R M du G

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a https://www.fadedpage.com administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at https://www.fadedpage.com.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: Summer 1914
Date of first publication: 1941
Author: Roger Martin du Gard (1881-1958)
Date first posted: Nov. 28, 2023
Date last updated: Nov. 28, 2023
Faded Page eBook #20231137

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

By Roger Martin du Gard

THE WORLD
OF THE THIBAULTS
The Thibaults
Summer 1914

SUMMER
1914

ROGER MARTIN DU GARD

Translated by Stuart Gilbert

New York: The Viking Press
1941

This volume comprises the three French volumes entitled *L'Été 1914* (Part VII of *Les Thibault*) and a fourth volume entitled *Épilogue* (Part VIII), copyright 1936, 1940 by Librairie Gallimard, Paris.

SUMMER 1914
Translation by Stuart Gilbert
COPYRIGHT 1941 BY THE VIKING PRESS, INC.
Printed in U. S. A. by The Haddon Craftsmen, Inc.
PUBLISHED IN FEBRUARY 1941

Je dédie
LES THIBAULT

à la mémoire fraternelle de

PIERRE MARGARITIS

dont la mort, à l'hôpital militaire, le 30 octobre 1918,
anéantit l'œuvre puissante qui mûrissait
dans son cœur tourmenté et pur.

R.M.G.

PART

I

I

JACQUES was getting tired; his neck was stiff from holding the pose, and the only movement he dared make was with his eyes to cast a furious look at his tormentor.

In two elastic strides Paterson had backed to the wall; palette in hand and brush in air, he was bending his head this side and that, in rapt contemplation of the canvas on his easel three yards away. Jacques was thinking: “What a lucky fellow he is to have his painting!” His eyes fell on his wristwatch. “Got to have that article finished by this evening. But a fat lot Pat cares for that, confound him!”

The heat was stifling; ruthlessly the sunlight blazed in through the window. Though the room, in former days a kitchen, was on the top floor of a building near the Cathedral and high above the town, neither the Alps nor the lake could be seen; only the dazzling blue of the June sky confronted it.

At the back of the room, under the sloping roof, two mattresses sprawled side by side on the tiled floor. Clothes hung on nails along the walls; in the sink, on the rusty kitchen-stove, and along the ledge of the iron hood above it, lay a jumble of the most incongruous objects: a dented basin, a pair of slippers, a cigar-box filled with empty paint-tubes, a shaving-brush caked with lather, some cups and plates, two dead roses in a tumbler, a bulldog pipe. A number of canvases stood on the floor, their faces to the wall against which they leaned.

The Englishman was naked from the waist up. His teeth were clenched and he was breathing heavily through his nose, as if he had been sprinting.

“Yes, it’s a teaser!” he grumbled, without turning his head.

Sweat glistened on his chest, and the muscles rippled under the fine-grained skin, white with the limpid whiteness peculiar to Northerners. A triangle of shadow at the base of his thorax bespoke his leanness. Under the threadbare old trousers the sinews of his legs could be seen quivering with the strain of his intense preoccupation.

“And there’s not a shred of tobacco left!” he sighed.

On his arrival Jacques had produced three cigarettes from his pocket; the painter had smoked them greedily, in quick succession, at the beginning of the sitting. Hunger gnawed at his stomach, which had gone empty since the previous day, but that was nothing new to him. He was thinking: “How marvellously luminous that forehead is! Have I enough white?” He glanced toward the tube of white lying on the floor, flat as a razor-blade. He owed a good hundred francs to Guérin, who kept the paint-shop, but luckily Guérin, an ex-anarchist recently converted to socialism, was a good comrade. . . .

His eyes still intent on the portrait, Paterson made a wry face, as though he were alone. His brush described a flourish on the empty air. And suddenly the blue eyes turned, settling on Jacques with an unblinking birdlike stare, a magpie's, inhumanly intent.

Jacques was amused. "He's looking at me exactly as he'd look at an apple in a bowl," he thought. "What a nuisance having that article to finish!"

When Paterson had shyly asked his leave to paint this portrait, Jacques had not dared say "No." For months the painter, too hard up to hire a model and incapable of getting through a day without plying his brush, had had to exercise his talent on makeshift still-lifes. Paterson had said: "Four or five sittings at most," but this Sunday morning was the ninth time that Jacques, inwardly chafing at the imposition, had forced himself to trudge uphill to the highest point of the Old Town and hold a pose that never lasted less than two hours.

Paterson had begun dabbing his brush feverishly on the palette. Once more, flexing his knees like a diver testing a springboard, he paused for a moment, stock-still, his birdlike eyes intent on Jacques. Suddenly his arm shot forward like a fencer's, to plant a speck of white on a precise spot of the canvas. That done, he backed once more to the wall, wagging his head, screwing up his eyes, and snorting like an angry lapdog. At last, with a smile, he turned toward his victim.

"There's such . . . such forcefulness, you know, in those eyebrows of yours, your temples, the way your hair sticks up! Sorry, old chap, but it's got me absolutely beat!"

After depositing his brushes and palette in the sink, he swung nimbly round, crossed the room, and plumped down on one of the mattresses.

"That's enough for today."

Jacques heaved a sigh of relief. "Can I have a look? Yes? Why, you've made a lot of headway this sitting!"

It was a three-quarter-length portrait, ending at the knees, and showed Jacques seated, his left shoulder receding in perspective, his right shoulder, arm, and elbow advancing boldly into the foreground. His sinewy hand, splayed on his thigh, made an effective highlight near the bottom of the picture. His head, though he was looking up toward the light—which came from the left—drooped a little over the left shoulder, as if weighed down by the thick mass of hair and the spacious brow. Half the face was in shadow, but, owing to the slant of the head, the whole forehead was bathed in sunlight. The dark lock, shot with ruddy gleams, that traversed it from left to right brought out by contrast the luminosity of the skin. The artist had been particularly successful in getting onto his canvas the texture of the hair that came down, in a stiff, serried growth, low on the forehead. The white shirt was open at the collar, and the heavy under-jaw rested on it. Though the drawing of the lips was faulty, the bitter, tormented line of the large mouth gave a savage grandeur to the face. Under the rugged brows the eyes were half submerged in shadow, but their expression was as frank and forthright as could be desired; indeed the artist had overdone this quality: there was a certain effrontery in the gaze that was unlike Jacques. Paterson had just become aware of this. On the whole, he had successfully brought out the impression of massive strength conveyed by forehead, shoulders, and chin; but he had lost hope of contriving to suggest the moods of melancholy, pensiveness, and boldness that flickered successively, near intermingling, in Jacques's eyes.

"You'll be coming again tomorrow, won't you?"

"Suppose I'll have to!" Jacques assented gloomily.

Paterson had risen and was feeling in the pockets of a raincoat hanging above the bed. He broke into a merry laugh.

"Mithoerg's a wily bird! He never leaves any tobacco in his pockets nowadays."

When Paterson laughed he seemed once more the mischievous youngster he had doubtless been five or six years earlier, when he had broken with his puritanical family and run away from Oxford to go and live in Switzerland.

"No luck!" He grinned. "I'd have liked to offer you a cigarette for a Sunday treat!"

He could do without food more easily than without tobacco, more easily without tobacco than without paints. In any case, he was rarely out of paints, or tobacco, or food, for long.

He and his friends formed part of a large group of revolutionary youth, all more or less penniless, who had flocked to Geneva and were vaguely affiliated with the recognized organizations. Somehow they survived—though how they managed it was a mystery. A favoured few, the intellectuals like Jacques, wrote for newspapers and magazines. Others, trained workers from different parts of the world—typesetters, draughtsmen, watchmakers, and the like—had more or less regular employment and shared their earnings with their unemployed comrades. But most had no fixed work, and took whatever came their way—obscure, ill-paid jobs, which they dropped the moment they had a little money in their pockets. There were a good many students among them, young men with frayed cuffs and collars, who kept themselves alive by tutoring, research work in libraries, or menial tasks in laboratories. Luckily they were never all destitute at the same moment. There was always someone with a well-lined purse to treat the others, roaming the streets with empty pockets, to a hunk of bread, a sausage, a cup of coffee, and a pack of cigarettes. Such mutual aid was furnished as a matter of course. A man can get used to eating only once a day—and a scratch meal at that—when he is young and lives in fellowship with others, sharing their interests, convictions, political ideas, and aspirations. Some, like Paterson, humorously vaunted the pangs of an empty stomach, the emptier the better, as inducing a fine frenzy of the brain that could be turned to good account. There was some truth behind the jest. The sparing diet helped to keep up that mental exaltation which gave such zest to the interminable palavers they indulged in at all hours of the day, in public squares, in cafés, in their lodgings, but, above all, at "Headquarters." This name had been given to the place where they forgathered to exchange the latest news transmitted from abroad by fellow-revolutionaries, to compare experiences and theories, and with fraternal fervour to pool their efforts for building up the New Social Order.

Standing in front of the shaving-mirror, Jacques was putting on his collar and tie.

"Where are you off to in such a hurry, old chap?" Paterson lazily inquired. He was sprawling across the bed, half naked, with his arm extended.

Paterson had thin, girlish wrists, but a man's hands; slim ankles, but typical English feet. His head was small; the sunlight gave his pale-gold hair, matted by perspiration, the rich patina of an ancient cameo. In his eyes, a little too translucent to be expressive, naïveté seemed always struggling with distress.

"I'd a lot of things to say to you," he went on languidly. "One thing is that you left Headquarters too early last night."

"I'd had enough of it. They go round and round in a circle, always saying the same things."

"Yes. But the argument took a really exciting turn last night. A pity you weren't there. The Pilot wound up by telling Boissonis off. Oh, only a few words, but the sort of words that give one the shivers, if you know what I mean."

His tone betrayed a rankling antipathy. Jacques had often noticed the hostile admiration the Englishman had for Meynestrel—"the Pilot" as he was usually called—but had never discussed it with him. Personally he was deeply attached to Meynestrel, whom he not only cherished as a friend but revered as a master mind.

He turned briskly. "What words? What did he say?"

Paterson did not reply at once; he was staring at the ceiling with an odd smile on his lips.

"It came at the end, a bolt from the blue. A good many had cleared out by then, like you. He let Boissonis rattle on, with that way he has, you know, of not seeming to listen. Suddenly he bent toward Alfreda, who was sitting at his feet as usual, and said his piece, very quickly, without looking at anyone in particular. Wait a bit! I'll try to remember the exact words. . . . 'Nietzsche did away with the idea of God, and replaced it by the concept of ideal man. That was nothing much—only a first step forward. It's up to modern atheism to go one better and do away with the concept of ideal man as well.' "

Jacques made an impatient gesture. "Go on! What else did he say?"

"Wait a bit! Boissonis asked: 'And replace it by what?' The Pilot smiled—you know that terrifying smile of his—and rapped out: 'By nothing!' "

Jacques, too, smiled—to avoid having to answer. He felt hot, tired with the long sitting, and eager to get back to his work. He did not in the least wish to embark on a metaphysical discussion with the worthy Paterson. He ceased smiling and merely said: "One thing is certain, Pat; the Pilot's one of the most noble-minded men."

Propping himself on an elbow, the Englishman looked Jacques in the eyes.

" 'By nothing!' An absolutely monstrous thing to say. Don't you agree?"

As Jacques made no reply, Paterson let himself sink back onto the mattress.

"I'm always wondering, old chap, what sort of life the Pilot can have led. To reach that stage of—of desiccation, he must have had a damnably hard row to hoe, have breathed a pretty noxious air. By the way, Thibault," he went on almost at once and in exactly the same tone, but fixing his eyes intently on Jacques, "there's something I've been wanting for ages to ask you, as you know both of them so well. Do you think Alfreda's happy with her Pilot?"

It struck Jacques that he had never put that question to himself. On the face of it, the question was natural enough. But to answer it would be venturing on delicate ground, from which some obscure instinct warned him off under the present circumstances. With a prudently evasive shrug of his shoulders he went on knotting his tie.

Paterson did not seem put out by his silence, and was lying down again.

"Are you coming to Janotte's lecture tonight?" he asked.

Jacques welcomed the change of subject. "I'm not sure. I've a job to finish off for the *Beacon*. If it goes smoothly, I'll be at Headquarters at about six." He had put his hat on. "Perhaps I'll see you there then. So long, Pat!"

Paterson sat up. "You haven't answered me about Alfreda."

Jacques had opened the door. He turned back and after a slight hesitation replied: "I really don't know. . . . But why shouldn't she be happy?"

II

HALF-PAST one had struck and all Geneva was lingering still over its Sunday dinner. Sunlight fell sheer upon the Bourg-du-Four Square, shadowless but for a purplish-black rim around the houses.

As Jacques crossed the deserted square, only the ripple of the fountain fretted the silence. He walked quickly, with his head down, sunbeams beating on the nape of his neck, his eyes seared by the shimmering asphalt. Though he had no great fear of the midsummer heat at Geneva—a blue-and-white effulgence, implacable yet healthy, seldom overpowering—he was glad to discover some patches of shade as he walked by the street-stalls in the narrow Rue de la Fontaine.

He was thinking out his article, a review, several pages long, of Fritsch's latest work, which was to appear in the "New Books" section of the *Beacon*. He had completed two-thirds of it, but the opening page would need to be entirely rewritten. It might be a good idea, he reflected, to begin with the passage from Lamartine that he had copied out two days previously in the public library: "There are two kinds of patriotism. One consists of all the malice, all the prejudices, and all the stupid enmities that nations, gulled by governments whose interest it is to keep them estranged, foster, each for each. There is another and very different patriotism, comprising all the verities and all the rights that nations share in common.” The idea behind the words was sound and generous enough, but Jacques could not help smiling at the terms in which it was expressed. “The revolutionary jargon of 1848, presumably. But, really, our vocabulary nowadays is very much the same. There are exceptions,” he reminded himself at once. “Those aren’t by any means the words the Pilot would have used.” The thought of Meynestrel switched his mind back to Paterson’s inquiry. Was Alfreda happy? A question he hardly dared to answer one way or the other. Can one ever be sure, he wondered, where women are concerned? Puzzling creatures, women! His experience with Sophia Kammerzinn crossed his mind. Since he had left her father’s *pension* at Lausanne, he had rarely given her a thought. In the first months she had made several trips to Geneva to see him. Then she had ceased coming. Still, he had always given her a cordial welcome. Perhaps she had ended by understanding that he had no particular attachment for her. A vague regret came over him. A queer girl, Sophia. He had not replaced her.

He quickened his pace. It was a longish walk to the Place Grenus where he was staying, on the far side of the Rhône, in a poor district all alleyways and slums. Tucked away in a corner of the square, the centre of which was occupied by a public urinal, was the Hôtel du Globe, a decrepit three-story building. Above the low entrance-door, in the guise of signboard, hung a glass terrestrial globe, which was illuminated at night. Unlike the other hotels in that part of the town, it did not harbour prostitutes. The hotel was managed by two bachelors, Socialists of long standing, the Vercellini brothers. Almost all the rooms were rented to party militants, who paid little and only when in funds. Never had the Vercellinis turned a lodger out for failing to pay his bill. On occasion, however, they had ejected suspects, for all sorts of queer customers, the worst and the best of men, flocked to their hotel.

Jacques lived on the top floor; the room was cramped but clean. Unfortunately its only window gave onto the landing, and if it was left open all the sounds and smells pouring up the stairs forced their way in. The only way of working in reasonable comfort was to keep the window shut and turn on the electric light. The furniture consisted of a narrow bed, a basin clamped to the wall, a wardrobe, a table, and one chair. The table was small and always crowded, so when he wrote Jacques usually sat on the bed, with an atlas on his knees doing duty for a desk.

He had been working for half an hour when three light taps, spaced at regular intervals, sounded on the door.

“Come in!” he called.

A roguish little face with a mop of unkempt hair peeped in. It was Vanheede, the albino. He, too, had left Lausanne the previous year, at the same time as Jacques, and was living in the Hôtel du Globe.

“Sorry, Baulthy—am I disturbing you?” He was one of the few who still called Jacques by his former *nom de plume*, though since his father’s death Jacques had taken to signing his articles under his real name. “I saw Monier at the Café Landolt,” he said. “The Pilot had given him two messages for you. Number one, that he wants to see you and will stay in for you till five; number two, that your article won’t appear in this week’s *Beacon*, so you’ve no need to hand it in tonight.”

Jacques laid his hands flat on the sheets of paper in front of him, and leaned back against the wall.

“That’s a blessing!” Jacques sounded relieved. But then it struck him this meant waiting till next week for the twenty-five francs he had been counting on, and funds were low.

Smiling, Vanheede went up to the bed. “Wasn’t it going well? What’s your article about?”

“About Fritsch’s book on internationalism.”

“What’s the trouble?”

“Well, I can’t make up my mind what to think of it.”

“Of the book?”

“Of the book—and internationalism.”

Vanheede’s eyebrows, pale to a point near invisibility, knitted.

“Fritsch,” Jacques went on, “is a doctrinaire. What’s more, he seems to me to lump together things that are distinct and of quite different value: the ideas of nationality, of the state, and of a *patria*—a fatherland. And that gives one an impression he’s on the wrong tack, even when he says things that sound quite sensible.”

Vanheede listened with a slight frown. His eyes were hidden by the hueless lashes, and the corners of his mouth drooped in a pout. Backing to the table, he swept to one side some of the books, files, and toilet articles, and perched himself on it.

Jacques went on, in an uncertain tone: “For Fritsch and men like him the internationalist ideal means first of all sweeping away the notion of a fatherland. Is that necessary, or inevitable? I’m not so sure of it.”

Vanheede raised his doll-like hand.

“Anyhow, patriotism’s got to go. How can one imagine the revolution cramped within the frontiers of a single country? The real revolution, ours, is a world-wide affair. Its got to be brought off everywhere at once, by all the working-class majorities throughout the world.”

“Yes. But don’t you see that you too are making a distinction between patriotism and the feeling that one has a native land?”

Vanheede emphatically shook his little head, crowned with a tuft of curly, almost silver hair.

“No, they’re the same thing, Baulthy. Just see the way the nineteenth century went about it. By everywhere exalting patriotism, the feeling that a man has for his own country and for no other, it fortified the notion of nationalistic states; it spread hatred among nations and paved the way to war.”

“Certainly. Yet it wasn’t the patriots but the nationalists of the nineteenth century who gave a wrong twist to the idea of a fatherland. For a harmless, sentimental, and, to my mind, quite proper affection, they substituted a cult, an aggressive fanaticism. There’s no question we should condemn that sort of nationalism. But need we follow Fritsch in condemning in the same breath every feeling one has for one’s own country—a very human, innate, almost physical attachment?”

“Yes! To be a true revolutionary one must cut loose from every attachment; root out of one’s personality——”

“Wait a bit!” Jacques broke in. “You’re thinking of the thoroughgoing revolutionary—the kind you aspire to be. And you’re losing sight of the ordinary man, shaped as he is by nature, by life, by the realities of experience. In any case, is it really feasible to do away with that sentimental patriotism of which I spoke? I’m not so sure of it. A man can try his best to root it out, but he belongs to a certain environment, he was born with a certain temperament, an ethnical complexion, so to speak. He clings to his customs, to the mannerisms of the culture which has shaped him. Wherever he is, he keeps his language. And mind you, that’s a very important point. I shouldn’t be surprised if the problem of nationality is, in the last analysis, a question of language. Wherever he may be, at home or abroad, a man goes on thinking in the words and syntax of his country. Just see how it is here! Look at our friends in Geneva, all these voluntary expatriates who sincerely believe they’ve shaken off the dust of their native lands and form a truly international group. You’ll see them instinctively forgathering, grouping themselves in little clans—Italian, Russian, Austrian, and so on. Tribal, fraternal—yes, patriotic clans! Why, even you, Vanheede, cling to your fellow-Belgians!”

The albino gave a start, and his owl-like eyes flashed a reproachful glance at Jacques before vanishing once more behind the long eyelashes. His physical uncomeliness made the humility of his manner seem still more pronounced. But his silences served him above all to safeguard his faith, which was stronger than his intellect and marvellously self-assured for all his seeming shyness. No one, not even Jacques, not even the Pilot, had any real influence over Vanheede.

“No,” Jacques continued, “a man may *ex*patriate himself, but he can’t *de*patriate himself. And in that sort of patriotism there’s nothing fundamentally opposed to our ideal of revolutionary internationalism. That’s why I wonder if it isn’t unwise to attack, as Fritsch does, such sentiments, which, when all is said and done, stand for something human and vital in their way. I even wonder if it wouldn’t be injurious to the coming race if they were eliminated.” He was silent for a few moments; when he spoke again, he sounded uncertain, perplexed by scruples. “That’s what I think, yet I daren’t write it. Especially in a short article on Fritsch’s work. A whole book would be needed, to make sure of not being misunderstood.” Again he fell silent; then suddenly exclaimed: “Anyhow, *I* shan’t write that book! For, really, I’m not sure of my ground. Human beings adapt themselves, and perhaps we can’t rule out the feasibility of ‘depatriating’ man; he might get reconciled to being countryless.”

Vanheede slipped off the table and took a quick step toward Jacques, a look of angelic joy transfiguring the face that normally was blank as a blind man’s. “But just think of the compensations he would have!” he exclaimed.

Jacques smiled. It was such sudden ecstasies as this that endeared the little Belgian to him.

“And now I’m off!”

Still smiling, Jacques watched Vanheede hop sparrowlike toward the door and make a soundless exit with a shy wave of his tiny hand.

Though it was no longer necessary for him to finish off his article—perhaps, indeed, for that very reason—he settled down again to it with zest. He was still writing when he heard the hall-clock strike four. Meynestrel was expecting him. He jumped off the bed. No sooner was he on his feet than he felt he was famished. But there would be no time to stop for a meal on the way. He remembered that in one of his drawers there were two packets of powdered chocolate instantly soluble in hot water, and that he had refilled his alcohol-lamp the day before. Before he had finished washing his face and hands, the water in his little saucepan was at the boil. After gulping down a cup of scalding-hot chocolate, he hurried out.

III

MEYNESTREL lived at a considerable distance from the Place Grenus, in the Carouge district, a rather dreary suburb on the banks of the Arve, where many revolutionaries, mostly Russian refugees, had settled. Wood and coal merchants, dealers in scrap-iron, coach-builders, parquet-makers, monumental masons—all such as needed elbow-room for their businesses—had set up in this district of Geneva. Along the wide streets, sheds and workyards alternated with blocks of ancient houses, mutilated gardens, and building-sites for sale.

The house in which the Pilot lodged was at the corner of the Quai Charles-Page and the Rue de Carouge, facing the Pont Neuf. It was a long, three-story building, flat-fronted, without balconies, weathered a dingy yellow which, however, under the summer sun took on the warm tones of Italian rough-cast. Flights of gulls sped past the windows, wheeling and swooping down toward the Arve, which here ran swift and shallow, boisterous as a mountain torrent, flecking with foam the rocks that jutted just above the surface.

Meynestrel and Alfreda had a two-room flat at the end of a long passage. The rooms were separated by a narrow hall, the smaller being used as a kitchen, the larger as their bedroom and study.

Near the window, in sunlight filtering between the slats of the drawn Venetian blind, Meynestrel was sitting at a light table, working as he waited for Jacques to come. In his uneven, microscopic script, bristling with abbreviations, he was dashing down on sheets of thin notepaper brief phrases, which it was Alfreda's task to decipher and copy on an antiquated typewriter.

For the moment, however, the Pilot was by himself; Alfreda had just left the low chair close beside Meynestrel's on which she always sat. She had taken advantage of a break in her master's work to run to the kitchen and turn on the water tap, and was standing by for a carafe to fill when the water began running cold. An acrid odour of stewed peaches simmering over a slow fire on the gas stove pervaded the warm air. They lived almost entirely on milk foods, vegetables, and cooked fruit.

"Freda!"

She rinsed out the percolator she was holding, set it to drain off, and hastily dried her hands.

"Freda!"

"Coming!"

She hurried to his side and settled down again on the low chair.

"Where have you been, little girl?" Gently Meynestrel patted the bowed, dusky head beside him. The question called for no answer. He had put it in an absent-minded tone, without ceasing to scribble away.

She looked up at him with a smile, her dark eyes glowing with calm loyalty. The widely dilated pupils conveyed her yearning to see, to understand, to love whole-heartedly; yet in them was not the least spark of curiosity or of insistence. She seemed born to watch serenely, to sit and wait. No sooner did Meynestrel begin, for her benefit, to think aloud (it was a habit with him) than she turned toward him, seeming to be listening with her eyes. Sometimes when the thought took a subtle turn, a flutter of her lashes showed her appreciation. All that Meynestrel got from her was this silent, constantly attentive nearness—but it had now become as necessary to him as the air he breathed.

She was only twenty-two, fifteen years younger than he. No one had any clear idea of how they had chanced to meet, or of the real bond uniting them under the tranquil surface of their life in common. They had come together to Geneva during the previous year. Meynestrel was Swiss. Alfreda, though she never mentioned her family or early years, was known to hail from South America.

Meynestrel went on scribbling, his slender head, which the short, pointed beard caused to seem longer still, bent above his task. The light fell full on the narrow forehead, which gave an impression of being pinched in at the temples. His left hand was fondling the nape of Alfreda's neck. Placidly leaning forward, the girl accepted the caress with the vibrant immobility of a petted cat.

Without shifting his hand Meynestrel stopped writing, gazed vaguely in front of him, and shook his head thoughtfully.

"Danton once said: 'We want to put on top what is below, and put below what's now on top.' That, little girl, is a politician's slogan, not a revolutionary Socialist's. I'm sure Louis Blanc, Proudhon, Fourier, or Marx would never have said a thing like that."

She looked up at him. But his eyes were not bent on her. His face, raised now toward the upper part of the window where a sunbeam filtered through a chink in the venetian blind, was quite expressionless. The features were regular, but curiously devoid of life. Though not unhealthy, his complexion was a neutral grey, as if the blood under the skin were colourless. Beneath the close-cropped moustache, the lips were of exactly the same hue as the cheeks. All the man's vitality was concentrated in the eyes, small, oddly close-set eyes. The jet-black pupils filled the space between the eyelids, the whites being scarcely visible. Their glow was so intense as to be hardly bearable, yet no warmth emanated from them. There was something almost feral in the eyes, deep pools of light never ruffled by the least hint of emotion, and in the look of imperturbable attention which at once captivated and annoyed its victim. One was reminded of the keen, ruthless, baffling stare of certain breeds of monkeys.

"Yes, the syllogisms of individualist ideology," he muttered in a breath, as if rounding off an unspoken phrase.

His voice was even, with no force behind it. He almost always spoke in curt, cryptic phrases, which seemed to shoot forth from his lips, impelled by a scant but never-failing supply of breath. His way of uttering such slippery combinations of big words as "syllogisms of individualist ideology" in a single breath, yet with every syllable distinct, seemed a feat of virtuosity like that of the violinist who with one sweep of his bow releases a cascade of semiquavers.

"Socialism that takes account of classes," he went on, "isn't true socialism. To turn the social order upside down is merely to replace one bad thing by another, one oppression by another. All classes are suffering today. The tyranny of competition, of capitalist exploitation—in a word, individualism run amuck—presses quite as heavily on the employer of labour. Only, he doesn't seem to see that." Twice he coughed slightly and pressed his hand to his chest. A rush of words followed: "To reorganize production and combine all the healthy elements of the community, without discrimination, in a classless society, that's the task before us, little girl."

Then he fell to writing again.

Meynestrel's name was linked with the early days of aviation. As a mechanical engineer and pilot, he had been called on to join the staff of the S.A.S. when their aircraft factory was set up at Zürich, and several aeronautical gadgets still in use bore his name. During that period a series of attempts to fly the Alps had brought him into the public eye. But a serious accident in which he all but lost his life, during the Zürich-Turin flight, had left him with an injured leg, and he had been obliged to give up flying. Later, when strikes had broken out at the S.A.S. factory, he had deliberately abandoned his post in the company's office to join in with the workers; thereafter he had vanished abruptly from Switzerland.

As to his subsequent movements nothing definite was known. He may have spent the intervening years in Eastern Europe, for he was well up on Russian problems and, on several occasions, had displayed a knowledge of Slavonic dialects. But he was equally well up on Spanish affairs and those of Asia Minor. One thing was clear: he had been in close touch with most of the then leaders of the revolutionary movement in Europe, and still corresponded regularly with several of them. No one knew in what circumstances or with what object he had approached them. He spoke of them in puzzling terms—a blend of vagueness and precision—and always with reference to some other topic, to contribute a piece of timely information when generalities were being discussed. On the occasions when he quoted some characteristic remark that presumably he had heard, or described an event that seemingly he had witnessed, he never troubled to explain his part in the interview or incident. His allusions were always casual; whether he spoke of facts, political theories, or personalities, he always sounded well informed and earnest, but whenever his personal experience was mooted he evaded the subject, sometimes with a joke.

The fact remains that he gave an impression of having always been on the spot when something memorable was happening, or, anyhow, of knowing better than anyone else exactly what took place on that particular occasion. Moreover, he seemed to have observed each such event from a special angle, enabling him to draw conclusions from it as cogent as they were surprising.

Asked one day why he had come to Geneva, he had replied: “To have some peace.” During his first months in that city he had kept severely to himself, avoiding alike refugees and Swiss members of the “Party”—with Alfreda as his sole companion. Meanwhile he read widely, and analysed the writings of the great revolutionaries—with the object apparently of mastering the tactics of revolution.

Then one day Richardley, a young Genevan militant, had persuaded him to come to Headquarters, the nightly meeting-place of a mixed group of Swiss and foreign revolutionaries. It would have been hard to say if he really liked the group; he had never expressed an opinion on the subject. Still, he came there again, of his own accord, on the next evening. And very soon his striking personality had made itself appreciated. In that fraternity of theorists, obliged for the time being to content themselves with words instead of deeds, the shrewdness of Meynestrel’s critical judgments, his unfailing competence (which seemed the outcome rather of experience than of mere study or research), his instinct for bringing each problem down to the level of hard facts and always giving revolutionary theory a practical twist, his gift for laying his finger on the crucial point of the most tangled social problems and summing it up in a few pithy sentences—all these qualities had given him a unique prestige among his associates at Headquarters. Within a few months he had become the focus, the driving force of the group; some would have said “the Leader.”

Daily he came there, but the mystery in which he wrapped himself remained impervious: the enigma of a man who is taking his bearings, holding himself in, biding his time.

“Come in here,” Alfreda said, and showed Jacques into the kitchen. “He’s working.”

Jacques mopped his perspiring brow.

“A glass of water?” she suggested, pointing to the carafe standing in the sink under a trickle of cold water from the tap.

“Rather!”

The glass she filled became misted at once. With the carafe in her hand she stood before him in that attitude of humble service which was so characteristic of her. Her sallow, lightly powdered skin, her snub nose, the childish mouth that swelled like a ripe strawberry when she closed her lips, her eyes slightly drawn up toward the temples, and the black, stiff, lustrous fringe that draped her forehead almost to the eyebrows, gave her the look of a Japanese doll made in Europe. Perhaps, Jacques mused, that blue kimono adds to the effect. And, as he drank the water, Pat’s question came back to his mind. Was Alfreda happy with her Pilot? He had to confess he hardly knew her, though she was always present at his talks with Meynestrel. He had got into the habit of regarding her less as a living being than as a domestic adjunct—more precisely an apanage of Meynestrel. For the first time he grew conscious of the slight constraint he always felt when alone with Alfreda.

“Another glass?”

“Thanks very much.”

That cup of chocolate had made him thirsty. It struck him that he had had no lunch, that it was absurd the way he played fast and loose with his meals. Suddenly a fantastic question crossed his mind: “Did I put out my alcohol-lamp?” Rack his memory as he might, nothing definite was forthcoming.

The Pilot’s voice echoed across the little flat.

“Freda!”

“Coming!”

Smiling, her eyes twinkling with amusement, she shot a meaning glance at Jacques that seemed to say: “You see what a spoilt child my Pilot is!”

“Come with me,” she said.

They found Meynestrel standing at the window, outlined against the light. He had raised the blind a little and sunlight fell on the large, low bed, bare walls, and the table, on which lay only a fountain-pen and a little mound of notepaper.

In his grey pyjamas Meynestrel seemed tall. He was sparely built and rather narrow-chested, and his shoulders had a slight droop. His keen eyes bored into Jacques’s as he held out his hand.

“Sorry to drag you all this way, but we’ll be quieter here than at the Talking Shop. . . . Here’s some work for you, little girl,” he added, handing Alfreda a book with a marker showing the place.

Docilely she took her typewriter, squatted on the floor with her back against the bed, and began strumming the keys.

As Meynestrel and Jacques sat down at the table, an anxious look settled on the Pilot’s face. Leaning back in his chair, he stretched his right leg straight in front of him. His flying accident had left a stiffness in the knee which sometimes gave him a slight limp.

“Here’s a nasty business!” he began. “Some ‘person unknown’ has sent me a letter. There are two men, it seems, whom we should beware of. Firstly, Guittberg.”

“What! Guittberg?” Jacques exclaimed.

“Secondly, Tobler.”

Jacques made no movement.

“Does that surprise you?” the Pilot asked.

“About Guittberg—yes.”

“Here’s the letter.” Meynestrel took an envelope from his pyjama pocket. “Read it!”

“Hm,” Jacques murmured after composedly perusing the letter, a long, methodical indictment—unsigned.

“You know the important part played by Guittberg and Tobler in the Croatian movement. They’ll be coming to Vienna for the Congress. So we must ascertain how far they’re to be trusted. I don’t want to pass the word round before making sure.”

“Yes,” Jacques said. It was on the tip of his tongue to ask: “What do you propose to do?” but he refrained. Though he was on easy terms with Meynestrel, instinct warned him not to go beyond a certain point.

As if he had expected the question, Meynestrel went on.

"Firstly"—he had intense concern, almost a mania, for making himself clear, and often began his phrases with a crisp, emphatic "Firstly," not invariably followed by a "Secondly"—"firstly, there's only one way of getting at the truth, and that's to make investigations on the spot. In Vienna. A discreet inquiry, made by someone who doesn't attract attention. Preferably someone whose name isn't on the rolls of any party. But"—his gaze settled fixedly on Jacques—"someone we can trust. I mean, someone whose common sense we can rely on."

"Yes." Jacques was surprised, and secretly flattered. Promptly came the not unpleasant afterthought: "No more sittings for Pat. Hard luck for him, but it can't be helped!" Then, for the second time, his thoughts harked back to the alcohol-lamp.

In the ensuing silence the only sounds were the clicking of the typewriter and, like the murmur of a distant stream, the trickle of the water overflowing from the carafe into the sink.

"Will you undertake it?" Meynestrel asked.

Jacques's answer was a quick nod.

"You must leave in two days. Time enough to get together the relevant documents. And stay in Vienna as long as is needed. A fortnight, if necessary."

Alfreda shot a quick upward glance at Jacques, who gave another nod; then she bent over her work again.

"In Vienna," Meynestrel went on, "you'll have Hosmer's help." He stopped abruptly; there had been a knock at the front door. "Go and see, little girl." He turned to Jacques again. "Hosmer should know something about it."

Hosmer, an Austrian living in Vienna, was a friend of Meynestrel. Jacques had met him a year before at Lausanne, where Hosmer had stayed a few days. The encounter had left a deep impression on him. It was the first time he had come across that type of revolutionary—hard-bitten, cynical, without scruples as to the means employed, and interested only in results, prepared quite shamelessly to sail under false colours when occasion called for it, provided that expedient served, in however small degree, the revolutionary cause.

Alfreda came back. "It's Mithoerg."

Meynestrel turned to Jacques, and said in a low voice: "We'll go into it together this evening at the Talking Shop," adding in a louder tone: "Come in, Mithoerg."

Mithoerg wore large round glasses which, looming below the half-moons of his heavy eyebrows, gave him a permanently startled air. His face was plump and rather flabby, with the puffy cheeks of a man who has not been able to sleep off the effects of a convivial night.

Meynestrel had risen from his seat.

"What brings you here, Mithoerg?"

Mithoerg's gaze swept the room, resting on the Pilot, then on Jacques, then on Alfreda.

"I come to say that old Janotte, he's come to Headquarters," he explained laboriously. He was never quite at ease in any language but his own, which was German.

No, Jacques was thinking. I can't be sure if I blew that lamp out. After filling my cup, I may have put back the saucepan on the lamp and left it burning. I drank my chocolate and went out. Yes, it may have been still alight then. . . . He stared at the others, without speaking.

"Janotte particularly wanted to see you before his lecture tonight," Mithoerg was saying. "But he's so worn by the journey. Heat always lays him down."

"Too much mane!" Alfreda chuckled to herself.

"So he's gone off for a little nap. But he asked me to bring you his best greeting."

"That was very, very nice of him." Meynestrel's voice rose to an unexpected falsetto. "Only, Mithoerg, my boy, we don't give a tinker's damn for your friend Janotte. Do we, little girl?" While speaking, he had rested his arm on Alfreda's shoulder, and was stroking her hair.

"Do you know him?" Alfreda cast a mischievous glance in Jacques's direction.

Jacques did not hear. He was vainly groping in his memory for some reassuring detail. He was fairly sure of having placed the saucepan on the floor, in which case he must have blown out the flame and replaced the cap. Had he, though . . . ?

"He has a mane like an old lion," Alfreda laughed. "He's a leader of the anti-clericals, and to look at him you'd take him for a cathedral organist."

"Sh, little girl," Meynestrel scolded indulgently.

Taken aback, Mithoerg gave a sickly smile. His bristling shock of hair made him seem always on the brink of flying into a rage—as indeed he was extremely apt to do.

He was an Austrian by birth. Five years earlier, to escape his period of military service, he had fled from Salzburg, where he was studying chemistry. He had settled down in Switzerland, first at Lausanne, then at Geneva, had there completed his course of studies, and was now working four days a week in a laboratory. But he was more interested in sociology than in chemistry. Gifted with a prodigious memory, he had read everything and forgotten nothing, and each detail was neatly pigeon-holed in his square head. His friends, especially Meynestrel, consulted him as they would consult an encyclopedia. He was an exponent of the school of violence, yet the man himself was soft-hearted, sentimental, timid, and unhappy.

"Janotte, he has trotted this lecture of his all round the Continent." His tone was bland, unruffled. "A great authority is he on European affairs. Just now he comes from Milan. Two days he spent in Austria, with Trotsky. He has some curious stories to tell. It's our plan to get him to come round to the Café Landolt, after the lecture, and start him telling them. You will come, won't you?" He glanced at Meynestrel, then at Alfreda. "How about you, Jacques?" he added, turning to the young man.

"Yes," Jacques said, "I may drop in at the Landolt. But the lecture—no!" His obsession had rattled his nerves and though he had long discarded any religious belief, the anti-clerical attitude in others almost always irritated him. "There's something childishly aggressive in the mere title of the lecture—'Disproofs of God's Existence.' " He took from his pocket a green handbill. "You've only to look at his manifesto!" he exclaimed with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders.

"Listen! 'I propose to submit to you a theory of the universe which definitely rules out all recourse to the theory of a Divine Purpose!' "

"It's easy to make jokes about his style," Mithoerg broke in, rolling his eyes indignantly. When he became excited, his salivary glands secreted copiously, and he seemed to hiss the words out. "I quite agree these things might be better put, from a philosophic viewpoint. But I don't think it useless to resay them, again and again. For truly it is by superstition that the clergy for years and years have kept their hold on men. Without religion, men would not have so long been putting up with poverty. They would have revolted long, long ago. And freed themselves."

"Very likely," Jacques admitted, as he rolled the leaflet into a ball and tossed it gaily through a chink in the blind. "And it's quite likely that a harangue on those lines will get as much applause here as at Vienna or Milan. What's more, I realize there's something rather touching in all this eagerness to understand, to clear the mind of cobwebs, which brings hundreds of men and women together, in a hot, stuffy room reeking with smoke, when they'd be ever so much better off sitting on the shore of the lake, looking up at the stars. But personally I simply can't face it—spending my evening listening to that stuff."

On the last words his voice had suddenly faltered; he had just pictured the papers on his table writhing as they caught fire, the window curtains going up in flames—so vividly that his breath failed him. Meynestrel, Alfreda, even Mithoerg—not a particularly observant man—stared at him in surprise.

"I'm off. *Au revoir*," he said curtly.

"Aren't you coming with us to Headquarters?" Meynestrel asked.

"Got to go home first!" He jerked the words out over his shoulder.

In the Rue de Carouge he broke into a run. At Plaimpalais Circus a tram was pulling out; he jumped onto it. But when it halted at the quay, impatience got the better of him; hastily alighting, he made for the bridge at the double.

Not till he was coming out of the Rue des Etuves and a familiar scene lay before him—the little square with the urinal in its midst, and in a corner the Hôtel du Globe, placid as ever—did his panic terror vanish as if by magic.

"What a fool I am!" he thought.

Now it came back to him that he had replaced the brass extinguisher on the wick, had even burned his fingers doing so. He could still feel the ball of his thumb smarting and, glancing at it, saw the mark of the burn. And now his memory was so precise, so unquestionable, that he did not even trouble to climb the three flights of stairs to verify it. Turning on his heel, he walked back toward the Rhône.

From the bridge he saw the Old Town serenely rising tier by tier from a green mass of foliage on the water's edge up to the Saint-Pierre spires fretting the blue immensity of the Alps. "What a fool I am!" he murmured once more. The disproportion between the trivial incident and the anxiety it had caused him passed his understanding. It was not the first time, either, that he had thus been plagued by his imagination. "How is it," he wondered, "that at such moments I so utterly lose control of myself? The way I can give in to anxiety is fantastic, positively morbid. And not only to anxiety, to scruples as well. . . ."

Panting, perspiring, he climbed with halting steps and unseeing eyes the little streets he knew so well: dark, cool alleys—lined with old houses and small, timbered shops, broken by flights of steps and terraces—that wound their upward way to the city proper.

He had entered the Rue Calvin, without noticing where he was going. A sombre, solemn street well suited to its name, it followed the crestline of the slope. The rows of stately grey-stone houses, the austere lives that were presumably being led behind those lofty windows—all contributed to an impression of puritanism at its wealthiest, and gloomiest. But at the far end of this bleak vista, with a saving grace, rose the pillars and façade of the Place Saint-Pierre, gay with sunlight and the verdure of its immemorial lime trees.

IV

"IT'S SUNDAY," JACQUES said to himself, observing the crowd of women and children in the Cathedral Square. "Sunday, June 28. This Austrian investigation may well last ten days or a fortnight; and there's heaps remaining to be done before the Congress. . . ."

Like all his comrades in that summer of 1914, he had high hopes of the resolutions touching the major problems of the Socialist International that would be passed at the Vienna Socialist Congress called for August 23.

Jacques looked forward to the special mission on which the Pilot had dispatched him. He liked activity; it enabled him to think well of himself, without remorse. Moreover, he was not sorry to get away for a few days from the perpetual confabulations and parlour politics of Geneva.

While he was there he could not refrain from going practically every evening to Headquarters. Sometimes he merely dropped in, shook hands with some friends, and left at once. On other occasions, after drifting from group to group, he retired to the back room with Meynestrel. Those he esteemed his lucky evenings; brief, cherished hours of an intimacy that made him greatly envied. For men who had to their credit a fighting record, who had "done their bit" on the revolutionary front, could not understand why the Pilot preferred Jacques's company to theirs.

Usually, however, Jacques stayed among his friends, silent, somewhat aloof, and rarely taking part in their discussions. On the occasions when he did take part he displayed a breadth of view, a desire for mutual understanding and conciliation, and a mental outlook which promptly gave an unwonted turn to the conversation.

In that little cosmopolitan circle, as in all similar circles, he encountered two types of revolutionary: the “apostles” and the “experts.”

Temperamentally he was drawn to men of the former type—whether Socialists, Communists, or anarchists. Spontaneously he felt at home with these generous-minded mystics, whose revolt had the same origin as his: an innate revulsion from injustice. All dreamed, as he dreamed, of building on the ruins of the contemporary world a new world of social justice. Their visions of the future might differ in detail, but they shared in the same hope, the hope of a new order, of liberty, equality, and fraternity, of peace. Like Jacques—and it was particularly this that drew him to them—they were scrupulously loyal to an inner standard of nobility; their aspirations toward a grandiose ideal urged them heroically to surpass themselves. In the last analysis, the revolutionary cause appealed to them because, like Jacques, they found in it a splendid incentive for living. Thus they remained at heart individualists, though they had pledged their lives to the triumph of a collective ideal; and though they might not suspect it, what they most enjoyed in that heady atmosphere of hope and conflict was that each could feel his individual energies and potentialities multiplied a hundredfold, and his personality set free to fulfil itself in the service of a movement infinitely greater than himself.

But his preference for the idealists did not blind Jacques to the fact that, were they left to their sole enthusiasm, they might have gone on agitating indefinitely, without ever making good. The active element, the leaven of the revolutionary movement, was a skilled minority, the experts. It was they who formulated specific grievances and achieved tangible results. Their revolutionary technique, already ample, was being constantly implemented by new experience. They applied their fanaticism to limited ends, graded in the order of their urgency; realistic, not visionary ends. In the atmosphere of high idealism promoted by the apostles, these experts gave practical expression to their faith.

Jacques felt that he did not really fit into either of these categories. Obviously he had more in common with the apostles; yet his lucidity of mind, or, anyhow, his knack of drawing clear distinctions, his shrewd insight into personalities, situations, and the bearing of events, might well, had he applied himself, have qualified him for expert work. Indeed, given favourable conditions, he might have blossomed out into a leader. Was it not that capacity for combining the expert’s political gumption with the mystical zeal of the apostle that characterized the revolutionary leaders? He had met some of them and found in all a twofold competence: efficiency—or more precisely, an outlook on realities so far-ranging and at the same time so shrewd that, in any given emergency, they could point out at once what steps to take to cope with the situation and control its trend; and, secondly, a personal ascendancy, a magnetic power enabling them automatically to influence other men and, it would almost seem, events as well.

Jacques lacked neither clear-sightedness nor authority; what is more, he had a quite exceptional gift for winning the affection and approval of others. If he had never tried to exploit these qualities, it was because, with very rare exceptions, he felt an instinctive distaste for meddling with the course of others' lives.

He often mused on the peculiarity of his position in this Genevan group; it struck him as very different according as he viewed it in relation to the group collectively or in relation to individuals.

As regards the collectivity his attitude was usually passive. Not passive, however, in the sense that he stood aside from their activities. That, indeed, was what surprised him most. By the force of circumstances he had been led to play a part, a rather thankless part: that of explaining and justifying certain values, certain cultural acquisitions and forms of art and life, which all around him labelled "bourgeois" and condemned as such offhand. Though no less convinced than his companions that the bourgeoisie had outlived its vocation in world-history, he could not bring himself to endorse the systematic, wholesale destruction of that bourgeois culture with which he felt he was still deeply imbued. To the defence of what was best and most enduring in it, he applied a sort of aristocratic, typically French intellectualism that, much as the others resented it, sometimes brought them round, if not to revise their opinions, at least to recast them in a less intolerant form. Perhaps, too, they felt more or less consciously a certain satisfaction at having in their ranks, sharing whole-heartedly in their social ideal, a deserter from the upper middle-class. Moreover, the very fact of his being with them was, as it were, a testimony—given by the very world that they were bent on overthrowing—to their theories of the supreme necessity of revolution.

In his relations with individuals, taken separately, Jacques's influence was much more noticeable. At first he had encountered a slight mistrust, but soon he had established a definite moral ascendancy—naturally over the best members of the group. Behind his reticence, behind the distinction of his modes of thought and conduct, they discovered a very human warm-heartedness which melted their reserve and fired their confidence. Nor did they treat Jacques quite as they treated each other—as a mere fellow-member of their team. They brought to their contacts with him a touch of intimacy, of affection, and made known to him their difficulties and doubts. There were evenings when one or another would unbosom himself to Jacques of his best-guarded secrets: his egoism, his failings, and his moral lapses. In his company they came to a keener understanding of themselves and gained a new lease of energy. They asked his advice as if he had discovered that key to the problems of man's inner life for which he had himself been seeking everywhere all his life through. And in so doing, without suspecting it, they imposed on him a painful self-constraint; by lending his personality and words a greater significance than he would have wished, they obliged him to keep a constant watch over himself, to refrain from speaking out or betraying his perplexities and discouragements.

The responsibility thus forced upon him kept him cruelly to himself, plunging him into an isolation that often made him feel quite desperate. "Why," he asked himself, "is this undeserved prestige foisted on me?" One of the pet notions of his brother Antoine came to his mind: "We're Thibaults and there's something about us Thibaults that compels respect." But it was easy for him to shake off the toils of pride, for he was far too well aware of his own weaknesses to imagine that any mysterious force could emanate from him.

V

THE HEADQUARTERS, or "Talking Shop" as Meynestrel's intimates usually called it, was discreetly situated in the heart of the upper city, in the old Rue des Barrières flanking the Cathedral.

Seen from outside, the building gave the impression of being disused. It was one of several ramshackle old houses that had somehow survived in that decorous quarter of the town. The front, three stories high, was plastered a dingy pink; the wall was crannied, pocked with damp-rot, and the dusty, shutterless sash-windows suggested an abandoned tenement-house. Between it and the street was a narrow, walled-in front yard, littered with refuse, scrap-iron, and rubble, among which a large elder tree rose in solitary grace. The entrance-gate had vanished, and a band of metal linked the two stone pillars, bearing in still legible characters the inscription: “Brass Foundry.” The foundry had long since been transferred elsewhere, but the premises were still being used as a warehouse by the proprietors.

Behind the empty house there was a second yard, invisible from the street, in which stood the two-story building that was known as Headquarters. The only access to it was through a long, vaulted corridor crossing the former foundry from end to end. The ground floor had been used as stabling in earlier days, and in it Monier, the handyman, now lived. The upper floor consisted of four adjoining rooms opening on a long, dark passage. The smallest of the rooms, at the end of the passage, had been, at the suggestion of Alfreda, set apart as a sort of private office for the Pilot. The others, which were fairly spacious, served as common rooms. In each were ten or a dozen chairs, some benches, and tables strewn with newspapers and magazines. For at Headquarters was available not only the whole Socialist press of Europe but also the majority of those sporadic revolutionary periodicals which, after several successive issues to bring themselves to notice, lapsed into an eclipse that lasted from a few months to years, because funds had run out or their staff was languishing in jail.

No sooner had Jacques emerged from the cloisterlike corridor and entered the back yard than a buzz of heated conversation on the upper floor apprised him that the Talking Shop had a full house that evening.

At the foot of the staircase three men were carrying on an animated discussion in what sounded vaguely like Italian or Spanish. They were three enthusiastic Esperantists, one of whom, Charpentier, a teacher at Lausanne —he had come to Geneva to hear Janotte’s speech—was the editor of a review that had some success in revolutionary circles, *L’Espérantiste du Léman*. He never missed an opportunity of declaring that one of the most crying needs of the internationalists was a universal tongue, and that the adoption of Esperanto as a second language by men of every nationality would simplify intercourse between the peoples on the intellectual plane no less than on the material. He was fond of invoking the high authority of Descartes, who in a letter to a friend explicitly preconized a “universal language, very easy to learn, to speak, and to write, and apt—this being the most important thing—to aid the understanding.”

After shaking hands with the Esperantists, Jacques went up the stairs. On the landing he found Monier on his knees, busy sorting out on the floor a pile of numbers of *Vorwärts*. Monier was a professional waiter, but though he always wore, in season and out, the low-cut waistcoat and celluloid dicky appropriate to his calling, he rarely followed it. The utmost he did was, for one week every month, to work as an extra hand at a beer-house, thus ensuring three weeks' leisure, all of which he devoted to the "revolutionary cause." He displayed an equal zeal for all and sundry tasks—running errands, cleaning up, sorting out periodicals, and operating the mimeograph.

The door of the room at the top of the stairs stood open. Alfreda and Paterson were by themselves, talking near the window. Jacques had already observed that, when she was with the Englishman, Alfreda seemed to drop her usual role of silent onlooker and blossom out into a young woman with a mind of her own—an aspect of her that, presumably out of shyness, she never revealed in other circumstances. She had Meynestrel's brief-case under her arm and in her hand a pamphlet, a passage from which she was reading out in a low tone to Paterson. Puffing at his pipe, the young man seemed to be listening absent-mindedly. His eyes were studying the bent face with the jet-black fringe and the pale cheeks on which the long lashes cast wavering shadows; he was wondering, perhaps, how the curious dull sheen of that white skin could be realized on canvas. Neither of them noticed Jacques walking past the door.

In the second room he saw a number of familiar faces. Old Boissonis was sitting near the door, his fat paunch sagging over his thighs. Near him stood Mithoerg, Guérin, and Charcovsky, the bookseller.

Boissonis shook Jacques's hand, without interrupting a rejoinder he was making.

"But, in that case . . . well, what does it prove? The same old story: not enough driving force behind the revolutionary movement. And why? They don't *think* enough." He threw himself back in his chair, his hands splayed on his knees, and grinned aggressively.

Daily he was one of the first-comers. Discussion was the breath of life to him. Sometime professor of natural science at the Bordeaux University, he had been led on from anthropology to sociological research, and, the boldness of his views having got him into bad odour at the university, he had moved to Geneva. What caught the eye in his appearance was the disproportion between his tiny features and his enormous head. The vast, bald, dome-shaped forehead, the heavy jowl, and several layers of chin formed a zone of superfluous fat which seemed to dwarf preposterously all the rest: the eyes sparkling with mischievous good nature; a snub, inquisitive nose with large, gaping nostrils; and fleshy lips always in readiness to smile. All the fat man's vitality seemed concentrated in the small oasis of eyes, nose, and mouth, lost in a Sahara of gross flesh.

"I've said it before, and I say it again," he oracled, licking his plump lips, "we've got to launch our attack, to start with, on the philosophic front."

Mithoerg rolled disapproving eyes behind his glasses, and shook his shaggy mane.

“Thought and action must march hand in hand.”

“Look at what happened in Germany in the nineteenth century,” Charcovsky began.

Old Boissonis slapped his thighs. “That’s just it!” he cried, chuckling already with the satisfaction of having made his point. “Yes, let us take the case of the Germans. . . .”

Jacques knew in advance everything they were going to say; the only variations would be in the way they bandied arguments and counter-arguments, like pawns on a chessboard.

Standing in the middle of the room, Zelavsky, Périnet, Saffrio, and Skada formed an animated quartet. Jacques went up to them.

“Everything hangs together, everything fits in so perfectly, in the capitalist system,” declared Zelavsky, a Russian with a long flaxen moustache.

“And zat is vy ve only need to vait, Sergei Pavlovitch,” put in Skada, sharply enunciating each word in a tone pitched deliberately low. “Ze bourgeois vorld vill of its own accord crumple into pieces.”

Skada, the Levantine Jew, was a man in the early fifties. He was extremely near-sighted, and glasses thick as telescope lenses straddled the putty-coloured hooked nose. The face was an ugly one, with short, fuzzy hair closely plastered over the egg-shaped skull and enormous ears; but the thoughtful eyes glowed with an infinite kindliness. Skada led an ascetic life. Meynestrel had nicknamed him “the Pundit.”

“How’s yourself?” a gruff bass voice inquired, and a sledge-hammer hand crashed on Jacques’s shoulder. “Hot as hell, ain’t it?”

Quilleuf, who had just come in, walked round the room, slapping backs and shaking hands with his hearty “How’s yourself?” He never waited for an answer and, in winter as in summer, invariably followed up with “Hot as hell, ain’t it?” Nothing short of a raging blizzard could make him change the formula.

“It may take time to crumple,” Skada went on, “but crumple it must one day—in-ev-i-ta-bly. Zat’s vy one can die vithout regrets.” His flabby eyelids dropped and a quiet smile that vouched for his serene confidence in the future set the long, plump lips slowly writhing across each other, like two tangled snakes.

Jean Périnet greeted the Pundit's speech with a series of little, emphatic nods.

"Yes, time's on our side. Everywhere. Even in France."

Périnet had a rapid, high-pitched voice with ringing tones, and a way of saying everything that crossed his mind with artless unconcern. His broad Parisian accent struck an amusing note in these international confabulations. He looked twenty-eight or thirty, a typical young workman from the Parisian suburbs, with alert eyes, the ghost of a moustache, a quizzical nose, and a general air of health and cleanliness. The son of a Paris furniture-maker, he had got into trouble over a woman and run away from home when little more than a boy. He had known hard luck, frequented anarchist circles, and done time in jail. When, as the sequel to a street affray, the Lyon police were on his tracks, he had crossed the frontier. Jacques greatly liked him. The non-French members of the group, however, tended to keep him at arm's length; they were put off by his overready laugh, his caustic wit, and, most of all, by his regrettable habit of naming his friends in terms of their national fare: the "Macaronis," the "German Sausages," the "Rosbifs," and so forth. He meant no harm by it, and himself had taken no offence on hearing an Englishman refer to him as "the Frog."

He turned to Jacques, as if calling him to witness. "In France, even in big business circles, the new generation's caught on to it. They know damn well, deep down inside them, that the game is up; that they won't be able to live on the backs of the workers much longer; that one of these fine days the land and mines and factories and railways, the whole bag of tricks, has got to come back to the workers. The younger ones, anyhow, know it. Ain't that so, Thibault?"

Zelavsky and Skada spun quickly round and fixed keenly questioning eyes on Jacques, as if the point were one of extreme urgency and they were only waiting for Jacques's reply before making some momentous decision. Jacques smiled. True, he attached no less importance than they did to every symptom of impending social upheaval, but he was less convinced than they of the utility of such conversations.

"That's so," he agreed. "Many young Frenchmen of the middle-class, I imagine, have developed secret doubts of the future of capitalism. The capitalist system still keeps their pockets lined, and they hope it will last out their lifetime. Still, they're beginning to feel uneasy. But that's all. It's a mistake to jump to the conclusion that they're on the point of deserting their class. On the contrary, I expect they'll put up a very stiff fight for their privileges, and they're still devilishly well entrenched. For one thing, oddly enough, they have the tacit consent of the poor devils whom they exploit; that's a big help."

"And don't forget," Périnet put in, "that they keep all the top jobs for their own selves, they run the show."

"Not only," Jacques observed, "do they run it but, for the time being, one might say they have a sort of right to run it. For, after all, where could we find—?"

A sudden bellow from Quilleuf interrupted him. "*Memories of a Proletarian!* Ha! Ha!" At the far end of the room Quilleuf was standing beside the table on which Charcovsky, the bookseller—who held the post of librarian—laid out each evening the new books, magazines, and newspapers that had just come in. All that could be seen of Quilleuf was his bent back and big shoulders quaking in a vast guffaw.

Jacques completed his remark. "Where could we find, at a moment's notice, men with enough expert knowledge to take their place? Why are you laughing, Sergei?"

For some moments Zelavsky had been contemplating Jacques with a look of mingled amusement and affection.

"In every Frenchman," he said, wagging his head, "dwells a sceptic who never sleeps but with one eye open."

Quilleuf had swung round abruptly. After a hasty glance at the other groups, he marched straight on Jacques, brandishing a book he had picked up from the table.

"Emile Pouchard. *Memories of a Proletarian Childhood.* What d'you make of this, eh, boys?" Guffawing, rolling his eyes, and thrusting forward his plump, jovial face to peer at each in turn, he comically overdid his fury for their entertainment.

"Here's another of these half-baked 'comrades,' some miserable whipper-snapper with his precious problems! Some dud pen-pusher who dumps his garbage on the workers' doorsteps!"

Quilleuf, hailed by his friends as "the Tribune"—alternatively, "the Cobbler"—came from the South of France. After many years at sea in the merchant marine and spells of multifarious work in Mediterranean ports, this rolling stone had fetched up at Geneva. His little bootshop was always thronged with workless militants who found there, after closing time at Headquarters, a fire in winter, soft drinks in summer, and at all times tobacco and good company.

There was a pleasant magic—which instinctively he turned to excellent account—in his melodious southern voice. Sometimes at public meetings, after fidgeting in his seat for a couple of hours, he would rush onto the platform and, though he had nothing new to put forward and merely clad the arguments of previous speakers in the glamour of his tempestuous eloquence, in a few phrases he would carry his hearers with him and persuade them to vote for measures for which the cleverest orators had until then failed to get a majority. The difficult thing was to dam this spate of eloquence, once the flood-gates were opened; for the release of his pent-up enthusiasm and the sense of power that, radiating from his personality, swept his audience off their feet—not to say the sound of his own voice—gave him a physical pleasure so intense that he could never have enough of it.

Now he was fluttering the pages of the *Memories*, scanning the chapter headings, and sliding his fat forefinger under certain passages, like a child spelling out the words.

" 'The joys of family life'! 'The charm of home'! Oh, the son of a bitch!"

He shut the book, and with the neat precision of an expert on the bowling green, flexing his knees and swinging his arms, pitched it across the room onto the table.

"Look here!" He turned to Jacques again. "I don't see why I shouldn't write my memoirs, too. Don't I know all about 'the joys of family life'! And I've plenty of memories of childhood, and to spare, for those who haven't any!"

Drawn by the stentorian voice, others were strolling up to join the group around the Tribune, whose yarns always brought a gust of breezy realism into the rather academic atmosphere of these gatherings.

Half closing his eyes, he cast a swift glance round his audience, then began adroitly in a low, confidential tone. "Everyone here knows the Old Town at Marseilles, don't they? Well, that's where we lived, the six of us, at the end of a blind alley. In two rooms which, put together, made about half the size of this one. One of 'em hadn't no window. My dad had to get up by candlelight every morning, before the sun rose, and bitter cold it was. He'd haul me out of the heap of old rags where I slept with my brothers; seems he couldn't bear to see anyone else taking it easy while he was up and about. Every night he'd roll in very late, half drunk, after a god-awful day loading barrels on the docks, poor devil. Ma was always ailing and wondering how to make both ends meet. Ma was as scared of him as we were. She, too, was out all day—doing chores, most likely, down in the town. As I'd the honour to be the first-born of the bunch, I had to keep the other three kids in order. And didn't I wallop it into them, seeing as how they got on my nerves, puling and mewling and snuffling and scrapping all the time. Nary a hot stew for us kids; a hunk of bread, an onion, and a dozen olives was all that came our way, with a rasher thrown in once in a blue moon. Never a square meal, never a kind word, never a lark, never a bloody thing! From morn till night we mooched about the streets, fighting like wildcats when we'd spotted a rotten orange in the gutter. Or we'd go sniffing the shells the lucky ones who were digging into sea-urchins chucked down on the sidewalk. At thirteen we'd started in with little girls, in the empty lots behind the billboards. My 'joys of family life'—to hell with them! Cold, hunger, injustice, jealousy, revolt! I'd been put to work as an apprentice at a blacksmith's; the only pay I got was kicks in the beam. My fingers were raw with burns, and my arms ached from tugging at the bellows, and my cheeks were scorched all day by the big, roaring forge." He had raised his tone; his voice was vibrant with indignation, and with pleasure at its own sound. Again with a swift glance he reviewed his audience. "Aye, I could tell some 'memories of childhood' if I set to it."

Jacques caught an amused twinkle in Zelavsky's eye. The Russian gently raised his arm toward Quilleuf, and asked: "How did you come to join the Party?"

"It's ancient history," Quilleuf said. "When I was at sea, I'd the luck to have two shipmates who bunked with me, who *knew*, and did a bit of propagandizing. I started reading, finding out about it. So did some of the others. We lent each other books, we talked things over. Cutting our wisdom teeth, eh? In six months' time there was a whole bunch of us that *knew*. When I left the ship, I'd grown up; I was—a man!"

He fell silent, staring before him into the middle distance.

"Yes, we were a group—a real gang of tough 'uns. What's become of all the others? Anyhow, they ain't written their 'Memoirs'—not they! . . . Hello, girls! And how's yourselves?" He turned gallantly toward two young women who were coming up. "Hot today, ain't it?"

The ring of listeners parted to include the two Swiss comrades, Anaïs Julian and Emilie Cartier. One was a schoolmistress, the other a Red Cross nurse. They shared a flat, and usually came together to these gatherings. Anaïs, the teacher, spoke several languages and made translations of foreign revolutionary articles for the radical Swiss papers.

They were very different in appearance. Emilie, the younger, was a small, plump brunette. Set off by the blue veil that suited her so well and which she almost always wore, her complexion had the creamy pink-and-whiteness of an English child's. She was a merry, mildly flirtatious girl, quick in her gestures and retorts, though the latter never had a sting. Her patients adored her. So did Quilleuf, who gave her no peace from his semi-paternal banter. In the broadest accents but with the utmost gravity, he would declare: “It ain’t that she’s exactly pretty, but our Emilie’s a treat to look at.”

Anaïs, the other girl, was also dark; she had prominent cheekbones, a high colour, and there was a hint of surliness in the long, horselike face. But both alike gave an impression of perfect mental balance and vast reserves of strength—the fine serenity of those for whom what they think is in perfect harmony with what they are and do.

The conversation had taken a new turn.

Skada, the dreamer, was discoursing on justice.

“*Ach*, but ve should alvays spread more and more justice round us,” he pleaded, in his slow, ingratiating voice. “Zat, zat is ze great thing to make men keep peace between zemselves.”

“Stuff!” Quilleuf burst in. “When you ask for justice, I’m with you till hell freezes—that’s sure. But, as for it making men keep peace, I wouldn’t reckon too much on that; there’s no fussier, more quarrelsome fellow on earth than one who has justice on the brain.”

“Nothing lasts that isn’t based on love,” murmured little Vanheede, who had just moved to Jacques’s side. “Peace is the work of faith, of faith and charity.” He stayed motionless for a few moments, then walked away, an enigmatic smile upon his lips.

Jacques noticed Paterson and Alfreda slowly crossing the room together, still engrossed in a low-voiced conversation; they were going toward the other room, where presumably Meynestrel was to be found. Alfreda looked tinier than ever beside the Englishman; tall and lithe, his pipe as usual to the fore, he was bending toward her as they walked. His clean-shaven face, delicately moulded features, and the cut of his clothes, threadbare though they were, always made him seem better turned out than the others. As she passed, Alfreda cast at the group of men including Jacques that soft, brooding glance of hers in which sometimes, as now, there shone an unexpected gleam, a slumberous fire that seemed to mark her out for some high destiny.

Paterson smiled to Jacques. He was obviously in good spirits, which made him look more boyish than ever.

“Look what Richardley’s given me!” he cried gleefully, holding out a small pack of tobacco. “Roll yourself a cigarette, Thibault. No? You’re wrong.” He took a puff and voluptuously rolled the smoke out through his nostrils. “I assure you, old boy, tobacco is the greatest boon on earth.”

Smiling, Jacques watched his receding form. Then unthinkingly he too began to move toward the door which had just closed behind them. But on the threshold he halted and leaned against the doorjamb.

Meynestrel's voice was coming to him, harsh, cutting, with an ironic lift at the close of certain phrases.

"That goes without saying. I'm not against what are called 'reforms' as a matter of course. The struggle for reforms may serve in some countries as a fighting platform. And the improved conditions of life thus obtained by the proletariat may tend to speed up its revolutionary education to some extent. But your reformers always imagine that reforms are the only means to attain their ends. They're only one of many means. Your reformers think that social legislation and victories on the economic front are bound to increase not only the well-being of the masses but their striking-power. I wonder! They assume that reforms will be enough to bring about a state of affairs in which the proletariat need only make a quiet gesture and political power will drop into its hands like a ripe plum. That's as it may be! But no child is born without some very painful birth-pangs for the mother."

"And no revolution," a voice put in, "without a *Wirbelsturm*, a phase of storm and stress." Jacques recognized the voice as Mithoerg's.

"Your reformers," Meynestrel went on, "are grievously mistaken. Mistaken in two ways. Firstly, because they overestimate the proletariat; secondly, because they underestimate capitalism. The proletariat is still far short of the stage of development they fancy it has reached. It hasn't enough cohesion, not enough class-consciousness, not enough—heaps of other things, to be able to take the offensive and seize the reins of power. As for capitalism, your reformers imagine that because it's giving ground it will let itself be nibbled away piecemeal, by reform after reform, till nothing's left. That's nonsense. Its anti-revolutionary zeal, its powers of resistance are intact. And all the time it's preparing the ground, with diabolical cunning, for a counter-attack. Do you think the capitalists don't know what they're about when they accept reforms which win over to them the Party officials and divide the working class by making distinctions between the workers—and all the rest of it? Of course I know that capitalism's divided against itself; I know that, appearances notwithstanding, the mutual hostility between capitalist groups is steadily increasing. That's another reason why we may be sure capitalism, before throwing in its hand, will play all the cards it has up its sleeve. *All!* And one of the trump cards on which, rightly or wrongly, it most relies is—war! War, it reckons, will restore to it, at one swoop, all the ground it has been losing to the socialist advance. War will enable it to divide and crush the proletariat. Firstly, to divide it—because the masses are not at one in being immune from patriotic sentiments, and a war would set those who thought nationally (no small number, I should say) at loggerheads with those who were faithful to the international ideal. Secondly, to crush it—because considerable numbers of the workers on both sides would fall at the front and such as survived would be either dispirited, in the country that was beaten; or, in the victor country, easy to lull into a state of lethargy. . . .”

VI

“THAT QUILLEUF—WHAT a chap!” Sergei Zelavsky smiled. He had seen Jacques leave the group, and followed him. “Funny how they stick, the things that happen to us when we’re children, isn’t it?” He seemed even more “up in the clouds” than usual. “How about you, Thibault? What led you to become a—?” On the point of applying the term “revolutionary” to Jacques, he hesitated. “I mean, how do you come to be with us?”

“I wonder, now!” Jacques’s faint smile and slight movement of retreat seemed to brush aside the question.

“Personally,” Zelavsky went on immediately, with the eagerness of a shy man glad for once to yield to the temptation of talking about himself, “personally, I know quite well how one thing led to another, bit by bit, once I’d run away from college. But I think the ground had been well prepared. The first shock, it had come a great deal earlier, when I was quite a little kid.”

He was looking down, his eyes fixed on his hands, which he was clasping and unclasping as he spoke—white, plumpish hands, with short, stubby fingers. A near view revealed a network of tiny wrinkles in the hollows of his temples, round his eyes. He had a long, hooked, flat-sided nose, the prow-like effect of which was heightened by the slanting eyebrows and receding forehead. The fair, preposterously large moustache seemed made of floss or spun glass, or some other curious feathery substance, and the least draught set it rippling delicately, like the filmy barbels of certain exotic fish.

He had shepherded Jacques discreetly to a quiet corner at the far end of the room, behind the table strewn with newspapers.

Without looking at Jacques, he went on talking about himself. “My father, he was the manager of a big factory he’d built on the family estate, six versts from Gorodnia. I can remember everything, oh, quite clearly. Really I never think about it.” He smiled, raising his head and letting his gentle eyes linger on Jacques’s face. “Only tonight—I wonder why that is?”

Jacques’s way of listening—patient, earnest, and tactful—always won him confidences. Zelavsky’s smile grew bolder.

“It is so amusing, all that, is it not? I remember the big house and Foma, our gardener, and the workmen’s huts on the edge of the forest. I remember quite well, when I was little, there was a sort of special—what do you call it?—fête I went to with my mother; I suppose it happened every year; father’s birthday it must have been. I saw my father standing by himself at a table in the middle of the factory yard, with a big pile of roubles on a dish in front of him. All the workmen, they march past him, one by one, in silence, with their backs bent. And to each my father hands a coin. Then each of them, one after another, he takes Father’s hand and kisses it. Yes, that’s how we were in Russia in those days; and I’m sure that even now, in 1914, it’s just the same in some parts of the country. My father, he was a very tall man, with broad shoulders. He always held himself very straight up; I was afraid of him. So, perhaps, were the workmen.

“I remember, when my father went after breakfast to the works, in his fur coat and cap, always he took his revolver from the drawer of the hall table. And he slammed it—like that!—all at once into his pocket. And never he went out without his stick; it was all of lead and dreadfully heavy, I could hardly lift it, but he would twirl it between two fingers and whistle a tune.” The Russian was still smiling at his memories. “My father, he was a very strong man,” he went on after a short pause. “He frightened me because of that, but I loved him because of that. And all the workers, they were like me. They were frightened because he was hard, a tyrant, even cruel if it must be. But they loved him too, because he was strong. And then he was just; with no pity, but awfully just.”

He fell silent again, as if troubled by a belated scruple. Then, reassured by Jacques’s attentive air, he went on. “And then, one day, everything went wrong at home. There was a coming and a going of men in uniform. My father, he did not come back to dinner. My mother would not sit down to table. Doors banged. The servants ran up and down the passages. My mother never left the upstairs window. I heard them say: “strike,” “fighting,” “police charge.” And suddenly there were shouts downstairs. Then I poke my head between two banisters on the stairs. What do I see? A long stretcher, all wet with mud and snow. And what do I see on it? My father lying flat, his overcoat torn up, his head bare. My father looking quite small, curled up, an arm hanging down. I started crying. They threw a cloth over my head and rushed me to the far end of the house, among the servants who were saying prayers before the icon and chattering like magpies. Then I got to understand. It was the workmen, the men I’d seen marching past my father with their backs nicely bowed, kissing his hand. It was the same workmen, who’d thought that day they’d had enough of scraping and bowing and being handed roubles. They’d smashed the machinery, and they’d proved themselves the stronger. Yes, the workmen. Stronger than Father!”

He had ceased smiling and was stroking his long moustache, peering up at Jacques with a quaintly solemn air.

“That day, my friend, all the world changed for me. No more I was on Father’s side, I was on the workers’ side. Yes, that day it happened. For the first time I knew how grand and fine that is: a crowd of bent-backs straightening them up.”

“Had they killed your father?” Jacques asked.

Zelavsky went into a peal of laughter. “Killed? Not a bit! He was blue and black all over, you know, but nothing grave. Only after that, Father, he was not manager any more. He went back never to the works. He lived with us, with his vodka, bullying always my mother and the servants and peasants. Me they sent to the town, to college. I never came home. And one day, two or three years later, Mother wrote to me, telling me to pray and to be sad because my father was dead.” His face had grown earnest again. Hurriedly he muttered, as if talking to himself: “But, of course, I’d given up praying already. It was quite soon after that I ran away.”

They were silent for a while.

Jacques’s eyes were fixed on the floor; his thoughts, too, had suddenly reverted to memories of childhood. He saw again his father’s apartment in Paris; he could even smell the odour of the carpets and curtains, and the curious stuffiness, emanating from his father’s study, that greeted him when he came home from school in the afternoon. Pictures rose in his mind of old Mlle. de Waize pottering to and fro, and Gise, the childish Gise of long ago with her round face and glowing, faithful eyes. He recalled his schooldays: the classrooms and the playground, his friendship with Daniel, the masters’ suspicion, the mad flight to Marseille and his homecoming with Antoine, his father waiting for them in his frock-coat under the hall lamp. And then the dark phase of his youth: the reformatory, his cell, his daily walk escorted by a warder. A tremor ran through his body. Opening his eyes wide, he drew a deep breath and looked round the room.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, breaking impatiently away from the corner in which they had been standing, and shaking himself like a dog that has just scrambled out of a pond. "Why, there's Prezel!"

Ludwig Prezel and his sister Cecilia had just entered. They were casting helpless glances at the various knots of people in the room; obviously they were newcomers and feeling rather lost. When they noticed Jacques, they waved a friendly greeting simultaneously and moved quietly toward him.

Brother and sister were remarkably alike; both were of a height, and dark. They had the same rotund, somewhat thick-set neck, the same type of head, the head one finds on classical busts, with boldly defined, impassive features, and which seems less a work of nature than moulded in accordance with a canon of art. The bridge of the nose continued the straight, downward movement of the forehead, without a notch at the level of the eyes. Even the eyes did little to impart animation to the statuesque faces; though perhaps Ludwig's seemed a little more alive than his sister's, in which there never shone a gleam of human emotion.

"We got back yesterday," Cecilia explained.

"From Munich?" Jacques inquired, as he shook hands with them.

"From Munich, Hamburg, and Berlin."

"And last month," Prezel added, "we were in Italy, at Milan."

A swarthy little man, with lopsided shoulders, who happened to be passing stopped short, his face aglow with interest.

"So you've been at Milan!" he exclaimed, and a broad smile disclosed his big, equine teeth. "Did you meet the *Avanti* comrades?"

"Of course."

Cecilia turned and looked at him. "Do you come from those parts?"

The Italian laughed and nodded emphatically several times.

Jacques introduced him: "Comrade Saffrio."

The sturdy, if slightly deformed, little Italian was a man in the forties. The dark velvety lustre of his night-black eyes gave beauty to his face.

"I knew your Italian Party before 1910," Prezel said. "There's no denying it used to be one of the feeblest in Europe. What a difference now! We watched the strikes during the Red Week. *Wunderbar*, the progress!"

“Yes, indeed!” Saffrio exclaimed. “What energy and courage!”

“Italy,” Prezel continued in a didactic tone, “has certainly a great example taken from the organization methods of our German social-democracy. Also the Italian working-class, it is well grouped together, well disciplined today, and ready to go quickly *vorwärts*. Markworthy is it that the peasant proletariat there is stronger than in any other land.”

Saffrio chuckled with delight. “Fifty-nine members are on our side in Parliament. And our press! Why, our *Avanti* sells over forty-five thousand copies of each number. When were you in Italy?”

“In April and May. For the Ancona Congress.”

“Know Serrati and Vella?”

“Serrati, Vella, Bacci, Moscallegro, Malatesta—we know them all.”

“And our great Turati?”

“*Ach*, that one’s only a liberal.”

“And Mussolini? *He’s* not just a liberal. He’s the real thing! Have you met him?”

“Yes,” Prezel replied briefly, with a faint grimace that Saffrio did not notice.

“We used to live together,” the Italian went on, “Benito and I, at Lausanne. He was waiting for the amnesty, to be allowed to go back to our country. Every time he visits Switzerland, he comes to see me. Last winter . . .”

“*Ein Abenteurer*,” Cecilia murmured.

“He comes from the Romagna—like me.” A glint of pride flickered in Saffrio’s eyes as he gazed at the Germans. “He’s a boyhood chum of mine, is Benito—like a brother! His father kept an inn four miles from my home. I knew him well, the old man; he was one of the first internationalists in the Romagna. You should have heard him at his inn, trouncing the priests and patriots. And wasn’t he proud of his son! He used to say: ‘Benito and me, if one day we got down to the job, just he and I, we’d wipe out all the blackguards in the old country!’ His eyes used to shine just like Benito’s. Ever noticed the power there is in Benito’s eyes?”

Turning to Jacques, Cecilia said some words in German in a low tone. Jacques smiled.

Saffrio’s face darkened. “What was she saying about Benito?” he snapped.

“She said he . . . he shows off a bit, he pushes himself forward,” Jacques translated.

“Mussolini?” Saffrio shouted, darting a furious glance at the girl. “No! Mussolini is as straight as a die, no hanky-panky about him. All his life he’s been an ‘anti’—anti-royalist, anti-patriot, anti-clerical. A great *condottiere*, too. The real revolutionary leader. And always practical, realistic. Deeds first, words after. And a perfect demon for work; during the Forli strikes he never took a moment’s rest, holding meetings, speaking in the streets. A fine speaker, too; every word straight from the shoulder! ‘Do this, don’t do that!’ You should have seen how pleased he was when we unscrewed the rails and held up a train. All the active measures against the Tripoli expedition were his work, his and his paper’s. In Italy he’s the incarnation of our fighting spirit. And it’s he who day by day in the *Avanti* keeps the revolutionary *furia* at boiling-point. He’s the man the King and his government have to fear most. Yes, if socialism’s suddenly forged ahead in my country, it’s mainly thanks to Benito. This last month, for instance. The Red Week. How he jumped at the opportunity! Ah, *per Bacco*, if only they’d listened to his paper! A few days more and Italy would have gone up in flames. If the *Confederazione* of Labour hadn’t taken fright and called off the strike, it was the beginning of a civil war, the downfall of the monarchy. The Italian revolution! One night, in the Romagna, the comrades proclaimed the Republic. *Si, si*—it’s a fact.”

He had deliberately turned his back on Cecilia and her brother, and was addressing Jacques only. Smiling again, he added in a tone at once peremptory and wheedling: “Be careful, Thibault, and don’t believe everything you hear.”

Then, faintly shrugging his shoulders, he moved away, studiously ignoring the two Germans.

There was a short silence.

Alfreda and Paterson had left the door of Meynestrel’s room open. He was not in sight but, though he was not speaking loudly, his voice could be heard now and again.

“And in your country,” Zelavsky asked Prezel, “are things going well?”

“In Germany? Surely. Better and better.”

“In Germany,” Cecilia said, “twenty-five years ago there were only a million Socialists; ten years ago, two millions. Today there are four millions.”

She spoke softly, hardly moving her lips, but the tone was challenging, and her dark, brooding eyes lingered first on Jacques, then on the Russian. Seeing her, Jacques was always reminded of Homer’s epithet for Hera, “the ox-eyed goddess.”

“That’s certain,” he said in a conciliatory tone. “Your ‘Social-Demo’ movement has put in some fine constructive work in the last twenty-five years. The genius for organization shown by its leaders is perfectly amazing. But perhaps one can’t help wondering if the revolutionary spirit isn’t—how shall I put it?—petering out a bit in the German Party. Precisely because your energies are directed wholly to organization.”

It was Prezel who answered him.

“The revolutionary spirit petering out? *Nein*, you need not to fear on that score. You see, our first duty is to organize—a force to become. We stand for realities, not only theories; and that’s what tells! If in these latter years—I’m thinking notably of 1911 and 1912—the peace has been kept in Europe, whose work was that? And if today we may hope that a great European war is out of the question for many years, it’s thanks to whom? To the German proletariat. Everyone knows that. You spoke of the ‘constructive work’ done by social-democracy. It’s an even greater work than you suspect—something truly solid and *kolossal*. Nothing short of a state within the state. And how did we do all this? Mostly by the energy we put forth in Parliament; and our influence in the Reichstag is still ground gaining. If tomorrow the Pan-Germanists tried to work up another Agadir affair, they’d find against them not only the two hundred thousand who demonstrated in Treptlow Park, but all the Socialist members of the Reichstag, with every liberal in the land behind them!”

Sergei Zelavsky had been listening attentively. Now he remarked: “Still, when the war levy was voted on, your Socialists voted aye.”

“*Pardon*,” said Cecilia, raising a monitory finger.

Her brother broke in at once, the German accent and idiom more pronounced now that he was speaking volubly.

“*Ach*, that was only *Taktik*, Zelavsky.” His smile was slightly condescending. “You do not understand. There were two quite different things involved; there was the *Militärvorlage*, the law concerning armaments, and there was the *Wehrsteuer*, the supplementary estimates for military expenditure. The Social-Democrats, first they voted *against* the militarist law and then, when it had been passed in spite of their opposition, they voted *for* supplies. And that was very clever *Taktik*. Why? Because in this law something there was absolutely new in the constitution, something quite vital to us: a direct imperial levy on private wealth. That was a not-to-be-missed chance for us! Because it was a real Socialist triumph for the proletariat. Now do you understand? And what proves our Socialist members are quite dead against the *Militarismus* is that every time they get a chance they vote against the Chancellor's imperialist foreign policy, like one man."

"That's so," Jacques admitted. "All the same . . ." He seemed reluctant to continue.

"All the same . . . ?" Zelavsky prompted eagerly.

"All the same—what?" Cecilia asked.

"Well, I can't help it, but somehow when I was at Berlin and came in contact with some of your Socialist members, I had a feeling that their struggle against militarism was rather—how shall I put it?—half-hearted. Liebknecht, of course, is an exception; I'm thinking of the others. I could see that most of them were reluctant to go to the root of the evil and attack it there; I mean, to challenge frankly and openly the subservience of the masses to the military power. It seemed to me that, in the last analysis, they were still, if I may say so, incorrigibly *German*; convinced, of course, of the world-wide mission of the proletariat, but convinced above all of the mission of the *German* proletariat. And very far from carrying their internationalism and anti-militarism as far as these are carried in France."

"Naturally," Cecilia said, and for a second the eyelids veiled the enigmatic eyes.

"Naturally," Prezel echoed in a tone of truculent superiority.

Zelavsky hastened to intervene.

"Your bourgeois democracies," he remarked with a shrewd smile, "they allow Socialists in their parliaments just because they know so well that a Socialist in the government, he's not a real dangerous Socialist."

From the other end of the room came Mithoerg, Charcovsky, and old Boissonis. Ludwig and Cecilia shook hands with them.

Zelavsky turned to Jacques, still smiling to himself, mildly and gently wagging his head to and fro.

"Do you know what I think? I think that, to keep the masses in servitude, your democratic governments, your republics and parliamentary monarchies, though they may not seem so, are methods no less terrible—and more cunning—than our Tsarist government, with all its horrors."

"Yes!" Mithoerg, who had overheard, put in excitedly. "And how right the Pilot was the other night when he said: 'The first task of the revolution is a fight to the death against democracy'!"

"Wait a bit!" Jacques said. "For one thing the Pilot had only Russia in mind, the Russian revolution. What he said was that the great change in Russia shouldn't start off with a bourgeois democracy. Also, don't let's exaggerate; one can do some useful work within the framework of a democracy. A man like Jaurès, for instance. . . . Just think what the Socialists have already achieved in France, and above all in Germany.”

