MANSION HOUSE of LIBERTY

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BY PHYLLIS BOTTOME

OLD WINE
PRIVATE WORLDS
INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE
THE MORTAL STORM
DANGER SIGNAL
MASKS AND FACES
MANSION HOUSE OF LIBERTY

MANSION HOUSE OF LIBERTY

by

PHYLLIS BOTTOME

"Behold now this vast City: a City of refuge, the mansion house of liberty, encompast and surrounded with his protection . . ."

— MILTON, *Areopagitica*

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TO

ALL THOSE WHO LOVE HUMAN BEINGS
BETTER THAN THEY LOVE POWER

FOREWORD

All visits to the British Isles begin, and end, with a ship. All the winds of England blow to and fro from the surrounding sea. Sea gulls can be found in almost every county. The scenery of Britain changes with the movement of unseen tides.

Although the sea is often out of sight it is never really out of the mind of an Englishman. He knows it subconsciously as a babe knows its mother's breast. The Englishman knows he is dependent on the sea, both for sustenance and for all communication with the outside world. Without the sea, an Englishman would be as homeless as an orphan child.

When Hitler set out to master the world, he only overlooked one obstacle, and it must have seemed to him a very small obstacle—a mere twenty miles of rather unstable water. This narrow channel would naturally seem to an Austrian, who has no intimate knowledge of the sea, to be without either practical or spiritual significance. Perhaps Hitler—this shaker of men's habits—did not realize the stubbornness of the Island-born; nor how they are gifted by birth and tradition to be as incalculable, and as adjustable, as is the element upon which their life depends.

Beneath the meek serenity of a summer sea, terrific forces sleep, and just such forces lurk beneath the mild and often expressionless exterior of an Englishman—and can be stirred into as terrible an awakening.

"But why," one can imagine Hitler asking himself, "having swallowed without a murmur the total loss of a free and democratic ally such as Czecho-Slovakia,—a country literally bristling with armed men and possessing a highly efficient air force; the Škoda works; the secret of the Maginot Line; defensive mountains; the road to the Roumanian oil fields and Bagdad,—why strain at swallowing a small loss such as Poland—not even an Ally, a country with no air force; next to no modern armaments; and no Russian pact with which to defend an extremely stabbable back?"

It was a problem—but there was a greater problem in store for Hitler—perhaps the greatest one of all—that very rough and realistic warrior, Winston Churchill! And did England—who had been crying out simply for comfort and peace, and to be let alone with the good meals of long ago still nourishing her—did such an England *want* a Warrior? What had Ribbentrop

been about—had that inspired Svengali failed to mesmerize his English Trilby with his anti-Bolshevik lullabies into a sleep so profound that he could turn her into a Nazi without her being in the least aware of it? What dread face was that rising up behind the appeasers—a round firm face with heavy jaws; a face lit by atrociously unpleasant laughter? There were a lot of other faces too—the faces of some of those complacent and inexpressive "yes-men" who had been responsible for the disastrous cotton-wool period that preceded the war, now looking roused and revitalized.

With infinite respect, even with some regret, this strange country pushed the appeasers gently aside, not even for the moment very far aside; but just enough to permit of the one great statesman she possessed taking the helm, out of their astonished hands. In the blackest hour of her history, England gave Winston Churchill his eleventh-hour chance to save her. That horrid nightmare of Hitler's worst fears at last stood astride the whirlwind!

Churchill had grasped the Dictator's aim, in time to prevent war taking place; though he had not been allowed either to avoid it—or to prepare for it. His words had been disregarded; his proofs had been suppressed; his talents had been ignored. Yet the very same England that had cheerfully acquiesced in all these shocking blunders now suddenly took her Churchill to her heart—and was prepared blissfully, and with serene confidence, to do and die for him! It must be admitted that both Hitler and Mussolini had some excuse for their astonishment. Nor had Ribbentrop been wholly wrong in the statements he had set before his masters. There was a part of England determined on a peace to be paid for by her fellow democracies; arrogant with the sloth of a quarter of a century steeped in Victory; guilty of money-conditioned thinking; apparently incapable of a vision beyond her skin and her pocket. But there was also an England unimaginable to Ribbentrop—an England determined on freedom, victory at any price—for her neighbours as well as for herself; an England active as a Disney film—pouring out her riches like water, selflessly fighting for humanity, and for the future of mankind.

Dorothy Thompson spoke the exact truth when she cried out, in the heat of her generous passion for a country she had long and faithfully criticized—and as faithfully loved: "Churchill *is* England!"

It is true that England has now to pay the price of her former blunders; and has had to see others pay it. She woke too late to save the Poles. Poland is now a tortured graveyard—her people stamped into the earth, her food and her resources used for her conquerors; and after Poland, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Norway, France! What a holocaust of fallen countries

swept over by a flood of equally helpless armed men, whom nobody loves; and who—drugged and diseased by Goebbels' propaganda—long shut away from the world's healthy condemnation—seem surprised that nobody loves them.

But there are still Austrians; still Czechs; still Poles; still Dutch; still Norwegians; still Belgians; still Danes; still French, and still Greeks; and as long as there are these men, they *are* the countries that belong to them!

Even Hitler and Goering know that there are still Poles, fighting side by side with the British and taking their toll from every German that they meet up in the air. Dutch ships and Norwegian play their great part upon the haunted seas; and every crack in Europe that he can creep through brings us a fighting Czech.

Belgium and France are writhing towards us from their half-choked colonies, and what men we succeed in gleaning from them are all heroes to the core.

The great sons of Britain—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa—stand by her side. Our dark brother of India; lands full of friendly Arabs; men of Malay and far-off tropical isles—are all eager in our defence. Nor must we overlook those heroes without battlefields, who know they have no chance, and who die daily in Germany itself, in her foul prisons, her vile concentration camps, or kneeling upon her senseless medieval block. Nor should we overlook—as, alas, in England and the United States, we have only too often overlooked—the immense potential assets we possess in the Refugees! Unlike those who merely fly from danger, or for selfish reasons only, these men have often flown from material security, for the love of freedom; or they were men of a great race, treated as animals have never yet been treated, who have always served the countries they distinguished by their talents: Jewish scientists, artists, and business men; perhaps among them some who were saints. These are the real Germans—Jews or Christians: such men as Thomas Mann, Werfel, Feuchtwanger, Adler, Freud, Haffner, Conrad Heiden, Otto Strasser, Rauschnigg—and a host of tried men and true—to whom we should turn for help to build the sounder Germany of the Future.

It is out of these Refugees that we should make a lasting peace if we but knew how to use them!

The victims of Nazi Germany are the picked men and women of Europe, who have escaped or died under the rule of gangsters. The dead we can but honour; we might at least make use of the living!

In the long history of man, even this war will one day become an incident, but the peace that should arise out of it must be a planned and lasting affair or herald the destruction of mankind.

It can be made lasting if all of us suffer enough to understand each other. The Nazis themselves cannot understand, or they would not be Nazis. Their creed—their practice—and their aim is Force. Violence against persuasion; tyranny against freedom; hate against love! Their punishment must be meted out to them—as criminals at the bar of the Civilized World. Every Nazi should receive the punishment due to the crimes he has committed against his brother men; but we should be prepared to offer complete co-operation to every German who is *not* a Nazi. What her spirit is, Germany herself can prove to us, when we have conquered the Nazis and broken up the Gestapo —by her voluntary overthrow of her army which was built upon Force, and has bred within itself the seeds of a worse and more implacable Force. If we can break the Nazis from without—as we, on both sides of the Atlantic, now propose to do—Germans themselves must be prepared to turn Germany, from within, into a permanent training ground for Peace.

If we should lose this war, we should have to wait as toads under a harrow wait, till some aroused and freedom-loving spirit, in the conquered lands, lifted the harrow from us.

But if, as we have good grounds to hope, by timely co-operation, and a sure intent, we English-speaking people—acting from the four corners of the globe and from both sides of the Atlantic—succeed in pushing back this evil Power, we must prepare ourselves not only with every technical device at our disposal, but in our spirits. We must never forget that we are not only fighting against "Principalities and Powers" but against a Swastika—an empty cross with hooks, rather than a cross with a Human figure on it drawing us not by force but by love.

Whatever we may feel about Christianity, the crux of what we are fighting for is the human spirit. Should the Nazis win, there would be a world without human spirits; a world of conscienceless State slaves—and God forbid that we should live under any such security! In Germany, in Japan, in Italy, and in all the lands conquered or suppressed by them, our fellow human beings have been tortured—we know this not as atrocity stories on the lips of sensation-mongers, but from highly unemotional and restrained people, such as Government officials, who when they say they have seen evidence of "physical maltreatment" are apt to minimize, rather than to exaggerate, the damage they have witnessed.

It will be, in the days ahead of us, our terrible duty not to flinch from using the utmost rigour against Force-lovers, either in enemy lands or in our own; and it is equally our duty now, and in the future, to give the utmost protection and fair play to those who are the victims of such Force.

Germany has trained herself for war as no other country in the world has ever trained herself. Her aim was antisocial and therefore wholly evil; but for such a purpose her training was meticulously right. If we would succeed in withstanding the shocks brought against us by her skilled and inimical Force, we too must train ourselves, with an equal ardour and efficiency—but towards the aim of freedom and good-fellowship.

Our opportunity is the measure of our faith.

"Which of these two equally matched Warriors will be victorious?" a Chinese student asked a sage four thousand years ago. "The one who has the most pity," replied the sage; "in fact he is already victorious."

PHYLLIS BOTTOME

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Mansion House of Liberty

CHAPTER I
A REGION OF THE SEA

At eight o'clock in the morning of June the 4th, 1940, my husband and I, with two American officials, sat round a table in the private sitting-room of the Vanderbilt Hotel, close to the New York docks.

We had crossed the Atlantic many times before safely upon our lawful business; and had known these two men as courteous officials—part of the general routine of travel. But we had never known them like this: for though they were carrying out their legal duties, and we were signing the forms they had brought us for that purpose, they were now our brothers. They had come, voluntarily, long before their day's work should have begun, sacrificing their breakfasts, to speed and help us on our journey across the haunted seas, home to a beleaguered England.

One was an Italian by birth, who had loved freedom better than Italy, but who, although he had long since become a naturalized American, had all the fiery courtesy and kindness of his race; the other was a quiet American with an English name. What we talked of and felt was not the business we were conducting; but what France could face and what England must face.

The B.E.F. was already threatened; the Belgian Army, under the hammer blows of dive-bombing and tanks, was sorely shaken. Holland was swallowed up. The daily toll upon the seas, before the new magnetic mine was countered, was a heavy one.

We had had nine months of uneasy fumbling war behind us, led by men who had already been fooled by our enemies; men who had promised us peace, where there was no peace; and who were therefore hardly to be

counted upon as leaders during a war which was certainly going to be a real war.

Now at last we had Churchill at the helm. What he promised us was toil and sweat, blood and tears; and he trusted us to take them. This was the real *Blitzkrieg*, a *Blitzkrieg* the ignorant had believed would be in our favour on the safe side of that last of all our Wish Dreams—the Maginot Line.

Our two American friends knew all about our weaknesses; perhaps they knew them better than we did, but from the bottom of their kind and friendly hearts—in the hour of our adversity—they wished us well.

The coffee that we shared with them was like a sacrament, binding our two countries together.

Later in the morning we had to face a bitter personal parting; but the heart of America was behind that too. From three thousand miles away, Hollywood sent us a farewell gift. In the New York studio of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, we two and our dearest American friend were allowed to see together the completed film of *The Mortal Storm* two hours before sailing. This film had been the purpose of our seven months' visit, and was our final message to the hearts and minds of America; by it we had hoped, not to drag them into the war, but to awaken them in time to what must happen to humanity if the Swastika took the place of the Cross.

We were content now to go back to our own land, and face the "mortal storm" that we knew awaited us.

My husband was to serve again as a soldier at fifty-five, having already served his country from 1914 to 1918, a quarter of a century earlier—in the first part of the same war. Germany was at that period of her forceful history fighting against the three great Democracies of the world; and now we knew she was fighting against *every* Democracy in the world—as well as against every freedom-loving citizen of her own state-ridden land.

The quarter of a century in between seemed like a long fantastic dream—in which the Dictatorships prepared with passionate conviction to execute their crimes, and the Democracies failed to serve "in spirit and in truth" their own immortal principles. Nevertheless, in the Eleventh Hour, we had found a great and generous Leader, worthy of our neglected cause; and those who were awake and those who still slept were being shocked alike, by the ruthless deeds of our enemy, into a spirit of sacrifice and courage.

The lean grey shadow of our ship had a familiar name. We were nine days upon the sea. She took us, blind and alone, through unknown regions of

the Atlantic Ocean, upon her secret course. We passed through fog and gale; through chill blank days of neighbouring icebergs, into a sunlit-whipped, forget-me-not sea. Planes were packed tightly here and there between decks; high walls were built of tinned food. We were being hunted by an enemy; but we were accompanied by the gifts of friends.

On the ship we had a strange mixed set of fellow passengers. There were so few of them in the First Class that we knew them all by sight.

There was the usual semi-smart group of smoking-room people common to our own and to other nations—drinking a great deal, talking their clipped small talk; expensive, loose-witted—Nazi by-products; inclined to hope that their brother Nazis would be so powerful that we should be unable to do much about them, and could therefore soon make an agreeable peace in which they could keep their money—and go on being loose-witted.

There were people with real business to perform, who kept quiet and only became recognizable, or approachable, towards the end of the voyage.

There was a highly intelligent liberal-minded Englishman who was our chief companion—very ill, and of undaunted courage. He was going home to perform a great task, if he could live to do it. There was a group of young people who played games, and were determined to think as little as possible about the war, believing that they could easily weave it into their usual routine of amusements if only older people would stop making such a fuss about it. They were nice young people, and probably, if they are not dead, are now carrying on the war, with all the vim and neat common sense with which they then clung to their sports and their games. The Fifth Column was certainly well represented, though probably not by those who we imagined belonged to it. There were unhappy and utterly unvolatile French and Belgians who spoke in swift tones to each other, and as little as possible to anyone else. Finally there were three old men, who soon became, for the writer, the symbol of England. Their ages ranged between sixty and seventy; and all three were extremely healthy and hearty specimens. Two had thick white hair; and the third, a little thin black hair, carefully trained like a delicate creeper, over a large bald expanse. They all three had red-brick faces, and cool observant eyes. Their figures were stout and compact, and when they sat down they kept perfectly still; and they never used a superfluous gesture. The one with black hair was a wit. He did not go further himself than a tight-lipped smile, but he often made his two companions shake with laughter.

Long before the time came for the news on the radio to be plucked from its barrage of obstruction, by a skilled and patient steward, these three were to be found in three large armchairs, as near to the radio as they could possibly get. There they sat, motionless and silent, listening. No matter what awful news they heard, their expressions never varied. They made no comments; but it was as if the very blood in their arteries listened.

Although in time my husband and I made friends with them, I cannot remember that they ever mentioned the war. They seemed determined to outlaw it. They took in every atom of news and they knew exactly what they thought of it; but they were not going to let a dirty word like Hitler pass their lips.

Blow after hammer blow struck at our British hearts. The French gap opened at Sedan; and having opened, mysteriously, did not close. Bridges that should never have been there enabled the Germans to cross the Meuse. The Belgian and the British Armies were pressed back. Leopold suddenly surrendered—without warning either his own army or the troops of his allies of his intention. The whole British Army was—as once before—cut off from its base and divided from the main forces of the French.

As the words of Leopold's betrayal reached the three old men, they exchanged one long look. It was not a look of consternation, or even of anger or contempt. It was as if they were measuring a fresh weight that they were rather unexpectedly called upon to shoulder.

There was no question whatever, as to their taking it on; but they wanted to make sure of how best each of them could get the new load balanced. The third one, as soon as the news was finished, leaned towards the other two and produced a small but telling joke. I think that somehow or other his two friends depended on his jokes. They were a part of the strength with which they would bear whatever the future held for them.

It must have been the fourth night out that they decided to speak to us, having discovered, by that time, that we were both British. I don't think that they thought about us, or indeed about anyone at that moment, by any other standard. Either you were British, and therefore in a sense belonged to them, or you were not, in which case—bearing Leopold in mind—they would rather have died than have spoken to you. One of the white-haired ones began a cautious conversation with the writer, about trees. "*Arh!*" he observed. "I have heard people say the trees in Wiltshire, under the Downs, are good trees." He himself came from Dorsetshire, he was therefore slightly suspicious about the trees of an adjoining county, but prepared to give the

Devil—if a neighbouring Devil—his due. The Dorsetshire trees were beyond comparison; and belonged to the standard of sacred and therefore unmentionable objects.

The other white-haired man was less interested in trees, and distinctly less articulate. I think he was afraid of women, though prepared to be kind to them, unless they startled him. The word "Ely" was eventually extracted from his lips. Where the third came from was evidently part of his joking propensities. The others made me try to guess it; and when I failed told me, with low rich chuckles, that he came from Nottingham in Nottinghamshire —a joke that I never yet have been able to fathom.

We could not discover what kind of work they did, or even what their names were; but we gathered that each of them was a deeply respected member of some solid branch of trade between England and the United States.

They admitted having crossed the Atlantic many times; but they never expressed any opinion whatever upon the United States. "That man over there," one of them told me warningly, "is a Canadian—but you'd better not talk to him—he *may* be all right, but you never know!"

They were all three pleased to hear that I was born near Rochester in Kent. "*Arh!*" the tree-lover remarked. "No one can say that there aren't good trees in Kent; look at the orchards! I don't mind saying that the fruit trees in Kent are hard to beat! And the strawberries too—there's value for your money!"

"Don't forget the hops!" the man from Nottingham observed with a sedate wink at me. "Nor he isn't likely to forget them either!" he added. A lively comparison sprang up between Rochester and Ely Cathedrals. They wanted to reassure me that though Ely was the more generally admired, Rochester was in its way not to be despised. Besides there was the Castle! "Foreigners!" our Dorset friend remarked with faint distaste. "A lot of them go to look at Ely, but I've never heard tell that they're to be found anywhere near Rochester." This was obviously one up for Rochester.

We did not see them to say good-bye. They must have slipped off the boat, and melted into the cliffs of England—of which they might be said to form an integral part. Conversation was not perhaps their strong point, but they could have been counted upon in any actual emergency—under bombing; pursued by flames; or in those last cold moments of a death at sea. Had they been torpedoed, they would have done what they could for the person next to them, as well as for themselves; and if they had had to drown,

they would have sunk, without so much as a sigh or a whimper, into a depth as incalculable as their own.

They were probably gravely prejudiced, as well as expressionless, human beings; but they would have been benevolent and self-reliant to their last gasp. I do not know what they would have done had they been dictated to, but I am quite sure that they would not have done what was dictated to them.

What little they expressed was always themselves, and inadvertently—England.

When the writer has thought of them, and during these long dark months of Britain at bay she has often thought of them as a kind of moral support, it has been to murmur:—

> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> Which serves it in the office of a wall
> Or as a moat defensive to a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands,
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

CHAPTER II
THE SAME ENGLAND

We had not known quite what we expected England to look like after nine months of war. We had been through so much distant agony, confusion, such a flood of facts without interpretation that almost any England, except the one we actually saw, would not have surprised us. What really *was* surprising was that England looked exactly as she had looked, when we had left her, after the first six weeks of a war that seemed still hardly to have begun.

She was there in all essentials, unhampered, unhindered, and superficially unchanged.

There were as yet no hardships, there was no visible shortage in anything whatever. There were a few sandbags about; and above the dark streets of Liverpool floated those strange silver fishes we had last seen swimming about in the blue ether above our London home. We said to each other "Of course it *seems* the same—but it *can't* be the same—not now—not after nearly a year— We must get hold of S. He will know everything; and even though he's an official and won't tell us anything, we shall pick up from him the *feel* of what has happened and is happening, before we go home."

It was a difficult business to find S. Whenever we telephoned, we were told that he'd just gone, or hadn't yet arrived. Finally his wife came in from the country, and took us back to their home. S. turned up much later between trains and telephone calls.

Looking at him we knew that England *had* changed. He looked worn to death. For three years or more, S. had foreseen what was coming, and had tried to prepare Liverpool for the breakers ahead. He had not succeeded; but without him and his warnings, Liverpool would have been far more bogged in surprise, and far less capable of her immense and swift *volte-face* and reconstruction, than she proved. S. had been like a man in a mining accident holding on his shoulders the roof that was threatening to fall on his mates. Only they had not believed that the roof was going to fall. He was still like that miner; but he looked less worried in spite of being worked to death, because every man in a responsible position was now helping to hold up the

roof with him—instead of resisting his efforts with something like contempt, and often with extreme resentment.

Our friends had a lovely home and garden in a friendly village looking over the great guarded estuary that makes the port of Liverpool. The June garden was full of lupins, blue and salmon-pink, pale lemon and dark purple; roses; and all the shining flowers of early summer.

We sat on the porch; and S. sat on the steps beside us. He is a quiet, self-contained and accurate man; and what he gave us was his insight into an immortal saga. What we had hardly dared to hope was becoming true—the B.E.F. was returning from France. It was coming back—not in thousands as we had barely allowed ourselves to hope, but in hundreds of thousands—it was coming back in warships, steamers, freighters, tugs and barges; it was coming back in mine-sweepers, in little drifters; in rowboats and on private yachts; even canoes carried a hero—and then went back for more. Our men were coming from those broken fiery beaches, over one small wooden jetty. They were coming as Daniel escaped from the lions to which he was thrown, as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the burning fiery furnace, with their garments unsinged by the flames.

I shall always see them as a part of that June evening: the garden loaded with summer flowers—the worn face of our friend, with a light on it that never was on sea or land, the light of a bare and tranquil spirit, justified of its vision.

In an hour or two, S. would go back to the city—though it was Saturday evening—and remain at work half through the long summer night. He would work all Sunday till five o'clock, and then come home for his only long night a week. He never had a holiday, only occasionally a spare hour.

Two Viennese friends came into the garden to join us and stayed to supper. A mother and daughter, hunted and harried out of their home by the Nazis, because the husband and father had been a famous anti-Nazi journalist. Our friends, the S.'s, had made them their friends and found a home for them close by, while their father worked for our Government with his unique and thorough knowledge in a protected area; their relief and happiness in the escape of our Army was as great as our own. . . . We were together again, and not everything that we had was lost.

When we got back to our hotel, we found a beaming porter with one arm—a reminder of 1914—who worked the lift. Two barefooted officers, one in rags and one wrapped in a blanket, had just turned up; and, as the Liftman told us, "They didn't want to go home looking that untidy," so he'd thought

of ringing up a railway porter who had the key of the LOST LUGGAGE office; and with the stationmaster's delighted consent, they had rifled that sacred precinct of LOST LUGGAGE and had come away with boots that fitted and a suit of clothes. The hotel had provided a further suit, hot baths, and the first great meal of their re-established lives; and off they'd gone to houses that would have asked nothing of them but their flesh and blood. Scratch an Englishman and you find a Pirate-*cum*-Philanthropist. He likes to break down doors, and use locked-up things for strange purposes. He likes to go home tidy after a battle. He likes, when a need is urgent and for a common cause, to prove himself a man and a brother; but he equally likes to forget about it afterwards, and not to be reminded of his emotional excursion. He is willing to open his house, and give his clothes, his food, his hospitality and his hearth to a bombed-out, splinter-shaken fellow citizen; but he would not necessarily wish to meet or speak to him again afterwards. An Englishman has a peculiar and most misleading attitude, never appreciated and seldom understood by any but fellow Englishmen; it might be expressed as follows: "Never admit or prepare for anything you don't like; when it happens, just meet it, and get rid of it as soon as possible. Prepare and continue to do what you like, and if, for a period, you are forcibly prevented from doing so, never forget that you don't like it—and return at the first opportunity to your habitual routine without back-chat."

We gathered that golf goes on; bridge goes on; greyhounds and betting go on. Racing requires too much upkeep; and football demands too large crowds; these sports must therefore be specially regulated or curtailed.

Air battles fortunately take their place. No one who can possibly help it, man, woman or child, misses an air battle. Women, on their return from marketing, stand on the edge of Dover cliffs, cheering and waving their baskets, to spur on the skilled antics of Spitfires or Hurricanes. The noise is terrific; an A.R.P. warden hurries up, and is understood to be urging a woman to take shelter, but instead offers a pencil to put between her lips, to prevent ear damage.

An invalid lady, a friend of the author, during air raids is carried downstairs to a sofa, not as one might suppose for greater safety, but because in this particular room there are French windows which give a particularly good view of air battles. Here she can watch with rapture, and describe, in letters Swift might have envied, the whole sequence of famous fights. She suffers from chronic heart trouble, but it has not occurred to her to find a safer spot than the battle area, upon which she lives.

For hundreds of years sport has been the main preoccupation of the British Isles. Hitler has made one of his serious mistakes by overlooking this traditional interest. He has made an even more fatal mistake by providing a nation of sportsmen with a new quarry.

A creature with the cunning of a fox, and the flight of a bird, menaces the homes of a nation of hunters.

It is true that there are very many of these new animals, and that they may, by sheer force of numbers, destroy many homes, and make into heaps of rubbish the skilled works of men; but what will happen to them in the end?—for even a few hunters can destroy many beasts of prey, and can destroy them a good deal more thoroughly than the beasts of prey have hitherto been known to destroy hunters.

CHAPTER III
THE FRONT DOORSTEP OF ENGLAND

The front doorstep of England, as far as America is concerned, has always been Liverpool; and it must be confessed by the most ardent of British patriots that Liverpool has not always kept her doorstep very clean.

The Mersey is an untidy, tidal river about as blue as the Danube. The myriad busy chimneys in and about Liverpool seldom allow her sky to appear as cloudless as it has an occasional right to be. A short impression of this great industrial city is therefore that it is dirty, drab, unlively and self-centred. Liverpool refuses to open its heart, its pockets, or its wits to greet visitors; but it would be a grave mistake to suppose that it did not possess all these commodities.

Liverpool, behind its façade of docks, cranes and tidal mud, has an intensely interesting and highly attractive personality.

The Social Services function there with a liveliness and intelligence seldom found elsewhere in these faithful but too often passive, because impecunious, bodies.

The rich in Liverpool are the ship-owners, and the merchants who deal with the sea; and Liverpool ship-owners and merchants are an enterprising and generous race who sometimes dodge their camels very neatly through the narrow gateways of the needle's eye. "I don't like children, and I don't like Basques," one of these well-known characters remarked to the author at the time of the Spanish War, "but I shall take a hundred of them"; and she did, and cared for them with such understanding and imagination that the strange relationship became a real success on both sides. No doubt the Liverpool merchants have these rare and enviable qualities of enterprise and generosity largely because they are sufficiently interested in their means of wealth to live upon the spot where they acquire it. Where their money goes, their wits, and occasionally their hearts, precede and follow the golden shower.

Actually Liverpool possesses—and had it not been for the intervention of the war would have widely extended her possession—the most up-to-date and attractive workmen's dwellings in England, buildings that might well be classed with their historic prototypes in Vienna.

There are still disgraceful slums to be found in Liverpool; also, the fruit of such a failure on the part of a rich community—grave child delinquency; but Liverpool possesses a noble band of enthusiastic and capable teachers, doctors, and welfare workers who are grappling with this evil; and Hitler and his bombing forces may incidentally clear up the Liverpool slums, by the same means with which he is clearing up the London ones. The bestial, blind cruelty that wipes out street after street of little defenceless homes rouses both compassion and understanding on the part of more fortunate people. "Never again," the Mayor of one of these slum districts said to the author, "will the responsible citizens of England suffer our own people to live under such conditions! When you've once worked to help people, thank God you can't forget them!"

The evacuated children drive home this lesson, in every household into which they penetrate.

Liverpool is no mean city. She has a great Chamber of Commerce that can be reached by intelligence and human feeling. She has a population of skilled workers who read and think, and follow with critical intelligence the administration of their city. She possesses a large floating population of Catholics, who in fact contribute to the dirt, tumult and crime of the community; although an enlightened Archbishop watches over their interests, and a body of Catholic clergy do their best to control a tumultuous stream of mixed Irish and foreign elements, who flash past them, on and off ships, in or out of prison, rather more often than they are to be found within the Church for which they are so willing to shed Protestant blood. Catholics and Protestants alike are both more vigorous and more sanguinary in this particular port than anywhere else in England; nevertheless the "dockers" in both Liverpool and London have provided us with magnificent Pioneer rescue squads. Men whose former careers were interrupted or maintained by violence, rape and murder have become eager to save human life. "You can't take them off a building however long they'd been at it, or however dangerous it is, when they think there's someone left alive under the ruins," I was told by a doctor who had worked with them. "Time doesn't mean anything to them or work either—they go to it like terriers at a rabbit hole."

On the whole, Liverpool manages to digest her unruly elements with more common sense and more severity than many equally burdened cities.

Behind the drab exterior of her industrial life, she has a hillside covered with beautiful houses and gardens. Most of those who inhabit this part of the city have a real life of the mind—modern, virile and disinterested.

These were the people who, two years before the war, welcomed the great Viennese psychologist, Alfred Adler—and were so struck by his practical science of human behaviour that they planned a summer school for him the following year, in order to master his theories fully enough to make a practical use of them, for their city. When Adler's death prevented his return, they extended to his daughter. Dr. Alexandra Adler, the welcome they had prepared for him. This is a city that looks towards the future with a determination to make the best use of every new discovery. Her vigorous roots go deep into freedom and personal responsibility—no other city in England has built a beautiful and modern cathedral. Democracy is in her blood. Even while some of her chief members vote Conservative or express a fundamentalist religious attitude, the city itself is reaching out towards something that is at home with neither—and beyond both: a deep unspoken sense of human brotherhood.

Perhaps nothing could strike down to this buried core of altruism in Liverpool or set it free so effectively as the devastation of her own workpeople by the Nazi bombers. Again and again the dry and brief communiqués of the air mention "Bombs have been dropped on the Merseyside," and so tell us what Liverpool is suffering. The blows come quick and fast from the air upon her disciplined workpeople, her free and precious merchandise; the life of her ships; and the life of her homes.

Hitler will have done a great deal to unite the rich and poor of Liverpool before the war brings to an end his task of common scourge. Meanwhile Liverpool adjusts herself in silence to his blows, by increasing the activity of her greatest qualities.

Liverpool gives four-and-a-half million pounds as her second year's war contribution. Money pours from her pockets to support the ring of Davids shooting up from her loins into the air—in Hurricane and Spitfire. Liverpool stands by and watches over her wounded ships; and succours each helpless family deprived of father, sons, or brothers.

She uses her sharp business wits to hide and protect her treasures. Her heart she keeps to herself; and probably when the war is over her face will be as grimy as ever. Perhaps it is not too imaginative to fancy that Liverpool sometimes turns her eyes across the grey measureless seas, towards that country with which she has dealt most, all her prosperous long life; and without asking for anything or perhaps expressing the thanks she is trying not to feel, is nevertheless cheered by the increasing flood of her neighbour's generosity—and looks for a deeper understanding that may make the future

co-operation, between New York and Liverpool, even more deep and real than their long co-operation of the past.

CHAPTER IV
A STATELY HOME OF ENGLAND

We were warned by our hosts that they were in the danger zone, that they were in fact more or less responsible for eighty miles of it. They hoped we would come to stay with them but their welcome would be without the element of security.

Having just crossed an ocean with an equal absence of this outworn commodity, we accepted their week-end generous invitation with alacrity. They were good, although by no means old friends; and would, we knew, share their knowledge of the situation with us, without any fundamental difference of opinion.

Curiously enough the last time we had stayed with them was also one of historical crisis. King Edward the Eighth was being driven into abdication at that particular moment by methods which, to say the least of it, we had all four considered dubious. Now we were in a war that we had all long foreseen, towards which the same set of statesmen had conducted the British Empire, unprepared, blindfold and fooled up to, and beyond, the last moment.

Nor could we believe it any particular advantage that this group of politicians now realized, and even publicly admitted, that they had been fooled; since—like the poor—they seemed determined to remain always with us; and in a position in which they might be fooled again. However we now possessed at the Helm of England a Prime Minister who had vision, strategic genius, long wisdom, humour and a great heart. This was a Leader who would inspire every British citizen throughout the world to "Hold hard the breath! and draw up every man's spirit to its full height!" England did not need a Gestapo or a concentration camp to make her follow Churchill. She could no longer be prevented from following him. That was why he was there. But he had been called to the helm at the Eleventh Hour.

What had been two years earlier disquietude and shame was now the fulfilment of our worst fears.

We spent two long strange evenings discussing our chances—and watching the map of France crumble hour by hour.

Our hosts were quiet courageous people, who had been trained under any and every circumstance to make no fuss.

But although they made no fuss they knew exactly what the fall of France meant to England.

Every now and then, our host would murmur under his breath: "What is going to happen to the French Fleet?" Nobody answered, but everyone felt relieved to hear the question in all our hearts put into words. If the French Fleet fell into Hitler's hands, we should not only lose Europe, we should be promptly—and at that moment probably successfully—invaded. Nothing could stop it; and we had an Army that had lost everything it possessed—except its spirit. Our Air Force was already a tried weapon, but pitifully inadequate as to numbers. Our Navy was a life-line, worn thin by unexpected charges. Our colonies were standing by us instantly with all their resources; we had the increasing sympathy and understanding of the United States. But help and understanding three thousand miles away are the sort of horses beggars would choose to ride on. The American Navy had now two oceans instead of one to guard. The United States was infiltrated by Fifth Column work. She had been uncertain of what we were fighting for, or even as to whether—until Churchill came into power—we really intended to fight to a finish. If Hitler struck at once, our small island would need something more immediate than these distant resources in order to hold the Seven Seas, which are its home, against Europe.

I think we shall never forget that rose-red Georgian house, with its clear shining rooms; its wide open windows and the roses that poured, like a stream of goblin jewels between dark box hedges, towards an invisible sea.

The house stood four-square facing the coast. It was perfectly vulnerable; unprotected and isolated.

Our host spent all his time, and no doubt all his material and spiritual resources, upon getting the coast he was in charge of protected, with wholly insufficient means. The last thing he thought of was his own home, or its security.

On this serene and flower-scented June evening, we sat there helplessly wondering if all we had to give would be enough.

"Bevin and Morrison," we reminded each other, "are grand men, and Labour is very solidly behind them." We knew that the workingmen of England were putting their health, their holidays, and every atom of physical power and personal conviction that they possessed, into the defence of England. Toil and sweat, blood and tears, sounded safer to them than the

hollow promises of appeasement. But it takes a year to make a tank of the size that pulverized France.

What lay behind the curtain of our immediate future? Would it be the beaches—the streets and the doorsteps of our homes—drenched with our children's blood?

How long had we to make enough tools, to make enough planes; to forge enough guns; to build more ships? We could not be saved by others. We must save ourselves. "Ships—" Back we came to where we had started. "What will happen to the French Fleet?"

There were four daughters of the house. The personal question that our hosts' hearts must have been silently at work upon was, What was to be the fate of these four young and beautiful girls? Two were still at school, and the other two were only a few years older. They were already grown up, but had they not already been so, these hours would have thrust them far along the thorny path to maturity.

