royal mistress; but he must have had powerful friends—no doubt Cecil was one of them—for after a year of imprisonment in the Tower he was released on condition that he would permanently reside abroad.

He went first to Basle, where he lectured and wrote; then to Padua, where the University invited him to give lectures on Greek. Finally, he settled at Strasbourg, lecturing and writing, as he phrases it, "for a living." All this time he was in constant touch with the Reformers, Melancthon and the successors of Luther and Erasmus. Their letters were supposed to be secret; but from what afterwards happened it is pretty clear that Philip of Spain knew all that was going on.

An added grief to Cheke was that his wife, to whom he was devoted, had not been permitted to accompany him. After two years of exile he obtained permission for his wife to leave England. She was only permitted to go as far as Brussels to meet him, and accordingly, in the summer of 1556, Cheke started from Strasbourg to join his wife there. No doubt she had much to tell him of politics and persecutions in England; much, too, about Mottistone and his friends and relations in the Isle of Wight. But only short leave had been given her, and at the end of three days she was bound to return to England by Antwerp. Accordingly Sir John Cheke, with his friend Sir Peter Carew, started off from Brussels to Antwerp to say good-bye to his wife

when she boarded the ship at Antwerp. Half-way between the two cities the emissaries of Philip of Spain fell upon the little party, brought them in captivity to Antwerp, accompanied them to England and handed Cheke and Carew over to the Governor of the Tower. Carew was promptly executed, but, to everyone's surprise, Cheke was kept alive.

The episode had created much stir, and, indeed, indignation. Sir John Cheke was well known; he was not only an ex-Secretary of State and Privy Councillor, but was a protagonist of the Protestant cause. What right had Philip of Spain to arrest an Englishman? it was asked. But the reason why he was spared the fate which had befallen so many other zealous Reformers was soon seen. Cheke, though still a young man of only forty-two years of age, had suffered severely in health, which had been aggravated by the extreme hardships of his journey. He was constantly visited in his cell by two priests, and by Doctor John Peckenham, the Dean of St. Paul's.

It so happened that, before his fall, Cheke had done his utmost to convert Peckenham to his views on Religious Reform. Peckenham had refused, and Mary had promoted him, as Catholic Dean of St. Paul's. No doubt this was why he was chosen to try, in his turn, to convert Cheke from Protestantism to Catholicism. Some accounts boldly state that the Dean's success was due, not to his eloquence, but to threats of torture and the stake. What the truth of the matter may be we shall never know. What is certain is that, to the dismay of Reformers throughout Europe, after some weeks of constant visits from the priests and the Dean, Sir John Cheke was received back into the Catholic Church by Cardinal Pole. In spite of his protests he was compelled to make two recantations in public.

At the end of the year he was released from the Tower, broken in health and spirit, and, finally, overcome by shame and remorse, he died on the 4th September, 1557—"carrying," as the chronicler records, "God's pardon and all good men's pity along with him."

I have found no records of Sir John Cheke at Mottistone; but when we were digging out the back of the house we came across a great quantity of little tokens used in those days for the payment of wages, which, the numismatists told us, were made in Strasbourg in the early part of the sixteenth century. It seems probable that these tokens were sent as presents by Cheke to his cousin Thomas, the then owner of Mottistone.

Although the fate of Sir John Cheke was tragic, his beloved Mottistone has seen much human happiness, for, indeed, the scene on which my eyes rest as I write these words is of such surpassing beauty that all anxieties

seem to pass away. I do not suppose there can be any people in the world who love their home better than my wife, my children and myself. I confess that it seemed to me, when I first planned to restore Mottistone to its pristine beauty, a strange coincidence that the most famous member of the family who built it should have been a Secretary of State and a Privy Councillor, and that, nearly four hundred years later, another on whom exactly the same offices had been bestowed should make it his home.

I said much of what I have written here to my well-beloved friend the late Lord Birkenhead, when I stayed with him on his little yacht last year. He pondered for a time, and then said:

"Let us try to write an inscription which we can put in the porch, embodying in a few words what you have told me."

This is what he wrote:

> "Haec domus aedificata est a Cheke, olim gubernatore hujus insulae. Ejusdem familiae primarius, sed non primus, Johannes Cheke, Consilio Regni adfuit prudens monitor; regnante Edwardo Sexto summus creatus est Regis Secretarius.
>
> "Post incredibiles vices, regnante Georgio Quinto Johannes Seely, aedium artificer, restoravit curavitque dirigente patre suo Johannes Seely, Milite, Regis concilario, summo Secretario Regis.
>
> "Prosit Haec domus
>
> "Comes de Birkenhead."