“No!” Mithoerg exclaimed. “Quite different things they are: the emancipation that comes by working within the framework of a democracy, and a revolution. In France the leaders have gone more or less bourgeois; they have cast off the pure revolutionary spirit.”

“We’re going to listen a bit to what they’re saying at that end,” Boissonis broke in, with a meaning glance toward the open door.

“Is Meynestrel there?” Prezel inquired.

“Don’t you hear him?” said Mithoerg.

They stopped talking, listened. The sound of Meynestrel’s voice came to them, all on the same note, meticulously clear.

Zelavsky slipped his arm in Jacques’s.

“Let’s go and hear it, too.”

VII

JACQUES came and stood beside Vanheede, who, with clasped hands and half-closed eyelids, was leaning against the dusty shelves that Monier used for storing out-of-date pamphlets.

“I, for one,” said Trautenbach—a German Jew, with curling, sandy hair, who lived in Berlin but made frequent visits to Geneva—“I don’t believe you can get anywhere by law-abiding methods. Leave those half-measures to the intellectuals.”

“Not so fast,” said Richardley, a tall young man with a shock of thick black hair. It was about him this cosmopolitan band had gathered, three years before, and until Meynestrel appeared on the scene he had been their leading spirit. Of his own accord, however, he had retired into the background before the superiority of the Pilot, at whose side he had ever since played the part of an able, devoted second-in-command. “The answer’s different according to the country you’ve in mind. You can’t deny that in some democratic countries, like France and England, the revolutionary movement does progress by legal means, for the time being." He always spoke with his lean, resolute chin thrust well forward. The clean-shaven face with the white forehead framed in dark hair was pleasant enough at first glance, yet the intensely black eyes had no trace of gentleness, the thin lips ended at each corner in a sharp-cut line, and there was a disagreeable harshness in his voice.

"The difficult thing," Charcovsky said, "is to know just when to proceed from law-abiding methods to violent, insurrectionary action."

Skada said with a jerk of his hooked nose: "Ven the steam pushes it up too strong, the lid of the samovar, it blows off of its own accord."

There was an outburst of laughter, fierce laughter, of the sort Vanheede used to refer to as "their cannibal glee."

"Bravo, Pundit!" Quilleuf cried.

"So long as all the power is in the hands of the capitalists," Boissonis observed, moistening his pink lips with his small, snakelike tongue, "the people's demands for democratic liberties can't do much to speed up the real revolu——"

"Obviously," Meynestrel cut in, without so much as a glance at the old professor.

There was a pause in the conversation.

Boissonis made an attempt to press his argument home. "Doesn't the course of history prove it? Just see what happened in the case of——"

This time it was Richardley who cut him short. "History, indeed! Does history ever justify the belief that one can foresee, that one can predict the hour when a revolution will break out? Never in your life! One fine day the samovar must blow up, but there's no foretelling just when the suppressed energy of popular discontent is going to take effect."

"That's as may be!" Meynestrel rapped out in a tone admitting no reply.

He said nothing further, but those who were used to his ways knew he was about to speak. At such gatherings, he would silently follow up a train of thought and stay for a long time without taking part in the discussion, merely interjecting an enigmatic "That's as may be" or an elusive and disarming "Obviously!" which, coming from any other man, might have had a ludicrous effect; but the shrewd glance, the sternness of the voice, the fixity of purpose and intense preoccupation that the tone conveyed never produced smiles. Rather, they compelled the attention even of those who were antagonized by his peremptory manner.

"There's a distinction to be made," he said. "You spoke of 'foreseeing' a revolution. What does that mean exactly?"

They were all listening now. He stretched out his injured leg in front of him and cleared his throat. His clawlike hand, the fingers of which were often half clenched as if holding an invisible ball, rose in the air, lightly stroked his beard, and came to rest on his breast.

"There's a distinction to be made between a *revolution* and an *insurrection*. Another distinction between a *revolution* and *revolutionary conditions*. Revolutionary conditions don't invariably lead to a revolution, even if they lead to an insurrection. . . . Take what happened in Russia in 1905; first there were revolutionary conditions, then an insurrection, but no revolution." He paused for a moment, setting his thoughts in order. "Richardley talks of 'foreseeing.' What does he mean by that? Accurately foreseeing just when conditions shall have become revolutionary is no easy matter. All the same, the action of the wage-earners, if brought to bear on pre-revolutionary conditions, may foster and even speed up the growth of revolutionary conditions. But what actually gets a revolution under way is almost invariably some outside, unexpected, and more or less unpredictable event; one, I mean, the date of which cannot be determined in advance."

He had rested his elbow on the back of Alfreda's chair, his chin propped on his fist. For a minute the shrewd yet visionary eyes seemed riveted on some distant scene.

"Let's consider things exactly as they are. In reality. In actual practice." (He had a manner of his own, shrill as a clash of cymbals, of uttering the word "reality.") "For example, in Russia. . . . One should always hark back to examples! Hard facts! That's the only way of getting to know anything. We aren't dealing with mathematics. There's a lot in common between revolution and the art of medicine. First you have theory, and then practice. And a third thing's needed as well: the art of it. But that's beside the point." (Before proceeding he cast a smiling glance at Alfreda, as if, to his mind, she alone were capable of appreciating the digression.) "Well, in Russia in 1904, before the Manchurian War, conditions were pre-revolutionary; pre-revolutionary conditions which might have, which ought to have, led to actual revolutionary conditions. But in what way? Was it possible to foresee in what way? Certainly not!

"More than one abscess looked like coming to a head. There was the agrarian question. There was the Jewish question. There was the trouble with Finland, the Polish business. There was the Russo-Japanese tension in the Far East. It was quite impossible to guess which would prove the unexpected factor that was to transform the pre-revolutionary phase into the revolutionary phase. And all of a sudden the unexpected happened. A camarilla of adventurers with an eye to the main chance succeeded in gaining sufficient influence over the Tsar to force him into a war in the Far East, without the knowledge and against the advice of his Foreign Minister. Who could have foreseen that?"

"Surely might it have been foreseen that the Russo-Japanese friction in Manchuria would inevitably bring about a clash," Zelavsky put in mildly.

"But who could foresee that the clash would take place in 1905, or that it would take place in connexion not with Manchuria but with Korea? Here is an example of the new factor that can transform pre-revolutionary into revolutionary conditions. In the case of Russia it took that war, those defeats. Only then we saw conditions entering the revolutionary phase and leading to an insurrection. An insurrection, mind you, not a revolution. Not a revolution of the workers. And why not? Because the transition from revolutionary conditions to an insurrection is one thing, and that from an insurrection to a revolution is another. . . . Isn't that so, little girl?" he added in a low voice.

Several times while he was speaking he had craned his head forward to peer inquiringly at the young woman's face. Now he fell silent, apparently unmindful of the others' presence and of what he had just been saying. He seemed to be reviewing, on some transcendental plane, the whole set of doctrines which usually engrossed him, though never to the point of making him lose sight of the relation between theory and fact, between revolutionary ideals and the realities of the moment. He was staring straight before him. At such times his vitality seemed wholly concentrated in the dark intensity of his gaze—a gaze so little human that it brought to mind a secret, constant flame burning within him, wasting his tissues, eating his life away.

Old Boissonis, who was more interested in revolutionary theory than in actual revolution, broke the silence.

"Yes, yes! Quite so! It's devilish hard to foresee the switch-over from pre-revolutionary to revolutionary conditions. . . . Wait a bit, though. Once revolutionary conditions have been created, shouldn't we be able to predict the outbreak of a revolution?"

"To 'predict'!" Meynestrel broke in, his nerves on edge. "There you go again! What matters isn't so much to predict. What matters is to prepare, to speed up the transition from revolutionary conditions to actual revolution. Everything then depends on subjective factors: the fitness of the leaders and the revolutionary groups for revolutionary action. And it's up to all of us, the vanguard, to raise that fitness to its highest power, by all and every means.

When a sufficient degree of fitness is attained, then and only then does it become possible to accelerate the passage to revolution! Then it becomes possible to control the march of events! Then, if that's what you're after, it becomes possible to *foresee*!"

He had spoken the last few sentences all in one breath, lowering his voice, and so rapidly that many of the foreigners present had not been able to follow what he said. Now he stopped speaking and, throwing back his head a little, gave a brief smile and shut his eyes.

Jacques, who had remained standing, noticed an empty chair by the window; going up to it, he sat down. At no time did he partake more fully in the life of the community than when he was thus able to break contact, to avoid rubbing shoulders, and, keeping in the background, to feel that he possessed himself once more. At such moments his feelings were not merely those of fellowship but warmly fraternal. Ensconced now in his chair, his arms folded, leaning his head against the wall, he sent his gaze roaming over the group of his friends. After a desultory pause they were again turning toward Meynestrel. Their attitudes were various, but all alike passionately attentive. How he loved them, these men who had given themselves up body and soul to the revolutionary cause, men of whose combative, hounded existences he knew almost every detail!

What if he did disagree with certain of them on the ideological plane? What if he was grieved by the lack of understanding in some of them, by the rough ways of others? He loved them all for their integrity, their single-heartedness. And he was proud of being loved by them; for they did love him, different from them though he was, because they felt that he too was single-hearted. A sudden rush of emotion misted his eyes, blurring his sight of them as individuals, and for a while he seemed to see this little band of outlaws hailing from the four corners of Europe as a composite picture of oppressed mankind growing alive to its servitude and at last rebelling in a desperate effort to rebuild the world.

The voice of the Pilot broke the silence. "Let's come back to the precedent of Russia, to that great adventure. One's obliged to do so. In 1904, was it possible to foretell that the then pre-revolutionary conditions would become revolutionary the very next year, after the reverses in the Far East? No! And in 1905, once a state of revolution had been matured by circumstances, was it possible to know whether the revolution, the real proletarian revolution, would break out? No! And still less whether it could succeed. The objective factors looked highly promising. But the subjective factors were inadequate. Remember how things stood. Objective conditions, first rate: military disasters, a political crisis. An economic crisis, too:

supplies had run out, and there was little short of a famine. And so on. . . . And the political temperature was rising to fever-heat, what with general strikes, peasant rebellions, mutinies, the *Potemkin* affair, the December insurrections in Moscow. Why, then, did revolutionary conditions fail to produce a revolution? On account of the inadequacy of the subjective factors, Boissonis. Because nothing was in proper shape. There was no real will to revolution. No clear line of action in the minds of the leaders. No agreement between them. No subordination, no discipline. No co-ordination between leaders and the led. And, above all, no unity between the industrial and the rural masses; no active revolutionary leaven among the peasantry."

There was a timid protest from Zelavsky. "But surely the mujiks . . . ?"

"The mujiks? Yes, they kept up a certain agitation in their villages; they occupied the estates of their overlords, burnt down a barine's manor-house here and there. Granted! But who was it showed their willingness to fight the workers? Why, the mujiks! Who were the rank-and-file that savagely shot down, wiped out the revolutionary proletariat in the streets of Moscow? Mujiks, every one of them. An utter lack of the subjective factors!" he repeated bitterly. "When one knows what happened in December 1905; when one thinks of the time wasted in windy rhetoric within the ranks of social-democracy; when one finds that the leaders hadn't even agreed upon the aims to be pursued, hadn't even agreed upon a general plan of campaign—so much so that the strikes in St. Petersburg were stupidly called off just when the disturbances began in Moscow, so much so that the strike in the postal and railway services came to an end in December, just when a breakdown in the transport services would have paralysed the government and prevented them from bringing up to Moscow the regiments which promptly smashed the insurrection—yes, when one remembers all these things, it's easy to understand why, in that Russia of 1905, the revolution"—he hesitated for a fraction of a second, bent his head toward Alfreda, then muttered very fast—"why the revolution was doomed, doomed from the outset."

Richardley, who with his elbows on his knees and shoulders bent forward had been listening, twiddling his thumbs, now looked up in surprise. "Doomed from the outset?"

"Of course it was!" Meynestrel replied.

There was a pause.

Jacques, from his seat, ventured to suggest: "In that case, instead of trying to force things to an issue, wouldn't it have been better . . . ?"

Meynestrel, who was gazing at Alfreda, smiled without turning toward Jacques. Skada, Boissonis, Trautenbach, Zelavsky, and Prezel nodded approval.

"Considering," Jacques continued, "that the Tsar had granted them the Constitution, wouldn't it have been better . . . ?" He paused again. Boissonis completed the phrase: ". . . to have come to a tentative agreement with the bourgeois parties?"

"And to have taken advantage of the situation to reorganize Russian social-democracy on a sound basis," Prezel added.

"No, I don't agree with you there," Zelavsky protested mildly. "Russia isn't Germany. And I consider that Lenin was right."

"Certainly not!" Jacques exclaimed. "Plekhanov was right. After the October Constitution, the best thing to do was not to take up arms. The thing to do was to call a halt, to consolidate the ground won."

"They took the heart from the masses," Skada put in. "For no purpose they sent people to their death."

"Quite true!" Jacques eagerly assented. "They'd have saved no end of suffering, no end of needless bloodshed."

"That's as may be!" Meynestrel's voice was gruff. He was no longer smiling.

All waited in silence for him to speak again.

"A foredoomed attempt?" he went on after a short pause. "Undoubtedly. Foredoomed as far back as October. But needless bloodshed? Certainly not!"

He had risen from his seat—a thing he very rarely did, once he had begun speaking. He went over to the window, looked out absent-mindedly, and hurriedly returned to Alfreda's side.

"The December rising could not lead to the triumph of a new regime. Granted! But was that a reason not to act *as if* that triumph had been feasible? Surely not. In the first place because one never can tell how strong revolutionary forces are until they've been put to the test, until after a revolution has been attempted. Plekhanov was wrong. It was necessary to resort to force after October. It was needful that blood should be shed. 1905 was only a rehearsal. A necessary one; historically necessary, I mean. October was, after the Commune and on a larger scale, the second attempt to turn an imperialistic war into a social revolution. The blood that was spilled was not spilled in vain! Down to 1905 the whole Russian nation—even the proletariat—believed in the Tsar. People crossed themselves when they spoke his name. But when the Tsar ordered the people to be fired upon, the proletariat and even many mujiks began to realize that there was nothing to be expected from the Tsar, any more than from the ruling classes. In so mystical-minded, so backward a country, this bloodshed was indispensable for the promotion of class-consciousness. Nor is that all. From the standpoint of technique, of revolutionary technique, the experiment was an extremely valuable one. The leaders were thus able to put their abilities to the test for the first time. As will perhaps be proved in the near future!"

He was still standing, his eyes flashing, every sentence punctuated by some motion of his hands. His wrists were as supple as a woman's, and the dainty, sinuous movements of his fingers made each gesture reminiscent of the East, of the expressive hand-play of Cambodian dancers or Indian snake-charmers.

He patted Alfreda's shoulder, and sat down again.

"As will perhaps be proved in the very near future," he repeated. "Europe today, like 1905 Russia, is obviously in a pre-revolutionary ferment. The interests of the capitalist world are in a state of latent conflict. The apparent prosperity Europe now enjoys is a mere illusion. But when and how will the new factor emerge? Of what nature will it prove to be? An economic crisis? A political crisis? A war? A revolution within some state or other? A clever man, indeed, who could foretell that. Not that it matters, of course. The new factor will emerge in its due time. What does matter is to be ready when that time comes. In the Russia of 1905 the proletariat was not ready. That's why the attempt proved an utter failure. Are the European workers ready? Are their leaders ready? No. Is there sufficient solidarity among the sections of the International? No. Is the unity between the leaders of the proletariat well enough established to ensure efficiency? No. Is it to be supposed that the triumph of the revolution will ever be possible without a close cohesion between the revolutionary forces of every country? True, they've set up this International Bureau. But what does it amount to? Very little more than an organ of information. Not even the embryo of that Central Proletarian Power lacking which no simultaneous and decisive action will ever be possible! The Socialist International? A demonstration of the spiritual unity of the workers. And that's no mean achievement. But it has little organization as yet. Everything remains to be done. In what way does it exert its activities? In getting up congresses! Don't think I'm sneering at our congresses! I'll be in Vienna, myself, on August 23. But, in point of fact, there's nothing to be expected from such gatherings. Take Basel, for instance, in 1912. A grandiose demonstration against the war in the Balkans. Granted! Now let's see what came of it. Admirable resolutions were passed amid vast enthusiasm. But especially to be admired was the skill with which the real problem was sidetracked. Why, they even cut out the words ‘general strike’ in their resolutions! Remember the proceedings. Was the problem of a strike at any time examined thoroughly, as a practical problem—to be solved in a different way according to the circumstances, according to the country? What should the *positive* attitude of the workers in such and such a country be, in the event of such and such a war? War is a specific factor; the proletariat, another factor. But when such factors are discussed, our leaders talk ‘about it and about,’ like parsons babbling about good and evil. That’s how things are. The International carries on like a Sunday school. The fusion between doctrine, on the one hand, and the class-consciousness, resources, and revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses, on the other, hasn’t even begun.”

He was silent for a few moments. Then, “Everything remains to be done,” he said in a low, pensive voice. “Everything. The education of the workers implies a huge, co-ordinated effort that has hardly been started as yet. I must refer to this at Vienna. Everything remains to be done,” he repeated very softly. “Isn’t that so, little girl?”

He smiled briefly; then his gaze swept his audience, and his brows knitted.

“For instance, how is it that the International hasn’t yet bethought itself of having a monthly or, better, a weekly paper of its own? A European news-sheet published in every language and common to every labour organization in every country? I’ll refer to this at the Congress. It’s the best way for the leaders at one and the same time to give one and the same answer to the millions of workers who in every country are asking themselves practically the same questions. It’s the best way of enabling every worker, whether militant or otherwise, to be kept accurately posted as to political and economic conditions throughout the world. In the present state of affairs it’s one of the best ways of still further developing the international instinct in the workers; an ironworker of Motala or a Liverpool longshoreman must be brought to feel as an event affecting him personally a strike that has just broken out in Hamburg, or in San Francisco, or in Tiflis. The mere fact that every worker, every peasant, when he comes home from his work on a Saturday evening will find waiting on his table, ready to hand, a paper he knows to be, at the same hour, in the hands of every wage-earner throughout the world; the mere fact that he is able to read in it items of news, statistics, information, resolutions which he knows are being read at the same time throughout the world by all such as are conscious, as he himself is, of the rights of the masses—these facts alone would have an *incalculable* informative effect. Besides which, the effect on the governments would be——”

The concluding phrases were poured forth at a speed which made them very hard to catch. He broke off sharp on seeing Janotte, the lecturer, come in, accompanied by a few friends. And all the regular attendants at Headquarters knew the Pilot would say nothing more that evening.

VIII

JACQUES had not seen Janotte before. The man was exactly as Alfreda had described him. In a suit of an old-fashioned cut, a shade too tight for his bulky form, he tiptoed across the room; his curatelike gestures, his bows and scrapes, seemed out of keeping with the pomposity of his countenance, crowned with a shock of prodigiously white hair like the mane of some heraldic animal.

Jacques got up at once and, in the general confusion while the introductions were being made, slipped away to the little study at the far end, to await Meynestrel there. He had not long to wait before, accompanied as usual by Alfreda, Meynestrel entered the room.

The interview was brief. In a few minutes Meynestrel had sorted out from the Guittberg-Tobler file all the documents bearing on the charge against them and handed them over to Jacques, along with a personal note for Hosmer. Then he gave some general advice as to the best way to set about the investigation.

He rose from his chair. “And now, little girl, to supper!”

Quickly Alfreda gathered up the papers scattered on the table and slipped them into their places in the file.

Meynestrel went up to Jacques and gazed at him for a while. Then, in a friendly voice, quite different from the tone he had been using during their previous conversation, he gently asked: “What’s wrong this evening?”

Taken aback, Jacques smiled uneasily. “Nothing’s wrong—I assure you!”

"You're not put out by this trip to Vienna?"

"Quite the contrary. Why?"

"Just now, I fancied you seemed worried . . ."

"Not a bit of it!"

". . . and a little . . . lost."

Jacques smiled more naturally. " 'Lost!' " he repeated. Then his shoulders drooped as if he suddenly felt tired, and the smile left his lips. "Yes, there are days when, for some reason one can't fathom, one feels more than usually . . . lost. But *you* must know all about that, Pilot."

Without answering, Meynestrel took two steps that brought him to the door, whence he looked back to see if Alfreda was ready. Then he opened the door for her to go out before him.

With a fleeting smile he turned to Jacques, murmuring in a breath: "Of course. Of course, I know all about that."

Everyone had left. Monier was busy putting back the chairs and generally tidying up. On Saturday and Sunday nights Headquarters usually did not empty till the small hours. But on this particular evening most of the habitués had arranged to meet after dinner at the Salle Ferrer, for Janotte's lecture.

Meynestrel had let Alfreda go a little ahead. Now he took Jacques's arm and, limping a little, went down the stairs beside him.

"One's alone, my dear Jacques. And one's got to accept that once for all." He spoke hurriedly, in a low voice. Pausing, he shot a glance in Alfreda's direction, and repeated almost in a whisper: "Yes, always alone." His tone was detached, as though he were making a general observation, without a trace of melancholy or regret. Yet Jacques felt certain that just now the Pilot had some personal experience in mind.

"Yes, indeed I know it," Jacques sighed, slowing down till he actually stopped, as if brought to a halt by the dead weight of unformulated thoughts that he was dragging after him. "It's the curse of Babel! Men of the same age, the same way of living, and the same ideas, can spend a whole day talking to each other in the most sincere, forthright way—and not understand each other for a single moment, never once meet truly heart to heart. As close as close can be, yet hopelessly aloof. Like pebbles on the lakeside, always touching each other, never uniting. And I sometimes wonder if human speech, by giving us an illusion of agreement, doesn't really keep us more apart than bring us together."

Glancing up, he saw that Meynestrel, too, had halted. Standing on the bottom step, he was listening in silence to the melancholy voice echoing in the cavernous hall.

“Oh, if only you knew how sick to death I sometimes am of—words!” Jacques burst out passionately. “Sick of our eternal palavers! Sick and tired of all that—ideology!”

At the last word Meynestrel made a quick gesture with his hand.

“Obviously,” he said. “Talking should always lead to action. But, so long as it’s impossible to act, merely to talk is better than doing nothing.”

He glanced toward the courtyard, where Paterson and Mithoerg were walking to and fro, waving their arms, no doubt continuing a “palaver” that had begun upstairs. Then his keen eyes settled on Jacques.

“Be patient. This ideological phase is—only an episode. An indispensable preliminary. It’s by way of debate that the principles of a doctrine are stabilized. Without a theory of revolution we can have no revolutionary movement. No leaders. Our ‘ideology’ annoys you. Yes, to our successors it will very likely seem an absurd waste of energy. But is that our fault?” He added in a breath: “The time for action hasn’t come yet.”

Jacques’s attentive gaze seemed asking him to explain himself. Meynestrel went on speaking. “The capitalist system is still holding its own. There are signs of wear and tear in the machine, but it’s still working more or less efficiently. True, the proletariat is restive and oppressed, but, when all is said and done, it isn’t dying of starvation—yet. In this halting, broken-winded social order that is living on its reserves of energy, what the devil do you expect them to do, these men of vision who’re waiting for the time to *act*? They talk. They keep their spirits up with theories! They’re bursting with energy, and the only run they can give themselves is in the field of ideas. For so far we haven’t come to grips with actual events.”

“Ah,” Jacques sighed, “if only we *could* come to grips with them!”

“Patience, my boy! It won’t last for ever. The flaws within the system are showing up more and more. Causes of friction between the nations are multiplying; their competition for the world’s markets has reached the danger-point. It’s a matter of life and death; the whole system is based on the assumption of steadily widening markets. Which is absurd, for markets can’t expand indefinitely. That means they’re in for it when a crisis breaks! The world’s heading straight for a catastrophe, a general smash-up. Just wait and see. Wait till the economic balance of the world is thoroughly upset. Wait till machinery has thrown more and more people out of work. Wait till bankruptcy and ruin are rife, and no work’s forthcoming anywhere, and the capitalist system finds itself in the position of an insurance company all of whose policy-holders have been run over on the same day! Then . . .”

“Then?”

“Then we’ll drop ideology. Then there’ll be no more palavering. We’ll roll up our sleeves because the time to *act* has come, because at long last we can come to grips with solid facts.” His face lit up, then as suddenly grew dark. “Meanwhile we must be patient.” He looked round to see where Alfreda was. And though she was too far off to hear him, he asked mechanically in an undertone: “Isn’t that so, little girl?”

Alfreda had joined Paterson and Mithoerg.

“Come to the Caveau with us to have something to eat,” she said to Mithoerg, without looking at Paterson. “He must come, mustn’t he, Pilot?” she cried gaily to Meynestrel. Which, for Paterson and Mithoerg, implied: “The Pilot will pay for everyone.”

Meynestrel signified assent with a flutter of his eyelashes.

“After dinner we’ll all go on together to the Salle Ferrer,” Alfreda added.

“Count me out,” Jacques said.

The Caveau, a little vegetarian restaurant, was situated in a basement in the Rue Saint-Ours, behind the Promenade des Bastions. This was the heart of the students’ quarter at Geneva, and the restaurant was patronized principally by Socialist students. The Pilot and Alfreda often dined here when they did not return to Carouge for an evening’s work.

Meynestrel and Jacques walked in front, with Alfreda and the two young men some yards behind them. The Pilot had begun speaking with the suddenness that was his wont.

“You know, we’re extremely lucky, in point of fact, to be living in this ideological phase. To have been born on the threshold of a new era. You’re too hard on our comrades. Personally, I think their youth and keenness atone for everything, even their palavers.”

A shade of melancholy, which Jacques failed to notice, flitted across his face. He looked round to see if Alfreda was still behind.

Unconvinced, Jacques resolutely shook his head. In his moods of depression he was apt to judge the young men round him with severity. In his opinion most of them thought on crude, narrow lines, the malice and intolerance of which they cheerfully condoned. They systematically applied their intelligence to bolstering up these views instead of widening or reshaping them. Many of them, to his thinking, were rebels more interested in their personal grievances than in humanity.

Still, he refrained from criticizing his comrades in the Pilot's presence. All he said was: "Their youth? Well, I'd be more inclined to blame them for not being young enough."

"Not young enough!"

"Certainly. Their spirit of hatred, for instance, is a quality of age. Little Vanheede's right: love, not hatred, is the quality of youth."

"Dreamer!" Mithoerg, who had just joined them, exclaimed in a low, emphatic voice; behind the large round glasses, his eyes slewed about in Meynestrel's direction. "You've got to hate hard if your thought's to flame up into action," he added after a moment, now gazing straight before him into space. Almost immediately he went on in an aggressive tone. "Just as one's always got to kill wholesale to win a victory. That's the way it is!"

"No," Jacques rejoined composedly. "No hatred and no violence, please! You'll never have me with you on those terms."

Mithoerg's eyes lingered on him unamiably. Jacques, who had half turned toward Meynestrel, paused before continuing. As Meynestrel made no comment, he broke out almost roughly. " 'You've *got* to hate!' 'One's *got* to kill!'—what do you know about it, Mithoerg? Supposing a great revolutionary leader brought off a bloodless victory—by working on men's minds—all your notions of revolution by violence would go by the board."

The Austrian was striding ahead a little apart from the others, with a stern look on his face. He made no comment.

Jacques went on speaking, turning again to Meynestrel. "If in the course of history there's always been so much bloodshed associated with revolutions, that's because the men who led them had not planned them, thought them out enough, in advance. They've always been more or less rough-and-ready *coups*, rushed through in an atmosphere of panic by fanatics like us who made a fetish of violence. They called it revolution, but they aimed no higher, really, than civil war. I admit that violence can't be dispensed with when there's been no planning; still, I see nothing absurd in picturing another sort of revolution taking place in the civilized world of today—a gradual revolution, the work of men who're not in a hurry, men like Jaurès, men of broad views and culture. They'll have had time to work out their theories and draw up a scheme of progressive action. I'd call them 'opportunists' in the best sense of the term, for they'll have cleared the ground for taking over power by a series of opportune moves, by exploiting at the same time all that can serve their ends: parliaments, trade unions, municipalities, labour movements, strikes, and so forth. Revolutionaries, yes; but I see them as statesmen, too, men who carry out their programme with the authority, the breadth of view and calm tenacity of purpose that come from thinking clearly and knowing that time is fighting on their side. It would all happen in an orderly way, and they'd always keep control of the march of events."

" 'Control of the *marsch* of events'!" Mithoerg snarled, gesticulating wildly. "*Dummkopf!* That's not the way a new order comes about! Noways shall we picture it coming except under pressure of a catastrophe, at a time of fierce collective *Krampf*, when all men with rage are boiling." (At such moments the thick, Teutonic burr in his voice was specially pronounced.) "Nothing really new can be done without the big push that hate shall give. And, before building, there must first be a *Wirbelsturm*, a cyclone, that smashes everything, levels out all into the dust!" He uttered the last words with lowered brows, in a tone of grim detachment. He looked up again. "*Tabula rasa! Tabula rasa!*" The violent gesture accompanying the words seemed to sweep away all obstacles, making the void before it.

Jacques took some steps in silence before replying. "Yes," he sighed, trying to retain his composure. "You—all of us—stand by the assumption that the idea of revolution's incompatible with the idea of order. We're all fuddled with heroic, bloodthirsty romanticism. But may I tell you what I think, Mithoerg? There are days when I ask myself: What's really behind this general adhesion to a gospel of violence? Is it only that violence is necessary if we're to make good? No. There's another reason, too; it's because such notions pander to our lowest instincts, to the beast that slumbers deep down in all of us. We need only watch our faces in the glass, and see the way our eyes light up, our grin of cruel, barbaric exultation, whenever we pretend to think that violence is indispensable. The truth is that we hold by it for much less avowable, far more personal motives; each of us has at the bottom of his heart some old score to pay off, some grudge to satisfy. And to enable us to relish this craving for revenge without a qualm what could be better than explaining it away as the acceptance of an inevitable law?"

Offended, Mithoerg swung round on him. "*Nein*," he protested, "I don't . . ."

Jacques brushed aside the interruption. "Wait! I'm not accusing any individual. I said 'we.' I state the facts, that's all. The craving to destroy is stronger than the hope of building up. For how many of us does not the revolution mean just this: not so much a step toward the regeneration of society as an opportunity for glutting that lust for vengeance which would have a glorious run in street-fights, civil war, a forcible seizure of the reins of power? What a field-day for reprisals it would be, that day when, after blasting our way to triumph, we in our turn imposed another tyranny, the tyranny of *our* justice! In the heart of every revolutionary there is, besides much else, the instinct of an 'agitator.' No, don't shake your head! Which of us can dare to say he is wholly immune from the virus of destruction? Even in the best, the most unselfish, loftiest-minded of us I sometimes have a glimpse of a drunken bully skulking in the background."

"All quite true," Meynestrel put in. "But is that the crucial question?"

Jacques quickly turned, hoping to catch his eye. Without success. He had an impression that Meynestrel was smiling, but could not be sure. He, too, smiled—though at something he had just remembered, the remark he himself had made a little while before: "I'm sick of our eternal palavers!"

His eyebrows arched in scornful crescents above his spectacles, Mithoerg seemed determined not to answer.

They had reached the Bourg-du-Four Square, and crossed it in silence. The old slate roofs glowed in the declining light, and the narrow Rue Saint-Léger lay in front like a deep, dark ravine. Behind them sounded two young, high-pitched voices: Paterson's, Alfreda's. Jacques heard their laughter, but could not catch the words. Several times Meynestrel had glanced back toward them over his shoulder.

Without explaining the link between what he now said and what he had been saying, Jacques remarked: "It's as if the individual couldn't enlist in the group and join forces with it, without first discarding all his standards. . . ."

"What standards?" the Austrian broke in; his demeanour implied that he was at a loss to see any connexion between the remark and what had gone before it.

Jacques hesitated; then, "The standards of a decent man," he said at last, in a low, evasive tone, as if he were afraid of seeing the argument diverge into this new field.

There was a short silence. Suddenly Meynestrel's voice rang out stridently. "The standards of a decent man?" An incomprehensible question, but put with animation, and Jacques seemed to discern a hint of emotion in the voice.

He had several times already detected, as he thought, in Meynestrel's dry, matter-of-fact manner a nuance giving an impression that that manner was less natural than studied; that it served to mask the anguish of a sensitive mind which had found out all there is to be known regarding human nature and, deep below the surface, mourned inconsolably its dead illusions.

Mithoerg, who had noticed only the vivacity of the tone, began to laugh, and clicked his thumbnail against his teeth.

"And you, Thibault, haven't *that* much political nous!" His tone implied that the discussion was closed.

Jacques could not repress an outburst of annoyance. "If having political nous, as you call it, means——"

This time Meynestrel intervened. "Political nous, Mithoerg, what does it really amount to? It means that one can bring oneself to use, in the class struggle, methods which would disgust us, seem little short of criminal, in private life. Isn't that so?"

He had begun the remark in an ironic tone, but ended on an earnest one, restrained though fervent. Then he began chuckling to himself, his mouth shut, breathing in little puffs through his nose.

Jacques was on the verge of answering Meynestrel, but his respect for the Pilot always held him in check. He addressed Mithoerg instead. "A real revolution . . ."

"A really real revolution," Mithoerg thundered, "a revolution to save the nations, however fierce she is, has no need to be excused for!"

"Yes? So the methods employed don't matter a bit?"

"Pre-cise-ly!" Mithoerg approved, without letting Jacques continue. "Action, it does not take the same road as your imaginative speculations. Action, *Kamerad*, grips a man by the throat. In action, ja, only one thing counts—to win! You may think what you will, but for me the object, it isn't to take revenge. *Nein*, my object is to put man free. Against his will, if necessary. With the guillotine. When you want to save a man who is drowning in the river, you begin by banging him hard on the head to make him let you save him nice and quiet. The day when the struggle really has begun, for me there will be one thing to aim at—to drive out, to smash the capitalist tyranny. And for knocking out a Goliath so *kolossal*, one who sticks at nothing to bring the people under his thumbs. I'm not as simple as to pick and choose my methods of attack. To crush out wicked, silly things, everything that crushes comes in handy, even wickedness and silliness. If injustice can help, if ferocity can help, then I will be unjust, ferocious. Any weapon's good enough for me, if it gives more power to my arm. In that war, I tell you, anything's allowed. Anything you will—except being beaten."

"No!" Jacques cried out passionately. "No!"

He tried to catch the Pilot's eye, but Meynestrel had clasped his hands behind his back and, his shoulders bowed, was walking some little way off, alongside the houses, staring at the sidewalk.

“No!” Jacques repeated. He was on the brink of saying: “That sort of revolution doesn’t interest me. A man who is capable of such brutal, bloodthirsty acts, and of calling them ‘acts of justice,’ such a man, when the battle’s won, will never regain his decency, his dignity, his respect for mankind, his passion for fair dealing, and his independence of thought. If I’m all for the revolution, it isn’t to put madmen of that sort on top!” But all he actually said was: “No! Because I know only too well that the violence you exalt is a menace, at the same time, to the highest side of life.”

“That can’t be helped. We can’t let ourselves be—how do you say it?—hamstrung by the scruples of intellectuals. If what you call the highest side of life has got to go, if the activities of the mind have got to be for half a century kept under, it can’t be helped. Like you, I regret. But I say: So be it! And if, to become truly efficient, I must first be blinded, ‘Out with my eyes!’ say I.”

Jacques could not help protesting. “No, I can’t agree. Don’t say: ‘That can’t be helped!’ Listen, Mithoerg.” He addressed himself to the Austrian, but it was for Meynestrel’s benefit that he was trying to define his viewpoint. “Don’t imagine I attach less importance to our final goal than you do. If I protest, indeed, it’s in the interests of that ideal. A revolution that’s carried out in an atmosphere of lies, of cruelty and injustice, can only be a false dawn; it will do nothing for humanity. Such a revolution carries within it the germs of its ultimate decay. Nothing it achieves by such methods can be lasting. Sooner or later its turn will come to perish. Violence is a weapon of the oppressor. Never will it bring true freedom to the nations of the earth. It can only install successfully a new type of oppression. Let me have my say!” he shouted, angered at seeing Mithoerg on the point of breaking in. “I’m not blind to the force you and those who think like you derive from this theory of ruthlessness; perhaps I’d sink my personal distaste for it, I might even turn ruthless myself, if I thought it would lead to good results. But that’s just the point; I don’t believe in its effectiveness. I’m positive that no true progress can be achieved by sordid methods. It’s sheer nonsense glorifying violence and hatred as means to bring about the triumph of justice and fraternity. It’s betraying, at the very outset, the world-wide justice and brotherhood that we’re aiming at. No. You may think what you like about it, but for me the denial of all moral values is fatal to the true revolution, the only revolution worthy of our utter, whole-hearted allegiance.”

Mithoerg was about to retort when, “Jacques, you’re an incorrigible little rascal!” Meynestrel broke in, in the high falsetto voice he sometimes assumed and which never failed to disconcert his hearers.

He had listened to the argument without intervening. The clash of two conflicting temperaments always interested him. These academic distinctions drawn between material and ideal ends, between violence and non-violence, struck him as so much beating of the wind—perfect illustrations of the false problem with ill-stated premises. But what was the use of saying that?

Both Jacques and Mithoerg were startled into silence. Turning toward the Pilot, the Austrian gazed for a moment at the impenetrable face, and the approving smile he had conjured up froze on his lips; he looked discomfited. He was put out by the turn Jacques had given to the discussion; vexed with Jacques, with the Pilot—and with himself.

After some minutes' silence he deliberately slowed down, let the other two go ahead of him, and joined Paterson and Alfreda.

Meynestrel took advantage of Mithoerg's absence to move to Jacques's side.

"What you're after," he said, "is to purge the revolution of its grosser elements, before it's taken place. Too soon! That would prevent its ever taking place." He paused and, as though he had guessed how galling the remark had been for Jacques, he added at once, with a comprehending glance: "Still . . . I understand you very well."

They continued walking down the street, in silence.

Jacques was musing on his upbringing, applying himself to a review of his mental background. "A classical education. Middle-class surroundings. They give a kink to one's mind that is never quite straightened out. For a long time I thought I was born to be a novelist; in fact it's only quite recently I've abandoned that idea. I've always been so much more drawn to looking on, to noting impressions, than to forming judgments and conclusions. And, obviously, for a revolutionary that's a drawback." The thought distressed him. He rarely indulged in self-deception—anyhow, not consciously. He felt neither superior nor inferior to his comrades; but he felt different from them and, generally speaking, of less value as a revolutionary agent. Would he ever be able, like them, to discard his personal viewpoint, to sink mind and will in the abstract doctrines and common activities of a party?

Abruptly he remarked in a low tone: "Is a man necessarily disqualified for joining in the action of a group because he clings to and safeguards his personal freedom of thought? Surely, Pilot, that's exactly what you do?"

Meynestrel did not seem to hear him. Still, after a few moments, he murmured: "Individualist standards. Human standards. Do you think the two terms are identical?”

Jacques’s eyes were still intent on his friend’s face, and his look of silent interrogation, it seemed, impelled the Pilot to make his meaning clearer. But when he spoke, the words came almost reluctantly.

“The great movement of humanity in which we are engaged is beginning to effect a tremendous change, not only in the relations between man and man, but at the same time—and to an extent we still have no conception of—within the individual, even in what he fancies are his natural instincts.”

He fell silent again, and seemed to withdraw into his meditations.

IX

MITHOERG was walking with Alfreda and Paterson a few yards behind, but without joining in their conversation.

The young woman had to take two steps to the long-legged Englishman’s one, to keep abreast of him. She was chattering away without constraint and keeping so close to her companion that at every step Paterson’s elbow brushed her shoulder.

“It was when the strikes were on,” she was saying, “that I saw him for the first time. Some friends from Zürich had persuaded me to attend a public meeting. We were in one of the front rows. He got up and spoke. I couldn’t take my eyes off him. His eyes, his hands. . . . There was a free-for-all at the end of the meeting. I ran away from my friends and stood beside him.” She herself seemed surprised by the memories she was recalling. “Since then I’ve never left him. Not for a single day. Not for even two hours on end, I imagine.”

Paterson shot a hasty glance at Mithoerg, hesitated, then murmured in a peculiar tone: “You’re his mascot.”

She laughed. “Pilot’s nicer than you. He calls me his ‘guardian angel.’ ”

Mithoerg hardly heard what they were saying. He was following up in his mind his argument with Jacques. He had no doubt that he himself was in the right. He appreciated Jacques as a *Kamerad*, and had even tried to make a friend of him; but he severely condemned Jacques as a member of the Party. Just now he was feeling a rankling animosity toward him. “I should have flung some home truths in his face,” he thought, “once and for all. Under the Pilot’s nose—so much the better!” Mithoerg was one of those most disconcerted by Meynestrel’s attachment to Jacques. Not from any sordid jealousy; it vexed him, rather, as a sort of injustice. He was sure that just now the Pilot had inwardly been on his side and Meynestrel’s equivocal silence had keenly annoyed him. Obsessed by a craving for revenge, he hoped an opportunity would arise for clearing up the matter. . . .

Meynestrel and Jacques, who were now some distance ahead, halted at the beginning of the Promenade des Bastions, whence a short-cut across the gardens led to the Rue Saint-Ours.

The sun was setting. Behind the railings a golden glow still hovered on the lawns. The close of this fine summer Sunday had drawn a crowd of strollers to the Promenade, which was, like the Luxembourg Gardens at Paris, a favourite resort of university students. All the seats were occupied and young folk in cheerful groups were sauntering up and down the avenues lined with trees, under which a certain coolness lingered in the air.

Leaving Alfreda and the Englishman, Mithoerg walked quickly up to the two men. “Still, it’s a rather sordid attitude to life,” Jacques was saying, “to make such a fetish of material well-being.”

Mithoerg looked him up and down, and deliberately, without an idea of the topic of their conversation, cut across it. “What’s he after now? I’ll swear he’s ranting against the ‘sordid materialism’ of us revolutionaries!” he snarled aggressively.

Jacques, though a little startled, gazed at him affectionately. He always took the tantrums of his Austrian friend good-humouredly. He regarded Mithoerg as a staunch comrade, as a somewhat demonstrative but exceptionally faithful friend. He had understood that Mithoerg’s churlishness was due to the lonely life he led, to an unhappy childhood, and a sensitive pride, under which, he suspected, lurked some latent sense of inferiority or a mind in conflict with itself. Jacques was not mistaken. The sentimental Austrian had a secret grief; conscious of his ugliness, he morbidly exaggerated it to himself, and to such a point that at times he felt utterly desperate.

Indulgently, Jacques explained: “I was telling the Pilot that quite a lot of us have a way of thinking, of feeling, and of insisting on happiness, which is absolutely capitalist. Don’t you agree? What does ‘being a revolutionary’ mean, if not first and foremost that one has a special attitude of mind? That one has begun by bringing about a revolution within oneself, and purged one’s mind of all the habits that are relics of the old order?”

Meynestrel cast a quick glance at him. “Purged!” he was thinking. “What a quaint fellow is our little Jacques! He’s sloughed his bourgeois skin so effectively, and purged his mind of habits, yes—except of that one habit, the most thoroughly bourgeois of all: the habit of regarding the intellect as the controlling factor.”

Jacques was still speaking. “Yes, I’m often struck by the importance, the unconscious respect, that most of us still accord to material comfort.”

Obstinate as ever, Mithoerg broke in. “Really now, a little too easy it is to taunt with materialism the poor devil who is starving and revolts because he wants a bite to eat.”

“Obviously,” Meynestrel commented, and Jacques, too, hastened to assent: “Nothing’s more legitimate, Mithoerg, than that sort of revolt. Only, a number of us seem to think that the revolution will have been achieved the day when capitalism has been dethroned and the proletariat’s taken its place. But to install a new set of profiteers in the place of those we’ve driven out wouldn’t be destroying the capitalist system but only turning it over to another class. And surely the revolution ought to be something different from a mere class triumph, even though it’s the most numerous and most exploited class that’s put on top. Personally, I’d like to see a more generous and general triumph, a triumph of humanity in the widest sense—in which all men, without distinction . . .”

“Obviously,” Meynestrel said again.

Mithoerg muttered: “Money-making, that’s the curse. Today it’s the one driving force behind all human activity. So long as we haven’t rooted out that evil thing——”

“That’s just what I was coming to,” Jacques put in. “Do you think it will be an easy matter to uproot it? When it seems that even *we* can’t manage to extricate ourselves from that idea? Even we, the revolutionaries!”

Probably Mithoerg was of the same opinion. But he was not honest enough to own to it. He could no longer resist the temptation of wounding his friend. With a laugh that was like a snarl he sidetracked the question. . . .

“ ‘We, the revolutionaries’! But *you*, you’ve never been a revolutionary.”

Startled by this personal attack, Jacques turned instinctively toward Meynestrel. But the Pilot merely smiled, and it was not the comforting smile that Jacques had hoped for. He turned to Mithoerg. “What on earth are you so ratty about?” he stammered.

"A revolutionary," Mithoerg exclaimed, with a bitterness that he now took no pains to conceal, "is a man who *believes*! See? You're a man who thinks things over, blows hot one day and cold another. See? You're someone who has opinions; you're not a man with a faith. Faith is a gift of heaven, so to speak. It's not for you, *Kamerad*. You have it not, and you'll never have it. No, I know you too well. What you like is wobbling to one side, then to the other. Like the bourgeois taking it easy on his sofa, smoking his pipe, and juggling with the *pros* and the *cons*. Thinking: 'What for a clever boy I am!' You're just like that, *Kamerad*. You rack your brains and reason things out and poke your nose this way and that, to smell out the—the 'fallacies' as you call them. That's your game, all the long day—and mighty clever you think yourself, eh? No, you've no faith!" He had moved nearer Meynestrel. "Isn't that true, Pilot? Had he any right to say 'we revolutionaries'?"

Meynestrel smiled again, briefly, inscrutably.

"But, Mithoerg"—Jacques was feeling more and more at sea—"what exactly have you got against me? That I'm not a bigot? True enough!" Little by little, embarrassment was yielding to anger, and this gradual change of mood gave him a certain satisfaction. He added in a frosty tone: "I'm sorry, but I've just been explaining to the Pilot how I stand. I must confess I don't feel inclined to go over it all again."

"A dilettante, that's what you are!" Mithoerg roared. As always when he flew into a passion, the rush of saliva to his mouth made him splutter out his words. "A ra-rationalist playboy! And, think I, a Protestant. Yes, one downright Protestant. Freedom of thought, of criticism, of moral judgments, and so further. Your sympathies are with us, I grant. But you're not with us striving toward one single end. And think I: The Party has no use for ones like you. Timid folk who always hesitate, and set out to find fault with the Party doctrine instead of fighting like good soldiers for it. We let you people come with us. Perhaps we're wrong. Your mania for reasoning, rationalizing everything, it is catching. And very soon everyone will begin blowing cold and hot, and shillyshally-making, instead of marching *vorwärts* toward the revolution. You are capable for once, perhaps, of doing a hero act, as an individual. But what's that, an individual act? Nothing! A true revolutionary, he should accept not being a hero. He should accept being just a little atom lost in the community. He should accept being—a nobody! He should wait patiently for the signal to be given to all; and only then he stands up and marches with the rest. *Ach*, you, as a philosopher, you may find that sort of obedience shameful for a brain like yours. But I say: to have that sort of obedience one needs a braver, truer, nobler soul than to be a playboy rationalist. And it's only faith can give that courage. The true revolutionary, he has that courage, because he has faith, because he believes with all his heart, without question. Yes, my *Kamerad*, that's so. And you need only look at the Pilot; he says nothing but I know he thinks like me."

Just then Paterson shot forward like an arrow between Mithoerg and Jacques. "Listen! Listen! What are they shouting?"

"What's happened?" Meynestrel asked, with a quick backward glance toward Alfreda.

They had crossed the Promenade and were coming into the Rue Candolle. Three newsboys were running toward them, zigzagging across the road, and yelling at the top of their voices.

"Late special! Political outrage in Austria!"

Mithoerg started. "In Austria?"

Impulsively Paterson dashed toward the nearest boy. But he came back at once, his hand thrust limply into his pocket.

"Haven't *enough* money!" he announced plaintively, smiling, however, at the euphemism "enough."

Meanwhile Mithoerg had bought the paper, and was running his eyes over it. The others clustered around him.

"*Unglaublich!*" He seemed stupefied by the news. He handed the paper to the Pilot.

Rapidly, his voice betraying not the least emotion, Meynestrel read the summary:

> "This morning at Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia, recently annexed to the Austrian Empire, the Austrian heir-apparent Archduke Francis Ferdinand and the Archduchess were murdered by a young Bosnian revolutionary armed with a revolver, during an official ceremony."

"*Unglaublich!*" Mithoerg repeated.

X

A FORTNIGHT later, Jacques came back from Vienna by the day express, accompanied by an Austrian named Boehm.

A piece of seriously alarming news that Hosmer had confidentially imparted to him the day before had led him to break off his inquiries and hurry back to Switzerland, to notify Meynestrel.

That same Sunday, July 12, Mithoerg, at the request of Jacques—who was disinclined to face his friends' questions—visited Headquarters at about six in the evening. He ran up the stairs, countered the others' greetings with a vague smile, and, threading his way between the groups crowding the first two rooms, made straight for the third, in which he assumed the Pilot would be found.

And so it turned out; in his usual seat beside Alfreda, facing a dozen attentive listeners, Meynestrel was holding forth. His remarks seemed to be directed more particularly to Prezel, who stood in the front row.

"Anti-clericalism?" he was saying. "Wretched tactics. See what happened to your Bismarck, with his famous *Kulturkampf*. . . . His persecutions only served to strengthen German clericalism."

All anxiety, Mithoerg was trying his hardest to catch Alfreda's eye. He managed at last to make a sign to her and moved away to the window.

Prezel had put up some objection, which Mithoerg failed to catch. Various interruptions rang out, and some members of the group changed places and began talking among themselves. Alfreda took advantage of this to come and join the Austrian.

Meynestrel's incisive voice made itself heard anew. "To my mind, it won't be that pig-headed anti-clericalism, so dear to the free-thinking bourgeois of the nineteenth century, which will free the masses from the yoke of religion. Here again the problem is a social one. The foundations of religions are of a social character. From the earliest ages religions have derived their chief force from the sufferings of oppressed mankind. Poverty has always been the mainstay of religion. Once that prop is gone, faith will steadily decline. When a happier era dawns, the existing religions will lose their hold on men."

"What is it, Mithoerg?" Alfreda asked in a low tone.

"Thibault's back. He wants to see the Pilot."

"Why didn't he come straight here?"

"It seems there's trouble brewing over there."

"Trouble?"

She scanned the Austrian’s face intently. She was thinking of Jacques’s mission in Vienna.

Mithoerg threw out his arms, as though to say he knew nothing definite. For a while he stood thus, his eyebrows raised, his eyes goggling behind the glasses, and the upper part of his body swaying clumsily, like a bear-cub standing on its hind legs.

“Thibault is with Boehm, a countryman of mine, who is leaving tomorrow for Paris. Terribly important it is that the Pilot shall see them tonight.”

“Tonight?” Alfreda was thinking things over. “Very well, come round to our place; that’s the best way.”

“All right. Tell Richardley to come too.”

“I’ll tell Pat as well,” she added hurriedly.

Mithoerg, who disliked the Englishman, was on the point of saying: “Why Pat?” He signified assent, however, with a flicker of his eyelids.

“At nine?”

“Yes.”

Without another word the girl went back to her seat.

Meynestrel had just cut Prezel short with an emphatic “Of course!” After a moment he spoke again. “The change won’t be brought to pass in a day. Nor in one generation. But the religious impulses of the new humanity will find an outlet, a social outlet. For the mystical aspirations of institutional religion, social aspirations will be substituted. Yes, the problem is of a social order.”

After catching Alfreda’s eye again, Mithoerg slipped out. . . .

Three hours later, accompanied by Boehm and Mithoerg, Jacques alighted from the Carouge tram and proceeded on foot to Meynestrel’s house.

Night had almost fallen, and the little staircase was in darkness.

Alfreda opened the door.

Meynestrel’s dark form was outlined, like a figure in a shadow-play, against the background of the lighted room. He took a quick step toward Jacques and asked in a low voice: “Anything new?”

“Yes.”

“Were the charges justified?”

“To a considerable extent,” Jacques whispered. “Particularly as regards Tobler. I’ll tell you about it later on. . . . But there’s something else I have to tell you first. We're on the eve of very serious events." He turned to the Austrian whom he had brought in with him, and added by way of introduction: "Comrade Boehm."

Meynestrel held out his hand. "So that's it, Comrade Boehm," he said with a hint of scepticism in his voice, "you've important news to give us?"

Boehm met his eyes squarely. "Yes."

Boehm was a Tirolese, a little man in the thirties, with a determined face. He wore a cap and, despite the heat, an old yellow raincoat hung on his stalwart shoulders.

"Walk in," Meynestrel said, showing the newcomers into the room, at the far end of which Paterson and Richardley were awaiting them.

Meynestrel introduced the two men to Boehm. The latter became aware that he had kept his cap on. This flustered him for a moment; then he took it off. He wore stout hobnailed shoes which skidded on the heavily waxed floor.

Alfreda, with Pat's help, brought in some chairs from the kitchen and placed them in a circle round the bed, on which she seated herself, her notebook and pencil held primly in her lap.

Paterson sat down at her side. Reclining with his elbow on the bolster, he leaned toward her. "Any idea what they're going to say?"

Alfreda made an evasive gesture. Past experience had led her to mistrust such conspiratorial airs. As indulged in by these men of action doomed for the while to inactivity, they were no more than symptoms of an overmastering desire, perpetually frustrated, for the day to dawn when at last they could display their mettle.

"Shove up a bit," Richardley said in a familiar tone, seating himself beside the girl. A blithe, almost martial fervour shone in his eyes; but there was something artificial in his bravado, as if he deliberately set up to appear strong-minded, well pleased with things, no matter what happened—on principle, to keep himself in trim.

From his pocket Jacques drew two sealed envelopes, a big one and a small one, which he handed to Meynestrel.

"Those are copies of documents. This is a letter from Hosmer."

The Pilot moved across to the one lamp in the room; it was placed on the table and gave out a dim light. He opened the letter, read it, and instinctively looked round at Alfreda. Then, after flashing a keen, questioning glance at Jacques, he laid the two envelopes on the table, and sat down—to encourage the others to do likewise.

When all seven of them were seated, he turned to Jacques.

“Well?”

Jacques glanced at Boehm, dashed the rebellious lock of hair from his forehead, and said to the Pilot: “You’ve read Hosmer’s letter. Sarajevo, the murder of the Archduke. It all happened just a fortnight ago. Well, during that fortnight there’s occurred in Europe, and particularly in Austria, a succession of events that have been kept secret. Events of such tremendous importance that Hosmer considered it necessary to give warning immediately to every Socialist centre in Europe. He dispatched comrades to St. Petersburg, to Rome. Bühlmann has left for Berlin. Morelli has been to see Olekhanov, and Lenin as well.”

“Lenin’s a dissident,” Richardley murmured.

“Boehm will be in Paris tomorrow,” Jacques continued, taking no notice of the interruption. “He will be at Brussels by Wednesday; in London on Friday. As for me, I’ve been deputed to explain matters to you. Because events really seem to be moving fast. Hosmer, when leaving me, said—these are his very words: ‘Be sure and explain to them that if things are allowed to drift, Europe within two or three months may be involved in a world war.’ ”

“On account of the murder of an Archduke?” Richardley sounded sceptical.

“On account of an Archduke killed by Servians; by Slavs, that is to say,” Jacques went on, turning toward him. “I was like you: miles and miles from having the slightest inkling. But out there, I realized. . . . Anyhow, I had a glimpse of the problem—and it’s infernally complicated.”

He stopped speaking, looked round the room, then fixed his eyes on Meynestrel and inquired hesitatingly: “Shall I tell it all, from the beginning, as Hosmer explained it to me?”

“Certainly.”

“I suppose you know,” Jacques began at once, “the efforts made by Austria to create a new Balkan League? . . . What’s that?” he added, noticing that Boehm was fidgeting on his chair.

“I think,” Boehm said in a slow voice, “that if you want to explain the situation in the light of its causes, the best method would be to go back a little further in your analysis.”

On hearing the word “method,” Jacques smiled. He glanced inquiringly at the Pilot.

“We have the whole night before us,” Meynestrel remarked with a quick smile; then stretched out his stiff leg in front of him.

"Look here," Jacques said, turning toward Boehm, "*you* do the job. You'll certainly make a better business of a general historical survey than I would."

"Yes, of course," Boehm said in all seriousness—which brought a mischievous sparkle to Alfreda's eyes.

He let the raincoat drop from his shoulders, carefully laid it out on the floor beside his cap, and drew himself forward to the extreme edge of his chair, in which position he remained, the upper part of his body stiffly erect and his knees wedged together. The close-cropped hair made his head look round as a billiard-ball.

"You must excuse me," he said. "As a start, I shall have to deal with the point of view of our imperialist ideology. That's the only way to bring out the underlying trend of Austrian policy. To begin with," he went on after a moment's reflection, "one should know what the Southern Slavs are after."

"The Southern Slavs," Mithoerg put in, "consist of Servia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Also the Hungarian Slavs."

Meynestrel, who had been listening with the closest attention, nodded approval.

Boehm went on with his discourse.

"These Southern Slavs have been trying for the last fifty years to join forces against us. The nucleus of the movement is Servia. The idea is to gather round Servia for the purpose of building up an independent Yugoslav state. In this they have the backing of Russia. Since 1878 and the Berlin Congress, there has been a ferocious enmity, a struggle to the death going on between Russian Pan-Slavism and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And Pan-Slavism is all-powerful in the minds of the leaders of Russia. Still, as regards the secret intentions of Russia and her responsibility for the coming troubles, I'm not sufficiently informed, I can't venture to express an opinion. I will only speak of my own country. As for Austria—and here I take the viewpoint of the imperialist government—it's only fair to say that this coalition of the Southern Slavs is a genuinely vital problem. If a Yugoslav coalition were set up at our borders, Austria would lose control of the numerous Slavs who are now incorporated in the Empire."

"Obviously," Meynestrel muttered mechanically; then, seeming to regret this involuntary interruption, he gave a slight cough.

"Down to 1903," Boehm went on, "Servia was under Austrian rule. But in 1903 Servia staged a nationalist revolution, set Karageorgevitch on the throne, and gained her independence. Austria waited for an opportunity to get even with her. And so, in 1908, we took advantage of the fact that Japan had dealt Russia a blow, and we coolly annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, a province handed over for our administration. Germany and Italy were consenting parties. Servia was furious. Then came the second Balkan War. Last year. You remember? Servia had gained new territory in Macedonia. Austria wanted to put her foot down. She'd brought it off on two occasions by sheer boldness. But this time Germany and Italy didn't back her, and Servia was able to stand her ground and keep her winnings. So far, so good. But Austria has felt bitterly humiliated ever since. She's biding her time to take revenge. National pride is very strong with us. Our General Staff is hard at work engineering that revenge. So are our diplomats. Thibault was speaking of the new Balkan League. That, in my country, stands in the forefront of the year's political programme. This is what it consists of: a projected alliance between Austria, Bulgaria, and Rumania, so as to form a new Balkan League to work against the Slavs. Not only against our Southern Slavs, but against *all* Slavs. Do you see the point? That means against Russia as well."

He paused to collect his thoughts and make sure he had omitted nothing essential. Then he turned toward Jacques, as if asking for his impression.

Alfreda, who was leaning back on Paterson's shoulder, bent her head to stifle a yawn. She found the Austrian terribly long-winded and this history lecture more than tiresome.

"Of course," Jacques put in, "whenever you think of Austria, you mustn't lose sight of the Austro-German *bloc*. Of Germany and her 'future on the sea,' which brings her into conflict with England. Of Germany, commercially encircled, and on the lookout for new openings. The Germany of the *Drang nach Osten*. Germany and her designs on Turkey, her plans to cut off Russia from the Straits; her interests in the Baghdad Railway, the Persian Gulf, England's oilfields, the road to India, and the rest of it. It all hangs together. In the background, dominating the situation, always we find the same two groups of capitalist powers up against each other."

"Obviously," Meynestrel put in.

Boehm nodded his assent.

A pause fell on the conversation.

At last the Austrian turned toward the Pilot and inquired with the utmost gravity: "Have I put it correctly?"

"You've made it very clear," Meynestrel declared emphatically.

Praise from the Pilot was unusual, and all except Boehm were surprised. Alfreda suddenly changed her mind and began looking at the Austrian with more attention.

“Now,” Meynestrel proceeded, fixing his eyes on Jacques and leaning back slightly in his chair, “let’s hear what Hosmer has discovered, and what these new factors are.”

“New factors?” Jacques began. “Well, not precisely that. Not yet anyhow. Merely symptoms.”

He drew himself up with a quick movement that brought his forehead into shadow, and now the yellow lamplight fell only on the lower part of his face, the prominent under-jaw and the wide mouth flanked with lines of anxiety.

“Ominous symptoms that point—in the near future, very likely—to startling events. To be brief: on the Servian side, a deep-seated popular irritation, due to the constant frustration of their national ambitions; on the Russian side, an obvious tendency to back up the claims of the Slavs. So true is this that immediately after the murder of the Archduke, the Russian government, which is entirely under the thumb of the General Staff and nationalist elements, allowed it to be stated by their ambassadors that they would take a definite stand as the protectors of Servia. Hosmer was made aware of this by information received from London. On the Austrian side, there’s bitter mortification in government circles over their recent failures, and serious anxiety as regards the future. In Hosmer’s words, we are putting out into the unknown, freighted with a high-explosive cargo of hatred, spite, and greed. The unknown begins with that dramatic event of June 28, the Sarajevo assassination. Sarajevo’s a Bosnian town, the population of which, after six years of annexation to Austria, has remained loyal to Servia. Hosmer, personally, is rather inclined to think that certain official Servian leaders directly or indirectly helped to promote the crime. But proof of this is hard to find. In the view of the Austrian government, the murder, thanks to the indignation it has aroused throughout Europe, provides an unhoped-for opportunity. To catch Servia red-handed. To settle her hash, once for all! To restore the prestige of Austria and, at one and the same time, to clinch the new Balkan League and thus enforce the hegemony of Austria in Central Europe! Rather a tempting prospect, isn’t it, for the statesmen concerned? In Vienna, accordingly, there was no hesitation among the leaders. A plan of action was worked out forthwith.

“The first thing was to prove Servia’s complicity in the outrage. Vienna promptly ordered an official investigation to be started at Belgrade and throughout the Kingdom of Servia. Evidence had to be unearthed at all costs. Up to the present, however, this first item of the programme seems to have been too much for them. The most it has proved possible to do is to ascertain the names of a few Servian officers mixed up in the anti-Austrian movement in Bosnia. In spite of the urgent orders they've received, the investigators have not been able to return a verdict of 'Guilty' against the Servian government. Naturally their report was suppressed. It was carefully withheld from the press. But Hosmer has been able to procure the findings. They are here," he added, putting his hand on the big envelope still lying on the table, its red seals glowing in the lamplight.

Meynestrel's thoughtful gaze rested for a moment on the envelope; then again he turned to Jacques, who went on speaking. "What did the Austrian government do? They ignored the report. That in itself would be enough to prove that they had some secret end in view. They've allowed it to be thought—indeed they've allowed it to be published—that the guilt of Servia is a proved fact. The official press has kept on working up the feelings of the public. In that particular murder they had a trump card. Mithoerg and Boehm can tell you about it. Over there, the person of the heir to the throne is sacred in the eyes of the people. At the present moment there's not an Austrian, not a Hungarian, but is satisfied that the Sarajevo murder was the outcome of a plot promoted by the Servian government and perhaps by the Russian government too, as a protest against the annexation of Bosnia. There's not one of them but feels aggrieved and is eager for vengeance. That's exactly what was wanted in high circles. From the day following the crime everything possible was done to keep the national pride at fever-pitch."

"By whom, do you think?" Meynestrel asked.

"By those in office. First and foremost by the Foreign Minister, Berchtold."

Here Boehm cut in. "*Ach*, Berchtold!" He made a significant grimace. "To be able to understand all this, you've got to know that fine gentleman and his ambitions, as we do! Just think! To crush Servia would make him the Bismarck of *Österreich*! On two occasions, already, he fancied he'd succeeded. Both times the opportunity slipped through his fingers. This time he feels the chances are favourable. They mustn't be allowed to peter out."

"Still, Berchtold isn't Austria," Richardley demurred, peaking his sharp nose toward Boehm with a smile. In every inflexion of his voice there could be detected that sense of heart-felt, thoroughgoing security which those who are young derive from the possession of a coherent doctrine, a settled view of life.

"*Ach*," Boehm retorted, "but he has the whole of Austria in his pocket! In the first place the General Staff, and then the Emperor as well."

Richardley shook his head. “Franz Josef? That’s a bit hard to swallow. How old exactly is he?”

“He’s eighty-four years old,” Boehm replied.

“Just so. An old dodderer. With two unsuccessful wars behind him. Yet he’s willing, you say, at the end of his reign, to embark with a light heart on another one!”

“Don’t forget, though,” Mithoerg exclaimed, “that he realizes the monarchy, she is in mortal danger! Old as he is, the Emperor is not truly certain he will still his crown be wearing when he goes down to the grave.”

Jacques rose to his feet. “Austria, Richardley, is at grips with her domestic problems, and they’re very serious ones. Don’t forget that. She’s a nation made up of eight or nine ill-assorted, rival races. And the central authority is growing weaker all the time. It looks as if Austria’s bound to fall in pieces one of these days. All those groups of people forcibly incorporated with the Empire—Servians, Rumanians, Italians, and so on—are seething with unrest; they’re only waiting for a favourable opportunity to shake off the yoke. I’ve just come back from there. In political circles, both on the right and on the left, the prevailing view is that there’s only one alternative to a complete break-up, and that is war. That’s the opinion of Berchtold and his gang. And of course the generals take the same line.”

“For the last eight years,” Boehm observed, “we have had as Chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf, the tool of the military party and the bitterest enemy of the Slavs. For the last eight years he has made no secret of his war-mongering activities.”

Richardley did not seem impressed. With his arms folded, bright-eyed—too bright, indeed—he watched each speaker in turn, with the same complacent air of knowingness and scepticism.

Jacques ceased to address his remarks to him and, going back to his chair, turned toward Meynestrel.

“Consequently,” he went on, “in the opinion of the leaders over there a preventive war would save the Empire. It would put an end to all party dissension, an end to the agitation of all those unassimilated nationalities. A war would restore to Austria her economic prosperity and secure for her the Balkan market which the Russians are trying to monopolize. And as they claim to be able to bring Servia to her knees within two or three weeks, what risks do they run?”

“That’s as may be!” Meynestrel rapped out.

The eyes of all swung round toward him. With sombre, far-away air he was staring at some vague point in Alfreda’s direction.

“But that’s not all. . . .” Jacques resumed.

“There’s Russia!” Richardley broke in. “And then there’s Germany. Let’s suppose, just for a minute, that Austria attacks Servia; and let’s suppose—a thing that isn’t certain, but quite in the cards—that Russia intervenes. Mobilization by Russia means an immediate mobilization in Germany, automatically followed by one in France. The whole of their charming system of alliances comes into play; it’s a foregone conclusion. Which is as much as to say that a war between Austria and Servia would as likely as not lead to a world-wide conflict.” He glanced at Jacques and smiled. “And that, old man, Germany knows better than we do ourselves. Is it likely, then, that by allowing the Austrian government to have their way Germany would deliberately incur the risk of launching a European war? No. Just think it out. The risk is so tremendous that Germany will prevent Austria from taking action.”

Jacques’s face had grown tense.

“Wait a bit,” he said. “That’s just what justifies Hosmer’s cry of alarm. There are strong reasons for believing Germany has already pledged her help to Austria.”

Meynestrel gave a start. He kept his eyes riveted on Jacques.

“This,” Jacques went on, “is how it came about, in Hosmer’s opinion. It would seem, in the first place, that in Vienna, during the first few days after the murder, Berchtold met with opposition in two distinct quarters: from Tisza, the Hungarian Minister of State, a cautious man with no liking for mailed-fist methods; and from the Emperor. Yes; it seems that Emperor Franz Josef was reluctant to give his consent; he wanted to know, before doing so, what Wilhelm II would think of the matter. Now the Kaiser was just off on a cruise. No time to be lost, if he was to be reached. It now looks as though, some time between July 4 and 7, Berchtold managed to consult the Kaiser and his Chancellor and to obtain Germany’s consent.”

“Mere assumptions,” Richardley declared.

“Obviously,” Jacques admitted. “But what gives weight to those assumptions is what has been happening in Vienna during the last five days. Let’s go into that. Last week, even in Berchtold’s set, there still appeared to be a certain amount of hesitation; no secret was made of the fact that the Emperor—indeed Berchtold himself—feared that Germany would object. All of a sudden, on the seventh, there was a complete change. That day (last Tuesday, to be exact) a big cabinet council, a council of war in fact, was called in haste. As if they had suddenly been given a free hand. As regards what was said at that council, there was complete silence for forty-eight hours. But no later than two days ago, things began to leak out; too many different people had been let into the secret, as a result of the various steps decided on at the meeting. I might add that Hosmer has fixed up a wonderful intelligence service of his own in Vienna. Hosmer always gets to know everything in the end! Well, at that council Berchtold's bearing was quite different; it was as though he had a definite assurance in his pocket that Germany would give unlimited support to a punitive expedition against Servia. And he coolly submitted to his colleagues a regular war plan, which Tisza alone opposed. The best proof that Berchtold's plan is actually a war plan is that Tisza urged his colleagues to be content with merely humiliating Servia; he thought it would be good enough to win a brilliant diplomatic victory. Well, he had the entire council against him, and in the end he gave in, he came round to the others' way of thinking. What's more, Hosmer stated positively that that same morning the ministers quite calmly discussed the question of ordering immediate mobilization. If they refrained from doing so, it was solely because they thought it wiser, *vis-à-vis* the other powers, not to drop the mask till the last moment. One thing's certain: the plan put forward by Berchtold and the General Staff has been adopted.

"For obvious reasons it's hard to know exactly what that plan is. Still, some things are already known. For instance, that orders have been issued to set on foot such military preparations as can be made without unduly attracting attention, and that covering forces on the Austro-Servian frontier are being held in readiness. Within a few hours, at the first pretext that crops up, they'll occupy Belgrade." He ran his fingers quickly through his hair. "And, to wind up, I'll quote something that an assistant of the Chief of Staff, the egregious Hötzendorf, is reported to have said to some friends. Perhaps it's only a piece of bragging indulged in by an old trooper; still, it's indicative of the Austrian leaders' frame of mind. 'The nations of Europe, one fine morning before long, will wake up to face a *fait accompli*!' "

XI

JACQUES fell silent, and at once all eyes converged upon the Pilot. He stood motionless, his arms folded, his pupils set and shining.

For a while there was silence in the room. The same anxiety, above all the same bewilderment, was manifest on every face.

At last Mithoerg's gruff voice broke the silence. "*Unglaublich!*"

There was another pause.

Richardley said at last, in a low tone: "If really Germany's behind it all. . . !"

The Pilot's keen eyes shifted toward the speaker, but did not seem to be observing him. His lips moved, and an incomprehensible sound broke from him. Alfreda, whose eyes had never left his face, was the only one to catch what he had said.

"Too soon!"

She shuddered, and unthinkingly nestled against Paterson's shoulder.

The Englishman gave her a quick glance, but, bending her head, she shunned the question in his eyes. Indeed, she would have been at a loss, should Pat have asked her, to explain that shudder. It was so clearly the first time, this evening, that war, till now a mere abstraction, had forced itself upon her imagination in such bold relief, with all its brutal realism. Yet it was not Jacques's revelations that had caused her to shudder; it was Meynestrel's "Too soon!" Why? The remark was not one to surprise her. She was quite aware of the Pilot's belief that revolution could come only of a violent crisis; that in the actual state of Europe war was the most likely occasion for such a crisis; but, even if war broke out, the proletariat, being insufficiently trained, would not be in a position to transform an imperialist war into a revolution. Was it this that had upset her, the idea that if socialism were really unprepared for it a war would mean mere fruitless slaughter? Or had it been the tone of that "Too soon!"? Yet there was nothing new to her in it. Had she not long been inured to her Pilot's lack of humane feelings? One day he had surprised her into saying: "Your attitude toward war is just that of the Christians toward death; their minds are so engrossed with what is to come after, that they seem blind to the horrors of the act of dying." He had laughed. "To a doctor, little girl, the pains of childbirth are just part of the scheme of things."

She had brought herself, painful though it sometimes was, to admire this deliberate detachment as the outcome of the strenuous and constant strivings of a man of whose very human weaknesses none was more aware than she. Indeed it raised him, in her eyes, above the rest of them. And it always moved her deeply to think that this "dehumanizing" process was prompted, after all, by a supremely human ideal: to serve mankind more fully and to work more efficiently for the destruction of present social conditions, for the coming of a better world. Why that shudder, then? She could not tell. Her long eyelashes lifted, and her glance, slipping over Paterson's head, came to rest on Meynestrel with a look of trust. "I must wait," she thought. "He's hardly said anything, so far. He's going to explain. And then everything will be cleared up, and I shall see again how right and how splendid he is!"

"That Austrian and German *Militarismus*, they want war, I'm quite convinced," Mithoerg put in, with a toss of his shaggy head. "And that that *Militarismus* has the backing of many German leaders, of the big business, of Krupp's, and of all the supporters of the *Drang nach Osten*, I can also quite believe. But as to the whole of the propertied class, *nein*! They will get the fright. Their influence is great. They won't let the militarists have their way. They will say to the governments: 'Stop! It's madness. If you touch off that dynamite, you shall all blow up at the same time!' "

"But look here, Mithoerg," Jacques said, "if really the leaders and their military parties are hand in glove about this war, what will the opposition of your propertied classes amount to? And if you accept Hosmer's information, they *are* hand in glove."

"No one questions that information," Richardley broke in. "But all that can be said so far is that there's a *threat* of war. Nothing more. Well, what is actually behind that threat? Is it a real desire for war? Or is it only another bluff on the part of the German Chancelleries?"

"I don't think there's any risk of a war," Paterson declared stolidly. "You're forgetting my country, good old England! She'll never allow the Triple Alliance to become all-powerful in Europe." He was smiling now. "She sits tight, does England; that's why people forget all about her. But she's listening, watching all the time, and if things take a turn that doesn't suit her, she'll get a move on, sure enough. There's lots of life in the old girl yet, you know! She has her cold bath every morning and she does her daily dozen!"

Jacques was fidgeting impatiently.

"You can't get over the facts. Whether there's a real desire for war, or whether it's only bluff, Europe will be up against an alarming situation within a day or two. Well, what are *we* to do about it? I agree with Hosmer. We must make a stand against the war-mongers. More than that, we must at once prepare our counter-attack."

"Yes, yes, I agree!" cried Mithoerg.

Jacques turned toward Meynestrel, but was unable to catch his eye. He looked inquiringly at Richardley, who nodded approval, and murmured: "I too agree."

Richardley declined to believe there was any real danger of war. Still, he did not question the fact that this sudden threat of it must cause a general upheaval in Europe, and he had promptly seen to what account the Socialist International could turn the situation. It would serve at once to rally the anti-war forces and stimulate the revolutionary ideal.

Jacques spoke again. “As Hosmer puts it, the threat of a European war provides us with a new and definite objective. What we’ve got to do is to take up again the programme we sketched out two years ago in connexion with the Balkan War, and to improve on it. To find out, in the first place, whether there’s any chance of holding the Vienna Congress at an earlier date. Then we’ve got to set on foot at once, in every country at the same moment, a peace campaign, working through official channels and with the utmost publicity. Speeches in the Reichstag, in the Chamber of Deputies, in the Duma. Simultaneous pressure brought to bear on all Foreign Ministers. Action by the press. An appeal to the nations. Mass demonstrations.”

“And dangle the bogy of a general strike before the governments,” Richardley put in.

“With lots of sabotage in the war factories!” barked Mithoerg. “And bust up the locomotives and cut the fishplates along the railroads, like they did in Italy!”

There was an exchange of thrilled glances. Had “zero hour” struck at last?

Jacques turned again toward the Pilot. A bright, fleeting, frigid smile, which Jacques took for a sign of acquiescence, flashed across Meynestrel’s features like the beam of a searchlight. Suddenly elated, Jacques went on eagerly. “The strike, of course! A general, simultaneous strike! That’s our trump card. Hosmer’s afraid the matter may be dealt with at Vienna on purely theoretical lines. It’s up to us to go into it again, from the start, on fresh lines. Cut out mere theory. Define for each country the attitude to be adopted in such and such a case. Avoid a repetition of that muddle we made at Basel. We must make sure this time of concrete, practical results. Am I not right, Pilot? Hosmer would even like to get the leaders to organize preparatory meetings before the actual Congress. So as to clear the ground and to show the governments, right away, that the proletariat is fully determined, this time, to stand up as one man against their bellicose policies.”

Mithoerg laughed derisively.

“*Ach!* You and your leaders! What do you expect from the leaders? For how many years have they been talking about the strike? And do you suppose that this time at Vienna they'll do any more than talk?"

"The times have changed," Jacques observed. "There's the threat of a European conflagration."

"No, no, cut out the leaders! Cut out speeches. Direct action by the masses, that's the stuff! Mass action, comrade!"

"That goes without saying," Jacques rejoined. "Only, if you want direct action, isn't it terribly important that the leaders should begin by declaring themselves plainly and emphatically? Just think, Mithoerg, what an encouragement that would be for the masses! Ah, Pilot, if only we had it now, that one world-wide international newspaper!"

"*Träumerei!*" Mithoerg shouted. "What *I* say is: a fig for your leaders; work upon the masses! D'you suppose the German leaders, for instance, would ever agree to the strike? Not on your life! They'd say, as they did at Basel: '*Unmöglich*, on account of Russia.' "

"That would be disastrous," Richardley observed. "Really disastrous. So in the last analysis, everything depends upon Germany, upon the Social-Democrats."

"Anyhow," Jacques said, "they showed two years ago that they're quite able, when necessary, to make a stand against war. But for them, that Balkan affair would have set all Europe ablaze."

"Don't say 'but for them'; say 'but for the masses.' As for them, what did they do? Just follow the masses' lead."

"But who was it organized the demonstrations of the masses? The leaders," Jacques retorted.

Boehm shook his head. "So long as you have not even two million wage-earners in Russia, and millions upon millions of mujiks, the proletariat can't be strong enough to rise against the government, and the Tsarist *Militarismus* is a real menace for Germany, and the Social-Democrats can't guarantee a strike. Mithoerg is right; at the Vienna Congress they'll only agree 'in principle,' as they did at Basel."

"*Ach!* Do cut off your congresses!" Mithoerg exclaimed petulantly. "What *I* say is: again this time it's action by the masses which will carry the day. The leaders will follow. What has to be done is to get the workers to rise everywhere, in Austria, in Germany, in France, without waiting for their leaders to give orders. To get together the good men at every street corner, to make troubles all over the country, in the railways, in armament factories, in the dockyards. Everywhere! And force like that the hands of the labour leaders. And in the same time we must set alight every revolutionary organization in Europe. Sure I am that the Pilot, he thinks like I do! Stir up troubles upon all sides. In Austria first, as being the easiest. *Nicht wahr*, Boehm? Excite still more all the nationalist plotters, the Magyars, the Poles, the Czechs. Also the Hungarians and Rumanians. And do the same all places at once. We can work up again the strikes in Italy. Also in Russia. And if once the masses everywhere are in revolt, the leaders, they will—how do you say it?—toe the lines!" He turned to the Pilot. "Isn't that so, Pilot?"

Thus challenged, Meynestrel raised his head. The sharp glance he shot at Mithoerg and then at Jacques wandered off in the direction of the bed, on which Alfreda was still sitting between Richardley and Paterson.

"Oh, Pilot," Jacques exclaimed, "if only we pull it off this time, what a marvellous access of strength it will mean for the International!"

Meynestrel's reply was: "Obviously."

A hint of irony, so fleeting that it required Alfreda's watchful eyes to notice it, played on the corners of his lips. Apprised of Hosmer's revelations and the strong reasons for believing Germany would support the aims of Austria, he had said at once to himself: "Here it comes, that war of theirs! It's odds on their bringing it off this time. And we're not ready; we've not the slightest hope of coming into power in any country in Europe. What's to be done, then?" His mind was at once made up. "There's no doubt whatever as to the proper course to adopt. We must play on the pacifism of the people for all we're worth. As things are, that's the best means at our disposal for getting a hold over the masses. A war against war! If it breaks out, we've got to convince the greatest possible number of the men who go to the front that this war has been let loose on the world by capital, against the will and against the interests of the workers. They must believe they're being driven helplessly into a fratricidal struggle for criminal ends. That seed, at least, will certainly bear fruit, whatever happens. Rather a neat idea, that—infecting capitalism with a germ that will destroy it! What's more, the war will be an excellent occasion for bringing our leaders into the limelight and compromising them thoroughly in the eyes of the powers that be, by obliging them to commit themselves up to the hilt. So carry on, my young friends! Sound the trumpet of pacifism for all you're worth! It's what you want to do, anyhow. We've only got to let you have your head." He smiled inwardly, picturing to himself the generous effusions of the peace-makers and Socialist-minded enthusiasts of every complexion. Already he seemed to hear the high-pitched, emotional appeals of the star speakers at the left-wing demonstrations. Then, "As for us," he murmured to himself, "and as for me . . ." He left the thought unfinished. There would always be time for him to come back to it.

Half aloud he said: "That's as may be."

He met Alfreda’s earnest gaze and realized that all the others had fallen silent, gazing at him, waiting for him to speak at last. Without thinking, he repeated in a louder voice: “That’s as may be.” With a movement of impatience he drew back his leg under his chair, and gave a slight cough. “I’ve nothing more to say. I agree with Hosmer. I agree with Thibault, and Mithoerg, and the rest of you.”

Running his hand over his clammy forehead, he stood up abruptly.

In the low-ceiled room, crowded with seats, he looked taller than his wont. He took a few desultory steps along the narrow space left free between the table, the bed, and the legs of his seated visitors. His eyes roamed over the faces of those present, settling on none individually.

After pacing to and fro for a few moments without speaking, he halted. His thoughts seemed homing back from a far country of the mind. They were all convinced he was going to sit down again, to set forth a plan of action, to launch out into one of those forceful, rather cryptic extempore speeches to which he had accustomed them. But he merely murmured: “All that remains to be seen.” With his eyes on the floor, smiling, he made haste to add: “And all that, of course, brings us nearer to our goal.”

Then, threading his way alongside the table, he stepped to the window, pushed open the shutters, and gazed out into the darkness. Bending his head a little, he added in an altogether different tone, speaking over his shoulder: “How about getting us some nice cool drinks, little girl?”

Obediently Alfreda slipped out into the kitchen.

There was a feeling of constraint in the air. Paterson and Richardley were talking in undertones, still seated on the bed. In the middle of the room the two Austrians stood arguing in German. Boehm extracted a half-smoked cigar from his pocket and proceeded to relight it; his prominent under-lip, moist and full-blooded, gave his flat face a good-natured expression, yet at the same time a look of rather gross sensuality which made him seem different from the others.

Leaning forward with both hands on the table, Meynestrel was rereading Hosmer’s letter, which he had spread out under the lamp. The light issuing from the top of the shade threw his features into bold relief; his short beard seemed blacker than ever, his complexion paler; his brows were knitted and the eyelids almost completely veiled the pupils.

Jacques nudged his elbow. “Well, Pilot, our chance of making good has come, and sooner than you expected.”

Meynestrel nodded. Without looking up at Jacques, impassive as ever, he agreed in a flat, perfectly toneless voice: “Obviously,” and proceeded quietly with his reading.

Jacques had a sudden feeling of discomfiture; it struck him that this evening a subtle change had come not only over the Pilot’s expression, but over the Pilot’s bearing toward himself.

Boehm, who had to catch a train early next morning, was the first to make a move. The others followed suit and filed out after him, with a vague sense of relief.

Meynestrel went downstairs with them to open the street door.

XII

LEANING over the banisters, Alfreda listened till the sound of voices had died away. Then she went back to the flat and began tidying up. But her heart was heavy and after a moment she crossed the hall to the kitchen, which was in darkness, and, resting her arms on the windowsill, gazed out into the night.

“Daydreaming, little girl?” Meynestrel’s dry, feverish hand fondled her shoulder.

She shivered, then all at once asked in a frightened, childish voice: “Do you really think, dear, there’s going to be a war?”

He laughed. She felt all her hopes foundering. “But surely we—?”

“We? We’re not ready.”

“Not ready?” She misunderstood him, for that night all her thoughts turned on the struggle to avert a war. “Do you really believe there’s no way of preventing it?”

“There’s no preventing it. That goes without saying!” he exclaimed. Any theory that the working-class, as it then was, could check the forces making for war struck him as absurd.

She guessed that in the shadow he was smiling, his eyes glittering. Again she shuddered. For some moments they stood in silence, pressing against each other.