One had already given up a promising profession to train as a nurse in a London hospital. The other was divided in her activities between helping at home, and working half the week away from home. Their lovers, and they must have had lovers, for they were beautiful and attractive girls, were in the air, or on the seas, or perhaps already in their graves; but of their personal interests and anxieties they gave no hint whatever. They seemed to possess a good understanding with their parents. Each child was an individual, confident of always being treated with respect and tenderness; each gave her parents in return a vigilant affection without sentimentality. There was little or none of that domestic bullying, under the guise of love, so often to be found in undisciplined families.

Although the daughters had to help entertain visitors whom they did not know, and might well have resented on such an occasion, they concentrated upon doing whatever they could to supplement the kind of staff they had been reduced to, and added to the comfort of their visitors who—had they known it—felt already only too completely comfortable and considered. Silently these young girls made their private plans; packed their things and muffled their good-byes; so as to give at least the outward appearance of a normal week-end. Yet this was to be their last week-end together in their deeply loved home, certainly for years, perhaps forever.

These girls had the honesty of their generation and made no attempt to hide their gravity or their interest in the slowly filtering disastrous news. They took it, when it came, on the chin.

Their mother was to stay alone with their father at the post of danger—a danger that at the moment was simply incalculable. The next few weeks or even days might bring to their home the fate of Polish mansions. The town nearest them might become Rotterdam.

The girls knew that, for their parents' sake, they must go where there would be, at least to a greater degree, safety. Even now, night by night, in the serene and silver wash of the bright moon, the German planes crept one by one round the visible and lonely mansion. Their tiger-humming—bestial and ferocious—bruised the scented silence. Such a sound was soon to be the commonest sound in the world in British ears; but in that first June of the war, it took us by surprise. We turned our heads to listen.

These girls had all been trained in a code of unflinching courtesy and courage. It was in their blood. You went on, whatever happened, till you dropped; and then you dropped as quietly as possible. But it had never been asked of them before to leave their parents in a danger they themselves might not share.

The youngest of them was less finally disciplined than her elders. She made no sound; but she smouldered. The rebel in her flashed up in short, truculent observations. Her thoughts were hostile and resentful behind her frowning brows. She even made a few well-chosen comments upon the general disgustingness of things. She obviously did not like having visitors over farewell periods; and we can only hope that her natural resentment may perhaps, for an hour or two, have ousted the sharpness of her pain. What had been demanded of her was even harder than what had been demanded of her sisters. She had to face the dreadful inconvenience of being decided *for*! She was not exactly forced, but she knew she was expected, to choose a far more desperate exile than the rest of her family. She must leave England. She must go to a country not her own, where her habits and her deep silent prejudices might not be understood or appreciated.

Could anything—even German concentration camps for Jews—be more upsetting? She must give up her exasperatingly dear and endangered parents; a school that exactly suited her present demands on life; a circle of friends to whom nothing need be explained; and her elder sisters. No doubt she fought occasionally with these sisters; nevertheless they were the stars of her celestial firmament. She was as proud of them as if she had made them; and if she had made them she would not have had them otherwise. She must have known that she could have used her resentment more favourably for her own purposes, had she expressed it. She knew her mother's heart. She could have stormed it. She could have persuaded her

elder sisters—full of sympathy as their hearts were for her predicament—into being her open allies. She well knew that they would have been potent ones.

But she did none of these things. Glum; silent; unconvinced; but wholly obedient to the laws of her being, this fifteen-year-old English heroine sailed, alone, to an unknown land—meeting Nelson's stern expectation—that as an Englishwoman she would do her duty.

CHAPTER V
LONDON ONLY

We did not dream when we reached London in June that we were seeing our beloved city for the last time. London is not destroyed and will not die; but the city that comes out of Hitler's air war will not be the same city that went into it.

Hitler's bombers have not lowered London's morale—on the contrary they have greatly increased it; and with this morale we can build a greater, fairer city than the one that we have lost.

The London of Victoria, of Edward the Seventh and of George the Fifth, has already whistled out of sight, carrying with it the ponderous selfishness, the cheap arrogance, and the insufficient supply of social interest which characterized portions of that great but unevenly prosperous period.

On this first day of our return from the United States, London murmured and boomed on as usual, with her spirit unawakened and her landmarks untouched.

The silvery towers of Westminster crowned the banks of the busy shining river; and no one felt surprised that they still stood there, in undisturbed serenity. Big Ben marched on relentlessly with Time as his servant, chiming out the unshaken hours.

Our own little cottage in a quiet Kensington square was in the hands of friends doing important war work; so that we only greeted it on our first evening, watching, with pleasure, the war balloons floating about it, like a school of glorified porpoises, in the blue bowl of the sky.

Kensington Gardens were ablaze with chestnut trees in their first undimmed emerald, and all the London lilac bushes were in flower.

We took a flat near by, as high up as we could—rooms which are now rubble and broken glass. Every June night we stood at our windows, gazing out over the roofs of London, and watched the searchlights flung out upon the sky like multi-coloured ribbons; converging suddenly into a sharpened centre, and then ranging out once more in their fan-shaped dances. The searchlights had only a few half-hearted hours of darkness in which to play

their strange new game with the solid moon, before the dawn stared them out of countenance.

There were raid warnings sometimes far away; and we would wake and listen to distant shouts and the barking of guns, and hope the Thames Estuary, from which the sounds came, was still as safe as we were.

In the morning we found that our London had already thinned out. The West End streets were like a country town on Sunday. Some old ladies still wandered about with dogs on leads, and the unaccustomed slight weight of gas-masks on their shoulders.

But they seemed like phantom old ladies with phantom dogs trying to get back into a dream.

The sight of a child was definitely shocking.

A doctor friend of ours told us: "The whole of my West End practice left when the war began. They came back a few weeks later, but now they are all off again. I hardly know what kind of doctor I am now. I just look after what the Government sends me."

The shops were very empty; buses, except at workers' hours, were curiously desultory and comfortable.

Yet the feeling in the air was not one of comfort. It was like the feeling in Paris during the Battle of the Marne—a slowing up of life—as if the very blood of every passer-by was listening to the approach of doom.

France had already fallen, but more than half of the French Fleet was immunized or ours. The B.E.F. were on their own hearthstone, preparing to defend it.

We could breathe again—but not with an easy breath. No one can lose a great-hearted comrade, upon whose strength and good will they have leaned—and breathe easily. For years Britain had been counting,—consciously or unconsciously,—as France herself had been counting, upon the French Army, and the Maginot Line.

Yet I heard no bitter criticism of our great ally. The shock had been too great, the agony of France too dire. Perhaps we knew that any criticism we could level at France should be shared by ourselves. France was betrayed into the hands of cruel men to be crucified, and some of these men who had betrayed France had been friends and colleagues of our own.

Germany's new air bases; our lost equipment; the nearness of the Channel ports—these were the topics hammering at our awakened hearts.

The "phoney war" was over, the fall of France was over—what was going to be Destiny's next step? What were the Three Old Ladies in the British Museum going to do with us?

The writer went to see a friend at the Foreign Office—a far-sighted man whose skill and knowledge had not been rightly used for his country's needs. "Now there is nothing left for us but invasion!" he said bitterly.

The Foreign Office looked strangely frail and feeble—cups of tea were being carried furtively to and fro. Everybody was trying to do what they had always done, and not feeling quite sure for how long they might be allowed to do it. The old gilding looked shabby; even the pompousness of officials had faded into nervous hurry. This was the haunt of great powers and secret knowledge—the very core of European diplomacy; and suddenly it looked pitiful and useless—like the unpainted Ball-platz of Vienna, after the breakdown of 1920.

"What can we do now for England?" we asked our friend, before we left him, to deal with the ruins of what he had helped to build; and not been allowed to save. "Keep out of the hands of the handicappers!" he answered with bitter earnestness.

We crossed the Green Park in all its June glory almost without a word; until we remembered, with hope, what Alfred Adler had said to us—on this very spot, three years earlier. "These are a benevolent and powerful people," the great Viennese psychologist had told us. "They will not yield easily to dictatorship." The awakening had come now; and we should see, under our new leadership, what powers we had; and learn how to use them.

In the eight months we had been away, there were almost no obvious changes in London; but the news placards at the street corners had gone; no longer could the traveller flitting past in bus or taxi read the latest event of his tottering world. Illegible chalked slates, or blue-pencilled broad sheets, had taken their place.

The great "Dailies" of London had shrivelled into close-printed ghosts of themselves. The Battle of the Books was upon us. There was a good deal more in this desperate struggle than ever met—or was meant to meet—the public eye. Shortage of paper was the excuse—but not the reason—for this blatant attack against the thinking powers of a free country. Ostensibly the publishers fought for their right to exist, and for their authors' right to produce, but what they were really fighting for was the mind of man.

The cold and sinister fingers of Nazi Germany stretched out from hidden hands in Britain itself, to strangle the voice of truth. "Look at the classics,"

the tax-spreaders cried. “Why not read them again?” “Why ask for new books when the old are better?”

Why in fact keep youth, or creative thought born out of current events, alive—when you can have fathers and grandfathers—authorities enough to crush every live coal upon the altar stones of freezing humanity?

The publishers, *with* the authors for once—shoulder to shoulder with them—fought stubbornly on. Certain Members of Parliament, and most editors of newspapers, spoke and wrote for the life of thought. It seemed that the Public itself wanted to keep its Pacemakers free for their job. The tax on books was fought to a standstill, though not necessarily to a permanent standstill—so its introducer informed us; nevertheless it was “a famous victory” and perhaps not the least of the landmarks which showed an upward turn in the fortunes of Democracy.

Across the Channel, before the air war struck London or invasion stalked us, there was a long curious pause, while Germany took over her ill-gotten and stupendous gains.

Perhaps Laval and Flandin were not quite as strong or as popular as they had hoped to be in betraying France, and that old lion Pétain not sufficiently tamed to play the rôle of Hindenburg to a successful finish. He even seemed to believe that a medieval word like “honour” had a modern value.

London, with the rest of England, waited. London had a great deal to do, while she waited; and she had at the helm a man who knew how to help her do it. She shifted and decentralized her food supplies. She locked up her Fifth Column. Unfortunately this process was put into the hands of the military, who were unable at a minute’s notice to sift the chaff from the grain. There was every excuse for locking up all uncertain quantities for the first few weeks of the readjustment of Britain; but alas! there was no discriminating between friends and foes in the weeks that followed. There seemed to be forces at work more unwilling to free our friends than to keep our enemies locked up.

England, in a moment of great glory, found herself smirched with the shame of behaving with inhumanity and stupidity towards her best friends—the anti-Nazi refugees.

It was a first-class blunder on the part of the authorities, and deeply resented by all decent people in every class, and belonging to every party. These refugees had already lost everything except their lives. Many of them had been physically and mentally tortured in German concentration camps; and to find themselves once more, without plea or trial, behind barbed wire,

put there by their friends and allies, and—should the Nazis win—to be handed over into inescapable disaster, was for some a final outrage. Many, including the famous psychologist Stekel of Vienna, committed suicide rather than suffer this last degradation. Some were hustled, without choice, upon the *Arandora Castle* and were sunk in the Atlantic.

Every form of protest beat upon this evil, until it was slowly, if even yet incompletely, rectified.

The camps themselves were only as uncomfortable, and as badly managed, as such unprepared places cannot fail to be. Those who ran them did the best they could with inadequate materials, and inhumane restrictions. There was never any intentional cruelty; but there was the natural result of uncontrolled power unjustifiably exerted over human beings.

The tragedies and suffering of these weeks stretched into months; and the moral shock it must have caused those countries under Nazi control, still looking to us for pity and for freedom, cannot easily be overlooked or forgiven.

London did her full part in restoring freedom and respect to her refugee guests, burdened as she was by preparing against air warfare. From June till the end of July, London worked at a pace hitherto unknown to any British person—London evacuated all the children, infirm people, and mothers with babies, she could persuade to leave their homes. The city raised enormous war loans; selected and trained bands of potential heroes—air-raid wardens; firemen; ambulance drivers; and, in a race against time, built more and more Anderson shelters.

Two years and a half earlier, J. B. S. Haldane had offered the Government then in power almost complete immunity for Londoners, if they would let him use the Tubes, and underground railways, for his purpose. The Treasury refused the expense—trifling compared with other no more vital war needs. The unaroused public easily acquiesced; and thousands of valuable lives have been lost in consequence of this stingy lack of foresight or common humanity.

Londoners themselves are largely responsible for the improvement in shelter tactics. When the air war broke upon them, in all its unbelievable atrocity, they swiftly went down into the Tubes and spread themselves out nightly, like an old-fashioned cross-work counterpane. There they lay, on the escalators, or the platforms, each family in a sort of square on newspaper, and what bedding they could carry; and they held their all-night picnic, warmly assisted by the station workers.

To go from a surface shelter, when an air battle is on, into the Tubes, is to pass direct from Hell to Heaven. The Tubes have everything the Londoner demands—drama; company; light; noise of an innocuous nature; and there he or she can carry out the new career of every Londoner—keeping alive—for at least twelve hours out of the twenty-four, with every prospect of success.

The London shelters can be roughly divided into three distinct categories:—

1. "*Safe Shelters*." These are to be found only in the Tubes; or under concrete flooring or well-built houses. Such shelters take all who are near enough to use them. When they are fitted up with bunks, tickets to prevent queues, food, hygiene, and heating, they will be exactly what is needed; but they can only be used by those who live near enough to reach them.

2. *Anderson Shelters*. These are small, compact steel-and-brick shelters, built for single families, or small groups of people. They have stood up surprisingly well against everything but a direct hit. They protect from glass, splinters, shrapnel, even from the shock and havoc of near explosions.

I have seen, on the very brim of thirty- to forty-foot craters, Anderson shelters out of which people have walked uninjured. Anderson Shelters do not protect from noise. They can be as comfortable as people's needs suggest. They can also be as uncomfortable as people's needs exact. They are—as they claim to be—safer than large surface shelters; but they are difficult to heat, and much less agreeable to many of their occupants. Families are not *more* devoted, unselfish and courteous to each other while being bombed than when the skies are clear of danger. They are also much closer together, as well as isolated from the community, so that should the shelter receive a direct hit, aid for the survivors, if any, might be slow to reach them.

3. *Public Surface Shelters* may be any big basement under a house, store, bank, warehouse, or in the crypt of a church. They are not safe, nor protected from the noise of battle, nor clean, nor warm, and not always dry.

We visited a big surface shelter one night, under a brewery off the Whitechapel Road.

There was a night raid well on. We stepped down three steps from the black shrieking inferno of the street, into a Cruikshank illustration of the Fleet Prison, taken from *Dombey and Son*.

As far as the eye could see, stretched a world of worn and shadowy faces, under a dim blue light. Figures of men and women with their arms weighed down with babies; of old and infirm members of families carried on stretchers or pushed in on wheeled chairs. Everyone lay, or sat, on the hard wooden floor, cheek by jowl. Some had brought pillows or rolled-up mattresses, some had food in paper bags. There were among them the uneasy furtive faces of criminals, and there were those who seemed to have transcended the ordinary powers and virtues of humanity, their faces so shone with courage and with kindliness; and there was a dancing child. A little space on the crowded floor had been set free for him. A woman was singing to entertain the shelter, accompanied by a violin; but it was the child that all our eyes were fixed upon. He danced like the lift of a wave, happy and smiling, he caught the rhythm of the music, and set it into movement.

The barrage was close and sharp about us. Every now and then there would be the crunch of a falling bomb or a harsh and inhuman burst of firing —a most evil and senseless sound—wrenching the very fibres of the heart; but the child danced on. He was oblivious of any sound but the music; or of any action other than his own gay and beautiful measures. He danced, until sleep caught him, and his father stooped and picked him up in his arms.

When the guns sounded close above our heads, the eyes of the people turned with one accord, and fixed themselves upon their marshal. He was a factory worker, who after working all day long came to this shelter and stayed with them till half-past one every night, when younger men took over from him, and he slept. Till then, he stood where they could see him, or walked to and fro among the people; holding up their hearts by the strength of his happy spirit. They were expecting, he told me, a new minister who had been kept by a late conference, and they would be disappointed if no one spoke to them, so he asked me if I would speak to them instead. Curiously enough as I stood in the midst of this great shadowy, comfortless throng, in a shelter that had no bunks, no hygiene, no air, no light, no safety, and looked into the faces of these alert and homeless people, liable to sudden death, I saw instead Pasadena, and another great hall full of flowers and beauty, shining with light. The people of my audience had just been lunching there on beautiful Californian food, and speaking to them I had told them of England, and of what might lie before us when the air war began.

I told these people now of America—of light and hope—of a great Democracy of friends doing all they could to help us. I tried to bring into their hearts the beauty and security I had carried away with me—as birds carry seeds, to plant for castaways, upon desert islands.

The surface shelters in the London slums, during this air warfare, are not pleasant places. Yet as I looked at my audience I felt wave after wave reach me of unbelievable spirit and friendliness.

Against one of the walls was a long row of kettles provided by the marshal himself and a few friends; so that he could make cups of tea for those who needed them most, in the cold hour of dawn.

It is not one night that these Londoners are asked to sleep upon the bare floor, breathing foul mephitic vapours instead of air, listening to mass murder creeping closer and closer to them; they must spend every night there, until the war ends.

It would not be true to say that none of them complain; complain they must—and do; but even while complaining they give you an apologetic smile, bearing their unimaginable trials with enormous patience, a sort of unconquerable good will, and with a most companionable and dauntless fortitude.

These big shelters are not only comfortless, they are extremely dangerous. A direct hit must kill many of the occupants and might bury all. The adults know this; but no one could guess their knowledge by their faces; or by listening to them chat, before settling off, to their uneasy slumbers.

Almost all of them are on the look-out to help those less strong and more burdened than themselves. They are pleased and respond with enthusiasm to any attempt to better their condition; or to offer them entertainment.

They believe that something is going to be done to help them, beyond what they can do for themselves or for each other; and they wait patiently for it, knowing the great, many-faceted task their country shoulders; grumbling a little, joking a great deal; and never giving in.

You can always raise a laugh in a London shelter, even on the worst night of bombing, with a joke against Hitler or Mussolini.

These newspaper bogies have come quite close to Londoners' lives—and may at any moment become the cause of their premature deaths.

What do they feel about them? Not altogether hate—though they grow bitter with anger at the sight of little homes destroyed; but the anger passes;

what remains is a sort of deep ironic contempt. These "blighters," as Londoners consider them, are of no more use than vermin; and like vermin they must be got rid of. It is no use stopping till you *have* got rid of vermin.

Of all the sights of Britain to-day, there could be no sight less reassuring to Hitler and Mussolini than the faces of Londoners in the surface shelters of the East End. No weapon that Britain can forge, no fighter among her young Davids of the air, or of her Senior Service,—ever facing in serene silence the myriad perils of the haunted seas,—is so terrible a fighter as that grim, determined, yet unconscious fighter: the London Poor. Those who have lost all outward possessions and yet retain their courage and good will cannot well be conquered.

The shelter problems—in the hands of Herbert Morrison, who loves London as a man loves his child, and Ellen Wilkinson, who loves humanity in the same heroic fashion (for in spite of Hitler, it *is* more heroic to love than to hate)—are already being solved slowly but successfully. What they once were, and what the people of London bore throughout the first critical months of the attack upon London, should never be forgotten.

The walls of London and her stately towers could not stand up against the bombing of Hitler's brutal warriors; it has been the hearts of Londoners that have proved the indestructibility of their city.

Call it no longer dear City of Cecrops:
Call it rather dear City of God.

CHAPTER VI
STILL LONDON

Three months after Hitler had decided upon London as a target we returned to see what had become of our home city.

As we approached the long, dim, murmuring mass, our first impression was one of relief.

We had forgotten the size and amplitude of England's capital, a city that contains 8,202,815 souls; takes slices from five home counties: Middlesex; Hertford; Essex; Kent and Surrey; stretches for fifteen miles within a radius from Charing Cross; and thins itself out into a greater London, thirty miles long. Street after street streamed by us unchanged. Every now and then chips were off roofs; and in the huddle of old and growing quarters, new bricks and tiles shone with an unfamiliar lustre.

Factories with glass roofs still intact had outlasted countless raids; they had a stubborn look about them, as if at the end of the war they would still be handing out soap and biscuits—as if Hitler's bombers had been but so many summer flies.

Suddenly a spattered derelict church crept into view,—with all its windows out, and a hole in the roof,—staggering out of its sedate compactness into a drunken sprawl. A street behind the church had a gap in it like a knocked-out tooth.

The station we drew into with astonishing punctuality had not yet received the "spot of bother" known to half-a-dozen other London stations. It is a kind, soft-voiced, velvet-footed station; and weeks of nightly terror had done nothing to make it less reassuring.

A row of taxis awaited us with calm precision, nor was there anything on the face of our driver to tell us that the night before he had passed through life-and-death adventures that made the Thousand and One Nights seem positively humdrum. Yet he had had these adventures overnight, during one of London's worst raids, and in traffic pauses he was not indisposed to talk of them.

As we approached the Marble Arch we found ourselves in the pathway of the late hurricane. The ponderous and solid neighbourhood looked like

the morning after a Bacchante's revel. The houses were most of them intact, but the windows were either wide and glasslessly open, or derelict-looking and boarded up. There were even interiors showing—curiously good; and even more curiously—helpless.

This was the rich, invulnerable plot of Fortune's family. Some of the great houses stood like the last stages of a Stilton cheese, nothing but rind and emptiness. At the foot of Park Lane a startling gash appeared, and an immense root of a tree pushed its way into a heap of rubble.

The driver said to us apologetically, as a conscientious housemaid might excuse herself for a speck of dust on the surface of a polished table, "It was a bad night last night—and we ain't 'ad time to clear everythink up."

The question of whether the railings round the Square gardens should not be taken down has been perturbing generous-minded Londoners with a faint desire to serve slum children, for several years. Hitler has now settled this question once and for all, by tearing open whole gardens, and flinging large chunks of railing across the secluded Squares.

The West End has certainly "copped it," on much the same scale as the East.

It is painful as well as curious to see stately and historical mansions come to such an unexpected and undignified end, their noble façades knocked into ruins, so that even what remains has a strained and helpless look, such as the Finance Kings of America once had, shocked at the turn in their fortunes, during the great Depression.

Yet the people in the streets do not look strained or nervous; and they very much object to anyone's thinking that they are particularly brave, or indeed, as a friend of ours wrote, "that there is anything to be brave about!" This, however, is a mere English way of trying to avoid any form of self-expression.

There *is* something to be brave about, since death is at least thirty per cent more probable to a Londoner at the present juncture than it has ever been before, or, we hope, is ever likely to be again—once the "*Luftwaffe*" goes into the obscurity it deserves. The people of London, too, *have* a different look, whether they know it or not; they look alert and absorbed, as if they had suddenly learned something of importance, which requires their full attention.

What they have learned is that to keep alive is difficult, enjoyable, and largely a matter of personal responsibility.

The civilized wills and habits of a well-served population have become self-supporting. This is strangely good for city-dwellers and has turned their rather puny and helpless physiognomy into the stripped, fiery and intelligent expression of active and creative human beings.

Londoners *are* carrying on; but they do not know what else is. Or, in an hour or five minutes even—what else will be.

The sirens sounded. No one in the roadway hastened or changed his expression. Yet the chipped and battered face of the street we were in seemed more aghast at its indignities than before.

A sort of foggy sullenness pervaded these stately but disheveled mansions, as if the long-drawn whistling note of danger was symbolical of some inner disconcertedness.

Coming up as we did, out of the different planet of rural England, we noticed that the people in the London streets smile less; though they respond immediately to the speech of strangers in a kindly fashion, and with great helpfulness whenever they can.

We stopped at one of the best hotels in London. What it had kept hold of, and what it had reluctantly abandoned, were equally interesting.

It had the same type of clientèle—and the same expensiveness; but it was more human. It seemed to have completely got rid of the third-person singular; everyone, even the porter, whose wife had been missing for twenty-four hours, had become everyone else's intimate. Each guest, as he came in, wanted to know if there was any news of the head porter's wife.

There were plenty of young guests in the hotel: most of them were in uniform, and strode about with a martial air under their tin, soup-platish headgear. There were fewer old people, but what there were looked calm and settled, and—if women—knitted. Nobody dressed for dinner; and no woman that I saw wore jewels.

There was an air-raid shelter of a highly superior kind, arranged like staterooms on an old-fashioned liner, just below the surface of the street.

Most of the guests, however, preferred to sleep in their bedrooms upstairs, which, if slightly less safe, were certainly more luxurious.

There was great disquiet among the staff when the gas was cut off and no toast could be made. The manager and manageress looked stricken.

They cheered up when a particularly noisy barrage started towards 9:30 P.M. and incendiary bombs were dropped in the near neighbourhood.

Our tin-hatted young people, joined by several others from the street, rushed up onto our roof, to put out any bombs that fell.

The manageress said: "You see it *does* make it so difficult to *promise* hot water for baths! But we *quite* hope it will be all right for them, in the morning!" The old ladies went on with their knitting.

Breakfast was as usual after a comfortable but rather noisy night. The quality of the food was good; the cooking excellent; and there was *just* enough. The head porter's wife *had* been killed. The second porter was still on the roof, tidying-up after the fires. There had been bombs dropped on the roof. But there was still a roof.

We drove through the city, claiming with joy each familiar landmark. We were glad to see that King Charles was boarded up; and Nelson and his lions still kept each other company, over a large bomb crater. The Burghers of Calais made our hearts ache for a deeper servitude now placed upon that proud and lucid country, our beloved and sundered France. Rodin's burghers were intact with their chains upon their necks. We visited the Abbey; and St. Margaret's—this little silvery church was alive only in its outer fabric, within it smelt still of burned-out fires, and all its pews, its glass, and its hassocks and church ornaments were brushed up into little heaps. But the rest of Westminster stood—chipped and scratched, as if a company of vampire bats had tried to get at its throat, and had been beaten off.

We drove through the city to Southwark, near the Docks.

The Mayor of Southwark was a youngish, energetic, kindly fellow whom life had suddenly forced into the part of a hero. He fitted into his new rôle without apparent difficulty. A growing multitude of homeless people were on his hands. The Government funds were wholly inadequate; the funds of his district had long ago been mopped up; without the Lord Mayor's fund, which was being handled in a quick and common-sense manner, freely entrusted to responsible people in authority, his task would have been impossible. Had there been no stream of generous gifts from the United States and the Dominions, it would have been a far more heart-breaking job than it actually was, though it was heart-breaking enough; for who can replace at a moment's notice a home—which is a poor man's all?

The Mayor's two main problems were that the bombed-out workers must be kept within reach of their work; and that their wives and families, ruined and nerve-wracked, could not get on comfortably in strange households; nor would most of them consent to evacuation; "not unless

they've been bombed twice," the Mayor explained, "then they generally see their way to it."

These are not easy problems; but perhaps they could have been avoided by greater foresight and generosity had those in authority, who were responsible for the safety of the people of London, believed in time that people matter more than property.

Now in the middle of this new warfare, with its terrific emergencies and disasters, drives and strains, it is not so easy to improvise any sort of secure and reasonable plan to cover the needs of London's workers; although those now in charge of the question take every risk, and strain every nerve, and have no hidebound prejudices or rigidities to stand between them and the safety of millions.

Londoners are a highly specialized and individual people; and though the young especially adjust rapidly to new conditions, country life is as strange to them as Jersey City would be to the natives of Central Africa.

"I like it down here," one small Londoner told his Cornish foster-parents, "there's heaps wot I've never 'ad before—but there don't seem to be no great towns—'ave they been bombed off it like?"

Another, taken to a church on Sunday where incense was used as a part of worship, instantly pulled on his gas-mask, crying aloud to his foster-mother: "'Ere, we must git aht of this plice quick. That's gas sent over by the 'uns to do us in!"

Country darkness and silence, outdoor water-closets at the farther end of pitch-black gardens, are fearful portents to the London child. One wept pitifully because he was put to sleep in a bed instead of being taken down to a shelter.

In the upheaved districts of Dockside, welfare workers, and officials belonging to the Women's Institute, work all day long to help in readjusting the oddly shattered lives of those who cannot or will not be evacuated.

They help to get Anderson Shelters, moderately comfortable for the inmates, in tiny backyards. They start cooking schools and give lessons in hygiene in the town halls. Perhaps those who do most to help their poorer and less educated sisters in their homes of disaster are the London teachers. They have become maids-of-all-work to humanity. Perhaps the cat with nine lives has whispered his precious secret into their ready hearts.

The London County Council had a brilliant idea when it turned its slum-feeding problems into the hands of the teachers who remained at their London posts and whose schools were taken from them. Five hundred London schools have had to be closed; and ninety-two thousand children—at the moment of writing—remain in London uneducated, except in the nerve-shattering task of escaping death at intervals.

It is not the least of the London teachers' trials that they have to see their material for the future ruined and broken before their very eyes. Yet there are no cut-and-dried solutions for this problem.

Those who have lost all their material possessions cannot bear to give up their children, even though the child's life and education are at stake. The very virtues of the London poor, their haphazard courage, their unending fortitude, and the dry cynicism of their outlook on life, make them always willing to take chances for their children as well as for themselves.

The writer once lifted a three-day-old baby from a slum mother's arm. "Don't you be too keerful of 'er, Miss," the mother said indulgently, "she's got to learn to rough it!"

Londoners learn fast, but not always what you may expect them to learn. I do not think I should have expected the little shops, East or West, to show quite such a stubborn defiance, in the face of their particular trials. They have no protection for their property either from the Devil above, or at dusk from the looters below. Their windows are broken and glassless. Their every form of transport is delayed or destroyed; many of their customers cannot pay them for their goods; yet they carry on. They "perm" and wave hair; they deliver each other's parcels and stores. They continue to fry fish and chips. Small restaurants open in air raids to meet public needs at the risk of their lives.

"Yes, dearie, all me glass *'as* gone," an indomitable woman in charge of a cigarette and sweet shop remarked cheerfully. "But what I says is—if you've got your roof, you've got everythink!"

None of the Cockneys have lost their wit, danger but sharpens it. An old lady was heard asking one of the demolition squad: "What made that large hole in the road—was it a bomb?" "No, lady," was the reply from the depth of the crater, "mice."

A bus conductor told a passenger that he had been bombed out of three different homes in ten days. He ended up by saying, "I'm getting to hate that bloke Hitler as much as he hates me!"

Yet there is suffering and terror that stretch behind these flashes of Cockney wit, like the dark background of a storm behind summer lightning.

There were 24,000 homeless people in Stepney and Bethnal Green at the moment of writing. There are only two deep shelters in this district; and in these shelters there is no sanitation; no heating; no food. In Wapping Old Stairs and the Limehouse region, the shelters are so close to the river that they are always wet. Under the arches cart-horses take shelter with the people.

Everywhere in these dockside districts the crushed houses were a cruel yet a gallant sight. "Bombed but not Beaten," was scrawled up on many small broken shops. Little Union Jacks waved over heaps of fallen bricks that had once been houses.

"I got furniture enough out my house las' night when it was took, to furnish two whole rooms," one cheerful woman told us, "and a lady near by, she has two empties and she said I might take them—isn't it grand?"

She was as happy and excited as if she had won a fortune. On the whole the homeless women of London looked more resilient and less dazed than their men. They had their children to think of—and plans to make for their immediate needs; while the men, who had been responsible for the "home" and will be again for another, were on the knife-edge of a financial precipice—and looked crushed and driven back into their own astonished hearts. I sat for a long time in the room where those who had been bombed overnight came to make their official statements. There was no question that their problems were being handled with sympathy and consideration. There was no outward expression of excitement about any of these bombed-out people, but there was pain in its passive and most cruel form. These were the people who had to take disaster where they were, and without alternatives.

If those in the United States and Canada could see what the wonderful gifts they send do to mitigate these helpless hours of human tragedy, their hearts would glow with joy and pride.

We went into the nearest town hall, where a big public room had been set apart for these clothes from America. All were laid out on trestles, with their sizes visible; and—straight from their complete and absolute penury—these mothers came to meet their own and their children's needs. "Isn't it glorious," a W.V.S. worker in charge of the distribution centre kept saying to me. "Isn't it *glorious* of them—to send us all these wonderful clothes! They are *so good*—so clean and new! We can give them out *at once*—just when and where they are most needed!"

I took particular note of this woman. She was well-dressed and had an enchanting happy face. Everyone who spoke to her was made more cheerful by the radiation of her good will and gentleness. She seemed to be everywhere at once, without hurry or any sign of fatigue. I found that besides working all day and every day in this bombed area, she drove daily an hour in and out of London, to her own home and children in the country. To drive during the blackout, through the streets of London, with a raid on, requires tremendous courage; and she did this every day; and would go on doing it, till the war ended. Wherever I went in dangerous places, in moments of special emergency, or difficulty, I kept coming on these women; until I found myself reminded of Phillips Brooks' saying: "Duty makes us do things well, but Love makes us do them beautifully." These women were lovers. I asked the Head of the W.V.S. about my friend in Stepney. I had forgotten her name, but when I said "She is like a bunch of daffodils on a winter's day," her chief replied: "I know exactly whom you mean. It is Mrs. F. The curious part of it is, she used to do nothing but play bridge; and now she is most certainly one of our best workers." But if the amateurs, sometimes, as long ago, "outran Peter," what can be said of the London professional workers with their smaller means and more iron duties? Every day they have three battles—transport, going and coming, and work under conditions that would appall lions. My own typists work in the city's centre. Opposite their offices, a general post office lies in ruins. Behind them a bomb tore away part of their own building, and the whole of its neighbour. The girls go to and from their work sometimes through streets on fire; sometimes on foot; sometimes in a stranger's car; sometimes standing in a barrage at a street corner for half an hour or more to catch a bus or a train. When they arrive home they sleep, or more often do not sleep, in shelters. The head of my typing office wisely arranged a back room with a bed in it, and sent each girl there for an hour's rest and sleep during the day.

One day my brother, who is a daily worker in London, asked his secretary if she were well. "You look rather white," he observed. "Oh it's nothing much," the girl replied. "Only last night we had incendiary bombs at both ends of our shelter at once, and when we had put them out, we had to dig out some people who got buried—and they were dead. It was the first time anyone had been killed in our shelter—but I shan't mind so much when I'm more used to it."

"I'm sorry I'm late," another of these London girls told her employer, "but we were bombed out last night. We're all safe, but everything we had is gone." "Wouldn't you rather go back to your people and not work to-day?" he asked her. "No. I think I'd rather stay here and work," the girl replied.

"You see, there is nowhere to go to—but I shall be quite all right, and I can sleep in the nearest shelter, when the work is finished."

We lunched with a girl who was a great personal friend. She had been a highly nervous and rather discouraged girl; now she drove an ambulance nightly through the barrage. "Don't you ever get frightened, Anne?" I asked her. She considered the question thoughtfully. "Yes, I did once," she said. "I was terrified. I had to telephone to rather an important person—it was about a lunch appointment—and she sounded sniffy—but it turned out all right."

That evening we sat in a quiet corner of the cocktail lounge, talking to a great London doctor, a man of particularly fine courage and common sense. With his reputation he could easily have followed his large West End practice into some safe rural district, where many of his old patients had congregated; but he had preferred to remain in constant danger working for a small Government salary in the heart of London.