I suppose the nearest translation would be:

> "This house was built by Cheke, one time Governor of this Island. Of this family the most famous, though not the first, John Cheke was a wise tutor to his sovereign and was raised to the Privy Council. In the reign of Edward VI he was appointed a Secretary of State.
>
> "After incredible vicissitudes, in the reign of George V John Seely, architect, restored it to its pristine beauty under the direction of his father John Seely, soldier, Privy Councillor, Secretary of State.
>
> "God's blessing on this House.
>
> "Earl of Birkenhead."

I have come to love very deeply these native island folk, amongst whom I have spent most of my life. They are different from any other people in the British Isles and it may well take a lifetime to understand them; but they are a great-hearted people, with a conception of loyalty to their kith and kin which carries them to every length of self-sacrifice, and although they regard all the rest of the world as "overners," in moments of real emergency and danger they are prepared to hazard life itself even for these despised strangers.

In days gone by there was much smuggling on the coast of the Isle of Wight. My friend, Colonel Wilfrid Ashley, found amongst the papers of the great Lord Palmerston at Broadlands a report of the captain in the Royal Navy who was in charge of the revenue men of the island which casts an interesting light on their activities in those days—one hundred and twenty years ago. The report, which was furnished to the Lords of the Admiralty, showed conclusively that the smuggling of brandy must have been on an enormous scale. I live on the lonely coast where the brandy was smuggled in. Curiously enough, it is more lonely now than it was a hundred years ago. Moreover, there are fewer coastguards, while the duty on spirits is higher than in the palmy days of smuggling and the profits of running a cargo would be correspondingly greater. But a strange thing has happened; these sturdy islanders have abandoned rum-running and have sought and found their adventure in saving life from shipwreck. My grandmother christened the first lifeboat launched on this coast about eighty years ago. Every able-bodied man with any knowledge of the sea must belong to the lifeboat, otherwise the boat could not be manned. The boat to which I have belonged for the last thirty-five years, the Brooke lifeboat, has saved two hundred and sixty-four lives. The island lifeboats between them have saved over a thousand. In almost every case these rescues have been effected from vessels wrecked on the rock-bound coast, with huge seas sweeping over them. In all these years never once has a lifeboat failed to respond to the call for assistance, nor has loss of life deterred the islanders from continuing the service. On one night of fierce storm, when I was a little boy, three lifeboatmen were washed away and drowned, but the boat was manned again in the height of the storm, the doomed vessel, the *Castle Craig*—was reached for the second time, and nearly all the crew were rescued.

We live and have our being in the sound of the sea. Sometimes a gentle murmur, generally a dull moan. Before a great storm, silence, then a thundering, echoing roar, then in a few hours, all at once, a noise like a hundred express trains rushing through a cutting, and then a great wind which obliterates all other sounds. At last the calm, the warm sun lighting up

the long range of cliff and down, the receiver of wreck holding his auction on the beach, and the placid, if not very profitable, life of English agriculture resuming its normal course. Living in these conditions we all have the sense, except for a few brief months in a calm summer, that we are on active service in a land of surpassing beauty, with a frontier held by a neighbour, who can be a good friend, but a terrible foe. Our neighbour is the sea, whose voice is ever in our ears. And so it has come about that these people have developed in a different way from most of their fellow-countrymen. In quiet times they seem to be less alert than others, but in the hour of danger or adversity both men and women find reserves of strength quite unsuspected. Fishermen, farmers, agricultural labourers, a few squires, a few doctors, a few "ladies and gentlemen of private means," as we are told to describe them in the Census, loving sport of every kind to a remarkable degree, with a sense of camaraderie and an absence of all sense of superiority or inferiority which astonishes all strangers who come here.

They are indeed a remarkable people. Boys from elementary schools become captains of great merchant ships, or distinguish themselves in the Royal Navy, and this in numbers out of all proportion to the population; and so with the girls, who get scholarships and rise high in the teaching profession. One outstanding fact about the girls is their good looks. If anyone doubts this, let him come to see, and if anyone doubts the claim which I have made for the great virtue of courage in the men who are my neighbours on this island, let him come to any part of the South Coast on a day of south-westerly storm and watch the breaking sea. Then let him remember that for nearly a hundred years no lifeboat, when summoned, has failed to brave those seas, and he will, I am sure, concede the claim and discover why one loves these people and rejoices to live amongst them. Jacobs, Hayters, Downers, Jackmans, Jolliffes, Ways, Chekes, Cottons, Ratseys, of all classes and all degrees, loyal in adversity, brave in danger, respectfully I salute you.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Links to chapter sections have been added to the Contents for reader convenience.

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Fear, and be Slain--Adventures by Land, Sea and Air* by John Edward Bernard Seely (Baron Mottistone)]