“But,” she suggested, “mightn’t Pat be right? Even if *we* can’t do anything, there’s England. . . .”

“England? All your precious England can do is to postpone matters—and perhaps not even that!” Probably because he had detected an unaccustomed stubbornness in her attitude, the Pilot’s tone grew still curter. “Anyhow, that’s not the point. The important thing isn’t to prevent war.”

She half rose, and turned toward him. “Then why ever didn’t you tell them so?”

“Because, for the moment, that’s nobody’s business, little girl. And because, just now, for practical reasons we’ve got to act as if that *was* the important thing.”

She said nothing, but that night she felt hurt, stung to the quick—never had he so wounded her before—and up in arms against him, she knew not why. And it came back to her how once, in the early days of their liaison, he had flung at her, all in one breath, with an impatient shrug: “Love? For us, that hasn’t the least importance.”

What, she wondered, had any importance for him? Nothing, nothing except the revolution. And for the first time she thought: “It’s an obsession with him, the revolution. He doesn’t care a rap about anything else; not about me or about my life as a human being, a woman. Nothing else counts with him; not even the fact of being what he is—something different from other men.” It was the first time she had thought of him as merely “different,” and not superior, nobler than the rest of mankind.

Meynestrel went on speaking, in an ironic tone. “A war on war, little girl! Well, let them carry on! Let them have their fill of stop-the-war meetings, strikes, and demonstrations. Forward, the peace brigade! Forward, the trumpeters! Let them bring down the walls of Jericho—if they can!”

Suddenly he drew away from her, spun round, and muttered between his teeth: “But it’s not their trumpets that will bring those walls down, little girl; it’s our bombs!”

And as he limped away toward their bedroom she heard that breathless little chuckle that always froze her heart.

For a long while she remained leaning at the window, gazing out into the darkness. Faint sounds of rippling water came from the Arve, across the silent quay, and the last lights in the houses on the riverside died out one by one.

She did not move. Asked what her thoughts were, she would have replied she had none. But two tears had welled up along her eyelids, and hung trembling between the lashes.

XIII

AFTER crossing the Esplanade des Invalides, the car swung round into the Rue de l'Université. It moved silently, but so deserted were the streets under the blazing sun, so deeply sunk was Paris in its Sunday afternoon siesta, that the mild warning of the horn at the street crossings, even the sleek rustle of tires on the hot asphalt, seemed an indiscretion, an outrage on the stillness.

When the car had crossed the Rue du Bac, Anne de Battaincourt lifted her Pekinese from the seat beside her, where it had been sleeping curled up in a ball, and, leaning forward, gently prodded with her parasol her chauffeur, a mulatto in a white dust-coat.

"Stop here, Joe. I'll walk the rest of the way."

The car drew up along the sidewalk, and Joe opened the door. His eyes, more darkly lustrous than the patent leather of his cap-peak, rolled this side and that like the eyes of a mechanical doll.

Anne hesitated for a moment; could she count on finding a taxi later on, in these drowsy streets? How silly of Antoine not to have taken her advice and moved, after his father's death, to the neighbourhood of the Bois! With the dog under her arm she sprang lithely out of the car. The desire to be free had prevailed.

"I shan't need you again this afternoon, Joe. Go home now."

Even in the shade the sidewalk was hot underfoot, and not a breath of wind stirred. Above the roofs the sky was bathed in silvery haze. Her eyes wincing at the glare, Anne walked past blind house-fronts, carriage-gateways grim as the portals of a jail. Laddie trotted lazily at her heels. Not a soul was out of doors, not even one of those spindle-shanked little girls with pigtails down their backs who sometimes on a Sunday were to be seen playing in the street outside their cell-like homes and inspired Anne with sudden fancies to adopt them for three weeks, take them to Deauville, and regale them with buns and brisk sea-air. No one was about. Like watchdogs moping in their kennels, even the concierges had put off till nightfall the ritual moment for taking the air on their doorsteps, sitting astride their chairs. On that Sunday, the nineteenth of July, the Parisians, worn out by the democratic rejoicings centring on the glorious Fourteenth, seemed to have migrated from the capital *en masse*.

With its roof still ringed by scaffolding, the Thibault building was conspicuous in the street. Striped with veins of fresh cement along its crannies, the old façade now wanted only a coat of paint to renew its youth. The ground floor was hidden by hoardings, plastered with many-coloured posters, that encroached upon the sidewalk.

Holding up the flounces of her wide silk skirt and wrapping it tightly round her, Anne, followed by the little dog, picked her way between the mounds of rubble, sacks of cement, and planks that littered the entrance. There was a cellarlike atmosphere in the vestibule, and the dampness emanating from the wet plaster made her shiver as if an icy sponge had touched her spine. Lifting his small black muzzle, Laddie stopped to nose these most unusual smells. Smiling, Anne stooped and picked up the tiny mass of warm, silken softness and held it to her breast.

Once the glazed hall-door was open, it seemed as if the interior decoration had been completed. A strip of red carpet, which at Anne's last visit had not yet been laid, led from the door to the elevator.

She stopped on the second landing and, by force of habit—though she knew Antoine was away—dabbed her face with powder before ringing.

The door opened diffidently; Léon did not relish being seen as he was then, unceremoniously garbed in a striped waistcoat. The long, glabrous face, crowned by a fluffy growth of yellow down like a fledgeling's, with the arched eyebrows, drooping nose, and plump lower lip, had now that non-committal air, at once obtuse and cunning, which was a defensive reflex with him. He cast at Anne's mauve frock and flowered hat a sidelong, rapid glance that seemed to take in everything in one wide swoop of comprehension. Then he stood aside to let her enter.

"The doctor is out, Madame."

"I know," she said, putting down her dog.

"I think he is downstairs, Madame, with some gentlemen."

Anne bit her lip. When Antoine had accompanied her to the station on the previous Tuesday—she was returning to Berck—he had told her he was going to the country on Sunday afternoon, for a consultation. During the six months their liaison had lasted, she had on more than one occasion caught Antoine misinforming her as to such small details of his life; it was his way of safeguarding his independence.

"Don't bother," she said, handing Léon her parasol. "I've only come to write a note for you to give to the doctor."

Walking past the servant, she stepped onto the deep-piled brown moquette which now carpeted the entire flat once occupied by M. Thibault.

The Pekinese went straight to the door of Antoine’s study and stopped outside it. Anne opened it, let the dog in, and entered the room, closing the door behind her.

The windows were shut and the blinds down. The room was redolent of varnish and new upholstery, with another, older smell of paint lingering in the background. She walked quickly to the desk and, resting her hands on the back of the desk chair, took stock of her surroundings. Her eyes were hard with suspicion and her nostrils dilated as if she were scenting out the secrets of the room. She was looking for a clue that might throw some light on the life that Antoine led apart from her, of which she knew so little.

But nothing could have been less revealing than the bleak luxury of this room. Antoine never worked in it, and used it only on consulting-days. Glazed bookcases curtained with Chinese silk that somehow gave the impression of concealing empty shelves ran half-way up the walls. An impressive writing-desk lorded it in the middle of the room; it was covered with a sheet of plain plateglass, on whose inhospitable surface was strewn a desk set in morocco leather—notepaper-cabinet, writing-pad, and blotter, all with a monogram inset. Not a single letter, document, or even book—except the telephone directory. A vulcanite stethoscope, posted like an ornament beside the crystal inkstand, inkless as yet, was the sole reminder of the profession of the room’s owner. And even this appliance did not seem to have been put there by Antoine with medical intent, but by some interior decorator with an eye for picturesque effects.

Laddie had settled down on his belly near the door, with his tiny legs spread out, and his flaxen ringlets merged with the pattern of the carpet. Anne glanced at him absent-mindedly, then perched herself astride an arm of the swivel-chair from which three afternoons a week Antoine dispensed his oracles. For a moment she toyed with the fancy that she was he, and felt a subtle pleasure in it; it was a revenge for the too scanty place he had given her in his life.

From the writing-case she took the block of headed notepaper which Antoine used for prescriptions, and began writing with the fountain-pen she carried in her bag.

> Tony darling, five days without seeing you—that’s my limit. So this morning I took the early train. It’s four now. I’m going to our place to wait till your day’s work is over. Come to me there, Tony dear, as soon as you possibly can.
>
> A.

> P.S.—I'll bring the makings of a little dinner, so we shan't have to go out.

Putting the note in an envelope, she rang the bell.

Léon entered. He had put on his livery. He patted the little dog, then went up to Anne.

Perched on the chair-arm, swinging her leg, she was licking the gummed flap of the envelope. She had a well-formed mouth, a thick, but nimble tongue. The scent with which she drenched her clothes hovered in the room. Catching a curious gleam in the manservant's eye, she smiled to herself.

"There you are!" She flung the letter onto the desk with a quick gesture that set her bracelets tinkling. "Will you be very nice and give him this the moment he comes in?"

She usually addressed him in this familiar tone when Antoine was not there, and so naturally that Léon took it quite for granted. There were so many secret, unavowed complicities between them. When she called for Antoine before going out to dinner and had to wait, she always chatted amiably with Léon; indeed his company was to her like a breath of congenial air from younger days. Moreover, he never took advantage of her affability; the furthest he went on such occasions was sometimes to omit a deferential "Madame." When she gave him a tip, he was gratified for being able to express his thanks by a mere flutter of the eyelids, his heart immune from the least nuance of class hatred.

Stretching out a leg, she slipped her hand under her skirt to pull up a silk stocking, then jumped down from the chair.

"I'm off, Léon. Where did you put my parasol?"

The best chance of finding a taxi was to walk up the Rue des Saints-Pères to the boulevard. The street was almost empty. A young man passed her, coming from the opposite direction; they glanced at each other casually, neither suspecting that they had met before on a certain rather memorable day. They could hardly have been expected to recognize each other. In four years Jacques had greatly changed; the thick-set young man with the careworn face had neither the look nor the gait of the boy who had once gone to Touraine to attend Simon de Battaincourt's wedding. And though in the course of that curious ceremony Jacques had gazed with interest at the bride, he would have been hard put to it to recognize, under the make-up and in the shadow of the parasol, the features of the "sinister" widow his friend Simon had married.

"Avenue de Wagram," Anne said to the driver.

"Avenue de Wagram" meant for her "our place"—a ground-floor bachelor flat that Antoine had rented at the beginning of their intimacy. The flat had a private entrance in a side-street, enabling them to elude the concierge's watchful eye.

Antoine had always refused to come to Anne's house in the Rue Spontini, near the Bois, though for some months she had been living there in solitary freedom. When, on Antoine's advice, Huguette had been put in a plaster cast and sent to a sanatorium at Berck-sur-Mer, Anne had taken a house near by, and it had been settled she would stay there with her husband till the little girl recovered. A heroic resolution, by which Anne had not been able to abide for long. It was Simon—he had never cared for Paris—who had settled at the seaside permanently with his step-daughter and her English governess. His great hobby was photography, but he did a little sketching and music-making as well; and he would sit up late at night reading books on Protestantism—an aftermath of his theological studies.

Anne meanwhile snatched at every pretext for being in Paris, and limited her stays at Berck to five or six days each month. The maternal instinct had never been strong in her, and in the past she had regarded the constant presence of her fourteen-year-old daughter as a handicap, not to say an infliction. And now to this rankling animosity there was added a sense of humiliation whenever she saw Miss Mary wheeling the child in her bath-chair along the sand-tracks between the dunes. Anne might sometimes dream of taking anæmic little girls off the streets and adopting them, but she found it quite natural to neglect her own daughter. At Paris, anyhow, she could put Huguette, and Simon, out of mind.

The car had entered the Avenue de Wagram when Anne remembered about the "little dinner." The shops here were closed, but she knew of a grocery near the Place des Ternes that stayed open on Sundays. She had the driver take her there, and then dismissed the taxi.

She took a childish delight in shopping. With the Pekinese under her arm, she strolled from one appetizing counter to another, choosing first the things that Antoine liked—brown bread, salt butter, smoked breast of goose, a basket of strawberries. For Laddie's benefit as much as Antoine's, she added a jar of cream.

"Give me a slice of that, please!" she added, greedily pointing a gloved finger toward a terrine of humble *pâté de foie de porc*. "That" was a titbit for herself; she had a weakness for pig's liver *pâté*, but nowadays—except when she was travelling, at a station buffet or a country inn—she had few chances of gratifying so plebeian a taste. Nibbling a slice of fresh bread spread with a slice of the pink, greasy *pâté*, ringed with lard and richly spiced with cloves and nutmeg, she felt on her lips the savour of the days when she was a young Paris shopgirl, of the cold lunches she used to eat, all alone on a bench in the Tuileries Gardens, among the pigeons and sparrows. Nothing to drink—but a bag of cherries bought in the street had quenched the thirst raised by the spices. And, to round off the meal, when it was time to hurry back to the shop, there had been a little cup of sweet, piping-hot coffee, drunk standing at the bar of a café in the Rue Saint-Roch.

Lost in memories, she watched the shopkeeper tying up the parcels, making out the bill.

"All alone. . . ." For even in those days she had had an intuition that her best chance of succeeding in life was to keep secret and aloof—without friends, ties, or fixed habits—always available for a sudden change of fortune. Ah, if the old woman who in those days used to prowl about the Tuileries Gardens with a basket on her arm, sounding her clapper, selling sugar-wafers and soft drinks, and telling fortunes on the side, could have predicted that one day the little shopgirl would be Mme. Goupillot, wife of the chain-store magnate! Still, thus it had come about, and today, seen in perspective, it all seemed quite natural.

"Your parcel, Madame."

Anne was conscious of the shopkeeper's eyes lingering on her figure. She was getting more and more to enjoy the glancing impact of men's desire. This one was scarcely more than a boy, with an ill-shaped but healthy-looking mouth, chapped lips, and a light down on his cheeks. She slipped a finger under the string, and as she drew herself erect, bending her head a little back, her grey eyes bestowed upon the youngster a coquettish glance in guise of thanks.

The parcel was by no means heavy. She had plenty of time; it was only five. She put the dog down and started back on foot.

"Come on, Laddie! A walk'll do us good."

She moved with long, lithe, swinging steps, and there was a hint of arrogance in her bearing. For never could she recall her past without a thrill of pride. She was conscious that her success in life was wholly her own handiwork, due to her indomitable will.

Looking back on her career impartially, as if it were another's, she was full of wondering admiration for the persistence she had shown from her earliest days in clambering up from the depths—like a drowning man with every fibre of his being set to lift him to the surface. And it had been so as to rise the better that she had, in the slow course of her chaste girlhood, kept herself so jealously aloof from men. She had lived with her father, a widower, and a brother older than herself. On Sundays while her father, a plumber’s helper, was playing bowls with his cronies, she used to go for walks with her brother and his friends, in the Bois de Vincennes. One evening on the way back, a young electrician, one of her brother’s set, had tried to kiss her. She had turned seventeen and rather liked the young man. But she had slapped him and run straight home by herself. After that she had refused to go out again with her brother, and stayed at home on Sundays, sewing.

She had always been fond of everything concerned with dress. A woman who had been friendly with her mother and kept a small dry-goods shop, had taken her to serve at the counter. But life had been depressing in the small suburban shop, patronized only by the poorest class.

Then one day she had had the luck of getting a post as salesgirl at a branch of the Goupillot stores which had just opened in Vincennes. For two years she had spent her days furling and unfurling lengths of taffeta and velvet, in close, almost physical contact with the daylong crowd of shoppers, and countering the amorous advances of clerks and department managers with friendly, non-committal smiles. Each evening, a model of decorum, she went straight home and cooked the family dinner. On the whole she had pleasant memories of that phase of her life.

On her father’s death she had left the suburbs for a much-sought-after post at the principal establishment, in the heart of Paris, at which old Goupillot himself, the owner of the business, sometimes put in an appearance. Then she had had to play her cards well, to bring him to the marrying point. “Play your cards well” might have been her motto in life. Even now . . . ! Was it not she who, at her first meeting with Antoine, had set her heart on captivating him, had gradually broken down his resistance and —won the game? He had never suspected it, for she had been adroit enough to humour his masculine vanity and make him fancy he had taken the initiative. And she was too old a hand at the game to prefer the vain delights of flaunting her power, to the more truly glorious satisfaction of wielding it in secret and plying all the weapons of apparent weakness.

Her musings had brought her to the little flat. The walk had made her warm, and the cool silence of the rooms, which had been closed all day, came as a delight to her. Standing in the middle of the bedroom she quickly let fall all the garments she was wearing and, running to the bathroom, turned on both taps.

She had a thrill of pleasure in the glimpse of her slim nakedness in the mirrors; a soft white radiance, like the sheen of a dead planet, filtering through the frosted panes, enhanced the lustre of her skin. Leaning above the hissing jets of water, absently she stroked the dusky hips that still were lithe as ever, the breasts that had lost something of their firmness. When the bath was half full, she put an exploring foot over the edge. The water was no more than tepid; with a little sensual shiver she let her body sink into it.

A white, blue-striped bath-towel hanging on the wall in front of her brought a smile to her lips; at a “little dinner” they had had together the other day, Antoine had comically draped himself in it. And suddenly she remembered the mild “scene” they had had that evening. When she had put a question to Antoine regarding his liaison with Rachel he had answered with a slightly acid look: “That’s the difference: *I* tell you everything, *I* don’t make a mystery of my past.”

It was true that she talked very little about herself. At the beginning of their intimacy Antoine had commented one evening, as he bent above her face, on her “Mona Lisa eyes.” Nothing had ever delighted her more, and she had treasured the remark. Since then she had made a point of veiling her past life in mystery, to maintain the glamour. She wondered now if that had not been a mistake. Perhaps Antoine would have liked discovering behind the enigmatic “woman with a past” the young shopgirl of Goupillot’s stores. She decided to think it over. Her earlier life had been varied enough, and she would not have to draw on her imagination to present another picture of herself: the sentimental little *midinette* she had been at a certain period of her youth.

Always her senses tingled when she thought of Antoine. She loved him for everything he was, for the self-confidence and energy of which, perhaps, he was too consciously aware. She adored him for his ardour as a lover, inclined though he was to be a little too unsentimental, not to say callous, in his dealings with her. And in an hour or so he would be with her. . . .

Stretching her limbs, she let her head sink back, and closed her eyes. Her tiredness seemed melting delightfully away into the water. A sense of physical well-being permeated her. Above her all was silent; not a soul was stirring in the whole building. The only sounds were the quick breathing of the little dog, sprawling on the cool tiles, a faint clatter of roller-skates in a neighbouring courtyard, and the measured cadence of water falling drop by drop from the cold-water tap.

XIV

STANDING at the corner of the Rue de l’Université, Jacques gazed at the house where he had been born. A maze of scaffolding made it unrecognizable. “Of course,” he murmured to himself. “Antoine had planned all sorts of alterations.”

He had made two trips to Paris since his father’s death, but without revisiting the quarter where he had lived or even letting his brother know of his coming. Antoine had written him several affectionate letters in the course of the winter. Jacques had limited his replies to brief, if cordial, postcards. He had not even made an exception in his reply to a long business letter dealing with the estate left by his father. In five lines he had categorically refused to take his share of the inheritance, giving hardly any reasons for his refusal and asking his brother never again to refer to “such matters.”

He had been in France since the previous Tuesday. On the day following the meeting with Boehm, Meynestrel had said to him: “Go to Paris. I may need your help there during the next few days. For the moment I can’t say anything definite. Take the opportunity of finding out how the land lies, and just what’s happening at that end. I’d like to know the reactions of the French left wing, especially Jaurès’s group and the *Humanité* crowd. If you don’t hear from me on Sunday or Monday, you can come back. Unless you think you can be of use at Paris.”

Till now he had not found time to look up Antoine; or, perhaps, had shirked it. But events just now were taking such an ominous turn that he had decided not to leave without paying a visit to his brother.

Gazing up at the second floor, resplendent with new sunblinds, he tried to locate *his* window, the window of the room which had been his as a little boy. . . . It struck him there was still time to retreat, and he hesitated for a moment; then, making up his mind, he crossed the road and entered the portico.

Everything had changed out of recognition. The dark wallpaper patterned with fleurs-de-lis, the carved wooden banisters and medieval stained-glass windows of the staircase as he had known it in the past had given place to distempered walls, wrought ironwork, and large plateglass windows. Only the elevator remained as it was. There was exactly the same sharp click, the same metallic clang, the same oily rumble that had always accompanied its upward start—sounds which Jacques could never hear without an inward pang of distress, without living again through one of the most hateful episodes of his thwarted youth: his homecoming after the flight to Marseille. It was at the moment when Antoine led him to this elevator, shepherded him into this prisonlike cage, that the fugitive had understood that he was hopelessly trapped, defenceless. His father, the Reformatory. Now Geneva and the International. Tomorrow, perhaps, war. . . .

"Hello, Léon! What a lot of changes! Is my brother at home?"

Léon gaped with amazement at this visitor from another world. At last he spoke, in a slightly flustered tone. "The doctor? No. Well—er—yes; I'm sure he's at home for *you*, sir. He's downstairs now, in the office. You'll have to go one flight down, sir. The door is open, you've only to walk in."

On the landing Jacques saw a brass plate on the door:

DR. A. OSCAR-THIBAULT
Laboratory

"So he's taken over the whole house," Jacques thought, "and tacked on the 'Oscar,' too, as Father wanted."

The door opened from outside. Turning the silver-plated handle, Jacques stepped into a hall flanked by three exactly similar doors. He heard voices behind one of them. Could Antoine be receiving patients, on a Sunday? Jacques moved doubtfully toward the door.

"Biometric observations . . . research work in educational establishments . . ."

The speaker was not Antoine. Then, suddenly, Jacques recognized his brother's voice.

"The first thing is to collect test-cases. Then to classify the data. In a few months' time any neurologist, or specialist in child pathology, or indeed educator, should be able to find here, in our records . . ."

Yes, that was Antoine, sure enough. No mistaking his astringent, rather complacent tones, with the faintly mocking lift at the close of each phrase. "Later on," Jacques said to himself, "he'll have exactly his father's voice."

Ceasing to listen, he stayed there for a moment, with his eyes fixed on the new linoleum floor covering. Again he felt a vague impulse to go away. But Léon had seen him, and anyhow, as he had come all this way, he had better go through with it. He threw back his shoulders and, with the assurance of a grown-up who feels no qualms about breaking in on a children's party, went up to the door and rapped on it briskly.

Vexed by the interruption, Antoine rose and, frowning, held the door ajar. "What the devil? . . . Oh! It's you, Jacques!" A glow of happiness lit up his face.

Jacques, too, was smiling, yielding to a rush of the fraternal affection which, all things notwithstanding, swept him off his feet each time he met Antoine again, Antoine in flesh and blood, with his determined look, square-cut forehead, stubborn mouth. . . .

"Come in, old man." Antoine was gazing intently at his brother, at the dark sunburnt forelock, those ever-changing eyes, and the vague smile that brought back to his mind Jacques as a small boy. Yes, it was indeed his dear young brother standing there!

Three men with perspiring face, collarless, in unbuttoned white coats, were seated at a big table on which tumblers, lemons, and an ice-pail jostled sheets of paper and outspread graphs.

"This is my brother," Antoine announced, beaming with delight.

The three men rose from their seats, and Antoine made the introductions. "Isaac Studler, René Jousselin, Manuel Roy."

"Sure I'm not disturbing you?" Jacques asked uncomfortably.

"You are!" Antoine gave his colleagues a cheerful grin. "Isn't that so? There's no two ways about it, he *is* disturbing us, confound him! But—so much the better. It's a case of *force majeure*. Sit down, Jacques."

Without replying, Jacques glanced round the enormous room, all the walls of which were taken up by shelves, filled with rows of brand-new numbered filing-cases.

Antoine was amused by his brother's look of surprise. "I expect you're wondering where you are. You're in our record room, that's all. How about a cool drink? A whisky and soda? No? Roy must fix you up a lemonade, then," he decreed, turning to the youngest of the three men. Roy was a typical Parisian student, with an intelligent face and bright, attentive eyes, the eyes of a good pupil.

While Roy was squeezing a lemon over a tumbler half filled with crushed ice, Antoine turned to Studler. "We'll go into all that again next Sunday, old boy."

Studler was noticeably older than the others; indeed he seemed even Antoine's senior. His name Isaac might have been given to match his profile, a beard that hailed from the *Arabian Nights*, the rapt eyes of an oriental seer. Jacques fancied he had met the man already, in the days when he was living with his brother.

“Jousselin, please put these papers back into the files,” Antoine continued. “In any case, we shan’t be able to make a serious start while I’m busy at the hospital, and my vacation doesn’t begin till August 1.”

Jacques listened. August . . . vacation! Something of his surprise may have shown on his face, for Antoine, who was looking at him, made haste to explain. “Oh, we’ve agreed, all four of us, not to take any vacation this year —under the circumstances.”

“I quite understand.” Jacques’s tone and look were grave.

“Why, it’s less than three weeks since the builders finished work on the house, and none of our new departments is in running order yet. In any case, what with my hospital work and private practice, I couldn’t have found time before then to get things going. But with two quiet months before us we’ll do it easily.”

Jacques gazed at him in amazement. The man who could speak thus had obviously noticed nothing in the present tension of the world that might disturb the smooth course of his work or shake his confidence in the near future.

“That surprises you, eh?” Antoine continued. “But of course you’ve no idea of our plans. We’re out to do something—something big, aren’t we, Studler? I’ll tell you all about it. You’ll dine with me, of course? Now drink your lemonade, then I’ll show you round my new domain. I’d like you to get an idea of our arrangements. Then we’ll go upstairs and have a chat.”

Jacques was thinking: “He hasn’t changed a bit. He’s always got to be organizing, taking the lead.” Obediently he finished his lemonade and rose. Antoine was already standing up.

“We’ll go down to the laboratories first,” he said.

Till M. Thibault’s death Antoine had led the normal life of a promising young doctor. He had passed his examinations in due order, had had himself placed on the Register, and, pending a vacancy in one of the hospitals, had built up a private practice.

Suddenly his father’s death had conferred on him unlooked-for power: the power of wealth. Antoine was not a man to miss the golden opportunity.

He had no dependents, no costly vices. Only one passion: work. Only one ambition: to become a leader of men. In his eyes hospital work and private practice were merely a training-ground. What really counted for him was his research work in child pathology. And so no sooner did he realize he was a rich man than his already powerful vitality was vastly multiplied. One thought possessed him: to devote his wealth to speeding up his rise in his profession.

His programme was quickly settled. The first thing was to provide himself with the requisite equipment: laboratories, a library, a staff of competent assistants. With money, everything was feasible. He could even buy the brains and loyal service of young, struggling practitioners and, while assuring them a comfortable livelihood, employ their gifts for the advancement of his researches and their extension into new fields. His thoughts had immediately turned to Studler—the "Caliph" as he was called in the days when they were fellow-students—a friend of Dr. Héquet. He had always been aware of the Caliph's methodical mind, his intellectual probity and capacity for hard work. Next, his choice had fallen on two young men: Manuel Roy, a medical student who had worked under him for several years at the hospital; and René Jousselin, an analytical chemist, whose researches on serums had already brought him to the fore.

Under the guidance of an enterprising architect the whole house had been completely transformed within a few months. The ground floor now communicated with the one above it by an inside staircase; it had been converted into a set of laboratories equipped with the most up-to-date apparatus. No detail had been scamped. Whenever some technical difficulty arose, Antoine's hand went instinctively to the pocket in which he kept his cheque-book. "Make out an estimate, please." The cost he brushed aside. He set little store by money, much by the success of his schemes. His lawyer and his banker were shocked to see him squandering with such a will a fortune that had been slowly amassed and prudently administered by two generations of *grands bourgeois*. But Antoine had no qualms; he sold large blocks of shares, laughing at the timid warnings of his business advisers. In any case, he had drawn up his financial programme, too. He had resolved to invest what capital remained to him after these inroads, in foreign government stock and especially in Russian mines, on the advice of his friend Rumelles, the diplomat. He reckoned thus to enjoy an income which, according to his calculations, would be approximately the same as that which M. Thibault, faithful to safe investments with small yields, had been receiving on the family capital when it was still intact.

The inspection tour of the ground-floor premises lasted nearly half an hour; Antoine spared his brother no detail. He even took him down to the former cellars, which had been converted into one huge basement-room with whitewashed walls. Jousselin had recently set up in it a malodorous stock-farm, with pens of guinea-pigs, rats, and mice, and a frog-tank. Antoine was in ecstasies, laughing every moment with that full-throated laugh of youthful exuberance which after long years of repression had been released, for good, by Rachel. “A rich man’s child showing his toys,” Jacques thought.

On the first floor were the private studies of Antoine’s three colleagues, a small operating-room, and the large room serving as record room and library.

“With that behind us we can get to work,” Antoine observed in a tone of grave satisfaction as they were going up to the next floor. “I’m thirty-three. High time to settle down to my job in earnest, if I’m to leave something lasting behind me. You know, old man”—he swung round on Jacques with the rather forced abruptness he liked to display, especially to his brother—“one can always do far more than one imagines. When one *wants* something, something realizable, of course—and personally I never aim at things that aren’t realizable—well, when one really sets one’s heart on something . . .” He left the phrase unfinished, smiled complacently, and began walking again.

“How far have you got with your exams?” Jacques asked, for the sake of saying something.

“I passed the hospitals exam last winter. I’ve still to grind for the fellowship—because one must be qualified as well for a professorial post later on. Still—it’s a fine thing, of course, being a good children’s doctor, like Philip, but I’ve come to feel that’s not enough for me; it wouldn’t give me scope. I believe that it’s on the psychological side that medicine today is going to make a great forward step. Well, I want to play a part in that advance, do you see? I don’t want to be left out when it happens. It’s not a mere accident that while I was working for my last exam I devoted so much attention to the subject of defective speech in children. Child psychology is, I’m convinced, only in its infancy. This is the time to start in. I propose next year to round off my studies of the connexion between breathing exercises for youngsters and their mental development.” He swung round. On his face had suddenly settled the look of the great savant whose superior knowledge sets him above the ruck of ordinary mortals. Before putting his key to the lock, he gave his brother a searching look. “What a lot remains to be done in that field!” he slowly said. “What tangles to straighten out!”

Jacques said nothing. Rarely had Antoine’s way of seeming, as it were, to grit his teeth on life got on his nerves so violently. Confronted with this level-headed young man in the thirties who seemed so sure of having launched out on a flowing tide, he realized with something akin to horror his own lack of balance—and, even more keenly, the menace of the storm brooding over Europe.

In his mood of hostility, he found the process of being shown round Antoine's apartment particularly exasperating. Antoine preened himself among its splendours like a cock lording it in his barnyard. He had done away with most of the walls between rooms and completely changed the lay-out of the apartment. Though somewhat over-elaborate, the general effect was a success. Tall lacquer screens partitioned off the two waiting-rooms into small boxlike recesses, ensuring privacy for the patients waiting their turn. Antoine seemed to take pride in this innovation—which made the rooms seem like an exhibition of decorative art. He told Jacques that personally he attached little importance to such displays of opulence. "But," he explained, "it helps to sort out my clientele—do you see? With fewer patients, I have more time for my work."

The dressing-room was a marvel of ingenuity and comfort. As he took off his white coat, Antoine amused himself by swinging to and fro the gleaming doors of the wardrobe.

"Everything's within arm's reach. That saves time, you see."

He put on a smoking-jacket. Jacques observed that his brother was dressing now with much more elegance than in the past. Nothing was showy, but the white shirt was of the finest linen, and the black coat of silk. This quiet spruceness suited him very well, and he seemed to have grown younger, lither, without having lost anything of his robustness.

"How at home he seems in all this luxury!" Jacques thought. "He has Father's vanity, the aristocratic vanity of the bourgeois. What a class! Really, one would think they regard as a proof of their superiority not only their wealth but their habit of 'doing themselves well,' their taste for comfort and the best of everything. They've come to see it as a matter of personal merit which gives them certain social rights. They find the esteem they enjoy perfectly justified. Justified, too, their power, and the subservience of others. Yes, they find it quite natural to 'possess the earth'! Equally natural that their possessions should be shielded by the law against the greed of those who have none. Oh, yes, they're generous, all right! Provided their generosity is only another luxury, a harmless extravagance." And Jacques recalled the precarious existences of his friends in Switzerland. No extravagances for them—though, to help the others, each was always ready to sacrifice his all.

Yet, as he gazed down at the bath, big as a miniature swimming-pool and shimmering with light, he could not repress a prick of envy. His bedroom at three francs a night was decidedly uncomfortable. A bath would be delightful in this heat!

"Here's my study." Antoine opened the door.

Entering, Jacques went up to a window.

"Why, surely this used to be the drawing-room?"

Here for thirty-five consecutive years M. Thibault had been wont to hold the family conclaves, in a dim, religious light between the brocaded window curtains and the heavily draped doors. The architect had achieved an ingenious transformation; it was now a bright, bare, modern room, dignified without being bleak, bathed in the light that flooded in through three large windows divested of their former Gothic panes.

Antoine made no reply. He had been surprised to see the letter from Anne, whom he believed to be at Berck, lying on the desk. Opening it at once, he glanced through the contents and his brows knitted. A picture had risen before him of Anne in the familiar setting of their little flat, Anne in the white silk peignoir half revealing her slim nakedness. Glancing instinctively at the clock, he thrust the note into his pocket. . . . Why should she want him just on an evening which, for once, he had a chance of spending with his brother?

"What?" he asked. He had missed Jacques's remark. "I never work here. It's my consulting-room. I stay mostly in my old room. Come along."

Léon approached them from the end of the passage.

"Did you find the letter, sir?"

"Yes. Bring some drinks, please. In the study."

The study was one of the rare parts of the flat to seem inhabited. As a matter of fact, it gave an impression not so much of work as of confused, multifarious activity. Still, its disorder rather appealed to Jacques. The writing-table was strewn with memorandum slips, notebooks, press-clippings, and miscellaneous papers; hardly any space was left for writing. The shelves were full of well-worn books, periodicals with markers between the pages, bundles of photographs, medicine bottles, and pharmaceutical samples.

"Well, let's sit down a bit." Antoine drew Jacques toward a capacious easy-chair and stretched himself full length among the cushions on the sofa. He always liked to talk lying down. "Lying or standing," he would say. "I leave the sitting position to bureaucrats." He saw Jacques's eyes rove round the room, pausing on the Buddha on the mantelpiece.

“Fine, isn’t it? It’s an eleventh-century piece, from the Ramsay collection.”

His eyes lingered on his brother affectionately, then suddenly grew questioning.

“Let’s hear your news, for a change. Have a cigarette? What brings you to France? The Caillaux case, I’ll wager—you’ve been asked to write it up, eh?”

Jacques did not reply. His eyes were fixed on the Buddha’s face, which, against the background of a golden lotus curved like a seashell, seemed aglow with radiant serenity. His earnest gaze shifted to his brother. In his eyes there was a hint of terror and his expression was so sombre that Antoine felt uneasy; some new tragedy, he supposed, was darkening his young brother’s life.

Léon came in with a tray, which he set down beside the sofa.

“You haven’t told me yet,” Antoine said. “How is it you’re in Paris? Staying long? What will you have to drink? Personally, I’m still addicted to cold tea.”

Jacques declined, with a fretful gesture. “Look here, Antoine,” he said in a low voice, “is it possible that over here you haven’t any notion of what’s threatening?”

Bending over the edge of the sofa, Antoine was holding between his hands the tumbler he had just filled. Before bringing it to his lips he was savouring the fragrance of the tea, discreetly flavoured with rum and lemon. Jacques could see only the crown of his head, the far-away, preoccupied expression of his eyes. Antoine was thinking of Anne, who must be expecting him now; he would have to call her up before long.

Jacques felt inclined to get up and go away without further explanation.

“And what’s threatening?” Antoine murmured, without changing his position. At last, almost reluctantly it seemed, he turned toward his brother.

For a moment they gazed at each other silently. Then, “A war,” Jacques said hoarsely.

The telephone-bell sounded in the hall.

“Yes?” The smoke rising from his cigarette made Antoine blink a little. “Those damned Balkan states at it again?”

He glanced through a newspaper every morning and was vaguely aware that one of those incomprehensible “diplomatic crises” which periodically fluttered the political dovecotes of Central Europe was in progress.

"What we ought to do," he said with a smile, "is to put a ring-fence round those damned Balkan states and let them go on cutting each other's throats till they're exterminated."

Léon's face appeared at the door.

"You're wanted on the phone, sir," he announced in a mysterious tone.

"That's Anne," Antoine said to himself. And though there was a telephone in the room, just beside him, he rose and went to the consulting-room.

For a while Jacques stared at the door by which his brother had gone out. Then suddenly, as though announcing an irrevocable verdict, he said aloud: "The gulf between Antoine and myself is . . . unbridgeable." (There were moments when he felt a rageful satisfaction in declaring that the gulf was "unbridgeable.")

In the consulting-room Antoine snatched up the receiver.

"Hello! Is that you?" asked a warm, rich contralto voice, its natural vibrancy amplified still further by the telephone.

Antoine smiled across the void. "Bad news, darling. I was just going to call you. I'm dreadfully sorry, but Jacques has just rolled in. My brother Jacques. He's come from Geneva. Yes, quite unexpectedly. A moment ago. So you see . . . Where are you calling from?"

The voice, coaxingly: "Why, from *our* place, Tony dear. I'm waiting for you here."

"Please forgive me, darling. I can't leave Jacques just now. You understand, don't you?"

No reply.

He called her name.

Still no reply.

"Anne dear!"

Standing beside the huge, pretentious desk, with his head bent over the receiver, Antoine sent a vague, uneasy gaze roaming across the brown carpet, the chair-legs, the lower shelves of the bookcases.

"Yes," the voice whispered back at last. And after a pause: "Will he—will he be staying very late?"

So heart-broken was the tone that Antoine felt deeply moved. "I don't suppose so," he replied. "Why?"

"Oh, Tony, surely you don't think I could bring myself to start back tonight without having had even a teeny-weeny glimpse of you? If you only could see the state I'm in! Everything's ready for you, dear—including our little dinner. . . ."

He laughed, and she, too, forced a laugh.

"Try to picture how it looks at this end. The little table in front of the window. The big green salad-bowl full of wild strawberries." After a moment she began speaking again, quickly, hoarsely. "Tony dear, do you really mean it? Can't you possibly come here right away—just for an hour or so?"

"No, darling. I can't possibly get away before eleven, or midnight. Do be reasonable!"

"Not even for a minute?"

"You don't understand. . . ."

"Yes, I do understand," she broke in sadly. "There's nothing to be done about it. What a shame!" She paused, then gave a little cough. "All right, it can't be helped. I'll wait for you." The faint sigh of resignation told Antoine what it had cost her to accept her disappointment.

"I'll be with you later, darling."

"Yes. . . . Wait!"

"What is it?"

"No, it's nothing."

"At eleven, then."

"Yes, Tony dear."

Antoine held the receiver to his ear for a moment. Anne, too, at the other end, could not bring herself to put down the receiver. After a hasty glance round the room, Antoine brought his lips close to the mouthpiece and made the sound of a kiss. Then, smiling, he rang off.

XV

WHEN ANTOINE came back to the room, Jacques, who had not stirred from his armchair, was struck by the radiant expression of his brother's face. It conveyed an intimate emotion which he somehow fancied was of an amorous nature. Decidedly, he thought, Antoine had greatly changed.

"Sorry, old man. With that confounded telephone one never has a moment's peace."

Antoine walked to the small table on which he had left his glass, took a few sips, then went back to the couch and stretched himself full length on it.

"What was it we were talking about? Oh, yes, you were saying something about a war. . . ."

He had never found time to take an interest in politics or wished to do so. His scientific training had got him into the way of thinking that in the social, just as in the organic, world everything is a problem and a hard one; that in every field the seeker after truth needs to apply himself to his subject and become something of an expert. And politics, as he saw it, was a specialized activity widely removed from his own. To his reasoned aloofness was added a natural repugnance for politics. From its first page to its last the history of nations was, to his mind, a chronicle of scandalous events, and he had come to regard the very exercise of power as tainted with a certain lack of scruple. In any case, it seemed to him that that unflinching honesty which he, as a physician, held to be all-essential was not the rule, and perhaps not so necessary in the field of politics. Consequently he watched the trend of public affairs with a mistrustfully indifferent eye, as dispassionately as he watched the activities of the Postal Service or those of the Public Works Department. And if, in a smoking-room chat—at the house of his friend Rumelles, for instance—he happened in a casual way to venture an opinion on the doings of some minister in power, it was always from a definite, matter-of-fact, deliberately unsophisticated viewpoint, after the fashion of a passenger in a bus who, wishing to praise or to criticize the driver, takes notice only of the way he handles the wheel.

Now, however, as Jacques seemed to be so keen on it, he was quite willing to begin the conversation with an exchange of generalities on European politics. And it was with the best of intentions that, hoping to end Jacques's silence, he went on to ask: "So you really think another war is brewing in the Balkans?"

Jacques stared intently at his brother. "Do you mean to say that here in Paris you haven't any inkling of what's been happening in the last three weeks? Of all the signs and portents that are piling up? It isn't merely a local Balkan war that's on the way; it's the whole of Europe that's heading straight for war this time. So you people are just carrying on as usual, without a thought for the near future?"

Antoine clicked his lips sceptically.

But what was it that suddenly brought to his mind the gendarme who had called, early one morning, last winter, just as he was leaving for the hospital, to alter the mobilization orders in his service-book? It occurred to him that he hadn't even troubled to find out what his new duties were to be. After the gendarme left, he had tossed the book into a drawer and forgotten all about it. . . .

"You don't seem to understand, Antoine. We've come to a pass when if everyone acts as you do, if everyone lets things drift, there'll be no chance of staving off disaster. Even as it is, any little thing, a single shot fired by some hothead on the Austro-Servian frontier, would start a war off."

Antoine made no comment. He had received a slight shock. A quick flush rose to his cheeks. The words just spoken had suddenly jarred, as it were, some secret spot within him, which so far had not made its presence felt by any special sensitivity. He, like so many others in that summer of 1914, had experienced a vague feeling of being at the mercy of some collective hysteria—of a world-wide character, perhaps—brooding in the air. And for a few seconds he was worried by a premonition he was powerless to shake off. Very soon, however, he got over that absurd feeling of discomfort and, his reaction driving him to the other extreme (as was so often the case), he found a certain pleasure in contradicting his brother, though in a quite amicable tone.

"On that point, of course, I'm not so well informed as you are. Still, you must agree that in so advanced a state of civilization as ours in Western Europe, the mere idea of a general conflict is almost inconceivable. For things to come to that pass there'd have to be, at any rate, a complete reversal of opinion. And that would take time, months and months—years, perhaps—during which other problems would crop up and act as counter-irritants, taking the sting out of our present squabbles."

He gave a genial smile, his equanimity entirely restored by his own arguments.

"These war-scares, you know, are nothing new. I remember one twelve years ago, while I was on military service at Rouen. When it comes to prognosticating a war or a revolution, there's never any lack of prophets of evil. And the queerest part of it is that the signs upon which these pessimists base their prophecies are invariably correct and genuinely alarming. Only there you are: for some reason that hasn't been taken sufficiently into account or has been underestimated, events don't pan out as expected, and things somehow right themselves. And life goes on for better or for worse. And peace likewise."

Crouching forward, his forelock straggling across his forehead, Jacques heard him out impatiently.

"This time, let me tell you, Antoine, it's extremely serious."

"What is? That rumpus between Austria and Servia?"

"That's only a pretext, the 'incident' they've been waiting for—deliberately engineered, quite likely. But don't forget the agitation that's been going on for years and years behind the scenes in the overarmed countries of Europe. That capitalist society you seem to think so safely moored in peaceful waters is adrift, the prey of all sorts of secret, furious antagonisms."

"Hasn't that always been the case?"

"No! Or rather, yes, perhaps. But——"

"I know, of course," Antoine broke in, "that there's that cursed Prussian militarism driving every country in Europe to arm to the teeth."

"Not Prussian militarism only!" Jacques exclaimed. "Every nation has its own brand of militarism, which it justifies by the interests at stake."

Antoine shook his head. "Interests at stake, I grant you," he said. "But however acute it may be, competition between those interests might quite easily go on for ages without leading to a war! I'm a believer in peace, and yet to my mind conflict is an essential factor of life. Fortunately we have other forms of conflict available for the nations than a recourse to arms. That sort of thing may be all right in the Balkans, but every government—I am thinking of the great powers—even in the countries which spend most money on armaments, obviously agrees that war is the worst thing that could happen. I'm only repeating what responsible statesmen themselves declare in their speeches."

"Oh, of course, when talking to their own people, they're bound to pay lip-service to peace. But most of them are still convinced that war's a political necessity, something that's bound to happen now and again, and which, when it does come, must be turned to the best account, and made as profitable as possible. For it's always the same old story: the root of the whole evil is *profit*!"

Antoine was deep in thought. Just as he was about to voice a further objection, his brother spoke again.

"You see, Europe is just now under the control of half a dozen of those poisonous 'eminent patriots,' who under the noxious influence of their

General Staffs are shepherding their several countries straight toward war. That's what everyone should realize. Some of them, the more cynical-minded, know perfectly well what they're about; they want war, and they're preparing for it, like criminals plotting a new exploit, because they're convinced that, sooner or later, events will play into their hands. This is notably the case with Berchtold, in Austria. With Isvolsky and Sazonov in St. Petersburg. As for the rest of them, I won't go so far as to say they actually want war; in fact, they're mostly scared of it. But they're resigned to war, because they think it's bound to come. And no more dangerous belief can take root in the mind of a statesman than the belief that war's inevitable. Those who hold that belief, instead of moving heaven and earth to avert it, can think of one thing only: how best to increase their chances of victory, at all risks and as rapidly as may be. Such, no doubt, is the case with the Kaiser and his ministers. It may be the case with the British government. It is certainly the case with France, under Poincaré."

Antoine's shoulders came up sharply.

"You talk of Berchtold and Sazonov. As for them, I've nothing to say. But Poincaré! You must have taken leave of your senses! In France, apart from a few worthy lunatics like Déroulède, is there anyone nowadays who dreams of military glory, or revenge? France, in every fibre, from the highest to the lowest social level, hates the idea of war. And if by some absurd accident we came to be dragged into a European mix-up, one thing at least is perfectly certain: no one could tax France with having done anything to bring it about, or throw upon her shoulders the slightest share in the responsibility."

Jacques leapt to his feet.

"Is it possible? Is this what you've come to? Can you seriously mean—that?"

Antoine bent on his brother the steady, compelling gaze which he bestowed on his patients and which always filled them with unbounded faith in him—as if a steady eye must guarantee a perfect diagnosis.

Jacques looked him up and down disdainfully.

"Really, your gullibility takes one's breath away! The only remedy would be to take you through the history of the French Republic. Do you consider it can honestly be maintained that French policy for the last forty years has been the policy of a peace-loving nation? That France has any real right to declaim against the misuse of force by others? Is it your opinion that our greed for colonies, and particularly our designs upon Africa, haven't helped to whet the appetites of others? That we haven't set them shameful examples of colony-grabbing?"

"Wait a bit!" Antoine said. "I fail to see that our penetration of Morocco was in any way illegal. I can remember the Algeciras Conference. It was under a mandate—neither more nor less—from all the powers that we were entrusted, the Spaniards and ourselves, with the mission of pacifying Morocco."

"That mandate we extorted by force. What's more, the powers that gave it to us had the intention of using the precedent for their own ends some day or other—as, by the way, they did. Do you suppose, for instance, that if it hadn't been for our Moroccan campaign, Italy would ever have dared to pounce upon Tripoli, or Austria upon Bosnia?"

Antoine gave him a sceptical look, but he was not sufficiently acquainted with the facts to dissent.

And now that Jacques was started, there was no holding him.

"And what about our alliances? Was it to prove her peaceful intentions that France entered into a military pact with Russia? Everyone knows that if Tsarist Russia made an alliance with revolutionary France, it was in the hope of getting us, when the time came, to back up her designs against Austria and Germany. Do you suppose a man like Delcassé, a pawn in the hands of the English diplomats, was working for peace when he schemed to encircle Germany? The result was simply to bolster up, to develop, to intensify that Prussian militarism you talked of. The other result was a cut-throat competition throughout Europe in preparing for war, putting up fortifications, building battleships and strategic railways, and all the rest of it. In France, ten billion francs have been voted for war credits in the last four years. In Germany, the equivalent of eight billions. In Russia six hundred millions, borrowed from France for the purpose of building railways that will enable her one day to move her armies westward against Germany."

" 'One day,' " Antoine murmured. "Yes, one day, perhaps. But a very distant day."

Jacques took no notice of the interruption. "All over the Continent," he went on, "these competitive armaments are being piled up in frantic haste, and they're ruining every country, causing the vast sums that ought to be devoted to social welfare to be spent on preparations for war. It's sheer madness, and bound to end in disaster. And we Frenchmen bear our share of the responsibility. Yes, we make no secret of it! Was it in order to satisfy the world of our good intentions that we sent to the Elysée that stubborn patriot of a Lorrainer, Poincaré, whom every nationalist trouble-maker at once set up as a symbol of jingoism; whose election promptly started our 'revenge'-mongers off on a 'lost provinces' crusade and roused mercenary hopes across the Channel, where the British shopkeepers would love to see their German competitors laid by the heels, and in Russia whetted the appetite of the imperialists, whose everlasting dream is to annex Constantinople?"

He seemed so carried away by his subject that Antoine could not help laughing. He was quite determined not to let himself be drawn into a discussion, and to keep his temper. He did not want this conversation to be anything but a match of wits, an intellectual parlour-game, with political ideas as the counters.

He pointed ironically to the seat from which his brother had risen. "Sit down, do!"

Jacques shot him a withering glance. Then, thrusting his fists into his pockets, he sank back into the armchair.

"As seen from Geneva," he went on after a moment's silence, "I mean, in the international circles in which I live, details become blurred and one sees the general lines of European policy, as it were, in their true perspective. Well, as seen from there, France's evolution in the direction of war is as clear as daylight. And in that evolution, whatever you may think, Poincaré's election as President marked a decisive stage."

Antoine was still smiling.

"There you go again with your Poincaré!" he exclaimed in a bantering tone. "Of course, all *I* know of him is from hearsay. Among the legal fraternity, who are very hard to please, let me tell you, he is universally looked up to. At the Quai d'Orsay, too. Rumelles, who was on his departmental staff, speaks of him as being a man whose heart is in the right place, a scrupulous, diligent minister, straightforward, a lover of law and order, averse to wildcat policies in any shape or form. It strikes me as simply ridiculous to suppose that such a man——"

"Not so fast, not so fast!" Jacques broke in, and, taking his hand from his pocket, fretfully brushed back the lock that kept on falling across his forehead. He was obviously trying to keep himself under control. He was silent for a few moments, his eyes half closed; then he looked up.

"There's such a lot to say that I hardly know where to begin," he confessed. "As regards Poincaré, one must, of course, distinguish between the man and his policy. All the same, to understand his policy one has to understand the man, the whole of him; never losing sight of the fact that in that logic-chopping fire-eater we also have a light-infantry officer, a man with pluck and brawn, who has always shown a taste for soldiering. ‘A lover of law and order,’ they say. ‘A man whose heart is in the right place.’ That much I can well believe. Loyal. Dependable. Dependable as all obstinate people are. They even say he is kind-hearted. Quite likely. He signs most of his letters ‘*Votre dévoué*,’ and in his case it is no empty phrase; he really enjoys doing a good turn. He’s always ready to fight against injustice, to remedy grievances.”

“Come, now! All that’s likeable enough, isn’t it?” Antoine put in.

“Not so fast!” Jacques repeated impatiently. “I’ve had occasion to go into the psychology of Poincaré pretty thoroughly for an article in the *Beacon*. Above all he’s a proud man, one who never bends, who never gives way. Intelligent, of course, but with an argumentative, logical cleverness, lacking in broadness of outlook, without any real genius. And unbelievably stubborn. Quick-witted, but rather short-sighted; with an exceptional memory, but a memory for details. All this goes to make a perfect lawyer—which, by the way, he has always remained—more skilled in handling words than ideas.”

Antoine demurred. “If that’s all he ever was, how can you account for his political success?”

“By his capacity for hard work, which is simply marvellous. And also by a gift for finance that’s rarely to be found in a member of Parliament.”

“By his honesty, as well, no doubt. That’s a quality which always surprises people in such circles—and commands respect.”

“As to his success,” Jacques continued, “one may imagine he was himself surprised at it, and that it gradually fired his ambition. For he has grown ambitious. And there are heaps of signs that he wouldn’t mind having to play a major part in making history. Or, rather, that he wouldn’t mind being the man who caused France to play a leading part in history and who gave France a new renown, with which his name would be for ever linked. The most alarming feature is his conception of national honour, his quasi-religious cult of patriotism. It’s due, of course, to his Lorraine origin, his early years in a land that had just suffered mutilation. He belongs to a land and a generation which for years and years have been looking forward to the day of revenge, to the recovery of the lost provinces.”

“That’s so,” Antoine conceded. “But as for suggesting that he aimed at coming into office so as to start a war . . .”

“Just a moment,” Jacques cut in. “Let me have my say. It stands to reason that two and a half years ago, when he became Prime Minister, or even eighteen months ago, when he was sent to the Elysée, if anyone had come up to him and said: ‘You’re bent on leading France into a war,’ he’d have been furiously indignant. Yet call to mind the circumstances in which he was appointed head of the government, in January 1912. Whom did he succeed? Why, Caillaux. Now Caillaux, you’ll remember, had just averted a war with Germany. He’d even paved the way for a lasting Franco-German reconciliation. As a matter of fact, it was just on account of that policy of concessions made for the sake of peace that he was turned out by the nationalists. And if Poincaré was able to step into his shoes it was—I won’t say because he actually intended to go to war, but anyhow because he was expected to adopt a ‘national’ policy with regard to Germany, a policy, that is, in sharp contrast with the overconciliatory attitude of a man like Caillaux. The best proof is that the first thing he did was to dig out that old fellow Delcassé, the man who had promoted the encirclement of Germany, and put him in charge at the Quai d’Orsay. And when he became President of the Republic a year later, whose were the votes that gave him his majority? The votes of such bourgeois capitalists as Joseph de Maistre, who hold that war is a biological necessity, a perfectly natural event, deplorable of course, but none the less inevitable now and again. Such people, I believe, wouldn’t stir a finger to start a war of revenge, yet for them it’s an inspiring possibility, and they’d jump at the chance if a pretext came their way. We used to see them at pretty close quarters, in the old days, at Father’s dinners, those diehards of our reactionary bourgeoisie. Not to mention that all the old French parties of the right have never really had any devotion to the Republic, and there’s always the idea at the back of their minds that a successful war would give the victorious government dictatorial powers, enabling them to call a halt to the Socialist drive, and even rid the country of its republican demagogues. They indulge in dreams of a disciplined, militarized France—a triumphant France, armed to the teeth, and backed by a vast colonial empire; a France in whose presence everybody else would cringe. Can’t you imagine the appeal that dream has for our ‘patriots’?”

“Still, since he came into office,” Antoine ventured to remark, “Poincaré has never ceased to proclaim his peaceful intentions.”

“What’s more,” Jacques said, “I’m quite willing to believe he means it—though actually such schemes for peaceful expansion very soon turn into war aims when diplomacy fails to put them through. But we’ve got to take another factor into account, the consequences of which may be immense. For years past it’s been a matter of common knowledge that Poincaré is obsessed by two incorrigible beliefs. First, that a clash between Germany and England is bound to come.”

“Well, isn’t that what you were saying yourself just now?”

“No. I didn’t say ‘bound to come.’ What I did say was that it seemed probable. Secondly, that ever since that Agadir affair Germany has been bent on attacking France, and steadily preparing to do so. Those are Poincaré’s two obsessions, and nothing will get them out of his head. And as he’s firmly convinced, moreover, that force and the fear that force inspires are the only means of ensuring peace, the conclusion’s obvious. If there’s one chance left to France of avoiding an attack by Germany, it’s by making herself more and more to be feared. Therefore she must pile up armaments, must take up an uncompromising, not to say aggressive stand. Once you realize that, everything becomes plain—all Poincaré’s activities since 1912, both abroad and at home, are seen to be perfectly consistent.”

Leaning back among the cushions, Antoine was tranquilly puffing at his cigarette. He was amazed by his brother’s excitement, but he listened to him attentively. Jacques’s voice, meanwhile, was gradually calming down, like a brimming stream returning to its bed. On this familiar ground, which gave him a brief sense of superiority over his brother, he felt perfectly at ease.

“But really, I seem to be giving you a history lecture; it’s ridiculous,” he said, forcing a smile to his lips.

Antoine gave him a friendly glance. “No, no, not a bit of it.”

“I said just now, ‘both abroad and at home.’ Well, let’s begin with his foreign policy. It’s aggressively defensive, as he intends it to be. Take our relations with Russia, for instance. Germany is worried about the Franco-Russian agreement, is she? Well, let her worry! In the war Poincaré sees coming, Russia’s assistance is absolutely necessary to stave off a German invasion. Therefore the thing to be done, regardless of German susceptibilities, is to strengthen the Franco-Russian Alliance and do so openly. But that involves appalling risks, for it involves playing the game of Pan-Slavism, whose warlike designs on Austria and Germany are common knowledge. Little does Poincaré care for that! All things considered, he’d rather run the risk of being drawn into a hazardous adventure than that of any loosening of the ties between France and her one and only ally. Nor was there any lack of persons ready to work hand in glove with him in furtherance of that policy—Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, and Isvolsky, the Tsar’s ambassador in Paris. To the embassy in St. Petersburg he appointed his friend Delcassé, who for a long time past had openly held the same views. The instructions given him were to foster Russia’s warlike inclinations and tighten the bonds between the two countries, so as to promote a policy of force. No stone has been left unturned. We have some very reliable sources of information in Geneva. As far back as his first journey to St. Petersburg as Prime Minister, two years ago, Poincaré made no attempt to dampen Russia's hopes of conquest. And his present visit, to which coming events may lend a terrible significance, is intended, I think, to enable him to verify on the spot, in consultation with the local leaders, whether all is in readiness and the agreement in shape to take effect the moment the signal's given."

Antoine propped himself on his elbow.

"Look here, old man, that's all guesswork really, isn't it?"

"Not a bit of it. It's all been checked up from other sources. Is Poincaré being fooled by the Russians, or is he in collusion with them? It makes little difference; in point of fact, his Russian policy is enough to make your hair stand on end. Perfectly logical, mind you! The policy of a man with a cast-iron belief that war is threatening his country, and the Russian army will be needed for a counter-attack in Eastern Prussia. One should realize the part a man like Isvolsky is playing in Paris with the permission and approval, if not the active encouragement, of Poincaré. Have you the least notion of the amount of money that's being paid to our press by the Russian secret service funds, to keep the war propaganda here in France up to the mark? Did it ever occur to you that the French government not merely tolerates the use of three million roubles for buying up French public opinion, but actually aids and abets the practice?"

"You don't say so!" Antoine exclaimed in mock horror.

"Just listen to this! Do you know who distributes those Russian subsidies among the leading French newspapers? It's our Finance Minister himself! And that's a fact of which we in Geneva have abundant proof. What's more, Hosmer—he's an Austrian who's very well informed as to European affairs—is constantly affirming that ever since the last Balkan wars the press in Western Europe has come to be almost entirely in the pay of the powers that are out for war. That's why the public in those countries is kept in such ignorance of the abominable rivalries which, in Central Europe and in the Balkans, have for the last two years been bringing war nearer every day—for those who have eyes to see. But that's enough about the press. There's more to tell. Wait a bit! . . . One could go on talking about Poincaré for hours—I can't explain everything to you, offhand, like that. Let's turn to his policy at home. It lines up with the other. Naturally enough. To begin with, a general speeding up of armaments—a godsend for the steel and iron industries, whose power behind the scenes is simply tremendous. Next, the period of military service has been increased to three years. (I suppose you followed the debates in the Chamber? You remember Jaurès's speeches?) Then, they've been working on public opinion. You were saying just now: 'Nowadays no one in France dreams of military glory.' Do you mean to say you haven't noticed how a jingoistic, war-mongering spirit has been gaining ground in France during the last few months, especially among the younger generation? Here, too, I'm not exaggerating, I assure you. And this, too, is Poincaré's doing. He has his scheme. He knows that when mobilization does come the government will need the support of a public opinion heated to fever-pitch and ready not only to accept and follow his lead but to back him up and cry him on. The France of 1900, the France of the Dreyfus affair, was too peace-minded. The army was under a cloud; people had lost interest in it. They took security for granted. Somehow, then, the nation had to be roused, alarmed. The young folk, especially of the middle-class, provided a favourable soil for sowing the seeds of chauvinist propaganda. And they were not long in striking root."

"That a certain number of youngsters have turned nationalist, I won't deny," Antoine broke in. He was thinking of his young assistant Manuel Roy. "But they're a very small minority."

"A minority that's growing larger every day. A very truculent minority. Their greatest joy is forming in groups, wearing badges, waving flags, marching in military formation. On the slightest pretext, nowadays, you find them staging a demonstration round Joan of Arc's monument or the Strasbourg statue. And there's nothing more catching. The man in the street—the petty clerk, the small shopkeeper—is not indefinitely proof against such sights, such appeals to fanaticism; particularly as the press, at the bidding of the government, is working on people's minds along the same lines. It's gradually being hammered into the French people that they're in danger, that their security depends upon their ability to use their fists, that they've got to show their force and put up with a huge rearmament plan. The country has been deliberately infected with what you doctors call a neurosis—the war neurosis. And when once that collective apprehension, that frenzied panic, has been injected into a nation, it's child's play to drive it into the most suicidal follies.

"That's how matters stand. Mind you, I don't say: 'One of these days Poincaré will declare war against Germany.' No, Poincaré isn't a Berchtold. But if peace is to be maintained, people must believe it to be possible. Acting on the principle that a clash is unavoidable, Poincaré has thought out and carried on a policy that, far from staving off the risks of war, has actually brought it nearer. Our armaments, keeping step with the Russian preparations, have scared Berlin, as was only to be expected. The German military party has improved the occasion to speed up its own. The tightening of the Franco-Russian Alliance has confirmed the morbid fear of encirclement in Germany; so much so, indeed, that German generals are openly declaring that a war is the only way out. Some go so far as to say it'll have to be started as a precautionary measure! And all this is largely Poincaré's doing. The one and certain result, the diabolical result, of the Isvolsky-Poincaré policy has been to drive Germany into becoming what Poincaré fancied her to be: a war-mad nation, a beast of prey. We're moving in a vicious circle. And if within three months from now France is involved in a European war—a war for which Russia has paved the way, step by step, a war that Germany will perhaps allow to break out so as to take advantage of a favourable opportunity—yes, if there's a war, what will happen? Poincaré will shout exultantly: 'You see what we were up against! You see how right I was to insist upon the need for a more powerful army and more reliable allies!' And he'll never guess that his psychology was at fault, that by playing up to Russia and always prophesying the worst, he was, appearances notwithstanding, one of the men actually responsible for that war."

Antoine had made up his mind to hear his brother out, but his private opinion was that Jacques's tirade had little weight behind it. He had detected several contradictions in its course. His logical, matter-of-fact intellect rebelled against a line of argument which struck him, on the whole, as feeble, badly arranged. He was greatly tempted to return a verdict of ineptitude against his young brother, whose views once again struck him as superficial, not to say childish. Yes, Jacques was a mixture of good-heartedness and inexperience. Even supposing there were really some such vague menace looming in the background, Poincaré, whose influence (though as President he stood outside party politics) was still predominant, would not fail to dispel the storm-clouds in good time. He was a man to be trusted; he had given proof of great political acumen. Rumelles thought very highly of him. To fancy that a level-headed man like Poincaré could wish for a war of revenge was mere silliness, and no less silly was it to imagine that without wanting it, simply because he supposed it possible or imminent, he would behave in such a way as to make it inevitable. All that was merest moonshine. The most elementary common sense sufficed to show, on the contrary, that Poincaré—and, like him, every French statesman—was stubbornly determined at all costs to spare his country the ordeal of war. For scores of reasons. First and foremost because he was aware, no one better, that neither Russia nor France was in a position to be sure of ultimate success. Hadn't Rumelles said so only the other day? Jacques himself, for that matter, had tacitly admitted that the Russian means of transport and strategic roads were inadequate, since it was to remedy these defects that Russia had just raised a loan of six hundred millions. As for France, the law of three years' military service, which was held to be of vital necessity to bring her establishment up to the German level, had only just been passed, and had not yet taken effect. . . . Still, Antoine was not equipped with enough precise data to enable him to demolish his brother's arguments, as he would have liked to do. So, prudently he kept his peace. The course of events would certainly give the lie to Jacques, and to those queer foreigners in Switzerland, the scare-mongers under whose influence he now was.

Jacques had ceased speaking, and suddenly looked quite fagged out. He pulled out his handkerchief and mopped his face and the back of his neck.

He was well aware that his passionate harangue had not convinced his brother. And he knew why. He had been foolish enough to pour out, higgledy-piggledy, without attempting to set them out in order, a medley of arguments on very different lines—political, pacifist, revolutionary—which were for the most part vague echoes of palavers in the Talking Shop. At that moment he too was cruelly conscious of the ineffectiveness with which his brother secretly reproached him.

During the week he had been in Paris he had spent most of his time inquiring into the outlook of the French Socialists, and had busied himself rather with their reactions to the threat of war than with the problem of national responsibility.

His eyes wandered restlessly to and fro across the room, without settling on any object. At last they came to rest on his brother, who had remained motionless, his head propped on his hands and his gaze fixed on the ceiling.

"In any case," he began in an unsteady voice, "I really don't know why I let myself go like that. Obviously there's more that might be said on the subject, but there are others who could do it far better than I can. Let's say I am unjust toward Poincaré, that I've an exaggerated view of France's responsibility. That's not what really matters. What does matter is that war is coming nearer. That it's up to us, at all costs, to avert that peril."

Antoine gave an incredulous smile, which exasperated his brother. "You and people like you," Jacques cried, "it's positively criminal the belief you have in your security! When at long last the middle-class makes up its mind to see things as they are, it will be too late. Events are moving at breakneck speed. Read today's *Matin*, the issue of July 19. It talks about the Caillaux trial. About the summer holidays, seaside hotels and the prices they are charging. But you'll find as well in the editorial columns an article that wasn't put in by accident, and begins with a phrase potent as an explosive: '*If war should break out . . .*' That's how things stand. The Western world is like a powder magazine. A spark let fly by chance would touch it off. And people like you go on talking about war in the tone of voice you used just now—as if you thought of war as just a word, a trivial word, and uttered it accordingly! When you refer to war, none of you thinks of the unprecedented slaughter, the millions of innocent victims it involves. Oh, if only your imagination could shake off its apathy just for a moment! Then you'd all be up and doing—you, Antoine, would be among the first to move! Out to do something, somehow to stave war off before it is too late!"

"No!" Antoine's voice was calm. For a few moments he stayed thus, lost in thought. Then, "No," he said again. "That's not *my* line!"

Perturbed as he might be, for all his seeming calm, by the issues his brother had just raised, he refused to allow any real uneasiness to get a grip on him, to ruffle the even tenor of the life he had built up and on which his peace of mind depended.

He drew himself up a little, folding his arms. "It's 'No' I tell you!" he repeated with a stubborn smile. "I'm not the sort of busybody who goes out of his way to interfere in world affairs. I've a job of my own to attend to, thank goodness! I'm a man who at eight a.m. sharp tomorrow will be on duty at his hospital. There's that phlegmon case in bed No. 4; a peritonitis in No. 9. Every day I've a score of poor little brats to attend to, and it's my job to get them out of the mess they're in. That's why I say 'No' to everything else. A man who has a profession can't allow himself to be switched off it to go and dabble in affairs he doesn't know a thing about. *I* have my job cut. It's up to me to solve certain specific, limited problems, which I'm competent to tackle, and on which the future of a human life depends—of a whole family, quite often. Now do you see? I've other things to do than fumble with Europe's pulse."

His private opinion was that those who are responsible for the nation's welfare are by definition experts used to dealing with international problems of all kinds, and that these experts should be trusted blindly by non-experts like himself. And the confidence he had in the French leaders he likewise extended to the rulers of other countries. He felt an innate respect for specialists.

Jacques was observing him with unwonted attention. He suddenly wondered whether that famous mental balance of Antoine's, which in the past he had admired as a triumph of reason, a victory of mind over the chaos of events, and which had always inspired him with mingled envy and vexation, were not merely the defensive armour of one of those active-sluggard people who always keep on the move, rather like athletes in perpetual training—just to prove to themselves of what stuff they are made. Or, to put the matter more fairly, might not Antoine's pose be a happy consequence of the limited and, truth to tell, rather restricted scope he had assigned to his activities?

"You talk of a war neurosis," Antoine went on. "That's all buncombe. I don't allow the importance you do to psychological factors. Politics is concerned essentially with practical matters, hard facts. And in politics generous impulses count for even less than in other fields of activity. So even supposing the dangers you see ahead are real, there's nothing we can do about it. Absolutely nothing. Neither you, nor I, nor anybody!"

Jacques jumped up angrily. "That's not true!" he cried, moved by an indignation he was now unable to control. "What! Faced with such terrible possibilities, you'd have us believe there's nothing to be done but to bow to the storm, and carry on with our silly little jobs, and meekly wait for the cataclysm to overwhelm us! It's perfectly monstrous! Fortunately for the nations, fortunately for people like you, there are men on the watch who won't hesitate to risk their lives, tomorrow if need be, to save Europe from disaster."

Antoine bent forward; his interest was aroused. "What men do you mean? Yourself, for instance?"

Jacques walked up to the sofa. His irritation had subsided. He gazed down on his brother, his eyes alight with pride and confidence.

"Is it news to you, Antoine, that there are twelve million *organized* workers in the world?" He spoke calmly, but beads of sweat were forming on his forehead. "Are you aware that the international Socialist movement has behind it fifteen years of struggle, fifteen years of loyal co-operation and continuous progress? That there are today large Socialist groups in every Parliament in Europe? And that the twelve million supporters of the movement are distributed over more than twenty different countries? Yes, there are more than twenty Socialist organizations linking together all the ends of the earth in one world-wide brotherhood. And do you realize that their ruling thought, the bond uniting them, is their hatred of militarism, their firm resolve to struggle against war in every shape or form, in whatever quarter it may arise? For war, you know, is always a capitalist expedient to make the masses . . ."

"Dinner is ready, sir," Léon announced, opening the door.

Cut short, Jacques mopped his brow and went back to his chair. Then, when the servant had left the room, he said, by way of conclusion, in a low voice: "Now, Antoine, perhaps you have a better idea why I've come to France. . . ."

For a few moments Antoine gazed at his brother without speaking. The sinuous line of his brows had stiffened to a bar above the deep-set eyes, showing the tension of his thoughts.

"Quite so," he observed at last, ambiguously.

There was a brief pause. Antoine had changed the position of his legs, and was now sitting up on the sofa, propping himself on his hands, and staring at the carpet. Then he gave a slight shrug and rose to his feet.

"Well, let's have dinner, anyhow," he said with a smile.

Jacques followed his brother without a word. He felt his clothes sticky with sweat. Half-way down the passage, he remembered his glimpse of Antoine's bathroom. The temptation was too strong to be resisted.

"Listen," he suddenly remarked, blushing like a child. "It's damned silly, but I'd love to have a bath. At once, I mean, before dinner. Any objection?"

"Not the least, old man!" Antoine smiled. The absurd notion flashed through his head that he was having a small revenge on Jacques. "A bath, a shower, anything you like. I'll show you the way."

While Jacques was luxuriating in the water, Antoine, who had gone back to his study, took Anne's letter from his pocket. He read it once more, then tore it up, for he made a point of never keeping any letter from a woman. He was chuckling inwardly, but only the ghost of a smile flickered on his lips. Then, going back to the sofa, he lit a cigarette and settled down again among the cushions.

He gave himself to thought—not about war, nor about Jacques, not even about Anne, but about himself. "I'm an utter slave to my profession, that's a fact," he mused. "I never have time to apply my thoughts to anything else. This business of keeping one's mind engrossed with patients, or even with medical research, isn't real thinking in the sense I mean—which is, or should be, trying to get the hang of things in general. But I haven't any time for that. I'd feel as if I were cheating my work of its due. Am I right, I wonder? Is a professional career really the only thing that counts? Is it even the whole of my own life? I'm not so sure. Under Thibault, the physician, I feel there's someone else: *myself*. And that self of mine has been suppressed—for years and years. Ever since I passed my first exam, perhaps. That day I stepped into the cage, and it closed on me for ever. The man I was, the man I used to be before I became a doctor—the man I still am, when all's said and done—is like a seed buried too deep; it's given up trying to develop. Yes, its development ceased with that very first exam. And all my brother doctors are just the same. All men with a calling must be like that, I imagine. The best, of course. For it's always the best who sacrifice their personalities, who submit to the all-absorbing tyranny of a profession. We’re rather like free men who have deliberately sold themselves for slaves.”

His hand, thrust into his pocket, was fidgeting with the little engagement-book he always had with him. Mechanically he drew it forth and ran his eye over the page for the next day—July 20. It was crowded with names and memoranda.

“By Jove, yes!” he suddenly reminded himself. “It’s tomorrow I promised Thérivier to go and see his little girl again, at Sceaux. And I must be back in my consulting-room by two.”

He crushed the stub of his cigarette in the ashtray and stretched his legs.

“That’s Thibault, the medicine-man, cropping up again.” He smiled to himself. “Well, well! Life, after all, means action. Not philosophizing. What’s the use of musing upon life? Everybody knows what life is: an absurd jumble of wonderful moments and infernal bothers! That point has been disposed of once for all. Living doesn’t mean to be perpetually calling everything in question.”

Drawing himself up with a vigorous forward lunge of his shoulders, he rose to his feet and took a few steps which brought him to the window.

“Life is action,” he repeated, gazing vaguely down upon the empty street, the closed shop-windows, the sloping roofs on which the declining sun cast long shadows of the chimney-pots. He was still fumbling with the little engagement-book in his pocket. “Tomorrow’s Monday; we’ll be doing in that guinea-pig for the little fellow in bed 13. It’s a thousand to one the inoculation will turn out to be positive. A nasty business, losing a kidney when you’re only fifteen. And then there’s that confounded kid of Thérivier’s. I’m out of luck, this year, with all these septic pleurisy cases. Another couple of days, and if there’s no turn for the better, we’ll have to remove the rib. . . . Damn it all!” he suddenly exclaimed, letting the curtain fall back into place. “The ‘one thing needful’—isn’t it just that: to do one’s job properly? And let life have its way?”

He moved back into the middle of the room and lit a cigarette. “Yes, life will have its way. . . . And Master Jacques will have his say!” Amused by the foolish jingle, he began singing the couplet to a little tune: “Yes, life will have its way. And Master Jacques his say! . . .”

XVI

THE meal began with cups of chilled soup, which the two brothers drank in silence, while Léon, white-coated like a barman, gravely sliced a melon on the marble-topped sideboard.

“There’s going to be fish, some cold meat, and salad,” Antoine announced. “That do you all right?”

In the new dining-room, with its bare panelling, blank mirrors, and a long sideboard that took up the full length of the wall opposite the window, there reigned an atmosphere of depressing, if majestic, emptiness. Antoine, however, seemed quite at ease in this spacious setting. Just now his face wore an expression of the utmost cordiality and good humour. So delighted was he at having his young brother with him once more that he could wait without impatience for their conversation to resume its course.

But Jacques kept silent. He was paralysed by the room’s lack of intimacy and the absurd distance between him and his brother; they were separated by the entire width of a table at which a dozen guests could have sat down in comfort. The servant’s presence added to his constraint; every time Léon came to change a plate he had twice to walk half the room’s length, coming and going between the table and the dumb-waiter; and Jacques found himself unwillingly following with his eyes the movements of the white, wraithlike figure gliding to and fro. He hoped Léon would disappear after serving the melon. But he lingered on, filling their glasses. “That’s something new,” Jacques said to himself. In the past, not to pour out his wine, as and when he felt inclined, would have been almost unbearable to Antoine.

“This is a 1904 Meursault,” Antoine said, raising his glass to admire the limpid amber glow. “It’ll go well with the fish. I found about fifty bottles of it in the cellar; but Father’d let our cellar pretty well run out.”

Stealthily he was examining his brother, with more attention now.

Jacques was in a brown study, gazing out of the open window. Above the house-tops the sky glowed with a roseate sheen of mother-of-pearl. How often on such summer evenings, in his childhood, had he gazed out at those selfsame roofs and house-fronts, those windows with their dingy awnings and closed shutters, and rows of ferns in pots aligned along the balconies!

“Tell me, Jacques,” Antoine suddenly inquired, “how are you getting on? Are you happy?”

Jacques gave a start and shot a wondering glance at his brother.

"Yes"—Antoine's voice was affectionate—"I want to know if you're happy, *anyhow*."

An uncomfortable smile hovered on Jacques's lips. "Oh, you know," he murmured, "happiness isn't something one can turn on like a bath-tap. I rather think it's a gift. Perhaps I haven't got that gift."

Then he caught a professional look in his brother's gaze, lowered his eyes, and kept silent. He did not wish to resume the discussion broken off a little while before, but his mind kept harking back to it. Opportunely the sight of the family plate—the oval dish on which Léon was serving him the fish, the sauce-boat with the handle shaped like an ancient Roman lamp—diverted his thoughts to the family dinners of his boyhood.

"And how about Gise?" he asked abruptly—as if she had suddenly come back to his mind after months of forgetfulness.

Antoine jumped at the opening. "Gise? She's still abroad. She seems happy; I hear from her now and then. She came here on a visit, at Easter, for two or three days. She's a young lady of more or less independent means now, thanks to Father's legacy."

He vaguely hoped that this allusion might lead to a conversation about the family property, for he had never taken seriously his brother's rejection of his share. With the family lawyer's approval he had made arrangements for an equitable partition of the estate and had instructed his bankers to administer Jacques's share until such time as the latter retracted his absurd decision.

But the allusion was completely lost on Jacques. "Is she still in the convent?" he asked.

"No. She's left London and is living in the suburbs now, at Kingsbury, in a sort of boarding-school—it's connected with the convent, as far as I can make out—with a number of other girls of about her age."

Jacques almost regretted having so rashly broached that particular topic. He could never think of Gise without a certain discomfort. There were too many reasons for believing that he alone was responsible for the girl's exile, for her flight from everything that might remind her of the past, and for the frustration of her hopes.

Antoine went on with a quiet, indulgent laugh. "You know how she is. It's just the life for her. A sort of communal life without any strict rules, in which her time's divided between good works and games. Yes," he repeated in a faintly hesitant tone, "it seems she's happy there."

Jacques hastened to start his brother on another trail. “And Mademoiselle?”

During the previous winter Antoine had mentioned in a letter that the old lady had moved into a home.

“I must admit,” Antoine replied, “that I only know of her by hearsay, through Adrienne and Clotilde.”

“Are they still with you?”

“Yes. I kept them, as they got on so well with Léon. They never miss going to visit Mademoiselle on the first Sunday of each month.”

“Where’s the home?”

“At Le Point-du-Jour. Do you remember the Superannuates’ Home in which Chasle put his mother—and ruined himself doing it? No? You didn’t hear the story? One of the old loony’s most priceless exploits, that was. . . .”

“What’s become of the old fellow?” Jacques asked, smiling despite himself.

“Chasle? Oh, he’s going strong. He keeps a gadget-shop in the Rue des Pyramides—the vocation he was born to, according to him. And I must say he seems to be making a success of it. You should drop in at the ‘Mart’ if you happen to be around that way. His partner is another quaint bird. The pair of them would have delighted Dickens.”

For a moment, back on familiar, fraternal ground, they laughed in unison.

“As for Mademoiselle . . .” Antoine began after a pause, then hesitated, obviously embarrassed. He seemed particularly eager to explain to Jacques just what had happened. When he continued, it was in that easy, urbane tone of his, which rang new for Jacques. “You must understand, old man; the idea that Mademoiselle would end her days anywhere but in this house never crossed my mind. . . . All right, Léon; put the salad-bowl on the table, we’ll help ourselves. . . . It’s a watercress salad,” he added, for Jacques’s benefit, as he waited for Léon to go out. “Will you have it with the cold meat, or after?”

“After.”

“I may tell you frankly,” Antoine went on, after making sure they were alone, “I’d never have stirred a finger to get the poor old thing to leave. Still, I don’t deny it suited my book, finding her so keen on going. There really wasn’t any place for her in my new domestic arrangements. . . . Well, it wasn’t till she realized Gise was determined to live in England that she got the idea of entering the home. Gise was quite ready to take her aunt with her to England, for them to live together. But no, the old lady had her fixed idea: the home. Every day after lunch she used to fold her skinny hands and start the same refrain, wagging her little head at me. ‘I’ve told you again and again, Antoine. In the state I’m in . . . I don’t want to be a drag on anybody. I’m seventy-four, and considering the state I’m in . . .’ I used to say: ‘That’s all right. We’ll talk about it tomorrow.’ Then one day—why shouldn’t I admit it? It simplified things immensely, you know—I gave in. You don’t think I was wrong, do you? Anyhow, I made a point of seeing everything was done in style. For one thing, I paid the highest rate on their scale of charges, to make sure they’d do the old lady proud. I went to the home myself and chose two rooms opening into each other, and had them done over thoroughly and the furniture from the room she had here moved into them, so that she wouldn’t notice the change too much. That way, she couldn’t have the feeling of being thrown on the scrap-heap, so to speak, could she, now? As it is, she’s more like a lady of modest means living in a boarding-house.”

He cast an anxious look at his brother and was evidently reassured by Jacques’s expression of approval, for he began to smile at once. “So that’s that!” he added cheerfully. “But I don’t believe in humbugging oneself, and I don’t mind telling you it was the devil of a relief when she cleared out of here!”

He fell silent, and picked up his knife and fork again. For some minutes, absorbed in his story, he had ceased eating. Now, his eyes bent on his plate, he was skilfully dissecting a leg of duck. He seemed absorbed, but it was obvious his attention was directed toward something other than his fingers’ neat activity.

XVII

“I’M THINKING of your twelve million workers,” he suddenly remarked. “Tell me, does this mean you’ve joined the Socialist Party?” His head was still bowed over his plate, and he kept it thus, though his eyes rose to observe his brother.

Jacques parried the question with a movement of his head that might have been a nod. As a matter of fact he had not received his Party member's card till a few days back. It was only at the threat of a European conflagration that he had renounced his independence, feeling it his duty to join the Socialist International, the one organization with energy and manpower to cope with the forces making for war.

As Antoine handed him the salad, he casually inquired: "Are you quite sure, old man, that your present life, in these—er—political surroundings, is really the life that suits you best? Does it give enough scope to your intellectual abilities, to your literary gifts—let's say, to your real personality?"

Jacques slammed the salad-bowl onto the table; he was furious with his brother. "Antoine," he thought, "is getting to talk more and more like Father—just the same pompous style."

Antoine was obviously making an effort to speak in a detached, neutral tone. After some hesitation he put a direct question. "Really, deep down inside you, do you think you were born to be a revolutionary?"

Jacques gazed at his brother, a wry smile on his lips. His face clouded over, and he did not reply at once. His lips were quivering when he spoke again. "What's made me a revolutionary," he said, "is having been born here, in this house, the son of a bourgeois father. It's having had to witness as a child, day after day, all the injustice which keeps our privileged class on top. It's having had always, from my boyhood up, a vague feeling of guilt, of complicity—yes, a rankling sense that, though I loathed the whole system, I profited by it."

Antoine was about to speak; but Jacques stayed him with a gesture and went on. "Long before I knew what capitalism was, before I'd even heard the term, when I was twelve or thirteen—do you remember?—I was up in arms against the world around me, against my schoolmates, my teachers; against Father's world, his charitable societies, and the rest of it."

Antoine was meditatively stirring the salad in the bowl. "Why, yes!" he conceded with a slight laugh. "I'm the first to acknowledge that the world you speak of creaks at the joints a bit. Still, its axle has been well ground in, and it goes on turning more or less smoothly—by sheer force of habit. You shouldn't be so hard on it. That world has its virtues and responsibilities; its greatness, too. Not to mention its amenities," he added with the air of genial unconcern which, more even than his words, antagonized his brother.

"No!" Jacques exclaimed, his voice vibrant with emotion. "The capitalist world is indefensible! It has created ridiculous, inhuman relations between man and man. It’s a world in which all values are perverted, where there’s no room for respecting human personality, where self-interest is the only motive and the one ambition is to amass more and more wealth. A world in which the magnates of high finance have it all their own abominable way; they can mislead public opinion by their venal press, and have even the government at their beck and call. It’s a world where the individual, the worker, is reduced to nothingness, where . . .”

“So according to you,” Antoine broke in—he too was beginning to lose his temper, “the worker doesn’t profit at all by the increased production we have in the world today?”

“What he gains by it is paltry, negligible! The only ones who really profit by it are company promoters and shareholders, bankers and big business men.”

“Whom naturally you picture as idle pleasure-seekers, battening on the workers’ sweat, and gorging caviare and champagne in the company of pretty ladies!”