The British Medical Society organizes certain London districts as much as possible under their own practitioners; and our friend was in charge of his own particular quarter. He visited the nearest hospital; advised upon shelter committees and spent long hours of the day and night with the demolition squad, rescuing buried people. "You'd hardly believe how many are saved," he told us. "Yesterday they dug out five from the ruins of a big building that had collapsed right on top of them. We supposed they'd all be corpses for certain. But only one of them was dead—and he'd been standing in the open doorway and must have been killed instantly. The other five looked dead as doornails, blue-white and covered with rubbish, but after I'd shoved 'em about a bit, round they came, mouths and eyes full of dust of course; but they got to the nearest Rest Room on their own feet, took a cup of tea, and carried on as usual."

The value of the Rest Room in the bombed area is slightly impaired if those just escaped from a previous bombing get blown up once more; but this is one of the awkwardnesses of the bombing system.

The London poor are accustomed to adjust to circumstances, although not to quite such severe circumstances as Hitler has provided for them.

Drama, company, noise and light are what Londoners most need, and this is the reason why they do not wish to evacuate into secure but sodden places, where nothing seems to be going on except the forces of nature.

Nor does any Britisher like interference with his way of life. A.R.P.'s—Air Raid Police—were highly suspect at first, their tin hats and arm-bands were disagreeably reminiscent of the Law; but Londoners have accepted

them by now, as, in the main, assets. Still they prefer to have these Public Sheep Dogs belonging to their own way of life. Some upper-class people *can* be very shocking except to each other. With the best motives in the world, they may use their highly cultivated but sometimes criminally unkind intelligences, in a wholly wrong direction.

In their praiseworthy desire to do away with dirt, smells and other threats to hygiene and public welfare, they may break up a companionableness and good will that would withstand—if left to themselves—the full extremes of panic or boredom. But there are rare people, of whom many seem to have joined the A.R.P., who—whatever section of society they come from—seem to know the needs of their "shelter populace," as the saying is, "by heart"; and in the moment of London's sharpest adversity these men and women shine out like jewels. They belong to all classes and professions or to either sex, and seem to take no rest day or night. They are turned to, now, as if they were—as perhaps indeed they are—angels of God.

The Pioneer Corps of Scottish and Irish navvies, first employed for rescue work on demolished buildings, were a wild and rough set of men. All were violent and some criminal; terrible men in peacetimes or at their normal jobs; but when they became rescuers they turned, our doctor friend told us, "gentle as nursing mothers." Perhaps the doctors and nurses in charge—the young girls driving ambulances through flaming streets—had something to do with the change in them. Heroism is catching. Doctors are often a pretty good type of men, and when they are, their influence is highly salutary, because less suspect, than the influence of often no less brave and devoted clergy. But to rescue is in itself a refining process.

These rough Pioneers rush into the teeth of danger, shouldering inconceivable weights, risking cuts from glass and falling masonry, to free the flickering lives of their fellows.

"I'm not one to cry," a little girl of seven said, as one of these rough men lifted her out from a weight of bricks that had blotted out her whole family, and kept her long imprisoned; but the fierce fellow who held her in his arms found himself unable to practise her heart-breaking stoicism.

CHAPTER VII
AT HOME AND ABROAD IN LONDON

It was growing dusk when we reached Sainsbury's. This great food store is known all over England. With characteristic British conservatism, it has kept its old premises while carrying on with the new; and now it finds the full usefulness of a double life.

Sainsbury's has not only got its old premises and its new, its food supplies divided between town and country, but it has mobile shops which can be filled at a moment's notice, and sent off to any bombed area, where a branch store has suffered, and where its familiar name, upon the motor-shop, reassures the inhabitants of the district that they can still be fed, even if their roofs have been snatched from over their heads.

Where grass and roots of daisies have been planted in the earth above an Anderson Shelter, it has been discovered that it strengthens the roof against exploding bombs. The roots of the past hold the earth firm in more ways than one. We like to fall back upon familiar things, when the Unknown has shocked us.

One of our hardest problems under the *Luftwaffe* is where to place food supplies for their greater security.

Long before the *Blitzkrieg* began, these difficulties had been partially met, but no one knew exactly how difficult transport might become, nor was it possible to leave great cities to be altogether fed from a distance.

Perishable food has to be near its market. This means that Commerce itself becomes part of the firing line; and that every worker on our food products has become automatically one of our fighting forces.

A new profession has been handed over to women, by this enterprising firm, as well as a new moving type of shop. Girls have become butchers.

Rows of these clean, agile expert women are now tackling the heavy task of cutting up our meat supplies.

Mr. Sainsbury told me that this new department of women workers has proved a hundred-per-cent success. One had only to look at the interested

smiling faces to realize that these women liked their new skilled pathway into anatomy.

In Sainsbury's, there is a special rule for the women workers: they are to go down to shelter at the first alert, while the men workers work on until the final signal. This is not so much a confession of weakness or infirmity on the part of the woman, as it is of actual convenience; most of the workers on the higher floors are girls and women; and therefore come by rights to their first-served position.

The dusk had deepened, when we once more found ourselves in the October streets. All Londoners know how beautiful are the long lanes of blue that autumn evenings give to our London streets and squares. We do not see the sky above us any more; it is walking by our side, and drawing together the towers and roofs of a dream city.

We took a late and hasty tea-supper, beneath the dome of St. Paul's, before the little restaurant in St. Paul's Churchyard closed up for the night.

There was a sort of flutter and quickening of pace, as the night drew on. At any moment now the barrage might begin; and bombs might fall.

The late workers must hurry home; and we must give them all the chance we could—have our change handy, and not waste a moment over our belated tea. To do so would be unfair to the kindly, willing waitresses; it might even put them in danger of death.

We were glad to be near St. Paul's; only a week before our visit, every heart in England was anxiously waiting on the Cathedral's fate. A few skilled and dauntless men had lifted that fear from us. We were to keep Wren's Dream—built out of his faith in the city that he had served so faithfully, by many beautiful creative acts—a little longer.

Thirty-four of our city churches have perished, forty-nine have suffered damage. But St. Paul's great dome still rides above the city. A bomb has pierced its roof and dashed the high altar into pieces, but the Cathedral has not changed its outline. It is perhaps not foolish to believe that even if the whole structure of St. Paul's was laid waste by those to whom beauty has no value, and love no sacredness—the spiritual outlines of St. Paul's would still rise on the same spot; and every Londoner see the dome for ever, built into the hidden places of his heart.

We say "Good night" now, when we leave London shops and restaurants, with a special friendliness. We may not see those who have

waited upon our needs again, and we never have seen each other before; but we know that we are fellow citizens of no mean city. There is something in the smile of Londoners, as they part to-day, which heartens each of them, upon their doubtful road.

Now we are in Fleet Street; and the dark has come. In this great building, one of London's dailies taps and shivers out its news of the world. We are taken up in a big slow wooden lift, so unlike the swift steel traps that shoot us into the sky and down again—in a thrilled minute—in America, to the Proprietor's book-filled spacious room.

The full responsibility for feeding the minds of millions rests upon him.

He is there daily, and stays on till after the barrage has begun. That he is anxious—anxious for the life of his paper, for the welfare of the gifted men who write for him, and for their skilled fellows who put their thoughts, and the happenings of mankind, into print, as well as for the public they are to guide—is obvious. But it is a quiet, controlled, and wholly impersonal anxiety. He does not hurry us, he wants us to see and understand all that he is at liberty to show us. Many other great papers depend on his having had the foresight and common sense to prepare in time for Hitler's onslaught against the democratic world. Two-and-a-half years before the war started, he told us, he heard a talk of Vernon Bartlett's which convinced him that the war must come. He said to his son, "I believe Vernon Bartlett is right—what do you think?" and his son replied: "Go ahead—prepare—I think so too!"

Deep below the level of the street he sank the first great shelters to house a duplicate set of the machinery he needed. There familiar processes were carried on with unfamiliar materials; there you could watch metal cylinders pressing their message into papier mâché; and at a pinch oil could take the place of gas. Before such a proposition had been heard of, this paper had its roof "spotters."

The printers carry on steadily through the alert; and the "spotter" radios the exact distances of the approaching bombers. At a given signal the men leave their machines, and troop down a prepared runway. We watched them fascinated; no man hurried, or even looked more aware of what was driving him than if it had been the whistle of his train home.

It was a nightly danger. Jerry wanted Fleet Street. Every worker knew it, but no single workman had resigned since the siege began. One man, who had been previously severely shell-shocked in the last war, was changed, on the doctor's suggestion, not his own, onto a safer job.

We followed them down below into their deep shelters, to watch them again at work, upon the machines of the emergency plant. The guns close by were coughing out their harsh barks; a canteen was working, the gas main had been hit; but there was an oil stove instead of gas. If the electric current should be cut off, there were oil lamps, and candles. Each room was alcoved off from its neighbour, but all were open to the main corridor.

The leader writers sat absorbed at their task; on the table beside them stood telephones, never left by a succession of guardians. They were reporting where each bomb fell. Every London station communicates its "incident" immediately to their paper; their information goes to the carriers as well as to the other great papers, if these have not been able to make (as by now most of them have) the same arrangements. They therefore know, if a station is put out of action, the direction in which other means of transport must be directed. On no single day since the war began has this paper failed to reach every spot for which it caters in the British Isles, though on two occasions it arrived at far-distant villages too late for distribution on the evening of the same day.

Nor would the destruction or capture of London itself result in the overthrow of the British Press.

The Provinces have made all arrangements to take over London's dailies, and relay them from their own plants.

The voice of Truth will not be easily silenced in this island that first gave freedom birth.

In the days of our duped simplicity, a placard was set up all over London, "*What Does Hitler Think of the World?*" No one cares now for the answer; and not very many people—except the Dupers themselves—cared then.

But "*What the World Thinks of Hitler*" cannot be so easily thrust aside. Fleet Street will continue to tell every listening ear—including Hitler's own—what it thinks of him; and should there be nothing left of Fleet Street but its stones, these would immediately cry out their deep repudiation.

"The barrage is very heavy, would it not be better to wait?" our new friend asked us anxiously. "We shall be open until the small hours!" But we too had an appointment with Destiny, and slipped out into the stern and noisy darkness, to meet it.

We did not know it, but we were about to spend the night in Europe.

Our little car bobbed and shuffled its way through the black curtain of the night, till our careful driver brought us in safety to Whitechapel.

There our guide had arranged to take us, to share the surface shelter of a Jewish master tailor and his wife, who not only slept there themselves but used it for all their workpeople.

We were no longer in London, we had gone abroad. Jews from every tortured, forbidden, devastated land were our neighbours: Czechs; Russians; Poles; Germans; Austrians and Belgians—even one calm Finn. The shelter was the most clean, orderly and happy shelter I have seen. It was something more—it was a promise. Here was humanity—internationally at peace. Mixed races, foreign languages were not used as barriers. Here there was a new brotherhood and a common heart.

Out of this chance of mingling of nationalities was born a culture, an intelligent friendliness and courtesy more beautiful and rare than any that the writer has experienced.

We sat and talked for a little while of cities—Vienna, and an unforgotten and wholly different Berlin. We could not speak of Warsaw; but we spoke of Prague; and then we passed from speech to music. A young Czech sang first to us—appropriately his friends urged him to begin with a "Potpourri," a reassembly of a dozen folk-songs from half-a-dozen centuries. Out they poured, soft as velvet, clear as a mountain stream, from this young Chaliapin with a throat of bronze. Old familiar melodies joining up with each other, forming a perfect whole. The boy had a grand free voice; no shyness; and a great good will.

After him a Viennese girl sang. She was afraid at first, but after a little pressing, she leaned forward, out of our dim circle, to where the light fell on her red-gold hair.

She sang the 1934 Berlin song of the persecuted Jews. She did not sing it with her voice alone, but with her bared heart.

No one of us so much as stirred—we hardly breathed, while she sang. It was as if we were watching a great procession of those bereft and hunted people, torn apart, and robbed of all that they possessed, fleeing before a pack of ravening wolves. It could not be men that so pursued their brothers.

Like Shelley's autumn leaves in the "Ode to the West Wind" these people fled as if,

. . . from an Enchanter fleeing . . .
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes!

But the disease was not theirs—it was in the heart of their persecutors. They themselves were guiltless. They did not hate; nor did they desire to hurt or harry. They were just such simple, friendly, hard-working people as the group around us; and capable of just such beauty. A boy of fourteen played to us on his violin. A couple of street musicians came in and joined us. The night before they had played under the arches by the river. In this shelter, they told us, a girl had slept, her coat trailing all night long in the water.

They asked her, when she woke, what she was going to do. "Oh," she said, "I shall just go out now, and walk round a little till I get dry, and then come back here for to-morrow night. I haven't anywhere else I can go to—and you get tired all day long on your feet, though it's nice to be where there's a little light." The musicians sat down with us and were given, as we all were, tea and biscuits, made by a Jewess from Stuttgart. She told us: "We were very well off once. We had our own big shop; and though we're doing very well here, I never quite get used to serving tea without a table, or a tablecloth."

Two high officials from one of the new ministries came in for a few minutes to inspect us—well-dressed; well-fed; kindly and good-mannered men. We persuaded the girl to sing her song again for them. "But I'm afraid I shan't understand it," one of the young men said to me confidentially, "my German is pretty rotten!" "Oh yes, you will understand every word this girl sings," I told him. "It is the Jewish song of the hunted and tells how they will go on—happen what will, throughout the world—and yet keep alive their Jewish heritage."

The girl sang again, and when she had finished there were tears in the eyes of the two Englishmen. "Yes, you were right," one of them murmured to me, "I *did* understand every word of it—and I shall never forget it either!"

Then they left us; and we began to settle down for the night. It was time to sleep if the guns would let us. My husband was given a steamer chair and a box for his legs; and I was allowed a cot bed, of almost inconceivable luxury, belonging to the master tailor himself who was absent on business in the Provinces.

All the lights, except one shaded by a newspaper, were put out. There was bedding of some description for all of us. We slept side by side so close that the heads of a father and son were almost touching my shoulder.

Under the one light, lying on a long trestle-board, was a boy, so like Basaiti's young dead Christ, in the Accademia in Venice, that he might have been its model.

On the other side of me two young girls sat on their beds, fixing their hair and their faces, so that when the new day came, they could at least appear tidy and good to look at.

The guns were close and loud for an hour or two; and every now and then came the shattering crunch of an exploding bomb, tearing up some little home in the streets near by.

At first in spite of the ordered cleanliness of the shelter it was difficult to breathe the bad air of so many confined in so small a space. Slowly the stuffiness and heat changed to intense cold. I was well-wrapped and wore a fur coat. It hurt me to think of the thousands of Londoners in far larger, colder shelters, with no such warm coverings. The last two hours I got quite used to the bad air, and slept deeply and well.

At 6:30 we crept out silently into the dawn, so as not to disturb our hosts.

There was an early raid still on; and we saw a new great hole in Trafalgar Square, there was one on each side of Nelson now. But the stone lions were their usual rather lethargic selves; and we reassured ourselves as to the Guildhall—now destroyed—and Westminster.

As soon as we reached Piccadilly we had an early breakfast in a Lyons "Corner House." I had long thought that these Lyons "specials" have the best plain food in London; and this morning the breakfast, with our kind guide, had a marvellous quality.

The waitresses were so anxious to feed their shelter breakfasters, and so glad of the new day, that they made this little meal into a festival.

After breakfast we walked to Westminster and were glad to see the County Council buildings, and St. Thomas's, were getting over their bombs and showed no outward signs of them. A bomb had destroyed the nurses' quarters of St. Thomas's and killed fifteen of the nurses. A very beautiful young girl I knew, half-American, half-English, had instantly volunteered as a V.A.D. worker, to take the place of one of those who were killed. She did not tell me of her work, until I said, "I wonder if St. Thomas's *can* carry on?" and she laughed and said, "Well, I know they *are* carrying on for a fact—because you see they're training *me*!" It brought our two countries

suddenly close together, because when I had last heard of this young girl, she had been given her coming-out party at the White House in Washington.

We had a grouse pie for lunch, to which we had invited a highly valued young lawyer friend, whose office was at the corner of Fleet Street. He had telephoned us the day before with a time-bomb in front of his doorway. "I think I'd better be off before long," he had explained, and when we expressed anxiety at his staying an instant longer, he had said reassuringly: "Oh, it's quite all right really—I have a bucket full of water just beside me!" Another great friend was a young woman who drove an ambulance through the London streets at night for raid victims, and slept when sleep was due to her, in Chelsea—the other guests were a dear friend, who had been a Viennese milliner of the first water and her able husband, just freed from the cruel blunder of internment.

The Viennese couple had had a difference of opinion the night before in their air-raid shelter. She was in the act of trying on a beautiful model hat on order from America, in an improvised ladies' cloakroom, before the only mirror, when an incendiary bomb fell on the shelter. Her husband tried to drag her out into a place of greater security. "Isn't your life of any importance to you?" he shouted in desperation, while the shelter rocked. "That a bow should be chic!" replied his wife, "is *that* not also of importance?"—thus justifying the ruling passion of the artist. Luckily someone put out the incendiary bomb; and an American woman will I hope one day wear the hat for which Eirene Braun Spierer was quite prepared to risk her life.

No one should forget the weariness of shelter life. As an adventure it might well be thought of as wonderful, but as a habit, it is as ceaselessly fatiguing as the long processes of a siege. No one succeeds in blunting the edge of fear, until the edge of strength and human endurance is also blunted.

Yet Londoners are loath to leave their beleaguered city. The spirit and intention of those who live there is perhaps best represented by a London hen.

The chicken house in which she was accommodated, in a cindery back yard, was blown into atoms. The hen, who had very naturally left with the atoms, happily remained intact, and very much alive.

A few hours later she returned to her roofless dwelling and laid an egg, within her battered nesting box.

CHAPTER VIII
THE COCKPIT OF ENGLAND

There is a little ridge above the Romney Marshes crowned by a small tree-sheltered village, in which there lives an ancient mariner, who is still being paid to look out for Napoleon and the French Fleet.

Night by night, on its way to London, all Germany throws her envenomed might against the heart of the British Empire; and this old man sleeps the sleep of the long justified—for the French Fleet never came; and he has earned his keep.

There is a farm close-lying under the ridge, which the author has known and loved for many years; five bomb craters pit its rich green meadows, but have not disturbed its deep Sussex serenity.

At six o'clock one early autumn morning a few weeks ago, I watched the cows move slowly out of the mist, as if they were a part of it; their breath made a little space of light about their heavy heads. Two pine trees towered above them under which we had watched the night before in the moonlight, with anxious hearts, the travellers of death.

These travellers, death itself, had passed us by. The cows, and their calm companions the Southdown sheep, strolled and grazed, moving in and out of the mist towards the growing light, as if no such thing as marauding planes, no such people as flying Nazis, had ever circled in a dance of death, above their unmoved heads.

In front of the house, pouter pigeons, glistening white, flickered daintily across the dew-soaked lawn.

The soft sunlight turned the last roses of the long bright summer into sparkling gems. Slowly the sights and sounds of day spread across the marsh—picked up village spires, and brought out the mellow reds and yellows of Sussex farms.

Behind this façade of slow peace a very live, sane people are now roused, as they have never, in their long lifetimes, been roused before.

They are roused; but they are seldom visible. They come up from behind their hedges, and carry out the mothering of their land with wary

persistence. More bombs have been dropped upon Kent and Sussex—these neighbour counties nurtured by sea and land—than upon any other part of England.

But they have not suffered as the great cities have suffered. The sea and the land have worked together for their safety. Their enemies have been washed to pieces on their shores; battered and lost by night in friendly mists and gales. And by day the ditches and the hedges have folded the marsh dwellers into invisibility.

My friend carried on her usual life. She made butter; cared for her house and garden; and was the staunch friend and mother of her four scattered children.

In addition only, she looked after a Red Cross hospital in a near-by town, which she had been largely instrumental in starting; slept five nights out of the seven in a room that had been the Casual Ward of a workhouse, and whose walls were not yet wholly untenanted by bugs, now turned, by her and four young women friends, into a Red Cross Receiving Station where first aid could be given all night long to any bomb casualties in the neighbourhood. This friend has long since trained her skilled and quiet heart to carry out every function with the rapidity and sureness of an instinct.

One night a week before, somewhere out on the mist-thickened loneliness of the marshes, a flying bomber had released its load, down the pathway of a searchlight. It had reached its goal and fallen upon the Searchlight Battery. Two of the men had been blown to atoms, and their brains scattered over their wounded comrades. It was four hours before anyone knew what had happened to them, and they were taken to the first aid station where my friend and her three helpers bound up their wounds. When I saw two of the wounded they were both very tranquil and happy, in the little terraced hospital full of sunshine and clean air, looking out over Michaelmas daisies and ripening pears. One was playing draughts with a friend; while the other, still suffering from shock and concussion, lay at rest in a room to himself, carefully watched over and nursed by one of these amateur nurses.

The night-silence of the marshes, wrapped in mist, under the steady silver of the moon, has never before been shaken awake by such sounds as interrupt it now.

Every evening, above the mossy roofs, the heavy humming of the loaded bombers takes its accustomed way towards London or the Midlands; and at

dawn some—but not all—fly back, the lighter from the dropping of their cruel loads, upon the homes of England.

Sussex has had little to do with violent deaths, since the Normans landed. Night after night, the little fields have been gathered in by the hedges, and the dark solid shadows of farms and cottages have melted into quiet hills.

The great churches, some of them struck down, and all their chiming voices forbidden, are silent as at a funeral. But they are alive, and the friendly mercy that they stand for is also alive in every Sussex heart.

These "decent and dauntless people," as Henry James well called them long ago, are an extraordinarily tough and vigilant part of England.

They have the blood of smugglers in their veins. They have watched their coasts for enemies for hundreds of years; and it is still theirs.

They go about their daily business without ever looking up at the German planes, in broad daylight, that skim and play about their skies. "Tom Tiddlers," Sussex people call them with a grim smile. Sussex folk have never hurried; and they believe in their friends. I stood and counted seventeen Messerschmitts from my friend's lawn, on this exquisite autumn morning. The husband of my friend, who had fought in the last war and is now the head of the Home Guards of his village, said: "We haven't enough machines yet, but they'll be sending them—the Americans, won't they? I tell my men that!" "Oh yes," I said. "You need have no fear. I *know* they'll come; and come quickly! And come in their thousands!"

While I spoke, those unattended silver planes shot to and fro like minnows in a stream. They left behind them, through the blue air, long trails of white smoke. A ski-runner over virgin snow cuts such a trail behind him; or a skilful skater weaving his intricate figures on the ice. It was difficult to believe, on that bright day, in the ugliness behind the dancing atoms.

On the way to the cottage hospital, we met a woman in the bus who had a basket on her lap full of empty glass jars, and we asked her what she was doing with them.

She told us she was going to see an old lady, who had a well in her garden, and who whenever a main was hit, and water difficult to come by, was willing to share her well with all her neighbours. "She's built us a shelter too," the woman told us, "large enough to hold all the cottage people round—but there she's never had the time yet to go into it herself!"

The woman was so cheerful and friendly that we ventured to ask her if she had suffered at all from the accidents of war. "Ain't you 'eard?" she asked incredulously, but with obvious pride. "The bomb 'e fell on my house while I was out—so I couldn't do anything about 'e, could I? Everythink I 'ad got burned up by 'e—except three sheets—double ones they was; and a bath towel—and my brother-in-law at Whitehall—if you can count on 'im!" The bus conductor reassured us about her future, when she had left the bus.

"She's a good char," he explained, "and there isn't anyone going to grudge 'er to sleep where she works—us knows each other 'ereabouts."

As we reached the rose-red little town, where our morning was to be spent, we saw a Dornier silver pencil, racing off through low thick clouds with two Spitfires pursuing her, as if she wanted to hide herself—as well as she might. We soon came on two little freshly spilled heaps that had been homes only a few minutes before. This had been her work.

Our day's tour took us through Dymchurch, Pevensey, Appledore, Sandgate, Hythe and Dover.

These solid, steady little marsh towns and villages were not much more affected than the browsing sheep. But as we drove towards Dover, we found ourselves on a battlefield.

We should have known it, I think, even if we had not come on bodies of troops, camouflaged guns, and the distant sounds of war. There was a sense of alertness and awareness in every face we saw. This expression did not in the least resemble fear, it was the look upon a hunter's face when he is listening for the "Tallyho." At any moment the fox may break cover—and this is what the hunter is waiting for with eagerness.

As we approached Dover we were halted several times by armed sentries. Our examination was courteous but thorough. Our friend told us that a real spy had been caught in their neighbourhood. He was dressed as a British officer, and brought by a friend, after a casual meeting in a train, to a tennis party. He was, so he told them, on sick leave from a Hastings Hospital, after escaping from the Dunkirk beaches severely wounded a few weeks earlier.

Everyone vied to do him honour, and he asked for and was given lifts in cars through the battle area. Several sentries let the car pass, as his hosts were well-known local people, and he was in uniform; but finally a sentry, who was a stranger, insisted upon seeing all their identity cards. The spy

turned rather blustery—had no identity card and tried to bluff his way through; but his horrified hosts, who had become suspicious by now, helped to detain him, until he was carried off by the authorities.

Now, no matter if it were the King himself, no one may pass into the war zone without reiterated and thorough inspections.

The main road, across the empty corn-fields, bore traces of its violent visitors. It reminded me of the track of New England's famous hurricane three years ago. A casino that we passed was in tatters, little bungalows had been turned inside out like umbrellas, larger houses here and there had been not so much broken up as crushed—and crushed into rubble.

There was something sinister about their end, as if a dragon had eaten them and spat out the bones. There was the same feeling of a destructive monster at work upon Lamb Cottage in Rye, where Henry James's Bechstein piano had been flung with its legs up against the sky—and all its white keys loose and stained.

As we entered Dover, armed police carefully explained to us what roads to follow. The traffic had been "diverted" because "something" had dropped; and shelling was at the moment taking place.

Dover looked reassuringly stout and alive, although every inch a battlefield. The Lord Warden Hotel had lost a wing, apparently torn off, as a careless picnicker might tear the wing off a chicken; the rest of the building was intact, though open to the light of day, as well as to every air that blew. There was not one whole pane of glass in the building. The whole sea-front presented the face of someone, fresh from a prize fight, with his front teeth missing. The harbour however appeared to be untouched, and the breakwaters presented their long familiar lines, stretching out in their accustomed force and apparent insignificance, into the arms of their ancient ally—the sea. Behind her battered front the solid little city lived its abnormal life, with strong-nerved simplicity.

We were allowed to visit the Dover control rooms; a wonderfully compact, up-to-date and vivid headquarters. It was more thrilling than any film, to look at the slate on which events are chalked almost the instant they happen. From the slate the time, place and nature of the "incident" are taken down on paper, and marked on a large-scale map.

All the services for the city's needs are sent out automatically to meet every attack with the smallest possible delay. Each service unit is represented by a disc on a chart—here a row of ambulances; cranes; a demolition squad; fire-engines, and so on. As each is ordered to the spot by

telephone, the disc is lifted off, and put back at the moment of its return. The Control knows exactly, from moment to moment, what service is in use, and where; as well as what services he still has in hand and how many in reserve.

Information reaches him as to the pace and direction of the bomber, before the bomb is actually dropped. Shells, however, come without warning and take their unregarded way. Two fell while we were having tea in the Control room, and a red hot piece of shell was given me as a souvenir. It had struck the gate of the Control house, and chipped it. Nobody in Dover takes either bombs or shells lightly. They have good deep shelters, and make use of them, when the alert sounds. But at this doorway of England, where the foe is nearest and where there is certainly constant danger, there is in the people of Dover an unshattered, an almost sparkling morale.

Fear without danger is a disintegrating and corroding force; but danger without fear is as heartening and as savoury as salt in food. In the ancient port of Dover there is a great deal of danger without fear.

Partly this may be due to the fact that small cities know their authorities personally; and in this particular town, they have a set of men looking after them that it would be hard to beat; and partly the population may owe its courage to the fact that Dover hits back. To be a passive target is a far less easy business, although perhaps no part of this island, at the present moment, is quite as passive as it looks.

A greengrocer of Dover, whose name might well go down to history, had his house bombed and three members of his family killed. His pony too, who carried his fruit and vegetables to their destinations, had not survived the disaster. The authorities, who knew how dire this man's misfortune was, were prepared to deal with the utmost generosity with his case. "All I want," he explained to them, "to set me up on my feet again, is a wheelbarrow." He got the wheelbarrow.

A woman, caught by an "incident" in the street, had blood pouring down her cheeks, but she refused the ministrations of the ambulance. "I'm so near me home," she said, "I can easily wash this off—but the other lady here—she 'as 'ad a nasty 'it—take 'er!"

An old lady of seventy-eight refused flatly to be evacuated from a hotel on the sea-front where she was nursing the wounded. "Not as long as there's one boy left that needs me!" she said firmly, and remained till all her wounded boys were evacuated with her.

Not every town upon the Channel coast shows such a staunch heart against its new emergencies. Two, which might be called "pleasure" cities, have shown no kind of desire to stand up to the foe.

In these towns, that had for the most part well-off and retired residents, whole populations fled overnight, leaving behind them ruined tradesmen and lodging-house keepers. Perhaps too in these padded centres, the authorities themselves may have been of a more servile and toadying nature, and could not therefore give a courageous lead to their people. But it is only fair to say that one of these towns, on being supplied with anti-aircraft guns lately, immediately perked up; it is now showing a most cheerful and determined spirit. It was a reassuring spectacle, from the war point of view, to find that through whatever towns and villages in England we visited, what was vital to our defence had been safeguarded, and could be kept more or less intact. But though military objectives had sufficient material to ensure their partial safety, we have as yet *not* had sufficient material to cope with the open dangers of our population at large.

It is hard to press on willing authorities the needs they would give anything to be able to meet; and it is still harder for the broken-hearted and the ruined to understand that their needs cannot be served.

The miracle took place once already as far as the safety of our realm was concerned—five loaves and a few small fishes were spread out over the multitude, and sufficed.

But all our needs cannot be met by miracles. We have to train ourselves as best we can, into this new profession of keeping alive against enormous odds. Where supplies fail we must fall back upon our emergency wits. England is a marvellous country for the gentle art of camouflage. Our trees are many; our rivers small; and one hedged field is the twin brother of another. Camouflage is indeed not only a geographical blessing, but a native talent.

Most English people's whole existence is taken up with *not* expressing what they feel; and the deepest fear (of almost every inhabitant of our secretive isle) is that in an inadvertent moment of enthusiasm, he may as he phrases it "give himself away." Sussex is perhaps of all our counties the one that most lends itself to camouflage. Until the war one Sussex householder made a tidy income out of showing to Americans, and other curious visitors, the historical cellars beneath her house, once used by her smuggler ancestors; what, however, she did *not* exhibit to them was the hidden portions of these family caverns, in which she was still making an

uncommonly good thing out of the old profession. The marshes possess not only hedges, but ditches; and where no natural trap of persuasive foliage lurks to catch an invader, a sheep choosing the centre of the road on a dark night might well suffice to trip him. There are not five underground rivers in Sussex for nothing; and those who imagine the Sussex villagers or their sheep are simple, guileless creatures had better think again.

We had luck on our tour through Folkestone to Ramsgate. We had barely crossed a remarkably empty and lifeless street, to step down into a basement restaurant, when a bomber dived down out of the empty skies and machine-gunned it.

A bomb or a shell may make more noise, and displace considerably more earth, but a machine-gun has a vicious personal sound, and goes on threatening you at close quarters, when the larger missile has long ago hit—or missed. Still we enjoyed our lunch, which was an unusually well-cooked one, though a resigned waiter informed us that it was the second time that morning they had nearly been "gunned out."

Ramsgate, which was our goal, lies in an ugly part of Kent,—my own county,—but it has a good harbour, and a long history, part of it not yet over.

Ramsgate also possesses a Mayor, who rightly represents it. This Mayor is loved; he is hated; he is laughed at—and honoured; he is deeply and deservedly trusted. He has saved the city of Ramsgate from certain and sudden death.

Two-and-a-half years before the war J. B. S. Haldane lectured at Ramsgate upon what kind of people dictators are; and on the deep shelters of Madrid. The Mayor heard him, and believed him. He fought his councillors one by one; he fought more distant and highly disapproving authorities. He determined to have deep shelters at Ramsgate; and to meet dictators in the last possible way that the appeasers wanted to meet them—by preparing for them. Everyone fought this Mayor. He became a man with a bee in his bonnet; an expensive bee that would neither consume honey, nor consent to carry it to others. He could be brushed aside—but could he? The authorities tried to brush him aside; and then something happened. Ramsgate turned nasty. After all he *was* Ramsgate's Mayor. He wanted deep shelters—well, the authorities at last declared, let Ramsgate pay for them; and Ramsgate did.

The Mayor bought up the disused shaft of what had once been the worst railway line in the world, and which happened to be sunk seventy feet deep;

from there he started tunnelling through the chalk; and the chalk responded. It acted as a sound Stilton cheese acts under a good knife, it yielded where the knife struck it and remained firm above and below. The Mayor of Ramsgate made a trench three-and-a-half miles long to house fifty thousand people.

War came, Ramsgate got the most concentrated fury of undefended bombing then known to England. Two thousand five hundred little houses were destroyed in less than half-an-hour. Seventeen per cent of the population of Ramsgate was bombed out of its homes. Out of this cruel holocaust only ninety people failed to survive; the rest were in the Mayor's deep shelters. Within two-and-a-half months, Ramsgate has herself rebuilt eight hundred of her ruined houses. She is that kind of place.

Wellington started out to beat Napoleon from Ramsgate. Ramsgate sent out her every boat to save the B.E.F. Into the port of Ramsgate, by steamer, tug, yacht, lifeboat, trawler and little pleasure rowboats poured the Dunkirk men.

"My ole dears," the Mayor told us, "got up at dawn, and were on the piers to meet 'em, carrying trestles and tables, their kettles and their teapots; and every tray they had packed with sandwiches and buns.

"There wasn't one man that came 'ere from those beaches but what had a breakfast hot to greet him! Whoever missed it on the docks—my ole dears saw to it—'e 'ad it on the station.

"The Government wasn't asked to pay one penny for the welcome Ramsgate gave the B.E.F. People like us—well, we live by the sea; and we know men when we see them."

This was an idyll of democracy; neither her first, nor her last.

CHAPTER IX
A PRIVATE CITIZEN IN THE MIDLANDS 1940

Mr. C. belonged to the ruling classes. He had a very gentle voice, a quiet manner; and could play games, though he preferred work. He had a good brain and had been in the habit of using it.

He also possessed a kind heart, which he controlled very carefully, partly because he had been trained to consider it good form to control all one's emotions, and partly because it would have got him into difficulties had he not controlled it. In the late thirties Mr. C. had married Amelia, who was very easy to look at, and considerably younger than he was.

Amelia was of the same class as Mr. C. and ran on more or less the same intellectual and emotional lines.

The war had already started in a playful, unbraced-up manner; and since Mr. C. was well over the age that was being drawn on for the fighting forces, he was given an important job in a large industrial town in the Provinces. It was a city of historic name, and usually referred to in communiqués as a town "somewhere in the Midlands." There were Objects of Interest in its immediate neighbourhood; as well as within its boundaries ancient buildings of great and irreplaceable beauty.

Mr. C. found a flat in a Regency house and decorated it for Amelia; although he was not a rich man he had spent years hunting for rare and beautiful things; and besides all the right books in the right bookcases, which he had really read, he possessed a Chinese head that was two thousand years old, and a Ming cup and saucer. Nor had he too much of anything else.

Mr. C. and Amelia thought it over very carefully before they decided to have a baby.

It was Amelia's way of taking her part in the war; and she carried through her task with extreme self-control and efficiency. It was hard on Mr. C. but he belonged to the ruling classes and knew that he must face it.

Air raids were expected but had not taken place, when they reached this decision. By the time the baby was due, air raids had already begun; indeed it was between air raids that the baby was born. The nursing home did not

function very well; but it functioned well enough for that. Mr. C. took Amelia and the baby home, very soon afterwards. Their maid had just left them, so both Mr. C. and Amelia had a hard time. Mr. C. had not only got an important job by day; he had undertaken to act as an A.R.P. for several nights in the week. Perhaps this was fortunate, for Mr. C., being a thorough person, now knew exactly how shelters should be arranged, and paid extra for a blast-proof doorway. The people in the other flats said this was highly unnecessary and refused to contribute towards the expense of the blast-proof door; although they had to pay for their share of the shelter, whether they thought it unnecessary or not. After all Mr. C. did not belong to the ruling classes for nothing.

Very soon after Amelia's return from the nursing home, at six-thirty on a cloudy December evening, the air-raid siren gave the alert. The only difference between an ordinary siren and an air-raid warning is that the alert swells up a little more and lasts a little longer; besides, you know what it is for. Mr. C. said: "I think I'll nip home and close the office, though it's rather early—because this *is* the exact time of that spot of bother we had a month ago."

Mr. C. said this with extreme casualness; and then sprinted. Just as he reached the end of the street on which the Regency house stood, he saw an aeroplane, skimming under the clouds, that looked like—and was—a Messerschmitt. It dived in fact very low down indeed, and was diving just over the house in which Mr. C. knew that Amelia would at this moment be giving their baby its bath. Mr. C. moved very quickly; and he was across the street, up the stairs, and into that bathroom before the Messerschmitt released its egg. He swept Amelia and the naked baby into a blanket, and bustled them onto the stairs.

"Bolt into the shelter," he said briefly. "I'll see to the bottle."

Amelia was just beginning to argue first that the aeroplane could not be a Messerschmitt, and second that he did not know how to mix the right contents for the bottle, when she caught the look in Mr. C.'s eyes, and bustled.

Something—not her intellect—told her that it was her job to keep the baby alive, and that bustling was the only way to do it. Then the bomb dropped; not on Mr. C.'s home but on the one next to it.

The lights went out; and the shutters of the sitting room came inside in a solid block carrying the glass in a sheet, in front of it. The very good parquet floor heaved, and then crumpled up like a table napkin. Mr. C. had got just

outside the door, and was on the stairs, when this happened. All the doors in the house, including the one Mr. C. had just got out of, began flying about with what was left of the windows. In the moment's lull that followed, Mr. C. slipped into the kitchen and mixed the baby's bottle. "It will have to do," he explained to an imaginary Amelia, wondering if she had by now become imaginary. He looked into what had been the sitting room, and found the Chinese head. Having remained intact for two thousand years, it had apparently got into the habit of remaining intact, so Mr. C. put it under his arm, and with the bottle in the other hand, fumbled his way over broken glass and traveling furniture down into the shelter.

There he found Amelia, lying over her baby on the bed he had carefully provided for her. Amelia had automatically taken this position so that she could shield the baby from flying splinters, and dust suffocation. It has frequently been found lately that babies still exist, with their dead mothers' bodies acting as a screen. But there had been no direct hit on the shelter; and Amelia was not yet dead.

Mr. C., having assured himself that the figure on the bed plastered with dirt, and blue-white with shock, was Amelia, and that the shock had not prevented her from doing what was necessary for the baby, then transferred his attention to the rest of his new household. Most of those already in the shelter were fellow householders from the flats; and more filtered in between blasts.

Being more or less normal people, except one of them who was a heroine, they were all extremely frightened.

Everyone *should* be frightened in an air raid. The only difference between brave people and cowardly people is that brave people behave properly when they are frightened, and do not take more than their share of what safety there is; and cowardly people try to take more than their share of safety, and do not behave properly.

All the people in Mr. C.'s shelter, except the heroine, who sat as near the door as she could on a camp stool and knitted, fell on their faces when a bomb whistled down, and shook; most of them sobbed; some of them prayed; and they all shivered.

Amelia sobbed; and she had not sobbed when the baby was born. In fact Mr. C. had never seen her cry before; nor had he ever given her occasion for tears. He disliked very much seeing Amelia cry. Although they had never shown the slightest sign of physical affection for each other in public—indeed they had believed that they would rather die than so expose their

carefully shell-covered hearts—they now knew that they would *not* rather die; and clung to each other with passionate devotion. As everyone else was crying except of course the heroine, who went on knitting, Mr. C. began to wonder if crying was after all not a wise provision upon the part of Nature. What had she given her children tears for? And would they ever have a better occasion upon which to shed them than an air raid in a shelter with a new-born baby, especially if it was their own new-born baby? Mr. C. knew that Public School men find tears disgraceful; but were Public School men right? After all they had not—in this country—under the age of seventeen—often fathered new-born babies in air-raid shelters. Bombs kept on dropping—with disgusting crunches—closer and closer. The Messerschmitts with careful zeal were herringboning the town in a systematic manner. Left—right—left—right—just as the Nazis themselves had learned to make their grotesque, efficient goose-steps.

Mr. C. decided that though difficult to cry, it might be useful, and found that it relieved him very much.

The baby cried; and it occurred to Mr. C. that though he had mixed its food and brought down the bottle intact, he had not as yet warmed it.

Owing to Mr. C.'s forethought they had an oil-stove in the shelter, and owing to Amelia's they had a saucepan and matches. Mr. C. lit the oil-stove, and held the saucepan on it; whenever a bomb whistled, he put out the oil-stove, and re-lit it when the bomb had burst. When he gave the milk to the baby, it instantly stopped crying, sucking at the bottle; with all the deep if recently acquired wisdom of growing infants, he showed his parents how necessary life is in a liquid form. It was the only lesson experience had so far taught him; and it showed his co-operative spirit that he passed this lesson on to his parents. He took no further notice of the air raid; and went to sleep when he had finished his bottle.

Mr. C. observed that his body and Amelia's, and therefore presumably all the other bodies in the shelter, except the heroine's, first turned hot and then icy cold, as the bombs shrieked past them. No one, except himself, had had the sense to bring down a blanket.

There were lulls between crashes, and Mr. C. told himself that as a member of the ruling classes, he should go up into the inferno over his head, however lively it was, and get blankets; or else these people—if they lived through the night—would certainly sicken with pneumonia. He did not want even to put so much as his nose out of the shelter; nor did he want to leave half his heart behind him with Amelia—while doing so. But he couldn't help

thinking, "We would all be the better for a cup of tea. The water supply is no doubt cut off; as well as the electric power and the gas; but Amelia may have had the sense to keep the kettle filled." He asked Amelia rather roughly if she had had the sense? And Amelia, not knowing what he was going to do about it, said she had.

Mr. C. therefore got off the bed, crawled out of the shelter, and found that he need not have bothered about a light. The whole sky was afire; and one of the houses opposite was lending its services as a beacon. The anti-aircraft guns were barking like shepherd dogs that have smelt a wolf—and hope that it will only come a little nearer.

Mr. C. got up what stairs were handy. Beyond the glass under his feet, the little kitchen was quite untouched. He took the kettle; all the cups he could find; a blessedly intact milk bottle—and put them on a tray. He went back into the living-room, and found the priceless heritage of Ming, both cup and saucer—unchipped, although chairs and sofas had flung themselves into a heap in the middle of the floor, or else rushed out into other parts of the house, as if they had found their lives with Mr. C. and Amelia too austere, and wanted to be vulgar in less highly educated surroundings. Mr. C. rifled every room that contained a blanket, and draped them hastily about his person. He stuck the Ming cup in one of his pockets and the saucer in the other, and carried the tray with the utmost care, suspending the kettle between one finger and thumb. As there were no doors except under his feet, he did not have to open any. He got down the staircase quite easily, by the light of his neighbour's burning house.

Before he had left the shelter, he had managed to drag the knitting out of the heroine's hands, and had told her that she must look after the oil-stove instead of him. She had been offended; but had seen his point. Now he relieved her of the care of the stove, and boiled the kettle in spasms; since spasms were all he had to boil the kettle in.

During the raveled and eternal hour that followed, Mr. C. gave everyone in the shelter a cup of boiling hot tea, although some of them had to drink one after another out of the same cup; and now too they all had some portion of a blanket. Mr. C. thought that they all felt better; at least if they did *not*, it was their own fault.

Amelia was sobbing harder than ever; because Mr. C. had left her; and she had naturally thought that he was dead.

It was hard for Amelia, because although she could control the half of her heart that lay in her arms, she could not protect the other half of it, which

belonged to the ruling classes. Between not admiring Mr. C. and not losing him, Amelia, who was only a woman, would have preferred not to admire him, but he had given her no choice.

Mr. C. promised not to leave her again, although he intended to do so, at the first opportunity; and then for a time he settled down to the shrieks and explosions and the long weary shuddering of Mr. Anderson's steel-and-brick shelters. Mr. Anderson, though less extravagantly generous—by nature or by the Treasury's training—than the woman in the Bible, had done what he could. His shelters stood up to splinters, shocks, and small incendiaries if put out promptly.

There was another lull. Amelia held Mr. C. fast; she knew the kind of thing now that Mr. C. was likely to do in lulls; but she could not hold him fast enough. Mr. C. had just remembered the two "Cranford" little old ladies who lived across the way. Mr. C. and Amelia called them in fun "Miss Letitia and Miss Henrietta."

They were very poor; very proud; and lived in a perfect specimen of Regency mansion, which they had all to themselves, without even a maid to look after them. Once a week, with feather-boas wound round their necks, quantities of hairpins, and the clothes that go with hairpins, they took two little baskets, and sallied into the town. They bought all their supplies for the week on this occasion, and stopped the entire work of one of the chief shops, in order to make their choice. This shop had dealt for generations with their family; and the owner saw that no one interrupted them; and that they got exactly what they wanted. They bought very little; but as each of them had a list, and neither would quite give up the ordering to the other, it was a little confusing to wait upon them.

They were very frail, and very old; and Mr. C. knew that something would have to be done about them.

He tore himself out of Amelia's grasp, into the lighted street, where so many houses were burning to death—and crackling as they burned. He was glad to see that the old ladies' house was still standing, and that their shutters held.

He knocked at the door; and after a pause repeated his knock. He hoped they had gone away; and that he could crawl back into Amelia's arms again, before those other knockings against the empty sky sounded straight overhead.

A tiny voice came through the door: "Would you mind telling me what you want, without my opening the door?" it said. "I fear I cannot unfasten it

easily—it is both chained and bolted."

"I am your opposite neighbour," Mr. C. said firmly. "I just wanted to know how you were getting on!" "Indeed," the gentle voice replied, "that is *very* kind of you, sir. No one has ever thought of such a thing before—I mean a stranger—such consideration! We are quite safe and well, thank you though—it seems absurd to say so—our dining-room table is large and particularly strong, so that we are—as it were—sitting beneath it!" "That is exactly right," Mr. C. stated, trying his hardest not to feel hurried. "Please continue to sit under it, and wrap blankets round you. I will knock again directly I think it's wise for you to come out. The 'All Clear' sometimes sounds a moment or so too soon, after these long raids. Meanwhile I will keep an eye on you from our blast-proof doorway!" He was down the steps nearer safety, but the little voice pursued and held him. "Please before you go—" it said. "I fear I do not know your name—or whom to look for—you have been so exceedingly kind. If you could tell me how to identify you, my sister and I would like to thank you in person to-morrow morning." "My God!" thought Mr. C., "how certain these people over sixty seem to be—of another morning!" Aloud he said cheerfully; "Look for a young gentleman in a bright blue overcoat, going to work between 9 and 9:30." And then the bombers came back in a fell swoop, and their strange flapping parcels could be seen drifting to earth in the broad and glaring light, as if they could hardly wait to get there, and Mr. C. made a successful dive across the road and into his burrow. A minute later he had taken over the oil-stove again from the forbidding heroine, who looked as if she thought he had merely gone out to lure the bombers back in a true Fifth Column fashion; and Amelia was cursing him.

Neither Mr. C. nor yet Amelia had known what a good vituperative vocabulary she possessed; but they knew now; and so did the rest of the shelter.

Mr. C. said several times over to himself, and he may have said it out loud to Amelia as well, that unless Amelia agreed to take the baby into the country next morning he would beat her black and blue; and what was more he meant it. Like almost all really good husbands, Mr. C. held his wife responsible for whatever happened to him, whether it was emotionally pleasant or unpleasant. Otherwise he would not have married her.

There were several short lulls before the "All Clear" sounded. There was no use, even then, for Amelia to go back into the house, since as a house it was not functioning. So she and the baby stayed where they were until Mr. C., who liked the taste of daylight, could make other arrangements.

Mr. C. notified the old ladies, at once, that they might safely release themselves from the table. Two hours later, just as he was trying to persuade Amelia that she and the baby must take the car—rarer than rubies—that he had acquired for them and go to her mother's in the country, he saw the old ladies emerging from their doorway, on their way to buy their weekly stores. He told them that they could not—just yet—go into the town; but he did not tell them that there was no street where they usually bought their provisions, and that the provisions, in blackened tins and rakish cardboard boxes, were floating down the gutters.

He begged them instead to share the car with Amelia and the baby and go into the country. They listened very gravely, because they knew how important men's opinions are, but when he had finished, shook their heads apologetically. "How very very kind of you," they said, "but you see we cannot leave the house."

This Amelia rashly took as an argument for not leaving husbands. Amelia had been frightened of death, all night long, but not nearly so frightened of death as she had been of parting from Mr. C. carelessly one minute before it was necessary. But the little old ladies would not support her. "Oh no, my dear," they said sternly, "your position is *quite* different from ours—*you* have a dear little baby to think of—may we say that we cannot help thinking that an air-raid shelter is *no* place for a new-born baby. Nor must a mother leave her child—if God spares her—to it."

God had spared Amelia; and eventually she saw the sense of allowing Him to go on sparing the baby. The trouble was, could she trust Mr. C. to such an uncertain Providence? "Thy Will be done—except about Mr. C.," prayed Amelia noiselessly, as the car smoothly bore her away from the serene old ladies and the cross young gentleman, in the bright blue overcoat, who was her lover.

Mr. C. had not been able to explain to Amelia that all night long she and the baby had been pushing back the walls of his heart, until they had made it so large that it now held all that was left of a city in the Midlands that once made—and because of just such men as Mr. C. will make again—forever—history.

CHAPTER X
THE PLOUGHSHARE INTO THE SWORD

For years, while Nazi gangsters were meticulously preparing for fresh war, with the single burning conviction of a tiger seeking its prey, the half-hearted democracies all over the world sat back upon their money-bags murmuring blandly to each other "Peace, Peace"—where there was no peace!

The swift overthrow of France, in spite of its splendid army, was plainly due to a few wealthy people so full of suspicion and personal selfishness that they literally preferred selling their country to a common criminal like Hitler to making any creative attempt to widen and modernize their capitalism in order that they might share its benefits with their own fellow countrymen. No doubt the Communists with their treasonable adhesion to the State helped to add weight to a decision that had the Comintern Pact been kept would not have split their loyalties. But no one can take the responsibility from the shoulders of the French reactionaries, in whose power, as in a vice, the brilliant, civilized land of France was fixed. The Bankers and the Politicians controlled industry, the Press and the Army; and betrayed France. Communism was but the red herring with which they confused and silenced all those members of the professional classes whose sense of patriotism and democracy would have checked the betrayal.

We, in Great Britain, must accept our own share for this war-guilt; and we are meeting it to-day as best we can, and suffering the torments of the damned for not having cleaned "the windows of our perception" and stood by our democratic principles, in time to save not only ourselves—but others.

One of the results of having let this frog Hitler swell into a Mad Bull before tackling him is an unexpectedly happy one—Britain is now acting and thinking in unison, as she has never yet—in all her history—acted. Centuries of sport had trained every class and section of the British people into the team spirit, and had given them the stoic sense of the gambler, to face a losing game with a courage that "creates, from its own wreck, the thing it contemplates." Sleepy we had become, but we were not yet sunk into the rigidity of death.

As soon as war was declared, a famous sewing machine company turned itself almost overnight into an arsenal. Another factory, which stood for every modern and time-saving device in laundry and kitchen, now devotes itself and its machinery to the most intricate devices of modern warfare. Giant vats in which bread was mixed for careful housewives now mix high explosive to save their threatened homes.

It is not easy to obtain permission for any outsider whatever to visit the carefully camouflaged armament factories of Great Britain; but the Ministry under which I work sent a Government Official with me, for the purpose of this book; and to him I owe my introduction to one of the largest of our armament factories—I have since heard, the largest in the world.

The Government introduction however did not extend its authority very far. The factory in question was under private ownership and there had been a serious "incident" the week before, so that it was not surprising that their hospitality to strangers was strictly limited.

Our credentials took us into the Manager's office. The Manager, who was the soul of courtesy, asked us what we wanted to see, and when I had explained that what I wanted was to be able to present a factual but wholly untechnical picture of British Labour at work for British principles, in order to share it with America, he frankly told me that I had asked too much. I might it appeared have such a picture presented to me through his own mind; and even elaborated by the factory's chief Welfare Manager; but with my own eyes I must see nothing whatever.

The Manager's "picture" was hardly to my purpose; but we listened politely to his account of factory management, especially of how it had stood the drastic test of last week's "incident." It had been a daytime raid, in the shape of a mass invasion of the air, before such daily raids became mercifully limited by the increasing skill and power of the R.A.F. Suddenly out of an apparently empty sky, from the height of five thousand feet, naked bombs had dropped upon the factory.

The bombers took exactly fifty seconds over their "job"; killed outright a number of happy human beings; wounded two hundred; and destroyed a valuable shed. The machinery within was much more lightly damaged than had at first been feared, as the roof falling in upon it had shielded it from the full force of the bombs; and the fires caused by high explosives were got under before they could wholly destroy the damaged machinery.

Nevertheless it was a valuable shed, and contained designs which although duplicated elsewhere could not be instantly replaced. Within three

hours, however, some of the work of this gigantic beehive started up again; and within twenty-four the whole factory—minus the one shed—was at its accustomed tasks. The bombers returned to the scene of their kill at dawn next day; but this time they were caught between two fires by the R.A.F. Thirty of them were shepherded out to sea, and there destroyed, and the rest —having dropped what bombs they had time to, upon little houses in a working quarter—hurried home.

There had been no panic at all at the factory, according to the Manager; the shelters had been all that was required of them. Only the smallest unavoidable loss of life had taken place. The incident had been sad but not serious.

At this moment the chief Welfare Inspector joined us. He was not the same type of human being as the Manager.

I would not say the Manager lied to us. I only felt that he had never known what speaking the truth meant. Salesmanship had been his job, and had become his nature. If bombing incidents could be turned into chocolate creams, or alternatively into feathers for official hats, he was the man to do it.

The welfare worker was promptly told by the Manager exactly what to tell us—and the Manager, although he had previously told us his time was overwhelmingly taken up, remained in the room in order to hear the Inspector safely through the same song. But when the Inspector began to give us *his* version of the story, it became something rather different, and far more natural.

The glory and honour rather shifted their positions and fell upon the workers themselves. It seemed that, after doing everything that had to be done at the factory itself, this Inspector had felt it worth while to hurry off to the attacked and bereft homes. He told us how he had visited one woman in her garden, which was almost wholly occupied by a bomb crater. There was no house, only powdered rubble where the house had stood. "Could you please tell me, sir," she asked, "is this a piece of one of Hitler's bombs I've got hold of here?" "No," our friend had replied, "I'm afraid not—it looks more like a bit of your own roof!" "I'm sorry for that, sir," replied the woman, "I *'ad* 'oped it *was* a piece of *'is* bomb. I'd 'ave kept it as a souvenir like. It 'ud be something to 'ave seeing everything else 'as gone." The Manager looked uncomfortable and began to assure us of the slightness of the damage once more, but the welfare worker now well into his stride said; "Well, it looked pretty awful to me—all that working quarter crumpled up

like biscuits, and I don't mind telling you—I felt broken up myself about it! I met another woman whose home was gone—picking over the pieces, as you might say, and said: 'I'm frightfully sorry for you. I've just come from the Works—is there anything I could do to help you?' 'Well, I'd like to know if my George is all right,' replied George's mother. 'He wouldn't telephone in worktime you see, so I haven't 'eard rightly if he's alive or not.' I was pretty glad to be able to tell her that, in the lot her boy worked with, only four of us were hurt, and none of them were called George!" The Welfare Inspector then got back onto the factory again—its damage and its human reactions; when fortunately for the now purpling and restless Manager, the telephone bell rang. The Manager, apologizing profusely, broke up the interview; both of them were needed, he explained, to attend an important conference, so that now if we were fully satisfied . . .! Here my official supporter mildly suggested: "Perhaps we might see over your wonderful canteens before leaving?" The Manager looked doubtful—we were by now in the hall—when, to his horror, a Colonel to whom he had introduced us, in command of the factory's contingent of the Home Guard, said "I'd be delighted to take you over!"

The Manager with a sickly smile handed us on to this new Uniformed Peril; who although a human being was, fortunately for me, also a Colonel, so that his offer could not very well be evaded.

The Colonel was a large and genial person, covered with many medals and not at all afraid of us. We told him we had been refused the sight of anything whatever. He laughed and said, "Well, I have been told you *can* see the canteens; and there are two ways to them, so we'll take the one that passes by the sheds, and through the fields—the sheds are all open and you can certainly look in; and if anything is hopping off in the fields, I shan't ask you to look the other way!"

The Colonel showed us the shelters, of which he was proud, but he was not satisfied that they were all near enough to the sheds the men worked in. Time, he explained, was the chief factor in raid difficulties. What not to waste and when to hurry were the chief problems. But what some of the concrete shelters had stood up to was certainly amazing. One still remained after a five-hundred-pound bomb had dropped fifteen feet away from it.

He pointed out a pillbox sentry shelter that stood on a crater's exact rim. "My guard came out after the explosion," the Colonel said. "Hadn't much colour, and shook a little—still there he was, fit to carry on."

The Colonel himself had been one of the only persons to spot the descending bombs. "Bits of floppy stuff, coming down," he described them. "I didn't hurry much, because there was a sea gull mixed up with them—and I knew something about birds; what they're likely to do—and how fast they're likely to do it. But then I heard all sorts of whistles and shrieks going off from the other side of me—so I rolled over on my face for all I was worth—for fifty or sixty seconds. Scared through and through I was—till I took it they'd finished dropping. Then I got up to have a go at the fires. No time to be afraid then you see—fires going up all over the place like sheets, and we had to get them under before the Jerries came back—men runnin' about like chickens—getting nervy you know, and all that. Some of the men ran out of the gates, and are running yet as far as I know, though we steadied most of 'em down. Can't altogether blame 'em—a lot of women killed too—I must say that rather got my goat. I don't get used to women being killed; and you can't expect them to either. Our A.R.P.'s worked damned well. None of 'em left their posts; stood outside the shelters till they'd got all their men in; and helped get the fires under. I can't complain of my guard either; funny point of view of course—odd for me, used to the Army, having to be careful of my p's and q's. Before I came to this place I had to train a lot of the shepherds on the Downs. Very independent lot they were—that was when we were expecting those Parachuters to come floatin' down on us. 'Look here,' I said to one of my shepherds, 'if you see one of those birds comin' down, shoot—but shoot at his face—I don't want 'em killed.' Would you believe it, the fellow was shocked. 'No, I couldn't do that, sir,' he told me, 'that might blind 'e!' Well, of course that's not a soldier's point of view! Still, I must say those Home Guards'll take any risk for themselves. They're to be respected."

We walked through the flat open fields, and saw into the sheds, where the flying birds were being made; and watched those that *were* newly made trying out their engines, in the still autumn day, upon their new element—the unsubstantial air. No one noticed our presence, though there were no other visitors. The men worked like inspired artists. Each one seemed to be his own master, and the servant of the task he had been set. No doubt there were occasional orders given; but they looked an unrigid, self-functioning lot of men—too interested in what they were doing to notice anything short of immediate danger.

The canteens were a marvel of cleanliness and efficiency, a vast affair with kitchens Ford might have allowed himself to envy. Nor was the food, whatever our immediate food problems may be, anything short of ample and eatable. There must have been every labour-saving contrivance known to

man. Machines sliced meat and bread; plates automatically washed themselves. Everything was open, visible and appetizing. A particularly inviting cake was made up of leftover portions of all the other cakes. Only one thing from an America-trained housekeeper's eyes was definitely lacking—the chief butcher told me, with grief, that he had no Frigidaire for his meat. It was kept, as everything perishable in the canteen was kept, in well-aired and spotless utensils; but his housekeeping would have been less on his mind had he been able to keep his supplies in properly iced larders. The food was being cooked while we were there; and very well cooked. Thousands of people were fed at midday; and there was very little difference, except in the trimmings and table settings, between the men's dinner and that of the officials.

Across the big canteen stood a rostrum, where music or speeches were given during the chief meal hour. Marshal Joubert was the men's favourite. Priestley, I gathered, had not been asked to speak to them; but they would have liked Priestley. They were looking forward to Bevin the following week.

"What they want to hear most," the Colonel explained, "as far as I can make out, is about the Nazis—by someone who tells 'em facts; or about their own stuff. They like to know, when it's made, what it does, you know—and all that! And—er—well, anything human—if you know what I mean!"

I think the workers must have liked the Colonel; for one thing he had done notable service in the air, during the last war; and he had an unqualified sense of humour. I was told that he was highly unpopular with some of his working colleagues; but that may not have been wholly to his discredit. His eyes had that curious blend of fun and fight to be found in the eyes of all Irish terriers, and most Airedales.

My second armament experience was at the factory of which a friend of mine is Chairman of the Board of Directors and Management. In peacetime this factory had produced model laundry and kitchen utensils. We did not therefore need any accompanying Government backing to waft us into its good graces. The Works Manager may have had his qualms, as was perhaps but natural. Our friend, Mr. S., had none, and gave us unlimited opportunity to see what we wished, and to go where we liked.

The factory was situated near one of those small provincial cities, described in air bulletins "as a town in the Midlands." Our friend had

prepared a lunch party in our honour, at the chief hotel, where we met some of his best friends and neighbours. This little party in the heart of wartime England will always stand out in our minds, with peculiar charm and vividness. The food was simple, but very well cooked and chosen, and the wine was French and of a good vintage. Our host had made it a delightful occasion; and this small party of quiet, well-dressed people had singularly good and easy minds.

We had been talking of how Adler, the Viennese psychologist, could tell at a glance from the physical appearance of any human being certain of his salient qualities; often his career; his place in the family—whether eldest, second, or youngest; as well as very often his most hidden aims.

"Even his politics?" someone asked. "Could you as his student tell us ours?"

As I looked at them each in turn I thought, "These people are perhaps the most highly civilized group of human beings that could be found in any country. They are the fruit of the very best training in this land. Christianity has moulded them; Democracy has touched their hearts; reading and travel have developed and enriched their open minds. What is going to happen to what they have to give? Will fate allow them to retain or use it?"

I laughed off their questions; but I could not—in early November 1940—laugh off my own unspoken question. I wondered whether they would be allowed to keep the Freedom that had bred them—or perish in the attempt to keep it. I hoped that we might all have the courage to perish rather than to give up our common heritage; and I thought that if we had, we should retain it.

After lunch our host drove us to the factory. What it was now producing was of vital importance to our war effort; and very ingenious and careful defences had been made for its security. Nevertheless all such factories are danger zones in the most real sense of the word. From morning till night, from night till morning, one fear or another must ride the hearts and minds of those who are in control of them.

The Company was saved from many difficulties by the machinery that had been set up long before the war for associating the workers in the task of management. Works and Staff Committees, which in peace discussed with Managers current business problems in so far as they concerned conditions of work and so forth, were in wartime giving splendid help with A.R.P., the training of dilutees, and with the host of problems that the war has raised. The Foundry has a "fellowship" bonus scheme which has proved helpful

both to the Management and the workers and which enables the latter to earn thirty and sometimes forty per cent bonus on their time rates, and to share in the profits in addition. The risks and charges, of course, fall upon the Company. It is interesting to note that this Company is employing the help of an industrial psychologist to fill important vacancies in the staff. The problem of dilutee workers and probation labour was met by the mutual understanding built up long ago between Managers and workmen.

For three months the newcomers had lower wages; but as soon as they had qualified, the full trades union advantages were granted them, with the good will of all parties.

Another branch of War Defences was now functioning in the near vicinity, and shared its watcher with my friend's factory.

The Midlands were very unexcited about the war. They may by now have become fiercer, since of late they have been the main target of night bombing. They had already weathered some sharp attacks, when we stayed with our friend; but they took them with calm, and grim determination. "We must get rid of Hitler," you heard on every side. "We must put up with what we are getting," or "We must carry on."

The provincial and industrialized region we were visiting had been, before the war, our friend told us, highly individualistic and competitive—each employer at the other's throat. "But now," he said, "it is really rather a miracle; all of us meet regularly to share out our experiences and discuss our outputs. All our cards go on the table; each company offers what it can spare to the other, or asks for what it wants. We lend each other our most prized tools and gadgets. Our one endeavour is to increase output, and spur each other on, by all the help we can give or receive. Sometimes I look at the faces of my fellow employers, and feel like rubbing my eyes— Is it a dream, I ask myself, to find all my old enemies turning into my best friends?

"It *must* make an immense difference after the war is over. We have learned to trust each other to the core; and by sharing we have enormously increased our productive powers, and halved expenses for machinery and tools. We cannot throw away these immense advantages!"

We were shown everything that our friend's factory contained—even the most secret processes that were being handled. It was a thrilling human experience to see the interchangeability and adjustable power of skilled workmanship. Every man we watched worked with the single-minded skill of a surgeon at an operating table. Actual creative work is done in the designing room of such a factory. The Government sends the designs; but

sometimes it is possible to suggest modifications which will facilitate manufacture.

The Government designs are therefore first studied with intense care; and if defects are found these are amended, and the design returned in its amended form, for the Government to approve, before it is put into execution.

In this particular factory, a highly ingenious gun was being made; and the metal shed or "summerhouse" in which it lived was of such impermeable material that it could not even be dented by an explosive bomb.

It was like watching a sculptor bringing his thoughts through clay, to watch the exquisite precision and skill with which these workmen dealt with their material. The jigs which hold the steel are of such an exact and immovable nature that they prevent every least jerk or vibration from infringing upon the plate that is being cut into shape.

The men hardly seemed to be watching their machines. They often sat or strolled about with their backs to them; but they were listening. The faintest alteration in a sound, and they were at the side of their machine, making the necessary readjustment, pouring in a drop of oil, or removing any obstruction.

While they were carrying the molten iron from the furnaces, they lifted and poured the contents of their terrifying buckets of liquid steel as if they were as harmless as milk.

Two of them carried the bucket at a time, in a perfectly adjusted rhythm of co-operation, beyond the need of speech.

For an armament factory this was not a large one, but during the first six months of the war they had made the entire swing-over from the service of the peacetime homes to that of guns made to protect such homes.

Their production was already considered highly satisfactory; but they hoped soon to increase its quantity, through fresh adjustments and duplicate machinery, by nearly fifty per cent.

We went up on the roof to see over the whole factory, and its system of camouflage. Upon the roof, an enormous tank full of water awaited any bomb that might come its way.

The Government had ordered shelters early in the war; and given its requirements. These shelters the company had made with generous care; and at great expense. Six months later they were told that the specified distance

was no longer considered safe, and they had had to improvise by building a far less comfortable set of shelters closer to the sheds. The first-aid room had to be reorganized and rebuilt at the same time. The canteens presented a similar problem, which had not yet been worked out fully to the firm's satisfaction. The men were fed, if they wanted to be; and well-fed at a reasonable price; or they might bring their own food and have it warmed through for them in their canteen kitchen. But the canteen accommodation was poor; and there was nothing of that impeccable lustre, polish and window-dressing of the great factory canteen and kitchens we had visited elsewhere.

There was instead a spirit, curious and individual, as of a corporate group, with but one single aim. No great Politicians or War Leaders spoke to these men; no artists made music for them.

Nor was there anyone to tell lies; either about them, or for them. Had there been an "incident," in which many of them had paid the toll of their lives, I do not think that these men would have run out of their gates, never to return. Free men are not cowards; and it was under the spirit of Freedom that these men worked; and meant to continue working, until their war—and they knew it *was* their war—was won.

CHAPTER XI
HERE AND THERE

It looked like every other station just at first; except for the parcels. There they were piled towards the sky like a giant's heap of Christmas presents without the Tree; and without any immediate chance of falling into the hands for which they were destined. As we had five hours to spend in this dusky, crowded, glassless, roofless station, we walked between these walls of severed communications, interested to guess what each contained.

Most of the parcels could be divided into three categories—steel bars or tools; dead rabbits; and ladies' hats. It looked as if all the milliners of London had loosed their wares into the Provinces to take the place of the dead rabbits.

There was one live animal in a hutch with air-holes; and we asked a porter how long he thought this creature, invisible but rustling, had been there without food or water.

"Well, I can't rightly say. Lady," he replied, "but 'e's lucky to be on 'is way out of 'ere sooner than most of us!"

It was the porters, rather than the station, who were different from the ordinary run of things. They were not at all surly; but they were blue-white; some of them shook. Their eyes were dazed; and they seemed at first unable to hear what was said to them. They mumbled automatic answers, but it was quite easy to see that their minds were on some other scene—not so much confused as fixed—elsewhere.

There were little heaps of glass neatly swept up, but not yet cleared away, in corners of the station. Trains came into and left the station, but not at their usual hours, or with the usual velvet-footed ease of English trains.

Whenever a train came in, there was a rush at it; and the parcels began to move, every porter or ununiformed auxiliary began to haul them into any and every exposed hole or corner of the train. They did not look at the parcels, they simply threw them in.

"Are they all going to the same place?" we asked in one of the intervals between trains. "They're all going out of *'ere*, no matter where they gets to!" our porter replied grimly.

The station we were sharing with the parcels had just survived its fourth night of fire-invaded existence. Each evening after the blackout came the dull distant humming, growing into a roar; and then the shrieks and crashes of falling bombs.

Our porter, who had slowly become human, began to tell us the history of these four nights. Incendiaries peppered the station. Molotoff bread-baskets let off their pretty firecrackers in dangerous dusters. High explosives shook the sockets of their hearts, rooting up whole houses and bringing them down in dust. Oil bombs guttered wherever they struck, from roof to basement.