Jacques did not even deign to shrug his shoulders. “No, I picture them as they are, Antoine. At least, as the best among them are. Far from idle; quite the opposite. But pleasure-seekers, yes! The lives they lead are at once laborious and luxurious—cheerfully laborious, shamelessly luxurious. Wholly satisfying lives, because they combine all possible pleasures—all the enjoyment and excitement of doing jobs that exercise the mind, the sporting thrill of competition, of taking chances, plotting and scheming, and winning through. And they have all the satisfactions that money, social prestige, the mastery over men and things, can bring. In a word, the life of the privileged few. Well, can you deny that?”

Antoine said nothing, but in his heart he judged all that as windy rhetoric, a tissue of commonplaces, the public speaker’s stock-in-trade. Still, he was conscious that his annoyance prevented him from being wholly just, and that the problems raised in his brother’s divagations had their importance. “Far more difficult problems,” he mused, “than Jacques, and those like him who see only one side of the picture, imagine. There’s no limit to their complexity, and the people who should tackle them aren’t humanitarian utopia-merchants but scientists, great thinkers who’re immune from passion and trained in scientific methods.”

“The capitalist system,” Jacques concluded, with an angry glance at his brother, “was in the past, no doubt, a factor for progress. But in our time, in the inevitable course of things, it’s become a force opposed to common sense, to justice, to the dignity of man.”

"Hear! Hear!" Antoine smiled. "Finished your tirade?"

They fell silent. Léon had come in, and was changing their plates.

"Put the cheese and fruit on the table," Antoine said. "We'll help ourselves." He turned to his brother and asked in a deliberately casual tone: "Cream cheese or Dutch?"

"Neither, thanks."

"What about a peach?"

"Yes, I'd like one."

"Wait, I'll choose it for you."

He purposely stressed the note of cordiality.

"Now let's talk seriously," he added, after a moment, in a conciliatory tone that took the sting out of the remark. "What exactly is 'capitalism'? I must admit I haven't much use for catchwords of that sort—especially of words ending in 'ism.' "

He expected the remark to disconcert his brother. But Jacques looked up quite calmly. His irritation seemed evaporating; indeed, a faint smile hovered on his lips. For a moment his eyes lingered on the open window. Night was falling and, above the dingy house-fronts the glow was dying from the sky.

"Personally," he explained, "when I speak of capitalism, I mean just this: a certain distribution of the world's wealth and a certain way of turning it to account."

Antoine pondered for a moment, then nodded approval. Both were equally relieved to feel their conversation was taking a less combative turn.

"I hope that peach is ripe, anyhow. Some sugar?"

"Do you know," Jacques said, without answering the question, "what most revolts me in capitalism? That it has divested the worker of everything that made him a man. It has uprooted him, wrenched him away from his village, from his home, from all that gave some human individuality to his life, and penned him in the industrial areas. The craftsman has been deprived of all the noble satisfactions of his handiwork. He's been brought down to the level of an insect, a laborious ant toiling in the ant-hill factories of capitalism. Have you any idea how the work is organized in those hellish places? Do you realize the literally inhuman separation that prevails between the manual, mechanical side of industry and—how shall I put it?—its intellectual side? Do you know what a factory-hand's daily round has come to be, the soul-deadening slavery of it? In former times that man would have been a craftsman, with a little workshop of his own, keen on his job. Now he's doomed to be nothing, as an individual; nothing but a cog in the wheel, a trivial part of one of those immense machines whose mysteries he need not even guess at, to carry out his task. Mysteries which are the prerogative of a select few, always the same persons: the directors and the engineering staff."

"For the simple reason that men with brains and competence are always in the minority."

"Man has been robbed of his personality, Antoine. That's the crime of capitalism. It has turned the worker into a machine; no, worse than that, the slave of a machine."

"Steady, there!" Antoine protested. "For one thing, what you're up against isn't capitalism but the age we live in, the 'machine age.' And then—don't you see you're overcolouring the picture? I'm very far from believing there's the hard-and-fast barrier between the workman and the skilled engineer that you describe. Oftener than not there's a give-and-take, an actual collaboration between them. The factory-hand to whom his machine is a 'mystery' is very rare. He wouldn't have been able to invent it, I grant you, nor perhaps put it together, but he has a very shrewd idea how it works, and quite often can suggest improvements on the technical side. In any case he likes his machine, is proud of it, looks after it, and keeps it in good running order. Studler, who's been over to the States, has some remarkable things to tell about the 'mechanical craze,' as he calls it, that's come over the American workmen. . . . Then there's the case of my hospital—it's not so very different from a factory, by and large. There, too, you have employers and employees, men who use their brains and men who use their hands. I'm an employer of labour, in my way. Well, I assure you, the fellows under my orders, down to the lowest ward attendant, have nothing 'servile' about them, in the sense you'd give the word. We all work together for the same end—to cure our patients—each according to his capacities. I'd like you to see how bucked up they all are when our joint efforts have brought off a difficult cure."

Jacques listened with growing irritation. "Antoine," he thought, "is always so cocksure about his views." Still, he was conscious of having opened the discussion with a foolish gambit, seeming to base his case against capitalism mainly on the distribution of labour in industrial concerns.

Mastering his feelings, he replied: "It isn't so much the nature of the work under the capitalist system that's so revolting; it's the conditions under which it's done. Of course, I've nothing against mechanized industry as such; what I dislike is the way a privileged class exploits it for selfish ends. If we made a rough cross-section of the present social order, we should find on the one hand a favoured few, wealthy middle-class folk, some of them industrious and efficient, others mere idlers and parasites, who between them own everything, have everything their own way, keep all the big jobs to themselves, and all the profits, too. On the other side we would find the masses, the actual producers, the exploited—the innumerable herd of slaves."

Antoine made a gesture of amusement. "Slaves?"

"Yes."

"No, not slaves," Antoine replied good-humouredly. "Just citizens. Men who, in the eyes of the law, have exactly the same rights as their employer or the expert; whose votes count the same; to whom nobody can dictate. They can work or not, according to the desires they want to gratify; they can choose their trade, their factory, and change them if they like. If they're bound by contracts these are contracts that they've freely agreed to, after talking things over. Can you call such men slaves? Slaves of whom, of what?"

"Of their poverty. You're talking like a perfect demagogue, my dear Antoine. All those liberties are eyewash. In actual fact the worker's never independent, dogged as he is by want. All that stands between him and starvation is what he can earn by work. Therefore he's compelled to offer himself, shackled hand and foot, to the bourgeois group that has all the jobs in its pocket and fixes wages. You said just now that skilled men, the experts, are a minority; of course I realize that. It isn't superior skill as such that I'm against. . . . But just see how it works out: the employer, if he thinks fit, gives a job to the workman who needs food, and pays him certain wages. But those wages never represent more than a minute fraction of the profits earned by the workman's industry. The employer and the shareholders pocket the balance."

"And rightly so. That balance represents what's due to them for what they put into the business."

"Quite so. Theoretically, I agree, those profits are due to the employer for his management of the business, and to the shareholders for being kind enough to lend their money to it. (I'll come back to that point.) But let's compare the figures; let's compare the profits with the wages. Those profits are the lion's share, grotesquely out of proportion to the services rendered by the men who get them. What's more, they enable the bourgeois to consolidate and increase his ascendancy. He doesn't use the money to raise his standard of living, but treats it as *capital* to invest in other concerns, and so, inevitably, it keeps on growing. And it's this wealth, capitalized at the workers' expense, which has given the well-to-do class its absolute power during so many generations—a power which is based on the most ghastly injustice. For (this is the point I said that I'd come back to) the supreme injustice isn't simply the disparity between the income the capitalist draws from his investment and the wages of the man who sweats at the machine. No, the flagrantly unjust thing is this, that money works for its possessor, multiplies automatically, without his having to stir a finger. Money breeds money *ad infinitum*. Have you ever thought of that, Antoine? Yes, that diabolical invention the banking system has provided the gang of profiteers with a highly perfected instrument for buying up its slaves and battening on their drudgery. A horde of nameless, undistinguished slaves, not in the least alarming, and so well kept out of sight that, to salve one's conscience, one can easily pretend to know nothing of their miserable existence. That, to my mind, is the supreme iniquity, that tithe levied on the toil and sweat of others—on the most immoral, most hypocritical of pretexts."

Antoine thrust his chair back from the table, lit a cigarette, and folded his arms. Darkness was falling now so quickly that Jacques could see little of the changes of expression on his brother's face.

"And I suppose," Antoine remarked in an ironical tone, "your revolution's going to charm all that away with a touch of the wand?"

Jacques pushed back his plate and, resting his elbows on the table, cast a defiant look at his brother across the gathering dusk.

"Yes. As things are now the worker is an isolated unit, powerless, at the mercy of his daily needs. But the first result of the revolution will be to give him political power. Then he'll be able to make a fresh start, set up new institutions, a new code of laws. The one thing evil, you see, is this exploitation of man by man. In the coming world such exploitation will cease to be possible. That's the world we're out to build. A world in which the wealth inequitably hoarded up by parasitic bodies like your big businesses and banks will be put into circulation, so that every member of the community profits by it. Nowadays the poor devil who produces the goods has so much trouble in making sure of the minimum he needs to live on that he has neither time nor energy, not even the desire, to learn to think, to make the best of his faculties. When we say that the revolution will abolish the proletarian condition, that's what's meant. In the view of true revolutionaries, the revolution shouldn't merely give the worker a more comfortable life; above all, it should change the relations between men and their work, so that the work itself becomes more 'human,' instead of being a dreary, never-ending round of toil. The worker should have leisure, and cease being a mere tool; should have time to think about himself and make the most of his abilities, his human qualities. Yes, he should become, so far as in him lies—and his capacities for that are far less limited than people think—a man with a mind, a personality, of his own.”

He had spoken of “capacities less limited than people think” in the compelling voice of one who is convinced of what he says; but a more heedful listener than his brother might have detected an undertone of doubt.

Antoine was thinking things over. “Really,” he said at last, “I’ve nothing against your plans—assuming that they’re feasible. But how are they to be carried out?”

“There’s only one way: by a revolution.”

“Leading to a dictatorship of the proletariat?”

“Exactly. That’ll be needed to start off with.” Jacques sounded thoughtful. “But I’d rather call it a government by the producers—that word ‘proletariat’ has served its time. Even in revolutionary circles they’re trying nowadays to get rid of the old liberal-humanitarian jargon of ’48.”

But inwardly he admonished himself. “That’s not true.” He remembered his own “jargon” and the discussions at the Talking Shop. “Still,” he mused, “we’ll have to come to that.”

Antoine, who had hardly listened to his brother’s last remarks, said nothing. He was thinking out the implications of a “dictatorship.” One by the proletariat seemed to him feasible enough, and he could easily picture it existing in certain countries—in Germany, for instance. But in France it seemed to him quite definitely ruled out. Such a dictatorship, in his opinion, could not become effective merely by switching the gears into reverse; to ensure its success it would need time to dig itself in, to show economic results, to strike root deeply in the rising generation. That would require at least ten or fifteen years of unremitting tyranny, repression, expropriation, human suffering. And would a country like France, composed of rampant individualists, clinging to every shred of personal liberty, France with its innumerable small investors, a land in which even the revolutionaries, for the most part, retained, unknowingly, the tastes and habits of the small private owner—would such a land for ten consecutive years put up with the iron discipline that would be needed? It was the merest moonshine even to dream of such a thing!

Meanwhile he grew aware that Jacques was rambling on with his indictment.

“Only with the overthrow of capitalism will its control and exploitation of all human activities come to an end. The possessive appetite of the exploiting class is insatiable. The industrial progress of the last twenty years has only served to increase its power, and its ambition is to get all the world's wealth into its clutches. So blind is its greed for expansion, for conquering new fields, that the various elements of world capitalism, instead of forming an alliance to rule the world between them, are actually trying to cut each other's throat, regardless of their most obvious interests—like a rich man's heirs fighting over the estate. That, indeed, is the one root cause of the war that looks about ready to start." He seemed haunted by that thought of an impending war. "But this time, quite likely, they'll find they're up against forces they haven't reckoned with. The workers, thank goodness, aren't the lamblike creatures they used to be. This time they won't allow the greed and internecine quarrels of the propertied classes to plunge them into a disastrous war, of which once more the workers would bear the brunt. For the moment the revolution can wait. The first thing is, at all costs, to prevent a war. After that . . ."

"Yes? After that?"

"Oh, we've lots of definite plans to carry out. The most urgent, of course, will be to make the most of this triumph of the left-wing parties, the revolt of public opinion against the imperialist governments, and make an effective bid to seize the reins of power. Then we'll be able to impose a rational system of production on the world—on the whole world, naturally."

Antoine was listening attentively. He made a gesture showing he quite saw what Jacques meant, but his faint smile implied he was less sure about endorsing it.

"Of course I know," Jacques went on, "it's not going to be easy. To bring it about, the revolutionaries will have to take drastic measures; enter on a state of active rebellion." The phrase was Meynestrel's and, speaking it, Jacques's voice had the Pilot's crisp, curt intonation. "It's going to be a stiff fight. But we shall be forced to set about it. Otherwise the workers of the world may be obliged to wait for half a century yet to win their freedom."

There was a short silence. Antoine was the first to speak. "And have you the men you need to carry out these . . . fine schemes of yours?"

He was doing his best to prevent their debate from growing heated and to keep on impersonal lines. He hoped, ingenuously enough, that he would thus convince Jacques of his good will, broad-mindedness, and impartiality. But, far from being grateful to his brother, Jacques was annoyed by this overscrupulous detachment, which he knew was feigned. The accent of self-assurance and the faintly bantering tone which Antoine could not keep out of his voice when conversing with his young brother never let Jacques forget that Antoine, conscious of his age, was talking down to him from a pedestal of ripe experience and wisdom.

“The men? Certainly we have them,” Jacques proudly said. “But often the great men of action, the inspired leaders, aren’t those we reckoned on; a crisis throws up new men.” For a few silent moments he was lost in dreams of the future. His voice was gentler when he spoke again. “There’s nothing fanciful about my ideas, Antoine. That the world’s moving toward socialism is a patent fact—no one can ignore it. Our final triumph will be hard-won and, I’m much afraid, accompanied by a general upheaval and by bloodshed. But for those who have eyes to read the signs of the times there can be no doubt about the issue. And looking further ahead, we may foresee one world-wide government.”

“And a ‘classless’ world.” Antoine’s tone was ironical.

Jacques went on as if he had not heard. “An entirely new regime which, in its turn, I suppose, will raise a host of unexpected problems. But at least it will have solved the problems which are crushing the life out of mankind today—the economic problems. There’s nothing chimerical about it, I repeat; and with such an end in prospect, no hope is too high.”

Jacques’s faith and fervour, the emotional effect of which was heightened by the semi-darkness of the room, served only to harden Antoine s scepticism.

“ ‘A state of active rebellion,’ ” he mused. “All very fine—but we’ve heard that slogan before. Those noble efforts to remould the world always involve too high a cost, and never lead to any permanent improvement. These feather-brained idealists are always in a hurry to smash things up and start a new regime. But when they’ve got it going, they find it has created a new set of evils and, on balance . . . It’s the same in medicine; people are always in too much of a hurry to try new treatments.”

Though less severe on the contemporary world than Jacques was, and though in general he fell in with its ways readily enough—partly from indifference, partly through natural adaptability, and also because he was inclined to trust the “specialists” in charge of world affairs—Antoine was far from looking on it as a perfect world. “Yes, he’s right in a way,” he now was thinking. “The conditions of life can and should be constantly ameliorated; that’s a law of civilization, indeed of life. But by degrees.”

“And to achieve all that,” he said aloud, “do you think there’s nothing for it but a revolution?”

“Yes, I’ve come to think so.” It sounded like a confession. “Oh, I can see your idea; for a long time I had it too. I managed to convince myself that reforms within the framework of the constitution would suffice. But now I’ve ceased to think that.”

“But surely that socialism you believe in is steadily gaining ground year by year, isn’t it? All over the world, even in despotically ruled countries like Germany?”

“No. In fact, the changes you’re thinking of actually prove my point. Such reforms alleviate the effects of the disease, but they never attack its *causes*. And that’s only natural. However excellent the intentions we attribute to the men making these reforms, in practice we find they’re always on the side of the economic system which it’s our task to combat and overthrow. And you can’t expect capitalism to sap its own foundations, effect its own destruction. When the capitalists are in a tight corner owing to the discontent they’ve provoked, they take over from socialism such reforms as cannot be dispensed with. But that’s all.”

Antoine held his ground. “It’s a mistake to cry down half-measures For, after all, even those partial reforms are so many points scored for the social ideal that you’re championing.”

“Bogus points, trifling concessions made with reluctance and changing nothing fundamental. In those countries you mentioned—what vital change has been brought about by reform? The moneyed class has kept its power intact; it still controls labour and has the masses in its toils; still manipulates the press and bribes or browbeats the public authorities. There’s only one way to make a satisfactory job of it, and that’s to make a clean sweep of the existing system and replace it by the Socialist plan in its entirety. Like town-planners who, to get rid of slums, have to pull them down completely and rebuild everything. Yes,” he added with a sigh, “it’s my profound conviction *now* that only a revolution, a tremendous upheaval starting from below and utterly disintegrating the old order, can rid the world of the virus of capitalism. Goethe held we had to choose between injustice and disorder, and he preferred injustice. I think differently. I don’t believe that without justice any real order can be established; anything, in my opinion, is preferable to injustice. Anything! Even”—he lowered his voice—“the shambles of a revolution.” (“If Mithoerg could hear me just now,” Jacques suddenly reflected, “how he’d love it!”) He fell silent, lost in thought. At last he spoke again.

“The only hope I have is that perhaps in certain countries bloodshed may be avoided. It wasn’t necessary to set up our guillotine of ’93 in all the capitals of Europe for the republican ideas of ’89 to spread abroad and change the world. France had opened up a breach through which the other nations marched successfully. Very likely it will be enough if one nation only—Germany, for instance—pays the price in blood; then the new order will take root, and the rest of us, with the German precedent before our eyes, will work out our destinies on peaceful lines.”

“I’m all for your upheaval”—Antoine grinned—“provided it takes place in Germany! But,” he continued in a serious tone, “I can’t help wondering what you and your friends will make of it when it comes to building up that new world of yours. For, try as you may, you can’t get around the fact that you must build it of the same human material. And if there’s one thing that never changes, it’s human nature.”

Jacques had suddenly turned pale. To hide his discomfiture, he turned away.

Unwittingly Antoine had touched his brother’s most sensitive spot, the secret doubt that always rankled like an ulcer in his mind. That faith in the coming race which was the *raison d’être* of revolution, and indeed gave an impetus to the whole movement, came to Jacques only by fits and starts, under the brief stress of others’ enthusiasm. He had never managed to share that faith instinctively. His pity for his fellow-men was boundless, and he had given up his life to them whole-heartedly; but, for all his desperate efforts, for all his fervent reiterations of the Party’s slogans, he remained sceptical as to the possibilities of human nature. For deep inside himself he felt a tragic disability: he did not, could not, believe sincerely in the theory taken as a gospel by his friends, the theory of man’s spiritual progress. He was quite ready to believe that, by a radical change of human institutions, by reconstructing the social edifice, it would be possible to amend, adjust, and indeed perfect the lot of man. But he could not bring himself to assume that the new social order would renew mankind itself, and, as a matter of course, produce an intrinsically better type of humanity. Every time he became alive to this crucial doubt so deeply rooted in his very being, he felt an agonizing rush of shame, remorse, despair.

“I’ve no particular illusions,” he admitted in a slightly changed voice, “as to the perfectibility of human nature. But I do hold that man, as we find him today, has been warped, not to say ruined, by the social system foisted upon him. By oppressing the worker, this system degrades him, weakens him morally, makes him over to his lowest instincts, and crushes out of him any tendencies to raise himself which he may possess. I don’t deny that these base instincts are innate; but I do think—I want to think—that he has other instincts as well. I believe that our civilization prevents these better instincts from maturing and putting the others in their place, and that we’ve the right to expect men to be different when what is best in them has been given a chance of making good in freedom.”

Léon had just opened the door. He waited for Jacques to finish speaking before announcing in a colourless voice: “I’ve served the coffee in the study, sir.”

Antoine looked round. “No, bring it here. And turn on the light, please; only the cornice lights.”

A pale glow spread across the ceiling, filling the room with a mild, agreeably diffused radiance.

“Wait a moment!” Antoine was far from guessing that on their present topic he and his brother held very similar views. “There we come up against a crucial issue. For all those simple souls, man’s imperfection is caused by the rottenness of the existing order; so it’s only natural they should have a blind faith in the efficacy of a revolution. But what if they saw things as they are, if they realized once for all that man’s a pretty vile creature—and there’s nothing to be done about it! Every social system’s doomed to reproduce the failings, the incurable defects of human nature. So what’s the use of running the risks of a general upheaval?”

“The hideous waste going on today,” Jacques began in a low, sullen tone, “isn’t only on the material plane. . . .”

Léon’s entrance with the coffee-tray cut him short.

“Two lumps?” Antoine asked.

“One only. Thanks.”

There was a moment’s silence.

“All that,” Antoine murmured, smiling, “well, my dear fellow, there’s only one word for it: it’s utopian.”

Jacques scowled at him. For the “my dear fellow” he had had exactly his father’s voice. Jacques was conscious of his temper rising, and yielded to it; it would take his mind off his discomfiture.

“Utopian!” he exclaimed. “You don’t seem to realize that there are thousands of quite sensible people for whom these ‘utopian’ projects constitute a carefully thought-out plan of action. And they’re only waiting for a chance to get it under way.” His thoughts had flashed back to Meynestrel, to the Russian theorists at Geneva, to Jaurès. “Quite likely both of us will live long enough to see these utopian projects worked out implacably in some corner of the globe and giving rise to a new order of society.”

“Yet,” Antoine protested, “men will still be men. There’ll always be successful men and underdogs. Only the men on top won’t be the same. And their power will be based on different institutions, different customs from ours. These men will form a new group of profit-takers, a new ruling class. That's a law of life. Meanwhile, what will have become of the good features —and you must admit there are some—of our civilization?"

"Yes." Jacques seemed to be talking to himself, and his brother was struck by the sadness in his voice. "Yes, the only way of answering people like you would be to bring about some striking and *successful* 'utopia.' Till that comes, you're on velvet! Like all those who feel comfortably off in the world today and want to keep it exactly as it is, at all costs."

Antoine set down his cup brusquely.

"But I'm quite ready to welcome a changed world!" he exclaimed with an eagerness that gave Jacques pleasure to hear. That's something anyhow, he thought; to have kept at least an open mind.

"You've no idea," Antoine went on, "how independent I feel, how remote from any social obligation! Why, I'm hardly a good Frenchman! I've my profession, and it's the only thing I stand by. As for the rest, well, you can reorganize the world—outside my consulting-room—to your heart's content, for all I care. If you think you can fix up a social order in which poverty and waste, stupidity and the lower instincts, will cease to exist; a society without injustice, without privilege or graft, in which the law of the jungle—eat or be eaten!—has been superseded, well, the sooner you get down to it, the better. I hold no brief for capitalism. It's the prevailing system, the system I was born into and under which I've lived for thirty years. I'm accustomed to it and put up with it; in fact, whenever I can, I make use of it. But I'm quite ready to adjust myself to changed conditions. And if you've really found a better plan, more power to you! All I ask for myself is to be allowed to carry on with my vocation. And I'll agree to anything you like except being told to drop the one thing that gives value to my life. In any case," he continued cheerfully, "however perfect your new regime may be, even if you succeed in developing a feeling of fraternity among men, I doubt if you'll be able to do the same thing for their health! Disease, and consequently doctors, will always exist, so there won't be any great change in my relations with the rest of mankind. Provided," he added with a flutter of the eyelids, "that your socialized world allows me . . ."

There was a sharp ring at the door-bell. Antoine pricked up his ears. Nevertheless, he finished off his phrase.

". . . allows me a certain liberty—yes, that's my *sine qua non*!—a certain professional freedom. Freedom of thought, freedom to work in my own way; with all the risks and responsibilities, of course, that it involves."

He stopped speaking, and listened.

They heard Léon open the hall-door, then a woman speaking.

Pressing his hand on the table, Antoine prepared to rise, a look of professional gravity already settling on his face.

Léon appeared at the door, but before he could utter a word the girl behind him burst into the room.

Jacques gave a start and suddenly went pale. He had recognized Jenny de Fontanin.

XVIII

JENNY had not recognized Jacques, perhaps not even noticed him. She walked up to Antoine, her face convulsed.

“Please come at once. Father’s wounded.”

“Wounded!” Antoine repeated. “Seriously? Where?”

She raised a trembling finger toward her right temple. The gesture, the horror written on her face, taken with what little Antoine knew of Jerome de Fontanin’s past, led Antoine immediately to surmise a tragedy—attempted murder, or suicide, more likely.

“Where is he?”

“At a hotel. I’ve the address. Mamma’s there, waiting for you. Do please come!”

“Léon!” Antoine shouted. “Tell Victor to get the car out at once!” He turned again to the girl. “At a hotel? How did it happen? When was it?”

She did not reply. Her eyes had just lit on the other person in the room—Jacques!

He was looking down, but he felt Jenny’s gaze upon his face, burning like fire.

They had not had sight of each other since that summer at Maisons-Laffitte—four years ago.

Antoine moved hastily toward the door. “I’ll fetch my instrument case.”

Now that she was alone with Jacques, Jenny began to tremble. She was staring at the carpet, and the corners of her lips were twitching imperceptibly. Under the stress of an emotion such as a minute earlier he would have deemed impossible, Jacques dared not draw a breath. Both looked up at the same moment, and when their eyes met, the pupils were dilated with anguish and amazement. A look of terror, veiled instantly by the dropped lids, fluttered in Jenny's eyes.

Unthinkingly Jacques went toward her. "Anyhow, do sit down," he said awkwardly, drawing up a chair.

She did not move. Statue-still she stood under the flooding light, the shadows of her lashes flickering on her cheeks. She was wearing a close-fitting tailor-made costume in navy-blue, which accentuated her height and slimness.

Then Antoine bustled into the room, his hat already on his head. Léon followed, bringing two emergency kits, which Antoine began spreading out on the table, meanwhile pushing the dinner-plates aside.

"Now give me some details, please. The car will be here in a minute. How was he wounded—with what? Léon, go and fetch a box of compresses —quickly."

As he spoke he took a forceps from one of the kits and slipped it into the other. His gestures were hurried, but always deft and sparing of unnecessary movement.

"We don't know anything," said Jenny. (The moment Antoine entered, she had darted to his side.) "It's a revolver shot."

"Ah!" Antoine exclaimed without looking at her.

"We didn't even know he'd come to Paris. Mamma thought he was in Vienna."

She spoke in a subdued voice, breathless but assured. Overwrought as she clearly was, she still gave an impression of strength and courage.

"The people from the hotel where he's staying came and told us. Half an hour ago. Mamma dropped me here on the way. She wouldn't wait, as she was afraid . . ."

Léon's entry with a nickel-plated instrument case in his hand cut her short.

"Right!" Antoine said. "Now we'll start. Is it far to the hotel?"

"It's 27A Avenue de Friedland."

Antoine turned to Jacques. "Coming along?" It sounded less a question than an order. Then he added: "You might come in useful, you know."

Jacques glanced at Jenny without replying. She made no sign, but he had an intuition that she agreed to his accompanying them.

"Come along!" Antoine said.

The car had not left the garage, and the courtyard was bathed in the glare of the headlights. While Victor rapidly closed the hood, Antoine helped Jenny in.

"I'll sit in front," Jacques said, taking the seat beside the chauffeur.

They made a quick run to the Place de la Concorde, but there was so much traffic in the Avenue des Champs-Elysées that the car had to slow down.

Sitting at Jenny's side, Antoine deferred to her silent mood. He had no qualms about relishing those familiar yet always pleasurable moments, the period of suspense and pent-up energy that precedes the time for taking action and responsibility. Absent-mindedly he stared out of the window.

Huddled in a corner, as far as possible from any human contact, Jenny was trying in vain to overcome her fit of trembling; she was quivering from head to foot like a jarred crystal.

From the moment when an unknown hotel waiter, whom Mme. de Fontanin had admitted into the flat with some suspicion, had announced in a surly tone that "the gent in No. 9 has just put a bullet through his head," to the moment when she had alighted from the taxi, in which she and her mother had been holding hands without a word, without a tear, all her thoughts had been for the wounded man. But then—miracle of miracles!—she had seen Jacques; and her father had passed clean out of mind. There, just in front, was a dark, stalwart form from which carefully she kept her eyes averted—an all-too-real presence that thrilled every fibre of her being. Clenching her teeth, she pressed her left arm against her heart to still its tumult. For the while she was quite incapable of analysing that rush of uncontrollable emotion. Those few minutes had been enough to plunge her back into that great tragedy of her life, the experience that had all but killed her and from whose shadow she had thought to have escaped for ever.

The brakes went on suddenly; she looked up. The car had had to stop dead at the traffic-crossing of the avenue, to allow a regiment to pass.

"It's always like that when one's in a hurry!" Antoine grumbled, turning to Jenny.

A troop of young men in close formation, flourishing Chinese lanterns, was following the band. All were keeping step and lustily joining in the chorus of the marching song the band was playing. On either hand a dense crowd, held back by lines of policemen, was cheering the vociferous youngsters and saluting the colours as they passed.

After making sure that Jacques did not lift his hat to the colours, the chauffeur kept his own on, and ventured to remark: “Only to be expected. In this part of Paris, them fellows have it all their own way.” Encouraged by Jacques’s scornful shrug, he added: “In my part of the town, in Belleville, they’ve had to stop their damned demonstrations. They always ended up in a free-for-all.”

Just then the procession swerved to the left, leaving the road clear. A few minutes later the car was speeding up the slope that led into the Avenue de Friedland.

Antoine had the door open before it stopped, and jumped out at once. With an effort Jenny rose and, declining Antoine’s proffered arm, stepped onto the sidewalk. For a moment she stood there unmoving, dazzled by the shaft of light that issued from the entrance of the hotel; her head was spinning and she could hardly keep from falling.

“Follow me,” Antoine said, gently touching her shoulder. “I’ll lead the way.”

Pulling herself together, she quickly stepped in after Antoine. She dared not look round; she was wondering: “Where is *he*?” Even at that tragic moment it was not to her father that her thoughts turned.

The Westminster was one of the numerous hotels in the vicinity of the Arc de Triomphe which are used principally by foreigners. The little lobby was brightly lit; at the far end, across a glazed door, they had a glimpse of a lounge in which groups of people were smoking and playing cards, to the strains of a small band concealed behind a row of palms.

At Antoine’s first remark the porter signed to a plump lady, caparisoned in black, at the cashier’s desk. She rose at once and with a hostile air led them rapidly to the elevator. The elevator-door clanged to. With a sense of vast relief, Jenny noticed that Jacques was not coming up with them.

Before she had time to steady her nerves, she found herself on the landing, facing her mother.

Mme. de Fontanin’s face was at once haggard and serene. The first thing to catch Jenny’s notice was that her mother’s hat was awry, and this small sign of carelessness so unlike her mother moved her even more than the grief-stricken eyes.

Mme. de Fontanin had an opened envelope in her hands. She clutched Antoine’s arm.

“He’s in there. Come!”

Quickly she led him down the corridor.

"The police have just gone. He's alive. We've got to save him somehow. The hotel doctor says he can't be moved." She turned to Jenny. "Wait for us here, darling." She wished to spare the girl the sight of her wounded father.

She handed Jenny the envelope, which had been found on the floor beside the revolver. The address on it had enabled a message to be sent at once to her apartment in the Rue de l'Observatoire.

Left to herself on the landing, Jenny began deciphering her father's letter as best she could in the dim light. Her name, Jenny, in the concluding lines, caught her eye.

> I beg my Jenny to forgive me. Somehow I've always failed to show her my affection. . . .

Her hands were shaking. In vain she tautened every sinew, trying to quell the riot of her blood throbbing in every vein down to her fingertips, but somehow she forced herself to read the letter through from the beginning.

> Thérèse, do not judge me too harshly. If only you knew all I have been through before coming to this! And how I grieve for you now, sweetheart; how I regret the sufferings I've brought on you, you so kind and so true! I'm bitterly ashamed; for always I have returned you evil for good. And yet I always loved you, sweetheart. If only you knew! I love you and I have never loved anyone but you.

The words seemed to flicker out under her tearless, fevered eyes, which kept on wandering from the paper to cast apprehensive glances toward the elevator-shaft. Jacques's nearness filled her thoughts. Her dread of seeing him reappear was so intense that she was hopelessly unable to fix her attention on that pitiful farewell which her father, on the brink of death, had hastily pencilled on the sheet before her; the words by which, before making that final tragic gesture, he had shown that his last thoughts were for her: "I beg my Jenny to forgive me. . . ."

She looked round to find some place where to hide, to take shelter. Her eyes fell on a bench in a corner; she stumbled toward it, sat down. She made no effort to analyse her emotions. She was too tired. Gladly she would have died there so as to have done with it all, to escape—from herself.

But she could not control her imagination. Memory cast on the screen a pageant of the past streaming before her eyes with the insensate swiftness of a dream. The enigma began for her with those last months of the summer of

1910, at Maisons-Laffitte. Before that she had seen Jacques growing daily more and more in love with her, more and more set on winning her affection. And she, too, had been alarmed at finding herself growing daily more affected by his presence, her resistance weakening. Then suddenly, without a word of warning, without even a line of explanation, without the least extenuation of the affront given her by this brusque *volte-face*, he had ceased coming. Soon after, Antoine had rung up Daniel; Jacques had disappeared! Then had begun for her that phase of agonizing doubt. Why had he disappeared—killed himself, perhaps? What was the secret that her wayward lover had taken with him into the unknown?

Throughout October 1910 she had anxiously followed the fruitless efforts made by Antoine and Daniel to trace the fugitive. She had never betrayed her agony of mind to any of those around her, not even to her mother. It had gone on for months. Alone, in silence and bewilderment, lacking even the consolation of true religious faith, she had somehow managed to survive in that stifling atmosphere of mystery. Obstinately she concealed not only her despair but her physical sufferings too: a general collapse due to the violent shock she had received. At last, after a year of unaided efforts, of convalescence broken by relapses, she had achieved a certain peace of mind. Her body remained to be cured. On the doctor's advice she had spent a summer in the mountains, and moved to the South of France when the winter cold began. During the previous autumn, in Provence, she had learned from a letter of Daniel's to her mother that Jacques had been found; he was living in Switzerland, and had come to Paris for M. Thibault's funeral.

For some weeks she had been the prey of a vast unrest, but it had passed away of its own accord, and with such surprising swiftness that she had had the impression then, for the first time, of being definitely cured. Yes, all was over between her and Jacques. Nothing remained! So she had thought at the time. And now, this evening, at the most poignant moment of her existence, he had incredibly appeared again: her lost lover with the changeful eyes, the sullen face.

She was leaning forward on the seat, her eyes still fixed apprehensively on the staircase. Her thoughts were running riot. What of the future? Was a chance meeting, the hazard of two glances, enough to stir up all the dregs of the past, to demolish in one brief hour the physical and mental balance she had taken years to recover?

Meanwhile, complying with a sign from his brother, Jacques had stayed in the vestibule.

The lady in black satin had resumed her seat at the cashier's desk, and now and then gave him a hostile glare above her glasses. The hotel orchestra, composed of a piano and one shrill violin, was struggling through a tango for the benefit of a single couple of dancers, of whom Jacques had brief glimpses through the glass door. In the dining-room some belated diners were finishing their meal. A clatter of crockery came from the kitchen, and tray-bearing waiters flitted to and fro, discreetly murmuring as they passed the cash-desk: "An Evian for No. 3," "No. 10's bill, Miss," "Two coffees for 27."

A chambermaid came running down the stairs. With a wave of her pen, the lady in black directed her toward Jacques. She was bringing a note from Antoine: "Telephone Dr. Héquet to come at once. Passy 0913."

A waiter led Jacques to the telephone-booth. He recognized Nicole's voice at the other end, but did not tell her who was speaking.

Héquet was at home, and came to the telephone at once. "I'm starting right away. I'll be with you in ten minutes."

The cashier was waiting outside the booth. She had a deep mistrust of everything that had to do with "the fool in No. 9": a sick man in the hotel was bad enough; a case of suicide, outrageous!

"You know, sir, things like that can't be allowed in a respectable hotel. You'll have to get him moved immediately."

Antoine had just come down the stairs. He was bareheaded and alone. Jacques went up to him at once.

"Well?"

"He's in a state of coma. Have you phoned?"

"Héquet's on his way."

The lady in black bore down on them imperiously. "Are you the family doctor?"

"Yes."

"We can't keep him here, it's out of the question. You must have him taken to the hospital."

Paying no attention to her, Antoine led his brother to the other end of the vestibule.

"What happened?" Jacques asked. "Why did he try to kill himself?"

"Haven't any idea."

"Is he staying here by himself?"

"I believe so."

"Are you going upstairs again immediately?"

"No. I'll wait to have a word with Héquet. Let's sit down."

But hardly was he seated when he stood up again.

"Where's the phone?" He had just remembered about Anne. "Watch the entrance. I'll be back in a minute."

Anne was lying on the sofa. The room was in darkness, with the windows open but the blinds drawn. When the telephone-bell rang, she had a swift intuition that Antoine would not be coming, and could not bear to listen to his explanations.

"Well, do you understand?" He was puzzled by her silence.

She could not answer. Something seemed to grip her throat, crushing her life out. At last she murmured brokenly: "You can't mean it, Tony!"

The voice, so faint, so different from her normal voice, held his vexation in suspense.

"I can't mean it? What's that? I tell you, he's unconscious. I'm waiting for the surgeon."

Her fingers stiffened with exasperation on the receiver; she dared not speak again for fear of bursting into tears.

He waited.

She forced herself to speak. "Where are you now?"

"In a hotel. Near the Arc de Triomphe."

Like a far echo she repeated: "The Arc de Triomphe!" Then, after a long pause, added: "But that's close by. You're quite near me, Tony."

He smiled. "Yes, it's not so very far."

She guessed the smile from the sound of his voice, and suddenly took hope.

"I see your idea." He was still smiling. "But, as I said, I'll have to stop here all night. You'd better be sensible, dear, and go straight home."

Quickly she whispered: "No! I shan't budge." She hesitated. "I'll be waiting for you."

Letting herself sink back, she drew a deep breath, holding the receiver at arm's length. From very far away a drone of words came to her.

". . . if I can get away, yes. But don't count on it too much. Good night, darling."

She brought the receiver hastily to her ear, but Antoine had hung up. She lay back again on the sofa, and stared up into the darkness, her body tense and throbbing, limbs knit together.

“Mme. de Fontanin’s really an admirable woman,” Antoine said as he came back and sat down beside Jacques. He was silent for a while, then asked: “You haven’t seen Jenny again, since . . . ?” He had just remembered his brother’s disappearance, “*La Sorellina*,” all the suspicions he had entertained about that puzzling tale.

Jacques’s face darkened; he shook his head.

A car stopped at the hotel entrance. They saw Héquet standing at the front of the steps. His wife was with him. Nicole had never really forgiven her uncle Jerome; she held him responsible for her mother’s lapse from grace, and saw the hand of God in his inglorious end. But she did not wish to leave her aunt Thérèse and Jenny alone in their hour of trial.

Héquet paused for a moment in the doorway and, from behind the pince-nez, his keen eyes swept the vestibule. He saw Antoine coming toward him, but did not recognize Jacques, who stayed discreetly in the background.

Antoine had not met Nicole again since the night before her little daughter’s death. He knew that, soon after, Nicole had given birth to a dead child under difficult conditions which had left her maimed for ever, body and soul. She had grown thinner. All the youth and hopefulness had gone out of her expression.

She held out her hand to him. As their eyes met, a slight frown settled on her face, for she associated Antoine with the bitterest moments of her life. And now again, it struck her, she was meeting him in a tragic atmosphere, in the shadow of death.

Talking in the surgeon’s ear, Antoine shepherded him toward the elevator. As the gate closed, Jacques had a glimpse of his brother placing his forefinger on a point at the upper margin of his temple.

The lady in black had darted forth from her retreat.

“Is he a relation?”

“He’s the surgeon.”

“But surely they don’t intend to operate on him *here*!”

Jacques turned his back on her.

The orchestra had stopped playing. The lights in the dining-room were out. The station bus deposited a silent young couple—English, apparently—

with smart, brand-new luggage.

Ten minutes passed; then the chambermaid appeared again, with another note from Antoine: “Ring up the Baudrand Hospital, Neuilly 5403. Say Dr. Héquet wants ambulance sent immediately for emergency case. They’re to get operating-room ready.”

Jacques telephoned at once. As he left the booth he ran into the cashier, who had been leaning against the door. She gave him an amiable, relieved smile.

He saw Antoine and Héquet crossing the hall. The surgeon drove off by himself.

Antoine went back to Jacques.

“Héquet’s going to try to extract the bullet tonight. It’s the only chance. . . .”

Jacques looked at him questioningly. Antoine made a wry face. “The skull is badly smashed. It will be a miracle if he pulls through. Now, listen!” He moved toward a writing-table near the entrance of the lounge. “Mme. de Fontanin wants Daniel to be informed; he’s at Lunéville. Will you take the telegram to one of the offices that stay open all night, to the one at the Bourse, for instance?”

“Do you think they’ll give him leave?” Jacques had remembered that Europe was on the brink of war, and Lunéville was a frontier town.

“Of course. Why not?” Antoine asked uncomprehendingly.

He had begun composing the telegram at the writing-table. Then he changed his mind, and crumpled up the telegraph-blank, remarking: “No. The safest thing’s to wire direct to his colonel.” He took another blank and began again, murmuring as he wrote: “Very urgent . . . request grant leave . . . Sergeant Fontanin. His father . . .” He stood up.

Docilely Jacques took the telegram. “I’ll see you later at the hospital, I suppose? What’s the address?”

“Just as you like. It’s 14 Boulevard Bineau. But what’s the use your coming?” he added after a moment’s thought. “The best thing you can do, old man, is to go home to bed.” He was on the point of asking Jacques where he was staying and proposing to put him up, but he thought better of it. “Call me up tomorrow morning before eight, and I’ll tell you what’s happened.”

As Jacques was going away, he called him back. “By the way, you’ll have to wire to Daniel, too, to give him the address of the hospital.”

XIX

IT was just midnight when Jacques left the Bourse telegraph office. He was thinking of Daniel, picturing his friend opening the telegram he had just sent off, signed “Dr. Thibault.” For a while he lingered on the edge of the sidewalk, gazing across the lighted, almost empty square. There was a dull ache in his limbs, as if a bout of fever were coming on, and he felt dizzy. “What’s wrong with me tonight?” he wondered.

Then, energetically, he drew himself up and crossed the street. The air seemed more limpid, but the night was sultry still. He walked aimlessly ahead. “What’s wrong with me?” Suddenly the picture of Jenny rose before his eyes: Jenny, pale and slim in the blue coat and skirt, as he had just seen her after all those years, so unexpectedly. But in a flash he dispelled the vision, almost without an effort.

By the Rue Vivienne he came to the Boulevard Poissonnière, and halted. The boulevards, which on that warm summer Sunday evening had so far been almost empty, were entering on the crowded hour following the closing of the theatres. The café terraces were packed with people. Open taxis were speeding past in the direction of the Opera; along the sidewalks, too, the crowds streamed westward. Some smart-looking ladies in huge, flowered hats were moving against the current toward the Porte Saint-Martin, eyeing every likely male.

Standing at the corner, with his back to a shop-window, Jacques watched the flowing tide of carefree Parisians. So Antoine’s blindness was shared by everyone! Among those laughing passers-by was there one who guessed that Europe was already struggling in the toils? Never had Jacques been so poignantly aware how the fate of unthinking millions lies in the hands of a few men chosen almost haphazard, into whose keeping the nations recklessly commit their safety.

A newspaper-vender shuffled by, crying lackadaisically: “*La Liberté, La Presse*, late edition.”

Jacques bought the papers and scanned them under a street-lamp. “*The Caillaux Case. M. Poincaré’s Russian Visit. The Cross-Paris Swimming Contest. Mexico and U.S.A. Jealous Husband Slays His Rival. Tour de France Cycle Race. The Balloon Grand Prix. Closing Prices.*” Nothing!

Again a thought of Jenny glanced across his mind, and hastily he decided to return to Geneva on the following day, forty-eight hours earlier than he had planned. The decision gave him a surprising sense of relief.

Meanwhile, suppose he looked in at the offices of the *Humanité*? Almost light-heartedly he turned into the Rue du Croissant. The district, in which most of the papers were at that hour in process of being printed, teemed with life, and Jacques threaded his way across a human ant-heap. Bars and cafés were brilliantly lit up and thronged with customers; a hubbub of voices poured through the open windows into the streets.

A small gathering in front of the *Humanité* building blocked the entrance. Jacques shook hands with some. They were already discussing a piece of news that Larguest had just transmitted to the "Skipper." An exceptional deposit of four billion francs in gold, known as the "war reserve," had recently been paid into the Banque de France.

The group began to disperse. Some suggested rounding off the night at the Café du Progrès, a restaurant near by, where Socialists in quest of red-hot news could count on finding newspapermen ready to impart it.

Jacques was invited to join them there for a glass of beer. He was already an accepted figure in such circles, and was sure to come across old friends. They knew he had been sent from Switzerland on a mission, treated him with a certain deference, and did their best to help him in his task by furnishing information. Nevertheless, for all their trust and good-fellowship, many of these militant Socialists, who came from the working-class, looked on Jacques as an intellectual, a well-wisher yet an "outsider" by the accident of birth.

At the Café du Progrès they had secured for themselves a fair-sized, low-ceiled room on the first floor, to which the proprietor, a member of the Party, admitted only known adherents. That night some twenty men, old and young, were gathered round the beer-splashed, marble-topped tables. The air was dense with cigarette smoke, acrid with the fumes of beer. They were discussing an article by Jaurès, which had appeared that morning, on the line the Socialist Party should take in case of war.

Cadieux, Marc Levoir, Stefany, Berthet, and Rabbe were there, grouped round a bearded giant of a man, fair-haired, pink-cheeked—Tatzler, a German Socialist whom Jacques had already met in Berlin. Tatzler was declaring that the article would be reproduced and commented on by all the German press. According to him, the speech that Jaurès had recently made in the Chamber to justify the Socialists' refusal to vote supplies for the President's trip to Russia—a speech in which Jaurès declared that France had no desire to be "pitchforked into peril"—had produced a deep impression across the Rhine.

"And so it did in France," said Rabbe, a bearded man with a curiously gnarled skull, who had once been a typesetter. "That's what led the Fédération de la Seine to pass that motion for a general strike if and whenever a war seemed threatening."

"Will your German workers," Cadieux asked, "be prepared, and are they disciplined enough, to go on strike automatically, if your Social-Democratic Party approves of and gives orders for it, even in the face of an impending mobilization?"

"I'll turn the tables on you!" Tatzler retorted with a confident, good-humoured guffaw. "If general mobilization's ordered here, do you think your French working-class is disciplined enough?"

"That would mainly depend," Jacques broke in, "on the attitude of the German proletariat."

"Personally I'd answer: 'Yes, undoubtedly!' " Cadieux exclaimed.

"I'm not so sure," Rabbe said. "I'd be more inclined to say 'No.' "

Cadieux shrugged his shoulders. He was a tall, lean, loosely built man, who was to be seen everywhere—on committees, at the Labour Exchange, at C.G.T. headquarters, in editors' rooms and government offices—always in a hurry, dashing here and there, inapprehensible. He was usually to be seen in transit between two calls, and no sooner did one decide to buttonhole him than he had vanished. The sort of person who is always recognized a shade too late, when he has just gone by.

"Yes? No?" Tatzler grinned with all his teeth. "Well, with us, it's *gerade so*. *Ach*, do you know," he suddenly exclaimed, rolling his blue eyes, "in Germany they're very much worrying about your Poincaré that's visiting the Tsar!"

"Yes, damn it!" Rabbe grunted. "Couldn't have chosen a worse moment. In the eyes of the whole world we look like we're giving our official blessing to the Greater Russia policy."

"Especially," Jacques remarked, "when you read our press. The leaders in our French daily papers sound a provocative note that's positively disgusting."

"Do you know what?" Tatzler went on. "It's because Viviani, your Foreign Minister, is there that everyone thinks they must be planning a diplomatic crusade against 'Germanismus' at St. Petersburg. In my country we know for sure that Russia it is who forced France into making a three years' military service law. *Wofür*? Because the Pan-Slavism, it threatens Germany and Austria always more."

"Still, things are in a bad way in Russia," said Milanov, who had just entered and taken a chair beside Jacques. "The French papers hardly mention it. But Praznovsky, who has just come over from Russia, has lots to tell. A strike movement has started in the Putilov works and it's spreading like wildfire. Day before yesterday, Friday, there were sixty-five thousand men out in St. Petersburg alone. The police opened fire and many people were killed. Women and girls among them."

A vision of Jenny in her blue dress rose momentarily before Jacques's eyes. To dispel the haunting vision, he turned to the Russian, saying: "So Praznovsky's here?"

"He arrived this morning. He's been confabulating with the Skipper for the last hour. I'm waiting for him. Will you stay on to see him?"

"No." Jacques felt restless—his fever was rising again—and the idea of staying where he was, hearing them thresh out the same eternal problems in this smoke-polluted atmosphere, suddenly seemed unbearable. "It's late. I must be getting home."

But, out in the street, he found the darkness and his solitude almost harder to endure than the crowded promiscuity of the café. Quickening his pace, he started back to his hotel, which was on the left bank of the Seine, near the Place Maubert; the proprietor, a Belgian Socialist, was an old friend of Vanheede. He walked by the Halles without a glance for the picturesque confusion of farm-carts disgorging their nightly loads of fruit and vegetables. He crossed the vast, silent square fronting the Hôtel-de-Ville; the clock showed a quarter to two. It was the hour when the last prowlers of the night, men and women, as they crossed each other's trail, seem to sniff each other, like questing dogs.

He felt hot and cold at once. All the cafés were shut. With bowed head and leaden limbs he trudged along the river-bank, yearning for sleep . . . oblivion. At this hour Jenny must be keeping vigil at her father's bedside. He thrust the thought of her out of his mind.

"By this time tomorrow," he consoled himself, "I'll be many miles away."

He went up the stairs on tiptoe and groped his way to his bedroom. After a long draught of lukewarm water from the jug, he undressed at once, without even pausing to light his candle. He dropped onto the bed, and a moment later was asleep.

XX

THE operation, which had been performed in Antoine's presence, had perforce been left unfinished. Héquet had opened up the wound and raised the splintered bones, spicules of which had become lodged in the brain. He had intended to trephine, but the condition of the patient was not such as to warrant further interference, and the two doctors gave up for the present any further search for the bullet.

They agreed that Mme. de Fontanin should be informed of the state of affairs. Out of kindness, however, they told her—as indeed was true—that thanks to the operation the patient had some chance of recovery. If his condition improved it should be possible to trace and to extract the bullet. What they did not tell her was how remote, in their opinion, that chance was.

It was fully two o'clock when Héquet and his wife left the hospital together, for Mme. de Fontanin had insisted that Nicole should go home with her husband.

Jerome had been installed in a room on the second floor, with a night nurse in charge. Antoine proposed staying the night, so as not to leave the two women by themselves. The three of them had drifted into a little parlour near the sickroom. Doors and windows stood open, yet the air seemed clogged with the oppressive silence of places where men suffer. They were haunted by the feeling that behind each door lay a pain-racked body, tossing and groaning, living down the sad, interminable hours.

Jenny sat apart, on a sofa at the far end of the room. Her hands folded on her lap, leaning stiffly against the wall, she had closed her eyes and seemed asleep.

Mme. de Fontanin had drawn her chair near Antoine's. It was more than a year since she had seen him last. Yet on the instant that the tragic news had reached her, her first thought had been to summon Dr. Thibault. He had come. Promptly he had answered her appeal, and here he was, loyal and energetic, as she had always known him.

"I haven't seen you since your bereavement," she suddenly remarked. "I know what a terrible time you had. I thought a great deal about you in those days and—I prayed for your father." She paused, remembering her one encounter with M. Thibault, at the time of the two boys' escapade, and how harsh, how unjust he had shown himself then. In a low voice she added: “May he have peace in God’s eternity!”

Antoine made no answer. A silence fell on the room.

Insects were hovering round the lamp, which shed a harsh, uncompromising light on the shoddy smartness of the furniture, on the gilt scrollwork of the chairs, and on a beribboned, bilious plant languishing in a blue earthenware pot near the middle of the room. Now and again a muffled bell buzzed at the far end of the corridor, followed by a patter of footsteps on the tiled floor, then the sounds of a door gently opened, slowly closing. Sometimes, too, there came a faint far-off whimper, a tinkle of porcelain, and silence closed in again.

Mme. de Fontanin bent toward Antoine, holding her small, plump hand over her aching eyes to shield them from the glare. In an undertone she began telling him about Jerome, setting forth in broken phrases what little she knew about her husband’s tangled affairs. It came easy to her thus to think aloud, for she had always felt she trusted Antoine implicitly.

He, too, listened, bending forward, looking up from time to time to exchange an earnest, understanding glance. “What a fine woman she is!” he was thinking. And how he appreciated this tranquil dignity of hers in her distress, and, no less, the womanly charm which always graced her virile qualities of mind! “Father,” he thought, “was only a bourgeois. She’s a patrician.”

Meanwhile he did not miss a word of what she was saying. And gradually he formed an idea of the circumstances which had led Jerome de Fontanin to self-destruction.

For some eighteen months Jerome had been employed by an English firm carrying on a timber business in Hungary from its London headquarters. It was a well-established company, and for some months Mme. de Fontanin had felt assured that at last her husband had found stable employment. In point of fact, however, she had never been able to ascertain exactly what his duties were. The greater part of his time was spent in trains, travelling between London and Vienna with brief halts at Paris, in the course of which he always spent an evening at his wife’s apartment. He trailed everywhere with him a brief-case bulging with documents and affected a jaunty air, but was always so full of high spirits and geniality, so lavish of endearments and delicate attentions for his family, that they could not help being captivated. What the poor woman did not mention was that certain discoveries had convinced her that her husband was carrying on two expensive love-affairs, one in Austria and the other in England. Anyhow, he seemed to be earning a good salary; what was more, he had given her to understand that he expected an increase in salary which would enable him to contribute generously to the aid of his wife and daughter. For, during the past few years, Mme. de Fontanin and Jenny had been living wholly at Daniel's expense. . . . When making the confession, Mme. de Fontanin was obviously torn between shame at this exposure of her husband's shortcomings and pride in the revelation of her son's devotion.

Fortunately Daniel was drawing a good salary for his work on Ludwigson's art review. Prospects had looked black for a moment when Daniel had been called up for his military service. But Ludwigson, eager to make sure of Daniel's collaboration when his period of training was over, had done the handsome thing and undertaken to pay him a reduced but regular salary during his absence. Thus Mme. de Fontanin and Jenny were assured of the indispensable minimum to live on. Jerome was quite alive to this state of things and, indeed, often referred to it. With characteristic light-heartedness he left it to his son to keep the home together. But with a show of lordly airs and graces he insisted on being informed of the exact sums thus disbursed, and never missed a chance of saying how grateful he was to Daniel. Moreover, he professed to look on this pecuniary aid as an advance made to him by his son, a loan he would repay at the earliest opportunity. He explained that he preferred to postpone payment till the "advances" came to a "round sum," and made a point of keeping an exact account of the items of this debt. Periodically he sent Daniel and Thérèse a typewritten statement of account in duplicate, in which the compound interest on the debt was worked out at a generous rate.

The ingenuous yet disillusioned air with which Mme. de Fontanin set forth the facts made it impossible to judge if she was duped or not by Jerome's unscrupulous pretences.

Just then Antoine looked up and saw Jenny's eyes fixed on him, in that gaze so dark with secrecy and solitude, so heavy with the burden of her inner life, that never could he meet it without a vague sense of discomfort. He had never forgotten that distant day when he had questioned Jenny, then a little girl, about her brother's escapade; when for the first time he had caught that look in her eyes.

Suddenly the girl stood up. "It's stifling here," she said to her mother, dabbing her forehead with the tiny handkerchief she had screwed up into a ball between her fingers. "I'm going down to the garden for a breath of fresh air."

Mme. de Fontanin nodded assent, and followed her with her eyes as she left the room. Then she turned again to Antoine. She was not sorry Jenny had left them to themselves. So far there had been nothing in her tale to account for the attempt at suicide. Now it fell to her to embark on more difficult and painful revelations.

In the course of the previous year Jerome, who had formed business connexions in Vienna, had "unwisely" lent his name and title—for in Austria he passed himself off as "Count de Fontanin"—to the directorate of an Austrian wallpaper-manufacturing concern, which after a brief career had recently gone into liquidation under suspicious circumstances. The accounts were being looked into and a judicial inquiry into the directors' conduct was on foot.

To make things worse, a suit had been instituted by the management of the Trieste Exhibition held in the spring of 1914, the wallpaper firm having occupied a costly booth in it and neglected to pay the rental.

Jerome had taken a particular interest in the Exhibition; he had induced his British employers to give him a month's leave in June, and spent it enjoying himself in Trieste. The wallpaper company had remitted to him from time to time large sums, for which, it seemed, he was unable to account; the official receiver charged Count de Fontanin with having spent the company's money on riotous living at Trieste and wilfully neglecting to pay the booth-rent. In any case, as managing director, Jerome was held responsible for the company's failure, and he was said to possess a large block of shares in the company, made over to him "without consideration" to secure his services as director.

Mme. de Fontanin had had no notion of her husband's plight till a few weeks before, when she had received a letter from Jerome—a vague but urgent appeal to her to raise another loan on the house at Maisons-Laffitte, of which she was the sole owner and on which a previous mortgage had already been contracted on his account. She had sought her lawyer's advice, and he had promptly had inquiries made in Austria. It was thus that she had learned that proceedings had been instituted against her husband.

But Mme. de Fontanin had no notion what had happened during the past few days, what new complications had led Jerome to this act of despair. She knew that some of his creditors at Trieste were daily publishing the most venomous allegations against him in a local paper. Were the charges well founded? Obviously Jerome must have judged his position past redress. Even if he managed to elude the hand of justice, he could not hope, after such a scandal, to keep his employment in the English company. Probably he had felt himself threatened on all sides, at the end of his tether, and had seen in suicide the only way out.

Mme. de Fontanin ceased speaking. In her eyes there was a dim, perplexed look, as if she were putting herself an unuttered question: “Have I done for him all I ought to have done? Would this have befallen him, had he felt me at his side as in the past?” Harrowing question, unanswerable now for ever!

With an effort she collected herself. “What can have become of Jenny? I’m so afraid of her catching cold; she may have fallen asleep down there in the open.”

Antoine rose. “Don’t bother to move. I’ll go down and see.”

XXI

JENNY had lacked energy to go all the way down to the garden. All she wanted was to escape from the sitting-room, so as not to see Antoine.

Pressing her hand against the tiled wall to steady herself, she had taken a few aimless steps along the corridor. Though all the windows were open, the heat was suffocating. From the operating-room on the floor below, a smell of ether came in nauseating gusts that, pouring up the staircase, mingled with the warm draughts circulating through the building.

The door of her father’s room stood ajar. It was in almost complete darkness; the only light came from a small lamp placed behind a screen, near which a nurse sat knitting. In the bed the outlines of a motionless body could be dimly seen, the arms stretched out along the counterpane. The head lay flat upon the pillow, the forehead swathed in bandages. The half-open mouth showed as a black cavity, from which low sounds escaped of hoarse but regular breathing.

Standing at the door, Jenny watched the mouth and listened to the stertorous respiration with a calmness, almost amounting to indifference, that startled her. Her father was dying. She knew it, repeated it to herself, but without being able to bring that tragic truth clear from the chaos of her thoughts, to consider it as a concrete, definite fact and closely touching her. It was as if her heart had frozen, grown hard as stone. Yet she loved her father despite his failings. She remembered how once, when she was a little girl, she had stood at his bedside, when he had been dangerously ill, and how the sight of his haggard face convulsed with pain had wrung her heart. Why was it she felt so terribly indifferent tonight? She forced herself to linger by the door; her arms hung limp and her eyes were fixed on the bed; she felt at once unmoved and self-reproachful, shocked by her callousness, fighting down an impulse to walk away and put this tragedy out of mind. It was as if, coming untimely on this night of all nights, her father's agony frustrated for her some last chance of happiness.

After a while she withdrew her shoulder from the doorjamb and walked to the corridor window for a breath of fresh air. A chair stood by it. Sitting down, she rested her folded arms on the windowsill, pillowing her aching brow on her clasped hands.

How she hated Jacques! He was a despicable, unstable creature. Irresponsible, perhaps; a madman.

Below, in the warm darkness of the sleeping garden, not a leaf stirred. Dimly she saw dark masses of foliage, white paths ribboning the lawns. A Japanese varnish tree cloyed the still air with pungent fumes as of some eastern drug-shop. Beyond the trees shone dotted lines of light, the street-lamps bordering the avenue. A sound came from it like the drone of a huge coffee-mill, as a never-ending file of market-gardeners' carts laboriously rumbled over the cobbles, Paris-bound. Now and then the hum of a motor drowned the rumble of cartwheels and in a burst of shrill, keen light a car flashed past behind the leafage, and vanished into the darkness.

"Don't go to sleep there!" a voice murmured in her ear.

She gave a start; an unuttered cry rose to her lips, as if Antoine had touched her.

"Let me get you a comfortable chair, anyhow."

She shook her head, rose stiffly, and followed Antoine back to the sitting-room. On the way he remarked in a low tone: "His condition is no worse. In fact the pulse has improved and there are indications that the coma is not so deep as it was."

Mme. de Fontanin had risen from her chair when they entered, and came toward them. "I've only just thought of it!" She turned impulsively to Antoine. "I should have let James know. Pastor Gregory, I mean; our oldest friend."

As she spoke she had half unconsciously slipped her arm round Jenny's waist and drawn the girl to her side, and the two faces, each marked with a different sorrow, were touching cheek to cheek.

Antoine’s gesture implied that he remembered Pastor Gregory quite well. And suddenly he had an impulse to snatch at this unlooked-for pretext for escape, and to get away from the hospital, if only for an hour. He might even have time to drop in at Anne’s place. . . . A picture rose before him of Anne in her white peignoir, asleep on the couch.

“That’s easily done!” He could not keep out of his voice a cheerful undertone that betrayed his eagerness. “What’s his address? I’ll go and fetch him.”

Mme. de Fontanin protested. “But it’s miles from here—near the Gare d’Austerlitz.”

“That doesn’t matter; I’ve my car, and you can move fast at night.” He added in a completely natural tone: “I’ll take the opportunity of looking in at my place to see if any patients have called me up. I’ll be back in an hour.”

He was already half-way to the door, hardly listening to the address given him by Mme. de Fontanin or her heart-felt thanks.

“How devoted he is! How fortunate we are to have him!” she could not help exclaiming, once he had left the room.

There was a moment’s silence; then, “I loathe him,” Jenny said.

Mme. de Fontanin gazed at her without surprise, and made no comment. Leaving her daughter in the parlour, she went to see Jerome.

The rattle in the throat had ceased and the breath, which hour by hour was growing weaker, came and went silently between the parted lips.

Signing to the nurse not to move, Mme. de Fontanin took a seat at the foot of the bed. She had lost hope. Her eyes were fixed on the poor bandaged head; tears of which she was unconscious streamed down her cheeks.

“How handsome he looks!” she thought, her eyes still intent on her husband’s face. Under the turban of cotton-wool and gauze that hid the silver locks and brought out the oriental elegance of the profile, the delicately formed yet virile features brought to mind in their frozen calm the death-mask of some young Egyptian king. A slight swelling had set in, smoothing out flaws and furrows, and in the dimly lighted room it seemed as if some miracle had given Jerome back his youth. The smooth cheeks described a flowing curve from the high cheekbones to the strongly moulded chin. The bandage had drawn up the skin of the forehead, and the line of the closed eyelids sloped up toward the temples. Slightly irritated by the anæsthetic, the lips had a sensual fullness. Handsome he was now as in their young days, when sometimes of a morning, waking early, she had pored over his sleep-bound face.

With hungry eyes, aglow with devotion and passionate regret, she gazed through her tears at what remained of Jerome, the one great love of her life. She pictured him as he had been at thirty, slim and lithe as a young panther; remembering his smile, his coaxing eyes and faintly bronzed cheeks—her "Indian Prince," she had used to call him, proud of being loved by such a man. She could hear his laugh, that way he had of saying "Ha! Ha! Ha!" in three distinct sounds, throwing his head back. She recalled his gaiety, his never-failing good humour: his false gaiety, for he had always lived in a world of make-believe; deceit was his natural element—smiling, thoughtless, incorrigible deceit.

All she had known of love her whole life long now lay before her, on that bed. And yet how often had she told herself in these latter years that her love-life was over! Now in a flash she realized that she had never really given up hope. Only tonight would all be ended, all hope blotted out for ever.

Burying her face in her hands, she invoked the Divine Consoler, but in vain. An all-too-human emotion stirred in her heart, and she felt forsaken by God, the prey of carnal regrets. She could not keep her thoughts from turning shamefully toward a last sweet memory of their love. At Maisons it had been, in their country home, when she had brought Jerome back from Amsterdam after Noémie's death. One night, humbly, he had crept into her room. He had pleaded for forgiveness. Hungering for pity, for caresses, he had nestled up to her in the darkness. She had taken him in her arms and pressed him like a child to her breast. One night, one summer night like this. Beyond the open windows had glimmered the starlit forest. Thus till dawn she had watched over him, herself unsleeping while he slept in her arms like a tired child, her child. One summer night, a warm, soft, languorous night like this. . . .

Suddenly Mme. de Fontanin raised her head. There was a glint of frenzy in her eyes; a wild, insensate desire had come over her to drive away the nurse, to stretch herself beside him on the bed and for the last time press her body to his body's warmth, and, since he must enter on eternal rest, for the last time, the last, put him to sleep—like a tired child, her child. . . .

Before her on the counterpane lay, still as a hand of stone, his graceful hand with the fine-drawn, sinewy fingers and, darkly glowing on the ring-finger, a large sardonyx. It was the right hand, the hand which, daring all, had lifted the revolver. "Ah, why wasn't I with you, darling, at that moment?" she murmured in a heart-broken voice. Perhaps before raising that hand to his forehead he had called to her in his heart. And surely he would have stayed his hand if in that moment of weakness she had been beside him, had remained at her post, the post assigned to her by God for all her earthly life and which, however wronged she thought herself, she should never have deserted.

She closed her eyes. Some minutes passed. Little by little she was regaining the serene climate of her soul, the heaven-sent peace of mind which, laying these phantoms of the past, remorse was bringing back to her. Once more she was entering into that communion with a Universal Power which was her never-failing help in time of trouble, and beginning to see from another angle this trial God had willed her to endure. And now she sought to discover behind the sorrow that had befallen her, the shock of which had left her bowed and broken, a divine intent, a secret purpose of the Immanent Will. And it seemed to her that at last she was nearing a haven of rest, the rest that comes of self-effacement and submission and quells every grief in those whom God has touched with grace.

Clasping her hands, she whispered: “Thy Will be done.”

XXII

WITH all its windows open, the car speeded across a city of the dead, past echoing walls, while the short summer night died on the peep of day.

Leaning well back, his arms and legs extended, a cigarette between his lips, Antoine was busy with his thoughts. A sleepless night was having its usual effect; far from prostrating him, it had tensed his nerves enjoyably.

“It’s half-past three,” he murmured as the car passed the clock at the Place Pereire. “By four I’ll have hauled that old loony of a pastor out of bed and packed him off to the hospital; then I’ll be free. It’s possible, of course, that poor devil pegs out while I’m away, but the chances are he’ll linger on another twenty-four hours.” He felt no qualms of conscience. “Everything possible has been done,” he decided, after mentally recapitulating the phases of the operation. Then, still harking back to the immediate past, he recalled Jenny’s arrival, then his conversation with Jacques. After this burst of professional activity, the discussion he had had with his brother seemed to him more futile than ever.

"I'm a doctor; I've a job to do, and I do it. What more do they expect of me?"

By "they" he meant Jacques, who did nothing, had no job, but merely fussed and fumed and ranted. He also meant the horde of revolutionary agitators behind Jacques, whom he had almost fancied he could hear yelling like wolves outside his door while Jacques was talking.

"Inequality, injustice! Of course they exist. Do those fellows imagine they're the first to spot that interesting fact? But what's to be done about it? Our present civilization is a datum, damn it! We'd do best to start by taking things as they really are instead of as they might have been. And their revolution?" he murmured *sotto voce*. "A fine mess they have in store for us. Smashing the whole show up, and starting all over again—like kids playing with toy bricks. They'd do better to get on with their jobs instead of wailing about the rotten state of society—and refusing to do their share in it. . . . Yes, you damned fools, can't you see it's up to you to make the most of the world as it is, the age and milieu you live in, and put your shoulders to the wheel—as we do? And instead of scheming and plotting for a catastrophe—the benefits of which are problematic—to employ the short span of life that's yours in making the best of your job, in making yourselves useful in your various walks of life, however humble?"

Pleased with this tirade, he rapped out, like a closing cadence: "And that's that!"

Another wave of indignation swept over him; he had just remembered Jacques's refusal to take up his share of the estate. "Nowadays, it seems, to be well off is to lead a life that's based on the 'exploitation of one's fellow-men'! What utter nonsense! Far be it from me to stick up for the principle of hereditary succession! But damn it, since that's the law of the land at present, since we've been born into the system, what's to be done about it? . . . Now, what's the next traditional idea I'm going to break a lance with?" He smiled at his own audacity. "It almost looks as if I was in revolt against the things I'm trying to defend."

Then with a sudden change of mood he said aloud, as if trying to convince an objector: "In any case, I maintain that often the system of inheritance leads to excellent results. I've frequently noticed that 'coming into money,' as they call it, facilitates the making of a fine career. And by a fine career I mean one that's useful, renders service to the community at large." He folded his arms. "Is it to be accounted a crime, then, not to be poor?"

He had a vague impression that he had put the question in an unfair form. The real issue in the debate within his conscience was rather: Is it a crime to be rich when one has not earned the money by one’s own labours? But he refused to linger over such fine shades of meaning and jerked his shoulders petulantly as if to shake off the small, vexatious thought.

“He wrote to me last winter: ‘I do not wish to benefit by this legacy.’ What a damn-fool notion! To ‘benefit’ by it. The next thing, I suppose, will be to accuse *me* of having ‘benefited’ by it! And in the last analysis, who is it that will benefit by the new scope provided for my professional career, by our researches? Is it I?” He was honest enough to answer: “Yes, it’s I. What I meant was: Will I be the *only* one to benefit by it? Really, when all is said and done, in the case of such a man as I am, isn’t it by furthering one’s personal interests that one most effectively furthers the interests of the community?”

The car was crossing the Seine. The river, the long vista of bridges, and the banks were bathed in rosy mist. He tossed the butt of his cigarette through the window and lit another.

“You’re far more like me than you think, my little noodle of a brother!” he chuckled to himself complacently. “You were born a bourgeois, my boy, just as you were born with red hair. Your hair has darkened but the reddish glint’s still there; you can’t get rid of it. It’s the same with your precious ‘revolutionary instincts.’ I haven’t much faith in them. Atavism, upbringing, the natural bent of your mind—all pull you in the opposite direction. Just wait; very likely when you’re forty you’ll be more of a ‘damned bourgeois’ than I am!”

The car was slowing down; Victor leaned out, trying to read the numbers on the houses. He drew up finally in front of a barred gate.

“Still, for all his faults, I’m very fond of Jacques,” Antoine murmured to himself as he opened the door. And now he reproached himself for not having given his brother a heartier welcome and shown more pleasure at seeing him again.

XXIII

FOR the past year, Pastor Gregory had been living in a squalid boarding-house at the far end of a block of tenement-houses whose occupants were mostly Armenian workmen. The pastor was carrying on a mission among them.

Antoine had the greatest difficulty in waking the night-watchman, an unkempt Levantine who was snoring fully dressed on a bench in the hall.

“Yes, sir. Master wanting Pastor Gregory? I knowing him, sir. Please to kindly step upstairs.”

The worthy missioner occupied an attic on the top floor of the overcrowded hovel. The sweltering heat of a July night was churning up a mingled stench of garbage-pails and grease, which brought to mind the rancid smells of an Arab back-street.

At the night-watchman’s timid rap on his door, Gregory could be heard scrambling out of bed at once. “The ‘sleep of the just,’ ” Antoine smiled to himself, “is obviously a light one.”

The latch slid back and the pastor appeared, holding a small, smoky oil-lamp.

He cut an amazing figure, clad in an immensely long night-shirt that decorously concealed even his ankles. As he was unable to sleep without constant pressure on his liver, he had tightly swathed his waist in a girdle of brown flannel, the effect of which was to make the upper part of the night-shirt bulge like a woman’s blouse, while the lower half bellied out like a skirt. With his bare feet, skinny arms, lank locks, and spectral pallor, he brought to mind a wizard out of the *Arabian Nights*.

He did not recognize Antoine at first, but no sooner had the latter spoken a few words than he understood everything. Without answering or wasting a moment while Antoine, standing in the doorway, went on with his explanation, he had fixed the end of his girdle to the iron bedpost and, to unwind the numerous layers of flannel, had begun whirling himself round, like a dancing dervish, faster and faster.

Antoine, who had difficulty in keeping a sober face, was now describing the operation and the difficulty of extracting the bullet.

“Ah! Ah!” the dervish panted derisively. “Forget about the revolver. Let that bullet be. What we’ve got to stimulate is the—the life-urge.”

Waving his arms, he flashed resentful glances at the visitor. When the unpeeling process was complete, he moved forward and brought close to Antoine’s eyes his angular, misshapen face, with the perpetually twitching brows. Then he chuckled to himself soundlessly.

“Poor dear doctor, my bearded enemy of yore!” he exclaimed in a tone of heart-felt pity. “You think to cure diseases, but it’s you and your blaspheming fraternity who cause disease—by proclaiming it exists. Nonsense! I say to you: Let the Light enter in. Christ is the only healer. Who raised Lazarus from the dead? Could *you* do as much, poor, benighted doctor?”

Antoine, waiting at the door, made no reply.

“Man is divine,” Gregory announced in a gruff voice. He had backed against the wall and was stooping to put on his shoes. “Jesus knew in His heart He was divine. And I’m divine. And so are we all.” He worked his feet into the heavy black shoes which he had left laced. “But He who said: ‘The letter killeth’ was killed by the law. Christ was killed by the law. Man has borne in mind only the letter of the law. There’s not one church in existence that is truly founded on the spirit of Christ’s teachings. All the churches are founded solely on the letter of His gospel.”

Without the least break in his flow of words, he was bustling about the room with the slapdash, blundering alacrity typical of neurasthenics.

“God is All in All. He is the supreme source of light and warmth.” With a vindictive tug he whipped his trousers off the window-hasp. Each movement of his had the startling suddenness of an electric flash. “God is All,” he repeated, in a louder tone, for he had turned toward the wall to button his fly.

When that was done, he spun round on his heel and shot Antoine a look of dark defiance. “God is All, and there is no place for evil in Him.” His voice was stern. “I tell you, my poor dear doctor, there’s not one atom of evil or ill-will in the universal All.”

He slipped into his black alpaca coat, put on a grotesque little felt hat, and in a surprisingly hearty tone—as if the sensation of being dressed had raised his spirits—ejaculated: “Glory be to God!” rolling his eyes toward the ceiling and touching his hat politely.

Then, lowering his gaze, he stared at Antoine with a far-away expression and murmured: “Poor Thérèse! Poor dear lady!” Tears glistened in his eyes. It was as if only now his thoughts had turned to the tragedy that had brought Antoine to his door. “And poor dear Jerome!” he sighed. “Poor sluggish heart, was life too much for you? Could you not put away from you the Negative? . . . May our Christ Jesus give him the strength to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light! I am coming to you, poor sinner. I’m on my way to you.” He went up to Antoine. “Let’s start,” he said. “Bring me to him.”

Before blowing out the lamp, he took a taper from the tail-pocket of his coat and lit it. Then he opened the door.

"Go ahead!"

Antoine obeyed. Stretching forth his arm, Gregory held the taper aloft to light the steps.

"Christ said men should not put their candle under a bushel but on a candlestick, for it to give light unto all. It is Christ who lights a candle in our hearts. Poor little candle, how often it burns low and wavers and gives off a noisome smoke! Alas for us! Let us pray Him that our light may burn with a bright, steady flame, so that it may drive back the world of matter into the outer darkness."

While, clinging to the banisters, Antoine made his way down the narrow staircase the pastor went on murmuring phrases that sounded like an exorcism. The words grew less and less intelligible, but Antoine noticed that "matter" and "darkness" kept on recurring, always on a note of rancour.

As they came out into the courtyard Antoine said: "I've my car here. You can go in it to the hospital, and I'll join you there in an hour or so."

Gregory offered no objection, but before getting into the car he flashed at the younger man a look that was so keen and seemed so understanding that Antoine felt a flush rising to his cheeks. "Still," he reflected, "he can't possibly know where I'm going."

With a sense of vast relief he watched the car recede into the greyness of the dawn.

A light, cool breeze met him at the street-corner; evidently it had been raining somewhere near by. Cheerful as a schoolboy who has just escaped from a long detention, Antoine almost ran to the nearest main thoroughfare and hailed a taxi.

"To the Avenue de Wagram."

He had the driver stop fifty yards from the house, jumped briskly out, ran up the side-street, and opened the door quietly.

No sooner had he entered than his face lit up. That was Anne's perfume—a heavy, cloying scent, with a tang more of resin than of flowers, that crept into the throat and set the senses tingling. It was less an aroma than something to be tasted—and Antoine relished it.

"Heady perfumes seem to be in my line." Antoine smiled to himself, remembering with a thrill the ambergris necklace that Rachel wore.

Stealthily he crept into the bathroom, which the dawn was flooding with cool, pale light. He undressed quickly and, standing in the bath, squeezed out a large sponge over his shoulders. As the water trickled down his back it seemed to evaporate in his body’s warmth, like water steaming off heated metal, and he had an exquisite sensation of his fatigue flowing away under its cool caress. Bringing his mouth down to the tap, he drank deeply of the ice-cold water. Then softly as a cat he tiptoed into the bedroom.

A little yawn, a faint, dulcet sound rising from the carpet, reminded him of Laddie’s presence. He felt a small cold muzzle, a silken ear tickling his ankles.

The curtains were drawn. The bedside lamp shed a soft dawnlike sheen, tinged with the roseate glow that Antoine had admired an hour before, when crossing the Seine. Anne lay asleep in the big bed, her face turned to the wall, her head nestling in the crook of her bare arm. Fashion papers were strewn on the floor, and in the ashtray on the table was a little pyramid of half-burnt cigarettes.

Standing at the bedside, Antoine gazed down at the dark luxuriance of her hair, her slim neck and shoulders, and the graceful outline of her limbs under the counterpane. “For once so helpless!” he mused. Seldom did Anne rouse in him any such tenderly protective feelings; as a rule he merely reacted with a sort of sporting zest to the passionate, insatiable desire she lavished on him. Smiling, he dallied with the pleasure of voluptuous suspense, postponing the thrill he knew was waiting for him there, close at hand—a thrill of which neither Jacques nor Jerome, nor Gregory, nor anyone in the wide world could now deprive him. But then the desire to plunge his face into the scented darkness of her hair, to strain to his breast that warm, supple form and weld their bodies into one, grew so imperious that the smile died on his lips. Warily, holding his breath, he untucked a corner of the bed and with a strong, sinuous movement, wriggled in beside her. She gave a hoarse, quickly stifled cry, swung herself round toward him, and passed from sleep to waking in his arms.

XXIV

JACQUES woke early, with an impression of being in good fettle for the day. "There's no time to lose," he murmured as he sprang out of bed, "if I'm to catch the five p.m. train."

But hardly was he on his feet when he grew aware of something weighing on his mind; he still was haunted by the events of the night before.

He dressed rapidly and went down to telephone to Antoine.

Fontanin was not dead; the coma might last another twenty-four hours or even longer. There was no hope of saving him.

Jacques informed his brother that they would not be seeing each other again, as he was returning to Switzerland that day. After paying the hotel bill, he went to the Gare de l'Est and left his valise at the parcel-room.

Throughout the day he hurried from one place to another, calling on certain "men in the know," whose addresses Richardley had given him. There were six or seven such visits to be made.

A vast movement was on foot in all the left-wing groups to scotch the war-menace. It seemed that the union of the various parties had at last been definitely achieved. On this point the latest news was more than reassuring.

And yet he could not shake off his feeling of apprehension; no sooner was he alone than stealthily its shadow fell across his mood, darkening it with an inexplicable premonition of futility. Feverishly, bathed in perspiration, he rushed to and fro across Paris, constantly changing his mind and his direction, cutting conversations short, hastily abandoning at the last moment an interview to have which he had spent a half-hour on the way. Streets, houses, the passers-by, even his comrades, all had a hostile air, unlike their normal selves. On all sides he seemed to be fretting against iron bars that hemmed him in like a caged beast. At certain moments, indeed, a feeling of actual physical sickness swept over him; his hands went clammy, his chest seemed gripped in a vice, his head was swimming, and an uprush of unformulated terror made him gasp for breath.

"What on earth can be wrong with me?" he wondered.

Still, by four he had got through his most urgent tasks and was free to leave. He was all eagerness to be back in Geneva and, at the same time, inexplicably dreaded quitting Paris.

Suddenly he thought: "Why not wait till the night train? I'd have time to drop in at the Croissant, the *Humanité* and the *Progrès* offices, and I might attend the meeting in the Avenue de Clichy and pick up some news of how things are going in the arsenals."

He had learned there was to be a gathering at one of the cafés in the Avenue de Clichy; it had been organized by the Maritime Workers' Union. There he would be sure to meet the strike leaders detailed to proceed to seaports on the west coast, where strikes were being fomented. He would do well to glean some information on these projects.

But another thought had been preying on his mind all day, the thought that Daniel was now in Paris. Obviously he could go back without getting in touch with him. But Daniel would be sure to learn about his presence here. "If only I could have met him," Jacques thought, "without going to the hospital!" Abruptly he made up his mind. "I'll wait for the night express. If I go to Neuilly after dinner I'll see Daniel, and there won't be much risk of my meeting *her*."

In pursuance of his plan he left the *Progrès* office at half-past eight. He had looked in there on the off chance, after the Maritime Workers' Union meeting, and had had the luck of running into Burot, a subeditor commissioned to collect for the *Humanité* all the news relating to the arsenals in Western France.

He heartened himself to face the trip to Neuilly, with the consoling thought: "Anyhow, tomorrow I shall be in Geneva."

He was going down the narrow spiral staircase leading from the mezzanine to the ground-floor café when a friendly hand clapped his shoulder.

"Eh, boy, so you're in Paris!"

Even in the semi-darkness there was no mistaking Mourlan, with his deep voice and broad accent. He wore his hair extravagantly long and had the look of an aged, swarthy Christ; the loose blouse worn by French compositors was his invariable garb, winter and summer through.

In the heroic days of the Dreyfus case, Mourlan had launched a subversive news-bulletin, reproduced by mimeograph and circulated weekly among a select few. Thereafter his *Etendard* had settled into a revolutionary little news-sheet which Mourlan continued to edit with the help of unpaid collaborators. Now and then Jacques sent him a news-story or the translation of an article in the foreign press. His publications had a tone of logical intransigence which appealed to Jacques. From the viewpoint of an uncompromising Socialist Mourlan attacked the Party officials and especially the Jaurès group, the "opportunists" as he called them.

He had taken a fancy to Jacques. He liked the "young 'uns" for their keenness and intractability. Though poorly educated, he had a nimble wit, paradoxical and garrulous, and his accent, that of the old-time Paris workingman, gave raciness to his humour. For years he had been struggling almost single-handed to keep his newspaper afloat. He was feared. Solidly entrenched in his orthodoxy, fortified by the life of militant poverty he led, and whole-heartedly devoted to the revolutionary cause, he harried without pity the politicians of the Party, denounced their slightest errors, showed up their compromises—and his blows always struck home. The men he trounced avenged themselves by spreading damaging rumours concerning him. He had once owned a bookshop in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, specializing in Socialist literature, but his enemies averred that the bulk of his trade was done in pornographic books, as indeed was not impossible. His private life, moreover, did not inspire confidence. The little offices of the austere *Etendard* in the Rue de la Roquette were frequented by women of the easiest virtue, hailing from the dives in the Rue de Lappe. The ladies paying these neighbourly visits brought him sweets, for which he had a weakness. They talked in shrill voices, wrangled, and sometimes came to blows. Then the worthy Apostle would rise and, laying down his pipe, seize the belligerents each by an arm, and throw them down the stairs; after which he resumed the conversation at the point where he had dropped it.

He seemed in a gloomy mood as he accompanied Jacques to the street.

“Not a sou in the till!” He pointed the remark by turning out both pockets of his black blouse simultaneously. “If a spot of cash don’t come my way before next Thursday, the next number of *Etendard’s* up the flue!”