"Flames and glass, that's all it is," he explained. "Flames and *flying* glass hour after hour, and when you think you've got one fire under, up starts another! The noise alone 'as you fair frantic without what's 'appening—only it 'appens as well! I thought me last hour was come las' night. It was only a piece of glass come boundin' along—right acrost me leg it run; and the blood didn't 'arf stand up after it. 'Gawd! I'm done!' I says to meself; and then a bloke comes erlong and bandages me up—and I was able to walk 'ome five miles through the blackout after the raid was over!"

"Oh, but don't they let you sleep here, or close by, after such a night—and when there's no 'bus running?" one of us demanded. "I dessay they'd *let* you—if it comes to that," the porter replied grudgingly, "but you see you don't fancy stayin' on 'ere—not after what you've been 'aving you don't! You want ter git 'ome quick, and see if it's standin'!"

This was to be his first night off, and reeling, blue with fatigue as he was, he offered to stay on an extra ten minutes to see our luggage safely on our train. We did not let him stay an extra moment, but watched him staggering off unnoticed, into the wet broken streets, realizing that we had shaken hands with a hero.

Only one hero, out of thousands. For there is no man working on the railway communications of Great Britain to-day who is less than a hero.

Our railwaymen's professions have become enlarged far beyond life-size. Engine drivers; plate-layers; pointers or porters, still serve trains and travellers; but as well as this normal service, they rig up signal boxes out of ruins; fight fires; and face death—not once or twice, but as if it were—as indeed it now is—part of their day's work.

The Forces, Fire Fighters, Demolition Squads, Mobile Units and A.R.P.'s in danger zones—all devote themselves to fighting for the lives of others. They have been trained for just such emergencies; but the railwaymen of

Great Britain have flashed unprepared into heroism. To them, and to the schoolteachers who train our children in danger or in exile, we owe an equal —perhaps a greater—debt.

We caught our train,—lovingly referred to by its Guard as the train it had once been, five hours earlier,—jerking our slow way through peppered suburbs till our destination actually drew up out of the dark—just as an alert heralded another fiery night for Birmingham.

Our host, who met us with his car, had a well-known name which he had earned by a penetrating bitter courage, much needed, and much dreaded, in the House of Commons.

"Last night's raid on the station held me up," he told us, after settling us in comfort in his car. "A messy noisy business—I'm glad you missed it."

His house was a strange fairy tale of historic treasures, most of them dated from an epoch that is at the moment looked down on, but which will no doubt take its place, in the long life of Art, as a true and successful attempt to break up industrial ugliness. There were, as well, prized relics of an earlier age: beds slept in by Stuart Kings and furniture that would make the mouths of collectors water.

The house was a gallery of Pre-Raphaelite pictures; books; stained glass; and early wallpapers, the first steps forward into decoration of William Morris.

Our host had preserved his glass, but otherwise had left his treasures to take what chances there were. A bomb had already fallen on his London home, so now he stayed with friends or slept in shelters while he continued to watch, on the spot where she was most threatened, the true interests of Britain—with his usual tart ferocity, as if nothing worse was falling round him than the curses he was accustomed to provoke from his irritated opponents.

We spent an interesting evening discussing a long and incapable speech by one of our reactionary Terrorists, who seemed to think that Anglo-American friendship was threatened by a visit to the United States on the part of H. G. Wells.

It had been an easy task to puncture the prep-school scurrilities of this anxious-minded gentleman—and our friend *had* so punctured them—but what, we asked ourselves, would become of Freedom of speech and action —if it were dependent upon the fears and prejudices of such representatives of Democracy?

Both H. G. Wells and J. B. Priestley had been the victims of these attacks of late; and it had been interesting and indeed highly reassuring to observe how this had increased their popularity with the general public. A few more such attempts to muzzle them, and there would be a danger of their becoming a Church.

Democracy is waking up, and there are far more people in Great Britain to-day than there were a year ago who believe that good manners come from the heart rather than from a Classical Education, and that good breeding can be found only—and wherever—the feeling of others are considered by us to be as important as our own.

On our way home, next day, we ran into the remains of the overnight raid upon the city of Birmingham. The fires were barely out, the streets ran with water. The homes that were whole yesterday were broken into to-day; but the people were going about as usual; or almost as usual—perhaps they looked a little more grim and determined, as if what they had fed on, overnight, had strengthened their purpose.

As we approached Bristol we heard planes overhead. The lights went out. A large soft-voiced, infinitely calm old guard looked in on us with his lantern. "That's Jerry overhead," he explained gently. "I've just cut off the light for a bit; and now if you and the lady will just lie down on your faces —comfortable like, just while the machine guns is over us—they'll soon have enough of it!"

We lay down comfortably upon our faces and listened to the sharp staccato spatter of the guns. The old guard, with his white hair and beautiful kindly face, took no such precautions for himself. He wandered up and down the train, taking anything that came, in the same compassionate and protective spirit.

I have seen absence of fear in danger on many occasions; but I have never seen such a comfortable way of putting danger in its place as was shown by this old guard.

At last the spattering abruptly ceased—for, strangely enough, silence after such sounds seems more abrupt than the breaking of it. The guard returned with his lantern.

"We'll be moving along now," he told us kindly. "But I'm not putting the light on yet, for there's Bristol to think of!"

We thought of Bristol as we slipped into its black portal. The guard found someone to help us with our luggage. We went down to a station

shelter in the lift, and found our porter—a friend, with whom we were often on subsequent occasions to discuss politics and literature—most ready to help us in any way.

By and by we were allowed to ascend, and found a taxi with a young girl already in it. She was—after a day's work typing—on her way to a hospital in the suburbs where she was a voluntary nurse four nights out of seven. I exclaimed at the severity of this double profession.

"Oh, but in Bristol we don't think anything of that!" she told us. "It's only the getting about that's awkward. It makes it much easier when people don't mind sharing cars or taxis!"

The taxi then broke down—not far from our hotel; so leaving it where we had to, accompanied by the driver we all carried the luggage together. When we reached the hotel, we begged the girl to come inside with us until we could procure another taxi for her, for it was not only pitch-dark, but savage with noise and fury overhead.

"Oh, no!" the girl said, "the taxi-driver will get me across to the nearest stand much sooner! I'll be all right with him. He belongs to Bristol." So those two united pieces of a great city's spirit went off linked together, into the darkness of the night, leaving us behind in safety—and rather ashamed of not being able to say that we too belonged to Bristol.

There is another town with the same spirit in the north-east of Scotland, where we have a better claim.

The small sea-city of Aberdeen is made of a stone that has the sharp whiteness of ivory without its milkiness. The granite of which the town is built is generally known as "Aberdeen adamant," and its citizens are said to possess some of its sparkling hardness.

We wrote to a cousin-inhabitant the other day for news of our city. She apologized for not writing at greater length, explaining that she was busy passing her medical examinations; and in between she was driving an Ambulance. Her sister is a Commander (Wing Officer) in the W.A.A.F., her brother a Commander in the Royal Navy, attached to the Fleet Air Arm, a very famous flyer, and their mother President of the Red Cross for her district.

Aberdeen has had quite its share of all that is going on in Great Britain to-day, and has taken it, we gathered, as it has hitherto taken all its peace emergencies—quietly, shrewdly, and in its stride.

Nobody in Scotland is proud of anything. They are merely proud in it; and it would be hard indeed to shake, blow, bomb or burn, this pride away from a Scot.

Not long before a number of unexploded bombs fell on the north-east coast, and were discovered in fields or out-of-the-way places, local inhabitants were asked, on finding a live bomb, to inform the police immediately. One old farmer, however, appeared at the Police Station long after the bombs had been dealt with. When asked why he had come, he replied laconically, "I've a bomb in ma neep park [turnip field]."

"Then why not come before?" the Police demanded. "There've been no bombs dropped your way lately!"

"Ay, A know tha' verra weel," the farmer answered. "A worked the twa days tae lift a' ma neeps, raun' aboot, afore A tellt ye—for A kent fine ye'd hae blawn them a' tae bits!"

After a raid on the outskirts of the city an A.R.P. post was called out to attend to the wounded. A girl F.A.P. was informed there was an unexploded H.E. bomb close to a cattle market. She was not at all perturbed at the presence of the bomb; but, gazing earnestly into the gloom, she asked anxiously: "Ay—but are ye sure there's nae coos [cows] aboot? Ye ken A'm awfu' feared at coos!"

CHAPTER XII
THE WOMEN OF BRITAIN

To think or speak of women in a lump is to make an invidious distinction. Men and women are at least ninety per cent human beings, and only ten per cent male or female.

Erasmus, with his happy clarity of vision, perhaps best sums up woman's true place in the Universe, when he writes to Sir Thomas More: "Women have different biological functions from men; but they should have the same education; and the same virtues."

Unfortunately very few countries have caught up with Erasmus. Perhaps time and the terrific pressure of our present epoch will ripen some of the more civilized of our countries into using one half of creation as if it were of equal value to the other half.

Twenty-five years ago the British Navy, with ill-concealed anxiety, agreed to let the W.R.N.S. (Women's Royal Naval Service) enter its sacred precincts on a trial trip of ten days. Should they not be found sufficiently serviceable after this short fling, out they must go, never to darken its doors again. When this war broke out, the Navy received the W.R.N.S. back with open arms and without conditions. Married or unmarried in they trooped and took over the Navy's linen, some of its stores, its housekeeping on land, a large slice of its clerical work; and actually at last, the most guarded of its privileges—hush-hush decoding!

W.R.N.S. of my generation, with the last war's experiences, were of course in command, but they were unshackled by former limitations; and they were the first to draw attention to the greater ease and directness of their younger sisters. "The girls we get now," they told us, "are far more at home in their jobs than we were in the last war—less self-conscious, more highly trained, and with a freer intelligence."

I was reminded as I looked at these quiet, efficient grey-haired women officers now belonging technically to the British Navy, of the Roman Centurion's saying to Saint Paul, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born."

The new generation of women *is* franker; simpler; better trained, and far nearer the bone of the ham, than the last generation. The paper frill has been dropped off for good. But those elders who have trod the rough road of Pioneers were of a stuff that even the British Navy might be proud to accept as part of themselves.

They told me, with a twinkle, of the stern discretion shown by the young decoders. "The other day when something rather good took place, and they knew it ahead of the rest of us, they kept telling us to be sure not to miss the six o'clock news; and when this gave us nothing, they begged us even more earnestly *on no account* to miss the 9 P.M. Their happy secret was broadcast at last, and they could breathe again!"

The A.T.S. (Auxiliary Territorial Service) has also gone up in the world. Some girls known as "Kine-girls" are allowed to work on anti-aircraft stations photographing shell-bursts. These photographs they develop themselves; and they may carry on these activities under fire in the midst of actual warfare.

W.A.A.F.S. (Women's Auxiliary Air Force Service) women are of course peculiarly in the limelight, and no one grudges it to them. They have a great deal to live up to; and whether it is by their actual work under new and infinitely more dangerous conditions, or by making little centres of freedom and fun for their flyers, they throw into both work and play alike a gallant spirit of sharing that is far nearer to that of their brothers than our untrained attempts to stand by them a quarter of a century ago. These girls have been, as we were not, spiritually trained by a healthier and more objective standard of living.

They are, too, physically stronger than we are, more open-hearted; and I am sure they have more courage.

An officer in command of an air station that was badly bombed wrote: "Every one of my girl workers behaved beyond all praise. To see them facing up to the flames and handling incendiary bombs as if they were cups of cocoa was a sight I shall never forget. I should not have minded if I'd had nothing else *but* girls under my command!"

"These little painted, red-lipped minxes," a doctor said of a troop of girl ambulance drivers in London, before the raids began, "will never be able to stand up to what they've got to face, if we get bombed!"

But after several months of the worst the *Luftwaffe* could do by day and by night, this particular troop of girls had never missed an hour of their duty;

nor failed to face flames, explosions, falling masonry, and that most cruel sight of all—the stricken and the dead.

The other day, in a bad night raid on Southampton, a girl driver was blown off her seat by the blast of a bomb. The whole town was alight with fires. When she picked herself up she saw three badly injured men lying in the road. Her ambulance had been blown against the curb; and had stopped. There was no one in sight who could help her; yet she managed to lift those three men into the ambulance and drive them to the nearest, unmenaced hospital.

These women ambulance drivers are a new service for women; but they have become part of the old ones, the Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance. These two societies have an old and glorious history, and they are writing fresh pages to its glory every hour.

In 1938 the Home Secretary decided to ask for an organization of women to unite for the protection of their homes and families against air attacks. The Dowager Marchioness of Reading was appointed Chairwoman. This was a singularly fortunate choice, for Lady Reading is a woman with a dynamic personality blessed with balance and judgment, and relieved by humour. She promptly set to work to visit, and to divide into different regions, the whole of the British Isles. In each locality she met key women on whom she hoped to rely when the need came. She had to work with amateurs; but she tried to inspire and train them into being the same sort of amateur that she was herself, one who worked like a professional; and who —had she been a professional—would have worked like a lover.

On September 25th, 1940, there were 767,645 of these women volunteers (W.V.S. as they are known throughout Great Britain to-day). Out of this number only 160 receive salaries.

When I started collecting information about our war efforts, I had only vaguely heard of them. I knew that they were not professionals, I knew that most of them had homes and children of their own, and could only be "half-timers," and I had heard in some places—not without reason perhaps—that they were accused of snobbery; though their organization roots out such failures when it comes across them. But I became more and more aware, as I moved about England, that wherever there was urgent need, or sudden and unexpected emergencies, I should be told "The W.V.S. is seeing to that!"—or "Before the other services could get here, the W.V.S. was on the spot and things got into shape!"—or "I should apply to the W.V.S. if I were you, they'll help you out!" Once at a smart lunch party there was pointed out to

me a remarkably pretty, well-dressed girl, and I was told, "She got up in the middle of the night to answer the door and found an anxious sailor on short leave looking for his evacuated wife and four children. Only that afternoon several hundred evacuees had been landed into this provincial town, but this girl (herself a mother of three) searched through the little city in a blackout, till she discovered the sailor's wife in a schoolroom with the four children. She shepherded them all home to her own house; gave them hot food and a shakedown for the night; and had since decided to keep wife and children as a permanent part of her household. I was glad to hear that the sailor had roused himself at six, and washed down her car before rejoining his ship."

"What made you take them all in," I asked after lunch, "let alone getting up in the middle of the night and searching the town for them?"

"Oh, I belong to the W.V.S.," the girl replied with a surprised look. "He had such a short leave; and he might have missed seeing them altogether! I couldn't let it happen, could I?"

I do not know whether this Society has a motto, but "I couldn't let it happen" is a spirit that works miracles—and incites them.

These women help as Air Raid Wardens; they act as Marshals in shelters; they are trained as First-Aid Parties, they work as clerical helpers, and extra telephonists—116,000 devote themselves to these jobs. And 36,000 are ambulance drivers, or act as chauffeurs for local activities.

"I drive the worst-tempered old general in the British Army," a spirited young girl told me the other day, "but I shall have to take it, till the war's over. The things I'd like to say to that man would fill a book—only most of it would be unprintable!"

There are 66,000 women who are Nursing Auxiliaries; 15,000 supply hospital needs and comforts; and last but by no means least, 97,000 of them tackle the burning problem of evacuation services.

I have spoken of the professional women of Great Britain elsewhere, but I feel I must say again that upon these, during wartime, falls the hardest brunt of the war service—for they *must* leave their homes to get to their work. They must—day in and day out—face dislocated transport going and coming; their work is just as hard or harder than ever; and they must adjust to sudden changes and emergencies which have nothing to do with it. Sometimes they have to work in offices with glassless windows; sometimes in shelters during air raids. It would be both invidious and impossible to make distinctions among them. But certain trades, and certain localities, are more dangerous and nerve-shattering—or else have specially come into my

field of vision. I should like to give a special salute to these adventurers: Nurses in City Hospitals; the girl telephonists of danger areas; the shop girls of London and all threatened cities; the typists, clerks and women bus conductors; the girl hairdressers, and above all those workers in crowded factories and workshops, where precautions have to be postponed to the last moment. I should like to salute two friends of mine,—both Londoners,—both free to seek safety, who will not leave those who are less free. One of these women is an A.R.P. warden and watches the streets of London three nights a week, visiting shelters, and any home that is struck or imperilled in her district. This woman is the daughter of a famous statesman, and herself one of the leaders of her party, and an admirable speaker. She has a great deal to keep, but she has even more to give; and has decided to give it. Another woman with the same unflinching courage and generosity has started a paper to train her fellow women in democracy—and is always fighting for the right treatment of refugees, and for any cause of the downtrodden or the afflicted. She could fight for them where she was safe—but she fights for them where she is in danger. All such women act as lights set upon a hill that cannot be hid; but there are those lesser lights that in their own homes, or thrust out of them into wild panic darkness, are seldom seen. What of those two sets of British women, the "bombed out" and those who have to break up the happy intimacy of their homes to let those first-line wanderers in?

The welkin might well ring with their afflictions; but they have not got loud voices. They grumble a little or are still.

"I shall let baby scream 'is 'eart out," I overheard a woman on a country road saying to her soldier husband, "and as for Tommy he can make as much mess on the stairs as he has a mind to! D'you 'ear that, Tommy?"

I glanced behind me and saw Tommy's face. He looked as one might look who had been given the keys of Paradise. A pickpocket hoping to get away with a gunmetal watch, and finding himself in possession of a gold one encrusted with diamonds, might feel as Tommy was obviously feeling. "May I play my tin trumpet in the middle of the night?" he asked in a voice hoarse with emotion.

"Certainly you may—if it will annoy *'er*!" his mother replied darkly.

The poor young husband did not, I think, wholly approve of this programme. He made confused sounds of pain, sympathy and protest. "If she knew what it was like trying to keep six people 'appy in a shelter that holds three with bombs dropping all round yer—she might begin to talk,"

his wife replied, with the full bitterness of exasperated nerves. Probably her landlady *had* begun to talk—and is still talking.

An eldest-sister evacuee was overheard by a friend of mine admonishing her two younger sisters: "Now mind, we're to wet our beds as hard as ever we can, till we're sent home."

This programme was carried out to the letter—and with triumphant success.

My sister, the other day, seizing the opportunity of a moment of privacy with a burdened landlady, asked her how her enforced guests—a mother and child—were getting on. "She's one of those," the landlady remarked dubiously, "who doesn't know much. But *if* she'll learn—I'll learn her!"

Imagine the fears of a London child used to indoor sanitation, when he has to brave a dark garden, and the shadows of unknown bushes, in order to find an outside water closet. Imagine the sufferings of those that receive the denizens of a London slum complete with insect life. Imagine what an East-ender feels when robbed of all she possesses, and of all she enjoys in noisy streets—exciting dramas, unlimited shops, and public houses—when she is poked down into complete silence without as much as a kettle to call her own; and then perhaps asked to have half her family elsewhere. Imagine old and retired people, having done their duty by their own children and now relaxing into undisturbed habits, being roused afresh by barbaric hordes of other people's children, or by one delicate, homesick and lonely child who can't be amused and won't be well. It is hard to know which has the hardest lot—the Interloper or the Interloped! In a small, strict country village, where no woman who kept her character ever entered a public house, three highly respectable Londoners, who always went to their nearest pub for a nightcap, and a social hour after work, were found in tears completely ostracized by new-found village friends because—according to their usual habits—they had visited the pub the evening before. Finally an intermediary explained the situation to the villagers, who once more extended a welcome to their new friends.

"We might learn from them," a West Country man said to a group of us dealing with evacuees, "how to be cleverer than we are—and they might learn from us how to be cleaner!"

People with large houses and a staff of servants are often reproached—and sometimes justly—with not exercising greater generosity, but they too have their problems. What about the servants? What about "the nasty look"

of butlers, or the high temper of great cooks? What about the poor women-and-children guests from another class, and with different sets of habits?

English people, whether rich or poor, respect their privacy, as if it were their blood. To ask them to give it up, and to share their homes with those who have not been trained either in manners or in gracious habits of living is to ask much.

It cannot be comfortably done by either party, although it is often bravely attempted by both. Each evacuated mother should have her own living room, with facilities for light cooking and washing, and a communal kitchen for the chief meal of the day, as well as a communal washing room for the weekly wash.

Children alone can always be fitted in to any household, except that of the aged and infirm; but not—for any length of time—mothers with children.

Personally I have very little patience with the English class system. It once had its uses, and may have been worth its many privileges; but it is now an anachronism, and a highly unfair and dangerous one at that. Still it exists; and until we improve the standard of living for our workpeople and grant them a complete and general education to be shared by all, the differences between them and the more fortunate *are* too great to enable us to be of much use to each other under the same roof.

Necessity makes strange bedfellows; but there is more than one kind of necessity; and it is better when possible to get some of the strangeness worn off first. Shelter life is almost unbearable at present, though rapidly on the mend; yet some women find it more bearable than separation from their husbands and children.

We should gain nothing by breaking up such households by compulsion, but merely increase the gulf between the rich and poor to the point of revolution. Nevertheless, compulsory education should not be shirked at any cost, since if we do not educate the young we handicap the future.

British women are as a whole facing up to these problems in a decent and common-sense manner. Not all behave with automatic heroism because they are confronted with danger, but many do—or else we should not read of four cases in one week in which dead mothers were found stretched across the bodies of the living children they had died to shield. Nor should we hear of the dying matron on the torpedoed *Benares*, saying with her last breath, "Are the children safe?" Nor of the young girl caring for six of these children in a lifeboat for nearly a week, through atrocious nights and days of

foodless suffering, and keeping their hearts alive by telling them heroic stories.

It is true that most British women have less trained knowledge than their men with which to meet emergencies, but they have brave hearts, and often wits to match them.

Not all our men and women possess high standards of living; far from it—even in a class where their means should suggest it—there are still strange little groups of self-insulated women, who play bridge half the day, and guard their nerves and their dogs with ruthless concentration, without so much as a pair of knitting needles to their credit. There are men who spend their days between golf and whisky in hide-out hotels. But there are not many of these "idle rich." Poor women cannot be idle but they can be shiftless, selfish and hard-hearted; so can their men. But even the most towering optimist before 1939 would not have dared to believe there could be so few duds in so large a company of live and tingling shells!

Hitler's unconscious purge has worked human miracles.

In the British Isles, which now receive the lion's share of his attention, it has brought out the lion's spirit.

Life has become a sport and death a quarry.

The *Blitzkrieg* has broken down more animosities and artificial barriers in a few months than a century could build up; and among them—the deep unspoken barrier of sex has sunk to a lower level.

Men generally get the women they deserve; and when I look round at the men of Great Britain to-day, I am glad to think that they deserve the women who are standing by their side.

CHAPTER XIII
ANGELS UNAWARES

Five hundred thousand children have slipped into strange households all over our island, almost without a ripple. The percentage of children sent alone upon this quest for new homes that have failed to please or to be pleased (and these two results are but different sides of the same medal) is almost microscopic. Wherever they go the children have soon become treasures. Sometimes they have made homes; sometimes they have found them already made. No doubt they have been homesick; shocked; dismayed and misunderstood; and all this they have borne with the usual protests and reactions common to children, until the blessed poultice of time, and the inherent sanity of a benevolent people, have created, between the children and their foster-parents, a successful human relationship.

A childless working couple in a country district volunteered to take two children into their little home, with such pleasant results upon both sides that within two days they offered to take two more; and all four children, happy as larks in their new surroundings, have firmly declared themselves on the side of staying forever where they now are. Of course misfits occur—dirty children from bad homes are forced by despairing billeting officers upon clean homes where children with clean habits are in a hurry to reproach them—and anguished mothers without common sense may believe their model offspring to be threatened body and soul by the new contact. Dirty children, however, are merely children that can soon be cleaned; and their habits, in a kindly atmosphere, become as good as anyone else's. Bad habits with young children, if they continue once they have been removed from the environment that caused them, are usually but a protest against moral reprobation. When the moral reprobation does not occur or is broken down by common sense and kindness, the bad habits of children swiftly disappear. Perhaps a worse and more prolonged tragedy is the placing of clean and well-brought-up children in poor and unsuitable households. This however is a rare blunder, since almost all billeting officers are sensible people and can see at a glance where children should definitely *not* be placed. These officers are chosen for their local knowledge, and there is always someone regularly visiting the children, who would report such a case and change the billet. There are two more safeguards for the children. The greatest of all is

the Teacher. Whenever possible, evacuated children are removed with their own teachers. These blessed rescuers upon uncharted seas are hailed by every evacuated child, as shipwrecked mariners hail an approaching sail. Next to his own parents, and in some cases more vital to his welfare, is the child's teacher. To say that the teachers of Great Britain live up to their children's new needs is to give them insufficient credit for a heroism perhaps greater—certainly as great—as any that is now part of the normal tasks of courageous people in Great Britain to-day. They visit the children in their billets; they give kind and wise advice to foster-parents. They watch the children at school and ask for milk grants, or more clothes, or whatever they think vitally necessary in the child's new surroundings. Voluntarily they often write to the real parents about their children. The teachers' new conditions of work are frequently deplorable; their new classrooms are often badly ventilated, and generally overcrowded. The local teachers, into whose schools they have been forcibly thrust, may or may not welcome their new colleagues with generosity and kindness. Yet with the zest of creative artists, these teachers of England stick to the raw material of the human young, and do their best to fashion it into decent and intelligent citizenship.

The clergy and doctors of rural districts have a great potential value for transplanted children; and they meet their opportunity—where they are people of courage and social interest—with untiring activity. Where they are not, the children must depend largely upon their foster-parents, and their teachers; but chiefly upon themselves.

It has been my very happy fortune to see, at first hand, how slum children, deprived of parents and familiar environments, re-settle and help bring up themselves.

The day upon which war was declared, Scotland,—in which we were spending our holiday,—in the shape of one of its best-known woman citizens, took sixty-three children and seven or eight mothers with babies straight from the Clydeside into her castle. This lady asked my sister and me to help settle them in, while she threw open two lodges for further batches, which she was personally installing. I shall never forget those Scottish children. They ranged between five years and thirteen years of age—most of them seemed to run between six and ten. They were all healthy, buxom children, from hard and poor homes. Only one was bow-legged and rickety; only one child of two-and-a-half accompanied by its mother cried. My sister and I took over the vital but thorny questions of heads.

We installed a table in the garden, with prepared disinfectants and fine-tooth combs, flanked by a large paper bag of boiled sweets. The children co-

operated marvellously; none rebelled—each, after being thoroughly examined, received a sweet; and was labelled free or invaded—the free half promptly disappearing into the park. The grounds of the castle had been given up to the children completely by their hostess who, when one of her household protested, drew herself up and replied coldly: "I am not accustomed to exclude my guests from any portion of my estate." The other half of the children, whose heads were thickly populated jungles, we retained; and led into a large washroom, where we had prepared disinfectants and could supply the necessary treatment. Only one girl—the eldest—felt a certain shame at the process; and she soon became amenable and friendly when we told her we had both had the same trouble ourselves when young—caught from bad homes in which we had been visitors. All through the three short days that we were allowed to spend in helping to instal these new inhabitants, we were amazed at the children's courage. No child rebelled; no child wept. One child asked with a trembling chin "And when am I fer hame?" But on being told, "Not just yet, but when we can send the Germans away from our seas and out of our skies," he nodded with great composure and said in a voice he tried to keep firm: "Me faither makes *our* ships!" And he felt that by his own courage he was (as indeed he may well have been) assisting in British ship-building. Another small boy rushed out of the castle and scanned it with a doubtful face. "What is the name of this shop," he demanded, "that I may write it to my Da'?" One little girl, who had never seen a cow before, expressed a fear that it might bite her. Another demanded to be taken instantly to the nearest sweet shop, to spend a ha'penny. On being put to bed, with new nightgowns, in separate beds, a considerable number of children were found the following morning naked and in the same bed. This, they explained, was what they were accustomed to—and considerably warmer. They liked their food, and ate it in large quantities from the first. Two or three had little sores that had to be tended, and they were soon inspected by careful doctors. Their teachers had been delayed in coming to them, but I shall never forget my last sight of the children—when two of these familiar beneficent beings loomed across the park, and like a flock of homing birds the children flew over the grass to meet them. "Teacher! Teacher!" they shouted in joyous unison. Perhaps that cry of trust and love may have been the reward for which the teachers carry on their careers of unregarded heroism. It is certainly their only one.

It is interesting that the children in bombed districts who go to school, and have to suffer the imminence of sudden death at least once a day if not oftener, are rarely troubled with nerves. On the contrary I am told that they become day by day more self-reliant, braver, and more cheerful. Their

shelter rushes become well-organized games. The children learn as well if not better than normally. But the children kept at home in bombed districts by anxious mothers—or hidden away sometimes for weeks at a time in semidarkness in crypts or shelters, living on insufficient nourishment—become dazed with terror and quite inhuman. Children suffer, too, very greatly, when made to sit for hours on bedding to keep places for the family in tubes. Children must be occupied, to remain normal; and they should also be—where those round them are—cheerfully and normally occupied.

It is not danger that upsets a child, as those on torpedoed boats containing children *can*, and *have*, told us. It is to see any form of breakdown in their elders; and from this they should certainly be preserved. Evacuated children in the homes of the rich are usually extremely well looked-after, and react upon their hosts' lives beneficially. Their hosts may have been unwilling to take them; but they are seldom if ever unwilling to keep them.

It is interesting to watch how John and Mary are first relegated entirely to the kitchen quarters, and make their homes with the servants; and then gradually their hosts begin to take more and more personal interest in them. They still have their meals in the kitchen, but they are talked to in the garden; somebody plays draughts with them in the drawing room—and slowly, bit by bit, John and Mary get the run of the house, and are equally welcome everywhere. Children do not themselves recognize class distinction—what they recognize is whether a grown-up is a good human being or not, and can be treated as such. You cannot feed and often clothe a child, you cannot keep it safe under your roof and hear its happy voice, thrilled by the thousand discoveries of a child's day—and think of it as belonging to a "lower" class!

These Angels Unawares may very well provide the answer to that choice puzzle—the "class distinctions" of the Englishman at home. After the war, he may wake up to find that there are still differences between human beings—but none that need any particular attitude upon his own part. The children of Great Britain have been well taught now, for at least two generations, by extremely well-trained teachers; and the difference between one class and another is already greatly reduced. But human beings can never belong to the same social level until the education of all children is approximately the same, and of the same length. When one set of human beings stops its education at fourteen and another at twenty-three or four, there can never be such a thing as a real democracy.

One thing that has greatly improved the relationship between the English classes already, and acts with a wonderfully developing and beneficial manner upon children's characters, especially in rural England, is the Scout movement—what it has done for boys, and in a lesser manner for girls, can hardly be exaggerated.

It has supplemented their education by direct character training, in a highly efficient and practical manner. Courage and personal initiative have been developed in almost every child that has had the good luck to be included in the Scout movement.

Scout training is the exact opposite of military training. Generally the Scoutmasters or Brownie mistresses are gentle people, and very often the best and most sporting type of gentle person. Into their instruction has crept, consciously or unconsciously, their own highest virtues. If Great Britain escapes revolution after the war—or the upheaval that followed the last war in Germany and Italy, resulting in Fascism and Nazism—it will largely be because the better-educated of the ruling class have made a real attempt to help and stand by the children of at least a section of the working class of Great Britain. They might have spread their task wider—and they might have thought out more thoroughly the after-conditions, into which they were letting trained and developed human beings be forced by economic pressure; but at least they cared enough to train and develop a certain section of the less-privileged young of Great Britain, and by doing so produced a race of potential heroes. It would be interesting to trace how many airmen, men with naval ratings, or "Tommies" of the B.E.F. were trained as Boy Scouts. Those who are still children have played their part in the defence of Britain, with those who trained them. They have gathered in harvests; they have helped keep roads clear; they have served as watchers, or as guards, official and unofficial. Whenever they have been in danger—or had to meet sudden and unexpected emergencies—they have used their Scout training; and they have thus found their way made plainer. We shall not soon forget the Boy Scout in the lost lifeboat of the *Benares*, who after six days' and nights' exposure at sea, almost foodless and waterless, stood up in the boat and signalled with his handkerchief to the flying *Sunderland*, to come to their rescue.

People have laughed at the Boy Scout's "one good deed a day," but perhaps they will not, when the war is over, continue to laugh at an education in morals which has strengthened a child into a hero, and could so strengthen the whole human race, if all normal education comprised a like training in the Scout virtues.

Man *is* a whole human being—and the "whole" contains and is controlled by a spirit; but so far education has only considered the mind and the body—and has entirely overlooked the fact that it is the human being himself that matters—not only what he knows in his mind or can do with his body, but the purpose with which he controls both mind and body. This unregarded purpose of the human being has been trained in the Scout movement, towards the goal of social interest; and where the child has responded to it in a creative manner, it has set free the best that was in him.

CHAPTER XIV
LETTERS FROM LONDON AND DANGER ZONE

The following letters are written by the author's brother, a London business-man in the early fifties. He goes up to town daily. When he returns home, his train not having been held up by an "incident," which is the official name for a bomb or a little playful machine-gunning, he acts as A.R.P. for the country hillside upon which he lives. This means that whenever there is a raid, and bombs drop near by, he gets up to locate the damage and to communicate with the authorities prepared to deal with it. Until these authorities appear, he himself deals with it.

> We started the week with a very peaceful Sunday night, on which we had no air-raid alarm at all, and the same happened again last night. Both nights it was pouring with rain and blowing half a gale, the sort of night we have come to appreciate.
>
> Monday night also was quiet, but on Tuesday night we had a lively few minutes at about 11:30, when between twenty and thirty bombs were dropped without very much warning. The first stick of fourteen were unpleasantly close, the nearest being only a few hundred yards. I was standing in the hall at the time in my pyjamas, just going to bed, and I heard the bombs whistle apparently just over my head, and they went off with a rapidity of a machine gun; in fact I found afterwards that they were mostly very small bombs and had been dropped in some cases in pairs. The second lot were a few minutes later and considerably farther away, and they again went off so rapidly that we thought they were in fact Anti-Aircraft guns. I find it almost impossible to tell the difference between the sound of an Anti-Aircraft gun and a bomb falling, unless I can actually hear, of course, the whistle of the bomb, but if it is a matter of a mile or more away it is extremely difficult to tell which is which, and even the experts cannot tell. Several houses were hit in the first lot but there was only one casualty of any importance, a lady whose face was cut by flying glass, and she was only kept in hospital a couple of days. One of my friends had a direct hit on his house. He and his wife and daughter were sleeping under the stairs, and although the

whole of the back of the house was wrecked, and part of the contents were blown out of the front door, he and his family were quite unharmed. Their maidservant, who was sleeping on the first floor, slid out of her room, of which the end wall had been somewhat forcibly removed, and fell on to the rubble and rubbish below, and she also, except for a few superficial scratches, was quite unhurt. It is most amazing what little damage and relatively few casualties are caused in these raids. The second stick of bombs caused rather more casualties; in fact there were five fatal casualties—all chickens. On Wednesday night we had up to midnight more planes over than has been the case ever since this business started. Quite possibly a lot of them were our own planes, as practically no bombs were dropped and none in our immediate neighbourhood. On Thursday we had a stick of seven or eight dropped within a mile or two, near enough to turn me out of bed to try and find out where they had dropped. This is always my difficulty, to locate the damage on a dark night. It is extremely difficult in a country area, as you can well imagine.