“That surprises me,” Jacques said. “I noticed that your circulation was going up.”

“I should say so! There’s new subscribers coming in all the time. Trouble is they don’t pay. If it was a money-making concern, o’ course I wouldn’t hesitate; I’d stop sending out their copies. But what do I run it for, boy? For propaganda. Well, then, what’s to be done? Cut down expenses? I do everything myself. To start with, I allowed myself a hundred francs a month out of the takings. But I couldn’t bring myself to draw ’em more than once. I live on bread and cheese, like an ordinary tramp. I’m up to the eyes in debt. And it’s been like that these eighteen years! . . . But let’s talk o’ something more important. What do they think in Switzerland about these ugly rumours buzzing around? Personally, I’m an old hand, I ain’t surprised at nothing. I seen too many things in my days. That business in ’83, for instance. I was only twenty then, but I used to trot round every evening to the offices of the *Révolte*. That name don’t mean anything to you, I opine. Likely you wouldn’t even know that in ’83, those four fine old fly-by-nights—England, Germany, Austria, and Rumania—were on the brink of launching a slap-up European war against Russia, taking advantage of

France's isolation, of course. And damn near brought it off, my boy! Put that in your pipe and smoke it! Nothing's changed. It's always the same old game. Patriotism, the national honour—they blithered about it then, as they're doing now. But what lay underneath? Commercial jealousy, tariff problems, the usual big business combines.

"No, nothing's changed, except one thing. We've no Kropotkin nowadays. In '83 Kropotkin worked like a demon, fighting the gang who had the European press in their pay: Anzin, Krupp, Armstrong, and the rest of them. He gave them one hell of a trouncing, did old Kropotkin. I've dug up his articles, and I'm republishing three in my next issue. You must read them, boy; there's useful stuff in 'em for all you lads to browse on."

The veteran pacifist-in-arms was grinning broadly; his eyes were twinkling. He had quite forgotten that a hundred and eighty francs, of which he had not the first centime, were needed before he could get that "next number" out.

Jacques took his leave. "I must get the *Etendard* included in our anti-war campaign list," he was thinking. He resolved to speak about it at Geneva and, if possible, have a subsidy remitted to Mourlan.

He had not dined and, before taking the Métro for Neuilly at the Bourse station, dropped in for a sandwich at the Café du Croissant. Several of the *Humanité* staff, following the editor's lead, patronized this café-restaurant at the corner of the Rue Montmartre.

Jaurès was seated in his usual corner near the window, dining with three friends. As he passed the table, Jacques waved a friendly greeting, but the Skipper, who was bending over his plate, failed to notice him. His shoulders hunched, his neck hidden by his beard, he let the others chatter away, while with thoughtless gluttony he dispatched a plateful of mutton and beans. The big brief-case, bulging with dossiers, that he carried with him everywhere, lorded it, within arm's reach, on the other side of the table. On top of the brief-case lay a pile of newspapers and pamphlets and a large paper-bound book.

Jacques, who knew that Jaurès was an indefatigable reader, recalled an anecdote which Stefany (who had heard it from Marius Moutet) had retailed to him two days before. When recently travelling with Jaurès, Moutet had been amazed one day to see him poring over—of all things—a Russian grammar. In answer to his question Jaurès had said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world: "Of course I'm learning Russian, and all of you should hurry up and do the same. Quite likely Russia's on the eve of playing a most important part in European affairs."

Sitting with his back to the light, Jacques watched the famous man at table, and wondered if he were paying the least attention to what the others said. That was a question he had put himself on several occasions when he had come in contact with Jaurès. Whenever he chanced not to be speaking, he seemed lost in a ruminative silence, listening to a secret music murmuring within his mind.

Suddenly Jacques saw him raise his head, pass his napkin quickly across his lips, puff out his chest, and begin speaking. Under the lowering brows his keen, restless eyes flashed glances round the room. Set back in the swarthy beard, the open mouth with the drooping corners brought to mind the horn of a loudspeaker, or, at certain angles, the black mouthpiece of a tragic mask. He gave the impression not so much of addressing any one of those around him as of thinking aloud, breaking a lance with an invisible opponent. In his mental make-up thought and controversy were so intimately allied that only in discussion did his mind work at full pressure. It was hard to catch the words, for Jaurès was speaking in a low tone—as low, that is to say, as his vocal organs, trained to public speaking and richly sonorous, permitted him. Nevertheless, across the hubbub of many voices in the café, Jacques distinguished unmistakably the very personal timbre of Jaurès's voice, with its low, throbbing accents like the drone of a muted orchestra accompanying the soaring phrases of the vocalist. And that familiar undertone evoked a host of memories in his mind: the hectic atmosphere of public meetings, the clash of partisans, dramatic perorations, storms of applause from frenzied crowds.

Carried away by his subject, Jaurès had thrust aside his half-full plate and was leaning forward over the table, with lowered brows, like a bull ready to charge. Beating the rhythm of his phrases, his clenched fists rose and fell upon the table edge, not violently but with the stolid cadence of a steam-hammer. And when, pressed for time, Jacques left the café, Jaurès was still declaiming, thumping the marble with his fists.

This heartening glimpse of the great orator had quickened his energy, and Jacques was still under its tonic influence when he reached the entrance-gates of a large building in the Boulevard Bineau. "Baudrand Hospital"; that was the place.

It was quite dark, but Jacques crossed the garden without slackening pace; he could not bring himself to look up at the lighted windows.

The old woman who opened the door for him informed him in a quavering voice that the poor gentleman was still alive and his son had arrived late in the afternoon. Jacques asked her to go and fetch Daniel. But the doorkeeper had no helper and could not leave her post.

“The ward nurse will go and tell him,” she said. “You’ve only to go up to the second floor, sir.”

After a brief hesitation Jacques complied.

On the first-floor landing he look round, but saw no one; the long corridor, bathed in a soft, pale glow, was silent as the grave. The second floor was equally silent and along the endless white-walled corridor no one was in view. There was nothing for it but to hunt for the ward nurse. After waiting some minutes, he began walking down the corridor. His feeling of apprehension had given way to a vague curiosity, which encouraged him to take risks.

He had not observed a shadowy form seated in a window bay. As he came up, the girl turned and rose abruptly. Jenny!

It was almost as if he had foreseen this meeting, for he felt no real surprise as he murmured to himself: “Well, it’s happened!” And at once he noticed that she was bareheaded . . . as in the past.

The girl’s first gesture had been to push back her hair, which she realized was in disorder, and under the subdued light, the soft pallor of her forehead gave an impression of inviolable purity, if not of gentleness.

For two seconds they faced each other, with wildly beating hearts. At last he managed to speak, in a voice roughened by emotion.

“Please excuse me. . . . The doorkeeper said . . .”

He was struck by her pallor, bloodless lips, peaked nostrils. Her eyes were tense but expressionless; all that he read in them was a firm resolve not to quail, not to avert her gaze.

“I came to inquire . . .”

Jenny made a vague gesture implying that all hope was lost.

“. . . and to see Daniel,” he added.

With an effort, as if she were swallowing a pill, she muttered some indistinct words, then made a hasty move along the corridor toward the sitting-room. Jacques began to follow her, but stopped half-way. She opened the door. He thought she was going to call Daniel. But holding the door open, she remained there, half turned toward him, with a harsh expression on her face and her eyes fixed on the floor.

“I’d rather not . . .” Jacques began, moving toward her. “I mean, I don’t want to disturb . . .”

She made no reply, did not raise her eyes. She seemed to be waiting, with suppressed impatience, for him to enter. Once he had crossed the threshold, she let the door swing to behind him.

Mme. de Fontanin was sitting on the sofa at the far end of the room, with a young man in uniform beside her. A helmet and service belt lay on the floor near him.

"You!"

Daniel had risen to his feet, his eyes aglow with joy and wonder. Unmoving, he was staring at the new Jacques before him, the young man with the sturdy shoulders and resolute chin, so little like his boyhood friend. And Jacques, too, stood for a moment motionless, his eyes held by the tall young N.C.O., with bronzed cheeks and close-cropped hair, who at last began to move toward him stiffly, with an unexpected jingle of spurred boots. . . .

Daniel had taken his friend by the arm and was steering him toward his mother. Without betraying the least vexation or surprise, Mme. de Fontanin raised her weary eyes to Jacques, holding out her hand, and in a voice as listless as her gaze she said quietly, as though it were only a day since they last had met: "How do you do, Jacques?"

With that easy, slightly punctilious grace he had inherited from his father, Daniel bent toward Mme. de Fontanin. "If you'll excuse me, Mother dear, I'll go downstairs with Jacques for a moment. Sure you don't mind?"

A tremor passed through Jacques's body. He had recognized *his* Daniel, the Daniel of his youth, in his intonation, in the small, faintly embarrassed smile that screwed up the left corner of his lips, in the tender, respectful way he had of pronouncing "Mother dear," separating the syllables of the word "Mother."

Mme. de Fontanin nodded gently, casting an affectionate glance on the two young men. "Of course, my dear, go with your friend. There's nothing I need you for just now."

"Let's go to the garden," Daniel suggested, his hand still resting on Jacques's shoulder.

Quite unconsciously he had reverted to that habit of his boyhood, which their difference in stature still justified as much as ever. Daniel had always been taller than Jacques, and his uniform brought out his height. The slimness of his figure above the waist, in the dark, close-fitting tunic with the white collar, contrasted with the baggy red breeches and thick leggings that gave his limbs a disproportionate bulk. His hobnailed soles clanged on the tiled floor of the corridor, and the loud, martial footfalls seemed an outrage on the sleep-bound silence of the building. Uncomfortably aware of this, he refrained from speech as he walked toward the stairs, leaning on his friend to keep himself from slipping.

Jacques asked himself: “What about Jenny?” and once more he felt a sudden contraction of his throat that was like a spasm of fear. He kept his head high and his eyes fixed on the floor as he walked. When they came to the stairs, involuntarily he looked back and cast a questing glance along the empty corridor; a feeling of disappointment, touched with rancour, stole over him.

Daniel halted at the first step.

“So you’re staying in Paris?” The cheerful tone struck a contrast with the sadness of his look.

Jacques thought: “That means Jenny hasn’t mentioned me to him.”

“I should have left already,” he answered briskly. “I’m taking a train back tonight.” Daniel looked so crestfallen that Jacques made haste to add: “As a matter of fact I stayed on just to see you. I’ve got to be at Geneva tomorrow.”

Daniel gazed at him pensively; his eyes were full of silent interrogation. Why must Jacques be at Geneva? The mystery surrounding Jacques’s life irritated him, but, intimidated by his friend’s reserve, he dared not question him as yet. Without speaking, he took his hand from Jacques’s shoulder, grasped the banister, and began walking downstairs. All his joy had left him now. What was the use of this unlooked-for visit, which had kindled his desire for an exchange of confidences, if Jacques was going away and would be lost to him once more?

The garden, which had just been watered, was empty and softly sparkling under the glow of lamps dotted among the trees.

“Have a smoke?” Daniel suggested.

Taking his cigarette-case from his pocket, he eagerly lit a cigarette. For a moment the match-flame illumined his features. Their most striking change was that an open-air life in the Vosges had tanned his pale skin, which in the past had so noticeably contrasted with his dark eyes and hair and the slender line of his moustache.

Side by side, in silence, they turned into a winding path at the end of which stood a ring of white garden seats.

“Shall we sit here?” Daniel asked and, without waiting for an answer, dropped heavily into a chair. “I’m worn out. It was a perfectly frightful trip.” For some moments he could not shake off the memory of the day he had gone through in a jolting, stuffy railway-car, smoking cigarette after cigarette, his eyes fixed on the landscape scudding past and his mind trapped in a maze of conflicting—but all equally lugubrious—theories as to his father’s “accident,” while unforeseeable events were taking place in far-off

Paris. “Frightful!” he repeated. Then pointing with the red tip of his cigarette toward the window behind which his father lay dying, he added in a sombre voice: “It was bound to end that way, sooner or later.”

The clean, cool odour of freshly watered soil was rising from the flower-beds through the darkness, and now and then, soft as a warm breath, the night wind wafted to them a bitter-sweet aroma, like that of some pungent medicine, which came not from the dispensary but from a little Japanese varnish tree in a remote corner of the grounds.

Seeing Daniel in uniform beside him had revived Jacques’s haunting premonition of a coming war. “Did you have any trouble getting leave?” he asked.

“Not the slightest. Why?” When Jacques said nothing, he continued tranquilly: “They’ve given me four days, with the possibility of an extension. But that won’t be needed. Your brother, who was here when I arrived, told me quite frankly there isn’t any hope.”

He fell silent, then went on abruptly: “And it’s best so.” Again he pointed toward the building. “It’s a horrible thing to say, but, considering how things are, none of us dare hope that he will live.” His voice grew harsh. “Of course I know his death won’t mend matters, but anyhow it cuts short an episode in my father’s life that would have had dreadful consequences for Mother, for him, for all of us.” He turned slightly toward Jacques. “There was a warrant out for his arrest,” he added with a break in his voice, a rageful, rasping sob. Closing his eyes, Daniel leaned back in his chair. For a moment the gleam of a lamp lit up his handsome forehead, the upper line of which formed two white half-moons parted by a promontory of dark hair.

Jacques would have liked to put in some consoling word, but his lonely life and political associations had unfitted him for expansiveness. Still, he drew nearer Daniel and touched his arm. Under his palm he felt the rough texture of the tunic. A curious odour of wool, dubbing, and warm leather came from Daniel and, when he moved, mingled with the fragrance of the night-bound garden.

Four years had elapsed since Jacques had last met his friend.

Despite the letters that had passed between them after M. Thibault’s death, and despite Daniel’s repeated invitations, he had never brought himself to make the trip to Lunéville. He dreaded meeting Daniel face to face; in affectionate, if infrequent, correspondence it seemed to him their friendship, such as it now was, could best fulfil itself. There could be no question of its persistence and vitality; indeed, the only real attachments

Jacques had ever known were for Daniel and Antoine. But it was a heritage from the past, that past from which Jacques had deliberately cut adrift and of which he hated to be reminded.

"Aren't they talking about war, at Lunéville?" he asked, to break the silence.

Daniel betrayed no particular surprise. "About war? Of course. The officers are always gassing about it. It's their kind of shop-talk, of course. Why shouldn't they?" He smiled. "Personally, I add up the days. Seventy-three, no, seventy-two today, seventy-one tomorrow. That's all that matters. By the end of September I'll be through with it."

Just then another ray of light was playing on his head. No, Daniel had not changed much. In the flawless oval of his face, to which the perfect regularity of the features added a certain gravity (especially noticeable at times like this when grief and weariness had overcast them), his smile had still its radiance of the past—that slow, far-away smile which drew his upper lip askew, discovering a white gleam of teeth. A shy though somehow brazen smile. In the old days, as a boy, Jacques had never been able to help watching, with a peculiar thrill, for that irritating yet so captivating smile; and now again he felt a surge of warm emotion. But all he said was: "I suppose you find your life in barracks pretty awful."

"Oh, no! Not so bad as all that."

Their feeble attempts at conversation plumped into the silence like mooring-cables, flung from one ship to another, which splash a dozen times into the water before being caught and hauled aboard.

After a longish pause Daniel spoke again. "No, it's not too bad. At first, yes; the fatigues—latrine, stable-litter, and all the rest of 'em—were foul. But now I'm an N.C.O., it's better. I've made some quite decent friends among the men—not to mention the horses! When all's said and done, I don't regret the experience."

Jacques stared at him fixedly, and with such aloofness, such disdain, that Daniel was at the brink of flaring up. Jacques's stubbornness, his silences, even his questions, implied a sort of distant superiority that galled Daniel bitterly. Now, however, affection got the better of his anger. "The real barrier," he thought, "between myself and Jacques isn't the superficial clash of our personalities, which can easily be explained by the long break in our intimacy. No, it's my complete ignorance of so many things; a whole slice of his life is a sealed book to me. Yes, I've got to win his confidence. . . ."

He leaned forward suddenly and in a different tone, tenderly persuasive, that seemed to solicit all the affection Jacques could muster up, he murmured: “Jacques!”

Probably he hoped that would be enough to evoke a swift response, a heart-felt word, or at least a gesture of encouragement. But instinctively Jacques had shrunk away, as if determined to hold aloof.

Daniel decided to risk all in a direct question. “But do explain! What was it happened four years ago?”

“You know quite well.”

“No; I don’t. I’ve never understood. Why did you go away? Surely you might have trusted me with your secret, and let me know that you were going? And why leave me all those years without news of you?”

Jacques’s head was sunk between his shoulders, and he was gazing sullenly at Daniel. He made a gesture of discouragement.

“Oh, what’s the use of digging all that up again?”

Daniel placed his hand on Jacques’s wrist. “Jacques!” he said.

“No!”

“Why? Is it really ‘No’? Am I never, never to know what prompted you to do a thing like that?”

“Oh, stop!” Jacques freed his wrist impatiently.

Daniel said nothing and slowly drew himself erect.

“Some day . . . later on,” Jacques muttered with an apathy that seemed invincible and rendered all the more unexpected the sudden shrillness of his voice as he burst out ragefully: “ ‘A thing like that’! Really, one’d think that I’d committed a crime.” Without a pause he went on speaking. “For one thing, is there really all that need for ‘explanations’? Does it seem to you so perfectly incomprehensible that one fine day a man should want to break with everything? To escape, with no companion but himself? Do you mean to say you can’t understand that? That one shouldn’t indefinitely put up with being muzzled, mutilated? That, for once in a lifetime, a man should dare to be his very self? Should have the courage to dig down into the depths of his being, and unearth that part of him which has always been the least appreciated, the most scorned, and dare to say: ‘This is my truest self’? To shout to all the world: ‘I can do without you!’ No? Do you mean to say you can’t understand that?”

“Indeed, I do understand,” Daniel murmured. “I understand quite well.”

At first he had yielded unthinkingly to a subtle delectation, the thrill of listening to that masterful, high-strung, overemotional voice which made him feel he had regained the Jacques of former days. But after a while he had become convinced that there was something insincere in this tirade;

Jacques's outburst had been above all an evasion of the issue. And then he grew aware that never would Jacques broach the frank explanation that would clear things up between them. He must abandon hope of ever knowing the truth. Worse still, he must resign himself to losing that unique friendship of which he had been so proud. And with the vivid intuition of his loss, he felt a pang of grief. Another added to the many griefs assailing him that night. . . .

For some minutes they remained thus facing each other, without moving, without exchanging a word, even a glance. At last Daniel drew in his legs—he had kept them stretched out full length till now—and passed his hand over his forehead.

"Well, I'm afraid I must be going back there now." All the singing tone had left his voice.

"Yes." Jacques stood up at once. "I've got to be going, too."

Daniel, too, rose from his seat.

"Thanks for coming."

"Please ask your mother to forgive me for keeping you so long."

Each waited for the other to make the first move.

"What time's your train?" Daniel asked.

"Eleven-fifty."

"From the Gare de Lyon?"

"Yes."

"You'll take a taxi, I suppose?"

"Don't need it. There's a tram that goes there."

They fell silent, ashamed to hear themselves saying such things to each other.

"I'll come with you as far as the gate," Daniel said as they entered the drive.

They crossed the garden without exchanging another word.

As they reached the street a car stopped beside the entrance. A hatless young woman and an elderly man jumped out of it. Their faces expressed consternation. They hurried past the two young men, who followed them for a moment with their eyes—less out of curiosity than of compunction.

To cut short the leave-taking, Jacques held out his hand. Daniel gripped it without speaking. For an instant they gazed silently at each other. On Daniel's lips hovered a dim smile, which Jacques was almost too weary to reciprocate. But he walked through the gateway briskly enough, and crossed the wide, brightly lit sidewalk. Before starting across the street he looked back. Daniel had not moved. Jacques saw him wave his hand, then swing round and vanish among the shadows of the trees.

In the distance, across the leafage, shone a row of lighted windows . . . Jenny.

Then, without waiting for his tram, Jacques started off in the direction of Paris—of his train, of Geneva—almost at a run, as if death were at his heels.

PART

II

I

IN the large reception-room with the lacquer screens Mme. de Battaincourt sat waiting. (Antoine had forbidden Léon once for all to show any caller into his private study.) The windows were open. The July day was drawing to a sultry close. With a lithe movement of her shoulders Anne let fall her light evening wrap onto the back of the chair.

"The nasty man likes making us wait, doesn't he, Laddie?" she sighed.

The Pekinese, a small sandy blur of silken fluff lazily curled up on the carpet, feebly pricked his ears. Anne had bought him as far back as the 1900 Exhibition and, for all his decrepitude and surliness, she still persisted in taking the grotesque little creature with her everywhere she went.

Of a sudden Laddie raised his head; his mistress followed suit. Both had recognized Antoine's rapid stride and his brisk way of opening and closing doors.

When he entered he was wearing the preoccupied look of the busy doctor. His lips lightly brushed Anne's hair, then slipped down to her nape, making her shudder deliciously. Raising both arms, she slowly passed her fingers over the high-domed, handsome forehead, the firm line of his eyebrows, then softly stroked his cheeks. For a moment she cupped with her hands his under-jaw, the sturdy Thibault chin that she loved and feared at the same time. At last she looked up and rose to her feet, smiling to him.

"Do *look* at me, Tony! Yes, your eyes are on me, but that doesn't mean you see me. I hate that high-and-mighty air."

He took her by the shoulders and held her in front of him, pressing his fingers on her shoulder-blades. Then, still holding her, he moved back a little and swept her body with a possessive gaze from head to foot. What had most of all drawn him to Anne was not so much the beauty that still was hers as that she was so obviously a woman made for love.

She yielded herself to his scrutiny, gazing at him with eyes aglow with pleasure and vitality.

"I'll make a quick change, and be with you in a jiffy," he said, pressing her gently back into the chair.

Nowadays he dressed for dinner so often that five or ten minutes were enough for the entire ritual—shave, shower, getting into a stiff shirt, white waistcoat, and the rest of it. All had been laid out in readiness, and Léon handed the garments to him one by one, with downcast eyes and naïvely priestlike gestures.

“My straw hat and motoring gloves,” he murmured.

Before leaving the room he cast a quick, comprehensive glance at the mirror and pulled down his cuffs. It was only quite recently that he had learned not to disdain the little increment of comfort and content which comes from fine linen, a crisp collar, well-tailored clothes. He had come to regard the relaxation of a rather extravagant “night out” as no more than his due after a hard day’s work, and, indeed, a good thing for his health; and he liked to have Anne share it with him—though he was quite capable on occasion of enjoying himself alone.

“Where are you taking me to dine tonight?” Anne asked as Antoine slipped her cloak around her shoulders after lightly kissing her bare neck. “It’s much too stuffy in Paris,” she continued. “What about going to Prat’s, at Marly? Or how about the Coq? It’s more cheerful, isn’t it?”

“Rather far out, don’t you think?”

“That doesn’t matter. And, anyhow, the road beyond Versailles has just been repaired.”

She had a way of her own of murmuring: “Shall we go there?” or “What do you say to this?” with a little dying fall in her voice and a languid, appealing look in her eyes. Light-heartedly she would propose the most fantastic expeditions without a thought for the distance or the lateness of the hour, for Antoine’s possible fatigue or preferences—still less for the cost her caprices might involve.

“Right! We’ll make it the Coq,” Antoine cheerfully assented. “Up with you, Laddie!” Stooping, he picked up the little dog and opened the door for Anne.

She halted in the doorway; the night-blue cloak, ivory-white dress, and a black lacquer screen behind her composed a perfect setting for the soft, dusky lustre of her skin. Turning, she enveloped him with a fond, all-revealing look, whispering “My Tony” so quietly that it seemed the words were not for him.

“Let’s be off!” he said.

“Yes, I suppose we must,” she sighed, as if their choice of a restaurant thirty miles from Paris had been a weak concession to her despot’s whim. And with her head high, with lithe, long steps, to a low rustle of silken flounces, she gaily crossed the threshold.

“When you start walking,” Antoine murmured in her ear, “I always think of a splendid ship putting out to sea.”

Though his car was powerful and pleasant to handle, Antoine had lost interest in driving. But he knew that Anne liked nothing better than such evening jaunts together, without the chauffeur.

The sun had set, but the heat was still oppressive. Crossing the Bois, Antoine took the smaller, unfrequented byways ribboning the forest. The windows of the car were open and warm breezes poured in, laden with woodland odours.

Anne was chattering away and, telling of her last stay at Berck, began talking about her husband—a thing she rarely did. "Just think, he didn't want me to leave. He was simply beastly about it; why, he even started threatening me. Still, he drove me to the station—looking like a martyr, though. When he was standing on the platform, just before the train went, what do you think he had the nerve to say to me? 'So you'll never change?' I looked down at him from the car window. 'No,' I said—and I said it pretty venomously, take my word for it! And it's quite true, I shall never change. I loathe him, and there's nothing to be done about it."

Antoine smiled. He rather enjoyed seeing her in a temper, and had told her once: "I like it when that murder light comes into your eye." And now a memory came back to him of de Battaincourt, her husband, the friend of Daniel and Jacques, with his deerlike nose and tow hair, his listless, mildly bored manner—rather a poisonous chap, in fact.

"And I once was really keen on that fool—imagine it!" Anne said. "Perhaps just for that reason."

"What reason?"

"Because he was so stupid. Because he'd had so few adventures. That struck me then as quite refreshing, it was such a change. Like starting life all over again. Goodness, what silly things one does!"

She remembered her resolve to talk oftener about herself, her past life. Now or never was the moment. She settled herself comfortably on the seat, rested her head on Antoine's shoulder, and, gazing vaguely at the road in front, let memory take charge.

"I used to see him sometimes in Touraine, at meets. I'd often noticed him looking in my direction, but he never said a word to me. Then one evening when I was driving home through the woods, I saw him on the road—he was on foot. For some reason I was alone. I stopped the car and offered to give him a lift to Tours. He went crimson, and got in without saying anything. It was getting dark. Suddenly, just before we'd reached the toll-gate . . ."

Antoine listened with half an ear, his attention fixed on the road ahead, on the rhythm of the engine. “Yes,” he mused, “Anne will love other men after me; will follow her appointed path.” He had no illusions as to the impermanence of their liaison. “It’s curious how I’ve always been drawn to women of that sort, strongly sexed women who’ve scrapped convention.” He had sometimes wondered whether this passionate companionship which was all he wanted from his mistresses were not a rather imperfect form of love. The second-best, perhaps. Hadn’t Studler said to him only the other day: “You confuse lust with love”? Well, imperfect or not, that form of love was his, and it suited him. For it made no inroads on his life as a hard-working man of science determined to let nothing in the world come between him and his vocation. In the course of that talk with Studler, the Caliph had quoted the words of a young writer named Péguy whom he knew: “To love is to declare the one you love is in the right, even when he or she is wrong.” A hard saying, and Antoine had rebelled indignantly against it. Love of that kind, such all-consuming, infatuated, brain-destroying love, always inspired him with horror and amaze, even with a certain disgust. . . .

They had come to the bridge over the Seine, after crossing which the car took the steep Suresnes hill at an effortless thirty.

Suddenly Anne raised her right arm and pointed. “There’s a little inn down there where they have wonderful fish and chips.”

The inn in question was the one where Delorme had always used to take her. He was a former medical student who had opened a drug-store in the western suburbs and for several years, until the previous winter—until, that is, Anne had succeeded in breaking herself of the drug-habit—had recompensed the favours of this heaven-sent mistress by keeping her supplied with morphine. Fearing Antoine might put a question, she forced herself to laugh.

“It’s worth visiting, if only to see the woman who runs it. A fat old dame with her hair always in curlers and her stockings concertinaing round her ankles. Personally, I’d rather go barelegged than have my stockings sag like that. Don’t you agree?”

“We’ll go there some Sunday,” Antoine suggested.

“No, not a Sunday. You know how I loathe Sundays. Everywhere such beastly crowds of people—who call it their ‘day of rest’!”

“Yes,” Antoine said ironically. “It’s a blessing, obviously, that six days out of seven everyone else is at work.”

She did not catch the mockery in his tone and began laughing again.

" 'Curlers'! I love that word. It sounds so quaintly comic, doesn't it? I might call my next dog 'Curler.' . . . Only I'll never have another dog." Her voice grew earnest. "When Laddie's quite old I'll poison him. And I'll never replace him."

Antoine smiled and said without turning toward her: "What? You'd have the heart to poison Laddie?"

"Yes." Her tone was firm. "But only when he's quite, quite old and doddering."

Antoine gave her a quick, keen glance. He was aware of certain ugly rumours that had circulated after old Goupillot's death. Now and again they crossed his mind; usually he laughed them off. But there were times when Anne inspired him with something like horror, when he thought, as now: "She'd stick at nothing—even at poisoning a husband who'd grown 'quite, quite old and doddering'!"

"How'd you set about it?" he asked. "Strychnine? Cyanide?"

"No, I'd use one of the veronal group. Didial's the best. Only it's on the list; one has to have a prescription. We'll have to manage with common or garden dial. That do you, Laddie?"

Antoine's laugh was rather forced. "It's not so easy as all that, hitting the right dose. A gramme or two too little or too much, and you botch everything."

"A gramme or two? For a dog that doesn't weigh six pounds? You're clear off the mark, doctor." After working it out rapidly in her head she said calmly: "No, for Laddie twenty-five centigrammes of dial, twenty-eight at most, would do the trick."

She fell silent. He said nothing, either, but their thoughts were evidently following different roads, for presently she added in a low tone: "I'll never have another dog. Never. Does that surprise you?" She pressed herself against his shoulder once more. "Because you know, Tony, I'm quite capable of being loyal. Yes, really faithful."

The car slowed down for a sharp turn, followed by a grade crossing.

A vague smile hovered on Anne's lips; she was gazing at the road in front. "Really and truly, Tony dear, I was born to be a woman with one great love, one only in her life. It's not my fault if I've lived—as I have lived. And yet"—her voice grew emphatic—"there's one thing I can truly say: I've never lowered myself." She spoke in all sincerity; she had forgotten about Delorme. "And I regret nothing," she added after a pause.

For a while she kept silent, her forehead nestling on Antoine's shoulder, her eyes fixed on the shadowy depths of the forest and the dancing clouds of midges lit up by the headlights.

Then, “It’s curious,” she said. “The happier I am, the less I feel self-centred. There are times when I’d love, oh, how I’d love, to be able to dedicate my life to somebody, or something!”

He was amazed by the emotion in her voice; he knew she was sincere, that her social position and her wealth—the reward of fifteen years’ methodical scheming—had brought her neither peace of mind nor happiness.

She sighed. “Next winter, you know, I’ve quite decided to start a new life—a life that’s worth while, serves some purpose. And I want you to help me in it, Tony dear. Will you?”

This was a pet idea of hers, of which she often spoke to Antoine. And he, too, judged her not incapable of changing her way of living. With all her faults, she had sterling qualities: an alert, practical mind and an indomitable tenacity of purpose. But to persevere and to achieve her object, he well knew that she heeded someone to play the guardian angel to her, and palliate her failings—someone like himself. He had been able to gauge his influence over her during the previous winter when he had made up his mind to break her of the drug-habit. He had persuaded her to undergo a two-month treatment at an institution near Paris; the treatment had been drastic and it had left her in a state of collapse, but definitely cured.

It was certain that, would he but take the pains to see it through, he could direct the store of latent energy in Anne to worthy ends. At a sign from him all her future might be transformed. But he was quite determined not to give that sign. Only too clearly he foresaw all the new, time-devouring responsibilities that would be his, were he to play the rescuer’s part. Every act commits its doer; most of all an act of generosity. And Antoine had the course of his own life to steer, his freedom to safeguard. On that point he was inflexible. Yet every time he thought of it he had an uneasy feeling—as if he were deliberately turning away so as not to see the hand of a drowning woman beckoning in a vain appeal. . . .

That night, as it so happened, the Coq d’Argent was almost empty.

When the car stopped, *maître d’hôtel*, waiters, and wine-waiter flocked forth to greet these two belated patrons and deferentially escorted them round the garden restaurant. Hidden behind shrubbery, a small string orchestra broke into discreetly muted music. Everyone seemed contributing to a well-composed stage-effect, and even Antoine, as he followed Anne across the garden, walked with the studied ease of a star actor making his entrance in a play that he knows well.

The tables were tactfully isolated from each other by privet hedges and flowers on stands. When at last Anne fixed on a table, her first move was to install her little dog on a cushion that the proprietor smilingly placed on the ground beside her. It was a pink cushion, for everything at the Coq was pink, from the begonias in the flower-beds to the tablecloths, the sunshades, and the lanterns hanging from the trees.

Before taking her seat, Anne studied the menu methodically, for she liked to affect an expert interest in food. Attended by his minions, the headwaiter stood by, a pencil to his lips, silently attentive. Anne turned to Antoine and with an ungloved finger pointed to certain items. She believed, and with some reason, that he was jealous of his prerogatives and would not wish her to address herself directly to any of the waiters in attendance.

Antoine gave the order in the firm if genial tones he employed on such occasions. The headwaiter took down his instructions with little gestures of approval and respect. Antoine watched him write. The obsequious manners of the staff pleased him and he was not far from believing, ingenuously enough, that they actually liked him. “After all,” he thought, “why shouldn’t they?”

“Oh, what a darling little kitten!” Anne exclaimed, pointing to a small black imp of mischief that had just sprung onto the buffet and that the waiters were trying to dislodge with scandalized flicks of their napkins. It was a six-week-old kitten, soot-black, with curiously vivid green eyes deep-set in an enormous head; the little belly was distended, though the animal looked half-starved.

Anne picked it up with both hands and, laughing, held it to her cheek.

Antoine smiled, but he felt slightly irritated.

“Do put it down, Anne. It’s a mass of fleas. And you’ll get yourself scratched.”

“No, you’re not a mass of fleas, are you, pussykins?” Anne hugged the dirty little creature to her breast and began stroking its head with her chin. “Did you ever see such a tummy! Like a little football, isn’t it? And the size of his head! He looks like an onion that’s sprouting—ever notice, Tony, the funny faces onions make when they’re starting to sprout?”

Mastering his impatience, Antoine laughed—rather constrainedly. It was so rare for him to laugh that he heard himself now with surprise, and suddenly was struck by a peculiar quality in his laugh. “Good Lord,” he thought, with a curious discomfiture, “the way I laughed just then sounded exactly like Father!” Antoine had never paid heed to M. Thibault’s laugh during his lifetime, and suddenly, amazingly, tonight he heard it again, coming from his own mouth!

Anne was trying to force the ugly little animal to stay on her lap—with dire results for her silk skirt. “Naughty pussykins!” She seemed enchanted by its “naughtiness.” “Now purr, you little devil! . . . There you are, he’s purring! He understood me. I’m sure he has a soul,” she added in all seriousness. “Tony dear, do please buy him for me. He’ll be our mascot. As long as we have him, he’ll keep bad luck away from us.”

“There you are!” Antoine grinned. “Now will you dare to tell me that you’re not superstitious?”

He had already teased her on that score. She had confessed to him that some nights when she went up to her room and, feeling restless, could not bring herself to go to bed—because she had a premonition of misfortune—she would take from the drawer in which she kept the relics of her past a shabby old fortune-telling manual and tell her fortune by the cards till she dropped asleep.

“You’re right,” she said abruptly. “I’m talking nonsense.”

She released the cat; it sprang away rather clumsily and slunk into the bushes. After making sure they were alone, she gazed deeply into Antoine’s eyes and whispered: “Yes, do lecture me—I adore it. I’ll attend to every word. I’ll mend my ways. And I’ll become the woman you want me to be.”

It struck him that perhaps she loved him more than he would have wished. Smiling, he signed to her to drink her soup, and she obeyed him like a child, her eyes fixed on the plate.

Then she began speaking of quite different matters—of the summer holidays which she had decided to spend in Paris so as not to be away from Antoine; of the sensational murder-case, in which politics and passion played equal parts, details of which had been filling several columns of the papers for some days past.

“What a nerve she had! How I’d love to do something like that! For you, Tony. Kill someone who wanted to injure you.” In the distance the two violins, alto and ’cello, began to play a minuet. For a while she seemed lost in dreams. Then she added, in a vibrant undertone, like a caress: “To kill—for love!”

“Well, you have the right appearance for that sort of thing.” Antoine smiled.

She was about to reply when the headwaiter came up carrying a large silver dish exhaling savoury fumes of *salmis*; before carving the pigeons it contained, he reverently presented it for her inspection.

Antoine observed that tears were trembling on her eyelashes, and threw her a questioning glance. Unintentionally, had he wounded her?

“That’s perhaps truer than you think,” she sighed, without looking toward him and in such a puzzling tone that he could not help thinking once again of Goupillot’s end.

“How do you mean, ‘truer’?” He could not conceal his curiosity.

Struck by his tone, she looked up and caught a curious gleam in his eye, which baffled her at first. Then suddenly she recalled their talk about poisons, and Antoine’s questions. She was well aware of the suspicion that had fixed on her after her husband’s death; a local paper had actually published an attack on her in scantily veiled terms. The effect had been definitely to establish in the region the legend of an old multimillionaire kept prisoner in his château by a young adventuress whom he had married late in life, and of the old man’s death one night under circumstances which had never been cleared up.

Steadying his voice, Antoine repeated: “How do you mean, ‘truer’?”

“I mean that I’ve the face of a melodrama heroine,” she replied in a calm voice, not wishing to let him see that she had guessed his thought. She had taken a small mirror from her bag and was inspecting herself in it with seeming carelessness. “Look! Is that the face of someone destined to die tamely in a bed? No, I’ll come to a dramatic end, you’ll see. One morning I’ll be found lying on my bedroom floor, stabbed to death. Stark naked—on the carpet—a stiletto in my heart. Haven’t you noticed that women called Anne, in books, always die that way? Do you know”—her eyes were still intent on her reflected self—“I simply hate the thought of looking ugly when I’m dead! There’s something so ghastly about the white lips of corpses. I want my lips and face to be made up nicely; as a matter of fact I’ve mentioned it in my will.”

She was speaking more quickly than was her wont and lisping a little, as was her way when feeling ill at ease. With a corner of her handkerchief she dried the tears still lingering on her cheeks, and stowed away puff, handkerchief, and mirror in her bag.

“To tell the truth,” she confessed, and now a slightly vulgar accent crept into the deep, melodious voice, “I don’t really mind having the face of a melodrama heroine.”

She turned toward him and saw that he was still watching her furtively. Then a slow smile crept to her lips and she seemed to come to a decision. “Still, my appearance has played me some nasty tricks,” she sighed. “Do you know, some people think I poisoned my first husband?”

For a split second Antoine hesitated; his eyelids fluttered, then he murmured: “Yes, I know.”

She rested her elbows on the table and, as her eyes sank deep into her lover’s, she said in a calm, deliberate voice: “And do you think me capable of that?”

For all the bravado of her tone; her eyes would not meet his, and again she gazed straight in front of her.

“Why not?” he asked, half bantering, half in earnest.

For some moments she stared pensively at the tablecloth. The thought that uncertainty might give a fillip to Antoine’s feelings for her crossed her mind; she was almost tempted to leave him with his doubts. But no sooner had she raised her eyes and looked at him than the temptation left her.

“No,” she said harshly. “The facts aren’t so—so romantic. As chance would have it, I was alone with Goupillot on the night he died. But he died a natural death—I had nothing whatever to do with it.”

Antoine’s silence, the way he was listening, seemed to imply he expected further details. She pushed her plate away, untouched, and took a cigarette from her bag; Antoine let her light it herself, without a movement. It was one of the special “tea-leaf” cigarettes that were supplied her from New York and gave off a heady, acrid aroma of burnt herbs. She took two or three puffs, leisurely breathed forth the smoke, then murmured: “Are you really interested in all that old gossip?”

“Yes,” Antoine answered, a shade too soon, too eagerly.

Smiling, she made a little, graceful movement as if to wave away a childish importunity.

Meanwhile Antoine’s thoughts were wandering far afield. A remark of Anne’s came back to him: “To keep my end up in life, I’ve developed such a habit of lying that if you catch me telling you a lie some day, you mustn’t get vexed—but just point it out to me at once!” In the present instance he hardly knew what to think, for, on occasion, to serve her ends (as he was well aware), Anne could assume an air of injured innocence that was highly disconcerting. . . .

“No! Do you want to choke him? Really you should know better than to give him bones!”

A young waiter had just placed a bowl in front of Laddie’s cushion and, through excess of zeal, was about to add the pigeons’ carcasses.

The headwaiter bustled up. “Anything you desire, Madame?”

“Nothing, thank you,” Antoine said curtly; he was feeling annoyed.

The Pekinese had struggled to his feet and was inspecting the contents of the bowl. He stretched himself, shook his ears and sniffed fretfully, then raised his little black snub-nose toward his mistress with a mournful air.

Anne looked down at him. “What’s the trouble, Laddiekins?”

The *maître d’hôtel* echoed: “What’s the trouble, Lady King?”

“Show me that,” Anne said, rapping the bowl with her knuckles. “Why, good heavens, it’s stone-cold! I told you, some warm hash. No fat,” she added severely, pointing to a small greasy morsel. “Some rice, carrots, and a little meat minced fine. There’s nothing very complicated about that, surely!”

“Take it away!” the *maître d’hôtel* commanded.

The young waiter picked up the bowl, stared for a moment at its contents, then started back submissively to the kitchen. But before turning he shot a quick glance at the table—a glance that Antoine intercepted.

Once they were alone again, Antoine turned to Anne.

“Really, darling, don’t you think Master Laddie’s a bit too fussy about his grub?”

“That waiter’s a born idiot!” Anne broke in pettishly. “Did you see the way he stood there gaping at that bowl?”

“Perhaps”—Antoine’s voice was gentle—“just then he was thinking that in some garret in the suburbs his wife and kids were at that very moment sitting down to——”

Impulsively Anne’s fingers, warm, emotional, closed on his. “Yes, yes, Tony darling!” she broke in eagerly. “I see what you mean. It’s awful to think of. Only—you wouldn’t like Laddie to get ill, would you?” She seemed genuinely perplexed. “Why are you laughing? Look here, Tony, we really must give the poor fellow a tip—a special one for him. Quite a big tip—with Laddie’s compliments.”

For some moments she was lost in thought. “Just fancy!” she suddenly exclaimed. “My brother, too, started life as a waiter. At a little restaurant in the suburbs.”

“I didn’t know you had a brother,” Antoine remarked. His tone and expression seemed to imply: “Of course, I really know next to nothing about you!”

“Oh, he’s far away . . . if he’s still alive. He enlisted in a colonial regiment and went to Indo-China. He must have settled down over there; I’ve never had a line from him.” Gradually she had lowered her tone, always most emotive in its lowest range. “It’s absurd—I could so easily have helped him.” She fell silent again.

A pause came in their conversation; then Antoine returned to the attack. “So you weren’t there when he died?”

“Who do you mean?” Her lashes fluttered; she could not account for his persistence. Still it gave her a certain satisfaction, feeling Antoine so absorbed in her past life.

Suddenly she burst out laughing—a quite unexpected, gay, revealing laugh.

“Just fancy, the silliest thing is that I was accused of something I hadn’t done, and most likely I’d never have had the pluck to do—and no one ever suspected me of the ‘crime’ I’d really committed. I’ll tell you what it was. I didn’t feel at all easy about Goupillot’s will. So, during those last two years when he was in his dotage, I coolly transferred to myself a goodish slice of his fortune, after extracting a power of attorney from him, with the help of a Beauvais lawyer. Quite needlessly, as it turned out. The will was entirely in my favour and only left Huguette the share she was entitled to by law. But, after those seven years of hell, I guessed I had the right to help myself.” She ceased laughing, and her voice grew tender. “And you, Tony, are the first person whom I’ve ever told that to.”

She shivered a little.

“Feeling cold?” Antoine looked round for her cloak. It was late and there was a slight chill in the night air.

“No, I’m thirsty.” She held her glass toward the ice-pail.

He filled the glass with champagne and she drank eagerly, then lit another of her scented cigarettes, and, rising, drew her cloak round her shoulders; As she sat down she pulled her chair nearer Antoine’s. “Listen!” she said.

Moths were fluttering round the lanterns; there was a patter of tiny wings upon the sunshades over the tables. The orchestra had ceased playing and behind most of the windows of the hostelry the lights were out.

“It’s nice here,” she said, with a fond glance at her lover, “but I know somewhere where it would be even nicer!”

As he said nothing, taking his hand, she laid it palm upward on the tablecloth. He thought she was going to read its “lines.”

With a hasty “No!” he tried to free his hand. He had no patience with predictions of this sort; even the handsomest seemed so tame beside the future he had mapped out for himself.

"How silly you are!" she laughed, without releasing his wrist. "Look, this is what I want to do!" Bending quickly forward, she pressed her lips to his palm and kept them there for some moments.

With the other hand he gently stroked the small bowed head, inwardly contrasting the blind passion that was hers for him with the strict measure of his love for her.

Just then, as if she had read his thoughts, Anne raised her head a little. "I don't expect you to love me as I love you," she said. "All I ask is for you to let me love you."

II

VANHEEDE, who intended to go out, was busy making his morning cup of coffee on his oil-stove when there was a knock at the door. Jacques had come straight to him, without calling in at his own room first.

"What's the latest at Geneva?" he cheerfully inquired, as he deposited his valise on the floor.

At the far end of the room the little albino screwed up his eyes, peering at his visitor, whom he had recognized by his voice. "So you're back already, Baulthy?"

He walked toward Jacques, his doll-like hands extended, and, after a close inspection of his friend, remarked: "You're looking fit."

"Yes," Jacques agreed. "I'm in good form today."

And so it was, for, unexpectedly enough, his night in the train had been not merely restful; it had been a liberation. He had had the car to himself, had lain down and fallen asleep almost at once, and, on wakening at Culoz, had felt refreshed, zestful, indeed quite exceptionally happy, as if some weight—he knew not what—had been taken off his mind. As at the open window he drew deep breaths of the brisk morning air and watched the early sunbeams sweep the last shreds of night mist from the depths of the valleys, he had pored upon himself, trying to analyse the secret joy that flooded all his being. "At last," he thought, "we've something definite to aim at; the days of racking our brains with theories and points of dogma are over. The time has come for direct action—war against war.”

He had no illusions as to the gravity of the situation; the moment was, he knew, supremely critical. But when he took stock of the impressions he had gleaned at Paris, the strong position taken up by the French Socialists, the unanimity of the leaders grouped round Jaurès and heartened by his pugnacious optimism, the *entente* which seemed in the making between the Socialist Party programme and that of the trade unions—everything tended to confirm his faith in the indomitable efficacy of the Socialist International.

“Sit down on the bed.” Vanheede straightened out the crumpled sheets. “You’ll have a cup of coffee with me, won’t you, Baulthy?” (He had never brought himself to call Jacques by his Christian name.) “So all went well? Tell me about it. How are they taking it over there?”

“In Paris? Well, that depends on whom you mean. In the general public no one knows, so no one worries. It’s appalling! The papers talk of nothing but the Caillaux case, Poincaré’s triumphal reception in Russia, and—the vacations! It’s believed that the French press has been given orders: public interest is to be switched off the trouble in the Balkans so as not to make things harder for the diplomats to straighten out. But the Party’s feverishly active and, really, they seem to be getting excellent results. The plan for a general strike has been definitely put in the forefront of their programme. It will be the platform of the French delegates at the Vienna Congress. Obviously the doubtful point is the line the Social-Democrats intend to take; they’ve agreed in principle to consider the proposal again. But one can’t be sure.”

“Any news from Austria?” Vanheede put down the glass containing his coffee among the books strewn on the bedside table.

“Yes. Pretty good news, if true. Yesterday night at the *Humanité* office they seemed sure the Austrian note to Servia would not have an aggressive character.”

“Listen, Baulthy,” Vanheede suddenly blurted out, “I’m so glad you’re back, it does me good to see you.” Smiling to excuse his warmth, he went on at once. “Bühlmann’s been here. He told us a story that comes from the Chancellery at Vienna, a story which goes to prove, on the contrary, that Austria has perfectly fiendish intentions and it’s all been planned in advance. . . . Yes, the whole world’s gone rotten!” he added gloomily.

“Tell me about it, old man.” In Jacques’s tone there was less curiosity than cordiality and affection. Evidently Vanheede noticed this, for, smiling, he came and sat beside Jacques on the bed.

“What he said was that the doctors called in to attend Franz Josef discovered that he was suffering from an incurable throat disease—so acute that the old Emperor will die before the year is out.”

“In that case R.I.P. for Franz Josef!” For the moment Jacques was not inclined to take a tragic view of things. He had wound his handkerchief round the glass so as not to burn his fingers and was sipping the syrupy mixture brewed by Vanheede. Over the rim of the glass his eyes shot a friendly but incredulous glance at the albino’s pale face and unruly shock of hair.

“Wait a moment!” Vanheede said. “I’m coming to the interesting part of it. The doctors’ diagnosis was transmitted at once to the Chancellor. Berchtold, it seems, forthwith summoned to his country house the various political leaders, for a secret conference, a sort of Cabinet Council.”

“Did he now!” Jacques chuckled.

“At that meeting, it seems, the gentlemen present—among them Tisza, Forgach, and Hötzendorf, the Chief of Staff—argued on the following lines.... In the prevailing state of home affairs, the Emperor’s death was bound to plunge the country into chaos. Even if the Dual Monarchy weathered the storm, Austria would be hamstrung for some time to come. She would have to postpone indefinitely the reduction of Servia; and to ensure the future of the Empire the reduction of Servia was indispensable. What was to be done?”

Jacques had been listening with growing attention. “Why, launch the attack on Servia at an early date, before the old man’s death—I suppose?”

“Exactly. But some go further still....”

As Jacques watched Vanheede talking, he was struck once again by the contrast between the fragile form, the young seraphic face, like a blind angel’s, and the stubborn force, the hard core of resolve behind that seeming blandness. “A strange little fellow!” He smiled to himself. He remembered occasions when, on Sundays, at one or another of the little inns beside the lake, he and his friends had engaged in heated political discussions and suddenly Vanheede had jumped up, muttering: “Everything’s foul, the world is rotten!” run off into the garden like a child, hopped onto the swing, and started swinging.

“Some go further still,” Vanheede went on in his high-pitched voice. “They say that the Sarajevo crime was arranged for by *agents provocateurs* in Berchtold’s pay, to create the necessary pretext. Thereby, according to them, Berchtold killed two birds with one stone: he got out of the way an inconvenient, too peace-loving heir to the throne, and at the same time made it possible to start a war on Servia before the Emperor's death."

Jacques laughed. "That's a good blood-and-thunder yarn you're telling!"

"Don't you believe it, Baulthy?"

"Well," Jacques replied in a serious tone, "I'm quite ready to believe that an ambitious man whose nature has been warped by a political career will stick at nothing, absolutely nothing, once he feels that he has all the power in his hands. History is one long record of such men's deeds. But I believe in something else, old man—that the most Machiavellian schemes will 'gang agley' when they come up against the will-to-peace of the masses."

"Do you think the Pilot shares your view?" Vanheede asked, shaking his head dubiously.

Jacques cast him a questioning look.

"I don't mean to say," the little Belgian went on rather uncomfortably, "that the Pilot says the opposite. Oh, no! But one always gets an impression that he doesn't really believe the masses will make a determined stand or are really bent on peace."

A shadow fell on Jacques's face. He knew well how Meynestrel's views differed from his own; but the thought was a distasteful one, and instinctively he brushed it aside.

"I assure you, Vanheede, that the desire for peace I spoke of is a very real thing," he said emphatically. "I've just come back from Paris and I'm full of confidence. At the present moment, not only in France but throughout Europe, there aren't ten per cent—no, not even five per cent—of the men who might be called up for service who'd approve of being drawn into a war."

"But the remaining ninety-five, Baulthy, aren't they just meek, sheep-like creatures who . . . ?"

"Certainly. But suppose that among those ninety-five there are a dozen, even half a dozen, who realize the danger and refuse to be coerced? They'd constitute a whole army of recalcitrants for the various governments to reckon with. It's those six men in every hundred or so whom we must organize. It's perfectly feasible. In fact, it's just what all the revolutionaries in Europe are working for at present."

He rose from the bed. "What's the time?" he asked, glancing at his wrist. "I must go and see Meynestrel now."

"Not this morning," Vanheede said. "He's gone to Lausanne with Richardley, in a car."

“Damn! . . . Quite sure?”

“He had an appointment there at nine, about the Congress. They won’t be back till noon.”

“All right, I’ll wait till then.” Jacques looked annoyed. “What are you doing this morning?”

“I’d meant to go the Library, but——”

“Come with me to Saffrio’s place; we’ll talk on the way. I’ve a letter to deliver to him. I met Negretto in Paris.” He picked up his valise and walked to the door. “Got to have a shave. Call for me in ten minutes, on your way down.”

Saffrio lived in a small two-story house in the Rue de la Pélisserie near the Cathedral; the entire ground floor was occupied by his shop.

Little was known of Saffrio’s past. His good humour and well-known readiness to oblige had won him general regard. He had been a registered member of the Italian Socialist Party before coming to Switzerland and had kept a drug-store in Geneva for seven years. He had left Italy as a result of “trouble with his wife,” of which he often spoke but always in the vaguest terms, and which had brought him, some alleged, to the point of murder.

The shop was empty when Jacques and Vanheede entered. As the door-bell chimed, Saffrio appeared at the back entrance; his handsome southern eyes lit up on seeing them.

“*Buon giorno!*” Beaming, he wagged his head, gestured with his arms, rolled his lopsided shoulders, with the airs and graces of an Italian innkeeper welcoming a customer. “I’ve two of my countrymen down there,” he breathed in Jacques’s ear. “Come!”

He was always prepared to shelter Italian refugees against whom the Swiss government had passed deportation orders. As a general rule the Geneva police were easy-going enough, but now and again a wave of zeal came over them, as inopportune as it was brief, involving the expulsion from Swiss territory of all foreign revolutionaries whose papers were not in order. The cleaning-up process lasted a week or so, during which its victims usually did no more than quit their lodgings and lie low in some friend’s home till the danger had blown over and the sky was clear again. Saffrio specialized in this form of hospitality.

Jacques and Vanheede followed him across the shop.

The door at the back of it opened into a narrow kitchen behind which there was a larger room formerly used as a larder. It had a close resemblance to a dungeon; the roof was vaulted, and high in the wall a small barred window giving on an empty courtyard let in a feeble light. But it was admirably fitted for a hiding-place and, as it could accommodate a fair number of people, Meynestrel sometimes used it for small private meetings. One wall was taken up by shelves piled up with utensils discarded from the shop: unserviceable mortars, bottles, empty jars. A framed portrait of Karl Marx lorded it on the top shelf; the glass was cracked and grey with dust.

Two Italians were in this cell-like room. One, a quite young man in tattered garments, was sitting at a table. Before him was a dish of cold macaroni and tomatoes which he was scooping up with the point of a knife onto a slice of bread. He looked up at the intruders, then continued eating; his eyes had the gentle sadness of a wounded animal's.

The other man, older and better dressed, was standing, holding a sheaf of documents. He came forward to greet the visitors. Jacques had met him already at Berlin; he was an Italian newspaperman named Remo Tutti. There was something rather effeminate about the little man, but his eyes were keen, sparkling with intelligence.

Saffrio pointed to Tutti. "Remo got here from Livorno yesterday."

"I've just come from Paris," Jacques said to Saffrio, taking a letter from his pocketbook. "Guess whom I ran across there and who gave me this letter!"

The Italian snatched at the letter with a cry of joy: "Negretto!"

Jacques sat down, turning to Tutti. "Negretto tells me that under colour of army manœuvres 80,000 reservists have been called up and equipped during the last fortnight. Is that so?"

"Not more than 55 or 60,000 anyhow. *Si.* But what Negretto may not know is that there's been serious trouble in the army. Especially in the northern garrisons. Any number of mutinies! The General Staff can't cope with the situation. They've practically had to give up court-martialling the men."

Vanheede's piping voice rose in the silence. "You see! Disobedience is enough. No violence. And then we'll have an end of bloodshed on the earth."

Everyone—except Vanheede—smiled. Blushing, the little albino locked his hands and said no more.

"You think, then," Jacques said, "that in the event of general mobilization there'd be trouble?"

"Not the faintest doubt," Tutti replied emphatically.

Saffrio's nose bobbed up from the letter he was reading. "In my country when the militarists try their little games, everybody—Socialist or not—

joins up against them."

"We," Tutti explained, "have an advantage over you; we have experience. The Tripoli campaign is still fresh in our memories. Our people have been through the mill; they know what it can cost, letting the army take control. I'm not thinking only of the sufferings of the poor fellows at the front, but of the rot that immediately attacks the country's life: the suppression of all freedom, jingo propaganda, the cost of living soaring up, the plague of *profittori*. Italy's gone through all that already. And she's forgotten nothing. Yes, in our country, if we're faced with mobilization, it'll be child's play for the Party to fix up another Red Week."

Carefully folding up the letter, Saffrio tucked it into his shirt and turned toward Jacques. In the comely, bronzed face the dark eyes were radiant. "*Grazie!*" he said.

The youngster at the far end of the room had risen. With both hands he lifted from the table a tall jug of porous earthenware, tilted it above his lips, and took a long draught of the ice-cold water.

"*Basta!*" Saffrio grinned as the young man went on drinking, and, going up to him, playfully tweaked the nape of his neck. "Now, comrade, I'll take you upstairs. You must have a nap."

The young Italian followed him obediently into the kitchen, giving the others a graceful nod as he went by.

On the threshold Saffrio looked round and said to Jacques: "You may be sure our Mussolini's warnings in the *Avanti* haven't fallen on deaf ears. The King and his ministers know now that the people won't follow them if they try to rush the country into a war."

Their footsteps rang, receding, up the little wooden staircase that led to the top floor.

Jacques was in a brown study. He pushed back his hair and turned to Tutti. "That's what has got to be brought to the notice of—I won't say the leaders, who know more than even we about it—to the notice of those nationalist groups in Germany and Austria which are still counting on the Triple Alliance and urging their governments to take violent measures.... Have you still got your job in Berlin?"

"No," Tutti replied briefly. His tone, the cryptic smile that crossed his face, implied quite clearly: "No use asking questions. My job is—nobody's business!"

Just then Saffrio came back, chuckling to himself. "Those youngsters—bless them!" he confided to Vanheede. "They'll swallow anything! That young ass got nicely caught by an *agent provocateur* yesterday. Luckily the boy is a good sprinter—and knew old Papa Saffrio's address." He turned cheerfully to Jacques. "Well, Thibault, so your trip to Paris gave you the impression that all is going well?"

Jacques's face lit up. "Better than well!" he cried enthusiastically.

Vanheede moved to another chair and sat down beside Jacques, with his back to the light. He suffered like a night-bird when he had the light in his eyes.

"I didn't meet only Frenchmen," Jacques continued. "I spoke to Belgians, Russians, and Germans as well. All over Europe the revolutionaries are on the *qui vive*. They've realized the gravity of the crisis. Everywhere they're getting together, arranging a concerted plan of action. Yes, the anti-war campaign is definitely taking form and it's most comforting to see how—in less than a week—the movement has spread, how unanimous they all are. It shows what forces the Socialist International can set in motion when it chooses. And what's been happening lately on a small scale, by driblets, in the various capitals, is nothing beside what's contemplated. The International Council is to meet at Brussels next week, you know. . . ."

"*Si, si!*" exclaimed Tutti and Saffrio in one breath, fired by Jacques's enthusiasm, their eyes fixed eagerly on his face.

The albino, too, bent forward and peered up blinkingly at Jacques, who was seated beside him. He had slipped an arm along the back of Jacques's chair and his hand rested on his friend's shoulder—so lightly that Jacques did not feel it.

"Jaurès and his group," Jacques went on, "attach the greatest importance to that meeting. Twenty-two countries are sending delegates. And these delegates represent not only the twelve million Socialist workers, but millions of others who are in sympathy with them—all those who are of two minds about socialism and even some who're in our enemies' camp but realize that, when a war is threatening, only the Socialist International can embody and give effect to the masses' desire for peace. Yes, the Brussels week will make history. For the first time on record the voice of the people, of the true majority, will be able to make itself heard. And obeyed!"

Saffrio was fidgeting with excitement. "Bravo!" he shouted. "Bravo!"

"And we must look still further ahead." Jacques yielded to the pleasure of strengthening his confidence by voicing it aloud. "If we win through, it will be not only a great battle won against war. It'll be more than that: a victory which may give socialism—" Just then Jacques grew conscious that Vanheede's little hand was resting on his shoulder; it had begun trembling all at once. Turning, he patted his friend’s knee. “Yes, Vanheede, old man, what’s on foot just now may well mean nothing more nor less than the world-wide triumph of socialism—and without any recourse to violence.” He jumped up from his chair. “Now let’s go and see if the Pilot’s back.”

It was still a little too early to count on finding Meynestrel at home.

“Come and sit down a bit at the café over there,” Jacques suggested, slipping his arm through Vanheede’s.

The albino shook his head. He had wasted quite enough time already. Since, following Jacques, he had settled at Geneva he had given up working as a typist and specialized in historical research. The work was not so well paid, but he was his own master. For two months he had been ruining his eyesight, collating material for a book entitled *Protestant Records* that a Leipzig publisher was bringing out.

Jacques accompanied him to the Public Library. Then, as he happened to be passing the Café Landolt—which with the Grütli shared the patronage of the younger generation of Socialists—and was feeling lonely, he turned in.

To his surprise, Paterson was there. The Englishman, in white flannel trousers, was busy hanging pictures for an exhibition that the proprietor had authorized him to give on the premises.

Paterson seemed in high spirits. He had just turned down a magnificent proposal. An American by the name of Saxton Clegg, impressed by Paterson’s still-lifes, had offered him fifty dollars for a life-sized portrait of the late Mrs. Clegg, who had perished in the Mont Pelée catastrophe. The portrait was to be copied from a faded photograph, of the size of a visiting-card. The disconsolate widower had insisted on one point only: that Mrs. Clegg’s costume should be transformed so as to come in line with the latest Paris fashions. Paterson spiced the story with a fine flow of humour.

“Pat,” Jacques thought, hearing the young Englishman’s peals of laughter, “is the only one of us capable of any real gaiety, genuine, spontaneous high spirits.”

“I’ll come along with you, old chap, for a bit of the way,” Paterson said, on learning that Jacques was going to see Meynestrel. “I’ve been getting some rather funny letters from England these last few days. They say in London that Haldane is fixing up, on the q.t., a slap-up expeditionary force. He means to be ready for anything. And the fleet’s still mobilized. By the way, have you read the papers—about the Spithead review? Military and naval attachés, it seems, from all over Europe have been formally invited to watch, for six solid hours, the British fleet steam past, in single file and in the closest possible formation—like those processions of caterpillars one sees here in the spring, don't you know! It'll be a damned fine show, I expect. Just window-dressing, of course," he added with a derisive gesture.

There was a hint of pride behind the sarcasm in Paterson's voice, and Jacques noted it with inward amusement. "An Englishman," he thought, "however socialistic, can never help being thrilled by a fine naval pageant."

"By the way, what about our portrait?" Paterson asked as he was saying good-bye. "There seems to be a hoodoo on it, doesn't there? Two sittings are all I need—honour bright! Two mornings. But when?"

Jacques knew the Englishman's obstinacy. Better give in, he thought, and get it over.

"Will tomorrow do? At eleven?"

"Righto. You're a damned good pal, Jacques. Thank you. . . ."

Alfreda was by herself. In her big-flowered kimono, with her lacquer-black bangs and eyelashes, her likeness to a Japanese doll was too pronounced not to be intentional. Flies were buzzing in the sunbeams filtering through the Venetian blind. The sickening smell of a cauliflower boiling in the kitchen pervaded the little flat.

She seemed delighted at seeing Jacques again. "Yes, the Pilot's back. But he's just sent a message to me by Monier that some news has come in and he's conferring with Richardley at Headquarters. I'm to join him there, with my typewriter. Why don't you have lunch with me?" Her look had suddenly grown earnest. "Then we might go there together."

Her dark, exotic eyes were fixed on him, and he had a fleeting impression that it was not out of pure friendliness she had chanced the invitation. Was it to have an opportunity for questioning or confiding in him? Anyhow, the prospect of a *tête-à-tête* lunch with Alfreda did not appeal to him, and he wished to see Meynestrel as soon as possible.

He declined.

The Pilot was at work in his little office at the Talking Shop. Only Richardley was with him. Richardley was seated, Meynestrel standing behind him, and both were bending over documents spread out on the table.

When he saw Jacques come in, a gleam of friendly surprise flickered in Meynestrel's eyes. Then his sharp gaze steadied—an idea had just crossed his mind—and, stooping down, he cast a questioning glance at Richardley, indicating Jacques with a jerk of his chin. "As he's back, why not give him the job?"

"Certainly," Richardley agreed.

"Sit down," Meynestrel said to Jacques. "We've almost done." Then he turned to Richardley. "Get this down, please. It's for the Swiss group."

In his harsh, toneless voice he began dictating: "Your question is misplaced. That is not the issue. In their day Marx and Engels might take sides with this nation or with that. We cannot. We, the Socialists of 1914, may not differentiate between the various European nations. The war in prospect is an imperialist war. Its aims are linked up wholly with the interests of finance capital. All nations, in this respect, fly the same flag. The one aim of the proletariat must be the downfall of the imperialist powers, without distinction. I advise *absolute neutrality*. (Underline that.) In this war the two capitalist groups will mutually destroy each other. Our policy is to let them do so. More, to help them to destroy each other. (No. Strike those words out.) To turn the situation to the best account. All the dynamism is in the left wing. It is the duty of the revolutionary minorities to do their best to raise this dynamism to its highest pitch during the period of crisis, so as to be able, when the time comes, to make the breach through which the revolution will advance."

He ceased dictating. After a while he muttered hurriedly: "Why doesn't Freda come?" then began scribbling brief notes on a memorandum-pad, tearing off the sheets and passing them to Richardley. "That's for the committee. This one for Berne and Basel. This for Zürich."

At last he rose and went up to Jacques. "So you didn't stay on?"

"You said: 'If you haven't heard from me by Sunday or Monday——' "

"That's so. I thought I was on the track of something, but it led nowhere. As a matter of fact, I was just going to write and tell you to stay on in Paris."

To stay in Paris! A curious perturbation, the origin of which he did not stop to analyse, came over Jacques. And with a sort of mental cowardice, with a vague satisfaction at saddling others with a responsibility that properly was his, he suddenly reflected: "Well, it's their doing, not mine."

Meynestrel went on speaking. "It may suit our purposes to have someone there just now. The reports you send in have their uses, they're a kind of temperature-chart of a milieu I know little of. Keep an eye on what's going on in the *Humanité* group—more than on the C.G.T. We've other sources of information about the C.G.T. For instance, the dealings between Jaurès and the Social-Democrats, and the English Socialists. Also, what strings he's pulling at the Quai d'Orsay as regards Franco-Russian relations. . . . But I've told you all that already. So you got back this morning? Not too tired?"

"Not a bit."

“Feel like starting off again?”

“At once?”

“Tonight.”

“If necessary, yes. To Paris?”

Meynestrel smiled. “No. You’ll make a little detour on the way, through Brussels and Antwerp. Richardley will explain.” In a low voice he added: “She promised to come here immediately after lunch.”

Richardley closed the time-table he had been studying and raised his sharp nose toward Jacques. “You have a train at seven-fifteen tonight which gets you to Basel at about two a.m. You’ll reach Brussels at noon tomorrow. From Brussels you take the first train to Antwerp. You must be at Antwerp tomorrow, Wednesday, before three p.m. It’s a job that requires careful handling, as you’re to get in touch with Kniabrovski and he’s under pretty strict surveillance. Do you know him?”

“Kniabrovski? Yes, very well indeed.”

Before meeting the man, Jacques had heard much about him in revolutionary circles. Vladimir Kniabrovski had just completed a term of imprisonment in Russia. No sooner was he released than he resumed his career as agitator. Jacques had met him in Geneva during the previous winter and had even, with Zelavsky’s help, translated for the Swiss press some chapters of the book Kniabrovski had written in prison.

“Don’t be too sure!” Richardley said. “He’s clean-shaven now and looks quite different, I’m told.”

Richardley was standing, bending forward a little, his thin lips set in their habitual smile, and his shrewd, rather supercilious gaze was fixed on Jacques.

Meynestrel, his hands behind his back, was pacing to and fro in the little room, to restore the circulation in his injured leg. His face was anxious. Suddenly he turned to Jacques. “Tell me—in Paris they had a blind conviction Austria would act with moderation, hadn’t they?”

“Yes. At the *Humanité* yesterday it was said that the Austrian note doesn’t even contemplate any delay.”

“That remains to be seen.” Meynestrel had turned from the window, whence he had been gazing down into the courtyard, and was walking toward Jacques.

“Yes?” Jacques murmured. A faint shudder ran down his spine, and a light film of sweat formed on his forehead.

"Hosmer knew what he was talking about," Richardley observed in a cold, detached voice. "Events are moving fast."

There was a short silence. The Pilot had started pacing up and down again. His nerves were unmistakably on edge. Jacques wondered if his anxiety concerned Austria—or Alfreda's absence.

"Vaillant and Jaurès are right," he said. "The governments must be made to realize there's no chance of getting the masses to accept any policy involving war. They must be forced to submit to arbitration—by the threat of a general strike. As you know, the motion was voted a week ago at the French Congress, with a big majority. In any case, everyone's agreed to it on principle. In Paris they're busy trying to find a way of convincing the Germans and getting them to declare themselves as explicitly as we have done."

Richardley shook his head. "Waste of time. They'll never consent. And their argument—it's the time-worn argument of Plekhanov and Liebknecht—is a sound one: as between two unequally socialized nations, the more socialized is at the mercy of the less socialized one. That's self-evident."

"The Germans are hypnotized by the Russian peril."

"Naturally enough. It will be another story when Russia has evolved, socially speaking, to such a point that it's possible to launch a strike in both countries simultaneously."

Jacques refused to give in. "For one thing, we can no longer be so sure that strikes must be ruled out in Russia—anyhow, partial strikes like the one at the Putilov factory, which, if extended to other industrial centres, may very well give a lot of trouble to the military faction. But let's leave Russia out. There's a definite argument with which we can counter the prejudice of the Social-Democrats against a strike. We can say: 'An order for a general strike to be declared automatically on the day of mobilization would be a danger for Germany—that's granted. But what about a *preventive* strike? A strike launched by the Socialist Party during the preliminary phase of international tension, while the diplomats are bandying notes—long before there's any question of mobilization? The mere threat of such a setback to the nation's forces—provided it was patently in earnest—would be enough to force your government to consent to arbitration.' None of the German objections could stand up against that argument. And that, I understand, is the platform which the French Party proposes to adopt at the Brussels Congress."

Standing at the table, his head bent over the documents that strewed it, Meynestrel had seemed completely unmindful of their discussion. Now, straightening up, he came and planted himself between Jacques and Richardley. A faintly ironic smile glimmered on his face.

“Now, children, off with you! I’ve work to do. We’ll talk later. Come back, both of you, at four.” He cast an almost frightened glance toward the window. “I can’t understand why Freda . . .” he began, then turned to Richardley. “Firstly, give Jacques precise instructions for his meeting with Kniabrovski. Secondly, fix up money matters with him; he may be away for two or three weeks.”

As he spoke he shepherded them toward the door, which he closed behind them.

III

UNDER the blazing sunlight of that summer afternoon Antwerp sweltered like a city of the South.

Blinking with the glare, Jacques looked up at the station-clock. Ten-past three. The Amsterdam train was not due in till three-twenty-three. It would be wiser to let himself be seen as little as possible within the station premises.

As he crossed the thoroughfare he cast a quick glance over the people sitting on the terrace of a café opposite. Evidently his survey reassured him, for, noticing an empty table in a corner, he sat down at it and ordered beer. The square in front was almost empty, despite the hour. All the passers-by kept to the sidewalk on the shady side, making the same detour, like a procession of ants. Tram-cars coming from all parts of the town, trailing beneath them slabs of shadow, criss-crossed in the middle of the square, their overheated wheels groaning on the curves.

At three-twenty Jacques made a move, turning leftward so as to enter the station from the side. There were few people about. A decrepit Belgian porter wearing a képi was describing figures-of-eight with a watering-can on the dusty flagstones.

At a platform on an upper level the train had just come in.

Reading his paper, Jacques took his stand at the foot of the steps marked *Exit* leading from the platforms; passengers were beginning to come down. Without fixing his eyes on anyone in particular, with feigned indifference, he watched them flocking down the stairs. A man in the fifties, wearing a cap, went by. He was dressed in a grey suit; a sheaf of newspapers was tucked under his arm. The crowd rapidly thinned out; soon only a few laggards remained, some old women laboriously descending the steps.

Then, as though the person he had been expecting had failed to show up, Jacques turned and walked quietly away from the station. Only a skilled detective, on the lookout for it, would have noticed the quick glance he cast over his shoulder before stepping off the sidewalk.

He walked along the avenue up to a wide crossing, at which he hesitated, like a tourist taking his bearings. Then, swerving to the right, he walked past the Lyric Theatre, pausing a moment to scan the play-bills, and turned unhurrying into one of the little public gardens in front of the Law Courts. Noticing an empty bench, he sank onto it, mopping his brow.

On the path in front some children, untroubled by the heat, were playing ball. Jacques took a sheaf of folded newspapers from his pocket and laid it beside him on the bench. He lit a cigarette. The ball rolled to his feet; laughing, he picked it up and made as if to pocket it. The children gathered round him, shrilly protesting. He threw the ball and joined in their game.

After some minutes another loiterer came and seated himself at the other end of the bench. He was carrying a bundle of untidily folded newspapers. The man had a foreign look; Slav, most likely. The peak of his cap was pulled well down and hid his forehead; the prominent cheekbones showed as highlights in its shadow. The beardless face was that of an elderly man—gnarled and ravaged but vividly alert. His skin, weathered a rich pie-crust hue, effectively set off his eyes, which, though it was hard to fix their colour in the shadow of the cap, were a pale, intensely luminous blue-grey.

The man took a small cigar from his pocket and, turning to Jacques, politely touched his cap-peak. To light his cigar at Jacques's cigarette, he leaned forward, resting on the bench the hand that held the newspapers. Their eyes met. The man straightened up and placed the bundle of newspapers on his knees. Adroitly he had taken his neighbour's papers and left his own on the bench beside Jacques, who casually but promptly laid his hand upon them.

His eyes fixed on the middle distance, without a flutter of his lips, in a barely audible voice—that brittle, ventriloquial voice the knack of which is learned in prisons—the man said:

"The letter's hidden in the papers. And there're some of the latest issues of *Pravda*."

Jacques gave no sign of having heard, but went on playing with the children as if nothing had happened. He threw the ball, the children rushed away, there was a general scuffle to get hold of it, the winner brought it back triumphantly, and then the game started anew.

The elderly man was laughing; he too seemed to find pleasure in the children's antics. Very soon it was to him they handed the ball, as he could throw it farther than Jacques. Once the two men were alone, Kniabrovski seized the opportunity and, his teeth still clenched, began speaking in little, jerky phrases, which he poured out excitedly in a hissing undertone.

"At Petersburg, on Monday, a hundred and forty thousand strikers. A hundred and forty thousand. Martial law in certain quarters of the city. Telephone wires cut, no trams running. Mounted police charges. Four whole regiments with machine-guns called up. Cossack regiments, detachments from——"

The children rushed up in a bunch, gathered round the seat. He drowned the last words in a fit of coughing.

"But the police, the army are helpless," he went on, after launching the ball into the middle of a lawn. "One riot after another! The government had handed out French flags, for Poincaré's visit; the women changed them into red flags. Cavalry charges, volleys. I saw a pitched battle in the Viborg quarter. Terrible it was! Another one near the Warsaw station. Another in the Stagara-Derevnia suburb. Another in the middle of the night at——"

He paused again; the children were back. And suddenly in a burst of hungry affection he caught hold of the youngest—a pale, fair-haired boy of four or five—drew him onto his knee, laughing, and gave him a loud kiss on the mouth. Then he put down the startled child, took the ball, and threw it.

"The strikers aren't armed. They've only paving-stones, bottles, kerosene cans. To hold up the charges they fire houses. I saw the Semsonievsky Bridge burnt down. There were fires everywhere, all night. Hundreds killed. Hundreds and hundreds of arrests. All the suspects pulled in. Our newspapers have been forbidden since Sunday. Our editors are in jail. The revolution's begun. High time it was; but for the revolutions, there'd be war. That Poincaré of yours, he's done a lot of harm in our country, a damned lot of harm."

Looking toward the lawn where the children were scuffling for the ball, he twisted his lips in an expression, meant for a laugh, that was an ugly snarl.

“Now,” he said gloomily, “I’m off.”

“Right!” Jacques breathed. Though there was no one near, it was useless to prolong the interview. Nervously he whispered: “Going back—there?”

Kniabrovski did not reply at once. His elbows propped on his knees, he was bending forward, staring at the gravel between his feet. His body seemed to have suddenly gone limp, crumpled up. Jacques noticed the lines of resignation—truer to say, of patience—that long, hard years had graven on either side of his mouth.

“Yes, I’m going back.” He raised his head and his eyes roamed the scene before them—the garden, distant houses, and blue sky—without settling anywhere; they had the haunted, obdurate look of a man who will stick at nothing this side of madness . . . and beyond. “By the sea route. Hamburg. I’ll have no trouble going back. But over there, you know, things are getting difficult. . . .”

He rose slowly from the seat.

“Very difficult indeed.”

At last he turned toward Jacques and touched his cap politely, like a chance-met stranger taking leave. Their eyes exchanged a look of anguish, of fraternity.

“*Vdobryi tchass!* Good luck!” he whispered before moving away.

The laughing, romping children escorted him as far as the gate. Jacques followed him with his eyes. When the Russian was out of sight, he thrust into his pocket the sheaf of newspapers that had been left lying on the bench. Then, rising, he resumed his stroll.

That night, after sewing into the lining of his coat the letter given him by Kniabrovski, he left Antwerp for Brussels, and there took the train to Paris.

Next day, Thursday, at a very early hour, he handed over the secret missive to Chenavon, who was due to reach Geneva that night.

IV

ON the following day, Thursday the twenty-third, Jacques dropped in early in the morning at the Café du Progrès to read the papers. He seated himself at a table on the ground floor, wishing to keep clear of the meeting rooms upstairs.

The account of the trial of Mme. Caillaux filled the whole front page of every one of the dailies.

On the second or third page a few of them had somewhat reluctantly inserted a short statement to the effect that strikes had broken out at some works in St. Petersburg, but that this labour unrest had promptly been quelled by strong police measures. As against this, there were entire columns devoted to the festivities ordained by the Tsar in honour of M. Poincaré.

As for the Austro-Servian dispute, the papers were discreetly reticent. A note—officially inspired, no doubt—with virtually the same wording in each instance, stated definitely that in Russian government circles it was generally held that an easing of the strain was bound to ensue very shortly as the result of the action being taken through the usual diplomatic channels, while most of the writers politely expressed their trust in Germany, a country which throughout the Balkan crisis had never failed to preach moderation to her Austrian ally.

The *Action Française* alone openly voiced its uneasiness. It made the most of the opportunity thus offered for incriminating more violently than ever the innate weakness of the republican government in the matter of foreign policy, and of holding up to scorn the unpatriotic behaviour of the parties of the left. The Socialists came in for special abuse. No longer satisfied with repeating as he had done every day for many years that Jaurès was a traitor in the pay of Germany, Charles Maurras, revolted by the emotional appeals to international pacifism published in ever-increasing numbers by the *Humanité*, now appeared to single out Jaurès as a fitting object for the dagger of some avenging spirit of the Charlotte Corday type. “We would incite no man to political murder,” he wrote with a boldness tempered by caution, “but let M. Jaurès quake in his shoes! His leading article may very well inspire some unbalanced zealot with the desire of putting to the test whether it is a fact that nothing would be altered in the immutable order of things were M. Jean Jaurès to meet with the same end as M. Calmette.”

Cadieux rushed by on his way to the street. “Aren’t you going upstairs?” he asked. “They’re at it hammer and tongs up there. It’s quite thrilling. There’s an Austrian delegate, Comrade Boehm, who’s just turned up from

Vienna. He says the Austrian note is to be handed in at Belgrade this evening, the moment Poincaré leaves St. Petersburg."

"D'you mean to say Boehm's in Paris?" Jacques exclaimed, jumping up from his seat, overjoyed at the prospect of having another talk with the Austrian.

He ran up the little spiral staircase, pushed open the door, and presently caught sight of Boehm with a mug of beer in front of him, his yellow raincoat neatly folded on his knees. Some fifteen militants were crowding round him, plying him with questions. Boehm was answering each in turn, chewing the stump of his eternal cigar.

He greeted Jacques with a friendly nod, as though he had only just taken leave of him the day before. The news he brought with him as to the war-fever prevailing in Vienna and the general pugnacity of Austro-Hungarian public opinion seemed to have aroused widespread indignation and anxiety. An aggressive ultimatum from Austria to Servia, should it materialize, seemed likely in the present circumstances to have all the more serious consequences in that a warning note had been circulated by the Servian Prime Minister to every chancellery in Europe, advising the powers not to count too much on Servia's remaining passive and stating that she was now determined to reject any demand derogatory to her dignity.

Without in any way attempting to justify the irresponsible policy of his country, Boehm did his best to account for the resentment felt in Austria toward Servia, and incidentally toward Russia, as a result of the continual pinpricks her truculent little neighbour, supported and egged on by the Russian giant, kept inflicting on the Austrian national pride.

"Hosmer," he declared, "read me a confidential diplomatic note sent several years ago by Sazonov, the Foreign Minister at St. Petersburg, to the Russian Ambassador to Servia. Sazonov expressly refers to the fact that a certain slice of Austrian territory has been promised to the Servians by Russia. A highly important document," he added, "for it's a proof that Servia and her evil genius, Russia, are a constant menace to the security of *Österreich*."

"So it's the same story! The capitalists are on their usual political racket!" an old workman in blue overalls shouted from the far end of the table. "Every government in Europe, whether it calls itself democratic or not, with its underhand diplomacy in which the people have no say, is just a tool in the hands of those international money-grubbers! And if Europe's been spared a general war during the last forty years, it's only because it suits the financiers' purposes to keep up a state of armed peace, in which the nations are getting deeper and deeper into debt. But the moment it pays the big banks for a war to break out—well, you'll see!"

They all assented vociferously. Little did they care that the interruption had but the remotest bearing on the subject Boehm was expounding.

A young fellow whom Jacques knew by sight, and whose watchful, fever-bright eyes and consumptive features had caught his attention, suddenly emerged from his silence and began quoting in a hollow voice a dictum by Jaurès on the perils of secret diplomacy.

Taking advantage of the ensuing uproar, Jacques went up to Boehm and made an appointment for them to have lunch together. After which he slipped away, leaving the Austrian to pursue his exposition with the same patient obstinacy he gave to chewing his cigar.

His lunch with Boehm, several talks at the main office of the *Humanité*, a few urgent messages Richardley had asked him to deliver personally on reaching Paris, then, in the evening, a Socialist gathering at Levallois in honour of Boehm (at which, in a short speech, he gave an account of what he knew of the riots in St. Petersburg), so thoroughly engrossed Jacques's mind during that first day that he had little occasion to think about the Fontanins. Two or three times, however, the idea did occur to him of ringing up the hospital in the Boulevard Bineau and inquiring whether Jerome was still alive. But would they have given him the desired information without asking him in the first place who he was? Better not make the attempt. He had rather not call attention to the fact that he was in Paris. The last thing at night, however, when he was back in his little room in the Quai de la Tournelle, he had to admit, before falling asleep, that, far from feeling his mind at rest, his self-imposed ignorance worried him even more than any definite tidings could have done.

And as he woke up on Friday morning, he was half tempted to ring up Antoine. "But what's the use? It's no concern of mine," he said to himself, looking at his watch. "Seven-twenty! If I'm to get in touch with him before he's off to the hospital, I've just about time as it is!" And without more ado he jumped out of bed.

Antoine was greatly surprised at hearing his brother's voice. He told Jacques that M. de Fontanin's death had taken place that very night, after he had lingered on for three days without recovering consciousness. "The funeral takes place on Saturday—tomorrow. Will you still be in Paris then? Daniel," he went on, "never stirs from the hospital; you're sure to find him there at any time." Antoine seemed quite certain of his brother's wish to meet Daniel again. "Come and have lunch with me," he suggested.

Jacques turned away from the phone with an impatient shrug and hung up the receiver.

On the twenty-fourth, the papers briefly reported the delivery of an Austrian note to Servia. Most of them, indeed, abstained—no doubt by order—from offering any comment whatsoever.

Jaurès had chosen the Russian strikes as the subject of his leading article. He wrote in a markedly serious vein.

"What a warning for the European powers!" he began. "Revolution brewing on every hand. Rash indeed would be the Tsar, were he to start a European war or permit one to be started. Nor would the Austro-Hungarian monarchy be one whit less foolhardy, were it persuaded by the blind passions of its clerical and military supporters into making an irremediable breach with Servia. An ominous chapter has been added to the tale of M. Poincaré's visit by the shedding of the Russian workmen's blood, and the tragic warning it affords."

The staff of the *Humanité* were in no doubt as to the tone of the note; it certainly was of a peremptory character and the worst was to be feared. Their nerves were all on edge as they waited for Jaurès to return. The Skipper had suddenly decided that morning to call in person at the Quai d'Orsay and see M. Bienvenu-Martin, acting Foreign Minister during the absence of M. Viviani.

There was a certain amount of confusion among the sub-editors. They anxiously wondered how the European nations would react. A pessimist by nature, Gallot maintained that the news received that evening from Germany and Italy justified the fear that in both these countries the man in the street, the press, and even certain members of the parties of the left rather approved the step that Austria had taken. Stefany agreed with Jaurès that in Berlin the indignation of the Social-Democratic parties would find expression in action of a forcible nature and calculated to have far-reaching effects not only in Germany but beyond the German borders.

At noon the offices became empty. It was Stefany's turn to be on duty during the lunch hour, and Jacques offered to keep him company so as to have a chance of studying the file relating to the meeting of the International Committee to be held the following week at Brussels. All nursed high hopes in connexion with this extraordinary meeting. Stefany knew for a fact that Vaillant, Keir Hardie, and several other Party leaders intended to include in their programme the proposal for a general strike in case of war. How would this drastic measure be received by the Socialists of other countries, particularly English and German Socialists?

At one o'clock Jaurès had not yet turned up, and Jacques went down to have a drink at the Café du Croissant, where he thought the Skipper might be lunching. But he was not there.

Jacques was looking round for an empty corner when he was hailed by a young German, Kirchenblatt by name, whom he had first met in Berlin and subsequently in Geneva on several occasions. Kirchenblatt was having lunch with a friend and insisted on Jacques's joining them. His friend was also a German, a man called Wachs, whom Jacques did not know.

The two were strangely different. "They're fairly representative of two characteristic types of East Germans," Jacques thought, "the *leader* and the *led*."

Wachs had been an ironworker in his youth. He looked about forty years old—a man with heavy, vaguely Slavic features, wide cheekbones, a forthright mouth, and limpid eyes, solemn and purposeful to a degree. He kept his big fingers splayed, like tools laid ready for instant use. He listened to what was being said, nodding approval, but was himself sparing of words. His whole deportment indicated a soul at peace with itself, steadfast courage, reliability, love of discipline, and instinctive loyalty.

Kirchenblatt was a much younger man. The shape of his small round head, perched on a scraggy neck, brought to mind the skull of a bird. His cheekbones, in contrast with Wachs's, were not wide but jutted out sharply under each eye. Usually serious and watchful, his face lit up at times in a somewhat disquieting smile, a smile which spread out to the corners of his mouth, pursed his eyelids, and curled back his lips over his teeth. At such moments a glow of rather cruel sensuality would kindle in his eyes. He reminded Jacques of certain fierce Alsatian dogs which show their fangs when at play. He was a native of East Prussia, the son of a Herr Professor—one of those cultured, Nietzschean Germans whom Jacques had frequently met in advanced German circles. For them laws were non-existent. A peculiar sense of honour, a certain chivalrous romanticism, and a taste for lawless, dangerous living, bound such men together in a sort of higher caste, deeply conscious of its aristocratic character. In open rebellion against a social order to which, after all, he was indebted for his mental training, Kirchenblatt lived on the fringe of the international revolutionary parties, being temperamentally too much of an anarchist to adhere unreservedly to socialism, yet balking by instinct both at the levelling theories of democracy and at the feudal privileges surviving in imperial Germany.

The conversation, which was held in German because Wachs had some difficulty in understanding French, turned at once on Berlin's attitude toward the policy of Austria. Kirchenblatt appeared to be well informed regarding the frame of mind of the high officials of the German Empire. He had just heard that the Kaiser's brother, Prince Heinrich, had been sent to London on a special mission to the King of England, a semi-official move which, coming at such a time, seemed to imply that Wilhelm II was personally desirous of winning over George V to his own views about the Austro-Servian dispute.

"What views?" Jacques wanted to know. "That's the whole point. To what extent does blackmail enter into the attitude of the imperial government? Trautenbach, whom I met in Geneva, claims to have it on reliable authority that the Kaiser himself refuses to contemplate the possibility of war. And yet it seems unthinkable that Vienna should take so bold a line without being sure of Germany's support."

"Yes," Kirchenblatt agreed, "it does seem likely, as far as I can judge, that Kaiser Wilhelm agrees to and approves of the principle underlying the Austrian claims; and even that he's egging Vienna on to act as rapidly as possible, so as to confront Europe with a *fait accompli*. Which, after all, is first-rate pacifism." Then, with a sardonic smile: "Why, certainly! For isn't that the best way of preventing any reaction on the part of Russia—to hasten on an Austro-Servian war with a view to saving the peace of Europe?" Then, sobering up suddenly: "But it's clear, on the other hand, that the Kaiser, advised as he is, has duly weighed the risks—the risk of a peremptory 'No' from Russia, the risk of a general war. Only there's this to be said, he must consider that risk as practically negligible. Is he right? That's the whole question." His features settled again into a Mephistophelian grin. "Just now, I see the Kaiser as a poker-player holding good cards and having to deal with faint-hearted opponents. Of course the possibility has occurred to him that he may lose, by a stroke of ill-luck. In any game somebody has got to lose. But, then, his cards are pretty good—and why should a man dread a stroke of ill-luck to the point of throwing in an excellent hand?"

It was easy to tell, by his caustic tone and dare-devil smile, that Kirchenblatt knew from personal experience what it is to hold good cards and back one's luck—with the sky the limit!

V

AT dawn, as was the custom at the hospital, the body of Jerome de Fontanin had been placed in its coffin. Immediately after, it had been removed to the special building at the far end of the garden in which the rules of the establishment ordained dead patients should await their obsequies—as far as possible from the living patients.

Mme. de Fontanin, who during her husband's long death-agony had hardly left his bedside for a moment, was sitting in the cell-like basement room to which the body had been relegated. She was alone, having just sent Jenny to their apartment in the Avenue de l'Observatoire to fetch the black dresses both would need for the funeral next day. After escorting his sister to the gate, Daniel had lingered on in the garden, smoking a cigarette.

Sitting in a cane chair under the solitary window, through which a cavernous light entered the little mortuary, Mme. de Fontanin was schooling herself to face the daylong vigil beside the dead. She had her back to the light and her eyes were fixed on the plain deal coffin resting on two black trestles in the middle of the room. The only outer sign of the dead man's identity was a small brass plate inscribed:

JEROME-ELIE DE FONTANIN,
May 11, 1857-July 23, 1914

She was feeling calm, composed—safe in God's keeping. The mental stress of that first night, that momentary weakness which the violence of the shock indeed excused, had passed away. Bereavement had lost its sting; all she now felt was a pensive melancholy. She was so used to living in secure communion with the Force that governs universal life, with that great All into which each of us, when his brief hour is done, must merge his personality, that death's aspect had no terrors for her. Even as a girl she had gazed at her father's corpse without any consternation; not for a moment had she doubted that the spiritual presence of him whom she had venerated, who had been her daily guide, would still befriend her after his body had returned to dust. And time had proved her right; never had she lacked his guidance—as yet again the happenings of the past week had demonstrated. Beyond the grave he had ever been closely associated with her life and struggles, had steered her through perplexities and inspired her decisions.

Thus, today, she could not look on Jerome's death as an ending. Nothing dies, but all things change and are transformed—as season follows season. Gazing at the coffin sealed for ever on her husband's mortal form, she felt a quiet ecstasy, like the feeling that came over her each autumn when, in her garden at Maisons, she watched the leaves she had seen burgeoning in the spring fall one by one, each in its due hour, well knowing that their fall meant no impairment of the vital forces latent in the trunk, that its life impulse was intact as ever. For her, death was but an incident of life, and to contemplate without alarm that ineluctable return to the endless cycle of existence was a way of humbly sharing in God's inscrutable design.

In the sepulchral coolness of the air hovered the sweet, rather cloying perfume of the roses placed by Jenny on the coffin. Unthinkingly Mme. de Fontanin was rubbing the nails of her right hand on her left palm. She had formed the habit, when she had finished dressing in the morning, of sitting for some minutes at her window and, as she polished her nails, communing with herself before entering on the new day; this she called her morning prayer. This habit had developed in her an associative reflex between the act of polishing her nails and invoking guidance from Above.

So long as Jerome lived, estranged from her though he might be, she had nursed a secret hope that one day her great, all-enduring love would enter into its reward on earth—that Jerome would come back to her repentant and reformed. And then, perhaps, it would be granted them to spend their lives' decline in close reunion, forgetting all the past. The folly of those years of waiting she recognized only now—now that all hope was lost for ever. Yet the mental agony she had endured was still too fresh in her mind for her not to feel a certain relief in knowing that at last the burden was lifted. Death had dried up that one bitter spring which for so many years had been poisoning her life. It was as if involuntarily she were holding her head high again after a long spell of bondage—a very human and legitimate feeling, the new-found charm of which unknowingly she relished. It would have abashed her, had she been aware of it, but such was the blindness of her faith that she could not direct a truly penetrating glance into the secret places of her heart. She took for divine grace what was the effect of purely self-regarding instinct, and thanked God for according her such peace of mind and resignation. Thus she could yield herself without remorse to her feeling of infinite relief.

She yielded herself to it all the more readily, since this day of watching beside her dead was for her no more than a breathing-space before a spell of strenuous activity. Tomorrow, Saturday, there was the funeral, then the return home and Daniel's departure. After that, on Sunday, would begin the urgent, arduous task of saving the honour of her children's name. She had determined to investigate her husband's affairs on the spot, in Trieste and in Vienna. Neither Jenny nor Daniel had yet been informed of this intention. Guessing that her son would be against it, she preferred to postpone a fruitless argument; for her mind was made up. The Spirit had inspired her with this audacious project; of that she was assured. Did she not feel within her, every time her thoughts turned to it, that peculiar psychic thrill which she knew well, a supernormal impulse, brooking no denial, that evidenced divine behest?

She decided to leave for Austria on Sunday if possible, or Monday at the latest. She would stay there a fortnight or three weeks; if necessary, the whole of August. She would have an interview with the Official Receiver, and thresh things out with the directors of the company in liquidation. Failure was out of the question, provided she were on the spot and could bring her personal influence to bear. In this respect, indeed, her intuition was not at fault; time and time again, in difficult circumstances, she had been given to see her power. But naturally it never crossed her mind that this power might be ascribed to personal charm. She saw in it nothing else than a divine interposition, and in herself merely a vehicle of the Immanent Will.

She had another delicate task to carry out in Vienna; she desired to get in touch with the girl named Wilhelmina, some letters from whom she had found in Jerome's luggage—childish, affectionate letters which had deeply touched her.

It was only after she had closed the eyes of her dead husband that she had brought herself to go through his luggage. She had done this during the previous night at an hour when she could count on being left to herself, for she wished to keep from the children their father's secrets, up to the end. What had taken longest was getting together the various letters and other documents scattered haphazard among his effects. For a whole hour she had handled the dead man's personal belongings, at once luxurious and shabby, the jetsam of a life: frayed silk shirts, well-cut suits worn threadbare, still fragrant with the cool, exotic, bitter-sweet perfume—of citron, lavender, and cuscus-grass—to which Jerome had been faithful for thirty years and which had never failed to thrill her like a caress. Unpaid bills trailed everywhere, even in the boot-trays and dressing-case: statements of account from banks and confectioners, from shoemakers and florists, from jewellers and doctors—and some quite unlooked-for bills, one from a Bond Street Chinese pedicure, another from a goldsmith's in the Rue de la Paix for a lady's silver-gilt toilet-case. A pawn-ticket issued at Trieste recorded the deposit, for a preposterously low sum, of one pearl tie-pin and one fur-lined coat with sealskin collar. In a wallet stamped with a count's coronet the photographs of Mme. de Fontanin, of Daniel and Jenny, were stowed alongside a set of photographs, with dedications, of a Viennese opera-singer. And finally, hidden away in a sheaf of German magazines with licentious illustrations, Mme. de Fontanin found to her surprise a well-thumbed pocket Bible printed on India paper. . . . She effaced everything from her memory—except the little Bible. How often, in the course of their heart-rending "explanations," when Jerome was condoning his misdeeds with his usual virtuosity, had he exclaimed: "You judge me too harshly, sweetheart! I'm not so bad as you think." It was true. Only the Spirit knows the truth of human hearts, by what detours and for what necessary ends God's creatures slowly climb toward perfection.

Misted with tears, her eyes rested on the coffin, the roses with their petals falling one by one.

"Yes," she whispered passionately. "Yes, indeed there was a soul of goodness in you, Jerome dear."

She was roused from her musings by the arrival of Nicole Héquet, accompanied by Daniel.

Nicole was looking her best; her mourning frock showed off the pink-and-white freshness of her skin. The sparkle in her eyes, her arching eyebrows, always made her seem in eager haste to proffer her young beauty. She bent and kissed her aunt; Mme. de Fontanin was grateful to her for respecting the silence of the death-chamber, refraining from the commonplaces of condolence. Nicole went up to the coffin and halted before it, her arms drooping and her hands clasped. Watching her, Mme. de Fontanin wondered if she were praying or lost in memories of her childhood, in which her uncle Jerome had bulked so large and in which she had known such agonies of shame. After some moments of this enigmatic immobility, she returned to her aunt, kissed her again on the forehead, and left the room, followed by Daniel, who had remained standing behind his mother.

When they were outside, Nicole stopped and looked at Daniel. "What time tomorrow?"

"We start from here at eleven, and go straight to the cemetery."

They were alone in the semi-darkness of the hall. Before them stretched the sunlit garden; convalescent patients, clad in light dressing-gowns, were reclining in deck-chairs along the borders of the lawns. In the warm, windless radiance of the July afternoon, in this golden air, summer seemed installed for ever.

"Pastor Gregory," Daniel went on, "will say a short prayer at the graveside. Mamma was against any sort of funeral ceremony."

"How splendid Aunt Thérèse is!" she whispered. "So brave and calm. Just perfect—as she always is."

He thanked her with a friendly smile. Though the childishness had left her eyes, the blue irises still had their crystal-clear purity and the gentle languor which in the past had stirred him so profoundly.

"What ages it is since I saw you last!" he exclaimed, and added: "Tell me, Nico, are you happy?"

Nicole's gaze, which had been fixed on the bright-green vistas of the garden, seemed to traverse a great distance before settling on Daniel. A look of distress crossed her face; he fancied her on the brink of tears.

"Of course," he murmured awkwardly. "You, too, poor little Nico, you've had more than your share of troubles."

Only then did he notice how much she had changed. The lower part of her face had thickened. Under the discreet make-up, behind the artificial pinkness of the cheeks, he had a glimpse of features that had lost something of their freshness, seemed a little worn.

"Still, Nico, you're young, you have your life before you; you should be happy."

"Happy?" she repeated, with a dubious shrug of her shoulders.

He gazed at her in surprise. "Why, of course! Why shouldn't you be happy?"

Again her gaze was lingering on the sunlit lawns. After a silent moment, without turning her eyes, she said: "Life's strange, isn't it? I'm only twenty-five and I feel so old already." She hesitated, then added: "And so lonely."

"Lonely?"

"Yes." Her eyes were still fixed on the distant scene. "My mother, my girlhood—it all seems far, far away. I've no child. And—I can never have one now; that's all over." Her voice was soft, resigned.

"Anyhow, you have your husband," Daniel ventured to remind her.

"Yes, I've my husband. We have a deep, dependable love for each other. He's kind and understanding. He does all he can to make my life agreeable."

Daniel kept silent.

She moved aside to the wall and leaned against it. When she spoke again, without raising her voice, stiffening up a little, it seemed as if she were nerving herself to say everything, quite simply, without shirking the truth.

"But why deny it? After all, you know, Félix and I haven't so very much in common. He's thirteen years older than I am; he has never treated me as an equal. Anyhow, he has toward all women a paternal, rather condescending attitude, the same that he has toward his patients."

A picture of Héquet rose in Daniel’s mind, Héquet with his grey temples, fretted by tiny wrinkles, his keen near-sighted stare, his quiet, precise, unbending manner. Why had he married Nicole? Was it as a man picks a flower he fancies on the wayside? Or, more probably, was it not a desire to graft upon his work-filled life a little of that youth, that natural charm, which doubtless he had always lacked?

“And don’t forget,” Nicole continued, “that he has his own life, a busy surgeon’s life. You know what that means. He’s at the beck and call of others from morn till night. Oftener than not, he doesn’t have his meals at the same time as I do. As a matter of fact it’s better so; we haven’t much to say to each other, nothing to share, not a single taste in common, not a memory, nothing! Oh, no, we never quarrel—never the slightest tiff!” She laughed. “For one thing, the moment he expresses a desire, whatever it may be, I say ‘Yes.’ As a matter of course. His wishes are my law.” The laugh had left her lips, and she said with curious slowness: “I’m so utterly indifferent—to everything!”

Gradually she had moved away from the wall toward the door. Lost in thought, she walked down the short flight of steps. Daniel followed in silence. With a free, spontaneous movement, she swung round and faced him, smiling. “I must tell you a little story. . . . Last winter he had some new bookcases made for our morning-room, and we decided to get rid of a little mahogany desk for which there wasn’t any room. It had been my mother’s—but that was all the same to me; I’ve nothing of my own, I’m not attached to anything. Only that desk had to be emptied out, and it was full of letters and things I’d never seen before. I found a heap of letters Father and Mother had written to each other, letters from my grandmother and family friends, old account-books, wedding-cards, and so forth. A scrap-heap of the past, dead memories of Paris, Royat, Biarritz. Old things, old events, old people, all dead and forgotten. I read every line before I threw the lot into the fire. And I cried over it for a fortnight.” She laughed again. “A fortnight, a whole delicious fortnight! Félix hadn’t an inkling—anyhow, he wouldn’t have understood. He doesn’t know a thing about me or my childhood or my thoughts.”

They were strolling slowly across the garden. As they walked by a group of patients, she dropped her voice.

“My present life—well, I can manage; but sometimes I dread the future. As things are, you see, the days are pretty full for each of us. My husband has his hospital, his practice, the daily round. And I’ve heaps of things to do, people to see, and so on. I’ve taken up my violin again and I play a bit of music with my friends. We dine out several times a week; we’ve got to mix in society on account of my husband’s position. But how will it be later on, when he’s retired from practice? When we stop going out at night? That’s what terrifies me. What’s to become of us when we’re a couple of old people who’ve got to spend whole evenings facing each other in front of the fire?”

“My poor dear Nico,” Daniel said gravely, “what you’ve just been telling me distresses me beyond measure.”

She broke into a peal of laughter, a gay, quite unexpected echo of her youthful self. “How absurd you are!” she laughed. “I’m not complaining. That’s the way life is. It’s not a bit better for other women. In fact, I count myself among the lucky ones. No, it’s only this: when one’s little, one imagines all sorts of silliness, one expects life to work out like a fairy-tale . . .”

They were near the gates.

“I’m awfully glad to have seen you,” she said. “You look splendid in your uniform. When does your military service end?”

“In October.”

“So soon?”

He laughed. “So the time seemed short to you?”

She had halted. A shower of splintered sunbeams was falling on her face, flecking her hair with the pale translucencies of yellow tortoise-shell.

“*Au revoir*,” She held out her hand with frank, spontaneous affection. “Mind you tell Jenny how awfully sorry I was to have missed her. Anyhow, next winter, when you’re back in Paris, you must come and look me up now and then. A charity visit, you know. We can have a good talk about old times and play at being old cronies raking up the ashes of the past, can’t we? It’s curious how, as I grow older, I get more and more attached to the past. You’ll come, then? It’s a promise?”

For a moment he peered intently into her eyes, attractive eyes, a little overlarge, too round, but crystal-clear.

“It’s a promise,” he said gravely.

VI

IT was the first time since Sunday that Jenny had set foot outside the hospital; the most she had done was to take a short daily stroll with Daniel in the grounds. In death's proximity she had lived through those four interminable days like a phantom lost among the living, and everything happening round her had seemed meaningless, irrelevant. And when her brother had seen her into a taxi, once she knew that she was alone in the sunbright street, she could not repress a feeling of deliverance. But before the car had reached the outskirts of Paris, she grew aware that the vague distress which had been gnawing at her heart for four days past had returned to her. Indeed, it seemed as if that distress, free now of the restraint imposed by the presence of others at the hospital, had, in her solitude, acquired a sudden, terrifying intensity.

It was one o'clock when she alighted from the taxi at her door. Cutting as short as possible the concierge's voluble condolence, she ran upstairs to the apartment.

In it disorder reigned; doors stood wide open as if the occupants had fled in panic. The garments tossed onto the bed, the shoes lying on the carpet, and the open drawers in Mme. de Fontanin's room gave an impression that burglars had ransacked it. The little table on which the two women, who had done without a servant for two years past, took their hasty meals was still strewn with the remains of their interrupted dinner. All that, Jenny reflected, had to be tidied up; she must see to it that next day, on returning from the cemetery, her mother should not find the apartment in this shocking chaos, an all-too-vivid reminder of the dreadful moments she had lived through here on that tragic Sunday evening.

Feeling oppressed, uncertain where to begin, Jenny went to her bedroom. Evidently she had forgotten to shut her window when she left; a sudden shower during the previous night had drenched the floor, and a gust of wind had scattered the letters on her desk, upset a vase, stripped the petals off a bunch of roses.

As she slowly removed her gloves, gazing at the havoc round her, she tried to pull herself together. Her mother had given her detailed instructions. From the desk she was to get the key of the store-room at the far end of the apartment, hunt through the boxes in it, and search in the wardrobe till she found two mourning shawls and crape veils. Mechanically she took from its peg the smock she wore for housework in the mornings and slipped it on. But then her strength failed her; she stumbled to the bed and sat down on it. The silence of the apartment seemed to weigh on her shoulders.

“What can it be that’s making me so tired?” she prevaricated with herself. A week ago she had been moving briskly to and fro in these same rooms, sped by the impetus of life. Less than a week—four days ago. Had four days been enough to shatter the peace of mind she had so dearly won?

She sat crouching forward as if under a dead weight. Tears would have been a solace, but she had always been denied that anodyne of weaklings. Even when she was a little girl, her sorrows had been tearless, arid, reticent. Dry-eyed, she set her gaze roaming over the papers lying on the floor, the ornaments on the mantelpiece, until it came to rest on the mirror, held by the dazzling sheen reflected from the sunlit sky. And suddenly in the silvery haze, for a spellbound second, the face of Jacques took form. She rose hastily, closed shutters and window, gathered up the flowers and letters, and went out into the passage.

The air in the store-room was stifling. The heat intensified its smell of dust, wool, camphor, and old newspapers toasting in the sun. With an effort she climbed onto a stool and opened the high-pitched window. With the fresh air, harsh light poured into the narrow room, bringing out the forlorn ugliness of the objects piled within it: empty trunks, discarded bedding, oil-lamps, schoolbooks, cardboard boxes smeared with patches of grey dust and speckled with dead flies. To get to the corner in which the trunks were stacked, she had to shift bodily a dressmaker’s dummy bonneted with an antiquated lampshade whose spangled flounces were held up by bunches of artificial violets. For a moment, gazing at this portentous work of needlecraft which, throughout her childhood, had lorded it on the drawing-room piano, she gave way to sentimental memories. Then she set manfully to work, opening boxes, rummaging in drawers, carefully replacing naphthalene sachets the pungency of which stung her nostrils and made her feel sick. Half fainting, bathed in sweat, humiliated by her languor and struggling against it, she doggedly kept to her task—at least it saved her from her thoughts.

Then, like a sudden shaft of light rending the gloom, an idea, definite if but vaguely formulated, struck on her consciousness at its most sensitive point and brought her to a stop. “Nothing is ever hopeless; everything is always possible.” Yes, after all, she was young, and before her lay the best part of life, uncharted, teeming with possibilities.

And what she was glimpsing now behind these commonplaces was something so amazing, so alarming, that it left her dazed. It had flashed on her that if after Jacques’s desertion she had managed to recover and regain her self-control, this was only because she had then been fortunate enough to banish utterly the faintest hope. . . .

"Am I," she wondered, "beginning to hope again?"

So affirmative was the unspoken answer that a tremor shook her body and she had to lean against the wardrobe to steady herself. For some minutes she stayed unmoving in a trancelike coma, her eyes closed, all but stunned into insensibility. Vivid as in dreams, a pageant of the past sped before her eyes; Jacques, at Maisons, sitting beside her after a game of tennis—she distinctly saw the tiny beads of sweat standing out on his forehead; Jacques walking beside her along the forest road after they had seen the old dog run over outside a garage—she heard his anxious question: "Do you often think about death?"; Jacques at the little garden-gate kissing her shadow on the moonlit wall—she heard his footfalls on the grass as he fled into the darkness. . . . She was still leaning against the wardrobe, shivering despite the heat. Within her reigned a deep, fantastic silence, and the rumble of the city drifting in through the high window came from far away, from another world. How was she to quell that insensate yearning to be happy which her meeting with Jacques had revived four days ago? She was beginning another illness, one that would last indefinitely—only too well she knew it. And this time there would be no return to health, for she would no longer have the wish for it.

Being alone, always alone, was hardest to bear. True, Daniel had been all attention to her while they had been together at Neuilly. Only that morning, while they were breakfasting together in the public dining-room at the hospital, he had taken her hand, struck perhaps by her listlessness, and murmured with an earnest look: "What's the trouble, Jenny darling?" She had shaken her head evasively, withdrawn her hand. It had always been a bitter grief to her that, loving her big brother so intensely, she had never found anything to say to him, anything that might have levelled once for all the barriers that life, their characters, perhaps their very kinship, had set up between them. No, there was no one in whom she could confide. No one ever had really listened to her, understood. No one ever would be able to understand her. No one? *He*, perhaps. Perhaps some day . . . Deep down in her a small, secret voice whispered: "My Jacques!" A blush mantled her cheeks.

She felt worn out, aching in every limb. A glass of cold water might do her good.

With blind, groping steps, steadying herself against the wall, she made her way to the kitchen. The water from the tap seemed to her ice-cold. Dipping her hands in a basin, she dabbed her eyes and forehead. Her strength was gradually returning; she need only wait a while. . . . Opening the window, she rested her elbows on the sill. Golden heat-haze, like a drift of dancing atoms, shimmered on the roofs. In the Luxembourg station a locomotive was whistling forlornly. How often during the last few weeks, on afternoons like this, had she gazed out of that window while she waited for the tea-kettle to boil! Then she had been almost gay, humming a cheerful tune. And suddenly her heart grew faint with longing to be that Jenny of last spring, the convalescent girl who had recovered peace.

In a whisper she asked herself: “How shall I ever find the courage to face tomorrow, all the tomorrows coming after?” But the words that rose to her lips conveyed only a conventional idea; they did not express the real truth, her inmost feeling. For now she had regained hope, she accepted suffering, too. And suddenly this girl who never smiled felt and perceived clearly, as if she had been looking in a mirror, a small, uncertain smile rippling on her lips.

VII

SEVERAL times in the afternoon, and even during his lunch with the two Germans, Jacques had asked himself: Would he go to see Daniel? And each time his answer had been: “Certainly not. Why should I?”

Nevertheless, after leaving the restaurant with Kirchenblatt, as he was crossing the square in front of the Bourse and walking past the Métro station, is suddenly occurred to him that it was only three, and the meeting he meant to attend did not begin till five. “This would have been just the moment,” he reflected, “to look in at the hospital—if I’d wanted to.” He halted, of two minds. “Anyhow, once it’s over, I’ll stop thinking about it.” His mind made up, he left the German abruptly, ran down the steps, and took the subway to Neuilly.

At the entrance of the hospital he found Victor, his brother’s chauffeur, standing beside the car, smoking a cigarette. That meant that Antoine would be present at the interview. So much the better!

But, as he was entering the grounds, he saw his brother approaching. “If you’d come a bit earlier, I’d have given you a lift back. I can’t wait now. Look here, how about dining with me tonight? No? Well—when?”

Jacques ignored the questions. “How can I manage to see Daniel—alone?” he asked.

“Quite simple. Mme. de Fontanin is staying in the mortuary, and Jenny’s away.”

“Away?”

“See that grey roof behind the trees? That’s the mortuary building. Daniel’s there. The attendant will tell him you’ve come.”

“So Jenny’s not here today?”

“No. Her mother’s sent her to fetch some things from their place in the Avenue de l’Observatoire. Are you staying long in Paris? . . . You’ll give me a ring, eh?”

He hurried out of the gate and sprang into the car.

Jacques walked on toward the mortuary. Suddenly he slowed down. A fantastic scheme had crossed his mind. Turning on his heel, he walked back to the entrance-gate and hailed a taxi.

“To the Avenue de l’Observatoire,” he said. “Quickly!”

He stared obstinately at the trees, the passers-by, the traffic—anything to keep himself from thinking! For he knew that if he allowed himself a moment’s thought he would abandon this absurd project to which, despite himself, some secret voice within was fervently impelling him. Once there, what should he do? He had no notion. Or, rather, this: justify himself, cease being the only one to bear the blame. Yes, their misunderstandings must be cleared up, once for all, by plenary explanation.

He had the cab stop at the Luxembourg Gardens, then made his way on foot, almost at a run, forcing himself not to look up at that balcony, those windows, which so often in old days he had come here to gaze at from afar. He dived into the building and was past the concierge’s room in a flash; he feared Jenny might have given orders to say she was not at home.

Nothing had changed. These were the stairs he had climbed so often, chatting with Daniel—a Daniel in knickerbockers with his schoolbooks under his arm; up there was the landing where he had seen Mme. de Fontanin for the first time, on the night of his return from Marseille; from there she had bent down toward the two young truants with no reproach but a grave smile. Nothing had changed, not even the door-bell of the apartment whose tinkle faintly echoed in the background of his memory.

In a moment she would be there. What was he to say to her?

His fingers clenched on the banister, he bent forward, listening. Not a sound behind the door; no footstep. What could she be doing?

After waiting for some minutes he rang the bell a second time, less boldly.

Silence again.

Then hurriedly he ran downstairs and called to the concierge.

"Miss Jenny's in, isn't she?"

"No. Did you know, sir, that poor M. de Fontanin . . . ?"

"Yes. And I know, too, that Miss Jenny's in the apartment. I've an urgent message for her."

"Well, sir, she did come after lunch, but she's gone now. I saw her going out a good quarter of an hour ago."

"So that's it. She's left already." Dully he stared at the old woman. He could not have defined his feelings; were they of vast relief or bitter disappointment?

The meeting in the Rue de Vaugirard did not start till five. Would he really attend it? He had lost all desire to do so. For the first time the shadow of a purely personal interest fell between him and his militant career.

Suddenly he came to a decision: he would go back to Neuilly. If Jenny had things to do on the way back, he could reach the hospital before her, await her at the entrance, and then . . . ! An absurd, foolhardy plan—but anything was better than tamely to accept defeat.

Chance outwitted him. As he alighted from the tram in front of the hospital and was wondering what move to make, someone behind called his name.

Daniel, who had been waiting for a tram in the other direction, had seen him and was crossing the road.

"You, Jacques?" He seemed absolutely thunderstruck. "So you're still in Paris?"

"I got back yesterday," Jacques said uncomfortably. "Antoine has told me—what happened."

"He died without regaining consciousness," Daniel said tersely. He seemed still more embarrassed than Jacques, almost put out by their meeting.

"I've an appointment I absolutely can't put off," Daniel went on. "I'm going to sell some pictures to Ludwigson, as we need the money; and I'm meeting him at my studio this afternoon. If I'd had a notion you'd be coming to see me . . . What's to be done? Look here, why shouldn't you come along with me? We can have a quiet talk in my studio before Ludwigson turns up."

"Right!" Jacques suddenly abandoned all his plans.

Daniel beamed with gratitude. "We can walk a bit of the way, and take a taxi at the Fortifications."

The spacious vista of the boulevard before them sweltered in dazzling light, but the tree-shaded pavement promised well for walking. Daniel looked at once heroic and grotesque in his flashing helmet with the horse-tail floating from it; flapping against his breeches, rapping his spurs, his sword accompanied each footfall with a martial clank. Haunted by premonitions of a war, Jacques heard his friend's explanations with an inattentive ear. He was always on the brink of interrupting, gripping Daniel's arm, exclaiming: "But, damn it, don't you realize what's threatening you?" Then a monstrous notion flashed through his mind, bereft him of speech. Supposing by some tragic chance the efforts of the internationalists proved unavailing, the handsome young dragoon beside him, back in service on the Lorraine frontier, would surely fall on the first day. His heart missed a beat; the words he had meant to say stuck in his throat.

Meanwhile Daniel was chattering away. "Ludwigson said to me: 'Round about five,' but I'd like to sort out the pictures before he comes. You see, it's up to me to save the situation; my father's left us nothing but his debts."

He gave a jarring laugh. That laugh, his volubility, the jerkiness of his speech, betrayed a nervous state unusual with him. It was due to various circumstances: the shock of seeing Jacques again, distressing memories of their first encounter, and his eagerness to bring back to their conversation its bygone note of intimacy and break down his friend's reserve by a free exchange of confidences. Added to this was the exhilaration of the radiant summer day, of a walk in the open air after four days' strict confinement by a deathbed.

So little mindful was Jacques of the fact that dormant somewhere, in his name, was a substantial fortune, that the idea he could come to his friend's aid never entered his head. Daniel, too, had forgotten it; otherwise he would not have breathed a word of his financial straits.

"Debts—and a dishonoured name!" Daniel's voice was gloomy. "Yes, he'll have poisoned our lives right up to the end. Only this morning I opened a letter written to him by some girl in England to whom he'd promised money. He was travelling to and fro between London and Vienna, and he kept a woman at each end. Like a sailor with a girl in every port! Don't imagine," he added hastily, "that I care a damn about his—his propensities; it's all the rest that is so rotten."

Jacques gave an evasive nod.

"Do you wonder why I talk like that?" Daniel went on. "I've an immense grievance against my father. Not in the least on account of his philanderings. If I said, 'Quite the contrary,' it would be nearer the truth. Queer, isn't it? Never once did we talk frankly, familiarly, together—and now he's dead. But if any intimacy between us had been possible, it would have been on that topic only: women, love-affairs. It's perhaps because I'm so like him," he mused aloud, "exactly like him—incapable of holding out against 'temptations' of that order, incapable even of feeling a sense of guilt when I've given way." After a slight hesitation he added: "You're not like that, are you?"

Jacques, too, during the past four years had been apt to yield to such temptations, but never without a sense of guilt. For, lurking in some obscure corner of his personality there remained, though he was not aware of it, a vestige of that puerile discrimination between the "pure" and the "impure" which had cropped up so often in his talks with Daniel.

"No," he said, "I've never had that courage—the courage of accepting oneself as one is."

" 'Courage'? Isn't it, rather, weakness—or self-conceit? Or anything else you like to call it? I imagine that for characters like mine this running from one passion to another is the normal, necessary course, their natural tempo. One should never hold back from anything that comes one's way," he concluded fervently, as if reiterating a pledge made to himself.

Jacques's eyes lingered appreciatively on the manly, clean-cut outlines of the face beneath the helmet-peak. "Daniel," he mused, "has the luck of being good-looking. To speak of 'passion' with such assurance one needs to be 'irresistible,' to be used to find women running after one. Perhaps, too, one needs to have had experiences of a different sort from mine." It was in the childish embrace of Lisbeth, the young, flaxen-haired Alsatian girl, that he had taken his first lesson in the amorous art. Daniel's had come when he was younger; his introduction to sensual pleasure had been at the expert hands of the "professional" who had given him shelter at Marseille. Perhaps, Jacques thought, those very different initiations had left their mark for ever. Does the first experience, he wondered, give a permanent bias to one's personality? Or, on the contrary, is that first experience governed by certain secret affinities to which one will be subject throughout life?

As if he had guessed the turn Jacques's thoughts had taken, Daniel exclaimed: "It's appalling, the tendency we have to complicate these problems! What's love? A matter of health—of physical and mental fitness. Personally, I accept verbatim Iago's definition—remember?—'It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will.' Yes, that's all love is, and it's a mistake to think it anything else. An uprush of the vital sap. Iago knew what he was talking about!"

"I see you haven't lost your habit of quoting English." Jacques smiled. He had no desire to embark on a discussion of "love." He glanced at his watch. The telegrams from abroad did not reach the *Humanité* office before four-thirty or five.

Daniel noticed the glance. "Oh, we've heaps of time," he said. "But we can talk better at my place."

He signalled to a taxi.

On their way, to keep the conversation going, Daniel continued talking about himself and his love-affairs at Lunéville and Nancy, vaunting the charms of the short-lived liaison. Suddenly he felt abashed. "You let me go on rattling away, and you just look at me," he said. "What's on your mind?"

Jacques gave a slight start. Once again he felt an impulse to plunge into the topic haunting all his thoughts. Once again he shrank from it.

"What's on my mind? Why—all that!"

During the silence that ensued each was gloomily wondering whether the picture of his friend, so treasured in remembrance, still had any semblance of reality.

"Take the Rue de Seine," Daniel called to the driver. Turning to Jacques, he added: "It's just struck me—you've not seen my place yet, have you?"

Daniel had rented this studio in the year preceding his military service. Ludwigson was still paying the rent, on the amiable pretext that Daniel used it to store the records of their art review. It was situated on the top floor of an old house with high windows, at the back of a paved courtyard.

Dark, smelly, and decrepit, the old staircase had yet a certain grandeur; it was spacious and adorned with a wrought-iron balustrade. Here and there the steps had caved in. The door of the studio, pierced with a spy-hole like those in prison cells, was opened by Daniel with a massive key which he had procured from the concierge.

Jacques followed his friend into a huge attic room with a sloping ceiling, lit by a large, dust-grimed window. While Daniel bustled about the room, Jacques examined it with interest. The walls were of a uniform neutral grey, without a touch of colour. Two low alcoves, screened by half-drawn curtains, were let into the back wall of the studio; one was painted white and served as a dressing-room; the other, hung with dark-red cloth, contained a large, low bed. In a corner stood an architect's trestle-table, piled with books, albums, and magazines; above it hung a green-shaded lamp. Under the slip-covers which Daniel was hastily removing was a collection of easels on casters and chairs of various shapes and sizes. Stowed in a deal canterbury set against the wall were mounted canvases and drawing-blocks, only the edges of which were visible.

Daniel rolled up to Jacques a frayed leather armchair. “Do sit down. I’ll wash my hands.”

The chair-springs jangled as Jacques sat down. Gazing through the window, he saw a vista of house-roofs bathed in golden light, and recognized the dome of the Institute, the steeples of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, the Saint-Sulpice towers.

Glancing back toward the dressing-room, he had a glimpse of Daniel through the gap between the curtains. Daniel had taken off his tunic and put on a pale-blue pyjama coat. Sitting before a looking-glass, he was smoothing his hair with his palms, smilingly observing his reflected self. Jacques was taken aback; he felt as if he had stumbled upon a secret. Daniel was handsome, his profile clean-cut as a cameo, but he always seemed so little conscious of this, and carried his good looks with such manly unaffectedness, that Jacques had never pictured his friend lingering thus complacently before a mirror. Suddenly, as Daniel began walking toward him, the thought of Jenny set him tingling with emotion. Though there was no real likeness between brother and sister, both had inherited from Jerome a characteristic elegance of build, long, lithe limbs which gave an unmistakable resemblance to their ways of walking.

He rose quickly and moved toward the rack containing the canvases.

“No,” Daniel said, following him. “That’s the dump for my early stuff. The 1911 vintage. Everything I painted that year was full of reminiscences. You remember the cruel remark that Whistler—wasn’t it?—made about Burne-Jones: ‘It’s like something that *might* be quite good,’ or words to that effect. Have a look at this, instead.” He picked out some canvases all depicting the same nude with slight variations. “I did these just before my military service. It’s these studies which have helped me most to understand.”

Jacques supposed Daniel had left the phrase unfinished.

“Understand what?” he asked.

“Why, *that*, of course. That back, those shoulders. It’s essential, in my opinion, to select some tangible object—that back, for instance—and plod away at it till one begins to discern the truth—the simple, vital truth that is a quality of all solid, eternal things. I believe that when one spares no pains, and studies thoroughly some given object like that back or those shoulders, one ends by lighting on a secret, the solution of everything, a sort of master-key to the universe.”

That back, those shoulders! Suddenly Jacques thought of Europe on the brink of war . . .

“I’ve always owed everything I’ve learned,” Daniel went on, “to the persistent study of a single model. Why change? You do much better work when you force yourself to come back constantly to the same starting-point, when each time you have to start all over again and go a bit further in the same direction. If I’d been a novelist, I think that, instead of having a new set of characters in each successive book, I’d have always stuck to the same characters, so as to dig a little deeper every time.”

Jacques kept hostile silence. How artificial, sterile, inopportune, he deemed such problems of æsthetics! He had lost the power of understanding the aim of such existences as Daniel’s. And when he asked himself: “What would they think of him down in Geneva?” he was ashamed of his friend.

Daniel picked up his canvases one by one, held them to the light, and, screwing up his eyes, gave each a rapid glance before putting it back. Now and then he laid one aside, propping it against the legs of the nearest easel. “For Ludwigson.”

Then, shrugging his shoulders, he muttered between his teeth: “When all’s said and done, talent hardly matters, though of course one can’t dispense with it. It’s the work one puts in that counts. Talent’s a mere skyrocket, if the work isn’t put in; it dazzles for a moment, but leaves nothing behind.” Regretfully, it seemed, he laid three successive canvases aside. “If only one could never have to sell ‘them’ anything, and work, *work* all one’s life!”

“So you’re still as wrapped up as ever in your art?” Jacques’s eyes were still fixed on his friend.

Daniel detected the undertone of slightly disdainful wonder in Jacques’s voice, and made haste to answer in conciliatory terms. “Well, some are born men of action, I suppose, and some are not!”

Out of prudence he concealed his true opinion, which was that there were quite enough “men of action” in the world already—for all the good mankind got out of them. Indeed, it was in the interests of the community that people like himself and Jacques, whom nature had endowed with gifts enabling them to develop into artists, should leave the field of action to such as had no other. In his eyes Jacques had flagrantly betrayed his natural vocation. And he saw a confirmation of this view in the fretful, uncommunicative attitude of his boyhood friend. This was surely proof of a rankling sense of frustration, the regrets of those who suffer from a vague unawareness that they have not fulfilled their destiny and hide, under a mask of scorn and bravado, an unavowed impression of having played false to themselves.

Jacques's face grew hard. When he spoke again his head was lowered—which made him almost inaudible. "Let me tell you, Daniel, you live locked up in your art, and it's as if you knew nothing of the world of men. . . ."

Daniel laid aside the picture he was examining. "The world of men?"

"Yes. Of men who lead the lives of ill-used, tortured animals. So long as one turns a blind eye to all that, perhaps one can behave as you do. But once one has had a view of the sufferings of oppressed humanity, it becomes simply impossible to devote one's life to art. It can't be done. Do you understand me?"

"I do." Daniel's tone was pensive. He went up to the window and gazed some moments at the grey expanse of roofs. "Yes," he was thinking, "of course he's right. The world is full of misery. But what can one do about it? Everything's so hopeless—everything but, precisely, art." And he felt even more appreciative of that marvellous haven in which he had been privileged to cast anchor. "Why should I saddle myself with the sins and sorrows of the world? I'd only paralyse my creative energy, stifle my gifts—without benefit to anyone. I wasn't born to be an apostle. And then—Jacques may write me down a monster if he chooses—I've always been determined, yes, *determined* to be happy." Indeed, since childhood he had made a point of safeguarding his happiness at all costs, in the belief—naïve maybe, but carefully thought out—that this was his chief duty toward himself. No easy duty, for it involved unremitting vigilance, since, in following the line of least resistance, a man may plunge head first into a sea of troubles. Certainly the prime condition of his happiness was freedom, and he was well aware that devotion to a common cause always involves the sacrifice of freedom. . . . Since, however, he could not confess as much to Jacques, he had to endure in silence the scornful disapproval he had seen in his friend's eyes.

Turning, he went up to Jacques and gazed at him for some moments questioningly. "It's no use saying you are happy." (Jacques had said nothing of the kind.) "On the contrary, you look sad, terribly worried."

Jacques straightened up. Now, at last, he would speak! It was as if suddenly he had come to a decision too long postponed and the look in his eyes was so earnest that Daniel was dumbfounded.

An imperious ring at the door-bell jarred the air, giving them both a start.

“Ludwigson!” Daniel breathed.

“So much the better,” Jacques thought. “For all the good it would have done . . . !”

“It won’t take long,” Daniel whispered. “Don’t go; I’ll walk back with you.”

Jacques shook his head.

“Must you really go?”

“Yes.” His face was set, expressionless.

Daniel cast him a desperately pleading look; then, conscious that Jacques would not give way, made a gesture of discouragement and hurried to the door.

Ludwigson was wearing a Riviera suit of cream-coloured tusser, close-fitting, with the Légion d’Honneur rosette well in evidence. His immense head looked as if it had been carved in putty; the double chin sat snug upon a very low collar. Ludwigson’s skull was pointed, his eyes were rather narrow, his cheeks flat. The wide, thick-lipped mouth brought to mind a rat-trap.

He had evidently counted on discussing prices with Daniel *tête-à-tête*, and showed some surprise at the presence of a third party. Nevertheless, he moved courteously toward Jacques, whom he immediately recognized though he had met him only once.

“Delighted to see you again. I had the pleasure”—he rolled the “r” prodigiously—“of chatting with you four years ago, at the Russian Ballet, during the intermission. Remember it? You were studying then for the Ecole Normale.”

“That’s right,” Jacques replied. “You must have a wonderful memory.”

“I have!” Ludwigson’s lizardlike eyelids dropped and, as if he wished to confirm Jacques’s eulogy, he addressed himself to Daniel. “It’s from your friend M. Thibault I learned that in ancient Greece—at Thebes, if I remember rightly—a candidate for a magisterial post had to prove that he hadn’t dealt in any form of business for at least ten years. Curious, don’t you think so? I’ve never forgotten it.” He turned to Jacques. “I also learned as well from you that night that in France, under the old regime, before he had the right to use his title, a man must have had his—what do you call it?—patent of nobility, for twenty years at least.” He added, with a graceful bow: “It’s one of my greatest pleasures conversing with well-educated people.”

Jacques smiled. Then, to cut things short, he hastily took leave of Ludwigson. Daniel followed him to the door. “Look here, Jacques,” he whispered awkwardly, “can’t you possibly wait?”

“Can’t be done. I’m late already . . .”

He avoided his friend’s eyes; that hideous vision—of Daniel fallen at the front—had come back, wringing his heart.

They shook hands mechanically, flustered by Ludwigson’s presence.

Jacques himself opened the heavy door, muttering “*Au revoir*,” and ran quickly down the lightless stairs.

In the street he halted, drew a deep breath, and looked at his watch. The Vaugirard meeting was long since over.

He felt hungry. Entering a confectioner’s, he bought two *croissants* and a bar of chocolate, then started off on foot toward the Bourse.

VIII

THAT FRIDAY evening, July 24, in Gallot’s and Stefany’s offices at the *Humanité* the talk was pessimistic. Everyone who had been in touch with the Skipper showed signs of anxiety. At the Bourse, a sudden panic had forced down the 3 per cent government bonds to 80, and even—for a short period—to 78 francs. Never since 1871 had the Rente touched so low a level. And German correspondents reported a similar break on the Berlin Stock Exchange.

Jaurès had paid another call at the Quai d’Orsay in the afternoon. He had looked very anxious when he came back, gone straight to his room, shut himself up in it, and remained there working, refusing to see anybody. His feature article for the next morning was ready. The heading alone had transpired, but that heading spoke volumes: “A Last Chance of Peace.” To Stefany he had observed: “The tone of the Austrian note is shockingly peremptory. So much so that one’s inclined to wonder whether Vienna’s aim isn’t to bring these things to a head, and thus to make any preventive action on the part of the other powers impossible.”

Everything, indeed, would seem to have been fiendishly devised to make confusion worse confounded in Europe. The responsible French leaders were abroad and would not be back in Paris until the thirty-first. They must have heard the news at sea, when crossing from Russia to Sweden, and it was no easy matter for them to consult either with the rest of the French Ministry or with the Allied governments. (Berchtold had arranged things so that the Tsar should not be apprised of the note until after the French President had left the country, fearing, no doubt, that Poincaré's advice would tend to conciliation.) The Kaiser also was away on a cruise and would have some difficulty even if so minded, in promptly urging counsels of moderation upon Franz Josef. Furthermore the Russian strikes, then in full swing, had a paralysing effect on the Russian leaders, much as the civil war in Ireland impeded British action. Lastly, the Servian government had during the last few days been plunged into the turmoil of a general election. Most of the ministers were touring the countryside for electioneering purposes; Prime Minister Pachich was actually away from Belgrade when the Austrian note was handed in.

Definite information was now coming to hand as regards the note itself, which had been received on the Thursday by the Servian government; its terms had been imparted that day to the powers. For all the conciliatory assurances repeatedly given by Austria (Berchtold had explicitly informed the Russian and French ambassadors that the claims put forward would be "most reasonable"), the note was distinctly in the nature of an ultimatum. The Vienna government insisted upon unqualified compliance with its demands and had set a time-limit within which a reply must be forthcoming —an unbelievably short time-limit: forty-eight hours—with a view, it seemed, to preventing the powers from intervening in Servia's favour. A piece of secret information gathered at the Austrian Foreign Office, and forwarded to Jaurès by Hosmer through a Viennese Socialist, justified the worst fears. Baron von Giesl, the Austrian Ambassador in Belgrade, was reported already to have received, along with the order to hand in the note, formal instructions to break off diplomatic relations and leave Servia immediately in the likely event of the Servian government's not having accepted the Austrian demands without discussion by six p.m. on Saturday. These instructions suggested that the ultimatum had been drafted deliberately in provocative and unacceptable terms so as to enable Vienna to speed up a declaration of war. Further information confirmed these discouraging conjectures. Recalled by wire, the Chief of the General Staff, Hötzendorf, had cut short his holiday in Tirol and hastily returned to the Austrian capital. The German Ambassador to France, Herr von Schoen, on leave at Berchtesgaden, had suddenly returned to Paris. Count Berchtold, after conferring with the Emperor at Ischl, had travelled back via Salzburg so as to meet there the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg.

Thus everything concurred to give the impression of a vast, cleverly organized plot. What was Germany's share in this? German sympathizers cast all the blame on the Russians and accounted for the German attitude by the fact that Germany had suddenly been informed of the disturbing activities of the Pan-Slav camarilla and the extent of the military preparations already under way in Russia. In government circles in Berlin the cue was to feign that until now the German leaders had had no inkling of the Austrian demands and had only learned of them from the communication sent to the rest of the powers. Jagow, the Secretary of State at the Wilhelmstrasse, had, it was said, given the British ambassador a positive assurance to this effect. Yet it was understood that the text of the note had been imparted to Berlin at least two days previously.

Was it to be concluded that Germany was deliberately backing up Austria, that she actually wanted war? Trautenbach, who had just come over from Berlin, and whom Jacques had met that evening in Stefany's office, totally rejected any such superficial interpretation of the facts. Germany's attitude was to be accounted for, in his opinion, by the fact that military circles in Berlin still believed in Russia's unpreparedness. Supposing their calculations to be correct, and supposing the risk of a general conflagration to be non-existent owing to Russia's incapacity to go to war, the Germanic powers could take any risks—and be certain that their adversary would "climb down." It was only a question of prompt and vigorous action. The Austrian troops must be in Belgrade before the powers had time to intervene or even to consult. Germany would then appear on the scene. Guiltless of the least connivance or premeditation, she would offer herself as mediator, with a view to localizing the conflict and settling it by negotiations which she would herself initiate. For the sake of peace, Europe would eagerly accept German arbitration and sacrifice the interests of Servia without much protest. Thanks to Germany, order would be restored and the issue be all to the advantage of the Central Powers. The rule of the Dual Monarchy would be consolidated for a long spell, and the Triple Alliance would score an unparalleled diplomatic triumph. These assumptions as to Germany's secret plans were borne out by certain confidential information gleaned among the familiars of the Italian embassy in Berlin.

Stefany having been sent for by the Skipper, Jacques took Trautenbach to the *Progrès*, close by.

The atmosphere in the little room was stormy. The evening papers, the news passed round by members of the *Humanité* staff, were giving rise to varied and impassioned comments.

Shortly before nine, there was a sudden revival of hope. Pagès had just spent a few minutes in the Skipper's room and found him in a less gloomy mood. Jaurès had observed: "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good. This move of Austria's will oblige the nations of Europe to shake off their torpor." Furthermore, the latest dispatches contained abundant evidence of the efforts being made by the Socialist International. The Belgian, Italian, German, Austrian, English, and Russian parties were in constant touch with the French section and were preparing for a combined demonstration on a large scale. Hopeful news had just been received from the German Socialists, vouching for the peaceful intentions of their government. If the Social-Democrats were to be believed, neither Bethmann, nor Jagow, least of all the Kaiser, would countenance being involved in war. Thus there was every reason to expect a forceful and effective intervention on the part of Germany.

From Russia, too, comforting news had arrived. On receipt of the Austrian note, at a hurriedly summoned meeting of the Cabinet presided over by the Tsar, it had been decided to approach the Austrian government immediately with an urgent request for an extension of the time-limit imposed on Servia. This ingenious move, which, without entering into the merits of the case, dealt merely with the secondary issue of the time-limit, might well be favourably considered by Vienna. And any extension, even if only of two or three days, would give a breathing-space to the European statesmen, during which they could agree upon some common line of action. In any case the Russian Foreign Office had lost no time in opening up definite conversations with the several ambassadors accredited to St. Petersburg, which conversations could not fail to bear fruit. Almost at the same time a cable was received from London corroborating the earlier hopeful information. The Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, had taken the initiative in backing up with his full authority the Russian demand for an extension of the time-limit. Furthermore, he was drafting an urgent plan for mediation, with which he meant to associate Germany, Italy, France, and England, the four great powers not directly interested in the conflict. A moderate plan, and one not likely to be rejected, for round the table of this court of arbitration the partners would be evenly balanced—on the one side, Germany and Italy to uphold the interests of Austria; on the other, France and England to represent the interests of Servia and the Slavs.

From eleven o'clock onward, however, evil portents once more darkened the horizon. There was first of all a rumor that, while Germany had agreed to Sir Edward Grey's plan, she had done so in very reticent terms, which seemed to imply she would not join whole-heartedly in the mediatory action of the other powers. Then Marc Levoir came back from the Quai d'Orsay with the news that, contrary to all expectation, Austria had flatly refused Russia's appeal for an extension of the time-limit, which at once struck his hearers as an admission of her aggressive designs.

About one a.m., when most of the militants had left, Jacques came back to the *Humanité* offices.

In the entrance-hall Gallot was showing out two Socialist deputies who had just left the Skipper's room. They were the bearers of a confidential and disquieting piece of information: that very day, while every chancellery was relying on the intervention of Berlin in favour of peace, the German ambassador, Herr von Schoen, who had just come back to Paris, had called on M. Bienvenu-Martin, acting Secretary of State, at the Quai d'Orsay, and read to him a declaration made to him by his government. This surprising document was couched in the curt language of a warning, or even of a threat. Germany coolly declared therein that she approved of both the substance and the form of the Austrian note. She more than hinted that European diplomacy had no business to interfere, that the conflict should properly remain localized as between Austria and Servia, and that "no third power" should intervene in the dispute, "otherwise, the most serious consequences were to be feared." All of which clearly meant: "We are determined to back up Austria; if Russia chooses to intervene in Servia's favour, we shall have to mobilize, and as the system of alliances would automatically come into play, France and Russia would have to face the possibility of a war against the Triple Alliance." This move of von Schoen's seemed to bring suddenly to light a biased, aggressive attitude on the part of German imperialism and a deliberate intention to intimidate all possible opponents. Thus Germany had, more or less overtly, flung down the gauntlet, and the question now was: How would France react?

Gallot and Jacques had remained talking in the entrance-hall and Jacques was just about to leave when a door opened suddenly. Jaurès came out, his forehead beaded with perspiration, his straw hat on the back of his head, his shoulders hunched, his eyes half hidden under his bushy brows. Under his burly arm was tucked a brief-case bulging with papers. He gave the two men a perfunctory glance, replied mechanically to their greeting, strode across the room with a heavy step, and was gone.

IX

MME. de Fontanin and Daniel had spent the night sitting beside the coffin. Jenny, at her brother's instance, had left them, to snatch a few hours of sleep.

When she came back it was close to seven. Daniel tapped his mother lightly on the shoulder. "Come, Mamma. Jenny'll stay here while we have a cup of tea." His tone was affectionate but firm. Mme. de Fontanin turned her tired face toward Daniel. She was aware that there was no use resisting. Here was an opportunity, she thought, for letting him know of her plan to go to Austria. Casting a last glance at the bier, she submissively followed her son out.

Their early breakfast was served in the same room in the annex where Jenny had slept. The open window overlooked the garden. The sight of the gleaming tea-service and the glass jars containing butter and honey brought a smile of ingenuous satisfaction to Mme. de Fontanin's face. For her, the early breakfast with her children had always been a cheerful prelude to the day, a little, hallowed oasis of content in which her native optimism took a new lease of life.

"Yes," she said as she went up to the table, "I can't deny I'm hungry. You too, dear, I expect—aren't you?"

Unthinkingly she began cutting slices of bread and buttering them. Daniel watched her with a tender smile; he was moved at seeing once again in the gay morning light those small hands, white and plump, gracefully intent upon their ritual task; the scene brought back to him the early mornings of his schooldays.

The sight of the well-stocked breakfast tray, by some obscure association of ideas, led Mme. de Fontanin to remark: "I've thought of you so much, dear, during these last manœuvres—did you have enough to eat? Sometimes at night I pictured you sleeping out under a haystack, your clothes all drenched with rain, and I was so ashamed of being in a comfortable bed, I couldn't sleep."

Bending forward, he laid his hand on his mother's arm. "What ideas you have, Mamma! On the contrary, after being cooped up in barracks, it was a treat for us to play at real war for a bit." He was toying with the gold chain-bracelet on her wrist. "And anyhow, Mamma, an N.C.O. on manœuvres has no trouble about getting a comfortable bed to sleep in."

He had come out with it rather thoughtlessly; the memory of certain amorous encounters he had chanced on when in billets flashed into his mind, giving him a feeling of embarrassment, registered—albeit obscurely—by his mother's intuitive mind. She looked away.

After a short silence she asked timidly: "When do you start back?"

"Tonight at nine. My leave is really up at midnight, but it'll do if I'm back for six o'clock parade."

It struck her that the funeral would not be over before half-past one and they would not be back at the apartment till two; that this last day with Daniel would be cruelly short. As if the same thought had come to him he said: "And I have to go out this afternoon, on urgent business."

From his tone she guessed that he was concealing something. But she misjudged its nature. For he had employed exactly the same evasive, rather too casual tone that he used to assume in earlier days when, after sitting in front of the fire at home for an hour or so after dinner, he would rise and say: "Sorry, Mamma, but I've promised to meet some fellows tonight."

He had an inkling of her suspicion and made haste to dispel it. "I've a cheque to cash. A cheque of Ludwigson's."

It was true. He did not wish to leave Paris without having given this money to his mother.

She did not seem to have heard. She was drinking her tea as she always did, in little, scalding sips, without putting down her cup and with a far-away look in her eyes. Her heart was heavy with thoughts of Daniel's impending departure. For the moment she had forgotten all about the funeral. Still, she reflected, she had no right to complain; what had afflicted her for so many weary months, her son's absence, was drawing to a close; in October he would be back and their home life would begin anew. And now she conjured up a picture of tranquil years ahead, for, though she would not avow it to herself, Jerome's death had cleared the horizon. Henceforth she would be free, independent, with her two children beside her.

Daniel was gazing at her with a look of anxious solicitude. "What are you going to do in Paris, you and Jenny, during the next two months?"

(Being pressed for money, Mme. de Fontanin had let her house at Maisons-Laffitte for the summer season.)

Here, she thought, is the moment to tell him that I mean to go to Austria. "Don't be anxious, dear. For one thing, I shall be terribly busy settling up your father's affairs."

"It's on Jenny's account I'm so worried," he blurted out.

Though his sister’s morbid taciturnity was nothing new to him, he had been struck during the last few days by Jenny’s haggard cheeks, the feverish glitter of her eyes.

“She’s awfully rundown,” he explained. “What she really needs is an outdoor life.”

Mme. de Fontanin replaced her cup on the tray without replying. She, too, had noticed something unusual in her daughter’s expression, a careworn, haunted look for which her father’s death was insufficient reason. But she did not share Daniel’s views regarding Jenny. “There’s something sadly lacking in her,” she sighed, adding with touching candour: “She has never learned to *trust*.” Her voice grew slightly formal, deferential, as was her wont when broaching certain topics. “Every human soul, you know, must have its inner conflicts, its trials . . .”

“Yes,” Daniel cut her short. “But all the same, if Jenny could have had some mountain air this summer or gone to the sea . . .”

“Neither would have done her the least good.” Mme. de Fontanin shook her head emphatically, with the obstinacy of all gentle souls obsessed by an unshakable belief. “It isn’t Jenny’s physical health that’s the trouble. Believe me, no one can help her in any way. Each human soul must work out its salvation alone—as it will be alone when the Last Enemy confronts it at the appointed hour.” She was thinking of Jerome’s end, unfriended and alone, and her eyes filled with tears. After a short silence she murmured: “Alone with its Maker.”

“It’s ideas of that sort . . .” Daniel began. There was a hint of exasperation in his voice. Then he took a cigarette from his case and fell silent.

“Yes? ‘Ideas of that sort’?” Mme. de Fontanin repeated in a surprised tone.

She watched him close the cigarette-case with a snap and tap the cigarette on the back of his hand before putting it to his mouth. Exactly like his father! The same hands, the same gestures! The identity was all the more striking as Daniel now wore the ring which Mme. de Fontanin herself had removed from Jerome’s finger before she locked his hands upon eternal rest. The massive cameo ring recalled to her, with a swift stab of pain, those slender yet virile hands that would survive henceforth only in her memory. And at the slightest personal recollection of Jerome she could not keep her heart from thudding wildly, as it had done when she was twenty. But, as ever, such glimpses of the likeness between father and son caused her not only a gentle thrill of pleasure but also immense anxiety.

“Yes? ‘Ideas of that sort . . .’?” she repeated.

“I only meant to say—” He hesitated, screwing up his eyes as he wondered how best to put it. “Well, it’s because of ideas of that sort that you’ve always made a point of never interfering in the lives of others, of letting them follow their own paths, even when those paths were obviously wrong ones and could only bring suffering into their lives and into yours as well.”

Cruel as was the shock, she conjured up a smile, making as if she had misunderstood. “Are you blaming me, my dear, for having allowed you too much liberty?”

Daniel, too, smiled and, bending forward, laid his hand on his mother’s. “I don’t blame you, Mother dear, and I’ll never blame you for anything—you know that quite well.” He gazed at her tenderly; then his obsession got the better of him. “And you know quite well, too, that I wasn’t thinking of myself when I said that.”

A wave of indignation swept over her. “Really, Daniel, that’s not nice of you!” She was stung to the quick. “You never miss a chance of speaking ill of your father; it’s most unkind.”

On that particular morning, a few hours before the funeral, such talk was singularly ill-timed, and Daniel was conscious of it. He already regretted having made the remark. But his vexation with himself for having come out with it urged him perversely on to make things worse.

“And you, Mamma, have only one idea in your head—and that’s to whitewash him! You shut your eyes to everything, even the appalling difficulties in which he’s left us.”

Though she had only too good reasons for sharing Daniel’s opinion, for the moment her one desire was to shield the father’s memory against the son’s attack. “Oh, Daniel, how unjust you are!” The cry ended in a sob. “But, then, you never understood your father, the man he really was.” With the blind zealotry of those who plead indefensible causes, she went on. “There’s nothing really serious to reproach your father with—nothing whatever. He was too chivalrous, far too generous and trusting, to succeed in business. That’s all there is against him. He let himself be led astray by scoundrels whom he should have kept at arm’s length. Yes, there’s nothing worse than that—and I shall prove it. He may have acted unwisely, with ‘deplorable irresponsibility,’ as Mr. Stelling called it in my hearing. But that’s the utmost that can be laid at his door. He lacked a sense of responsibility.”

Daniel's lips stirred and he made a slight, impatient movement of his shoulders, but he did not look at his mother or answer her. He recognized that, despite their mutual love, and however much he might desire it, any hope of speaking frankly on this subject must be ruled out. At the first contact, their hidden thoughts were at cross-purposes; grievances rankled even in their silences. He stared dully at the floor, without speaking.

Mme. de Fontanin, too, kept silent. Why go on with a conversation that had taken a wrong turn from the start? She had intended to inform her son of the criminal proceedings that had been instituted in Vienna, so as to make Daniel understand how necessary it was for her to go there. But her son's harshness had cut her so deeply as to drive out of her head all thoughts save one: how to exculpate Jerome. And this obviously took the cogency out of the arguments she might have used to justify the trip to Austria. "It can't be helped," she thought. "I'll explain it in a letter."

For several minutes there was a constrained silence. Daniel was gazing out of the window, his eyes fixed on the tree-tops and the morning sky. He was puffing at a cigarette with a simulated ease that duped his mother as little as himself.

"It's eight," Mme. de Fontanin murmured. She had just heard a clock strike in the hospital. Gathering up the crumbs that had fallen in her lap, she strewed them on the windowsill for the birds, then said in a tranquil voice: "I'll go down again now."

Daniel rose. He was heartily ashamed of himself and aching with remorse. As always happened when his mother's blind devotion to her husband forced itself upon his notice, his enmity toward his father grew the keener. Some impulse to which he could not give a name had always urged him to persecute that too indulgent love.

Throwing away his cigarette, he went up to his mother with a shy smile, then in silence bent and kissed her, as he often did, on her forehead, just at the margin of her prematurely white hair. His lips knew the place well; and his nostrils, the warm scent of the skin. Tilting her head a little backward, she clasped his cheeks between her palms. She said nothing, but, smiling, let her gaze sink into his, and her smile, her eyes in which was not a glimmer of reproach, seemed to be saying: "Everything's forgotten. Forgive me for being so easily put out, and don't feel the least remorse for having hurt me." He knew that wordless speech so well that with a slow flutter of his eyelids he signified assent. She was getting up from the chair; he helped her to rise.

Still unspeaking, she took his arm and went down the stairs to the basement. He opened the mortuary door for her and she entered alone.

As she went in, the perfume of the roses wilting on the coffin came to her, borne on a waft of cool, cloistered air.

Jenny was sitting beside the coffin, motionless, her hands resting on her knees. Mme. de Fontanin went back to her seat beside her daughter. She took her Bible from her little handbag, which was hanging on the back of the chair, and opened it at random. (As a matter of fact, though she deemed it at random, the well-thumbed, broken-backed old volume invariably opened at one or another of the passages, her favourites, to which she oftenest turned.) She began reading.

> Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.
>
> Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.

She raised her eyes, meditated for a while, then laid the book on her lap. Her reverent way of handling, opening, and closing her Bible was in itself a rite of piety and gratitude.

She had wholly regained her peace of mind.

X

ON the previous evening, after watching Jaurès enter a taxi and drive away into the darkness, Jacques had joined a group of Socialists with a propensity for late hours who often saw the night through at the Chope tavern. The private room reserved for members of the Party had a special entrance from the courtyard, and was thus available after the public bar had closed. The talk had been so animated and gone on so late that Jacques had not left the premises till three. Lacking the energy at this belated hour to trudge back to his lodgings at the Place Maubert, he had turned into a small, shabby hotel near the Bourse. No sooner did his cheek touch the pillow than he fell into a heavy sleep which even the early morning hubbub of this crowded quarter of the city failed to disturb.

It was broad daylight when he awoke. After a hasty wash he went downstairs, bought the morning papers, and hurried to the terrace of a café on the boulevards to study them.

At long last the press thought fit to sound a warning note. The Caillaux case was relegated to the second page and bold headlines in every paper proclaimed the gravity of the situation, describing the Austrian note as an ultimatum and the line being taken by Austria as one of barefaced provocation. Even the *Figaro*, which for the past week had been devoting all its columns to a full-length, *verbatim* report of the Caillaux trial, now flaunted on its front page an inch-high headline: THE AUSTRIAN MENACE, and a whole page dealt with the European crisis under the caption "Is It War?" The semi-official *Matin* took a definitely warlike tone. "The Austro-Servian controversy was one of the subjects discussed during the President's stay in Russia. The Dual Alliance will not be caught unawares." Clemenceau, in his paper *L'Homme Libre*, wrote: "Never since 1870 has Europe been so near the brink of war, a war the scope of which it is impossible to foresee." Describing von Schoen's visit to the Quai d'Orsay, the *Echo de Paris* spoke of "a threat from Germany following on the heels of Austria's peremptory demands," and a late edition warned its readers that war might be declared overnight if Servia did not yield.

Naturally, only a war between Austria and Servia was contemplated for the moment. But what assurance was there that the conflagration could be kept from spreading? Jaurès in his leading article made no secret of the fact that the last hope of peace lay in the humiliation of Servia, an inglorious surrender to Austria's demands. Extracts from the foreign press showed that opinion in other countries was equally pessimistic.

On that morning of July 25, barely twelve hours before the expiration of the time-limit granted Servia, all Europe—as foretold by the Austrian general whose ominous remark Jacques had culled in Vienna a fortnight earlier—had a rude awakening.

Pushing aside the newspapers littering the table, he drank his coffee; it had gone cold. True, he had learned nothing he did not know already, but somehow, stated thus in print, this world-wide consternation took on a new, appalling actuality. In a mood of profound dejection he watched the daily crowd of workmen and employees alighting from their buses and hurrying away to their work. There was an unwonted earnestness on their faces and each was carrying an open newspaper. For a moment his courage failed him; the burden of his loneliness seemed past enduring. Then suddenly a thought crossed his mind—of Jenny, Daniel, the funeral taking place that morning.

Hastily rising, he set off in the direction of Montmartre. It had struck him that he might look in at *Le Libertaire*. He was eager to be back again in an atmosphere of combat.

In the Rue d'Orsel, even at this early hour, a small group had collected in quest of news. Newspapers of the "advanced" persuasion were being passed from hand to hand. The front page of the *Bonnet Rouge* was devoted to the Russian strikes. For most revolutionaries the serious nature of the labour unrest in St. Petersburg was one of the best guarantees of Russian neutrality—in other words, the restriction of hostilities to the Balkans. All those connected with *Le Libertaire* were at one in condemning the remissness of the Socialist International and accusing the leaders of "playing up" to their respective governments. Now, if ever, was surely the moment to deal a vigorous blow, to foment strikes in other countries by every possible means so as to paralyse all the high commands of Europe simultaneously. Now was the ideal opportunity for a mass uprising that might well not only dispel the threat of war but bring the revolution many years nearer.

Jacques listened to their talk, but was chary of expressing his own opinion. In his view the Russian strikes were a double-edged weapon. They might indeed checkmate the warlike activities of the High Command, but they might also furnish a government in a tight corner with a pretext for taking drastic measures. Under colour of the danger of war, martial law might be proclaimed and the revolutionary movement violently cut short by stern, repressive action.

The clock pointed to eleven precisely when he was back again at the Place Pigalle. "Now what was it I had to do this morning at eleven?" he suddenly asked himself. Nothing came. "Eleven, Saturday?" Anxiously he racked his brains to remember. "Was it the Fontanin funeral?" But surely he'd never had the least intention of attending it.

He walked on, his eyes directed at the ground, puzzled as to what to do. "I'm hardly presentable," he mused. "Not even shaved! Still, in the crowd I wouldn't be noticed. Of course the cemetery's quite near; I could drop in at a barber's—a matter of five minutes. I could just shake hands with Daniel; it's only the decent thing to do. The decent thing, and it wouldn't commit me in any way. . . ."

Already his eyes were hunting for a barber's shopsign.

When he reached the cemetery, the caretaker told him the funeral service had already begun and showed him the direction to take. Soon he had a glimpse, across the gravestones, of a group in front of a small family vault inscribed: DE FONTANIN. He recognized Pastor Gregory and Daniel; they had their backs to him.

The Pastor's raucous voice rose through the silence: " 'The Lord said unto Moses: I will be with thee. And fear not, poor sinner, when you are walking in the Valley of the Shadow, God will be with you, too.' "

Jacques made a circuit of the group so as to have a front view of the mourners. Uncovered, with the full light falling on his brows, Daniel's head dominated all the others. Three heavily veiled women were beside him. The one in front was obviously Mme. de Fontanin; which of the other two was Jenny there was no telling.

His arm uplifted in a comminatory gesture, his eyes fanatically aflame, the Pastor was apostrophizing the deal coffin laid on the threshold of the vault under the garish light.

"Poor, miserable sinner, whose sun went down before the shut of day! But, nay, we shall not weep over you as we weep for men without hope. You have left the region of things seen, yet what is lost to our material eyes is but the fleeting form of your vile body. This day you have put on the shining armour of Christ, called to your Master's side in His most glorious service. You have entered before us into the joy of our Lord. And I bid you, my brethren, praying at my side today, possess your souls in patience. For that happy release is drawing near to all of us. Father, into Thy hands I commend our spirits. Amen."

The attendants lifted the coffin, slung it above the tomb, and, paying out the ropes, gently lowered it into the darkness. Leaning on Daniel's arm, Mme. de Fontanin gazed down into the yawning hole . . . (That must be Jenny behind her, Jacques thought, next to Nicole Héquet.) Presently, guided by one of the undertaker's staff, the three women slowly made their way to a funeral coach waiting in the cemetery avenue; it moved away at once, at walking pace.

Daniel was standing by himself at the end of the pathway leading to the grave, his gleaming helmet tucked under his arm. He was looking his imposing best; slim, tall, graceful, and, if as usual a shade punctilious in his gestures, perfectly at ease, he was receiving the condolences of the family friends who were filing past him slowly, one by one.

Jacques watched him, and that mere distant glimpse was enough to fan the ashes of his early ardour into a gentle glow of warm affection.

Daniel noticed him and, as he shook his hand, gazed at him with fond surprise. "Thank you for coming, Jacques." Then, hesitantly, he added: "I'm leaving tonight. I'd very much like to see you again before I go."

The sight of Daniel had brought to Jacques's mind the imminence of war, of fighting on the frontier, the war's first victims. . . . "Have you seen the papers today?" he asked.

Daniel stared at him uncomprehendingly. "The papers? No. Why?" Then, doing his best not to sound too insistent, he said: "Won't you come to see me off at the Gare de l'Est tonight and say good-bye?"

"What time?"

Daniel's face lit up. "The train leaves at nine-thirty. Shall we meet at the bar at nine?"

"I'll be there."

They gazed at each other for a moment before shaking hands. Then, "Thanks," Daniel said in a low voice.

Jacques walked away without once looking back.

XI

SEVERAL times in the course of the morning Jacques had wondered what reactions the turn for the worse in the political crisis might be producing on Antoine. He had vaguely hoped to meet his brother at the funeral.

After a hasty lunch he made his way to the Rue de l'Université.

"The doctor hasn't finished luncheon, sir," said Léon as he led Jacques to the dining-room. "But I've just served the dessert."

To his annoyance Jacques found that Isaac Studler, Jousselin, and young Roy were there as well; he did not know that they lunched every day with Antoine. It was a custom Antoine had established, as being the best way of keeping in daily touch with his assistants, since his mornings were taken up with hospital work and the afternoons with his private practice. And for the other three men, bachelors all, this arrangement meant not only a saving of time but also of an appreciable daily outlay.

"You'll have lunch with us, won't you?" Antoine said.

"Thanks; I've had my lunch."

Jacques walked round the big table, shaking the hands extended to him. As he sat down he threw out a seemingly casual question: “Seen today’s papers?”

Antoine gazed at his brother for a moment before answering, and his look seemed to say: “Perhaps you were right after all.” “Yes,” he said aloud in a thoughtful tone. “We’ve all of us read the papers.”

“Since we started lunch we’ve been talking of nothing else,” Studler confessed, stroking his black beard.

Antoine was careful not to betray unduly his anxiety. All morning a rankling irritation had been preying on his mind. For he set store on feeling himself surrounded by a stable, smooth-running social system, much as he needed a smooth-running home where each material problem was solved for him, in an efficient manner and without his intervention, by a reliable domestic staff. He was quite prepared to put up with minor defects in the system, to overlook occasional scandals in high places—much as he shut his eyes to Léon’s wasteful habits and Clotilde’s petty pilferings. But he considered that in no event should the destinies of France give him more anxiety than did the proper functioning of his pantry or his kitchen. And it went against the grain that political embroilments should threaten to disturb his working programme, force their tempestuous way into his life.

“I don’t consider,” he said, “that there’s occasion for any great alarm. It’s not the first war-scare we’ve had. Still, I don’t deny that this morning’s papers strike a rather disagreeable note. There’s too much—how shall I put it?—sabre-rattling for my taste.”

At the last words Manuel Roy looked up at Antoine; in the boyish face the dark eyes glowed. “A sabre-rattling, Chief, that’ll be heard across our frontiers. And which, unless I’m much mistaken, will give pause to some of our too greedy neighbors.”

Jousselin, who had been bending over his plate, quickly looked up at the young man. Then he returned to the task of methodically peeling with the tip of his fruit-knife a peach impaled on his fork.

“Nothing’s less certain,” Studler remarked.

“Still, it may very well have that effect,” Antoine suggested. “And perhaps it was necessary.”

“I wonder!” Studler sounded dubious. “It’s a damned risky game to play, intimidation! It infuriates the enemy quite as often as it checks him. Yes, I’m much more inclined to think the government is committing a vast blunder by making the welkin ring with ‘sabre-rattling’ as you call it.”

“Well, we can hardly put ourselves in the place of the men who’re in command,” Antoine sagely remarked.

“What I ask above all of the men who’re in command,” Studler retorted, “is for them to act prudently. To take an aggressive line at all is an imprudent thing to do. And to make people think that circumstances compel them to take that line is equally imprudent. Nothing could be deadlier to the cause of peace than to get the idea rooted in the public mind that we’re threatened by a war—or even that there’s the possibility of a war.”

Jacques kept silent.

“Personally,” Antoine said, without looking at his brother, “I can quite understand how a leading statesman—even if as a private citizen he disapproves of war—may be led to take certain aggressive steps. If only for the simple reason that he holds a post of responsibility. A man who has been given the reins of power, whose duty it is to watch over the safety of his country, may well, if he has any sense of realities and if the attitude of a neighbouring state strikes him as a real menace——”

“Not to mention the fact,” Roy broke in, “that one simply can’t conceive of a statesman worth his salt who’d let his sentimental prejudices run away with him—to the point of avoiding a war at all costs. When a man’s at the head of a country that has a place on the map, a great nation with an empire overseas, he’s got to think realistically. The most pacifist of our Prime Ministers, once he’s in the saddle, is bound to discover pretty quickly that a country can’t keep its wealth and guard its territories from the greed of neighbours unless it has a strong army, an army that compels respect and now and again ‘rattles the sabre’—if only to remind the rest of the world that it exists.”

“ ‘To keep its wealth,’ ” Jacques mused. “The cat’s out of the bag! To safeguard one’s own possessions and, on occasion, grab a neighbour’s. That’s the whole creed of the capitalists—nations and individuals alike. The individual fights to snatch a profit, the nation to annex new markets, territory, seaports. As if ruthless competition were the only rule of human conduct!”

“Unhappily,” Studler said, “whatever turn things take tomorrow, those sabre-rattling antics of yours may well have the most deplorable effects on French policy, foreign and domestic as well.” As he spoke, he turned toward Jacques, as though inviting his opinion. In the mild eyes there was a languid, disconcerting lustre that made it almost painful to face them squarely.

Jousselin looked up again, gazed at Studler, then swept the others with his glance. He was fair-skinned, and the finely cut features had an engaging gentleness. His mouth was wide, delicately moulded, always hovering on a smile; the nose was aquiline, rather long and melancholy, and there was a curious glint in the elongated, mist-grey eyes.

"That's all very well," he murmured vaguely. "But you all seem too inclined to overlook the fact that nobody wants a war. Nobody!"

"Are you so sure of that?" asked Studler.

"I dare say," Antoine conceded, "there are a few old fire-eaters who'd welcome one."

"Pernicious old fire-eaters," Studler exclaimed, "who dodder away in fine, heroic phrases and know very well that if war came they could still dodder away to their hearts' content, well behind the firing-line, without risking their precious skins!"

"The danger is," Jacques put in with a cautiousness that was not lost on Antoine, "that almost everywhere in Europe it's those same old men who hold the reins of power."

Roy turned to Studler with a laugh. "Why, here's an opening for you, Caliph, who're so keen on new ideas! You might launch that scheme of yours, as a preventive measure: in the event of mobilization, all the oldest contingents to be called up first, and all the veterans to be dumped in the front line."

"It wouldn't be such a bad idea," Studler grunted.

There was a short silence while Léon served the coffee.

"There's one way and only one," Studler continued in a gloomy voice, "of almost certainly preventing wars. It's a drastic measure, but perfectly feasible in Europe."

"Meaning?"

"To insist on a general referendum, to leave it to the nation to decide."

Jacques alone gave an approving nod.

Encouraged, Studler amplified his view. "Isn't it illogical, isn't it preposterous, that in these days of democracy and universal franchise the power of declaring war should be left to a few men, a government? Jousselin says: 'Nobody wants a war.' Surely no government in any country should have the right to embark on a war—even a defensive war—against the will of the majority of its electors. When it's a question of life and death for a nation, the least one can say is that the nation itself should be consulted. That ought to be a *sine qua non*."

Whenever Studler became excited the wings of his hook-nose began to flutter, dark blotches mottled his cheeks, and his big equine eyes grew slightly bloodshot.

“There’s nothing Utopian in all that,” he added. “All that’s needed is for every nation to force its government to add a short amendment to its constitution. ‘Orders for a general mobilization shall not be passed, and no war shall be declared, unless and until a plebiscite has been held and a clear majority of 75 per cent has voted in favour of such measures.’ Think it over! That’s the only legal and practically certain way of putting an end to war. In times of peace—we’ve seen it in France—a man with jingoistic views may on occasion find a majority to vote for his election; there are always hotheads who delight in playing with fire. But if, when there’s talk of mobilization, that man was compelled to sound out the opinions of those who put him into power, he wouldn’t find anyone willing to confer on him the right of declaring war.”

Roy gave a little soundless laugh.

Antoine, who had risen, tapped his shoulder. “Give me a light, Manuel, old man. Now let’s hear your views about all that. What would your paper have to say to it?”

The young man looked up at Antoine; his eyes had the docility of an attentive pupil, but he was laughing still with a faint air of bravado.

Antoine turned to Jacques. “Manuel, I may tell you, is a fervent reader of the *Action Française*.”

“I read it too, every day,” Jacques said, gazing at the young doctor, who returned his scrutiny. “They’re an exceptionally intelligent lot, the men who write for it, with really logical minds. One seldom detects a flaw in their arguments. The trouble is—to my mind, anyhow—they almost always start with the wrong premises.”

“Really, now?” Roy drawled. He still had his jaunty, rather supercilious smile, as if it were an effort to bring himself to speak with the unenlightened of subjects which he had at heart. He reminded Jacques of a child wanting to keep a secret. In his eyes, however, there sparkled now and then a light of truculence. Then, as if Jacques’s criticism had stung him out of his reserve, he took a step toward Antoine and blurted out: “Personally, Chief, I must say this everlasting Franco-German tension’s getting on my nerves. It’s been poisoning our lives for the last forty years, ours and our fathers’. And we’ve had enough of it! If a war’s the only way of ending it, let’s have a war and get it over. Things are bound to come to that sooner or later. What’s the good of waiting, postponing the inevitable?”

“Let’s go on postponing it,” Antoine smiled. “A war indefinitely postponed’s uncommonly like peace!”

“Well, personally, I’d rather have done with it once for all. For this much, anyhow, is certain: after a war, whether we win (as seems more probable) or whether we lose, the matter will be definitely settled in one way or another, and we’ll hear no more about the ‘Franco-German problem.’ Not to mention”—his face grew earnest—“that in the pass we’ve come to, a good bloodletting might do wonders for us. Forty fat years of stagnant peace are bound to tell on the morale of a nation. And if the spiritual integrity of France is to be recovered only at the cost of a war, well, thank heavens there’re some of us will pay the cost without haggling over their precious lives.”

There was not a trace of braggadocio in Roy’s tone, nor was there any doubting his sincerity. All present were conscious of this—and that they had before them a man of firm convictions, ready to give up his life for the cause that he believed in.

Antoine had heard him out, standing, his cigarette between his lips, his eyebrows puckered. He said nothing, but his eyes lingered on the young man in a look of grave affection tinged with sadness. Courage always appealed to him. For some moments he gazed at the smouldering tip of his cigarette.

Jousselin had gone up to Studler; with his forefinger, the nail of which was yellow, eaten away by acids, he tapped the Caliph on the chest.