On the Tuesday night I was of course out as soon as I could get dressed, and it took me then quite a quarter of an hour to locate where the nearest bombs had dropped, and by the time I got there I found the fire engine and several ambulances all on the spot and everything well in hand, and the only thing I did was to discover a bomb crater by the side of the road by the simple means of falling into it. It was pitch-dark of course.

Bill and Gwen were with us for the week-end and we were seven in the house, which with a combined dining and sitting room makes rather a squash, but one is getting used to that sort of thing and we had quite a lot of fun.

I have been rather crippled with sciatica during the last few days; I suppose it is this damp weather. I am a bit better to-day, but sitting in one position for any length of time I find it extremely painful when I get up. I am afraid I am going to be a rheumatic old man in my old age if I ever have one.

We have been having interrupted nights during the past week. The Hun has been approaching London from the south-west lately and we seem to lie immediately in his path. Also there are usually two or three planes circling round the Heath and dropping bombs almost haphazard. Last night there was a stick of seven bombs

dropped and as each one dropped it was getting nearer to us until we could hear the whistle of the last two bombs. When I went out to investigate I found that they had dropped at least two to three miles away although they had sounded within a few hundred yards. When they do eventually come as near as this Lord knows what they will sound like. My sister-in-law was coming back from the Canteen at midnight last night and was stopped at a cross-roads about a couple of miles away for her pass and as she was pulled up a bomb dropped and exploded in a field just about two hundred yards from her car. She was quite unhurt and completely undisturbed. The extraordinary thing about the number of bombs we have had dropped around home is the very little damage they have done. After all I don't know that it is very extraordinary because it is a very countrified district and practically every bomb has dropped in open country and the casualties have been very few indeed.

I have been on duty from eight to one most of the past week and it has been most interesting standing at a point of vantage and watching the planes, or rather watching the searchlights as two or more at a time pick up the planes by sound and one imagines the plane in the "V" of the searchlight beams. By this means one can follow the course of the planes, and when bombs are being dropped one can get a good idea of the direction. This is going to be a darned cold job later on and I am not looking forward to it in rain and snow.

It is rather wonderful how everyone has settled down to this sort of nightly routine. For the first two or three days many people, myself included, got distinctly jumpy and it affected one's sleep which again made one still more jumpy, a sort of vicious circle, but strange to say after two or three days these feelings wore off and have been replaced by a sort of optimistic fatalism. We look on the whole thing as a sort of unfortunate necessity and try and make the best of it.

Last Tuesday evening the Hun dropped several bombs which straddled the Railway close to the Station, one hitting a shop in the Town and completely demolishing it and breaking windows and tiles in others, but no one was hurt.

On Friday at lunchtime when I was in Town a Hun plane made a dive-bombing attack on the Railway Bridge about two hundred

yards as the crow flies from my house and dropped a stick of five bombs, two of which landed in a market garden and one on the Railway embankment which did not explode. Of the other two one dropped in my Sector this side of the Bridge and one immediately the other side. Both dropped in gardens of cottages. The one in my Sector made a large, deep crater with the result that the majority of the blast went upwards and very little damage was done to the surrounding cottage property, just broken tiles and broken glass, and very little of the latter. In fact, one house nearest to the crater, while it had most of the tiles ripped off had no glass broken whatever on the side facing the explosion. The effects of blast are most extraordinary and no one can understand them. The bomb on the other side of the Railway was a percussion bomb, that is one that explodes on impact and therefore has a lateral blast. This bomb did rather more damage to the surrounding cottages, although as far as I can make out no structural damage was done and only two people were injured.

One of my Wardens was on the spot within two minutes of the bomb-dropping and all the A.R.P. Services functioned like clockwork. The reason my Warden was so quick on the job was possibly that his wife with baby in perambulator had five minutes before left the house going in the direction of the Bridge and he naturally wanted to find out what had happened to her. Actually she was under the Bridge when the bombs fell and was blown from one side to the other, complete with pram, and landed, presumably, on her feet, as she found herself upright, and although considerably shaken she was quite unharmed. I went in to see her in the evening and the baby was sick, but this may, of course, have been due to my sudden appearance.

Everyone on our side of the Heath heard the whine of the falling bombs and thought their last hour had come, but actually the blast did not reach us as we, of course, are some hundred and fifty feet higher up than the ground on which the bombs fell. I am now on duty on Friday nights only, as my superiors consider I was not getting enough sleep. This means that there are three of us on on Friday night and we have two hour watches, one on duty and two off, so that we get a reasonable amount of sleep. On the other nights I am, of course, on call and should spring out of bed if I heard anything in my immediate neighbourhood.

The following two extracts are from the letters of the author's highly sporting sister-in-law. Lions and leopards in Rhodesia were part of her early life-training, and she has lived up to them ever since.

I arrived in London at 7 P.M. and found we were going down Lillie Road near here so hopped off and came here on foot, and was horrified to see the devastation en route—whole houses in ruins and glass everywhere. I got here just before the sirens went for the evening and was having a cup of soup when the crashes began, so K. and I dashed out of the house and into the shelter at Chatsworth Court where we spent the night; I on the stone floor (very chilly) and K. on an upright chair, surrounded by recumbent forms, most of them snored frightfully as the night wore on. Last night we spent here on the stairs but the noise was terrific and when the loudest bangs come K. says, "Did you hear that, Griffy, or are you asleep?"

To-day I went out and looked at the wreckage. All the shop windows are out in the road opposite Earl's Court Station and houses are demolished in various streets etc. I waited for a 74 bus as I wanted to get E's stocking which was being invisibly mended at Selfridge's, but a nice fat man passing by said, "You won't get a bus there, my dear," and directed me somewhere else. At Marble Arch I was met by tin-hatted men and ropes across the road, just beyond the Cumberland, and they explained they were waiting for a time-bomb to go off. I had to make a detour by the American Embassy and into Duke Street and everywhere there were ropes and thoughtful notices, "Unexploded bomb."

It did seem so uncanny, and everything seems so odd.

The road is roped off from Marble Arch to Duke Street and no end of windows out all down Oxford Street. Penberthy's has no glass at all and all the stockings and whatnots on view just the same. The house in Trebovir Road is demolished entirely and a woman in the basement cannot be found. So to-night K. and I are going to the Tube at Earl's Court. I could not get E's stocking at Selfridge's because they cannot get to the part where the stockings are put. But they are going on in the shop just as usual. We are told we ought to settle down in the Tube by about 6 P.M. or shall not get a place. What a long night we shall have! K. is very bright and completely Irish over everything and I found her to-day laughing

like anything because she had tipped a whole bottle of ink into her lap, where it lay like a black lake, quietly sinking through to her knickers. Later she tried to put it back into the bottle straight from her lap, which was not a success.

One of the unexploded bombs near here has just gone off with a great crash, in Child's Road, or somewhere.

K's friend lived in the house in Trebovir Road that was demolished last night and came back this morning from Leatherhead, where she had been with her sister for the night, to find no house. Hers was the top flat, so poor thing, she has nothing but what she stands up in.

Well, I really must go now to the Tube. We are taking two cushions each and a rug. Everybody says the Tube smells frightful at night with so many people.

We had a good drubbing on Saturday night—a house in Lexham Gardens got a direct hit and burnt merrily, also a house opposite us, and next to Chatsworth Court, was burnt to the ground. Chatsworth Court got off with broken windows. I was sitting in here comfortably knitting and listening to the crashes when suddenly a frightful one came and the room got up and sat down again and the window blew out. So I went down to the kitchen to see how K. was getting on and found she had been thrown across the floor and the lodger taking cover under the sink. However, she was all right and we watched the blazing house opposite—two poor things were killed in it. The girl who lived on the ground floor had a premonition that she had better sleep that night in an Air Raid Shelter, and did so. Lucky for her. Last night they made such a din we could not sleep at all. Just now (about 6 P.M.) we watched a bomber come over and saw it shot down, so now the "All Clear" has gone.

The following extract is from a retired Major of the Regular Army, a man over sixty, who won the Military Cross in the last war. He was an intimate friend of Penn Browning, the only son of the poets, Robert and Elizabeth Browning. Probably Major B. is the best skier of his age in Europe. He is now at work in the Censor's Office.

This is the twenty-seventh day of the battle of London, during which we have continuously been in the "front line," not only in

the daytime but all night too and in fact mostly at night. We, personally, have had it very badly indeed. I am beginning to wonder how much longer we shall be alive for really we seem to have escaped death so often that our time must come soon.

First of all, about three weeks ago, we had a time-bomb in the back yard of this *very house* and were evacuated to a schoolroom in Winchester Road at Swiss Cottage, half a mile from here, together with about two hundred other people in the street, at 2 A.M. At 8 A.M. we were informed that we could go home again. The kind A.R.P. had got a stretcher for Eva who was (in her nightie and a fur coat) suffering from frightful sciatica.

Next night Jerry sent down a "bread-basket" of incendiaries which set the next house to ours alight and again we were turned out, this time in the rain, and Eva caught cold; a cold from which she has never recovered and which turned to bronchitis, which the doctor is now treating her for.

But all this is nothing to what happened last Thursday week. First of all I must explain to you that we have found that we cannot go downstairs because it makes Eva worse, so we just stay in bed. The raid was no worse than usual that night but the bombs did seem to be dropping nearer. We are so accustomed now to them that we only really get nervous when there is a lull, for then we fear that he may be preparing to drop oil bombs, or gas. Then we heard it coming! The high-pitched scream of a great bomb coming straight for us. And it happened! The house seemed to leap, and bounce, and everything was covered with bits of ceiling, and dust, and the noise was appalling and ear-splitting—but we were both quite all right. What had happened really was that a big crump had fallen in the garden of No. 36 and taken the backs off Nos. 36, 37, and 38. The front of No. 36 bulges forward like an old gentleman's shirt front, and all the other houses will have to be taken down. That we are alive at all is because the bomb fell on soft earth, and not on stonework, for it was only *forty yards from us*.

For a week we slept in a lodging house until the Borough Surveyor had expressed the opinion that the house is safe for human habitation still. But I don't mind telling you that despite his assurance, the cracks all over the house have made us look for a safer place to live in, so we are house-hunting!

The following letter is from a life-long friend, a woman of nearly seventy. She is an artist by profession and the maker of a sort of Hans Andersen toys—called "The Pomona Toys"—and very well known in England and even in America.

She lives in one of the worst bombed London areas and has refused to leave it, for a home offered her in the country.

> I can live quite serenely here in spite of the *Blitzkrieg* (going on beautifully at the moment); frankly, I should not be happy away from London. I am conscious of being protected at times . . . it is a curious and beautiful feeling. Vera, poor little thing, is frankly terrified so I pack her off to the Public Shelter as soon as the night visitation begins; armed with a down quilt, cushion, a book and her "piece" to eat. Down there not hearing the noise either of falling bombs, or our splendid defensive fire, she can be comparatively happy and get a little sleep. She joins a group of friendly neighbours and has now given up all efforts to persuade me to go too. . . . I go every few days to the workshop, where I still have a lot of stock, a good bit of which I hope to dispose of before Christmas. Anyway, I am going to dress some of the dolls for children in the shelters, as it seems that the poor lambs in some of them have no toys. It was a good thing that I did go to the workshop a few days ago, as I found the windows blown in and saw about getting them boarded up at once and everything made as secure as possible. . . . I am doing a great deal of walking these days and so see much of the devastation that has been done and it fills me with anger. You must have seen a great deal when you were up here. I allow myself one, or sometimes two, a week of the National Gallery Concerts that Myra Hess has organized, and was up there to-day. It is an immense refreshment. All profits, and I am told they run into a very large sum, go to the Musicians' Benevolent Fund so that one feels that the shilling that one spends serves a double purpose. I have made a lot of friends up there. They provide excellent coffee and sandwiches for ninepence. One of my best friends there is the char, who does the washing up. She is a great dear, and there is also a black cat whom I sometimes see being given an airing on the steps in the arms of one of the men attendants.
>
> To-day one of the nasty sights was a great hole blown in the crypt of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. One never knows what will be

standing, or what tumbled down. Nelson still dominates Trafalgar Square. It is a comfort that Charles I is safely encased in corrugated iron! For one or two Sundays getting to All Hallows was difficult, but for the last few weeks it has been quite easy. It is interesting to see all the strange buses that are on the streets from Manchester, Hull, Halifax, and lots of others. The girl conductors are coming on too. Everything outside is very quiet now; anyway, nothing keeps me awake. I don't completely undress in case of having to move quickly, but I make myself extremely comfortable and sleep soundly.

I'm still here you see, alive so far, and very decidedly kicking! London is, I think, standing up finely to the strain. I'm afraid our tempers are some of them (including mine) getting a bit short. I get desperately sick of hearing how Vera's stomach rises and turns over when she hears the guns and all her other symptoms. I am, in this little house, it seems, in the centre of a semicircle of devastations. One whole side, half of Parson's Green, is down, including a Maternity Home, though that was I hope, and believe, empty of patients at the time. . . . Three craters close together in front of some poor little houses, just tumbled down . . .

It is unpleasantly exciting when one hears the approach of a screaming bomb, and waits in suspense to know where it will hit!

The wireless is a great stand-by. I generally stay up for the midnight news, and then go up, partly undressed, to lie on my very comfy bed, and am soon asleep, raids or no raids—I *do* give thanks for my gift of sleep. This morning I had a most unexpected letter from my late bank manager, asking me to send him a line to say how I was getting on, as he felt anxious about me! I was really quite touched. They have a branch near here, and it was completely destroyed the other night. It was rather a desperate night, with houses falling in dust and rubble all round.

I have nearly finished my third patchwork quilt, and I shall still, I think, have some bits left—enough to make some tiny ones for little tots.

It is a great job getting down to All Hallows on Sunday, but it can be done. I was there yesterday, and found great refreshment. They are carrying on splendid work down there, and so far have escaped all damage. Not one of the Toc H. places has been

touched. [Alas, this lovely, ancient church did not remain undamaged!]

I am hoping to get once more to the National Gallery Concert to-morrow. I walk the greater part of the way home—it is years since I have walked so much, and it is interesting, and good for me—but there are some sad sights to be seen on the way. The shops are keeping going splendidly. I often get my lunch at a Lyons over at Walham Green and am charmed with the girls there, so good-tempered under difficulties. For some time now there has been no gas in this district—an inconvenience in small houses such as this, but a really serious business for a large restaurant.

To-morrow I must summon up my courage and go and have a look at my Holland Street shop—still, alas, unlet, and likely to be—but I want to know how it, and all my neighbours there, are. I hear that Holland House has been badly damaged. We have guns close here, and at this moment I hear "Jerry" cruising overhead, and guns having a grand go at him. I have got used to the guns now, and no longer jump when they go off suddenly, as they did a moment ago. What a mad business it all is—what does that criminal lunatic Hitler think he is going to gain by it? Only one thing for sure, and that is the hatred and execration of the whole civilized world. One can think of no punishment severe enough for him. I hope that you heard the Polish Officer who broadcast the other evening. I look forward with intense pleasure to the thought of some day being able to go to bed in real night-clothes and between sheets. There are all sorts of ordinary things like that that one will appreciate at their proper value when this horror is over. In the meantime, London carries on in grand style. I wish that more children had been sent away—there are still too many about—people wanted to be all together, but it is a pity. I must finish this up to-night, and then Vera can post it when she comes in in the morning. For the last hour and more it has been wonderfully quiet—no guns, bombs or sound of planes—a blessed peace for a space.

The writer of the following two extracts belonged to a Religious Sisterhood in the English Church. She is now an invalid with a badly affected heart; and has chosen for her retirement the cockpit area of Great Britain. When the alert sounds she is assisted downstairs to a sofa—not to

where she has the most security, but to a room where she has the best view of any battles that may take place.

> We *have* been having times, and shall continue to have them I expect. Never did I dream that I should have the thrill of watching a battle!—and we have watched many air battles these days. Yesterday I saw my fourth German plane crash—and it was the most thrilling because it was so near. It actually crashed in one of Bob's fields, and it came screaming down past the house—I have never heard such a scream. It might have been Lucifer falling from Heaven—the cry of a soul falling from Grace. The pilot had baled out, and floated down interminably slowly, it seemed to us onlookers. He was only a boy of nineteen, desperately frightened, and amazed at being at once offered a cigarette.
>
> This is a wonderful life. I feel as if by watching those wonderful men one was entering into the spirit of men of long-past ages—adventurers all. It is also a very lovely sight to see the action of these planes fighting. When the sunlight catches them they are like silver fish floating with infinite grace of movement—up and down, in and out, with no awkward lines—a poetry of motion.
>
> Last week was an exciting week here—for we had magnificent views of the two big air battles on Thursday and Sunday. On Thursday we watched a huge German bomber crash into the valley below, and a parachute descend—so slowly. I couldn't help feeling terribly sorry for the poor wretch coming down so slowly into what he thought were unfriendly hands. He was a very young boy, and he came down into the middle of a Canadian battalion on manoeuvres—and was surrounded by Generals and Colonels at once. He begged for mercy—and was of course taken to hospital, as he was badly wounded. Sunday's battle was still nearer. It was amazing to see the way our fighters twirled in and out, and they all hurtled backwards and forwards right over the house. We saw two German planes crash and another man descend by parachute. It has been a wonderful experience, and I must say gives one great confidence for the future of the world when one sees such heroism *and* ability as our R.A.F. display. We saw a formation of thirty-two German planes, and one little English Spitfire went up alone to tackle them. He climbed high above them, and then came down like a rocket on the leading German plane—smashed it and

dispersed the formation, by which time more of our fighters had come to finish them off. They are amazing.

The following letter is from a doctor friend of mine in one of the worst and most continually bombed of England's great industrial cities.

I intended to write to you before but the efforts of the Blitz, municipally and domestically, have needed my attention.

We are now nearly straight here and the honourable scars that the house bears are not serious. But I cannot replace a Nurses' Home—or one third of it to be exact—so easily. They were very busy on the night of the twenty-first and practically all the nurses on day duty—who might have been in the Home at night—volunteered for duty. Not a person was hurt. One brick fell through the roof of a ward and fell in the only bed that was unoccupied. One might be inclined to praise the angels were it not that at a Hospital in Manchester the Medical Superintendent, Matron, Assistant Steward, and other chiefs were all killed by a bomb on the Administrative Quarters. So to invoke the angels in our case would savour of unctuous rectitude.

A few nights ago we had forty-three incendiaries on the hospital where I reside. We had about twelve fires which were all under control in about ten minutes. I put out three in the grounds, breaking in a door of a Conservatory with the aid of two soldiers and a heavy plank. Then I saw the light through the hole in a roof of a house backing on the hospital. Thinking the house might be unoccupied, I ran round and hammered on the door, which was promptly opened to me. I told the people that their house was on fire, to which they replied, "Yes, we know"! The staircase was burning but I soon had it out.

On my returning to the hospital it was reported that the Mortuary, next to the petrol tank, was on fire; with a party of soldiers and of tramps from the casual ward etc. we had a chain of buckets feeding a stirrup pump and soon had that out too. That was the end of it. Result almost nil. One old lady recounted her experience as follows: "I went to the lavatory and when I came back there was a bomb in my bed."

They had a shower of incendiaries here followed by a heavy bomb which fell in a field. Result again nil. We are said to have

had two hundred planes over the District that night but the damage was insignificant and casualties very slight.

The following letter is from a South African friend of mine who was a brilliant scholar and secretary. Her father recalled her to South Africa after war had begun and she gave her services to the Government to take out British children from bombed areas.

> Our voyage out was a terrific experience—not that anything happened—and we were worked to almost exhaustion, but the children were such a grand crowd and one felt that they were worth saving and that this country was lucky to get them. We brought about three hundred and had the boat to ourselves. Each escort had fifteen children to take complete charge of—mine were boys which was a nice change. The ship though full was terribly understaffed but the officers and men were wonderful to the children and would do anything to help us, and their patience and generosity was staggering. Our engineer spent his whole voyage's salary in sweets and stuff for the kids. I had a wonderful boy whom you'd have adored—Ronnie was a sturdy five-year-old from Sheffield, youngest but two in a family of eight. He was completely amoral, he lied and stole and was disobedient, had a runny nose, was shabby and dirty and most elusive and utterly lovable. He could be bribed to do anything, including intoning the whole of the Lord's Prayer for Grace, which he did enchantingly when he was promised a bottle of pop. He was always in trouble but he was made of the right stuff and I was heartbroken at parting from him. We had a terrific reception in Capetown, and it was nice to see how glad people were to have them. Unfortunately the people who took them over were well-meaning and foolish and they were thoroughly spoilt before a week was out after they left us. I went after that to a farm in the karoo and slept for ten days with intervals for food—a fact which surprised me.
>
> It is good to be home. In lots of ways the war is very remote—almost in another world. There are none of those constant reminders like rations and blackout. The lights at night are lovely and still excite me, and neon lights are so securely vulgar. In another way the war however is on our doorstep. Pretoria is an armed camp—the military college is here and there are several training camps round about, and large aerodromes. All the

English-speaking men have joined up or want to, but can't be released from their jobs, and a large proportion of the *Afrikaans* population too. The Government's difficulties are increased by the need for keeping a strong armed force in the country. Smuts in just over a year has brought the country from a position of pro-German neutrality and no army to where it is now with an army of a hundred and ten thousand, and he seems to have a complete grip of things.

It is difficult to judge the strength of the opposition but at the moment it is much weakened by internal quarrels. There is however a "cultural" organization called the Ossewa-Brandway which has all the usual trappings—uniform, arms, secret meetings, seditious speeches—in fact most of its spokesmen are openly pro-German. It is not yet illegal, I don't know why—unless they want to find out more about it. It boasts a membership of a hundred and seventy thousand, but I think that must include the new-born and possibly even the unborn! There is a section of the rebel population which goes round wearing a little goatee beard supposed to resemble the Voortrekkers but they don't at all. One of them hurled a brick to-day at an English girl—one of the F.A.N.Y.S. who have just arrived here en route for Kenya. Poor girl is suffering from shock—I feel she can't be a very good person to be going to the wars. The F.A.N.Y.S. are in barracks up here, near the men, and I hear they are in tremendous demand, the South Africans being astounded to find they are not decadent—which seems to show some influence of Zeesen.

The following letter is from an English girl, also in times of peace an excellent secretary, and who, immediately war broke out, had herself trained as a voluntary nurse in a Red Cross Mobile Unit operating in London.

Somebody seems to have borrowed London's Blitz—you haven't got it, by any chance? Because you're welcome to keep it, if you have! It was really quite nasty up to a week or two ago, and our Mobile has had quite a lot to do. It is a grand feeling, being able to do something, isn't it? I feel sorriest for those who have to stay at home and wait and struggle with rations and so forth. They always seem to think they're doing nothing, in spite of being told how necessary their job is.

Life is most amusing, however—you ought to see our dormitory here!

Mother bewails her blankets being used downstairs on the floor, and I can't get her to take her corsets off at night—she says they give her moral support as well as physical.

On duty, we spend the nights in flimsy wooden huts (which is really a much safer situation than a house, as there's not so much to fall on you! The only thing is that we get shrapnel through the roof and I'd really prefer a good clean bomb!) which bounce every time a gun goes off—and we have a very heavy barrage round here. Every now and again a Mobile Gun sneaks up on us and goes off just outside—we still rush for battle-bowlers and first-aid kit and stand by, thinking a bomb has dropped.

One night they peppered our Depot with incendiaries—only the sort that go out if you spit on them—and it really looked lovely with the fires lighting up the trees. Only one hut got hurt, so there was nothing to mar our pleasure in the beauty of it; specially as there were no casualties.

Wasn't it splendid, Roosevelt being elected for a third term? The Blitz was only a minor affair for us, while that was going on, and for a little while I was afraid Willkie might get home. Now that Roosevelt's in office again, I feel that everything that can be done for us will be done.

Please, why add "Respect" to your love and good wishes? I know it wasn't sarcasm, from you, and feel rather false-pretence-ish about it! If it's because of the raids, our Sister-in-Charge says we're not to be praised for doing our job like thousands of others, only blamed if we fall down on it!

CHAPTER XV
A NEW WORLD: REGIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

There used to be an old-fashioned ditty sung in my youth, about an old lady who loved her poodle-dog with such devotion that if she lost it, she would never have another. The poodle-dog then died; and within a week she had bought another poodle-dog exactly like the last.

During the war of 1914—fondly called by us at that time "the World War"—we made an impassioned vow to give up the world we had, and provide a better one. We won the war; we kept the old world on. If we had been trained to make the payment required for a new world, it is more than possible that we should have avoided a fresh war.

Now we have another and worse war; and the payment has gone up. Experience has taught us that, with the prods of emergency once removed, human hopes are apt to go static. But it is a mistake to suppose that history *has* to repeat itself, unless the human beings who make it wish to have it repeated.

In 1918 there was not more than a rather powerless enlightened section who really *did* want this new world; and they did not know how to set about getting it. Not everybody had suffered by the war. Officers, who had learned not only to care for their men like brothers, but that the men really *were* like brothers, found themselves strangely bereft of any influence in the world they had saved for Democracy. Nor did the great upheaval of Russia give any well-balanced person much ground for seeking a similar upheaval at home.

It is true that Communism promised all that Christianity had once offered; but she gave considerably less. The theory of salvation through the fallacy of "economic man" became strangely bloodless, by the time Bolshevism had done with it. Dictatorship of the Left had a far better programme than Dictatorship of the Right, but it rested upon the lie which is the foundation of all Dictatorships—that authority can take the place of personal responsibility.

This lie corroded the programme of Communist Russia into a nightmare Farce.

Those who believe with passion in the creed of Communism came back from Russia appalled by the methods used to carry the programme out.

Peace, Work, Brotherhood, the main tenets of Communism and Christianity alike, were—practised by gangsters—twisted into conduct as viciously subversive as even the minds of Hitler and Mussolini could have devised, to control their reactionary State Slaveries.

The poodle-dog was *not* exactly like the last, this time. The poor old lady had bought a mad one, in its place.

What can we do this next time—if we succeed in stamping out rabies?

Everyone knows by now, except those who support the twin Dictatorships of Right and Left, that this is not a "Class War." It is a war of decent human beings from all over the world, to prevent universal State Slavery run on gangster lines.

But this knowledge, in itself, is not enough to help us to get rid of unfair privileges which lead direct to Dictatorships; and which might make Great Britain—after the war is over—precisely such a Slave State as the Dictators we are now fighting made of Germany and Italy.

The less compulsion we now practise, and the more individual responsibility is encouraged in us, the less likely we are to submit to such a trap. But we shall have to use all our powers in order to evade it; and we can only be sure of escaping it by living up to our principles, as well as by fighting for them.

The more we study gangster methods, the more we fix upon each one of ourselves full responsibility for our own acts, and use free criticism of all the acts of those in authority whom we have chosen to represent us, the less likely we shall be to get led by subversive short-cuts up the garden path of Dictatorship.

The first thing we must do is to remember the reverse side of the medal we fought for last time. We did indeed fight to save the world for Democracy, in 1914; but we overlooked the equally, if not more, important aim of fighting to keep Democracy safe for the world.

In order to do this as a united people—and there is no other way of fighting successfully than through co-operation—we must get rid of the Top Dog fallacy. Whenever there's a Top Dog, there's an underdog; and when

there's an underdog, there's a row; and indeed there should be a row, until there are no more circumstantial underdogs left.

Training is the only way to attain this aim. Education has done much to help—already—but it has been too slow and too partial; and it has overlooked the moral training on scientific lines that can produce a good human being. If the Nazis could train the whole younger generation to hate, the Democracies can certainly train the whole future generations towards love.

Until we make old age secure, and every man and woman a trained worker with equal chances of success, we shall not get the better of Nazis and Communists. We must be able to promise our people more, not less, than the Totalitarian system has to offer.

Nor must we set out by trying to abolish any section of our people—since such an attempt can only lead to hate.

The Conservative Party of England has always been one of her great assets. I cannot imagine a worse way of starting a new England than by trying to get rid of it—or by attacking with hostility all those who belong to it. Liberalism has been—and perhaps still is—the only quality England possesses that has won the acclamation and trust of any other part of the world than the part she has—not always in a liberal spirit—occupied. We need not therefore conduct Liberals *first* to the Lamp Post, as either Fascists or Communists would be certain to do! Labour has also two vital qualities needed by Great Britain: it works; and, in some measure, it understands brotherhood.

What can we do then to improve our breed of dog—before the race dies out?

Can we breed a new kind of dog—not mad—not petted into lethargy—and not overbred into insignificance?

There is a heritage, that we English-speaking peoples possess, and have—at one time or another—already fought for. Cannot we begin by safeguarding ourselves by making these agreed aims into the core of our future Government?

First in value is the One Commandment of Jesus Christ: "A new Commandment I give unto you—that ye love one another." The Ten Commandments of Moses support it. The Law of Habeas Corpus is an outer bulwark; and for flying buttresses, to strengthen our whole building, we

have the Declaration of Independence of the United States, and the Bill of Rights.

We might add to this proved collection of wisdom three additional modern developments—accepted alike by Science, Art and Religion.

1. That a fact—to be true—must be of universal application.

2. That what is factual must be freed from the Wish-control of Individuals.

3. That a training in Social Interest, accepted by the State, should be a part of every child's education.

We are left for the moment in the hands of Politicians who have not been so trained, and whose thoughts are controlled by careerist aims. Could we not modify this form of Government by putting greater power into the hands of local representatives,—Mayors, Town Clerks, Aldermen,—many of whom are doing such splendid service for England to-day? These men are *not* careerists first and foremost. They have the aims of their special localities at heart, and, linked up with a Central Government, might well act as deterrents for prestige motives.

During the war, each local district has become largely responsible for its own order and security.

What is called a Regional Officer, from the Ministry of Information, attends these local Committees with information upon what the Central Government is planning in order to meet each fresh emergency as it arises.

These Committees, held all over rural Counties or in provincial cities at regular intervals, contain representatives of all three political Parties.

The Regional Officer from the Ministry often takes no part in the local discussion except as a listener, though he may, if no chief local authority is present, take the chair if required. He is there to answer questions, for the Ministry, and to explain any difficulties there may be in carrying out the local demands.

Everyone present has an equal voice; the chairman merely keeps order and prevents undue waste of time by calling upon speakers in their turn, or limiting the time of any points of discussion.

The members of the Committee are all familiar with the needs of their own towns or villages. They are busy people, with careers other than politics. What they are there for is to deal with facts—usually highly unpleasant facts—not contributed by each other, but by Hitler.

This common aim sweeps aside their minor differences.

I attended one such Conference in the West of England that took place after a severe bombing attack upon one of their principal cities.

The Mayor of the city in which the Conference was held took the chair; a fellow Mayor of a rival city sat opposite him. Several Conservatives with large local interests, a good sprinkling of Liberals including one famous Dame, and two or three strong Labour people were sitting round the Council table. There were an even number of men and women; and the sexes seemed equally divided as to their political views.

But they were all at one in attacking the Regional Officer from the Ministry of Information. The Regional Officer kept his temper under all their onslaughts, though at moments of extreme provocation his complexion varied.

Why had not more precautions been taken? Could not more and longer notice have been given? All were equally intent upon helping the victims, and on gaining further protection for their own localities. He was equally determined to help them, to the extreme limit of his power. As a matter of fact, the city raided was his own; and no one had done more to help his fellow sufferers in time of need than he had.

But he was in the position of also knowing that this was not the only region threatened; and his was the responsibility for distributing, fairly, the five loaves and the few small fishes at his disposal. Miracles were in the order of the day; one had already been worked, since the three conflicting Parties before him all wanted the same thing. It was the good of their community they had at heart, and all questions of personal prestige were sunk, to further this great aim.

Such Conferences are a training in co-operation. Each member had brought his own contribution to add to the general stock of information. Even the one cross-grained, born Objector, always to be found upon large Committees, had his special uses. No proposal, insufficiently weighed, got past him, through over-optimism!

The Liberal Dame, with an icy voice and a deadly lucidity of brain, checked all wandering sallies by a few well-chosen acidities. A Labourite

spoke of a human need, with a deep sincerity that gained him the instant support of the Conference table, except of course the Objector, who after a moment or two for caustic reflection, found quite a good objection which, while supporting the need, managed to differ, in form, from the suggestion accepted by all the others.

There were two or three points particularly noticeable about this Meeting.

1. The men and women who gave their opinions would also be responsible for carrying them out.

2. They had control, but not the power to use it for personal purposes, or indeed for any purposes that could be twisted into being personal; since not only had any plan to be agreed to by the others, but its carrying out would be liable to be checked, by their fellow members.

3. Their opinions were all based on valuable local knowledge; or else they would not have been elected by the local people, to represent them upon the Council.

4. Their method of approach to each question, as it came up, was individual, so that no one could hide behind Party support.

No onlooker could observe the faces round that table and fail to realize that they all wanted the same thing—to give what each man and woman possessed, to further their cause; and to obtain whatever help the Central Government of Great Britain was in a position to offer.

There were better suggestions made and less time wasted than the writer—in a long life—had ever known in a Public Meeting.

That some dynamic and permanent use might be made of such co-operative powers for the future could not but occur to a disinterested audience.

These people—when the war ends—will have learned, throughout every district and provincial city of Great Britain, how to work together for the common good. Their deeds and their names linked together are public property.

They could, through their official communications with the Central Government, make all their local needs felt at first hand; and could also offer, to the Central Government, their special form of support.

There is no cover for a lie in this representative self-government. There would be a check, from outside, on any attempt at domination. There would be a common aim—rather than an egocentric one—for the benefit of the community. Surely this would be a new kind of dog worth breeding!

CHAPTER XVI
THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

The Royal Air Force is a comparatively new Institution; and it is working—as its worst enemies have found—extraordinarily well.

It has marked characteristics of its own, which separate it in spirit and in practice from the other two fighting Forces. The R.A.F. has no traditions, but it is making history. It has no fixed ideas, but it is rooting itself—as an organic substance—into the heart of our Empire. The R.A.F. is a singularly unrigid and adjustable Institution, at all points open to possibility.

Three major principles seem to work through all its manifestations. First, it is a democratic Force in the truest sense of the word; any skilled and reliable work is taken into consideration for promotion. Even its control is democratic. Group Captains can rise from the ranks, or be picked out of Mayfair; but what decides their promotion is not Mayfair or the ranks, but their own skill and judgment for a given task. Universality is the R.A.F.'s second outstanding principle. British airmen may be black, yellow, or pale pink. They may be Christian, Jew, Mohammedan, Hindu or infidel. But they must be men—and good ones.

Their third principle is perhaps the most basically important of the three. The R.A.F. carry on their work—and *can* only carry it on—through intensive good-fellowship.

Bombers and airships depend upon teamwork plus initiative. Hurricanes, Spitfires, and the new Whirlwinds, depend almost wholly upon initiative; but upon co-operative, as well as individual, initiative. Because upon the faithful skill of the Ground Staff rests the integrity of the Pilot's machine. Nor are the active members of the R.A.F. in any way divorced from their more static brothers. The spirit is the same throughout. Intelligence Officers, who correlate and sort the records of each flight, feel and show a deep respect for Pilots and their crews, and treat them like Princes; and the Pilots and crews return both respect and courtesy.

When the flyer first lands from his flight, he reports direct to his Squadron Leader, whom he finds either awaiting him on the landing ground or in the crew room close by. The crew rooms I saw were bare, cold and rather comfortless, but I suppose they are just what is needed to come and

go from. They were decorated with the same kind of warning pictures of flying blunders that school children have pasted on the walls of schools as warnings against traffic dangers on the roads. However, the flyers had improved upon their pictured precepts by inserting likenesses of public characters, cut out from newspapers, in the most harrowing situations. The Prime Minister's was the face they seemed to think could most favourably master any predicament. Over each doorway was a series of family portraits, with the following captions under the proper pictures: *Don't tell Mother—Don't tell Father—Don't tell Uncle—Don't tell Auntie—Above all don't tell ——!* And here followed the portrait of a glamorous and writhing young woman in evening dress.

While reporting to his Squadron Leader, the returned flyer should have at least one cup of tea and a sandwich, which he munches on his way across the field to make his full report to the Intelligence Officer in the Operations Room. There are two or three Intelligence Officers moving about in this large warm Headquarters, who receive routine reports; while in a small inner room, the Chief Intelligence Officer takes on the fuller reports of entire bombing crews. He makes the tired men as comfortable as he can; and they sit round him smoking peacefully, till out comes the story.

These Intelligence Officers not only are carefully picked for their brains and their tact; they generally also have some special knowledge of the region over which the flyers have been operating. One of these officers was the son of a world-famous Arctic explorer, and had himself been on expeditions to the Arctic Ocean; another was Flemish; a third Belgian. Such picked men not only check and correlate the accounts of their flyers, but build up, for the boys' minds, the countries and weather conditions they are likely to find, before the flight takes place.

An Australian Squadron was in charge of the first flying field I was invited to visit. Their particular bird was a Sunderland Flying Boat. Each of these mammoth aircraft costs a large fortune. They are flown by two Pilots, and served by six to eight gunners and a wireless operator.

They can take off from the sea at twenty minutes' notice complete with crew, and in full fighting trim. Their job is to escort, defend and rescue convoys.

Their prey is the submarine; whenever one is sighted they give it their immediate attention.

They are not often attacked by enemy aircraft, as their gun power is highly formidable and only one has been brought down, from the air, since

the war began.

The R.A.F. functions under Group Captains, middle-aged men whose command corresponds to that of a Commander in the Navy, or a Colonel in the Army.

They are chosen solely by merit. One of those whom I met had the mind and training of a highly intelligent workingman. Another was a velvet-gloved, playing-field-of-Eton "Aubrey Smith." But whatever their social milieu, they were obviously men—and good ones. One of them said to me, with a groan, "My job is not to make these boys do what is wanted—but to try to prevent them doing far more than any sane person could possibly want them to do!"

The Australian Squadron had made itself at home on a particularly bare and gloomy spot; but it looked the type that could safely be left

> . . . alone
> On a bald man's head
> To paddle his own canoe.

Its Group Captain was a most kindly and conscientious-looking man, with bright blue eyes that might glint with sternness, but could also glint with humour. I think he was a little proud of the young Squadron Leader to whom he introduced us. This creature was a perfect vision. He must have been well over six feet, and was dazzlingly smart as well as extremely handsome. He was just off to the nearest large town in order to celebrate a well-earned and long delayed leave; and he simply sparkled with health, good temper and young beauty. I could not help comparing him—to his great advantage—with certain prize specimens of Nazis and Fascists we had been fated to run across two years earlier, in Venice. These Nazis and Fascists were on a fraternizing tour and had been ordered by Hitler and Mussolini to enjoy each other's company. The picked specimens of the Totalitarian States were physically the young Australian's equals; but their blank masklike faces, their atrocious manners to civilians, their unmirthful laughter and their brittle hardihood were a thousand years less civilized.

This Australian Squadron Leader obviously enjoyed not only his own well-being but the well-being of others. No one had ordered *him* to laugh and enjoy himself—and I doubt if he would have done it had he been so ordered. His manners came straight from his heart; they would have been the same to anyone.

We said good-bye to him reluctantly, and wished him the good time that we felt certain he would be sure to obtain.

We were then put into the hands of a young Australian Pilot, and a friendly and intelligent mechanic. Between them they managed to haul me successfully from a motor-boat into a Sunderland; and eventually up a steel ladder inside it, to the Pilot's seat. The plane was, as flying boats go, extremely spacious and complete—with two worlds at her disposal, and a solid way of setting about her activities in either. Besides her guns, her bombs and her engines, she possessed an oil-stove, a larder full of food, and two leather-covered couches. I was probably more interested in these, and I certainly gathered more about them than about the multiplicity of gadgets being the Pilot's wheel, which he explained to me with extreme care and skill—but which it seemed to me would have struck terror to the soul of the most hardened mechanic. He reassured me, when I asked him how he could possibly remember what each stood for in a moment of emergency, by saying, "Well, you don't have to, really. What you've really got to know *pronto* is only about four. The rest you can take your time over; or only need every now and then. It's all quite simple really."

After I had heard how he had been trained, or rather had trained himself, I began to understand just how simple it was. He had only been in England three months, and had never before left Australia, although he could not have been said never to have been outside it, since for the last two years he had been in the air, in every conceivable air machine threading its way round thousands of miles of coast.

"I really am used to the air," he explained with diffidence, rather as a Cordon Bleu—if equally modest—might have said, "I really am used to kitchens."

He had, as indeed all the flyers I talked to had, a deep inner joy that kept bubbling out of him. It was the joy of a trained artist, sure of his material and equally confident of his skill in using it. I can best explain the reason for such joy in mastery by the fact that these boys were single-minded. They had one aim; and they were fitted—and knew themselves to be fitted—to carry it out.

The conditions of their lives are extremely hard. They live in a raw, open-air simplicity few men over thirty could stand. Most of their time is spent in being cold, tired or hungry, with the possibility of a hideous death thrown in. But they have an inner security, inspiring and reassuring them, that is the fruit of their own skill and courage, plus the love of their fellows.

I do not think hate occurs to them except as a joke, unless perhaps they have been forced to witness the indiscriminate bombing of their fellow

citizens. I doubt if they themselves would make such bestial attacks if ordered unless the fate of our cause depended upon it, and I believe that our Government would not lightly give such an order.

The R.A.F. know that even in their own skilled bombing of communications and war materials, some civilians must often be killed; but where you are risking your own life for the sake of those you love, you can endure the loss even of those who die by your unintentional means; what it would be hard to endure would be the determined organized attempt to destroy imperishable art; or to terrorize and destroy civilian human beings. The Nazis' extraneous, wanton, and useless murders must sooner or later damage themselves, for it must take the heart out of their courage.

The Australian Pilot, a most simple and friendly boy, had the true rescuer's selfless desire to save, which ensures the highest form of courage. He told me, "A week ago we went out to look for a ship in distress. She was gone when we got there but we picked up six men floating about, got them in, and then turned for home. On our way back we sighted a raft and tucked away twenty more. We were thirty-five all told and pretty cosy, I can tell you. But," he said with a sudden flash of eagerness in his quiet eyes, "I wish there'd been twenty more! I'd gladly have piled them in on top of the others!"

I do not think *that* boy's courage will be likely to fail!

Next to the easy democracy of the R.A.F. is their universality. Nobody's complexion and nobody's creed, let alone anybody's racial origin, matters a twopenny damn to a flyer. Anyone who enters their Squadron—whether Czech, Pole, Hindu or a native from the island of Jamaica—black as the ace of spades—is made instantly welcome; and if he is a good fellow he soon becomes a brother.

Even age, if it has been properly concealed, is not wholly a barrier. A favourite story in the R.A.F. is that of a retired Rear-Admiral, who, having successfully hidden both his rank and the weight of his years, crept into an aerodrome in the far North.

He might have got away with both of his guilty secrets, had he not in the early days of the war commanded one of the lighthouses to break the blackout. He had this order repeated up and down the coast while he flew from end to end of the Channel in a blaze of light, happily searching for a submarine—regardless of the curses and wild surmises which strewed every inch of his illicit gamble.

The strength and weakness of a Sunderland Flying Boat is its size. It is also worth its weight in gold, which is an unfortunate thing to be in this war, in which swift destruction is the main factor.

It was a Sunderland that sighted the last lifeboat from the *Benares* (after six days' and nights' exposure) when one of the six children still alive—a Boy Scout—had drawn its attention, by the correct signal.

"I want to go to the U.S.A.," this Australian pilot told me before we parted, "when the war is over. What I feel is, you ought to have something to talk about before going home."

We were "transported," as the Forces call it, the next morning to a large station many miles—perhaps two counties—away.

Here we stayed the greater part of the day—and were entertained lavishly and with great kindness by a Group Captain to whose Bomber Squadron we had been specially commended.

It was a tragic day; one of his best Pilots had not returned at dawn and the Group Captain had just been breaking the news to the Pilot's wife. He was a benevolent and charming type of man, with authority only distantly lurking behind his gracious manners.

I am sure that he must have carried out his cruel task with special sympathy and understanding. He told us in an interesting way about the "dual control" which formed a part of his own job. He had to think, and feel, for all his young officers with the affection of a pal in the same mess—and yet to dispose of them as units in a machine. With his heart and his head often pulling different ways, he must keep both on the *qui vive* and choose men for dangerous tasks solely by their fitness for the opportunity.

"We must not fail to fight the enemy to the uttermost," he explained earnestly, "*because* we are thinking of our friends."

The officer, who was our guide, next took us to the big "Operations House." Here many different activities share a large, open, well-warmed room. A table stretches the whole way down it, and opposite the table is a map that covers an entire wall.

Soon after we entered, a Flying Officer who had been searching for the missing Pilot came in. He had covered three thousand, nine hundred square miles of empty sea.

"Did you pick anything up?" one of the men asked him casually, as he passed by them.

"No," he replied, as casually. "Nothing."

I shall not easily forget this man's cold exhaustion, his quiet, firm record, and his unspoken disappointment at not having found his friend.

He refused a seat and, standing close by my side, held the table with his stiffened hands. I had felt how ice-cold they were through his woollen glove when he had shaken hands with me. Through my mind there ran those lines of Swinburne's on a seamew—

Wide eyes that weary never,
And wings that search the sea.

The fortitude and care with which, all through that icy, pitiless gale, this man had been looking for his friend were still a part of him.

He had seen nothing at all, he told an Intelligence Officer, except two small British trawlers hugging the coast. The Intelligence Officer, who treated him with the humility of a pigeon asking for a crumb, murmured, "Are you sure the trawlers were ours?"

"Yes, I think I know one of our own trawlers when I see her," the Spitfire Pilot answered, with the ghost of a smile in his eyes. "They were as near in as they could get, to land—rather nearer!"

"Perhaps I ought to put down," the Intelligence Officer gently urged, "their markings. Where was the funnel?"

The flyer described every distinctive portion of the ships as if he had made them. Remembering the type of question and answer used by the Gestapo, I felt for the moment almost no temptation "to belong to other nations."

There was a very young and very grave boy who may barely have reached his nineteenth birthday—he looked only sixteen—who was sitting at the table a short distance away, poring over a sextant.

"What is he doing?" I asked our guide.

"They come in here," he explained, "very young ones like that—to try over their flights on paper. They get them well fixed into their minds that way, and it reassures them, you know, later on when they're alone in the air. When they've flown a lot they never bother to come in, but we let them do whatever they like about it."

An officer who had just received another report came forward and moved a tiny disc on the map.

"That's a boat," he explained. "We've just lost sight of her in the fog, the pilot tells me. It doesn't matter though, because what we can't see the Germans won't. I'm moving that disc to show where someone must fly later on to pick her up—when the fog lifts. We can time it pretty exactly."

We went out once more into the freezing gale. We were escorted to visit a bomber by a Canadian officer in his flying kit, just off for a long night trip. He had been three years in the R.A.F. and did not wish to be taken for anything so raw as a war recruit. He told me he was not even interested in the new Canadian Squadrons and had no friends in them.

"I'm only interested," he explained, "to know that they're here; and carrying on properly. I am what I've meant to be all my life—a regular Flying Officer in a British Squadron."

He was a big, sensible young man with a charming smile; and I hope that the rest of his life will be a great deal longer than the "all" he had completed.

After giving me one of the many hands I needed in order to get me inside a bomber, he vanished into the sky and I was left with the Navigator Pilot. I think he was a Scot; but I knew at once that he was a friend.

I was by now in the Pilot's seat; but I slipped down into one to the side of it, and just beneath it, so that I could see while he was explaining exactly the kind of world a Navigator Pilot has to live in.

Although they are quite close to each other, the Pilot and the Navigator (who is also a Pilot and can take over if his Pilot is wounded or needs a rest) have to speak to each other through a tube.

"You have to study your Pilot's face all the time and know exactly what each of his expressions means," he told me, "in fact, though it sounds funny, you have to care for him really more than you've ever done for anyone. Otherwise you wouldn't know when he's putting his last ounce into what he's doing, or could manage a bit more. And you see you've got to know it! You've got to be sure too if he's going to take a risk or not. It's up to you to keep giving him whatever he needs—second by second almost. You've got to get into his blood, if you know what I mean."

Listening to this man talk, and watching his face, I began to understand what members of a flying Squadron feel for each other; and why it doesn't matter what their colour or their creed is—only their reliability and their friendliness.

He showed me what his duties were, without I feel sure realizing, as I realized, of what terrific concentration his mind must have been capable. A Navigator Pilot has almost more complexity of detail and promptness of execution to master than has any other member of a bombing crew—and very little less responsibility than that of the Pilot himself.

In front of him is an exquisitely made and very easily moved machine. The slightest touch pushes it out of his way or straightens it in front of his eyes. There are three pointers in the machine that have to keep at a dead level. Each must move in front of the other, in order to fix his target. He looks straight into a large, dazzlingly bright, self-cleaning and non-freezing pane of glass. Through this he watches their flight, and frames the target. At the moment when the three pointers move into line, he must simultaneously guide the Pilot through the speaking tube and press a button to release the bombs. Just behind him he keeps his parachute harness, and, should the machine catch fire, he must slip it on, switch back his machine, pull a handle at his feet and drop through the bottom. The Pilot throws back two windows fronting him and gets out of the top of the machine.

We discussed the timing and sensation of the drop. The Navigator had a friend who was a champion parachutist. He had once fallen thirty thousand feet—and only opened his parachute at twenty thousand. He described the sensations of a long drop as being one of blissful mystery; great excitement possessed him without the faintest hint of personal responsibility. The act of falling seemed quite interminable, though he was enchanted to have it continue as long as possible. Like Saint Paul he could not be quite sure from one ecstatic moment to another whether he was "in the body or out of the body."

We then returned to the crew and their various duties; and we explored the rest of the bomber. The Tail Gunner, he explained to me, was the one who usually saw what had been done to the target. The Wireless Operator was essential for landing difficulties—in addition of course to his usual responsibilities of picking up or sending messages.

During a blackout all landings are difficult and rendered much more so by the lights of cars on the roads; or worse still, if they are massed together outside a cinema or theatre. Landing speed cannot be exactly regulated because of various interfering factors, wind, "ground pressure," and so on.

We discussed German bombing and the Navigator said he was convinced that the German bombers do not aim at hospitals or churches, although they so often hit them. Where they differ from the attacks of the

R.A.F. is that they are too anxious for their own safety and therefore do not descend far enough to "sight" their actual target. This makes them but partially responsible for their gratuitous murders.

"I think we really are a lot more accurate about what we hit," he told me, "partly because we do take more chances and dive lower; and partly because we never claim what we haven't got. For instance, the other day we put seven hundred shots into a German flying boat off Ireland. We counted them —and we knew they got her—but we didn't see her actually go down into the sea; and we weren't allowed to claim her until after the Germans admitted her loss in one of their communiqués."

Bombers, the Intelligence Officer told me, have a different mentality from that of lone fighters. They are more precise and a great deal more cautious. They give each point they have noticed with meticulous slowness, checking each other up; while Spitfires and Hurricanes are tougher, swifter and more irresponsible in their accounts. They plunge in and out of scraps at such a rate, and so often, that their adventures are difficult to check or follow; even for themselves.

A Chief Intelligence Officer has to use great skill in "milking" a crew. It is rather like an experienced Spiritualist putting together a message from the Spirit World, from a dozen automatic writers. Perhaps even more difficult, since automatic writers do not have to stick to facts, whereas crews of bombers have a preference for them; and facts are frequently stranger than fiction!

The Intelligence Officer starts asking questions on routine lines. "How many bombs were dropped? Where were they dropped? What results were observed? What were weather conditions? How was the enemy A.A. fire and so forth?" Then, the ice broken, stories and jokes begin.

During one interrogation a Pilot stated that he had dived from about ten thousand feet to three thousand feet through icing conditions; and noticing that his controls were growing sluggish, he had moved his stick gently backwards and forwards.

"Is that what you call gently?" demanded the Tail Gunner indignantly. "Every time you eased out of a dive my head cracked against the turret so hard I thought it was coming off!"

Another Pilot on the same night dived out of icing conditions and stated, "I dived out as smoothly as possible."

"Sir," said the Navigator, "I thought we'd fallen straight out of the sky!"

The Navigator, with his freezeless window, usually has the most information to impart, but when it comes to results of the bombing he often hands over his story to the Tail Gunner. The Tail Gunner, or the Pilot himself, is more likely to observe the flashes on docks near such-and-such an area; or to notice whether the flashes were green—indicating the blowing-up of an electric power station—or blue, suggesting a hit on chemical works. Each member of a bomber crew, however, *is* expected to add his mite; and it is out of the combination of their separate details that the Intelligence Officer gets the full picture of the flight. Perhaps the added items reveal what enemy forces were present; or the exact spot of gun emplacements; or the positions of searchlights; or—through a final bit fitted into the picture puzzle—the exact area where the bomb burst can be proved, and if necessary returned to. Often the information gleaned results in the authorities' sending out fresh waves of bombers, to turn a huge fire already started into the complete devastation of an important objective.

Weather conditions are noted by the crews of all planes, and handed over to the Meteorological Officer.

The adjustability and the co-operative union between the R.A.F. officers works incredible results. Discipline of the situation, rather than the rigid discipline of personal authority, helps to enlarge each man's creative powers.

It would be a certain loss to place this unique and modern Force under any older and less malleable Institution. The new wine might *not* be able to break the old bottles, but a far worse thing might befall, should the new wine —full of the spirit of to-morrow—be forced into another, stiffer mould, and so lose its creative power.

When the Sons of the Morning visited the daughters of the Earth they lost their Godhead. Nor did their mixed progeny ever regain the heights their fathers trod.

CHAPTER XVII
THE BRITISH ARMY

The British Army has always been the stepchild of the British people—and treated as such.

Formed out of press gangs and despair (to "take the King's Shilling" was the ne'er-do-well's last threat to his unhappy family) and commanded by the lowest-gage sporting brains of younger sons, the standard set by the British Army up to the Twentieth Century was pitifully low.

Nursemaids may have loved scarlet coats, but nobody else did.

In times of war, Tommy Atkins became spectacularly heroic, but in times of peace his name was dirt—and the way he was treated by the Public he had risked his life to save was also dirt.

The Senior Service was Britain's life-line; and any Politician who tried to starve it of its needs was meddling with dynamite. They did at times meddle with this dynamite throughout our early history, indeed up to the late nineteenth century. The Navy saved us again and again only to be starved and—when the next emergency attacked us—repaired and rebuilt at needless risk and expense. The people themselves, as they became better educated and had more freedom of thought and action, would no longer tolerate political jugglings with their life-line; but the Politician who cut the Army estimates automatically became a Patriot. Except for one determined and enlightened woman—Florence Nightingale—nobody bothered much about the Army's health, comfort or morals.

The War Office may have been partly responsible for this undue neglect, since for several centuries it had very wisely hidden all its deeds, and in conjunction with the Treasury kept down any brains that threatened its personal security. Officials in the War Office always loved darkness, not so much because their deeds were evil as because they hadn't any deeds to show that would bring them in the gratitude and applause of a well-served Public.

The South African War exposed some of the War Office's most settled decrepitude; and Lord Haldane, when he became its chief, brooded long over its chaos before producing a small picked Force—well equipped except

for suitable ammunition and the small scale of machine guns, only two per battalion. It was certainly and stubbornly useful during the war of 1914, at great personal expense, and in 1915 was grandly reinforced by Kitchener's Army. Still, the average life of a British Second Lieutenant in the trenches of France during 1915 and 1916 was about a fortnight.

France, however, never forgave us for not having had a conscript army the size of her own. Perhaps if the French had not had their back broken during 1914, the history of 1939 might never have been written.

The spirit of our country has always been against conscription; and no one has yet presented us with a good working alternative, such as the three-to-six-weeks yearly training of the Swiss.

Still, in 1914 we had a fine army, although too small a one to weigh-in against the German Army; and by the time we had collected and organized the five million men we ultimately produced to fight for us and for our Allies, France had already been bled white of only sons. With the help of the United States, we won the first round of the war between freedom and slavery—and thought that it was a final victory.

Perhaps the immediate fate of Europe depended, from 1925 on, upon that antiquated but favourite quadruped of the British ruling classes—the horse. The British aristocracy used horses to hunt with and horses to race with, and could not believe that horses should not also be used to fight upon. This equine obstacle hung round the neck of the British Army as the albatross hung round the neck of the Ancient Mariner. But not even the nuisance value of this bird—so ably pointed out for us by the poet, Coleridge—acted as a lesson upon the War Office. Think of the Duke of Wellington without a horse! Think of the charge of the Light Brigade—the only sentimentally successful blunder of the Crimean War! Think of the convulsion of worry caused by a modern artist's idea of a horse—sculpted for the late Lord Haig's statue—and what the British Public fondly thought of its truly represented favourite animal! The High Command of the British Army thrilled and shook with rage at the artist's daring conception of a horse as an intemperate lump.

In 1925, Lord Haig made this curious prophecy on the subject of his—and the War Office's—fantasy pet:—

> Some enthusiasts to-day talk about the probability of horses becoming extinct and prophesy that the aeroplane, the tank, and the motor-car will supersede the horse in future wars. . . . I believe that the value of the horse and the opportunity for the horse in the

> future are likely to be as ever. . . . I am all for using aeroplanes and tanks, but they are only accessories to the man and the horse, and I feel sure that as time goes on you will find just as much use for the horse—the well-bred horse—as you have ever done in the past.

At this date Captain Liddell Hart presented his vision of combined air and mechanized operations in his book *Paris, or the Future of War*, one of the "Today and Tomorrow" series.

The whole Army did not share in the Cavalry Myth. Four military geniuses were sprinkled over the British Isles during these fateful years; and by the mercy of Providence they got more or less together. Their names were T. E. Lawrence, Winston Churchill, Lord Trenchard and Liddell Hart. Colonel J. F. C. Fuller was the best acting representative of their creative thoughts.

The War Office leaned over backwards, as we say in the United States, in order to get rid of them. But geniuses have a way of sticking to their subjects like burrs; and these geniuses continued to stick to theirs, giving each other a leg up whenever possible. The War Office was at a gross disadvantage in its dealings with these irksome men, since at least two of them were highly popular with the British Public.

Whenever it had to, the War Office gave way. Liddell Hart and Colonel J. F. C. Fuller acted as persistent gadflies upon the heels of their reluctant intent. Finally Colonel Fuller—perhaps the best fitted soldier to conduct modern warfare in the British Army—was politely ushered out of it into a retirement honourable only to himself. No one will ever know what treasures of polite bunkum were offered to this valiant group, nor what flower-strewn garden paths, leading direct to precipices, these poor geniuses were invited up!

Fortunately they stuck to their fixed idea of mobile units, working together—so that Navy, Army and Air Force could, when the terrain permitted it, act as one. General Wavell has just given us an example of what the scheme can accomplish.

Hitler, too, promptly picked up the lesson—no doubt handed on to him by Ribbentrop—in time for Poland.

De Gaulle, less fortunate than the English, put the same idea before the reactionary rulers of France—we know with what result. In England the War Office accepted the idea in principle, and promoted one of its chief exponents to the command of a cavalry regiment in the Far East.

Hitler, actually being the simple realist Mr. Chamberlain claimed to be, based his entire *Blitzkrieg* upon the new plane-tank-gun combination and, with it, broke France. The sea saved England, but at what a cost! The B.E.F. (as some suppose, saddled with pre-war generalship) was flung into the most awkward corner of France along the Belgian border, where the extension of the Maginot Line had not been solidified. They were adequately equipped; their hearts were on fire with eagerness; they were ready to be used to the uttermost of human nerve and ingenuity; and they were so used—in retreat, and on the Dunkirk beaches.

We had kept all our promises to France; we could say so to ourselves and to each other; but there are times when promises, like patriotism, are not enough. We had promised too little, too late, without that alliance with the United States for the protection of France upon which Clemenceau and Foch had based all their hopes for a permanent peace.

As a great Frenchman said to me in 1938 when I pleaded, after the rape of Austria, that England was waking up, "Yes, Madame, and she has woken up as usual eight years too late!" But from that dread moment on, the slow smouldering fires of the British conscience began to break into flame.

Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of England. The B.E.F., being exactly the same material as the Royal Navy and R.A.F., got themselves out of France; the R.A.F. held back what it could of the German Air Force, by a series of miracles; and the Royal Navy, in co-operation with every floatable spar contributed by almost every boat-owner in the British Isles, recovered over three quarters of the British Army. The French troops, covering the retreat, must have died—nearly to a man—in order to save them.

The War Office suddenly discovered that British hearts can beat rather better, and certainly longer, in steel than in oak, during the twentieth century; and steel is now used for offensive and defensive purposes. Purges and reconstruction of all kinds are rapidly taking place; but it is difficult to get rid of all old-fashioned methods and their exponents in the middle of a war. Some of the Army chiefs have the minds of yesterday instead of the minds of to-morrow. This is not a question of age; it is a question of adaptability. Those who have been corrupted by power are already too old to understand the shift necessary, in this skilled mechanical age, from the authority of personal discipline, to the far more stringent discipline of mechanical laws. Yet a skilled mechanic is far more faithful to a law than an old-fashioned workman to any master; and he is worse penalized if he breaks it.

The British Army must suffer—as neither Navy nor Air Force suffer—from a divided aim. We have already seen the harm the mind of yesterday can work, in the military handling of the Refugee question. We sank our friends in the *Arandora Castle*; we drove Stekel to suicide, as well as many other lesser known friendly Refugees. We deliberately starved ourselves of assets and must have shocked all the anti-Nazi elements favourable to our cause all over the world.

Old-fashioned discipline, too, produces irresponsibility in the ranks. The Army is not generally popular to-day, because of this childish failure to develop its own sense of human reliability. Military lorry-drivers are wickedly selfish and inconsiderate in their driving; and the appalling toll of accidents on roads—almost empty except for military transport—does not make for popularity. Many units borrow buildings and leave them dirty. Their Commanding Officers are seldom remarkable for their good manners to civilians, unless the civilians belong to the "upper classes" and might be in a position to bring their ill manners home to them. They are impatient; and in order to use short cuts, they overlook the danger of causing local ill feeling. They have not learned either the good-tempered tact of the Navy, nor the brotherly adaptability of the Air Force. However, individual soldiers billeted with friendly people behave like good sons. I have one in my own house—a stranger when I took him in—who is now a favourite member of the household. Among all our acquaintance, I have never heard one case where soldiers were offered weekly baths in private houses and have not left the bathroom as clean or cleaner than they found it.

The irresponsibility begins where the responsibility of the individual ends.

I suppose the officers will improve rather later than the men because they have still been to some extent trained to the old pattern, and have not quite got over the feeling that, since they are trained fighters and badly needed by their country, they should be allowed to trample on the rights of less useful citizens than themselves. Nor have they yet learned that modern soldiers should be citizens first and soldiers afterwards; and that modern citizens, in time of war, should be soldiers first and citizens afterwards. The bombed and burning cities may still teach them.

Nor must we forget that the Army had to face the first and hardest hour of the war; and by bearing the brunt of it saved us from Invasion, when we were totally—except for naval protection—unprepared for it.

It is easier for the Navy and the Air Force to bear the constant danger to their homes and families, since they are never out of danger themselves, and are being used the whole time in actively preventing attacks upon their homes; although to all the fighting Forces alike, this cruel danger to their unprotected homes is a bitterly accepted necessity. But the poor Army has to live more or less in security, out of reach of bombed areas, thoroughly well fed and unrobbed of sleep. The rôle of standing idle all the day long—when it's not your fault that you are idle—is sometimes well forth the labourer's full wage. Not that the British Army is idle in England—on the contrary, it is being taught intensively in a few months what it was prevented from learning over a course of years; but while it is learning these postponed lessons, it is being well looked after—and this is for the soldiers themselves a hard and cruel trial. A concert singer on Government Service arrived at Coventry without knowing that it had been sore stricken overnight. A soldier genially conducted her to the nearest Police Station, explaining to her quite cheerfully the unlikelihood of there being any concert for at least a day or two. Suddenly they reached a street that had been reduced to heaps of rubble. He flung his arms over his head shrieking, "That's my street—my home—my family." And his agony was justified; for his wife and children had all been killed.

The new methods of warfare require such intensive training, and such constant practice, that it has been a godsend for those in command to have these comparatively quiet months of inactivity. The health, the hygiene and the food of the British Army are all being better looked after than ever before.

The proud Sisters of the Professional Forces have now a Cinderella to assist them.

The Home Guard has passed, and is still passing, through many vicissitudes.

It was at first treated half as a joke, and half as—what it actually was—a grim last-ditch adventure.

There were hours in the early summer of 1940 when, had the Germans attempted invasion, only the Home Guard would have met them; and only ten per cent of the Home Guard, in some of the danger areas, were armed. A few months has changed them, from raw men with "sticks and staves" for weapons, into efficient soldiers well clothed, and in control of modern armaments.

It cannot be disputed that in many districts they are by now a good auxiliary Force though too much of their time—many experts claim—is wasted on "old parade-ground stuff," and not nearly enough is spent on expert mechanical training. They are of all ages from seventeen to seventy. Some do hard manual work by day; some are sedentary workers or tradesmen; others are retired men with comfortable incomes, and physically past their prime—but spirit is the actual prime of man, young or old, and any man whose spirit is roused can be trusted to accept hardship. Many of them sleep—in unaired and sometimes very unhygienic and totally unheated guardrooms—between patrolling for two or three hours at a time in the dark, on icy winter nights.

The best of them tackle anything they have to tackle; they take their drill, forced marches, gun-manning or bomb-throwing tactics after work hours, with the keenness of boys playing at pirates or wild Indians. This wholly voluntary Force is now universally accepted with gratitude—even by military authorities—and certainly by all other authorities; and it has the warm support of the Prime Minister.

Britain's Home Guard is a wonderfully bitter pill for Hitler to swallow. A country reluctantly accepting a conscript army and able to produce a volunteer Force, of a million strong, cannot be construed into a country cowed and crawling for peace, even by the most optimistic of Dictators. Old soldiers form the core of the Home Guard—and train them. It is an elastic body; and it can melt away at will so that it has to be treated with a wholesome amount of respect. It may well prove, in the future, a model for the handling of a professional army. A great deal of red tape—always insisted upon by military authorities as essential—could still be cut with advantage, in order to get these men even more usefully trained.

In rural districts, if co-operation were maintained between it and the regular Army, the Home Guard would be worth its weight in gold to its proud Sisters. Unfortunately this co-operation is very seldom allowed to take place. Army officers turn up their noses at it, or else want to discipline it with a severity that would result in instant disintegration. A farmer may know far less of defensive tactics than any Army officer, but he does know more about his own land and could probably point out the best place for a machine-gun nest, far better than the officer.

Local Coast Guards know more about their own cliffs, shores and currents than any soldiers; and they could save the military some very nasty surprises from tides and currents, if their advice were asked, or when offered —taken.

When once the prestige question is merged in a common aim of dealing objectively with a fact, co-operation of this kind can be counted upon to produce brilliant results.

We have come to a curious point in this world's history, which perhaps the United States, as well as England, would do well to ponder, before the whirlwind strikes it. We have got to learn how to practise a fifty-fifty policy towards our neighbour—army or civilian—employer or employed—man or woman—or we shall find ourselves straight off the path of Democracy and into Fascist or Communist camps. For two thousand years we have paid lip-service to Christianity—for two centuries or more we have attempted to digest a half-baked democracy.

Now Time and Space have decided to teach us the lesson we could not learn for ourselves—either we must practise the equal rights of man, or we must give up the whole idea, and get ourselves permanently trained as murderers—on the lines that Hitler and Mussolini have so ably built up for us.

It will be interesting, if the spirit of our fighting Forces—Navy, Air Force and Army—should be the first to lead the way, into a truer understanding and co-operation with our brother man.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE SENIOR SERVICE

All over the British Empire, the Royal Navy goes by the name of "the Silent Service."

Perhaps what Madariaga says of the Englishman is specially true of this section of our Forces. "The mind of an Englishman functions best in action; he has little or no abstract intelligence."

The Navy certainly speaks, with no uncertain tongue, by its acts.

But among its members, or with those they call their friends, this loyal, specialized and isolated Service lets itself speak in words. No one who has been entertained by naval officers can have failed to be struck by the open and cordial spirit of his hosts. I was perhaps specially fortunate in my introduction, since, quite by chance, I had asked to visit a section of the Navy lately commanded by an Admiral I had had the good fortune to meet long ago in California.

Whatever may have been the cause, the result was that I was allowed a freedom of opportunity to observe the Navy at work which I prized more highly than any other opportunity that has yet been given me.

On our first day's visit, "What is it that you specially want to see?" the famous young Commander of a flotilla of Destroyers asked us, with apologies, which were wholly unnecessary, for having to receive us in an office.

"The truth is," he explained, "my ship is being repaired, and I'm just hopping about with a suitcase from ship to ship."

He did not tell us the whole truth, for we learned subsequently, from his coxswain-chauffeur, that the leader ship of the Destroyer Fleet had come limping home "having that within her womb that had left her ill content." This time she had met a torpedo; but before that she had had an argument with a mine. "But there," the coxswain said with passionate pride, "'e (referring to his Commander) could take you across the Atlantic in an egg-shell with a 'ole in 'er, if 'e 'ad a mind to!"

Only a few weeks later while leading his flotilla into action against German Destroyers, the same young Commander was torpedoed again in another of his Destroyers; and for four days and nights, on her broken-winged flight home—while she was bombed unavailingly from the air and her engines were out of action—he ordered a sister Destroyer to take her in tow; and home she came, to live and "fight another day."

This is a small-ship war, and one that has been full of long suspense and preliminary disappointment for the Senior Service.

Before the war, our great battleships were kept impotent, while their charges—the Mercantile Marine—were sunk before their eyes, off the coast of Spain. Ask a sheepdog what it feels like when it is ordered by its master to let the wolves raven its flock without protest, and you will get an idea of what the Navy felt like in the Mediterranean.

Even after the war began, the Navy was asked to change the aim of its whole being—"to attack the enemy"—into the defence of our Island.