“There you are! We always come back to Minkovsky’s classification—into ‘syntonous’ and ‘schizoid’ types: men who take life as it is and men who turn their backs on it.”

Roy burst out laughing. “I’m a ‘syntonous’ type, I suppose?”

“Yes, and the Caliph’s ‘schizoid’; and neither of you will ever change.”

Antoine glanced at his watch and turned to Jacques. “Come to my den for a minute or two, ‘Schizoid,’ ” he said with a smile, “if you’re not in too much of a hurry.”

Opening the door of his little study, he stood aside to let his brother pass. “I’m very fond of young Roy,” he said. “He’s such a decent, healthy-minded youngster. And straight as a die. A bit narrow in his ideas, of course,” he added hastily, as Jacques made no response. “Sit down. Have a cigarette. I expect he got on your nerves a bit. One’s got to know him, to understand him. He has the typical mentality of the man who’s keen on games; he never beats about the bush, he faces the facts cheerfully, courageously. He has no use for subtleties of thought—not that he lacks the critical faculty, in his work at any rate. But instinctively he brushes all doubts aside, for uncertainty holds a man up. Perhaps he’s right. His view is that life shouldn’t be spent in juggling with ideas. He never asks: ‘What’s a man to think?’ but: ‘What’s a man to *do*? How can he make himself most useful?’ I’m not blind to his failings, but they’re mostly the faults of youth. They’ll pass. Did you notice his voice? Sometimes it breaks, goes shrill like a schoolboy’s, then he forces it down and talks in deep tones like an adult.”

Jacques, who had settled into a chair, was unconvinced by his brother’s eulogy of Roy. “I prefer the other two,” he confessed. “Jousselin especially seems quite a nice fellow.”

“Jousselin,” Antoine laughed, “is a fellow who always has one foot in wonderland. The typical inventor’s mentality, I imagine. He has spent his life dreaming of things that lie just on the inside edge of the impossible, in that semi-real world where minds like his sometimes make real discoveries. And he has made some, confound him! Really important ones, what’s more. I’ll tell you about them when we’ve more time. Roy’s very funny when he talks about him. ‘Jousselin,’ he once said to me, ‘is a fellow who insists on seeing none but three-legged calves. Some day he’ll deign to observe an ordinary calf and then he’ll fancy he has made a wonderful discovery, and go round telling everyone: “Would you believe it, there are calves with four legs, too!” ’ ”

He stretched himself full length on the sofa, locking his hands behind his head. “As you see, I’ve got together a pretty good team. All three men are very different, and each supplies what the others lack. You’d met the Caliph before, hadn’t you? He’s immensely useful to me; the amount of work he can put in is simply amazing. And the fellow has brains, marvellous brains. I might almost say his brain-power is the most striking thing about him. It’s at once his strength and his limitation. He understands everything without an effort. And each new thing he learns is neatly docketed for reference in his brain—it’s as if he had the pigeonholes all ready in advance. With the result that there’s never the least untidiness in that big head of his. Yet somehow I’ve always felt there’s something queer, outlandish, about him—one can’t quite say what it is—due to his race, I suppose. I don’t know how to put it, but his ideas never seem to come out of himself, to be really part and parcel of his personality. It’s very odd. He doesn’t use his brain as a natural organ belonging to himself, but like a tool—a tool that comes from outside, that somebody has lent him.”

While speaking, he had glanced at the clock; now lazily he swung his legs off the sofa.

Still, Jacques mused, he must have read the papers! Doesn’t he realize the threat that’s hanging over all of us? Or does he rattle on like that just to avoid discussing it?

“Which way are you going?” Antoine asked, as he got up. “Can I drop you somewhere with the car? I’m going to the Quai d’Orsay, to the Foreign Office.”

“Really?” Jacques was taken aback and made no effort to conceal his surprise.

“I’ve got to see Rumelles,” Antoine explained at once. “Oh, not to talk politics; I’m giving him an injection every two days. Usually he comes here, but he called up to let me know he was so overwhelmed with work that he couldn’t leave his office.”

“What does he think of the present state of affairs?” Jacques ventured to ask.

“Haven’t a notion. I thought of asking him about it. Come back this evening and I’ll tell you. No, you’d better come with me; it’ll only take ten minutes, and you can wait for me in the car.”

Tempted, Jacques pondered for a moment, then nodded.

Before leaving, Antoine went to his desk and locked the drawers. “Do you know what I did just before, when I came home?” he asked in a low voice. “I hunted up my military service-book to see my duties in the event of mobilization.” He did not smile. Then in a calm voice he added: “I’m to join up at Compiègne—on the first day.”

Silently the two brothers gazed into each other’s eyes. Then after a moment, Jacques said gravely: “And I’ve no doubt that all over Europe thousands of other fellows did exactly the same thing.”

“Poor old Rumelles!” Antoine remarked as they went down the stairs together. “He was terribly rundown after this last winter and was due to go on leave about now. But Berthelot’s asked him to skip his leave—on account of all this to-do most likely. So he came and asked me to do something to help him to stick it out. I’ve started a treatment, and I hope to fix him up.”

The words were lost on Jacques. His mind was too full of the discovery that, for some cause he could not fathom, all his old affection for his brother had come back today—warm and deep as ever, yet exacting and dissatisfied.

“Oh, Antoine,” he cried impulsively, “if only you knew them better, the masses, the workers of the world, how . . . how different you’d be!” His tone implied: “How much better as a man you’d be—and how much nearer we should be to one another! If only—if only it were possible for me to love you!”

Antoine, who was walking in front, turned on Jacques indignantly. “Do you imagine I don’t know them, after fifteen years of hospital work? Don’t forget that for three hours each morning, day after day, I’ve been seeing factory workers, people from the industrial suburbs, all sorts and conditions of men. And, as a doctor, it's the real man I see, the man whom suffering has stripped bare of all pretences. Can you say that sort of experience isn't as instructive as yours?"

No, Jacques thought obstinately, morosely. No, it isn't the same thing!

When, twenty minutes later, Antoine left the Ministry and came back to his car, his look was anxious. "They're in a fearful stew in there," he muttered. "Cables are pouring in from all the embassies, people rushing about madly between the various departments. Everyone's very apprehensive about the tone of the reply that Servia's due to send this evening." Without heeding his brother's questioning look, he asked: "Where are you going now?"

"To the *Humanité*," was on the tip of Jacques's tongue, but all he said was: "To a place near the Bourse."

"I can't drive you there; it would make me late. But, if you like, I'll drop you at the Place de l'Opéra."

No sooner was Antoine seated than he began speaking again. "Rumelles looked worried. This morning, I gathered, all the Foreign Office staff were staking high hopes on a semi-official communication from the German embassy declaring that the Austrian note was not an ultimatum but only a 'demand for an immediate reply.' That, it seems, conveyed in diplomatic jargon several interesting facts: first, that Germany was making serious efforts to tone down the effects of Austria's high-handed gesture; second, that Austria would not refuse to parley with Servia."

"So we've come to that!" Jacques exclaimed. "They're staking their last hopes on verbal quibbles of that sort!"

"Also, as this morning Servia seemed ready to give in all along the line, almost without protest, there were good grounds for hope."

"And then?" Jacques asked impatiently.

"Then, later on, news came that Servia was mobilizing three hundred thousand men and that, Belgrade being dangerously near the frontier, the Servian government was preparing to move from the capital tonight to a safer place in the interior of the country. Which makes it look as if the Servian reply won't be the hoped-for capitulation and that Servia has reasons for expecting to be suddenly attacked."

"What about France? Does France propose to do anything about it, take some sort of initiative?"

"Rumelles, naturally enough, is guarded, but, from what I could gather, the opinion prevailing among the members of the government is that we've got to show ourselves very firm—if necessary, speed up quite openly our preparations for war."

"I see. The usual policy of bluff!"

"Rumelles says—and one has the feeling that he's repeating what he's been told to say: 'Considering the pass things have come to, the only way for France and Russia to curb the Central Powers is to show that they're prepared to face the worst.' And he said this, too: 'If either of us flinches, it means war.' "

"And, of course, all of them have the idea in the back of their minds that, supposing our threats don't take effect, and if war should break out, our preparations will give us a start over the others, anyhow."

"Certainly. And in my opinion that's a sound argument."

"But don't you see," Jacques cried, "the Central Powers are bound to argue in the same way! And then? Yes, Studler's right; these sabre-rattling tactics are the riskiest of all."

"We've got to leave such matters to the experts," Antoine cut in fretfully. "They must know better than we do what's the wisest line to take."

Jacques merely shrugged his shoulders.

They were nearing the Opera.

"When shall I see you again?" Antoine asked. "Will you be staying on in Paris?"

"I really don't know."

Jacques was stepping out of the car when Antoine touched him on the arm. "By the way . . ." He paused, to choose his words. "You know—or you don't know—that every other Sunday afternoon a few friends gather at my place. Tomorrow Rumelles is to come at three for his injection and he's promised to join us afterward, for a short time, anyhow. If you'd like to meet him, I'll be delighted if you'll come. Under the present circumstances what he has to say may be . . . instructive."

"Tomorrow at three?" Jacques said in a non-committal tone. "Well, yes, perhaps. I'll do my best. Thanks."

XII

AT the *Humanité* office nothing more was known than what Antoine had passed on to Jacques after his talk with Rumelles.

Jaurès had left for twenty-four hours' electioneering in the Rhône Department, where his friend Marius Moutet was running for Parliament. Though the Skipper's absence at such a critical hour had an unsettling effect on the editorial staff, the atmosphere was rather optimistic, and they were awaiting the reply to the ultimatum without undue anxiety. The impression was that Servia, under pressure from the powers, would adopt a tone conciliatory enough to deprive Austria of the least pretext for taking umbrage.

High hopes were founded, above all, on the repeated assurances given by the German Socialist Party; it seemed that, faced by a common danger, French and German Socialists had at last achieved a whole-hearted unity. Moreover, most encouraging reports of the spread of the international pacifist movement were steadily pouring in. Demonstrations against the threat of war were growing more and more impressive in every country. Socialist groups throughout Europe were actively conferring with a view to taking concerted, drastic action; the plan of launching a general strike, as a practical deterrent, seemed to be making headway everywhere.

As he was leaving Stefany's office, Jacques met Mourlan, who had come in quest of news. After a few general remarks about the situation, the veteran revolutionary shepherded Jacques into a corner of the room. "Where are you staying, boy? Have you heard that just now the cops are nosing round in all the lodging-houses? Old Gervais has had trouble with them. So's Crabol."

Jacques knew that the keeper of the lodging-house where he was staying, on the Quai de la Tournelle, was on the police list of suspects. Though his identity papers were in order, he had no wish to come in contact with the police.

"Take my tip," Mourlan advised him. "Don't waste any time. Clear out this evening."

That could easily be done. It had just struck half-past seven, and his meeting with Daniel was not till nine. The problem was where to move to.

Mourlan had an inspiration. One of the *Etendard* group, a travelling salesman, was leaving for a week. He rented a room by the year on the top floor of a house near the Halles, facing the porch of Saint Eustache's Church. It was a quiet place and most unlikely to figure on the police registers.

"Let's step round and see," Mourlan suggested. "It's quite near."

The comrade was at home and the matter was settled at once. Less than an hour later Jacques had transferred his scanty belongings to his new abode.

The station-clock pointed to a few minutes after nine when he reached the Gare de l'Est. Daniel was waiting on the platform at the entrance to the bar. As soon as he caught sight of Jacques he went up to him, looking uncomfortable.

"Jenny's here," he said at once.

A flush rose to Jacques's face. His lips parted on an almost soundless "Ah . . . !" and for a moment all sorts of contradictory plans raced through his head. He looked away, to conceal his discomfiture.

Daniel supposed he was looking round for Jenny. "She's on the platform," he explained. "She insisted on seeing me off." He sounded apologetic. "It would have been unkind to tell her about our appointment; she wouldn't have dared to come. So I only mentioned it just now."

Jacques had regained his composure. "Well, I must be going, anyhow," he said briskly. "I only came to say good-bye." He smiled. "And now that's done, I'm off!"

"No, please don't go!" Daniel cried. "I've heaps of things to say." Suddenly he added: "I've been reading the papers."

Jacques looked up, made no comment.

"Tell me, Jacques," Daniel asked, "if there was a war, what would *you* do?"

"What would I do?" He made a gesture seeming to imply: "That would take too long explaining." Then, after some moments' silence, he said, putting all the fervour of his hope into his voice: "But there won't be a war."

Daniel was watching him attentively.

"I can't acquaint you with all the plans that are on foot," Jacques went on. "But you can take my word for it—I know what I'm talking about. Already, throughout the working-class of Europe there's been such a wave of indignation, and the forces of socialism have been mobilized so effectively, that no government can any longer feel sure enough of its hold on them to embark upon a war."

"Is that so?" Daniel sounded frankly incredulous.

Jacques closed his eyes for a moment. Suddenly, as on a diagram, the situation in its entirety took form across the twilight of his mind. He saw two clean-cut, contradictory lines of force: the left-wing parties at daggers drawn with all existing governments, doing their utmost to stir up the masses to revolt; on the right were the reformists, who, believing that diplomacy could find a way out, were doing their best to co-operate with their governments. And all at once he was afraid, a sickening doubt came over him. But then he opened his eyes again and, with a conviction that impressed Daniel despite himself, repeated: “Yes. You’ve no idea, I suppose, of the driving force behind the Workers’ International as it is today. Everything’s provided for. All is set for an obstinate resistance—everywhere: in France, in Germany, in Belgium, and in Italy. The least attempt to start a war would be the signal for a world-wide revolution.”

“Which might, perhaps, be even more terrible than a war,” Daniel suggested.

A shadow fell on Jacques’s face, and he did not answer for a while. “I’ve never been in favour of violence,” he admitted. “Still, if it came to a choice between a world war and a rebellion that would prevent it, how could one hesitate? If some thousands have to die on the barricades to spare the world a futile massacre of millions, there are a good many Socialists in Europe who would feel no more qualms than I do.”

Then he wondered what Jenny was doing. If her brother lingered here too long, she would come to fetch him.

“Jacques!” Daniel suddenly exclaimed. “I want you to promise me . . .” His courage failed him when he tried to continue. “I’m terribly afraid for you,” he ended lamely.

Jacques thought: “He’s in a hundred times greater danger than I am, and not for a moment does he think about himself.” He was greatly moved. Forcing a smile onto his lips, he said: “But I tell you, there won’t be a war. Still, we may very well come within an ace of it, and I hope the nations will take the lesson to heart this time. We’ll talk all that over some day, if you like. Now I’m off. *Au revoir.*”

“No. Don’t go yet. Why should you?”

Jacques made a vague gesture toward the platform. “You’re . . . keeping her waiting.”

“Anyhow, you might see me into my car,” Daniel said sadly, “and say a word to Jenny.”

A tremor sped down Jacques’s spine. Taken unawares, he stared blankly at his friend.

“Come along!” Daniel clutched his arm affectionately. “I’ve taken a platform-ticket for you.”

Jacques thought: “I’m a fool, giving in to him like this! I ought to put my foot down, to go away.” Nevertheless, deep down in him, a soft, insidious voice urged him to follow Daniel.

The station-hall seethed with passengers, soldiers, baggage trucks. It was a Saturday night and for many the beginning of their summer vacations. Jacques and Daniel threaded their way between vociferating, laughing groups surging round the ticket-offices. As they approached the platform-entrances, the air grew darker. Smoke-clouds swirled under the huge glass roof, people scurried about in all directions, the tumult was deafening.

"Mind, not a word about the war in Jenny's presence!" Daniel shouted in Jacques's ear.

She had observed them approaching from the far end of the platform and hastily turned away, pretending she had not seen them. But she could feel their coming; her throat grew parched and the muscles of her neck tautened. When her brother tapped her shoulder, somehow she brought herself to turn with a look of feigned surprise. Daniel was startled to see her face so white, but put it down to fatigue and the emotion of their parting, also perhaps the contrast between her face and the black dress.

Without looking at Jacques, she greeted him with a distant nod and, as her brother was present, dared not refrain from holding out her hand as well. "I'll leave you two together," she said in a shaky voice.

"No, no!" Jacques exclaimed at once. "I'll go instead . . . I mean, I've got to be off. I've an appointment at ten—at the other end of Paris."

Under a compartment beside them a steam-pipe began hissing so shrilly that they could not hear each other speak; a cloud of vapour billowed round them.

"Well, good-bye, old man." Jacques touched his friend's arm.

Daniel's lips moved, but Jacques could not catch the words, if any. A wan, wry smile screwed up one corner of his mouth; in the shadow of the helmet his eyes glowed strangely, desperately, fever-bright. He gripped Jacques's fingers with both hands. Then, of a sudden, bending, he put his arm awkwardly round his friend's shoulders and kissed him—for the first time in their lives.

"*Au revoir*," Jacques said. Hardly knowing what he did, he freed himself, glanced toward Jenny, bowed, gave a forlorn smile to Daniel, and walked hastily away. But when he was leaving the station some secret instinct made him halt at the edge of the sidewalk.

In the grey dusk the thoroughfare lay spread before him, spangled with lamps and surging with its tides of traffic—a no-man's-land between two worlds. Beyond it lay in wait for him his life of militant activity, a life of loneliness. But on the hither side, in the station just behind him, what wonderful possibilities! He did not know, would not define their nature. All he knew was that to leave this place would be like rejecting a heaven-sent chance, casting away for ever a golden opportunity.

Feebly, unheroically, he shirked making a decision. Some baggage trucks were drawn up along the wall behind him, and he sat down on one—but not to think things out; in his present state of mingled apathy and nervous tension he was incapable of that. His hat pushed back, he sat hunched forward, his arms limply dangling, his eyes bent on the sidewalk, breathing heavily, his mind devoid of thoughts.

Probably, had chance not intervened, he would have sat on unmoving till presently his mind and nerves regained composure. Then, caught up once more by the feverish rhythm of his life, he would have rushed to the *Humanité* office to learn the contents of the Servian reply. Had it so fallen out, a whole cycle of potential experience would have escaped him, doubtless for ever. But chance did intervene. A porter needed the truck on which he was sitting. Jacques rose and with an enigmatic smile glanced first at the man, then at his watch.

Uncertainly, as though yielding to a casual impulse, he walked back into the station, took a platform-ticket, crossed the central hall, and took his stand beside the platform exit-gate.

XIII

THE STRASBOURG express had not yet left. The three tail-lamps on the guard’s van glowed clear and still. Somewhere, hidden among the people on the platform, were Daniel and Jenny.

Nine-twenty-eight. Nine-thirty. A ripple of unrest traversed the crowd. Doors slammed belatedly. Across the livid sheen of the arc-lamps flurries of snow-white steam swirled up to the glass dome; the line of brightly lit compartments strained and shuddered, to an accompaniment of little creaks and thuds. Jacques’s eyes were riveted on the guard’s van, unmoving yet. At last it rumbled off, unmasking the gleaming rails as the three red lights receded; slowly the train bearing Daniel away dwindled into the night.

"What next?" Jacques asked himself; he really believed he had not yet made up his mind.

He was standing beside the platform-barrier, watching the people who had seen the train off streaming by—dim wraiths which, as they passed under an arc-lamp just above him, seemed to come momentarily to real life, only to merge once more into the shadows.

Yes, that was Jenny. When he saw her in the distance, his first impulse was to hide, to slink away. But something stronger than his shame held him there; more, led him to advance to meet her.

She was heading straight toward him. Her face still bore the imprint of the parting with Daniel. She walked quickly, with unseeing eyes.

Suddenly, from two yards away, she caught sight of him. Jacques saw her face grow tense at the shock, and, as on that previous evening at Antoine's, a brief glint of terror shone in her dilated pupils.

At first she could not believe that he had had the effrontery to wait for her; something must have delayed him at the station. Her one idea was not to meet his eyes, to slip past him without recognition. But she was caught in a stream of people hurrying out; she could not help passing near him. Then she grew conscious that his eyes were fixed on her intently, and it flashed on her that he was there on her account. When she drew level with him, mechanically he raised his hat. She took no notice of the greeting, but, edging round those in front of her, with lowered eyes, hurried toward the exit, stumbling a little in her haste. It was an effort to keep herself from running. Only one thing mattered now—to get away from him as quickly as possible, to hide in the crowd, to plunge into the subway station, to escape.

Jacques swung around, so as to keep her in sight, but did not move away. Again he asked himself: "What next?" This moment, he knew, was critical, decisive. "Not to lose sight of her," he thought, "that's the important thing."

He started off in pursuit. Travellers, porters, baggage trucks—every sort of obstacle lay between them. He had to steer his way round a whole family camped on their impedimenta; he all but fell over a bicycle. When he looked up, Jenny had vanished. He zigzagged across the crowd, stood on tiptoe to peer with distraught eyes into the maelstrom of moving forms. At last, amid a stream of people converging on the exit, he glimpsed a black veil, slim shoulders. . . . Now he must not lose her again, must keep his gaze clamped like steel to that slender form!

But she had the start of him. While, hemmed in by the crowd, he was vainly trying to advance, he saw her cross the central hall and turn right, toward the entrance to the subway. Chafing with impatience, he forced his way through the crowd roughly, hustling aside all who were in his path, and started down the steps. Where was she? Then he saw her at the foot of the stairs. In a few strides he had caught up with her.

Again he asked himself: "What next?"

He was quite near her now. Should he address her? Another step and he was at her heels. Breathlessly he called her name: "Jenny!"

She thought she had shaken him off, and his cry was like a brutal blow dealt her from behind. She reeled forward.

Again he called her name: "Jenny!"

She gave no sign of having heard, but took to her heels, spurred on by panic terror. Her heart had grown so heavy that it seemed like one of those intolerable burdens the dreamer has to carry in a nightmare, making escape impossible.

At the end of the passage another flight of steps plunged downward; it was almost empty. Without troubling where it led to, she began running down the steps. At the bottom she saw an arrow pointing to the platform, a ticket-inspector punching tickets. Feverishly she began fumbling in her bag. Jacques saw the gesture. It meant she had a ticket. He had none; the ticket-inspector would not let him by. Once she reached the platform, all hope of catching up with her would be lost. Promptly he made a spurt, drew level, passed her, then swung round and boldly barred her way.

She was trapped, and knew it. Her limbs seemed giving way beneath her. But she faced up, looked him full in the eyes.

He stood before her, barring the way, flushed, his features blurred, staring at her with fanatic eyes; it was the face of a criminal or a madman.

"I want to talk to you."

"No!"

"I insist."

She held him with her gaze, mindful not to betray her terror; the pale, dilated pupils expressed only anger and disdain.

"Go away!" she panted hoarsely, without raising her voice.

For some moments they stayed unmoving, face to face, dazed by the violence of their emotions, staring at each other ragefully.

But they were blocking the narrow passageway; people hurrying to the trains slipped between them, cursed them for mannerless young people, then looked back, their curiosity whetted. Noticing this, Jenny lost her nerve completely; better give in than cause a public scene. He was the stronger;

there was no eluding an interview. But, anyhow, it must not take place here, before all these inquisitive eyes.

She turned on her heel and began walking rapidly up the steps. Jacques followed. Suddenly they found they were outside the station.

“If she hails a taxi,” Jacques thought, “or jumps into a tram, I’ll get in with her.”

The street was brightly lit. Boldly Jenny threaded her way across the traffic, Jacques at her heels. A bus missed him by inches; the driver threw a curse at him. But little he cared for danger. His eyes were fixed on the slim form hurrying ahead of him. Never had he felt so sure of himself.

As she stepped onto the sidewalk she looked back. He was following, a few yards behind. Her mind was made up, she would not try to avoid him. Indeed, just now she was almost eager to make an end of it, to let him hear how she despised him. But—where? Certainly not in this crowded street.

She was unfamiliar with that part of Paris. She noticed a boulevard going up to the right. It was thronged with people, but she took it, at random.

“Where’s she going?” Jacques wondered. “It’s absurd. . . .”

His mood had changed; the morbid excitement of a few minutes ago had given place to a vague abashment, mingled with a sentiment of pity.

Suddenly she paused. On her left was a short, narrow street, dark and empty, overshadowed by a lofty building. Deliberately she turned into it.

What would he do? She felt him coming closer. Straining her ears, with tingling nerves, she braced herself to swing round at his first word, at last to give free vent to her anger.

“Jenny, please . . . please forgive me.”

The one thing she had not expected! That note of humble, fervent pleading in his voice! She felt ready to faint, halted, steadied herself against the wall.

For a while she stayed thus, unmoving, hardly breathing, her eyes closed.

He had taken off his hat and remained standing a little way from her.

“If you insist, I’ll leave you. I’ll go away at once without another word. I promise it.”

She only grasped the meaning of his words a few seconds after hearing them.

“Do you want me to go away?”

She thought: “No!” and suddenly was amazed at herself.

Without waiting for an answer, he breathed her name again, and then again: “Jenny!”—so gently, shyly, tenderly, that the mere tone of his voice was a declaration of love.

And she heard its message; raising her eyes, she gazed covertly across the shadows at his resolute, anxious face. The sudden happiness that welled up from her heart almost suffocated her.

Again he asked: “Shall I go away?”

But now his tone was quite different; now he was sure she would not dismiss him until she had heard him out.

She gave a slight shrug and instinctively assumed a look of frigid scorn—her one resource for safeguarding her pride a little longer.

“Jenny, let me speak to you. I *must*. Please, please don’t refuse me that. Then I’ll go. Come to that little public garden in front of the church. Anyhow, you’ll be able to sit down there. Will you come, Jenny?”

She felt the insistence of his gaze compelling her, and it thrilled her even more than his voice. How firm was his determination to solve the riddle of her heart!

She could not find strength enough to answer. But with a stiff gesture, as if she still were yielding only to compulsion, she seemed to tear herself away from the wall and began walking again with the measured gait and unseeing eyes of a somnambulist.

He walked at her side in silence, a little behind her. A cool, delicate fragrance, so faint as to be hardly perceptible, came in wafts toward him, mingling with the warm air of the summer night—Jenny’s perfume. And emotion, the pangs of self-reproach, brought tears to his eyes.

That night for the first time the veils were lifted and he frankly admitted to himself the truth: that he had been eating his heart out for Jenny’s forgiveness, for her love, from the moment she had crossed his path again. He had half a mind to tell her so—but how could she believe him? He had always behaved to her like a brute, a clumsy, mannerless boor! And surely nothing could ever efface this last affront, his outrageous conduct at the railway-station. . . .

XIV

LAID out terracewise in front of Saint Vincent de Paul's Church, the little public garden was at that hour completely deserted, but the gentle lamplight flooding it dispelled any suggestion of unseemly furtiveness. In the Place La Fayette, too, which it overlooked, the traffic had subsided. They entered the garden by the top gate.

Taking the lead, Jacques walked toward the bench where the light was brightest. Jenny let him guide her and, when they reached the bench, sat down at once with a sedate assurance that belied the fact that her legs were giving way beneath her. Though the rumble of the city reached their ears, it seemed to her that a vast silence brooded round them, the sultry silence, lightning-laden, that preludes a storm. Some elemental power was hovering in the air, some dreadful thing quite beyond her control, beyond his, perhaps; something that would suddenly burst upon them. . . .

"Jenny!"

The sound of a human voice came like a deliverance. And the voice was calm, and almost comforting.

He had dropped his hat on the bench and was standing a little way from her, talking. What was he saying?

"I've never been able to forget you."

A word rose to Jenny's lips: "Liar!" but she said nothing and did not raise her eyes.

Vehemently he repeated: "Never!" Then, after a pause that seemed eternal, added, more softly: "Nor have you forgotten."

She could not withhold a protesting gesture.

"You may have loathed me, that I can well understand," he went on sadly. "In fact I loathe myself for what I did. But *forgotten*, no! All the time, deep down in our hearts, we've been thinking of each other—on the defensive!"

She could not bring out a word. But, so that at least he should not misconstrue her silence, she shook her head with all the energy she could muster up.

Impulsively he moved toward her.

"I can't expect you ever to forgive me. I daren't hope you will. All I ask of you is to understand; to believe me when I tell you, looking into your eyes, that when I went away four years ago I *had* to do it. In justice to myself I couldn't have acted otherwise."

Unwittingly he had imparted to that last phrase the fervour which the ideas of "escape" and "freedom" always kindled in him.

She did not stir, but gazed with hard eyes at the gravel path.

"When I think of all I've been through in these last four years!" He paused, made an evasive gesture. "Oh, it's not that I want to hide anything from you, from you of all people! No, far from it, my dearest wish would be to tell you everything, everything. . . ."

"I don't ask anything of you!" she exclaimed. Her voice had come back, and with it the harsh tone mat made her seem so inaccessible.

There was a silence.

"Oh, how far away from me I feel you are at this moment!" he sighed. Then, after another pause, he confessed with touching simplicity: "It's so different with me; I feel so near, so very near you."

Again that wistfully appealing note had crept into his voice, and again Jenny took alarm. She was aware that she was alone with Jacques in this little night-bound garden, far from everyone, and made as if to rise and go.

"No," he said with a compelling gesture. "Please hear what I have to say. I'd never have dared to approach you deliberately after behaving as I've done. But during these last few days chance has brought us together again. And now—here you are before me. Oh, if only you could read my heart tonight! It all seems to mean so little to me now—my going away, the four years' absence, and even—yes, I know it sounds abominable—all the sorrow I may have brought on you. Yes, all that hardly counts beside what I feel tonight. For me that's all past and done with, now that you're with me and at last I'm talking to you. You can't imagine the feelings that came over me when I saw you again the other day at my brother's place."

"And over me!" she could not help thinking. But for the moment this reminder of her anguish of the last few days only made her furious with herself for having been so weak.

"Listen!" he said. "I don't want to tell you any lies; I'll talk exactly as I might talk to myself. A week ago, it's certain, I shouldn't have dared to say that all through those four years I'd never ceased thinking about you. Perhaps I didn't know it then. I know it now. Now I realize what it was, the dull pain that never left me, something that all the time, everywhere, was eating my heart away. It was . . . my longing for you, you whom I had lost. I had deliberately mutilated my life, and the wound would not heal. Now I see it all so clearly, in this light of the new dawn that's risen for me since you've come back into my life."

She hardly caught what he was saying. Her head was swimming, and the racing pulse of her blood set up a ringing in her startled brain. All the world was growing blurred, trees and houses tottering. . . . For a moment she looked Jacques full in the eyes, braved their impact without flinching, and her look, her silence, the poise of her head, all seemed to say: “When will you stop hurting me like this?”

He went on speaking in the murmurous silence. “You say nothing, and I can’t read your thoughts. But that makes no difference. Yes, it’s true; whatever you may be thinking about me now hardly matters at all. For I’m certain that, if only you’ll listen to me, I shall somehow convince you. Sooner or later you’ll understand. I have the patience and I have the power to win you back to me—I’m sure of it. Through all my boyhood my whole world turned on you; I couldn’t imagine for myself a future in which you had no place—even were it a reluctant place. Reluctant, as tonight. For you’ve always been a little . . . a little hard on me, Jenny. Everything about me displeased you: my character, my education, my clumsy manners. For years you countered all my advances with a sort of cold dislike, which made me still clumsier, still less likeable. Isn’t that true?”

She thought: “Yes, it’s true.”

“But even in those days your distaste for me hardly mattered—as tonight it hardly matters. What a small thing that was beside what *I* felt then, an emotion so strong and so stubborn—so natural, too, and vital—that for a long time I could not, or dared not, give it its real name!” His voice shook; the words came in little gasps. “Remember that wonderful summer! Our last summer at Maisons. Didn’t you realize, that summer, that you and I were puppets in the hands of destiny, and there was no escaping it?”

Each memory reawakened called up others, moving her so poignantly that again she was on the brink of getting up and going, so as to hear no more. Yet she stayed on, listening, not missing a syllable. Her breath, too, was coming in gasps; she had to gather all her energy to still her laboured respiration, not to betray herself.

“Jenny, when once there has been between two people what there has been between you and me, when they’ve been drawn to each other as we were drawn, glimpsed such boundless hopes, such visions of the future, what difference can the lapse of four years, ten years, make? No, something has come into being that can never be blotted out. . . . It’s unthinkable!” He lowered his voice, as if to impart a secret. “It goes on growing, perhaps without our noticing it, and strikes root deeper and deeper in our hearts.”

It was as if he had laid bare a hidden wound, touched on a raw point of which till now she had hardly been aware, so deep it lay beneath the surface of her consciousness. She leaned back a little, pressing her hand on the stone bench and stiffening the muscles of her arm to keep herself erect.

“And you are still the Jenny of that summer; I feel it, I know I’m right. Exactly the same. Lonely, as in the past.” He hesitated. “And unhappy, as in the past. I, too, am the same; lonely, as lonely as I was then. Two lonely people who for four years have been drifting, drifting apart, drifting hopelessly into the darkness. And miraculously have met again. And now that they have met——”

He paused; then cried with sudden vehemence: “Do you remember that last day of September when I summoned up all my courage to say to you as I said just now: ‘I’ve got to speak to you’? That September morning beside the Seine, do you remember it? Our bicycles were lying on the grass in front of us. And, as tonight, it was I who talked. As tonight, you made no answer. But you had come, and you listened to me, as you’re listening now. And somehow I knew that you were yielding. Our eyes were full of tears. When I stopped speaking we didn’t dare to meet each other’s gaze; we parted at once. Then, too, your silence seemed heavy with unspoken thoughts, with sadness. But it was a radiant sadness—radiant with hope.”

She gave a sudden start, straightened up indignantly. “Yes!” she cried. “And three weeks later . . . !” Her voice failed on a choking sob. All unwittingly she was using her anger to mask from herself the growing turmoil of her thoughts.

Jacques’s doubts and fears had been swept away by that reproachful, self-revealing cry; a tide of glorious rapture was surging through his heart. “Yes, Jenny, I know.” His voice was trembling with emotion. “I owe you an explanation for going away like that. I won’t try to exculpate myself. A sort of madness came over me and I gave way. You see, I felt quite desperate, what with my home life, my father, my university career. And there was something else as well.”

He had Gise in mind. . . . Dare he this evening, so soon . . . ? He felt as if he were groping his way along the edge of a precipice.

“Yes, there was something else.” His voice sank to a whisper. “I’ll tell you everything. I want to be frank with you. Utterly frank. It’s hard, you know. When one starts talking about oneself, however much one tries, one can never tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. These sudden impulses I have to run away, to smash everything and break loose, are a sort of disease, I imagine. All my life I’ve longed for peace and calm. I always fancy I’m the prey of others and, if only I could escape from them, if I could manage to start a wholly new life, I’d at least achieve tranquillity. But tonight, Jenny, I know this definitely: if there’s one person in the world who can cure me from breaking loose—it’s *you*.”

She turned on him again, with no less vehemence. “Did I keep you from going four years ago?”

He had an impression of coming up against something hard as steel that was part of her character and would always be so. Even in the past, even on those rare occasions when their so different temperaments seemed momentarily in harmony, always he had encountered that secret, innate hardness.

“That’s true. But—” He hesitated. “Please do let me tell you frankly what I think. What had you done, up to that time, to hold me back?”

In a flash she thought: “Yes, I’d certainly have tried to do something, had I known he meant to go.”

“Don’t imagine for a moment I’m trying to excuse my conduct. No, I’d only like—” The gentleness of his voice, his timid smile seemed to crave her pardon in advance for what he was about to say. “What did I ever get from you? So little! Now and then a look that was less harsh, now and then a mood a shade less distant. And sometimes a remark that showed a little trust in me. That’s all. And all the rest of the time—reticence, rebuffs, aloofness. Isn’t that true? Did you ever give me any encouragement that might have been enough to counteract my morbid hankering after the unknown?”

She was too honest with herself not to admit that this reproach was justified. Indeed, it would have been a relief for her just then to be able to blame herself as well as Jacques. But at that moment he came and sat down beside her; she straightened up at once.

“I haven’t yet told you the whole truth.” The tone in which Jacques spoke these last words was so changed, so harrowing, and at the same time so resolute, that she began to tremble.

“I hardly know how to tell you about—about such a thing. But I’m determined to keep back nothing from you tonight, nothing whatever. In those days there was someone else in my life. A charming, sensitive little being—Gise.”

A keen blade seemed to pierce her heart. And yet the spontaneity of this confession, which he was not bound to make, appealed to her so strongly that she almost forgot the pain of it. Yes, he was hiding nothing from her; she could trust him through and through! A curious joy possessed her; she had an intuition that deliverance was near, soon she would be able to desist from this inhuman aloofness and all its agonizing effort.

Jacques, the moment Gise’s name had crossed his lips, had had to stifle an unforeseen emotion, an afterglow of that uncertain love which, as he thought, had died long since. It lasted but an instant, a faint, last gleam from embers of a fire that perhaps had waited till this night to flicker out.

"How shall I explain my feelings toward Gise? Words are such treacherous things. What I felt was an unconscious, surface appeal, made up largely of childhood memories. No, that's understating it; I don't want to be unfair to what is past. Gise's presence was the one bright spot in my home life. She had such a sweet nature, you know; a warm little heart that gives itself unstintingly. She should have been like a little sister to me. But"—his voice choked at the end of each phrase—"I've got to tell you the truth, Jenny. My feelings toward her had ceased to be in any way . . . fraternal. Yes, all the purity had gone out of them." He paused, then added in a whisper: "It was you I loved with a fraternal love, with a love that was *pure*. It was you I loved—like a sister."

A poignant spasm of remembrance seized him and suddenly his nerves gave way. A sob that he could neither foresee nor keep back racked his throat. Lowering his head, he hid his face between his hands.

Abruptly Jenny had risen and moved a step away. It had shocked her, seeing Jacques break down like this, but it had thrown her thoughts into confusion too. And for the first time she wondered if the grievances she had felt against him were not due to a misconception.

He had not seen her rise. When he noticed she was no longer at his side, he concluded she was going away, lost to him. But he made no gesture of recall; crouching forward, he went on sobbing. Did he for a moment—half unwittingly, half deliberately—visualize himself as another might have seen him then, and guess that his tears might stand him in good stead?

She did not go away but stood there helplessly. A desperate struggle was going on within her; under the frozen calm that pride and modesty imposed, she was quivering with tenderness, compassion. At last she brought herself to take the step that separated her from Jacques and looked down on his head, clasped in his hands, bowed low above his knees. Then awkwardly she stretched her arm forward and her fingers lightly brushed his shoulder, which quivered at their touch. Before she could draw back he had clasped her hand and was holding her in front of him. Gently he pressed his forehead to her dress; she felt the contact sear her like a gust of flame. A still small voice within warned her for the last time that she was slipping fast into a perilous abyss, that she did wrong to love, to love this man of all men. She tautened every sinew, but did not draw back. With terror and delight she accepted the inevitable. Too late; nothing could save her now.

He stretched forth his arms as if to embrace her, but all he did was to press the two slim, black-gloved hands between his. And by those hands that now at last she yielded he drew her down upon the bench beside him.

“Only you can give me that sense of inner peace, the peace I’ve never known before and I am feeling now beside you.”

She thought: “I feel it too!”

“Perhaps someone before me has told you that he loved you.” His voice was level, but Jenny seemed to catch in it an undertone just strong enough to thrill her to the depths of her being, spreading a vague, delicious havoc in her heart. “But of one thing I’m positive: nobody else will ever bring to you a feeling that’s as deep as mine, so long-lasting and so vital—in spite of everything!”

She did not reply. She was worn out by her emotions. Every moment she felt that he was taking a stronger hold of her and, conversely, that she belonged to him the more, as more and more she yielded to her love.

“Perhaps you’ve loved someone else? I know nothing of your life.”

She looked at him and her eyes held such amazement, shone so crystal-clear, that he would have given anything in the world to blot out the memory of his question.

Quite simply, in the matter-of-fact tone he might have used for drawing attention to some obvious natural event, he said: “No one has ever been loved as you are loved by me.” He paused, then added: “I feel that my whole life has been merely a prelude to this moment.” She did not speak at once. At last, in a voice so husky she hardly recognized it as hers, she whispered: “Mine too, Jacques.”

Leaning back, she gazed up into the darkness. In one brief hour she had changed more than in a whole decade; her soul was being refashioned by the certitude that she was loved.

Each felt the contact of the other’s arm and shoulder, the soft warmth emanating from the other’s body. Lost in a maze of thought, with fluttering eyelids, wildly pulsing blood, they kept silent, fearful of the solitude around them, of the brooding shadows; apprehensive even of their happiness, as though it were no conquest but a capitulation to some dark necessity.

Time stood still—then suddenly from the church-tower behind them clang upon clang peremptorily jarred the silence.

With an effort Jenny rose. “It’s eleven!”

“Surely you needn’t leave me yet, Jenny?”

“I’m afraid my mother may be worried,” she explained helplessly.

He did not try to keep her; indeed, he felt a new and curious pleasure in renouncing for her sake what he most desired.

Side by side, without speaking, they walked down the steps to the Place La Fayette. As they reached the sidewalk a cruising taxi drew up.

“Do let me see you home, anyhow,” Jacques said.

“No, please.”

Her voice was sad, coaxing and firm at once. And suddenly, as if to excuse herself, she gave him a little smile. It was the first time for many years that he had seen her smile.

“I’d like to be alone a bit,” she said, “before meeting Mother.”

He caught himself thinking: “Very well, then,” and was amazed that this parting should seem so easy.

The smile had left her face, and a look of positive distress had settled on the delicately moulded features; it was as though this new-won happiness were still too recent to have effaced the marks of years of suffering.

Shyly she asked: “Tomorrow?”

“Where?”

Her answer came promptly. “I’ll be at home all day. I’ll stay in for you.”

He could not help being a little surprised at first; but immediately, with a feeling of pride, he told himself that they had nothing to conceal.

“At your place, then. Tomorrow.”

Gently she freed her hand, which he was squeezing almost roughly Then, stooping, she entered the taxi.

Just as it began to move away, a new thought seized him: War! It was as if a chill had crept into the air and the light suddenly gone grey. Gazing at the car already almost out of sight, he struggled vainly against an onrush of overwhelming fear. The spectre holding Europe in suspense that night seemed to have waited till he was alone again, at a loose end, to swoop down on him.

“No, not war!” he muttered, clenching his fists. “Not war, but revolution!”

For the sake of the love to which his life henceforth was pledged, he longed more than ever for a new world, a world of purity and justice.

XV

JACQUES woke with a start. Where was he? What was this shabby room? Half dazed, he blinked toward the window, waiting for memory to return. Gradually it all came back. Jenny, the little garden by the church, the Tuileries, this small commercial hotel behind the Gare d'Orsay into which he had turned at daybreak.

Yawning, he looked at his watch. Nine already! Weary as he was, he sprang briskly out of bed, drank a glass of water, scanned in the glass his haggard features, shining eyes—and smiled.

He had spent the night roaming about Paris. Toward midnight, without realizing how he had got there, he had found himself at the *Humanité* office. Half-way up the stairs he had turned back. He had learned the latest news from the evening papers, which he had glanced through under a street-lamp soon after leaving Jenny. He did not feel up to facing his friends' political confabulations. And on no account would he break the truce he had made with himself or let the tragic turn events were taking mar the splendid hope which made life seem so wonderful that night. Aimlessly he had walked on and on, in the warm darkness, his brain in a ferment, in his heart high festival. The thought that in all the great, night-bound city round him no one but Jenny knew the secret of his happiness filled him with joy. For the first time, perhaps, he had a feeling that the burden of loneliness which had weighed on him always, everywhere, had been lifted. He walked rapidly ahead to a gay, lilting rhythm, as if no slower step could match his jubilation. The thought of Jenny never left him. He repeated to himself the words she had spoken, thrilling to their echo, hearing still each faint modulation of her voice. It was not merely that her presence never left him; she had entered into him, taken possession of him, so thoroughly that his own personality was dispossessed and the look of things, the very meaning of the world, seemed transformed, spiritualized.

Much later on, he made his way into that part of the Tuileries Gardens, near the Pavillon de Marsan, which remains open all night. At that hour there was nobody about; he stretched himself full length on one of the benches. From pools and lawns a cool, clean fragrance was rising, laden at whiles with wafts of heavier perfume from petunias and geraniums. He dreaded the thought of sleeping, for that would mean an end of relishing his joy. He had stayed thus till the sky paled at daybreak, with no clear thoughts in mind, gazing up at the zenith, watching the host of stars retreating one by one. His mind was full of grandiose visions and a peace so pure, so vast, that never had he known its like all his life long.

No sooner was he outside the hotel than he began hunting for a newspaper kiosk. On that day, Sunday, July 26, all the papers printed under indignant headlines the Havas dispatch relating to the Servian reply and, with a unanimity the cue for which had certainly come from the government, protested against the blustering attitude taken by von Schoen at the Quai d'Orsay.

The mere sight of the headlines, the smell of all these papers fresh from the press, revived his fighting spirit. He jumped aboard a passing bus so as to reach the *Humanité* offices the quicker.

Early though it was, there was an unwonted bustle in the building. Gallot, Pagès, and Stefany were already at their posts. News of startling developments in the Balkan imbroglio had just come in.

On the previous day, when the time stipulated by the Austrian note expired, Pachitch, the Prime Minister, had handed the Servian reply to Baron von Giesl, the Austrian representative at Belgrade. This reply was more than conciliatory; it was a capitulation. Servia gave way at every point, agreed to repudiate officially all propaganda directed against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and to publish this repudiation in the *Official Gazette*. Servia further undertook to dissolve the nationalistic organization known as Norodna Obrana and even to cashier such army officers as were suspected of anti-Austrian activities. All Servia asked was to be given further information as to the exact wording of the notice to be published in the *Official Gazette* and as to the nature of the court to be appointed for inquiring into the guilt of the suspected officers. These trivial reservations were of a wholly inoffensive nature.

Nevertheless, as though the Austrian embassy had been given orders at all costs to break off diplomatic relations between the countries and force a war on Servia, hardly was Pachitch back in his office when, to his dismay, von Giesl apprised him that “the reply was unsatisfactory” and that the Austrian diplomatic staff was leaving Servian territory that night. The Servian government which, as a precautionary measure, had taken preliminary steps for mobilization in the afternoon, promptly evacuated Belgrade and withdrew to Kragujevac.

There was no blinking the seriousness of the situation. Beyond all doubt, Austria was out for war.

Far from discouraging the group at the *Humanité* office, the imminence of catastrophe seemed actually to have strengthened their belief that the cause of peace would triumph in the end, and their hopes were lent support by the detailed information Gallot had collected as to the doings of the Socialist International. The anti-war campaign among the proletariat was making headway; even the anarchists were joining in the struggle. Their congress was to meet in London in a week's time and a debate on the European situation was the first item on their agenda. A mass meeting was being organized, for a near date, by the Confédération Générale du Travail. Its official organ, *La Bataille Syndicaliste*, had just published in bold type the resolutions voted at the trade-union conferences as to the line to be taken by the workers in the event of war. "The workers' response to any declaration of war must be the immediate outbreak of a revolutionary general strike."

Furthermore, all the leaders of the Socialist International, after an exchange of views, had been summoned to a convention at the People's House in Brussels and were now making arrangements for a general meeting of their committee with the specific object of coordinating methods of resistance in every European country and taking effective steps in close co-operation, to enable the nations threatened by war to checkmate the reckless policy being followed by their governments.

All which circumstances seemed highly encouraging.

In the Teutonic countries the opposition set up by the pacifists was particularly impressive. The latest issues of the radical Austrian and German newspapers, which had just arrived, were being passed round, and Gallot translated them, interspersing hopeful comments. The Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung* published an elaborate manifesto drawn up by the Austrian Socialist Party, unreservedly disapproving of the ultimatum and calling for a peaceful settlement of the dispute, in the name of the united working-class. "Peace hangs on a thread today. We refuse to shoulder the responsibility for this war, against which we energetically protest."

In Germany, too, the left-wing parties were in revolt. Vehement articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and *Vorwärts* called on the government to repudiate emphatically the line of policy adopted by Austria. The Social-Democrats were organizing a mass meeting in Berlin for Tuesday, the twenty-eighth. In a strongly worded protest addressed to the community at large, they insisted that, even if a Balkan war broke out, Germany must remain strictly neutral. Gallot attached high importance to a manifesto launched the previous evening by the executive committee of the Party. He read out some passages from it, translating as he went. "The war-lust fostered by Austrian imperialism bids fair to involve Europe in wholesale carnage and disaster. We condemn the manœuvres of the Servian nationalists, but by the same token the provocative attitude of the Austro-Hungarian government calls for our vigorous protest. In its demands we find a brutal insolence which has no precedent in dealings with an independent nation. No other motive can be assigned to it than the desire to bring about a war. The class-conscious German proletariat, in the name of humanity and civilization, vigorously protests against the criminal machinations of the war-mongers; we call peremptorily on the government to bring its influence to bear on Austria for the preservation of peace.” This message was welcomed with enthusiastic cries by the little group round Gallot.

Jacques did not share his friends’ unqualified approval. Strong though the terms of the manifesto were, they were not, to his thinking, strong enough. He regretted that no overt reference was made to the complicity between the two Germanic powers. There were grounds for suspecting that the two chancellors, Berchtold and Bethmann-Hollweg, were working hand in glove, and had these suspicions been set forth in black and white, the Social-Democrats might well have enlisted all classes of Germans on their side against the government. Jacques criticized with some asperity the, to his mind, overcautious line that German socialism had adopted. In thus attacking the German Socialists he was indirectly attacking the French Socialists, and especially the parliamentary group, the *Humanité* contingent, whose conduct during the last few days had struck him as pusillanimous, unduly nationalist in outlook, and too inclined to truckle to the government. Gallot met his criticisms by quoting Jaurès, who had no doubts as to the staunchness of the Social-Democrats and the efficacy of their anti-war campaign. Nevertheless, in answer to a question put to him by Jacques, Gallot was forced to admit that, if the news coming in from Berlin was to be trusted, most of the official Socialist leaders had come to accept the fact that military action by Austria against Servia was practically inevitable, and they were prepared to fall in line with the Wilhelmstrasse programme: the *localization* of the war, at all costs, on the Austro-Servian border.

“Given the attitude of Austria just now,” he said, “and the way she’s committed herself—and mind you, there’s no getting away from that!—that plan of localizing the war is a sound and practical one. We’ve got to make the best of a bad job; all we can do is to prevent the trouble from spreading.”

Jacques did not share his opinion. “If we confine ourselves to trying to limit the conflict, it’s as good as admitting we accept—to say the least of it—a war between Servia and Austria. And that necessarily implies we more or less tacitly decline to take part in the mediatory action of the powers.

That's serious enough, but that's not all. Even if the war is localized, it confronts Russia with a dilemma: either she backs down and allows the Servians to be crushed, or else she takes up arms for them against Austria. The odds are, I should say, that the Russian imperialists will snatch at this long-awaited chance of vindicating their national prestige, in which case they'll make no bones about mobilizing against Austria. You can see what that would lead to; automatically it would bring the alliances into play, and the Russian mobilization would be the signal for a general outbreak. So, knowingly or not, by her efforts to 'localize' the conflict, Germany is spurring Russia into war. To my mind, the one hope of peace is, on the contrary—as England proposes—not to localize the conflict but to treat it as a diplomatic problem involving the whole of Europe and directly concerning all the powers, a problem which it's up to the various Foreign Offices to solve between them."

They had heard him out without interrupting, but no sooner was he silent than there came a volley of protests. Each began declaring in an authoritative tone, as if he were in the secrets of the cabinets concerned: "What Germany wants . . ."; "Russia's quite decided . . ."; and the like.

The discussion was growing more and more chaotic when Cadieux appeared. He had returned from his trip to Vaize with Jaurès and Moutet, and come straight on from the station.

Gallot got up at once. "Is the Skipper back?"

"No. He'll be here this afternoon. He stopped off at Lyon, where he had an appointment with a 'silkworm.' " He grinned. "Oh, I'm not giving our friend away. The man he's meeting is a bigwig in the silk industry, but he's a Socialist (there *are* some capitalists like that) and a pacifist as well. Fabulously rich, it seems. And he proposes to turn over some of his money to the International funds—for propaganda. No good looking a gift horse in the teeth, eh, boys?"

"If all the Socialists with the money-bags did as much!" Jumelin muttered.

Jacques gave a start; his eyes stayed fixed on Jumelin.

In the middle of the room Cadieux went on talking; he had embarked on a stirring account of his electioneering trip. "I never saw the Skipper in such form," he declared. He told how half an hour before the meeting, Jaurès had learned of the Servian retreat, Austria's rejection of it, the breaking-off of diplomatic relations, and the mobilization on both sides. "The Skipper was all upset when he mounted the platform. That was the only pessimistic speech he's ever made." On the spur of the moment Jaurès had launched into a dramatic picture of the European scene. In a voice of bitter indignation, he had blamed all the nations, turn by turn, for sharing in the general guilt. Austria was to blame; time and again, by acts of criminal rashness, she had all but set Europe ablaze, and today her evil intent was manifest. What was her object in foisting this quarrel on Servia if not to shore up her tottering monarchy by yet another act of violence? Germany was guilty of having seemed, during the preliminary phases, to back the warlike schemes of Austria instead of urging moderation on her. Russia's guilt lay in her perpetual intrigues to extend her empire southward; for years now she had been dreaming of a Balkan war in which, under colour of safeguarding her prestige, she could intervene without undue risk, push on to Constantinople, and seize the Straits. France, too, was guilty; her colonial policy and, above all, her conquest of Morocco had rendered it impossible for her to protest against similar annexations made by others and to impose her authority in the cause of peace. Guilty, too, were all the statesmen of Europe, all the Foreign Offices, to whose activities were due the divers secret treaties imperilling the very existence of the nations concerned and serving only to enable their governments to embark on imperialist wars. "We have tremendous odds against us," he had thundered, "and against the cause of peace! There's but one hope left of saving the world from war today, and that is for the proletariat to stand up as one man against it. . . . But when I say these things I feel a sort of despair come over me."

Jacques listened with half an ear; when Cadieux had finished, he got up.

A tall, gaunt man, white-haired, grey-bearded, had just entered. He wore a flowing tie and a wide-brimmed felt hat. It was Jules Guesde.

A silence fell on the group. Guesde's presence, the disillusioned, rather bitter expression of his ascetic face, always produced a momentary feeling of discomfort.

Jacques remained leaning against the wall for a few minutes; then suddenly he seemed to come to a decision, glanced at the clock, nodded hastily to Gallot by way of farewell, and hurried to the door.

Militants were coming up and going down the steps in threes and fours, each group engaged in noisy argument and taking no notice of the others. At the bottom of the staircase, an old workingman in blue overalls was leaning by himself against the doorpost. His hands in his pockets, he was watching with a far-away look the people passing in the street. He was chanting in a hollow voice the anarchist refrain which Ravachol had roared out at the scaffold's foot:

“You’ll be merry as a lark
When you’ve lynched that bloody shark
(Damn his eyes!)
Your landlord!”

Passing, Jacques gazed a moment at the singer. That tanned, deeply scored face, with the bald, domed forehead, with its mixture of nobility and vulgarity, of energy and weariness, was not unknown to him. Only when he was in the street did he remember: he had seen the man one evening of the previous winter at the *Etendard* office, and Mourlan had told him that the old fellow had just been released from prison, where he had served a sentence for distributing anti-militarist propaganda at barrack-gates.

It was eleven. The city sweltered in a heat-haze presaging storm. The picture of Jenny, which, faithful as his shadow, had been haunting him ever since he awakened, seemed suddenly to materialize; he saw her slender form, her slightly drooping shoulders, her white neck glimmering through the loosely clinging veil. A smile of happiness rose to his lips. She, assuredly, would approve of the resolve he had just made.

At the Place de la Bourse a cheerful band of youngsters on bicycles swept past him. They had parcels of food strapped to their machines, and were evidently off for a picnic in the country. He followed them with his eyes for a moment, then started off toward the Seine. He was in no hurry. He intended to see Antoine, but he knew his brother was rarely back before noon. The streets were quiet—no one seemed about—and the freshly watered asphalt gave off a pungent odour. He kept his eyes fixed on the sidewalk, unconsciously humming as he walked:

“You’ll be merry as a lark
When you’ve lynched that bloody shark
(Damn his eyes!) . . .”

“Dr. Thibault isn’t back yet, sir,” the concierge informed him.

He decided to wait outside and began walking up and down the street. He recognized the car at a distance. Antoine was driving; he was by himself and looked worried. Before stopping, he gazed at his brother and shook his head gloomily several times.

“What do you make of all that?” He pointed to a sheaf of newspapers on the seat beside him.

Jacques made a wry face but did not answer.

"Won't you come up and have a spot of lunch?" Antoine suggested.

"No, thanks. I've only a word or two to say."

"Here, in the street?"

"Yes."

"Come into the car, anyhow."

Jacques sat down beside his brother. "I want to talk to you—about money." He seemed to get the words out with some difficulty.

"About money?" For a moment Antoine looked surprised. Then at once he exclaimed: "Why, of course! How much would you like?"

Jacques stopped him with a fretful gesture. "That's not it. I want to talk to you about that letter you sent me, after Father's death. About my——"

"Your share of the estate."

"Yes."

He felt a naïve relief at not having had to utter the words.

"So you—you've changed your mind, eh?" Antoine remarked tentatively.

"Perhaps."

"Good!" Antoine rejoined. He was now wearing the look that so exasperated Jacques, the look of an astute clairvoyant reading another's thought.

"With all due deference," he said, smiling, "I must say that the letter you wrote me on that occasion——"

Jacques cut him short. "I merely want to know——"

"What's become of your share?"

"Yes."

"It's at your disposal."

"Would it be a complicated business if I wanted to—to collect my share? Would it take long?"

"Nothing could be simpler. You've only to drop in at the office of our lawyer, Beynaud, and ask him to render an account of his administration. After that, you'll have to see Jonquoy, the stockbroker with whom the securities have been deposited, and give him your instructions."

"Could it be fixed up by tomorrow?"

"In a pinch it might. Are you in such a hurry?"

"Yes."

Antoine did not venture on further questions. “All you’ve got to do,” he said, “is to let Beynaud know that you’re coming. By the way, won’t you be looking in at my place this afternoon to meet Rumelles?”

“Perhaps. . . . Yes, I’ll come.”

“Then it’s quite simple. I’ll give you a letter and you can take it to Beynaud yourself tomorrow.”

“Right!” Jacques said, opening the door. “I’m off now. Thanks. I’ll come back this afternoon and get the letter.”

As he took off his gloves, Antoine watched his brother’s disappearing form. “What a queer fellow he is! He never even asked how much his share amounted to!”

Picking up the bundle of newspapers, he stepped out of the car; rapt in thought, he walked up to his door.

“There’s been a telephone call, sir,” Léon informed him, without raising his eyes. It was the ambiguous formula Léon had adopted once for all, so as to avoid mentioning Mme. de Battaincourt by name, and Antoine never thought fit to remonstrate with him regarding it. “You were specially requested, sir, to ring up the moment you came back.”

Antoine frowned. Anne had a perfect mania for calling him up at all hours on the least pretext. Nevertheless, he walked at once to his little study and went up to the telephone. His straw hat on the back of his head, his hand hovering over the receiver, he passed some undecided moments gazing vaguely at the newspapers he had tossed onto the table. Then abruptly he turned on his heel. “No, I’m damned if I do!” he muttered. Really, today he had other things to think about. . . .

Now that his talk with Antoine had put his mind at rest, Jacques’s one idea was to see Jenny again. But, on account of Mme. de Fontanin, he hardly dared to call at their apartment before half-past one or two.

“What did she tell her mother?” he wondered. “And what sort of reception shall I have?”

He turned into a students’ eating-house near the Odéon and slowly ate his lunch. Then, to kill time, he took a stroll in the Luxembourg Gardens. Dark clouds rising in the west hit the sun now and again.

He was pondering on a jingoistic article in the *Action Française* which he had just read. “For one thing,” he reflected, “England won’t join in. She’ll stay neutral and watch events, till the time comes for mediation. Russia will need a couple of months to get her army into the field. France will be beaten to her feet long before that. So, even for a nationalist, peace is the only reasonable solution. Articles like that are positively criminal; Stefany may say what he likes, but they put ideas into people's heads, there's no denying that. Luckily the masses have a very strong instinct for self-preservation, and—whatever people may say—a marvellous sense of realities."

The spacious garden was dappled with light and shade, gay with flowers and greenery and romping children. Jacques's eye fell on an empty seat at the corner of some shrubbery and he dropped wearily into it. Tingling with impatience, incapable of steadying his mood, he let his thoughts drift idly from one theme to another: Europe, Meynestrel, Jaurès, Antoine, his father's estate—and Jenny. He heard the Luxembourg clock strike the quarter-hour, then the half-hour, and bade himself wait another ten minutes. Then, at the end of his endurance, he jumped up and strode ahead.

Jenny was not at home.

The one thing he had not reckoned on! Hadn't she said: "I'll be at home all day"?

Completely at a loss, he had the explanation repeated to him several times. Mme. Fontanin had left Paris for a few days. Mlle. Jenny had gone to see her off and had not said when she would be back.

At last he tore himself away from the entrance; a fit of dizziness came over him in the street. Such was the chaos of his thoughts that he even wondered for a moment if there were not some connexion between Mme. de Fontanin's abrupt departure and the news Jenny might well have imparted to her when she reached home the previous night. On second thought he recognized that the supposition was absurd. No, he must give up hoping to understand until he had seen Jenny again. He recalled the concierge's words: "Mme. de Fontanin will be away for a few days." In that case Jenny would be alone in Paris for a while—a prospect which consoled him a little for his disappointment.

Meanwhile, what was he to do with himself? He had kept the afternoon free of engagements; he had no appointment till a quarter-past eight, when Stefany was to put him in touch with two particularly active militants attached to one of the local sections.

Antoine's invitation came back to his mind, and he decided to go to his brother's place to spend the time before returning to see Jenny.

XVI

THERE were half a dozen guests already assembled in Antoine's big reception-room. As Jacques, on entering, looked round for his brother, Manuel Roy came forward to greet him, explaining that Antoine was in his consulting-room with Dr. Philip and would be back in a moment.

Jacques shook hands with Studler, Jousselin, and Dr. Thérivier, a genial, bearded little man whom he remembered having met at the bedside of his dying father.

A tall man, still young, with a resolute face bringing to mind Napoleon's in his youth, was holding forth in front of the fireplace. "I don't deny," he was saying, "that all the governments are declaring with equal vigour and with every appearance of sincerity that they're not out for war. They'd do better to prove their good intentions by showing more readiness to meet the other fellow half-way. But they rant on about the national honour and prestige, their indefeasible rights, and lawful aspirations! Each seems to be saying: 'Yes, I want peace—but a peace that *pays* me.' And nobody's shocked by this way of talking. The man in the street's exactly like his rulers; his one idea is to do a good stroke of business. That's what is so serious; it's impossible for *everyone* to make a profit; the only way to peace is the way of mutual concessions."

"Who is that?" Jacques asked Roy.

"Finazzi, the oculist. A Corsican. Like to be introduced to him?"

"No, no!" Jacques hastily replied.

Roy smiled and, shepherding Jacques into a corner of the room, began chatting with him amiably. He was familiar with Switzerland and especially with Geneva, where during several consecutive summers he had taken part in the local regattas. On being asked what he was doing there, Jacques talked vaguely about journalism, literary work. He was determined to maintain an attitude of reserve, not to parade his opinions in this milieu. He hastened to switch the conversation to the war-menace. Remembering some remarks the young doctor had thrown out at their previous meeting, Jacques was curious to hear Roy's views.

"Personally," Roy began, stroking with his fingertips his small, silky, brown moustache, "ever since the autumn of 1905 I've had the possibility of a war in mind. I was only sixteen then. I'd just passed my junior exam and was starting on the senior year. Schoolboy as I was, I realized quite well that my generation would have to count on a day of reckoning with Germany; and many of my schoolfriends felt as I did. We didn't want a war, but from that time we braced ourselves to face it as a natural, inevitable event."

Jacques's eyebrows lifted. "Natural?"

"Why, yes! There's an old score to pay off. And we've got to make up our minds to it sooner or later, if we don't want France wiped off the map."

Just then, to Jacques's annoyance, Studler turned abruptly and walked toward them. Jacques would have preferred to carry on his little investigation without the presence of a third party. Hostile though he was to Roy he did not dislike him in the least.

" 'If we don't want France wiped off the map'!" Studler repeated in a surly tone. He turned to Jacques. "Is there anything more sickening than the way these nationalists have of claiming a monopoly in patriotism and always trying to hide their war-lust under a mask of patriotic sentiments? To hear them, one'd think that a love of war was the hallmark of patriotism."

"Congratulations, Caliph." Roy grinned ironically. "But the men of my generation aren't as easy-going as you are; they're more touchy where honour is concerned. We've had enough of taking Germany's bullying methods lying down."

"Still, so far, you must admit," Jacques put in, "the provocation's come entirely from Austria—and it isn't aimed at us."

"So, pending the time when our turn comes, you're prepared to stand by idly and watch them gobble up Servia?"

Jacques made no reply.

"The defence of small nations, so that's the latest war-cry?" Studler guffawed. "Then, when the English coolly annexed the gold mines of South Africa, why didn't France rush in to help the Boers, a small, weak nation—far more likeable, moreover, than the Servians? And today why don't we rush to the rescue of poor, distressed Ireland? Do you seriously regard any of these noble gestures as worth the risk of launching all the European armies at each other's throats?"

Roy merely smiled; then, addressing himself to Jacques, remarked: "The Caliph's one of those worthies with a sentimental turn of mind who have a lot of silly ideas about war and haven't a notion what it is in reality."

" 'In reality'?" Studler cut in. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean—well, several things. First of all, a law of nature, a deep-seated human instinct that you can't uproot in a man without mutilating him shamefully. A healthy man should exercise his strength; that's a law of his being. Then, again, war provides a man with opportunities for developing a host of virtues, of rare and very fine qualities that have a tonic effect on his morale."

"What qualities?" Jacques did his best to keep to a tone of mere inquiry.

Roy cocked his little bullet-head toward the questioner. "Why, obviously those qualities that I rank highest. Manly enterprise, a taste for risks, a sense of duty, and, best of all, a spirit of self-sacrifice, a readiness to subordinate private inclinations to a great collective and heroic ideal. Don't you realize how heroism can appeal to any young man who's worth his salt?"

"I do," Jacques agreed laconically.

"There's something splendid about physical courage!" Roy's face lit up with a smile of exultation. "War for fellows of our age is a glorious sport—there's no game in the world to touch it!"

"You call that 'sport,' " growled Studler, "when its price is paid in human lives?"

"Well, what of it?" the young man riposted. "Isn't the human race prolific enough to indulge in that form of luxury now and then—when it's needful?"

"Needful?"

"A good bloodletting is necessary sometimes for a nation's health. When there's been a too long spell of peace, the world secretes a host of toxins which it has to get out of its system somehow, like the man who leads a too sedentary life. And just now, I believe, a good bloodletting will do the French morale a world of good. The European morale, too. In fact, it's indispensable, if we don't want this Western civilization to sink into a morass of decadence, of vileness."

"Vileness, to my mind," Studler said, "is just that—giving way to cruelty and hatred."

"What's cruelty or hatred got to do with it?" the young man retorted with a contemptuous shrug. "We've heard those silly old clichés too often; they're the stock-in-trade of pacifists. But, I assure you, for men of my generation war doesn't involve any appeal to hatred, still less to cruelty. War isn't a quarrel between one man and another; it's on a far grander scale, a test-match between nations. A great adventure. The king of sports! The battlefield's a stadium in which two rival teams compete. And the men who're fighting aren't enemies, they're competitors."

Studler gave a short whinnying laugh and fixed his eyes on the young fighting-cock, the dark, dilated, almost expressionless irises swimming in pools of milky whiteness.

"I've a brother who's in the army, in Morocco," Roy went on in a gentler voice. "You haven't a notion, Caliph, what army life is really like. The mentality of the younger officers, their fundamental decency, their self-sacrifice, would be a great surprise to you. They're living examples of all that selfless courage can mean when put to the service of a fine ideal. Some of your Socialists might do worse than go to school with them. They'd have a glimpse of what a disciplined community can be, in which each individual genuinely dedicates himself to the common good and leads an almost monastic life, a life that leaves no room for sordid personal ambition."

He had turned toward Jacques as if asking his approval, and the frankness of his look made Jacques feel it would be unfair to keep silent any longer. "I believe that's quite correct." He weighed his words carefully. "Anyhow, as regards the younger officers of our army overseas. And there's nothing more moving than to see men stoically prepared to give up their lives for an ideal, whatever that ideal may be. But I think, too, that these young officers are victims of a ghastly error. They imagine in good faith that they're serving a noble cause, while in reality they're serving the interests of capitalism. You were speaking of the colonization of Morocco. Well——"

"The conquest of Morocco," Studler cut in, "was nothing more than a racket, a huge conspiracy. And the men who go and get themselves killed over there are its dupes. It never strikes them that they're giving up their lives to serve a gang of brigands."

Roy turned pale. His eyes were aflame with indignation. "In this rotten age we live in," he exclaimed, "the army is the one place where there's still some decency, some nobility left!"

"Ah, here's your brother!" Studler touched Jacques's arm.

Dr. Philip had just come in, followed by Antoine.

Jacques did not know Philip, but he had heard his brother talk of him so often that he observed the newcomer with interest. He saw an elderly man, with a small pointed beard, walking with little springy steps and wearing an alpaca coat so much too large for him that it dangled from his shoulders like a scarecrow's tattered smock. The bright, beady eyes, lurking beneath bushy eyebrows, shot glances right and left without coming to rest on anyone.

There was a lull in the conversation, while those present one by one greeted the eminent physician, who returned their handshake limply.

Antoine introduced his brother. Jacques was conscious of being subjected to a scrutiny so keen as to be almost rude, the mask, perhaps, of an excessive shyness.

“Ah, yes, your brother. . . . Yes, of course,” Philip muttered in his nasal drawl, chewing his under-lip; the tone of voice seemed to imply that he was thoroughly conversant with Jacques’s life and character, down to the smallest detail.

All at once, his eyes still fixed on Jacques, he said: “You’ve been in Germany a good deal, I hear. So have I. That’s interesting, now.”

He was moving forward with little steps as he spoke, steering Jacques toward a window where they would be out of earshot of the others. “Germany,” he continued, “has always been a puzzle to me. A land of extremes . . . of paradoxes, don’t you think? Could you find anywhere else in Europe a type of man more congenitally peace-loving than the German? No. And yet there’s militarism in his blood, it seems.”

“Still,” Jacques ventured to put in, “the internationalist group in Germany is one of the most active in Europe.”

“Do you think so? Yes, that’s all very interesting. But I must admit that, contrary to all my previous ideas on the subject, if we’re to judge by what’s been happening these last few days . . .” He left the phrase unfinished, then went on to say: “It seems that at the Quai d’Orsay everyone had been counting on Germany to take a conciliatory line. And now they’re all at sea. . . . But you were talking about the internationalist movement in Germany, weren’t you?”

“Yes. In Germany, once you get away from the military milieu, you find a pretty general mistrust of nationalism and the army. The League for International Conciliation is a very active organization, and most of the big names of the German middle-class figure on the membership list. It’s far more influential than our pacifist societies in France. Also, we shouldn’t forget that Germany’s a country where we have actually seen a red-hot militant like Liebknecht, after going to jail for his anti-militarist propaganda, being elected to the Prussian Landtag and, after that, to the Reichstag. Can you imagine a notorious anti-militarist here in France getting into Parliament and, what’s more, making his weight felt there?”

Philip gave a few little, meditative sniffs. “Quite so. Quite. That’s very interesting indeed.” Abruptly he went on: “I always used to think that now that capital and credit and big business had become internationalized, now that the smallest local disturbance has repercussions all over the world, that here was a new, decisive factor making for universal peace.” He smiled and stroked his beard. “That was one way of looking at it,” he concluded cryptically.

“That’s what Jaurès thought, and he thinks so still.”

Philip made a wry face. “Jaurès? And Jaurès counts on the influence of the masses to prevent a war. That’s one way of looking at it, of course. One can easily picture a mass impulse of an aggressive form, an outbreak of war-fever. But a mass impulse with the kind of forethought, common sense, and firmness needed to maintain peace—that’s quite another story!

“Perhaps those who, like myself, have a distaste for war are at bottom prompted by purely personal motives, a congenital, almost physical aversion to it. The truly scientific view might well be to regard the destructive impulse as a natural instinct. Biologists, I fancy, bear that out.” Again his thought took a new turn. “The funny thing, you know, is that I can’t discern a single one of all the problems Europe’s tangled up in nowadays—problems it would take years of research to solve—which there’s the faintest hope of cutting, like a Gordian knot, by a war. That being so——”

He broke off with a smile. His remarks never appeared to chime in with what he had just said or heard. There was a mischievous twinkle in his deep-set eyes; he seemed always to be telling himself some spicy story the savour of which he reserved for his private delectation.

“My father was an officer,” he went on. “He served in all the campaigns of the Second Empire. I was brought up on military history. Well, if you take the trouble to unravel the real causes of any recent war, you’re always struck by their *non-necessity*. It’s very interesting. Looking back at it in perspective, we always see that it could have been avoided—to all appearances, quite easily—if two or three statesmen had shown some common sense and a real wish for peace. And that’s not all. In most cases, it seems that each of the nations concerned let itself be stampeded into a state of mistrust and fear, both of them quite groundless and due to a misunderstanding of the true intentions of the adversary. It’s panic that nine times out of ten sets nations at each other’s throats.” He gave a short, crisp laugh that sounded like a cough. “Exactly like a pair of nervous imbeciles who meet each other in a lonely lane at night, get panicky, and end up by going for each other—because each one thinks he’s about to be attacked and prefers taking the offensive, with all its risks, to remaining in suspense. It’s comical, really. Just look at Europe now—hag-ridden by fear! Austria’s afraid of the Slavs and afraid of losing her prestige. Russia’s afraid of the Germans and afraid that, if she stays put, it will be taken as a sign of weakness. Germany’s afraid of a Cossack invasion, and of being ‘encircled.’ France is afraid of Germany’s armaments, and Germany is arming only because she’s afraid, in self-defence. And not one of them will make the least concession for the sake of peace, because they’re all afraid of seeming to be afraid.”

“There’s another thing,” Jacques suggested. “The imperialist powers deliberately keep up this atmosphere of fear, because it suits their purposes, as they well know. Poincaré’s policy during the last few months might be defined as a scientific exploitation of national alarm.”

Philip had not been listening. “The most damnable thing”—he caught himself up with an abrupt guffaw—“the most comical thing, I mean, is that all the politicians try to hide this fear behind a parade of noble sentiments and bravado.”

He noticed Antoine coming toward them, and stopped speaking. With Antoine was a man in the early forties whom Léon had just shown in. It was Rumelles. He cut an imposing figure, forecast by nature to adorn official functions. His big head was flung well back, as if overweighted by the thick, shaggy mass of his silvery-blond hair. A short, bushy moustache, the tips of which were jauntily up-twirled, gave a touch of character to the flat, fleshy features. His eyes were rather small and sunken, but the china-blue irises, restless and alert, lightened the portentous gloom of his expression with little dancing flames. In a general way, Rumelles’s face was not lacking in character; it was easy to foresee that some day it would prove a godsend to some purveyor of official busts for town halls in the provinces.

Antoine introduced Rumelles to Philip, and Jacques to Rumelles. The politician bowed to the old doctor as he would have bowed to some celebrity of the day. To Jacques he proffered a courteously friendly hand. He seemed to have taken as his watchword: For a front-rank man, a simple genial manner is the thing.

“There’s no need to tell you, my dear Rumelles, what’s the burning topic here today,” Antoine said bluntly, placing his hand on Rumelles’s arm.

“Obviously, M. Rumelles, as regards the true state of affairs, you have the advantage of us,” Philip remarked, his gaze bent quizzingly on Rumelles. “Outsiders like ourselves have to depend on what we read in the newspapers.”

The politician made a non-committal gesture. “You’re mistaken, Professor, if you think I know much more about it all than you do.” He looked round to see if the sally had drawn appropriate smiles. “Still, subject to that reservation, I don’t think we should take too gloomy a view of the situation. I’m more inclined to say—indeed, I’m bound to say—there are far more reasons for optimism than for despair.”

“Good for you!” Antoine exclaimed. He had been steering Philip and Rumelles toward the two chairs placed near the middle of the room, round which the other guests were grouped.

“Reasons for optimism?” the Caliph echoed in a dubious tone.

Rumelles’s blue eyes flashed round the group gathered about him, before settling on Studler. “The situation’s grave, I’ll allow, but it’s no use exaggerating its gravity.” He tossed back his head and, in the commanding tones of a statesman whose task it is to hearten a despondent audience, added: “Bear well in mind that the factors making for peace are still in the majority.”

“What factors, for instance?” Studler asked.

Rumelles frowned slightly. The Jew’s insistence vexed him; he felt a current of ill-will underneath it.

“What factors, for instance?” he repeated, as if there were so many that he had difficulty in choosing. “Well, for one thing, there’s England. The Central Powers have encountered from the start a vigorous opposition from the Foreign Office.”

“England!” Studler broke in. “Riots in Belfast! Street-fighting in Dublin! The Buckingham Palace conference a dismal failure! There’s a regular civil war in the making. Ireland’s like an arrow planted in England’s back, paralysing her energies.”

“No more than a thorn in her heel, I assure you.”

Léon appeared at the door. “You’re wanted on the phone, sir,” he said to Antoine.

“Say I’m busy,” Antoine retorted peevishly.

“Oh, you needn’t have any fears for England,” Rumelles said. “If you knew, as I do, the sort of man they have in Sir Edward Grey; cool, level-headed—a very fine type of statesman . . .” He avoided meeting Studler’s eye and turned toward Antoine and Philip. “Sir Edward’s one of those aristocratic country gentlemen of the old school who have a very precise idea of the methods that should be observed in foreign relations. He deals with the ministers of foreign governments, not through official channels, but as one gentleman dealing with another. I know that he was profoundly shocked by the tone of the ultimatum. You have seen how he took action immediately and with the greatest firmness, how he remonstrated with Austria and advised the Servians to act with moderation. The fate of Europe lies, to some extent, in his hands—it could not be in better, more trustworthy hands.”

“But,” Studler broke in again, “Germany has met his suggestions with a point-blank refusal, and in that case——”

Rumelles cut in at once. “The line taken by Germany, her attitude of cautious, very comprehensible neutrality, may have held up the first attempts at mediation made by England. But Sir Edward is sticking to his guns! There's no reason why I shouldn't tell you—it will appear in tomorrow morning's papers, if not this evening's—the Foreign Office is drawing up, in collaboration with the Quai d'Orsay, a new plan which may very well bring the conflict to a peaceful issue. Sir Edward is making proposals for a conference to take place immediately in London, between the German, French, and Italian ambassadors, at which all the matters in dispute will be threshed out."

"And meanwhile," Studler observed, "while all these shillyshallyings are going on, Austrian troops are pouring into Belgrade!"

Rumelles jerked up his head as if he had been stung. "I'm afraid, my dear sir, that your information is at fault on this matter as well. This show of military action notwithstanding, there's no proof as yet that what has happened up to now is more than window-dressing—as between Austria and Servia. I suspect you don't allow sufficient weight to a fact of capital importance: none of the European governments has been advised, through diplomatic channels, of a declaration of war. Another even more striking fact is that the Servian Ambassador to Austria had not left Vienna at noon today. And that's because he is acting as intermediary in an exchange of views between the two governments—a very good sign, you must admit. Negotiations are still in progress. In any case, even supposing diplomatic relations were broken off, even if Austria thought fit to declare war, I have reason to believe that Servia would yield to wiser counsels and refuse to embark on an unequal struggle—three hundred thousand men against a million and a half—and would withdraw her army without engaging battle. Don't forget," he added with a smile, "that until the guns speak, the last word rests with the diplomats."

Antoine's eyes met his brother's and caught a disrespectful gleam in them; obviously Jacques was not impressed by Rumelles's know-it-all manner.

"You might find it harder," Finazzi ventured to put in, "to take an optimistic view of Germany's present attitude."

"Why should I?" Rumelles threw a quick, scrutinizing glance at the oculist. "Of course, I don't deny that there are influences in Germany that make for war, but they're counterbalanced by other, weightier influences. The Kaiser's hasty return—he'll be at Kiel tonight—should modify the present trend of German foreign policy. Everyone knows that the Kaiser will take a determined stand against the risk of a European war. All his personal advisers are fervent advocates of peace. And among those of his entourage who have the greatest influence on him I count Prince Lichnowsky, the

German Ambassador at the Court of St. James's. I had the advantage of seeing a good deal of him in London some years ago; he is a very level-headed man, and just now in high favour at the German Court. You realize, of course, the serious consequences a war would have for Germany. With her frontiers blockaded, she would literally starve to death. Once the day came when the Germans could not get supplies of wheat and meat from Russia, how could they feed their army of four millions and a population of sixty-three millions? You can't keep hungry men alive with steel and coal and machinery!"

"What would prevent them from buying supplies abroad?" Studler suggested.

"This, my dear sir: they'd have to pay in gold for all they bought, as German paper money would soon lose its purchasing-power in other countries. Well, it's an easy calculation; we know the figures of the German gold reserve. In a few weeks Germany would have used up all her gold, and that would mean starvation."

Dr. Philip greeted the remark with a snorting little chuckle.

"Don't you agree with me, Professor?" Rumelles asked in a tone of polite surprise.

"Of course, of course," Philip said good-humouredly. "Only I can't help wondering if that isn't . . . just one way of looking at it."

Antoine could not repress a smile. Often in the past he had heard his "chief" employ that rather cryptic phrase. "That's one way of looking at it" was Philip's civil subterfuge for telling someone he was talking nonsense.

"What I've just said," Rumelles went on in a confident tone, "is borne out by every expert on the subject. Even the German economists have recognized that there's no solution to the problem of provisioning their country in case of war."

Roy broke in excitedly. "Yes, and that's why the German General Staff declares that Germany's one chance is a lightning victory. If that can be staved off, even for a few weeks, Germany will be forced to throw in her hand. That's common knowledge."

"And she can't be feeling too easy about her allies," Dr. Thérivier rumbled in his beard, with a broad grin. "Her dear friend Italy, for instance."

"Yes," Rumelles agreed, "Italy seems quite determined to stay neutral."

"And the Austrian army is—a washout!" Roy exclaimed with a scornful grimace and a contemptuous wave of his hand over his shoulder.

"Yes, gentlemen!" Rumelles seemed rather gratified by these interruptions. "Let's not exaggerate the danger! Listen! Without divulging any state secret, I think I may tell you this. At St. Petersburg, at this very hour, an interview is taking place between the Foreign Minister, M. Sazonov, and the Austrian Ambassador, an interview of which great things are hoped. Well, doesn't the mere fact that a friendly discussion of this sort has been consented to by both parties prove a common wish to avoid any recourse to arms? Then again, we know that efforts in favour of peace are being made by America and by the Pope."

"You don't mean to say so! By the Pope!" Philip exclaimed with an air of perfect gravity.

"Why, yes, the Pope!" Roy echoed. Sitting astride his chair, his chin propped on his folded arms, he was taking in Rumelles's remarks, not missing a single word.

Philip was careful not to smile, but there was a mischievous twinkle in his eye. "So the Pope is going to save the situation!" he remarked. Then he added: "I'm afraid that, too, is only one way of looking at it."

"Perhaps," Rumelles said, "there's more in it than you think, Professor. A definite veto from His Holiness would be enough to stop old Franz Josef from moving and send the Austrian army scuttling back behind their frontier. All the legations are aware of it. At this moment the Vatican is a perfect hotbed of intrigue. Which group will win? Will the minority in favour of a war persuade the Pope to keep from making any protest? Or will the peace-loving majority persuade him to intervene?"

Studler grinned. "What a pity we've given up having an ambassador at the Vatican! He might have advised His Holiness to take a peep at the Gospels for a change!"

This time Philip smiled broadly.

Rumelles observed him with a faint, slightly superior frown. "I can see, sir, that you're sceptical about the influence of the Pope."

"The Chief is always sceptical," Antoine put in lightly, and his eyes lingered on his old teacher with a look of affectionate respect, in which there was a nuance of complicity.

Philip turned toward him, puckering his eyelids roguishly. "My dear Thibault," he said, "I must confess—though it's probably a horrid symptom of senile decay—that I find it harder and harder to form a view about anything. I don't suppose there's anything that I've heard proved to me, the opposite of which might not have been proved by somebody else on equally conclusive evidence. Perhaps that's what you call my 'scepticism.' In the present case, however, you're quite mistaken. I bow to the superior competence of M. Rumelles, and I appreciate to the full the force of his arguments."

"Still . . ." Antoine began laughingly.

Philip smiled. "Still"—he rubbed his hands vigorously together—"at my age it's hard to count on reason vanquishing stupidity. If things have come to such a pass that peace hangs only on the good sense of a group of men, well, peace is in a very bad way, that's obvious. All the same," he went on at once, "that's no reason for standing by idly. I thoroughly approve of it if our statesmen are sparing no efforts. . . . That's the right way to tackle things—as if there was always something to be done. It's our method in medicine, isn't it, Thibault?"

Manuel Roy was playing with his small moustache; nothing bored him more than the old professor's antiquated homilies.