When France fell, our whole naval strategy had to be changed, at a moment's notice.

The submarine menace, with its new danger from the magnetic mine, had been already countered; but now from Northern Norway to the Pyrenees, our enemy had control of an unbroken line of submarine bases; and chasing had to give place to ceaseless watching.

There was a period of the war when our Destroyers were at sea twenty-seven days out of the month; and sailors will know what that means to a ship and her Commander.

No fighting Service has ever been so used—to the last sleepless ounce of every man's nerve and training—as the small ships of Britain have been used for long months at a time, during this war. The fifty Destroyers of the United States did not come only as the first great symbol of support from our fellow Democracy; they came like blood transfused from the veins of one in health, to one sore smitten. And blood is life. When I asked if I might see one, the Commander of the flotilla replied, "See one? *Of course* you can see one—they're the joy of our lives! And one of ours too if you like!"

I listened to the Commander give his order for our visits, with the interest of a psychologist.

His commands were as bare of cover as an unsheathed sword, and therefore simple to understand; there was no arrogance in them—no pretentious heartiness—no gloved iron; they held, instead, that priceless

element of human respect for the man to whom he gave them. I have never heard better orders, or ones which were so unmistakably based on mutual obligation.

On our way to the British Destroyer which had just put in, and was to go out again that very evening, I was given the coxswain's saga.

It was a taut, breathless, and, I must confess, a partially unintelligible saga, full of technical expressions—knots; bells; ack-Emmas, and kindred riddles of the sea; but his heart was easy to follow, and the few wrung phrases that expressed it I could not forget or fail to understand.

"When the war began," he started, "no one could find the Commander. Where was 'e? they was asking all over the place. I could have told 'em where 'e would be—over the side of our ship, putting on 'er war paint with the ship's company. That's the *kind* of Commander 'e is—as you was asking! Nor there isn't a thing in the ship wot we does, that 'e can't do better—and what's more as often as not 'e does it! You don't find many like 'im, because there isn't any! We all feel the same about 'im—'cos we know that whatever 'e takes us into, 'e gets us out of! And we ain't never particular what we comes up against, neither! And we *'ave 'ad* some fair do's, one with another!"

The log began; priceless stories of priceless events flickered past me but I could not catch them. There were only three objects in his clear and swift mind—his God (the Commander), his ship, and the service he was allowed to pay to one or the other of these objects of his adoration.

I was sorry when we reached the docks and had to part, and I cursed my fate that I was not a Kipling and could make such poor use of my material; but one thing I did not lose, for I was to find, in the next three days, wherever I was taken to visit the various activities of the Royal Navy, always that same deep glow of men in love with what they served.

The Commander of the British Destroyer was a grave, quiet young man; and it would have seemed impossible to believe that a ship only a few hours "in" could look so spotless and so clean, if it had not been for his unmistakable personality.

There is about all Destroyers a nattiness of strength combined with order. Wind and waves rust her from without but she makes up for it by sparkling within. Everything she uses has been thought out and tested, like the gold in a refiner's furnace seven times heated. Centuries of sea-craft have heated it.

A Destroyer's food is good; and her cooking good; and her men superlative.

We talked of the psychology of war and the Commander told us that men shell-shocked twenty years ago—completely cured though they seem to be, and good at their work—may at times be likely to break under fire, especially when they do not see what is happening to them; but that the men of the younger generation can be torpedoed, bombed, or "pitched about generally," and it seems only to make them tougher. He gave us the letters of a French officer to read, the Commander of a twin Destroyer with the same name.

It was infinitely touching to read of their comradeship, their simple pride and joy in their own ships, and in each other's ships, their constant effort and determination to meet. These curt, undemonstrative but deeply affectionate letters had been exchanged throughout the first year of the war.

"You see, I can't change in my feelings about him and his ship, can I?" the Commander asked me with a pained frown, "And I can't help feeling that he isn't a bit changed either! I just go on hoping he'll get a chance to come in with us again later on!"

He told us a little about his work, and introduced us to his fellow officers. There was a wild gale blowing. The sound of water pounding against the ship's side, the snug and peaceful cabin, the thought of our Cause, as we drank to it, in the King's sherry, remains in my mind as a great security.

The ship's name and its story, the faces of those friendly careworn men, will never leave me. I never hear the words "The Admiralty regrets to announce . . ." over the B.B.C. without my heart listening for that ship's name; and I never look at an Honours List without hoping to see that deserved name in it.

The ship's officers wore immaculate uniforms and looked as if they had sprung from bandboxes; but they could not hide—especially their Commander—their sleepless sunken eyes.

We were escorted, next, to the nearest American Destroyer "ready for the sea." On board her was her young English Commander bubbling over with his joy in her. No young wife about to housekeep among her brand-new wedding presents—every pan shining like a new pin—could have looked more sedately proud of her possessions.

He was full to the lips with praise. "Look at this Frigidaire—would you believe it, they had it stocked full of food for us—and such food!" "Look at my stateroom!" He had as a matter of fact taken over one of his officers' so as to be nearer to his Bridge; but all the officers' cabins were a dream of delight to him; fresh curtains and actually bookshelves close to his bunk full of the newest books. Better even than these luxuries, he liked the positions of the engines. The depth charges, too, he considered better placed than ours —"handier," as he expressed it. The American Destroyers, he told us, had good speed and good guns.

"Think what this means—when you remember how the sea rusts us! She was polished like a jewel when she came in, and in order to be in that condition, her men must have worked upon her day and night throughout the crossing!"

It was true he had retained a preference for some of the British Destroyer gadgets. He preferred the English crew quarters, and he had yet to accustom himself to a shower rather than a bath.

"But these ships are simply grand—and God, how we needed them!"

The Commander was a fine young fellow, gay and modern-minded, with fair hair and blue eyes, and on the top of the wave of life. I met his young and pretty wife that evening in our hotel. She had brave eyes and was wrapped up in him. They had set fair towards life, and I hope it will stay long with them, and that this Destroyer Commander will keep his skilled mind at the same keen edge of love and duty.

If any American doubts the gratitude and love of England towards her American friends, I hope he will some day meet one of the Commanders of these Destroyers. He will not be left long in doubt of what England feels for America! I had myself a taste of it that afternoon. I had been invited to meet one of the great figures in the Royal Navy, a terrifically tall, handsome fellow with a sort of extra-territorial strength about him, as if the sea flowed through him. All the men and women in that room were courageous and first-rate people; but about this man there was something a little different—as if he had an iron ration of the spirit tucked away behind his sea-blue eyes and quiet manners. We spoke at once of the American Destroyers. I told him with a laugh of the single criticism the Commander had allowed himself—in his preference for baths to showers. He did not return my smile; instead, with a ferocity of earnestness, he gave me argument after argument showing why showers should be used rather than baths, ending up with, "And I hope to live to see the day when every bathroom in His Majesty's ships has

showers only!" Behind this passionate flood of argument I suddenly sensed what had so moved him. It was not that he cared in any such grave and fierce way for showers instead of baths—it was that these American Destroyers had struck down into the core of his loyalty, that stern indomitable loyalty that had won him the highest honours his profession could give him, or that were in the gift of his King. For the sake of these Destroyers he was from henceforward the Friend of America, and let him who dare prefer baths to showers! I did not dare, but loving America as my own country I turned away my eyes, to hide the tears of pride and joy his words had brought to them.

The next day I asked to see a Mine-sweeping Trawler; and a Drifter; and we went down to the docks to visit two ships that had only a few minutes earlier crept in out of a freezing gale.

We visited the Drifter first.

It was not very easy to get on or off this little, wriggling ship, or when once on board, to keep one's feet among the fearsome piles of coiled steel rope lying about on deck.

There were no rails. Her little guns stuck up their impudent small noses like inquisitive fox-terriers.

She had brought back the B.E.F., plying to and fro across those fiery waters day and night, between Dunkirk and her English harbour. Her complement of crew is Skipper and seventeen men.

"One of our Drifters, a bit bigger than this one—but not much—" our Skipper told us, "she brought over seven hundred and fifty on one voyage—though she was so low-down a ripple could have sunk her. I can't say I ever piled up over the three hundred myself, and then you couldn't 'ardly breathe between 'em! Packed 'em in like sardines we did—back to back on deck, and wherever we could stow 'em; and then walked over 'em or on 'em, when we 'ad to! It *was* a fair do, and no mistake. But we weren't going to leave none of 'em behind—on the sea, or in it, was better than them beaches!"

We went down a ladder into the Skipper's cabin, where he had everything he needed, including a red-hot coal fire. They had just been "touching up" magnetic mines, in the worst gale of the year, yet I don't think I ever met a calmer human being. He came from Lowestoft he told us; but most of his crew were West Country.

"They don't mind bombs nor mines and such," the Skipper told us. "Bless you, not my boys; what they mind is weather! They come from all over the country—nor they aren't as used to weather as Lowestoft men are!"

When one little Cockney saw fifteen hundred pounds of explosive going up with a heart-shaking roar—carrying whatever it could grab of the sea with it—he said in the ensuing awful pause that followed: "Gor blimey, I wish I could have a cracker like that to give to the kid at Christmas!"

Of all the jobs upon the sea, minesweeping is perhaps physically the toughest, and yet day by day men volunteer—sometimes, the Skipper told us, fifteen a day at this one dock—and plead to be taken on.

An extra member of this ship's crew was a dog from Dunkirk. He had been torpedoed once on his way over from the beaches; and once again a fortnight before when a sister Drifter went down; but he was saved again by the nearest sailor, and handed over to our Drifter for a "keepsake."

This dog, unlike Thomas Carlyle's friend, Margaret Fuller, did not "accept the universe." On the contrary he resented everything about it, except sailors. They had three times saved his life; all sailors therefore he wagged at; and anyone else he bit as soon as possible, so as to prevent their blowing him up. He considered us in the light of bombs, and that he did not bite me (having been put into my arms as a token of friendship) I attribute solely to shock on his part. The moment I put him down, he flew at our legs. I have never seen a better example of "*l'esprit d'escaliers*." I have heard of other evacuees behaving in the same manner, but I do not find it at all surprising that they should!

A Mine-sweeping Trawler is a much bigger and more imposing boat than a Drifter. She has rails, more and bigger guns, stays longer at sea; and she is often commanded by a naval officer.

Our visit to the Trawler was neither so long nor so intimate as our visit to the Drifter. Time was short; it was growing dusk; and the weather was wilder than ever.

Her Skipper was a Devon man, a fair, weather-beaten Viking with a soft deep voice. He was an easy, true talker, full of meat, and it was plain to see that his men loved him, for they were popping up behind funnels, or taking any other suitable cover in reach of his voice, just to enjoy his conversation.

He was a married man with his home close by, so that he did not give me the same feeling that I had had with the Drifter Skipper, of a man whose roots were solely in his small battered ship.

The sea had nursed them both; she had rolled them and lifted them, and dashed them about, till she had put on each wise, salted tar the polish she gives to the pebbles she plays with on the shore. The Devon Skipper had been the last to see the Dudgeon Lightship men alive.

"Ay," he said, "we waved to 'em and they waved back, hearty like, for that's a lone hard job—light-shipping; and a passer-by—'e's more than a passer-by to them, seemingly."

That very night, the Germans to their eternal shame bombed the Dudgeon Lightship, set to warn all sailors off the Goodwin Sands; sank her, and left her men to die of exhaustion in a rowboat in the hard seas. Four centuries ago, Louis the Fourteenth of France was asked by one of his courtiers, "Sir, why do you not destroy the lightship that keeps ships off the Goodwin Sands?" The King answered, "Because I am at war only with England—not with humanity!"

The Germans have a bigger quarry—it is human beings that they wish to destroy.

"It was ill done," the Devon Skipper said, "and it will come upon them in the end, for only those natural to the Goodwins, knows 'em; we've been in near, and off again with God's good luck; but the Germans will find them poor company without the light I'm thinking, if they ever hanker to use our seas."

We spoke together of the Nazi breakdown of all tradition, and of that plain mercy common to those who respect all men as brothers. Although he was a gay, deep-laughing fellow, his eyes grew grave as we talked of it.

"If the Germans don't let us try to save their men," he said, "and they've fired on us time and again while we were trying to—well, then we can't save 'em! But we don't like it, for that's no way of doing things on the sea."

When Pacifists tell me that Hitler and his methods are akin to ours, and peace possible between us in a divided world, I wish they could ponder well the spirit that would hold the world in thrall and what it stands for, and then remember this clear and simple man, with all his thousands of fellows. Nothing in his perils had daunted him, or could chase that merry gleam from his eyes; but the thought that his enemies would not let him save their own men from drowning in the sea—that really turned him grave.

When we said farewell to him, we spoke earnestly of his work, of his crew and the risks and dangers we knew lay before them, which must be faced in the coming year. He had begun to smile again, now that we were

talking of things natural to him. "My old grandmother," he told us, "had a saying I oftwhiles remember, though I'm not a religious man—what with one thing or another, I've never rightly put my mind to it; but when things go wrong—what we can't see how to set right ourselves—I take comfort out of 'er old saying, 'There's one above—looks on.'"

We wound up our war visit to the British Navy by trying to trace its spirit to the source. We were invited to spend a day in a training ship. On our way to it, we first visited a certain famous building well known to all the Navy, where a replica of Nelson's sword hangs over the mantelpiece, and Drake's own cup stands under his portrait. Upon the walls of this room are hung portraits of old triumphant ships; and perhaps one is not yet there that may well hang with them. Men forget sometimes—even Englishmen forget—the names of their great ships; but the Navy never forgets. For with them, ships stand for men, and men for deeds; and in a hundred years from now the Navy will remember the deed of the *Jervis Bay* as if Nelson had commanded her in the Battle of Trafalgar, for the *Jervis Bay* saved thirty-two ships of her convoy, and fought gloriously—running into the enemy's fire towards certain death—so that she might save them.

We visited the W.R.N.S. at their Headquarters and congratulated them upon their Navy, and the Navy upon its W.R.N.S. Women are now an integral part of the Royal Navy. Nor do they only sew on its buttons, look after its linen and cook; they also drive the Navy on shore; assist with its accountancy; and are even allowed in the sacred precincts of the Cypher Room, to share in the decoding.

The training ship has to be—for its immediate purposes—on shore; but it has not failed to retain its nature as a ship. "She" is divided as all ships are divided, into Forecastle, Foretop, Main-top and Quarter-deck. The men's quarters take the names of the Seven Seas. Thousands of men pass through this training ship in a year from all parts of our Empire; and are trained upon a bleak hillside miles away from the haunted sea.

Many of them volunteer weedy and lank physically—without self-respect—bent on petty aims, and filled with egocentric emotions. They leave ten weeks later, having put on over a stone in weight, and having gained at least two-and-a-half inches of chest expansion. But the whole human being has been changed, as well as the mere physical fulfilment. Men's expressions become—during this training—curiously alert and vital, their aim is objective now rather than egocentric. They are intelligent where they

were dull, responsible where they were hostile or passive, alive where they were dead. They have become supple and tough, and worthy to be called a part of that amphibious good-natured monster, the British Navy. These men have not lost their individualities through this new discipline—they have found them; but both for the men themselves, and for those handling them, it has been a pretty hard tussle.

The Commander (who was our patient and friendly escort for more than half a day) asked, "What do you want to do after I've shown you over the ship—talk to the men—or what?"

"No," I said, "not talk to them, but I should like to watch them while they are doing something." For I thought that for men to talk to a strange woman while their Commanding Officers were standing by would be a mere waste of breath; but if I saw them in action, they would be sure to reveal a part of the business of their lives.

The Commander took me all over the ship, explaining simply and plainly everything we saw. Canteens, drill halls, cinemas, men's quarters, officers' quarters; and finally to a great open shed where I saw crowds of men eagerly pressing round a distant object, with the keenness of a football crowd.

"That's our model battleship," the Commander explained. "She cost five thousand pounds, and they always take a good deal of interest in her!"

Upon this immense model of the newest battleship, every minute fragment of her life was visible, precise and up-to-date. The ship seemed to move against a background that was always changing from dawn to dusk, from light to shadow. While the men gazed and crowded close about her, an Instructor with a pointer touched each separate object on her, explaining its use, and how it worked. I never saw a better audience. They gazed and listened enthralled.

The men's canteens were a pleasure to look at. Their midday meal was in preparation and smelled as appetizing as any in England. The men had a large mess canteen and a much smaller "snack" bar where at stated intervals they could come and devour light refreshments, in the short time allowed them. One boy had been seen the day before consuming six doughnuts and several cups of boiling hot tea in eight minutes, with no apparent ill-effects.

We talked for a long time about how best to produce the kind of material they wanted in their short ten weeks. No difference is made between volunteers and conscripts; and no one but the officer who has to deal with admission knows which is which. Their ages range from eighteen to forty-

five—with one notable exception nearer eighty. This old Able Seaman had served the Navy with a passion of faithfulness and zeal, and his pleadings to be allowed to continue his service in her hour of need could not be disallowed. He was promoted to official rank, and it was decided to let him teach knot-making and other useful pieces of permanent sea-lore, which it was known he had mastered more completely perhaps than any man living. He lunched with us, glowing with pride in still being able to serve his country.

Men from any corner of the globe, in any class, out of any career, upon this ship work together in harmony.

"I found two rich men's sons on their knees scrubbing a floor," the Commander told us. "I knew this was not part of their usual duties, so I told them they might find something better to do if they liked.

"'Please let us stay and scrub, sir,' they replied. 'We have never scrubbed a floor before and we want to see what kind of job we can make of it!'"

Some of the finest specimens—both of physical and mental stamina—were, our guide told us, the Canadians. "Such good fellows! So grand physically and so full of vitality!" he said. "I've never seen men before so quick in the uptake; the Instructor tells me he never has to explain a thing twice to them."

The Commander had his problems. One promising young recruit signed on with enthusiasm one day, and the following asked to be excused as he had become a Pacifist.

"You can't do that now," he was told; "why didn't you think of being a Pacifist before?"

Further talk brought out the real reason. A spoiling mother in the background had determined to keep him at home.

"I faced up to the mother," the Commander admitted, "although I had a frightful letter from her. But I had another talk with the young fellow, and made him the head of a group. I do that with the new recruits; I form them into small groups of eight to ten, and choose a Leader. I always pick a fellow that I think looks reliable and that the other fellows seem to like—never a driver or a man that fancies himself; and I somehow thought there was stuff in this boy. He was pretty sulky for a few days, but now he's the best Leader we've got; there isn't a smarter group than his in the ship—and you couldn't get him out of the Navy now even with a fine-tooth comb!"

We met all the officers at mess, including a visiting Bishop who had once been a fighter himself, and—from the look of him—still was. We talked all the time of the men and their handling.

"How do you get this new spirit into them?" I asked the Commander. "I am certain that it is unique, because it cannot be for nothing that 'all the world loves a sailor.' Even having a wife in every port, though it may not imply a high moral standard, shows that a sailor must be a peculiarly attractive type of man!"

"Discipline," he replied automatically, as I knew he would.

"Surely it is something *more*," I urged. "The Nazis use discipline, the German Army has always built itself up on it—and look what such discipline produces—clockwork wolves!"

The Commander thought for a moment, and then at last spoke from his own mind. "Perhaps there is something more, some idea at least behind it! You see the Navy has always realized that England is in our care. It's a small rich island off the coast of a continent—the very life of Britain depends on us. She has to have the freedom of the seas, or starve. And we're the sheepdogs that must see she keep it! Yes, I suppose we try to turn our men out thinking what depends on them! They have to feel individually responsible. You remember that in the last war the German Navy was the first to mutiny. Well, I have a feeling that if anything went wrong over here, we'd be the last."

I knew then that I had heard his real answer.

After lunch the Physical Training Officer, a highly intelligent, humane and pleasant person, took us to the gymnasium to watch the games. It is largely through these games, and by their mastery, that the tough, absorbing, incredible training of the men takes place.

Roughly the great shed is divided into four forces, two opposing each other on opposite sides. The games change every few minutes: obstacle races, intricate ball-throwing, leap-frogging, tugs of war, and so on. In each game, speed and the sudden change of movement to accomplish some object—perhaps a swift correlation of movements—brings out presence of mind, instant decision, exact timing, or rhythmic teamwork. The games could well be dangerous if each quota of men were not in charge of a highly skilled Trainer. The final vault over a high parallel bar finishes each of the obstacle races. At each of these bars stands a Trainer, ready to give each man—with unerring skill and readiness—the exact help he needs.

The look on the men's faces as they played, listening for each new shouted direction, without let-up or intermission, was completely resolute and mustard-keen.

The men liked to feel this new command of unused powers; they liked to equal or excel each other; they liked to find each new day a fresh chance for skill and an enlargement of opportunity! One over-eager fellow paid for a moment of indecision with a bad toss on to the hard floor. He was stunned outright, and lay motionless. In an instant, two Trainers had reached him; they brought him round and, as soon as he could move, they helped him out into the air. I watched with interest the mixture of extreme carefulness without undue concern that they showed him. He had—without asking for it—all the help he needed, given with skill and friendliness, but no more than he needed.

"He's physically rather a poor specimen," the Physical Training Instructor told me. "It's always the weak ones that push too hard, and get a fall. I'll explain it to him later on. He's only just joined up too, and needs more food and air. You'd be surprised what he'll look like in a fortnight."

The Officers in this ship worked with the same unresting keenness as the men; but upon their shoulders night and day rested the bitter responsibility of air raids. They must prepare against every conceivable danger from without as well as from within. If they had not learnt precisely the same alertness, decision and promptitude that they were training their men to achieve, they would not have been chosen to make men for the Royal Navy.

My last lesson in the naval spirit came to me from a late Submarine Commander, who had been our one day's guide.

"It seems terrible," I said to him, "to have to think of the men, down below all that weight of water, bottled up with Death!"

"No, no!" he exclaimed, with an unforgettable flash of friendly reproof. "We aren't bottled up with Death—we're bottled up with Life!"

CHAPTER XIX
RELIGION AGAINST HITLER

Another deep-seated trait in English people overlooked by Hitler, and perhaps not surprisingly overlooked by Hitler, is that they are a religious people.

This unconscious, unexpressed, oftener still unpractised religion of Christianity has been at work upon the British Isles for nearly two thousand years; and for the last four centuries it has been partly supported, and partly shackled, by the State.

The first Head of the Church of England was Henry the Eighth; hardly perhaps a happy portent!

England's religion can be roughly divided into three strata. The first is a conscious type of Christianity, upheld in Church and Chapel, and sometimes practised by a few exceptionally honest people who worship God equally in either. The second stratum of religion is an intellectual smear without any marked fruits of the spirit, but making difficult any open repudiation of Christian principles. The third stratum is that of unprofessing Christians who practise the fundamental precepts of Christianity without accepting its religious or dogmatic tenets.

To this stratum belong most of the best citizens of Great Britain; they are to be found in every class, although as "goodness" implies realism, they are to be found most often where life is hardest and where loving one's neighbour as oneself—the root of all practising religions—is as much a protection as a duty.

There is a great deal to be said both for the Churches and the Chapels of England; so that what is to be said against them can be disposed of briefly. They do not attract more than a pitifully small percentage of people under thirty.

These young people simply do not believe—nor do some of the more intelligent among their elders believe—that it matters about an unseen and unknowable God; nor do they believe that if it does matter, Church and Chapel services represent Him. Probably they are not always right, and those who even inefficiently support and teach the Gospel, may be better

equipped to practise it. Still, even the most ardent Church or Chapel people among us must admit that it is only rarely that the overwhelming tenet of Christianity—that unless we learn to love our brothers as ourselves (and that all men *are* our brothers) we shall become Murderers—breaks through into our lives. But it does sometimes break through. "The Faith" once delivered to the Saints still finds Saints to be delivered to. Hitler has come across them himself in his own country, and not been altogether able to silence them even there. He can lock Niemöller up, in solitary confinement without a Bible; but he has not yet broken him. He has tried to silence Faulhaber, Preysing and Initzer—the last of these with stones—but they are not silenced. The Faith is being delivered to them—and by them to the German people, indeed to all the world—in spite of Hitler. Nor is Hitler more likely to silence the Saints within the British Isles.

Perhaps Saints are oftenest to be found where Sainthood is an aim and a career. I have lately found three in a radius of twenty miles, and all are professional Christians. One is a Methodist; one an Anglo-Catholic; and one just a nondescript Vicar of a country parish.

The Methodist had spent his long life in a small provincial town as Founder of a Christian Brotherhood; the Anglo-Catholic had served the church of a little Cornish village for the last fifty years. They were therefore well known, and inescapably judged, by their neighbourhoods.

The Methodist, who had founded, and run for fifty years, the Christian Brotherhood in his town, has made its activities famous all over the country. If anything needs doing, or any reform hangs too long in empty air, "Ask the Brotherhood—get them to take it on" is an invariable suggestion.

Only a few miles away, the Anglo-Catholic priest has also devoted fifty years of his life, in the same selfless devotion of the spirit, to his village church.

Early in the dark dawn of Christmas Day we drove to the service round which his spirit clings. Out of his village of three hundred inhabitants, a third were already there—early in the morning, like the shepherds of Palestine, they had followed the light of a Star. The beautiful and happy face of that old priest was light enough to get up early for.

In his long career, he had met and conquered much opposition; his ritual was mysterious to his simple agricultural congregation; some of his beliefs were disconcertingly fundamentalist. It took his practising Sainthood many years before it overcame even the stubbornest of his enemies. One of them said to my husband, "Bless you, we don't mind anything he does in the

church now; nor what he says about it—you see we've none of us known anyone who was his equal to live with!"

The third example of Sainthood in our neighbourhood lacked perhaps the permanent common sense that characterized the Methodist and the Anglo-Catholic. He had a passion for gardening; and another passion for restoring at great expense part of his church fabric, which had already been restored at great expense, in a contrary fashion. Nevertheless, when the call came he heard his Master's voice, left all that he had, and followed Him. Evacuated children tore his lovely garden to smithereens; and every penny that he had been saving or could have collected for the fabric of his church went straight into the lives of the homeless children of God.

He filled his own house with them; and he educated his reluctant parishioners to follow suit. He filled his study with children and his hours with teaching them, until the little village schools could be reorganized to share the flood of strangers with him.

I have always had a theory that should anyone be thrown penniless and a stranger upon the world at a moment's notice, the Clergy of England or the peasants of Austria would live up to their faith as Christians and give him a helping hand. Not, of course, *all* the English Clergy, nor *all* the Austrian peasants; yet more of them than of any other people would remember: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: . . . I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

Many of the Clergy in Great Britain are now practising their faith under fire, and a good proportion of them—including several Bishops and many Leaders of the Free Churches—are behaving with the courage of martyrs, and the untiring generosity of Saints.

By the docks at Limehouse through the first days and nights of the *Blitzkrieg*, a cassocked old priest of seventy remained almost without intermission, rocking on his feet with exhaustion, but never too exhausted to fail to minister to foodless and homeless people from a little food stand he ran for them—with urns full of hot drinks and piled-up sandwiches.

Almost every poor district in bombed cities has one or more such men. They are to be counted upon like Rocks; but you need not strike them to produce help: they give all that they have, without so much as a question, to those who need it.

In the slums of London, ministers, priests, settlement workers, men and women, with churches and houses falling all about them, are building them up again in their own hearts and in the hearts of their people. The Free

Churches and the Established have in many centres joined their efforts and flung themselves into the Union they have resisted for centuries, in order to increase their usefulness.

Both churches and chapels have been opened for the homeless, and sometimes even used as canteens or first-aid centres, although it must be confessed that only a certain proportion of churches have been so used. Chapels are used far more frequently, partly because Chapels in England have always functioned socially, as all Churches do in the United States, whereas the Church of England has been—with a few practising exceptions—a painfully private and select affair; but even churches have, here and there, thrown themselves open, and used crypts or side chapels for God's children.

All Hallows, Barking—known all over the world for the mellow sweetness of its chimes, now silenced—has always been specially concentrated on serving the fighting Forces. Its Vicar is now far away in some cold corner of our northern seas, ministering to sailors and airmen; but his City Church has organized itself afresh under a group of Clergy:—

> Since August last the Church has been doing what it can, not only for the A.F.S., A.R.P. Services in and around this part of the City, but also down on the Docks by running a First Aid Post at night and by adopting two or three large public shelters. You will be interested I think to know that these shelters, and other similar private ones, are visited on week-nights with regularity, and in addition Sunday by Sunday, when Services are held. Last Sunday evening a voluntary choir of some fifteen of us started at 6 P.M. and finished at 10:30 P.M., going round having simple Carol Services, which seemed to be much appreciated.
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> The damage to All Hallows on December 8th has not made things any easier, but I know you will rejoice that the worship of the Church is continued both on week-days and Sundays. The Office visiting too, during the afternoons, goes on and many friendships are thus formed.
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> In one of the evening public shelters, a Canteen is being run nightly since September—in another, Discussion Classes are held weekly, and in all our various ports of call by night, till just recently, when prices became prohibitive for hiring films, we gave a Talkie Cinema Show with regularity.

These Clergy work by day and night, carrying accordions on their backs to bring music, as well as food and games, into shelters or canteens. They co-operate with everyone who is helping to keep up the heart of London. They may be said to beat through this heart with their selfless love of man. St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and many other such London Churches stand by their people through the long danger hours—with the same significant courage.

Nor are all the Bishops secure and idle; on the contrary I know of at least three (and expect there are many others whose dioceses I have not visited) who organize their whole districts on the lines of practical and fearless service. One of these Bishops is at the centre of Britain's cockpit; and there is no need or call that comes to him unanswered. I myself have plagued this fighting Christian very often with what he might well have thought impertinent suggestions, only to be given more help than I should have dared to ask for.

There is a Dean—not a gloomy one—in the immediate vicinity of a constantly bombed city, who has organized all the churches in the surrounding country into hostels and canteens; and has flung open every building he could lay his hands on, to take in the evacuated and bombed-out citizens.

The Rural Dean of Poplar, a now depopulated dockland, travels all over the British Isles to comfort and sustain his scattered parishioners.

"What are you doing?" he was asked by a fellow traveller much interested in his conversation. "Well, I'm just collecting little bits of Poplar," he replied cheerfully, "and stringing them together."

This thinking Parson explained the real difficulty, between the evacuated and those who sometimes very tepidly act as their hosts, better than it has often been explained. "You see," he said, "urban people are consumers—rural people are producers. How can one genius of a housewife, whose talents lie in expending small amounts upon carefully selected shop foods, understand an equal genius who produces sticks to light the fire from the garden, eggs from the nearest hedgerow; and vegetables from under her apron? They naturally think each other obstinate and wasteful idiots; while as a matter of fact they both are women of extreme perspicacity and skill!"

A third Bishop flung himself full-tilt against a powerful group of business men who he had reason to believe were holding up, for selfish purposes, a highly important ingredient of public security. He was challenged by the Law of Libel, which they immediately evoked against him

—and which is one of the few really sinister and dangerous laws of a fairly decent Legal System; but the commodity needed was mysteriously set loose at the same time; and it is more than possible that this dynamic flash of Christianity, on the part of a Bishop, will not be further penalized.

It is open to doubt whether the impassioned activities of our Clergy—or even the loss of every Wren church in the land—will bring larger congregations back into the Church after the war is over. If the Clergy, Free Church or Established, nourish this hope, I feel sure they will be disappointed; but they themselves, enlarged by their own heroism, and made humble by the even greater heroism of the homeless and poverty-stricken people to whom they have ministered, may build up a new Church with rather less bricks and mortar, and rather more spirit and truth, if they concentrate upon the Brother, whom they now know better—rather than upon the God, of whom we could not well know less.

The second stratum of religion in England, the intellectual smear of Christianity, also has its uses. It is hard in England, harder I fancy than in any other country, to express with conviction, to a sympathetic audience, any form of blasphemy.

Anyone may say in public that he does not believe in God and get away with it; but anyone who throws contempt upon what "true religion and undefiled" stands for would receive a cold welcome; perhaps the coldest of all welcomes would be from non-professing Christians.

The really stubborn core of what Hitler is fighting against in Great Britain is the unconscious Christianity of the British people. They may not know why they have this religion; they may not know how to define it; they may not even know that they are practising any religion at all; but they do practise it, and they practise it individually without suggestion or control. Take the King and Queen for instance: None of their Ministers or Court officials would have dared to suggest their driving down to the bombed areas within an hour of the bombing of Buckingham Palace, or their remaining in the bombed areas they were visiting, after the alert had sounded.

They did these acts of unselfish courage, because they wanted to; and only unselfish and courageous people want to act in immediate sympathy with their neighbours at a moment of personal danger.

They could also have got their two children in safety to Canada in the early days of the war, before the sea became the haunted and sinister region it now is. No one would have blamed them for it. Yet the clear strong voice

of the Princess Elizabeth, speaking to English children all over the world over the B.B.C., sounds better when coming from this shaken Island, that she may some day rule, than it would from anywhere else.

The chivalry and heroism of the Poor are like the Peace of God—they pass all understanding. For those who have only their homes, and no alternative to their homes,—who have no money in the Bank, and cannot drive away in a cab from the scene of disaster,—to lose their homes is to lose all.

The religion of the working people of England was best explained by one of their own sons on his return from the beaches of Dunkirk.

His girl asked him what it felt like on those fiery beaches.

"Well," he said after a long minute of reflection, "it was funny like—it felt as if any man who stood next to you was your brother."

This is the religion that Hitler has roused, from where it lay, buried and dormant in the hearts of our people. The mother of a baby a few weeks old wrote, after she had experienced lying over her new-born baby's body all night long in a shelter during one of the worst bombardments of an English city: "I miss Bristol dreadfully. Each bomb that dropped seemed to let forth such a flood of neighbourliness. Each terrible fire seemed to warm the hearts of the people."

The ring of Davids who keep our Island safe from the horde of Hitler's hate-trained, brutalized slaves, our sailors in every gallant ship—naval or mercantile marine—who run the gantlet of the infested seas to bring our people bread—all such men are indeed Christians. For "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The "Forces," as they are rightly called, in our Island to-day, possess the Christian virtues at white heat. They love and serve; they face danger and dare the dearness of their young lives against chronic murder—for the sake of their immortal purpose.

These tough young men and girls are kind. They have a fundamental honesty running from their hearts into their deeds. They may be relied upon; and they cannot be quelled.

As one of our great sons said upon his deathbed to the United States, a few weeks since, "If you back us, you will not back a quitter!"

"What then is England fighting for?"

Americans do well to ask. They were once our Sons; and once our enemies because we tried to deprive them of this dear possession; and now they are our brothers and equal sharers in Democracy.

Freedom is what England is fighting for. We have not always understood it, nor always practised it; but we have always loved it.

Now we are alone with Danger in our small Island; and we are united in being ready to die for it.

Freedom is all men's religion; there can be no religion without it—for there is no such thing as an involuntarily decent human being.

Freedom is our Peace Aim. Those who wish us to define what we mean by freedom, for ourselves and for others, must share the struggle in order to attain it—with us.

Perhaps Patrick Henry's test is the only safe one.

"Give me," he once shouted, choked with his righteous anger, in the shortest of renowned speeches, "Give me liberty—or give me death."

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

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.

[The end of *Mansion House of Liberty* by Phyllis Bottome]