Equally nettled by Philip's academic scepticism, Rumelles was looking persistently in Antoine's direction; no sooner did he catch his eye than he made a sign to remind him of the real object of his visit: the injection.

But just then Manuel Roy turned to Rumelles and blurted out: "The shocking thing is that, if, in spite of all you mention, the storm should break, France isn't prepared. It would be a very different matter if we had first-rate, definitely superior armaments at our disposal."

Rumelles bridled up. "Who says we're not prepared?"

"Well, it seems to me that Humbert's disclosures in the Senate three weeks ago were pretty definite."

Rumelles faintly shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, come now! Those disclosures, as you call them, made by M. Humbert, were common knowledge, really; they're far from having the importance lent them by a certain section of the press. Surely you aren't innocent enough to think the French infantryman will go to war barefooted, like the army of the Revolution."

"I didn't refer to their boots. I was thinking of our heavy artillery, for instance. . . ."

"Do you know that many experts, and not the least competent, absolutely deny the efficiency of those long-range guns the Germans are so keen on? It's like those famous machine-guns of theirs, cumbrous weapons that slow up the progress of their infantry."

"What exactly is a machine-gun?" Antoine asked.

Rumelles laughed. “It’s a cross between a rifle and that infernal machine Fieschi invented—do you remember?—which so signally failed to kill King Louis-Philippe. They’re terrifying weapons—on paper or at a shooting-range. But in the field—that’s another story. It seems they jam for the least grain of dust.”

Turning to Roy, he went on in a more serious tone. “According to our experts, what really counts is field-artillery. And ours, let me tell you, is vastly superior to the Germans’. We have more 75’s than they have 77’s, and our 75 is the far better weapon of the two. Don’t you worry, young man. The truth is that during the last three years France has made great strides. All the problems of concentration, the working of our railway system in wartime, and supplies, have been solved. If we’ve got to go to war, believe me, France is in an excellent position. And our allies are aware of it.”

“That’s just what makes the danger!” Studler muttered.

Rumelles shot the Caliph a supercilious glance, as if he failed to see the sense of the remark. It was Jacques who pressed the point home. “It might be better for us, I agree, if Russia did not just now place too great a confidence in the French army.”

True to his resolve, he had so far listened in silence. But he was chafing under his self-restraint. What seemed to him the dominating factor—the anti-war movement of the masses—had not been even touched on. Hastily he took stock of his feelings and made sure he had self-control enough to maintain the tone of speculative detachment which seemed the rule among this group. Then he turned to the politician. “You were reviewing just now the reasons for not losing confidence.” His voice was calm, collected. “Don’t you think we should reckon as one of the main factors that make for peace the active opposition of the pacifist groups?” His eyes swept Antoine’s face, caught a hint of apprehension on it, then came back to Rumelles. “We shouldn’t forget that at the present moment there are ten or twelve million internationalists in Europe who, should the threat of war become more urgent, are determined to prevent their governments from letting themselves be drawn into a war.”

Rumelles heard him out without a flicker of the eyelids, watching the speaker’s face attentively. When he replied, the studied calmness of his voice did not exclude an undertone of irony. “I am not inclined to attach as much importance as you do to these mass movements. Further, I’d have you note that the demonstrations of patriotic enthusiasm in the various capitals are far more numerous and impressive than the meetings of protest organized by a handful of objectors. Last night in Berlin a procession a million strong marched through the city, booed the Russian embassy, sang the '*Wacht am Rhein*' outside the palace, and covered the Bismarck monument with flowers. Mind you, I don't deny the existence of certain anti-war parties, but their activities are purely negative."

"Negative!" Studler cried. "No threat of war has ever before raised such a storm of protest among the working-class."

"What exactly do you mean by 'negative'?" Jacques asked in a calm tone.

"Well"—Rumelles paused as if to choose his words—"by 'negative' I mean that the parties you refer to, the groups hostile to any notion of a war, are not large or disciplined enough, nor—internationally speaking—sufficiently coherent, to constitute a force that need be seriously reckoned with."

"Twelve million men," Jacques repeated.

"Twelve million men, perhaps, but most of them are merely people enrolled in some union or other, who pay their contribution to a common fund. How many real, active militants are there among them? And even among those militants there are a great many who would respond to patriotic appeals. In some countries, possibly, these revolutionary parties might be capable of placing certain obstacles in the way of their governments, but such obstacles would be merely tentative and would have short shrift in any case. That type of obstruction only lasts as long as the powers that be permit it. If the situation became critical, the government involved would only have to put the screws on liberalism to abate the nuisance, as the lawyers say! It wouldn't even be necessary to declare martial law. No, so far, international socialism can't be regarded as a power capable of making any effective stand against the wishes of a government. And it's not in the midst of a crisis that the extremists could fix up any organized resistance on the spur of the moment. No," he said with a smile, "it's too late—for this time, anyhow!"

"Unless," Jacques retorted, "those elements of opposition, which lie low when things go well, should, under pressure of the crisis, be goaded into violent action and prove invincible! Just now, don't you think the outbreak of strikes in Russia is holding up the Tsarist government?"

"You're wrong there," Rumelles calmly replied. "Let me tell you, such views are out of date—by twenty-four hours! The latest dispatches are, I'm glad to say, quite definite: the revolutionary movement in St. Petersburg has been crushed—brutally, but once for all."

He was still smiling, as if to excuse himself for being perpetually right. Then, glancing at Antoine, he raised his arm, bringing his wristwatch into prominence. "My dear doctor, I'm afraid my time is nearly up."

"Right you are," said Antoine, rising to his feet.

He was not sorry to see the argument ended thus abruptly, for he feared Jacques's reactions.

While Rumelles was bidding good-bye to those present with studied courtesy, Antoine went up to his brother, taking an envelope from his pocket.

"Here's the letter for the lawyer. I've not sealed the envelope. Well, what did you think of Rumelles?" he added in an absent-minded tone.

"He looks his part," Jacques answered with a smile.

Antoine seemed preoccupied with some thought he was reluctant to express. After a quick glance round to make sure there was no one within hearing, he said hastily, lowering his voice, in a would-be detached tone: "By the way—supposing there's a war? You've been excused from your military service, haven't you? But—if there's a mobilization . . . ?"

Jacques gazed at him for a moment without answering. It had just struck him that Jenny was sure to ask the same question.

Then he rapped out his reply: "I'll never let myself be mobilized."

Antoine, feeling ill at ease, had kept his eyes fixed on Rumelles; he did not seem to have heard the remark.

The brothers parted without exchanging another word.

XVII

"THOSE hypodermic injections of yours are simply marvellous!" Rumelles observed as soon as they were alone. "I already feel ever so much better. It's no longer such an effort to get up in the morning, and my appetite's coming back."

"No fever of an evening? No dizzy spells?"

"None whatever."

"In that case we can safely increase the dose."

The walls of the room they entered, next to the consulting-room, were tiled in white porcelain. There was an operating-table in the middle, and on this Rumelles stretched himself submissively after taking off his coat and waistcoat.

Antoine, with his back turned, stood beside the sterilizer, preparing the injection. “What you say is pretty encouraging,” he remarked in a pensive voice.

Rumelles glanced round, wondering if the allusion was to the state of his health or to the political situation.

“That being so,” Antoine proceeded, “why do they let the papers keep harping on Germany’s alleged double-dealing and her aggressive designs?”

“They don’t ‘let them,’ they encourage them to do so. It’s up to us, you see, to prepare public opinion for every emergency.”

He spoke in a gloomy tone of voice. When Antoine turned toward him, Rumelles had laid aside his cocksure expression. There was a strained, far-away look in his eyes.

“To prepare public opinion?” Antoine repeated. “They’ll never make this country believe that the interests of Servia should be allowed to involve us in serious complications.”

“Public opinion!” Rumelles exclaimed with a contemptuous grimace. “My dear man, with a little gumption and a judicious selection of the news permitted to leak out, three days would be enough for us to bring about a complete reversal of feeling *in either direction*! The majority of the French people, moreover, have always felt flattered by the Franco-Russian Alliance. It would be easy to play upon that chord again.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” Antoine remarked as he drew nearer.

With a wad steeped in ether he swabbed the place for the injection, and with a quick stab thrust the needle deep into the muscle. Silently he watched the level of the liquid sinking in the syringe. At last he withdrew the needle.

“The French,” he went on, “welcomed the Franco-Russian Alliance enthusiastically, but this is the first time they’ve been called upon to ask themselves how far they are committed.... Don’t get up for a minute or two.... I often wonder what there really is in our treaties with Russia. No one knows anything about it.”

It was a roundabout way of asking a question, but Rumelles answered it readily enough. “I’m not in the secrets of the gods,” he said, propping himself on his elbow. “All I really know is departmental hearsay. There were two preliminary agreements, in 1891 and 1892, and after that a regular Treaty of Alliance which Casimir-Perier signed in 1894. I’m not acquainted with all its terms, but—this is not a state secret—France and Russia are pledged to give each other military assistance in the event of either being threatened by Germany. Since then we've had M. Delcassé, we've had M. Poincaré and his trips to Russia. All of which must obviously have defined and emphasized our commitments."

"That being so," Antoine observed, "if Russia were now to intervene against the German policy, it would be Russia threatening Germany, and under the treaty we shouldn't be bound to come in."

Rumelles made a fleeting grimace intended for a smile. "It's not so simple as all that, my dear fellow," he said. "Supposing Russia, as the out-and-out champion of the Southern Slavs, were to break with Austria tomorrow and mobilize in defence of Servia, then Germany, being bound by her treaty of 1879 with Austria, would have to mobilize against Russia. The mere fact of that mobilization would oblige France to implement her pledge to Russia and mobilize immediately against Germany, as threatening our ally. One thing follows the other automatically."

"So, according to you, that precious Franco-Russian friendship, which our politicians prided themselves upon as a guarantee of security, now proves to work in the opposite direction. To be not a guarantee of peace, but an instrument of war!"

"Its all very well to blame the politicians. . . . But remember what France's situation in Europe was in 1890. Was it a mistake for our statesmen to give their country a weapon that cuts both ways, rather than leave her entirely defenceless?"

The argument struck Antoine as being a piece of special pleading, but he found no ready answer to it. His knowledge of contemporary history was very sketchy. And, besides, all this was only of retrospective interest. "Be that as it may," he observed, "at the moment, if I understand you properly, our fate is entirely in the hands of Russia. Or, to be more precise," he added after a moment's hesitation, "everything depends on our loyalty to the Franco-Russian Alliance. Is that right?"

Rumelles again gave a brief, sub-acid smile. "As to that, my dear fellow, don't bamboozle yourself into imagining we could wriggle out of our obligations. It's Berthelot who's in charge of our foreign policy just now. So long as he remains in office, with M. Poincaré behind him, you may be sure our loyalty to our allies can never be in doubt." He hesitated, then went on: "This was made quite clear, I'm told, at the Cabinet Council held after von Schoen's unspeakable proposal."

"In that case," Antoine exclaimed testily, "if there's no chance of shaking off our Russian incubus, the only thing to do is to compel Russia to remain neutral!"

"How do you propose to do that?" asked Rumelles, his blue eyes fixed on Antoine. "And, anyway, how do we know it's not too late?" he muttered. There was a short silence before he spoke again. "In Russia, the military party is all-powerful. The drubbing they received in the Japanese war has left the Russian Staff with an itch for getting even with someone, and they've never forgotten the rap over the knuckles Austria gave them when she annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. People like M. Isvolsky—who, by the way, is due to arrive in Paris this afternoon—make little attempt to conceal the fact that they want a European war so as to be able to shift the Russian frontier right down to Constantinople. It would suit their purposes to postpone that war until Franz Josef's death, and if possible till 1917, but obviously, if an opportunity arose before . . ."

He spoke quickly, breathlessly, and his look grew suddenly downcast. An anxious frown settled on his brows. It was as if he had thrown off the mask at last.

"Yes, my dear fellow, frankly, I'm beginning to despair. Just now, in the presence of your friends, I of course had to put up a bold front. But the truth is that things look black. So black, indeed, that the Foreign Minister's given up the idea of travelling on to Denmark with the President and is returning post-haste to France. The midday dispatches haven't improved prospects. Instead of falling in with Sir Edward Grey's suggestions, Germany does nothing but quibble, raise frivolous objections, and seems bent on scuttling the proposal for arbitration. Does she really want to bring things to a head, or is it that she objects to a conference of the four great powers because she knows beforehand that, owing to the strained relations between Austria and Italy, Austria would inevitably be condemned in such a court by a majority of three to one? The latter is the least invidious as well as the more likely supposition. But meanwhile events are moving fast. Military precautions are already being taken everywhere."

"Military precautions?"

"That was inevitable. Every nation naturally has in mind the possibility of mobilization and is preparing for it on the off chance. In Belgium an extraordinary cabinet meeting was held this very day, with M. de Broqueville in the chair; it had all the appearances of a precautionary council of war. It's proposed to call up three classes of conscripts so as to be able to have an additional hundred thousand men in the firing-line. With us it's the same story. At the Quai d'Orsay, this morning, a cabinet council was held, at which, as a measure of precaution, the advisability of preparing for war was considered. At Toulon and Brest the fleet has been ordered to stand by. Instructions have been cabled to Morocco for fifty battalions of native troops to be transported to France immediately. And so forth. Every government is taking the same line, and that's how the situation is growing worse and worse automatically. For there's not an expert on the Staff but knows that when once you've started off that infernal machinery of general mobilization, it becomes a physical impossibility to slow down the process and wait upon events. Thus the most peaceful-minded of governments are confronted with a terrible dilemma: either they embark on a war, for the simple reason that they've been preparing for it, or else . . ."

"Why not issue counter-orders, throw the gears into reverse, and put a stop to the whole business?"

"Quite so. But in that case you must be absolutely certain that you won't have to mobilize again for many months to come."

"Why?"

"Because—and this is another axiom never called in question by the experts—a sudden stoppage jams every cogwheel of the intricate war-machine and puts it out of commission for months. What government, I ask you, can feel certain just now that there'll be no need to mobilize in the immediate future?"

Antoine remained speechless, gazing at Rumelles in dismay. At last he said under his breath: "It's a damnable business!"

"And the worst of it is that underneath the surface there may be nothing more than a colossal gamble. What's going on in Europe at present may be no more than a gigantic game of poker, with every player trying to put through a bluff. While Austria's strangling treacherous Servia on the side, big brother Germany takes a blustering attitude, for no other purpose, maybe, than to forestall Russian action and a conciliatory intervention on the part of the powers. Just like poker: the fellow who keeps up the stoutest and the longest bluff takes the pool. The trouble is that, as in poker, no one can tell what proportion of trickery and what of genuine aggressive intent there may be at the moment in Germany's attitude or in Russia's. Hitherto the Russians have always given way to German effrontery. So of course Germany and Austria think themselves justified in assuming that, provided they put up a good bluff, provided they seem determined to go the limit, Russia will back down. But then again it may be that, just because she has always had to give way, Russia may really throw her sword into the scales this time."

"A damnable business," Antoine repeated. Gloomily he placed the syringe in the sterilizer, then took a few steps toward the window. Confronted with Rumelles's description of the European scene, he felt all the mental anguish of a passenger who in the midst of a hurricane should suddenly discover that all the ship's officers had taken leave of their senses.

A pause fell on their conversation.

Rumelles had risen to his feet. He was adjusting his braces. Unconsciously he looked round, as though to make sure of not being overheard, and moved a step nearer to Antoine.

"Look here, Thibault," he said, lowering his voice, "I oughtn't to disclose these matters, but you as a doctor can keep a secret, I suppose." He looked Antoine squarely in the eyes; Antoine nodded without a word. "Well, what's going on in Russia is simply unthinkable! His Excellency M. Sazonov has as good as warned us in advance that his government means to turn down any attempt at mediation. And as a matter of fact we have just received extremely grave news from St. Petersburg. Russia's intentions are no longer a matter of doubt. Mobilization over there is already in full swing. The summer manœuvres have been cut short, the troops have returned post-haste to their garrisons; in the four chief Russian commands—Moscow, Kiev, Kazan, and Odessa—every regiment is on a war footing. It was yesterday, the twenty-fifth, or perhaps even the day before, at a council of war, that the Staff managed to extort from the Tsar written orders to prepare in all haste, 'as a preventive measure,' for an attack on Austria. Germany is undoubtedly aware of this and it's quite enough to account for the way she's behaving. She too is mobilizing secretly, and she is, I fear, only too well justified in doing so. What's more, she has just taken a step of the gravest importance. She has warned St. Petersburg publicly today that unless these military preparations of Russia are at once cut short—and all the more, of course, should they be speeded up—she will feel obliged to decree her own mobilization. And that, as she says in good set terms, would mean a world war. What will Russia's answer be? Her responsibility is heavy enough already, but it will be crushing if she declines to give way. And it's unlikely, to say the least of it, that she will give way."

"But what of us, meanwhile?"

"What of us, my dear fellow? What of us? What would you have us do? Let Russia down? That would merely demoralize our own public on the very eve of the day when we shall stand in need of all our strength, of all our national enthusiasm. Let Russia down and stand entirely alone? Quarrel with our one and only ally? Make England turn away in disgust from the Franco-Russian combination and compel her government to declare in favour of the Central Powers?"

Two gentle taps at the door cut him short. Léon's voice was heard in the passage outside: "You're wanted again on the telephone, sir."

Antoine made an impatient gesture. "Say I'm . . . no," he called out, "I'll answer it myself." And, turning to Rumelles: "You'll excuse me, won't you?"

"By all means, my dear doctor. Besides, it's awfully late, I must be going. Good-bye."

Antoine hastened to his study and unhooked the receiver. "Well, what is it?"

The harshness of his tone gave Anne a shock. "Sorry," she said contritely. "I'd forgotten it was Sunday. I suppose you've friends with you this afternoon."

"Well, what is it?" he repeated.

"I only wanted . . . Sure I'm not disturbing you?"

Antoine made no reply.

"I wanted . . ." She felt his nerves so much on edge that she floundered for her words, could not concoct a lie. Timidly, finding nothing better to say, she whispered: "Tonight?"

"Quite impossible," he replied curtly. Then he added in a gentler tone: "Nothing doing tonight, darling, I'm afraid."

Suddenly he felt sorry for her. At the other end of the line Anne somehow grew aware of his changed mood, with a little thrill of mingled pain and pleasure.

"Do be reasonable!" he said. (She could hear him sigh.) "For one thing, I'm not free. And even if I were, I wouldn't feel like a festive evening, considering the state of things."

"Whatever do you mean?"

"Really, Anne, you read the papers, don't you? Surely you know what's happening?"

She straightened up. The papers? Politics? Was he thrusting her out of his life for such futilities? . . . She jumped to the conclusion that he was lying.

"Tonight, at our place—really, really can't you manage it?"

"No. I probably shan't get home till late—dead tired, what's more. It's quite true, darling. Please don't insist." He added rather lamely: "Tomorrow, very likely. I'll ring you up tomorrow, if I can. *Au revoir*, Anne dear."

He hung up immediately.

XVIII

JACQUES had left without waiting for his brother to reappear. In fact, when the Fontanins' concierge told him that Jenny had been back for more than an hour, he regretted having wasted so much of his time on Antoine's friends. He ran up the steps, three at a time, and rang the bell. With a wildly beating heart he listened for the sound of Jenny's footsteps behind the door, but it was her voice that he heard first.

"Who is it?"

"Jacques."

There was a rattle of bolts and chains and at last the door opened.

"Mother has left Paris," she said, to account for the locked door. "I've just been seeing her off."

She lingered in the doorway as if, now that she had to let him enter, she were feeling ill at ease. But then he gazed into her eyes with such frank delight, such loyalty, that all her qualms were dust before the wind. He had come to see her; yesterday's dream was continuing today!

He held out both arms to her with unthinking fervour, and with the same spontaneity she gave him both her hands. Then stepping back two paces, her hands still clasped in his, she drew him across the threshold.

While waiting for Jacques's coming, she had wondered into which room to show him. The drawing-room was all slip-covered, and she always felt scruples about taking anyone into her bedroom; it was her place of refuge, her sanctum, and even Daniel rarely entered it. The only other rooms available were Daniel's and Mme. de Fontanin's; the latter was the one in which she and her mother usually sat. Finally Jenny had decided on her brother's room.

"Let's go to Daniel's den," she said. "It's the only cool place in the apartment."

As she had not yet bought a mourning costume of light material, she wore in the apartment an old white serge summer frock, open at the neck, which carried a suggestion of vernal lawns, open-air games. Though she had small hips and long, slim legs she did not give an impression of being particularly supple, for instinctively she held herself in and walked with calculated stiffness; yet all the same, despite her self-restraint, the litheness of youth showed through in every movement of her slender body.

As he followed Jenny, Jacques's attention strayed; he could not keep himself from gazing with emotion at this well-remembered setting: the hall with its Dutch cupboard and the delf plates above each doorway; the grey corridor wall on which Mme. de Fontanin had hung her son's first charcoal sketches; the cupboard with a red window which the children had used as a darkroom; and Daniel's room, his bookshelves, his old alabaster clock, and the two little armchairs, upholstered in dark-red velvet, in which he and his friend had so often talked the hours away.

"Mother left this afternoon." To hide her shyness, Jenny busied herself pulling up the blind. "She's gone to Vienna."

"Where?"

"To Vienna. Do sit down." She turned, but failed to notice Jacques's consternation.

On the previous night, to her surprise, she had not been asked to explain why she was so late. Mme. de Fontanin had been too busy getting things ready for her journey (she had not dared to start packing while Daniel was about) to look at the clock during her daughter's absence. So Jenny had not needed to give any explanations; it was her mother who, rather ashamed at having kept it back so long, had hastily confessed that she was leaving for ten days, to "settle things" on the spot.

"To Vienna!" Jacques repeated, without sitting down. "And you didn't try to stop her?"

Jenny gave him an outline of the conversation, explaining how, when she began to raise objections, her mother had cut her short and insisted that a personal visit to Vienna was the one way of straightening out the tangle their affairs were in.

Jacques's eyes rested affectionately on her face while she spoke. She was sitting at Daniel's desk, holding herself very straight, with a calm, rather aloof expression. The set of her mouth, the lips that hardly parted ("too schooled to silence" was Jacques's thought), indicated firmness of will and self-composure. There was something rather strained in her whole demeanour, and in her watchful gaze a stubborn reticence. Was it pride, he wondered, or mistrust? Or was it only shyness? No, none of these, he decided, for he knew her well enough to recognize that stiffness as habitual with her; it expressed one side of her temperament, the self-imposed reserve that had become second nature for her.

He had qualms about telling her point-blank the reasons why a stay in Austria was ill-advised at the moment and prudently inquired: "Did your brother know she was planning this trip?"

"No."

"Ah, that explains it!" He had suddenly decided to speak out. "Daniel would have put his foot down if he'd known, I'm certain. Doesn't your mother know that Austria is mobilizing, that the frontiers are under military surveillance, that martial law may be declared in Austria at any moment?"

It was Jenny's turn to show consternation. For the past week she had hardly glanced at a newspaper. In a few words Jacques explained what had been happening.

He spoke circumspectly, taking care to keep to actual facts, without alarming her unduly. The questions she put him evinced a trace of incredulity and brought it home to him how little such political concerns entered into her life. The possibility of a war, one of those wars described in history books, seemed to present no terrors to her, or next to none. It did not even enter her head that, if war broke out, Daniel would from the outset be in serious danger. All that troubled her was the thought of the inconveniences to which her mother might be exposed.

"It's quite likely," Jacques hastened to explain, "that Mme. de Fontanin will give up her plan before she reaches the frontier. You may see her back here at any moment."

"At any moment!" Jenny exclaimed, colouring.

She confessed to him that, to tell the truth, she had felt rather relieved by her mother's departure; it put back the trying hour of explanations. Not, she hastened to explain, that she feared encountering her mother's disapproval. But there was nothing she disliked more than having to talk about herself, to lay bare her inmost feelings. "Don't forget, Jacques," she said, with an earnest look toward him, "where my feelings are concerned, I like people to read between the lines."

"So do I!" Jacques laughed.

The conversation took a more intimate turn. He questioned her about herself, urged her to give details, helped her to analyse her sentiments. She submitted to it readily enough, and did not balk at his questions. Gradually she came to feel a sort of gratitude to him for having put them. To her surprise, she found a certain pleasure in casting off, for his sake, her wonted reticence. For until that day no one had ever gazed at her with such compelling fervour in his eyes; no one had even spoken to her with such care not to hurt her feelings, with so obvious a will to understand. She felt a gentle warmth, unknown till now, stealing over her; it was as if hitherto she had led a cloistered life and suddenly the barriers had fallen, revealing a radiant, undreamed-of landscape.

At every moment, for no reason, Jacques would smile, not so much for Jenny's benefit as from inward joy. He was still quite dazed with happiness; Europe had vanished from his thoughts and nothing existed now but him and her. Everything that Jenny said, the most trivial remark, seemed another token of her trust and faithfulness, thrilling him with a sense of boundless gratitude. A new conviction was striking root in his mind, filling him with pride: their love was not merely something rare and precious, but an adventure without precedent; more than exceptional—unique. The word "soul" rose to their lips time after time and each time that vague, mysteriously emotive word seemed to rouse answering echoes, charged with overtones of meaning, secrets unguessed by any save themselves.

"Do you know what surprises me most?" he suddenly exclaimed. "It's that I feel so little surprise. I feel as if, deep down in me, I'd always, always known this was to happen."

"I'm not surprised, either."

It was equally untrue for both of them, yet the more they thought about it, the more they grew convinced that never for a single day had either abandoned hope.

"And I find it so natural, my being here," he went on. "I've the impression, at your side, of being in my usual, appointed place."

"So have I."

For both of them it was a delicious temptation, to which they yielded at every moment, to feel themselves in unison, to declare themselves at one in everything.

She had moved to another chair and was now sitting in front of him in an almost languorous attitude. Already love seemed to be changing her whole appearance, making itself visible in her bearing, lending her a grace, an ease that she had never had before. Jacques watched the transformation with enchanted eyes. His gaze lingered like a caress on the play of shadows on her neck and shoulders, the ripple of the muscles under the light frock, the rise and fall of her breast. And he could never feast his eyes enough on the charming picture offered by her slender hands restlessly fluttering like two amorous white doves—nestling together, drawing apart, hovering till they locked again. She had small, round, amply moulded nails—“like half-kernels of hazel-nuts,” he told himself.

He bent toward her. “Do you know, I’m discovering lots of the most wonderful things!”

“What things?”

Listening, she had rested her elbow on the arm of the chair and propped her chin on the palm of her right hand, her fingers cupping the curve of her cheek. Sometimes her forefinger idly toyed with her lips, then again strayed upward to her brows.

He brought his eyes near hers. “Do you know, by daylight your eyes look like sparkling jewels, pale-blue sapphires?”

With an embarrassed smile she bent her head. Then straightening up again, she returned his scrutiny and, as if teasingly to turn the tables, began studying his appearance with no less care. “And it seems to me, Jacques, you’ve changed since yesterday.”

“Changed?”

“Yes. A lot!” She seemed disposed to keep her secret to herself and it was only after he had plied her with questions that, by way of shy approximations and phrases timidly let fall, he elicited what she had not dared to say openly: ever since Jacques had come, she had been feeling that something was weighing on his mind, something that had nothing to do with their love.

With a quick gesture he pushed back the lock of hair that dangled over his forehead. “Listen!” he said abruptly. “I’ll tell you exactly how I’ve spent my time since yesterday.”

He described to her his night in the Tuileries Gardens, his morning at the newspaper office, his visit to Antoine, adding detail to detail, with the novelist’s delight in drawing an apt picture of scenes and people. He detailed what Stefany and Gallot, Philip and Rumelles, had said, and explained his own reactions. He told her of his fears and hopes, and tried to give her an idea of the part he was playing in the struggle to avert a war.

She listened breathlessly, without missing a word but feeling hopelessly at sea. It was as if she were plunged headlong, not merely into the midst of Jacques’s existence but into the vortex of the European crisis, and confronted with terrifying issues such as she had never dreamed of. The whole social structure seemed to be tottering, and a feeling of panic came over her, the panic of those who in an earthquake see tumbling about their heads the walls and roofs which had seemed until then so safe and solid.

She gathered only a partial impression of the role that Jacques was actually playing in what had been to her till today an unknown world, but she felt bound to assign him an exalted place, to justify her love. She felt assured that his aims were lofty and that the men whom he mentioned by name—men like Meynestrel, Stefany, and Jaurès—were worthy of exceptional esteem. Their ideals must be praiseworthy, since they were Jacques's ideals, too.

Jenny's attention was like strong wine to Jacques; he let himself go whole-heartedly. "Revolutionists like us . . ." he said.

She looked up quickly and he caught a gleam of wonder in her eyes. It was the first time she had heard "revolutionists" spoken of in an approving tone, with an almost religious deference. The term had always conjured up to her pictures of a ruffianly mob out to burn and pillage the homes of the rich, so as to gratify their basest instincts; of desperadoes with bombs concealed beneath their coats, to cope with whom society's one arm was stern repression.

Jacques began to speak to her of socialism and of his reasons for joining the Socialist International. "Don't imagine it was an impulse of blind philanthropy that swept me into the revolutionary movement. No, I went through a long phase of doubt, of spiritual loneliness—a terrible time! In the old days when you knew me, I firmly believed in human brotherhood, the victory of truth and justice, but I then had the notion that they would triumph easily and quickly. A fool's paradise, as I very soon found out, and then everything seemed to go dark inside me. That was the most appalling period of my life; I let myself sink, I touched the lowest depth of despair. Well, it was the revolutionary ideal that saved me then." With a rush of gratitude he remembered Meynestrel. "That ideal broadened my horizon—radiantly! It gave an incentive for living to the futile, undisciplined youngster I'd been from my schooldays on. I realized that it was absurd to fancy justice would triumph easily or quickly, but that there was a practical way of showing my belief in the triumph of justice, that my instinct of revolt might serve a useful purpose if it joined forces with other rebellious spirits like mine for the betterment of mankind."

She listened without interrupting. In any case her Protestant upbringing had predisposed her to the notion that the social system should not be cramped by strict conventions and that it is the duty of the individual to exalt his personality, carrying to its utmost consequences any line of action that his conscience bids him follow. Behind Jenny's silence Jacques discerned the workings of a keenly alert intelligence, sound and well balanced though, naturally enough, unused to tackling speculative problems. She could, he felt, rise clear of prejudices, and under her reserve was a highly strung, sensitive nature that would readily espouse and serve a noble cause once she had judged it worthy of her life's devotion.

Nevertheless, she could not repress an incredulous, almost disapproving glance when Jacques proceeded to inform her that the capitalist system, under which in all innocence she lived, was a consecration of the most heinous injustice. Though she had not thought much about it, she accepted the inequalities of the human lot as a natural outcome of the inequalities of human nature.

"Oh, Jenny," Jacques exclaimed, "I'm sure you have no idea what the life of the world's underdogs is really like! If you had, you wouldn't shake your head like that. You don't realize that quite near you there are thousands and thousands of miserable people whose lives are a never-ending round of toil, who bow their necks beneath an iron yoke without a decent wage, without security for the future, without a gleam of hope! You know that coal is dug out of the earth, that goods are made in factories, but do you ever think about the millions of men who spend their lives half suffocated in the darkness of the mines? Do you think of the men whose nerves are worn to shreds by the ear-splitting din of factory machines? Or even of those relatively favoured farm labourers who drudge their lives out for as many as fourteen hours a day, according to the season, only to sell the produce of their never-ending toil to some middleman who haggles over every penny? That's what a workingman's life means.

"Don't think I'm exaggerating; I speak of what I've seen with my own eyes. In Hamburg, to keep myself alive, I had to work as a dockhand, with a hundred other poor devils in the same plight as myself—starving, that's to say. For three weeks I was at the beck and call of those modern slavedrivers they call foremen, bawling at us: 'Lift that there plank, you! Carry those bags! Get a move on with them barrows, damn you!' from morn till night. When the day's work was over and we'd drawn our scanty pay, we flung ourselves like wolves on food and strong drink; every limb ached, we were covered with filth, our bodies empty, our minds empty; we were too fagged out even to rebel against it all. That, perhaps, is the most horrible thing about it: these poor devils haven't any idea that they are the victims of social injustice. The wonder is how they bring themselves to endure, as if it were the normal thing, a life that's horrible as a convict's. I managed to escape from that hell on earth because I had the luck of knowing several languages and could turn my hand to journalism. But what about the others? They're still sweating their souls out for a pittance. . . . Have we the right, Jenny, to allow things like that to go on, to regard them as the normal lot of our fellow-men?

"Or take the factories! I worked at Fiume for a spell as machine-tender in a button-factory. I was the slave of a machine that had to be fed incessantly every ten seconds. Impossible to take your mind or hands off it for a single moment. For hours on end we went on making the same motion. It wasn't really tiring, I'll admit. But I assure you, I felt rottener mentally and physically after a spell at that machine than I'd ever felt in Hamburg after hauling bags of cement all day, with the lime-dust burning my eyes and throat. In an Italian soapworks I've seen women whose job it was to lift and carry, every ten minutes, cases of soap-flakes weighing eighty pounds; for the rest of the time they had to turn a handle which was so stiff they had to get a purchase with their feet against a wall to set it in motion. And they put in eight hours a day at that back-breaking job. I'm not inventing anything, mind you! I've seen with my own eyes, at a Prussian furrier's, girls of seventeen employed on brushing pelts who had to go out every few hours and vomit because their throats got full of hairs. Miserably paid, they were, what's more. Of course, that's the rule everywhere: women are always paid less than men for the same work."

"Why?" Jenny asked.

"Because it's assumed a woman has a father or a husband who contributes to her support."

"That's quite true, very often," she said.

"No, worse luck! If these wretched women are obliged to work, isn't it just because, under our present social system, a man can't earn enough to give a decent life to those dependent on him?

"I've been telling you about workers in foreign countries. As for France, you've only to go some morning to any of the industrial suburbs. A little before seven you'll see a long file of women coming to leave their children at the public *crèche*, so as to be free to work all day at a factory. The factory managers who have organized these *crèches*—at the expense of the business—are convinced, quite genuinely I expect, that they're doing a kindness to their employees. But try to picture what it's like, the life of a mother who, before putting in her eight-hour day of manual toil, has to be up at five to make the coffee, wash and dress her children, tidy up the room a bit, and hurry to reach her work by seven. Isn't that absolutely scandalous? But, I assure you, that's how it is. And the capitalist system battens on those martyred lives. Tell me, Jenny, can we allow such things to be? Can we permit the system to go on thriving at the cost of all those millions of victims? Certainly not! But to bring in a new order the proletariat must take over. *Now* do you understand? That's the real meaning of the word which seems to frighten you so much, *revolution*. What's needed is a brand-new social system enabling men not merely to exist, but to *live*. We must give back to the individual not only his rightful share of the profits of industry, but the measure of liberty, well-being, leisure, without which he can't develop in an atmosphere of decent human self-respect."

"Of human self-respect," she repeated pensively. She was realizing now, for the first time, that she had reached her twenties in utter ignorance of the underworld of labour. Between the working-class and a young 1914 bourgeoisie like herself, the wall of class was as solid as the caste barriers in certain ancient civilizations. Still, she reflected naïvely, all rich people aren't monsters of iniquity! She recalled the Protestant organizations to which her mother belonged and which dispensed charity to needy families. And now she blushed at the thought of it. Charity. She was aware that those poor folk who asked for alms had nothing in common with the exploited working-class, who claimed their right to live, their right to independence, self-respect. Those plaintive paupers did not represent the "lower class," as she had stupidly imagined. They were only parasites, hangers-on of the prosperous middle-class—almost as far removed from the proletariat Jacques had spoken of as from the kindly charity-dispensers befriending them. Jacques had revealed the proletariat to her.

"Human self-respect," she repeated for the second time and her tone showed she gave the words their fullest meaning.

"Of course," Jacques said, "the first results are bound to be disappointing. Once the revolution has set him free, the worker will, to begin with, make a dead set at the most selfish, not to say the basest, forms of satisfaction. We'll have to reckon with that, I'm afraid; men's lower instincts will need to be appeased before any real spiritual progress is feasible." After a moment's hesitation he added: "Before their souls become enlightened."

His voice had grown husky; an apprehension which he knew only too well gripped his throat. Nevertheless, he went on speaking. "Yes, I'm afraid we shall have to bow to the inevitable; the change of institutions will precede by far man's change of heart. But it wouldn't do—we haven't the right—to lose faith in human nature. I see its flaws quite clearly. But I believe, I *must* believe, that they're largely consequences of the present social order. Yes, we should close our ears to the insidious voice of pessimism, we must learn to believe in Man. There is, there surely must be, in Man a secret, ineradicable craving for what is noblest. And it's our task to fan that failing spark of aspiration hidden beneath the embers till it glows and some day, perhaps, bursts into a splendid flame.”

She nodded emphatically; her expression was more decided than ever, her eyes calm and wide. He beamed with satisfaction.

“But the social changes will have to wait; for the moment we’ve a more urgent job on hand: to prevent war.”

Suddenly he remembered his appointment with Stefany and glanced at the alabaster clock. It was not going. He pulled out his watch and jumped up hastily. “Good heavens, it’s eight!” He seemed to waken from a dream. “And I’m due at the Bourse in a quarter of an hour’s time.”

It struck him that their conversation had taken an unexpectedly impersonal turn and, fearing it might have disappointed Jenny, he began to murmur excuses.

“No, no!” she broke in at once. “I want to hear your views on every subject, I want to know your life—to understand!” The fervour of her tone seemed to imply: by thus confiding in me, by showing yourself to me exactly as you are, you’ve given me the best possible proof of your love, the proof I most appreciate.

“Tomorrow,” he said as he moved toward the door, “I’ll come earlier—immediately after lunch. Will that suit you?”

The blue depths of her eyes gleamed with a glad, responsive light. She would have liked to say: “Yes, come as soon as you possibly can. I feel alive only when you are with me.” But she said nothing, though a flush rose to her cheeks as she got up and followed him.

The drawing-room door stood ajar. He paused in front of it. “May I have a peep? That room brings back so many memories.”

The shutters were closed; she went in ahead of him and threw a window open. She had a way of her own of walking, of crossing a room, moving straight to the point where she had something to do, unhurrying, with gentle but inflexible determination.

A mingled scent of beeswax and upholstery rose from the parquet floor, the rolled-up carpets and curtains stacked in piles. Jacques took it all in, smiling. A picture rose before him of the first time he had entered this room with Antoine. Jenny had taken offence at his remarks, had gone to the window and leaned on the balcony rail, while he had stood uncomfortably, berating himself for a clumsy fool, in the far corner of the room beside the cabinet. He had no need to raise the sheet that covered it, to recapitulate the knickknacks it contained, the fans, miniatures, bonbonnières, and so forth, on which that day, to keep himself in countenance, he had fixed his eyes and which thereafter he had seen, year in, year out, always in the same places. Successive images of Jenny, changing with the years, overlaid themselves like tracings on the original picture of her hovering before his eyes. He saw her pass from childhood into girlhood, recalled her sudden changes of mood, her quickly restrained impulses, her shy half-confidences.

He was smiling as he turned to her. She may have guessed his thoughts, but she said nothing. She stood before him now as in the old days he used to see her in this same room—self-possessed, not shy yet never unconstrained, with the direct, rather hard gaze and calm, inscrutable expression he knew so well.

“Jenny, may I see your mother’s room, too?”

She showed no surprise. “Come,” she said.

That room, too, he knew down to its least detail; how well he remembered the photographs and portraits hanging on the walls, the big green damask bedspread glinting through the filmy point-lace coverlet! Daniel used to bring him here, after a discreet knock at his mother’s door. Usually they found Mme. de Fontanin sitting at the fire in one or the other of the two easy-chairs that flanked the hearth, reading an English novel or some edifying work. She would lay the open book on her knees and welcome the two youngsters with beaming smiles, as if nothing could have given her greater pleasure than their visit. She would have Jacques sit in the chair facing hers and ask him about his life and studies, with a friendly, encouraging look on her face. If Daniel took it on himself to move back an ember slipping off the grate, she would snatch the tongs from his hand with playful alacrity and laughingly say: “No, my dear, let *me* attend to it. Fire is such a temperamental creature!”

It cost Jacques an effort to tear himself away from those long-cherished memories. At last, “Let’s go,” he said, turning to the door. Jenny followed him out into the hall. Suddenly he looked at her with such a grave expression that an unreasoning fear came over her, making her drop her eyes.

“Have you ever been happy here, really and truly happy?” he asked.

Deliberately, before replying, she reviewed the past, summed up in a flash of recollection those early years when she had been tormented by self-questionings, when, wise beyond her age, she had possessed herself in silence. In the greyness of her childhood there had been some saving gleams of light: her mother’s love, Daniel’s affection for her. . . . But, no, she had to admit it, *truly* happy she had never been.

Looking up, she shook her head. She saw Jacques draw a deep breath, impatiently dash back his wayward forelock, and suddenly smile. He said nothing; he dared not promise her happiness, but, still smiling, gazing deep into her eyes, he clasped her hands as he had done when he arrived, and pressed his lips to them. She kept her eyes fixed on him, and she felt her heart throbbing, throbbing. . . .

It was not till much later that she became aware of how indelibly the picture of Jacques at the precise moment when he stood thus in the hall, bending above her hands, had stamped itself on her memory, with what hallucinating vividness she was, all her life long, to recall his forehead with the strand of dark hair drooping across it, the bold insistence of his wilful gaze, and that proud smile of his, radiant with promise.

XIX

FILLING the courtyard with their provincial clangor, the bells of Saint Eustache's Church roused Jacques at an early hour. His first thought was for Jenny. Throughout the previous evening, up to the moment when he fell asleep, he had been running over in memory the incidents of his visit to the Fontanins' apartment; every time he recalled it some new detail came to mind. For a few minutes he lay still in bed, dimly taking stock of his new surroundings. The walls were stained with damp, the ceiling flaked and crumbling, a stranger's garments dangled from the coat-pegs. On top of the wardrobe were piles of propaganda leaflets and booklets. Above the metal basin hung a cheap mirror, splashed and stained. Jacques wondered idly what sort of life the comrade living here might be leading.

The window had stayed open all night; despite the early hour, the air that came in from the courtyard was foul and sweltering.

He took his pocket diary from the bedside table. Monday, the twenty-seventh. Let's see, now. Got to meet those fellows from the C.G.T. this morning at ten; then I must see about that legacy, call on the lawyer, broker. But at one I'll be at her place, with her! At four, the meeting that's been fixed up for Knipperdinck. At six I might drop in at *Le Libertaire*. And tonight there's that mass meeting. Shouldn't be surprised if there's a rough house. Last night, already, one felt there was trouble in the air. Still, we can't let those young patriots have it all their own way in the streets of Paris. Tonight's demonstration promises well; we have posters all over the place. The Building Section has called on the unions to turn out in force. That's all to the good; it's important for the trade-union movement to keep in close touch with the Party.

He ran out into the hallway, filled his jug at the tap, and sluiced his shoulders with cold water.

Suddenly, as the thought of Manuel Roy came back to him, he fell to objurgating the young medico. "The truth," he muttered, "is that the people you accuse of being unpatriotic are people in revolt against that damned capitalism you stand by. If anyone attacks the system, you say he's a disloyal Frenchman. '*La Patrie*,' that's your slogan," he gurgled, his face plunged in the basin. "But what you really mean is 'class,' the social hierarchy. All your blather about patriotism's simply eyewash; what you're defending is the present social system." Gripping the towel by both ends, he vigorously rubbed his back; his mind was full of visions of the coming world in which the various countries would survive as local, self-determining states under the federate control of a proletarian organization.

Then his mind harked back to the trade unions. "It's only when one's got a place inside the unions," he muttered, "that one can put in really useful work." His face darkened. Why was he in France? To pick up information—yes; and he did his best at it. Only yesterday hadn't he sent some brief reports to Geneva which would certainly be of help to Meynestrel? But he had no illusions about the importance of his mission. "If only I could make myself really useful—*act*!" he sighed. He had come to Paris with that hope, and was raging at being constrained to be a mere onlooker, a collector of unconsidered gossip; in short, he chafed at *doing* nothing, being unable to do anything.

Action of any concrete kind was obviously impossible on the international plane to which he was perforce restricted. It was ruled out for those who did not form part of any definite group, who were not members—what was more, members of long standing—of recognized associations. "That's the trouble," he murmured despondently, "with being a free-lance as regards the revolution. An instinct of escape led me to break with the bourgeoisie. It was as an individual that I rebelled against them, not as the member of a class. I've always been self-centred, trying to 'find myself.' " Mithoerg's taunts came back to him. "You, *Kamerad*, will never be a true revolutionary." And, thinking of the Austrian, of Meynestrel, and of all those others whose stern sense of reality had led them to accept once for all the fact that revolution cannot dispense with bloodshed, he felt again the tightening at the throat which always gripped him when he came up against that ugly issue, the problem of violence. “Oh, if only one day I could free my mind of doubts, make an entire surrender of myself, heart and soul!”

He finished dressing in one of those moods of vague dejection which were only too familiar to him, but fortunately did not last, quickly succumbing to the stress and bustle of active life.

He gave himself a little shake. “Let’s go and find out what’s been happening.”

The thought of it was enough to brace him. After locking his door, he ran down to the street. The papers had little new to tell him. The right-wing organs made much of the demonstrations of the League of Patriots around the Strasbourg monument. In most of the papers the scant official communiqués were supplemented with verbose, often contradictory comments. They conveyed an impression that orders had been given to alternate, as deftly as possible, grounds for hope and reasons for alarm. The left-wing press called on all pacifists to attend a monster demonstration to be held that evening at the Place de la République. The *Bataille Syndicaliste* flaunted a front-page appeal: “ALL OUT ON THE BOULEVARDS TONIGHT!”

Jacques called in at the *Humanité* office before going to the Rue de Bondy, where he was not due till ten.

At the door of Gallot’s office he was buttonholed by an elderly woman, whom he remembered having met on several occasions at gatherings in the *Progrès* rooms. A militant Socialist of fifteen years’ standing, she was editor of the journal *La Femme Libre*, and was generally known as “Old Mother Ury.” Everybody liked her, but was careful to keep out of her clutches, for her loquacity knew no bounds. Obliging to a degree, an eager champion of all worthy causes and unsparing of herself, she had a mania for recommending people to each other, and, despite age and varicose veins, she was indefatigable when it was a question of getting a worker into a job or a comrade out of a tight corner. When Périnet had fallen foul of the police, she had courageously given him shelter. She was a quaint-looking creature; her wild, wispy grey hair gave her the air of one of the harpies of the Commune. Yet her face had kept a beauty of its own. “She’s like a classy doll that’s been left out in the rain”—thus Périnet in his broad Parisian accent. She was a fervent vegetarian, and her latest enterprise was a co-operative society which was to provide each district of Paris with its Socialist-vegetarian restaurant. The crisis notwithstanding, she would not miss a chance of making a convert to the vegetarian creed and, clutching Jacques's arm, launched out into a homily.

"Ask the folks who know about it, my dear boy. Consult any health specialist. Your body can't achieve the harmony of its functions, and your brain can't give its maximum output, if you insist on stuffing yourself with decaying animal matter, if you live on corpses like a vulture!"

Jacques had great difficulty in shaking her off and getting into Gallot's office alone. Gallot was busy examining a list of names that Pagès, his secretary, was showing him, and ticking them off with a red pencil. He glanced up over the rampart of documents stacked on the table and signed to Jacques to take a seat, while he finished checking the list.

As Jacques saw him now, in profile, his head seemed a rodent's rather than a man's; almost all of his face consisted of a tapering snout extending from the slanting forehead to the tip of the nose. Its beginning was hidden in a mass of pepper-and-salt hair crowning his brows, and it ended in a bushy beard like a penwiper clamped to an abortive chin and fuzzing up round the small, sunken mouth. Jacques never set eyes on Gallot without a sense of startled curiosity, like that one feels when catching a hedgehog unawares upon some country road before it has had time to curl into a ball.

The door was flung violently open and Stefany burst in, coatless, shirtsleeves rolled to the elbows on his sinewy arms, his birdlike nose bespectacled. He brought a copy of the resolution passed the day before at the Trade Union Congress in Brussels.

Gallot stood up to greet him, but only after he had taken the list of names from Pagès and slipped it carefully into a file. The three men talked of the Belgian resolution for a while, paying no heed to Jacques. Then they began discussing the latest news.

That morning undoubtedly the tension had relaxed; the news from Central Europe furnished some grounds for hope. No Austrian troops had so far crossed the Danube. This sudden lull, coming as it did after Austria's seeming haste to force a break with Servia, was, to Jaurès's mind, significant. Obviously, in view of the conciliatory tone maintained by Servia and the undisguised indignation of the European powers, Austria was still of two minds about crossing her Rubicon. Moreover, all things considered, it seemed reasonable to put a less unfavourable interpretation on the threats of mobilization bandied by Germany and Russia which had caused such a flutter in the diplomatic dovecots. Some saw in these measures an ostensibly aggressive line of action pursued with the best intentions—to safeguard peace. And there was no denying that its immediate effects promised well: Russia had obtained from the Servians a promise to fall back without fighting in the event of an Austrian advance. Thus time would be gained for exploring possibilities of conciliation.

The reports Jaurès had received as to the anti-war activities of the internationalists were, on the whole, encouraging. In Italy the Socialist members of Parliament were to meet in Milan, review the situation, and affirm the pacifist position of the Italian Party. In Germany the measures taken by the government to muzzle the opposition, stringent though they were, had failed. A mass demonstration against war was due to take place in Berlin on the following day. In France the local Socialist and trade-union organizations all over the country were on the alert and formulating plans for a strike.

A message was brought to Stefany that Jules Guesde was waiting to see him. Eager to be on time for his next appointment, Jacques left the room with him and accompanied him to his private office.

"*Local* organizations, you said." Jacques's tone was dubious. "In the event of war, would they be prepared to embark on a *general* strike, I wonder?"

"Obviously it would be a general strike," Stefany replied. But, to Jacques's thinking, his tone somewhat lacked confidence.

The Café du Rialto was in the Rue de Bondy, and its proximity to the trade-union headquarters, the Confédération Générale du Travail—familiarly known as the C.G.T.—had caused this café to be chosen as the meeting-place of a group of particularly active trade-unionists. Here Jacques was due to meet two C.G.T. militants with whom Richardley had asked him to get in touch. One of them had been a schoolmaster; the other, foreman in an ironworks.

Jacques was greatly interested by their description of the plans in process of being drawn up to bring about a closer collaboration between the activities of the C.G.T. and those of the Socialist organizations in their joint anti-war campaigns. The conversation had lasted nearly an hour—Jacques had no desire to cut it short—when the woman in charge of the establishment appeared at the door of the back room used for meetings and to the company at large announced: "Thibault's wanted at the telephone."

Jacques did not move at once. No one could have had a notion he was to be found here, and he supposed there was some other person of his name among those present. But, as no one else made a move, he went out to make sure.

At the other end of the wire was Pagès. It flashed on Jacques that, when leaving Gallot's office, he had mentioned his appointment at the Rialto.

"Lucky I got you," Pagès said. "There's a Swiss fellow here wants to see you. He's been looking for you since yesterday, he says."

"Who is he?"

"A funny little bird with white hair. Looks like an albino."

"I know who it is. He's not Swiss, he's a Belgian. I wonder what he's here for."

"I didn't want to give away where you were. But I told him to look in at the Croissant at one, on the off chance."

Jacques remembered his plan to visit Jenny.

"Nothing doing. I've an appointment at one, which I can't possibly . . ."

"Suit yourself," Pagès cut in. "But it seems urgent. He has a message from Meynestrel to transmit to you. . . . Well, anyhow, I've let you know. So long."

"Thanks."

An urgent message from Meynestrel! As he left the Rialto, Jacques was still undecided. He could not bring himself to delay his visit to Jenny. Finally good sense won the day. Before calling on his lawyer, he flung ragefully into a postoffice and sent a special-delivery letter to Jenny, telling her not to expect him before three.

Beynaud's offices occupied the whole first floor of a handsome building in the Rue Tronchet. In other circumstances, the heavy pomposity of the lawyer, the solemnity of the premises, furniture, and staff, and the archaic gloom of this necropolis of legal documents would have struck Jacques as frankly ludicrous. He was greeted with a certain deference, as son and heir of the late lamented M. Thibault and a potential client in the future. From office-boy to head of the establishment, veneration for the man of property was obviously *de rigueur*. Jacques was requested to sign certain documents and, as he seemed in a particular hurry to take possession of the fortune standing in his name, discreet inquiries were ventured as to his intentions.

"Obviously," Maître Beynaud oracled, gripping the lions' heads which ended the arms of his thronelike chair, "the Bourse, in critical times like these, offers unusual opportunities—for those who have inside knowledge of the stock-market. But we must not forget the risks involved. . . ."

Cutting short the oracle, Jacques took his leave.

At the broker's office the clerks were in a state of feverish commotion behind their cagelike railings. Telephones were frantically buzzing and orders were being called out from desk to desk. The Stock Exchange was due to open shortly and, in view of the political situation, there were fears of something like a panic. Difficulties were raised when Jacques asked to see the head of the firm, M. Jonquoy, in person, and he had to make shift with the great man's second-in-command. No sooner had he expressed a desire to sell out his complete holdings than he was informed that the moment was ill-chosen and he would sustain a heavy loss on the transaction.

"Never mind," was all he said.

So determined did he seem that the broker was impressed. To take so rash a step with such serene assurance undoubtedly implied that this odd young man had picked up some inside information and had in view a masterstroke of speculation. Two days, however, would be needed to put through the selling orders. Jacques rose, expressing his intention to return on Wednesday and receive in cash the proceeds of the sales.

The broker escorted him politely to the outer door.

Jacques found Vanheede sitting by himself near the entrance of the café. His elbows on the table, his chin cupped in his hands, he was blinking toward the door, watching all who entered. He cut a quaint figure in a khaki tropical suit, bleached almost to the paleness of his hair. Though at the Croissant they were used to queer birds of every plumage, he attracted some amused attention.

On seeing Jacques he stood up at once, and the blood rose to his pale cheeks. For a moment he could not get a word out. Then, "At last!" he breathed.

"So you're at Paris too, Vanheede old man!"

"At last!" the white-haired youth repeated shakily. "I was really getting terribly alarmed, Baulthy, you know."

"Why? What's up?"

Screening his eyes with his hand, Vanheede cast a weary glance toward the neighbouring tables. Greatly mystified, Jacques took the seat beside Vanheede's, bending his ear to him.

"You're wanted," the albino whispered.

A picture of Jenny rose before Jacques's eyes; impatiently he thrust back his wayward lock of hair and asked uncomfortably: "I'm wanted? In Geneva?"

Shaking his tousled head, Vanheede fumbled in his pocket. From his wallet he extracted a sealed, unaddressed envelope. While Jacques was feverishly opening it, Vanheede whispered in his ear: “I’ve something else for you. Identity papers in the name of Eberlé.”

The envelope contained a double sheet of notepaper; on the front sheet were some lines in Richardley’s hand. The second sheet seemed blank.

Jacques read:

> The Pilot is counting on you. Letter follows. We all meet at Brussels on Wednesday.
>
> Yours, R.

Jacques knew what “Letter follows” signified: that the blank page had a message written in invisible ink. He twiddled the letter between his fingers. “I’ll have to go home to find out what is written there. . . . And suppose you hadn’t found me?” he asked Vanheede.

A seraphic smile lit up the young face. “Mithoerg has come, too. In that case, he was to open the envelope and do the job himself. We’re to meet the others at Brussels. . . . So you’ve moved from Liébaert’s place?”

“Where is Mithoerg now?”

“He’s hunting for you, too. We’re putting up with a man called Oerding, one of Mithoerg’s fellow-countrymen, and I’m to meet him there at three.”

“Look here!” Jacques thrust the letter into his pocket. “I won’t take you with me to my room; there’s no point in letting the concierge set eyes on you. But will you and Mithoerg meet me at a quarter-past four, at the tramway shelter outside the Montparnasse station, you know? I’ll take you to an interesting meeting in the Rue des Volontaires. And tonight, after dinner, we’ll go to the demonstration in the Place de la République.”

Half an hour later, in his room, Jacques read the secret message.

> Be in Berlin on Tuesday, the 28th.
>
> At 6 p.m. visit Aschinger’s Café in Potsdamerplatz. Tr. will be there and give you detailed instructions.
>
> After taking what he gives you, catch first train to Brussels.
>
> Spare no precaution. Have no other papers on you except those given by V.
>
> If, by mischance, caught and accused of espionage, employ as lawyer Max Kerfen of Berlin.
>
> It’s a plan devised by Tr. and group. Tr. particularly insisted on your co-operation.

“So that’s that!” Jacques said half aloud, and thought immediately: “Well, here’s my chance of *doing* something. I’m on active service—at last!”

The developer had left a smell of chemicals in the basin. After drying his hands, Jacques sat down on the bed.

“Now let’s think things out quite calmly. Got to be in Berlin tomorrow afternoon. The morning train wouldn’t get me there in time to be at Aschinger’s at six. I must take the ten o’clock train tonight. Anyhow, I’ll have time to see Jenny again. Thank goodness! But I’ll miss the demonstration.” His breath was coming rather rapidly. There was a time-table in his valise, which was lying open on the floor. Picking it up, he went to the window; suddenly he found the room insufferably hot. “After all, the twelve-fifteen train would do. It’s a local train, but if I take it I’ll be able to attend the demonstration.”

In a room near by, a woman was singing as she worked; now and again the shrill, full-throated melody was interrupted by a metallic clink, the sound of flatirons put back on a stove.

“ ‘Tr.’ means Trautenbach, of course. What’s this great ‘plan’ of his, I wonder? And why did he insist on me?”

He mopped his sweating brow. He was at once thrilled by the prospect of doing something definite, by the mysterious nature of his mission and the risks it might involve, and heart-broken at the thought of having to leave Jenny.

“As I’m to meet them in Brussels on Wednesday,” he reflected, “there’s nothing to prevent my being back in Paris on Thursday, if all goes well.”

In that case he would be away only three days—a consoling thought.

“I must let Jenny know at once. There’s just time, if I’m to be outside the Gare Montparnasse at four-fifteen.”

As he could not count on being able to return to his room before leaving Paris, he emptied out his wallet, made a packet of his private papers, and addressed it, on the off chance, to Meynestrel. He kept with him only the Eberlé passport given him by Vanheede.

Then he started off post-haste to Jenny’s apartment.

XX

JENNY opened the door so promptly when he rang the bell that one might have thought she had been standing there ever since he had left her, waiting for his return.

"Bad news," he said at once in a low voice. "I've got to go abroad and I must leave Paris this evening."

"Go abroad?" she faltered. Her face had gone pale; her eyes were fixed on him intently. He looked so upset at having to inflict this disagreeable news on her that she would have given much to be able to hide her distress. But the thought of losing Jacques again played havoc with her self-control.

"I'll be back on Thursday, or Friday at the latest," he hastened to explain.

Her head was bowed. She drew a deep breath. Slowly the colour came back to her cheeks.

"Only three days," he said with an attempt at a smile. "Three days isn't such a long time, when one has a whole life of happiness ahead!"

She gave him a shy, questioning glance.

"Please don't ask me about it," he said. "I've been assigned a special mission. I *must* go."

At the word "mission" an expression of such deep anxiety had settled on Jenny's face that Jacques, though himself unaware on what errand he was being sent to Germany, felt he must say something to reassure her. "It's only a matter of getting in touch with some foreign politicians, and I've been given the job because I speak their language fluently."

Her eyes were still intent on him. He broke off abruptly, pointing to some newspapers lying on the hall table. "I suppose you've seen the news?" he asked.

"Yes" was all she said, but the tone made it clear that she was now as conscious as he was himself of the gravity of the political situation.

He came closer, clasped both her hands in his and kissed them. "Let's go in there, to 'our' room," he suggested, pointing to Daniel's bedroom. "I've only a few minutes to spare. Don't let's spoil them."

Brightening up a little, she led the way along the passage.

"Any news from your mother?"

“Not yet,” she said without turning. “She was to have reached Vienna early this afternoon. I don’t expect a wire before tomorrow.”

The room had obviously been made ready for his visit. The partly lowered blind mellowed the light, the whole place had been tidied up, newly ironed window-curtains had been hung, the clock set going, and a bowl of sweet-peas stood on one corner of the desk.

Jenny had come to a halt in the middle of the room and was watching his face with a tense, rather anxious gaze. He smiled, but could not get her to smile in return.

“So you really mean it?” she said slowly, in an unsteady voice. “You can stay only a few minutes?”

His eyes lingered on her smilingly, affectionately, but there was something vaguely remote in his gaze, for all its steadfastness, that made Jenny slightly uneasy. It struck her that not once, since he came in, had Jacques met her eyes quite squarely.

He saw her lips quiver. Clasping her hands again, he whispered: “Please don’t make it too hard.”

She drew herself up and smiled at him.

“That’s better.” He drew her toward a chair. Then, without explaining the sequence of his thoughts, he added in an undertone: “One’s got to believe in oneself; in fact, one should have faith in nothing else. A man’s inner life can have no solid foundation unless he’s fully alive to his destiny and sacrifices everything to it.”

“Yes,” she murmured in an unsteady voice.

“To realize one’s inner forces,” he went on, as if talking to himself, “and let them take charge. And if others choose to look on them as evil forces, well, it can’t be helped.”

“Yes,” she repeated, looking down again.

Time and again, during the past few days, she had thought, as she was thinking then: “Now that’s something I must store up in my mind and think over, so as to understand him better.”

She remained quite motionless for a minute, her eyes veiled by their lashes; there was a look of such rapt meditation in the bent face that for a while Jacques could not bring himself to speak again. At last in a vibrant but controlled voice he said: “One of the turning-points in my life was when I realized that what others disapproved of in me and thought pernicious was, on the contrary, the best and most genuine part of my nature.”

She listened to him, grasped his meaning, but a sort of dizziness came over her. For the past two days the foundations of her inner world had been crumbling. A void was forming about her which the new values on which all Jacques's pronouncements seemed based were as yet unable to replenish.

But then she saw his face light up. He was smiling again, but his smile was quite different. He had just thought of something, and gave her a questioning look.

"I've an idea, Jenny. As you're all by yourself this evening, why shouldn't we go and have dinner together, you and I? Anywhere you like."

She stared at him without a word of reply, taken aback by so simple, yet in her case so unusual, a suggestion.

"I shan't be free before half-past seven," he went on. "And I have an appointment at nine in the Place de la République. Shall we spend that hour or so together?"

"Yes."

What a way she has, Jacques thought, so resolute yet gentle a way of saying "Yes" or "No"!

"Splendid!" he exclaimed joyfully. "I shan't have time to call for you, but could you manage to be in front of the Bourse at half-past seven?"

She nodded.

He stood up. "Well, now I must be off. See you this evening, then."

She made no attempt to detain him, but followed him silently to the head of the stairs.

As, on his way down, he turned back for a last affectionate smile, she leaned over the banisters and, suddenly emboldened, called to him in a low tone: "I like to picture you moving about among your friends. In Geneva, for instance. It's there, I should say, you're really and truly yourself."

"What makes you say that?"

"Well, you see," she replied slowly, groping for her words, "wherever *I've* seen you, until now, you've always seemed to be rather—how shall I put it?—rather out of your element."

He had stopped half-way down the staircase and stood looking up at her earnestly. "Don't you believe it!" he exclaimed. "Over there, too, I'm out of my element. In fact, I'm out of my element everywhere. I've always been like that. I was born out of my element!" He smiled. "It's only when I'm with you, Jenny, that this feeling of being out of my element wears off a bit."

His smile faded. He seemed half inclined to add something else. He made a hasty gesture which might have meant anything and went on down the stairs.

“She’s perfection itself,” he was thinking. “Perfection itself—yet how terribly mysterious!” But that was nothing against her, to his mind. Was not the appeal Jenny had had for him from the first partly due to that sphinxlike quality of hers?

Back in her room, Jenny stood for a few moments behind the closed door listening to his receding footsteps.

“How baffling he is!” she thought suddenly. Not that she would have had him any different. Her love for him was deep enough to vanquish even that eerie sense of dread he always left in his wake.

XXI

THE VAUGIRARD meeting was held in the private room of the Café Garibaldi, in the Rue des Volontaires.

Being introduced by Jacques, Vanheede and Mithoerg were received as delegates of the Swiss branch of the Party and were given seats in the front rows.

Giboin, the chairman, called upon Knipperdinck to address the meeting. The works of the old Swedish thinker were written in his native tongue, but his influence had long since taken effect beyond the confines of the Scandinavian countries. His more outstanding books had been translated, and many of those present had read them. He spoke French well. His tall stature, his crown of snow-white hair, the light of apostolic fervour shining in his eyes all enhanced the prestige of his theories. He hailed from a peace-loving and essentially neutral land, in which the rabid nationalism of the leading Continental countries had for many years been viewed with anxiety and disapproval. His appraisal of the European situation was severely lucid, and his well-informed, impassioned speech was constantly interrupted by bursts of applause.

Jacques listened with half an ear. His mind was full of Jenny—and of Berlin. As soon as Knipperdinck had wound up with an emotional appeal to make a stand against militarism, Jacques rose from his seat without waiting for the general debate to begin and, giving up the idea of taking Vanheede and Mithoerg round to the *Libertaire*, made an appointment to meet them after dinner at the mass meeting.

In the square beside the Comédie Française, seeing what the time was, he changed his plans. Montmartre was a long way off. It would be better to give up the call at the *Libertaire*, to go back to the *Humanité*, and get some idea of what had been happening during the afternoon.

As he turned into the Rue du Croissant, he ran up against old Mourlan, in his black printer's overalls, just leaving the premises of the newspaper in company with Milanov. He walked a little way with them.

Jacques knew that Milanov kept in touch with anarchist circles. He asked him if he meant to attend the Congress to be held in London during the weekend.

"Nothing that's of any use can come of that," was all the Russian chose to answer.

"And besides," Mourlan put in, "the Congress seems to be in a bad way. No one cares to be in the limelight just now. They're all running for cover. At police headquarters and in the Home Office, they're already spreading their nets; they're making haste to bring the B List up to date."

"What's that—the B List?" Milanov inquired.

"A list of all the suspects in the country. They have to see the police force set for action if the crash comes."

"And what are they saying up there this evening?" Jacques asked, pointing to the *Humanité* windows.

Mourlan shrugged his shoulders. The latest information to come over the wires was anything but hopeful. From St. Petersburg, thanks to the indiscretion of an always well-informed special correspondent of the *Times* of London, the news had leaked out that the Tsar had authorized the mobilization of the fourteen army corps stationed on the Austrian border, thus taking up Germany's challenge. Not only had Russia not been intimidated, as it had been hoped at first she would be, but she was becoming blatantly aggressive. The Russian government threatened at once to decree a general mobilization of all her forces, should Germany so much as venture upon partial mobilization. It was known through dispatches received from Berlin that the Kaiser's government, throwing caution to the winds, was speeding up mobilization. The Chief of Staff, von Moltke, had been urgently summoned to headquarters. The German public had been informed by the official press that war was expected to break out at any moment. The *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* published a lengthy plea in favour of the Austrian ultimatum and declared that Servia must be completely crushed. From early morning, in Berlin, the banks had been besieged by panicky mobs, clamouring to withdraw their deposits.

In France, the credit establishments were similarly mobbed. In Lyon, Bordeaux, and Lille, runs on the banks were making matters difficult for the directors. On the Paris Bourse there had been an actual riot that very afternoon. An Austrian broker, charged with having engineered a fall in the Rentes, had been manhandled by an angry crowd shouting: "Kill the spy!" The police had managed to rescue him in the nick of time. An inspector had ordered the peristyle to be cleared, and it had been as much as the police could do to prevent the Austrian from being torn to pieces by a raging mob. The incident was an absurd one in itself, but it went to show to what a pitch of war-fever the public was worked up.

"And what about the Balkans?" Jacques asked. "The Austrians haven't actually moved across the border, have they?"

"Not yet, it appears."

According to the latest telegrams, however, the offensive which had been postponed so far was expected to be launched that night. Gallot, in fact, declared on reliable authority that Austria had decided upon general mobilization, that the decree would be published next morning and carried out within three days.

"In France," Mourlan remarked, "all officers on leave, men on furlough, railway and postoffice employees away on their holidays, have just been called back by wire. Poincaré himself is setting the example. He's hurrying straight back, without interrupting his trip anywhere. He's due at Dunkirk on Wednesday."

"Your mention of Poincaré," Milanov broke in, "reminds me . . ." and he went on to relate a significant anecdote which was going the rounds in Vienna. On July 21—the story went—at the reception of the diplomatic corps in the Winter Palace, the President of the French Republic, in that peremptory voice of his, had addressed the Austrian Ambassador in the following sensational terms: "Servia has very warm friends in the Russian people, Mr. Ambassador. And Russia has an ally—France!"

"Always the same policy of sabre-rattling!" Jacques muttered, his thoughts reverting to Studler.

Milanov suggested an adjournment to the *Progrès* offices, pending the hour set for the meeting. But Mourlan turned down the suggestion. “We’ve had quite enough palaver for one evening,” he observed gruffly.

“There’s something I want you to do for me,” Jacques said to him when Milanov had gone. “I’ve left a parcel tied up with string in my room in the Rue du Four; it contains some private papers. If anything . . . goes wrong with me during the next few days, will you have them sent to Meynestrel in Geneva?”

He smiled, but gave no further explanations. Mourlan looked him in the eyes for a moment or two. But he asked no question, merely nodding assent. As they parted, he held Jacques’s hand for a moment in his own. “Well, good luck!” he said, for once omitting to call him “lad.”

Jacques went back to the newspaper office. He had only half an hour left before the time of his appointment with Jenny.

A party of Socialists, among whom he caught sight of Cadieux, Compère-Morel, Vaillant, and Sembat, was coming out of Jaurès’s room. He saw them go into Gallot’s office. Turning back, he went and knocked at Stefany’s door. Stefany was by himself, bending over a table strewn with foreign newspapers.

He was a tall, thin man, hollow-chested and high-shouldered. His long face, framed in coal-black hair, was perpetually twitching, sometimes so violently that he was taken for a lunatic at large. He was a man of all-consuming, typically Southern activity. (He hailed from Avignon.) After obtaining a degree in history, he had taught that subject for some years in a provincial public school before diverting his energies to the Socialist cause, and had left a lasting impression on the memories of his pupils. Jules Guesde had him given a post on the *Humanité* staff. Jaurès, whose robust health inclined him to shun sickly people, had no liking for the historian, though he held him in high esteem. He had, however, let him work his way up to a leading position on the staff, and turned over the harder jobs to him.

He had deputed him this afternoon to keep in touch with the Parliamentary Socialist Group and the executive committee of the Party. Jaurès was trying to get the Socialist deputies to enter an official protest against any armed intervention on the part of Russia. He had been calling again and again at the Quai d’Orsay in the hope of inducing Paris not to side with St. Petersburg and to preserve complete liberty of action, so as to be able to play the part of arbitrator and peacemaker when opportunity arose.

Stefany had just had a long talk with the Skipper. He did not conceal from Jacques that he had found him in an unusually “jumpy” state. Jaurès had decreed that the next day’s number of the *Humanité* should bear this ominous headline in block letters: WAR WILL BREAK OUT THIS MORNING.

Between them, he and Stefany had drafted a manifesto in which the Socialist Party proclaimed its will to peace *urbi et orbi*, as spokesman of the French working-class. Of this declaration Stefany had committed to memory whole passages, which he recited in his sing-song voice, while pacing up and down the narrow office. His small, birdlike eyes flickered excitedly behind his glasses, and his lean, hooked nose stabbed the air like an eagle’s beak.

“Against a policy of violence,” he declaimed, raising a monitory arm, “the Socialists appeal to the whole country.” The need he felt, on this particular evening, of bracing up his faith by dwelling on these comforting assurances was at once obvious and pathetic.

A similar declaration had been received in the course of the day from the German Socialists. Jaurès had himself translated it, with Stefany’s assistance. “War is threatening us,” it ran. “We will not have war, at any price. Long live international reconciliation! In the name of humanity and civilization the class-conscious proletariat of Germany enters an impassioned protest. With no uncertain voice it calls on the German government to use its influence over Austria for the maintenance of peace. And if this abominable war cannot be averted, it demands that Germany be kept entirely out of the conflict.”

Jaurès wanted the two manifestos to be reproduced by thousands and displayed side by side, in two-column posters, all over Paris and in all the large cities. The various Socialist printing-works had been commandeered that same night for the purpose.

“In Italy they’re doing some good work, too,” Stefany observed. “The Socialist group of deputies have held a meeting in Milan, at which they passed a resolution demanding that an emergency session of the Italian Chamber be convened immediately, so as to force the government to declare publicly that Italy has no intention of following the lead of her partners in the Triple Alliance.”

With a quick movement, he snatched a sheet of paper from the table. “Here’s a translation of the Socialist manifesto that has just been published in Mussolini’s *Avanti*: ‘There’s only one line for Italy to take—neutrality. Is the Italian proletariat going to allow itself to be led a second time to the slaughter? For us, for all of us, the slogan today is: Down with war! Not a man, not a centesimo will we contribute!’ ”

This translation was to be published next day on the front page of the *Humanité*.

"On Wednesday," he continued, "in Brussels, will be held not only a session of the International Socialist Committee, but also in the evening, a mass protest meeting, with speeches by Jaurès, by Vandervelde for Belgium, Haase and Molkenbuhr for Germany, Keir Hardie for England, and Rubanovitch for Russia. It will be a spectacular affair. In every country all available militants will be called upon to make the trip and join in a demonstration that will stagger Europe. It must be made clear that the proletariat of every country in the world is up in arms against the nationalistic governments."

He strode up and down the room, puckering his nose, screwing up his lips, seething with impotent rage, and steadfastly refusing to abandon hope.

The door opened to admit Marc Levoir. He was red in the face, excited. No sooner had he come in than he dropped into a seat. "It's enough to make a man wonder if they don't actually want it, every one of them!"

"What? War?"

He had just got back from the Quai d'Orsay and was the bearer of strange news. Von Schoen, it was stated, had come round to give notice that, to provide Russia with a decent excuse for dropping her uncompromising attitude, Germany undertook to obtain from Austria a formal promise that the territorial integrity of Servia would be respected. Furthermore, the Ambassador was reported to have suggested to the French government that it should publish an official statement in the press declaring that France and Germany, "completely at one in their fervent desire that peace should be maintained," were acting in concert and doing their utmost to persuade Russia to act with moderation. And it was alleged that the French government, under the influence of Berthelot, had rejected this proposal and declined point-blank to make any show whatever of being "at one" with Germany, for fear of giving offence to its Russian ally.

"Whenever Germany makes any suggestion whatsoever," Levoir concluded, "the Quai d'Orsay, like one man, pronounces it 'a trap.' And so it has always been for the past forty years."

Stefany's beady eyes were fixed on Levoir with an expression of distress. His sallow face seemed to have grown still longer, as though his flabby cheeks were being dragged down by the heavy under-jaw.

"What's so appalling," he muttered, "is to think there are six or seven men in Europe—ten, perhaps—making history all on their own. It puts me in mind of that line in King Lear: ''Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind! . . .' Come on"—he broke off suddenly, placing his hand on Levoir's shoulder—"we must go and tell the Skipper about it."

When the others had left, Jacques rose from his seat. The time had come for him to keep his appointment with Jenny. "And tomorrow night," he thought, "I'll be in Berlin." He remembered his mission only at odd moments, but each time it was with a pleasurable thrill, not unmixed with a certain anxiety, anxiety lest he should fall short of what was expected of him.

XXII

THOUGH it was barely the half-hour by the Bourse clock, Jenny was there already. Jacques saw her when he was some way off, and halted. The iron gates had been closed for the night and against the dim background Jenny's graceful form stood out in statuelike repose amid the usual evening crowd of newspaper-venders and busmen gathering at the Bourse terminal. For some moments he remained on the curb gazing at her, stirred by an emotion he had often felt in the past on taking her thus unawares. In the far-off days of Maisons-Laffite, he would often linger outside the Fontanins' garden on the chance of a glimpse of her. He remembered one late afternoon when he had seen her in a white dress emerging from the shadow of the fir trees and crossing a patch of sunlight that for a magic instant haloed her in dazzling sheen.

That night she was not wearing her mourning veil. The black costume made her seem even slimmer. She never yielded to the impulse to make herself attractive either in her dress or in her demeanour, for she sought her own approval only; she was at once too proud to care much what others thought and too modest to suppose others would trouble to pass judgment on her. The dresses she preferred were of a reserved cut, severely practical. None the less, Jenny always looked well dressed, with an austere, almost puritanical elegance due to simplicity and her natural good taste.

When she saw him coming, she gave a slight start and went toward him, smiling. For now she had learned to smile effortlessly—or, rather, a faint flutter dimpled the corners of her lips, while the clear depths of her eyes lit up with a sudden little sparkle that filled Jacques with delight each time that he glimpsed it.

"When you smile," he began teasingly, "you always look as if you were doing one a charity."

"Really?" She could not help feeling a little hurt by the remark, but at once she told herself that he was right, and almost went so far as to confess: "Yes, I know there's something dreadfully stiff and crabbed in my expression. . . ." But she always disliked talking about herself.

Suddenly Jacques gave a sigh. "Things are getting worse and worse. Every government's 'taking a firm stand,' blustering. It's a sort of competition to see who can be most intractable."

She had noticed how tired and careworn Jacques was looking, from the moment they had met. Now she threw him a questioning glance, as if eager to learn the details.

He shook his head obstinately. "No, no. Let's not talk about it. What would be the good, anyhow? I'd much rather you helped me to forget about it all, now that I've a short spell off. How about dining somewhere near by? That will save time, and I'm fiendishly hungry—didn't have any lunch. Come on!"

He led the way and she followed, thinking: "Supposing Mother or Daniel saw us now!" This escapade had suddenly given their intimacy—of which neither was as yet fully conscious—a sort of public recognition, and she had a vaguely guilty feeling, like a child who is doing wrong.

"How about that place?" He pointed to a humble little restaurant at the corner of a street; through the windows standing open on the street could be seen some tables spread with white tablecloths. "It looks quiet, don't you think so?"

Crossing the road, they entered the little dining-room side by side; it was cool and empty. In the background, through the glazed door of the kitchen, they had the back view of two women seated at table under a hanging lamp. Neither of them looked round.

With a weary gesture Jacques had dropped his hat onto the wall-sofa, and walked toward the kitchen door, hoping to attract the attention of the women. For a moment he stood unmoving. Jenny glanced at him and suddenly she fancied she was looking at the face of a stranger, a much older man; in the light issuing from the kitchen all the outlines of the face seemed evilly distorted. She had the impression of living in a nightmare, the panic fear of a young girl who has been lured by criminals to some sinister retreat.

The sensation passed immediately; no sooner had Jacques turned to her and the shadows veered than he looked himself again.

"Do sit down," he said, moving the table aside for her to take a seat against the wall. "No, this is the best place; you won't have the light in your eyes."

It was a new experience for Jenny to find herself the object of a man's concern; she welcomed it now with a little thrill of pleasure.

The younger of the women in the kitchen, a fat, slatternly creature in a pink blouse, with a forehead like a heifer's and a mop of dark hair set low on it, had risen at last. She approached them with the surly air of an animal disturbed at feeding-time.

"Well, can we have some dinner, Mademoiselle?" Jacques asked in a genial tone.

The girl stared at him sulkily. "That depends."

Jacques's eyes roved merrily from the girl's face to Jenny's.

"You've got some eggs on hand, haven't you? Yes? And some cold meat, perhaps?"

The girl extracted a slip of paper from inside her blouse. "This is what we have." Her tone implied: "Take it or leave it."

But Jacques's good humour seemed imperturbable. "Splendid!" he exclaimed after reading out the menu and casting an inquiring glance at Jenny.

The waitress turned on her heel without a word.

"Nice disposition, hasn't she?" Jacques said with a chuckle and, laughing still, dropped into the seat facing Jenny. He rose again immediately to help her take off her coat.

She wondered whether to take off her hat as well. "Better not; my hair'll be dreadfully untidy." At once she felt ashamed of the coquetry behind the thought. Deliberately she took off her hat and purposely refrained from settling her hair after she had done so.

The sulky waitress came back with a steaming soup-tureen.

"Bravo, Mademoiselle!" cried Jacques, taking the soup-ladle she handed him. "We hadn't counted on this soup—it smells delicious!" Turning to Jenny, he said: "Let me help you."

His high spirits were a little forced; the truth was that this first meal together disconcerted him almost as much as it did Jenny. Moreover, he could not wholly rid his mind of the anxieties that had been haunting it all day.

A tarnished mirror behind Jenny doubled all her movements, enabling Jacques to see beyond the living presence her reflected self, the graceful play of neck and shoulders. Conscious that he was watching her, she suddenly said: “Jacques, I wonder—do you really, really know what I am like? It’s dreadful, but I can’t help wondering if you haven’t a lot of . . . illusions about me.”

She hid with a smile the very real misgivings that came on her whenever she asked herself: “Shall I ever manage to become as he would have me be? Am I not doomed to disappoint him?”

He smiled too. “And if I were to ask you: ‘Do you really know the man I am?’ what would you reply?”

After a moment’s hesitation she said: “I think I’d have to answer ‘No.’ ”

“But at the same time you’d think: ‘That hasn’t much importance.’ . . . And you’d be right.”

She assented with a slight nod. “Yes,” she thought, “it hasn’t much importance. All that will come in good time. What I thought just now is the sort of idea that haunts the minds of parents.”

“We must have confidence in ourselves,” Jacques said emphatically.

She made no reply, and he felt a vague alarm fretting his heart. But then her face lit up with a look of radiant happiness that, better than words, swept all his doubts away.

A smell of fried butter began to pervade the room.

“The Holy Terror’s coming back,” Jacques whispered.

The girl in the pink blouse put a sizzling omelet down on the table.

“A savoury omelet with minced bacon in it!” Jacques exclaimed. “Couldn’t be better! Is it you who do the cooking, Mademoiselle?”

“Well, if you must know, I do.”

“Congratulations!”

The girl condescended to smile, and simpered: “Oh, the dinners here ain’t nothing much. You oughta come here for lunch. Not a seat to be had. But of an evening we don’t have many customers. Only loving couples.”

Jacques exchanged a merry glance with Jenny. He seemed genuinely relieved at having coaxed a smile from the ungracious wench.

“Now this,” he said, smacking his lips appropriately, “is something like an omelet!”

Flattered, the waitress gave a chuckle and bent toward him as if to impart a secret. “Me, I do my own job in my own way, for them as knows a good thing when they eat it.”

Thrusting her fists in the pockets of her apron, she ambled off.

“Are we to take that for a tactful compliment?” Jacques laughed.

Jenny was in a brown study. The little scene had been trivial enough, but it had taught her several surprising things. Obviously Jacques had a gift of creating, with a word or two, with a smile, by dint of the interest he showed in others, a sort of temperamental warmth around him, an atmosphere congenial to expansiveness and good feeling. None knew this better than Jenny; in his company even the most secretive, not to say churlish, characters sooner or later broke the taboo of silence, unbent, and spoke their hearts out. To her such a gift seemed positively astounding, for unlike Jacques, unlike Daniel too, she felt hardly any curiosity about others. She lived shut up in her private world, and so intent was she on keeping it inviolate that she took pains to rebuff all who approached her and offered to outside contacts, as it were, a smooth, defensive shell on which nothing could take effect. Thinking of her brother, she was moved to wonder: “Mayn’t this curiosity which urges Jacques to interest himself in anyone who comes his way have as its complement an inability to discriminate, to pick and choose?”

“Are you capable of having preferences?” she asked abruptly. “Can you feel more attached to one person than to all others—and for always?”

At once she grew conscious of how clumsily she had put the question, and a blush rose to her cheek.

Jacques gazed at her, puzzled, trying to fathom the association of ideas behind it, as he repeated the question to himself, anxious above all to give it a straightforward answer. For both of them had an almost superstitious dread of deceiving each other on even the most trifling matter; it would be an act of sacrilege toward their love.

He was on the brink of saying: “ ‘Capable of having preferences’? How about my friendship with Daniel?” But that example would have been misleading, for he knew that time had impaired their friendship.

“So far—possibly not,” he admitted rather grudgingly, and added almost harshly: “But surely that’s no reason for doubting me!”

“I don’t doubt you,” she answered hastily, in a shaky voice.

He was struck by her woebegone air and recognized too late that her extreme sensitiveness called for the utmost prudence on his part. As he was pondering what to say, the waitress appeared with the next course, and he confined himself to a tenderly affectionate look that was an obvious plea to be forgiven for his tactlessness.

Her eyes were fixed on him. The rapidity with which Jacques's moods swung from one extreme to another dismayed her as a possible danger, but ravished her as well—though why it should do so was beyond her telling. Perhaps she saw in it the indication of an exceptionally strong personality, an untamed force. With a curious thrill of pride she smiled to herself: "My caveman!" The gloom had lifted from her face, and once more she felt possessed by the deep certitude of happiness that for the last two days had been pervading—and remoulding—her whole existence.

No sooner had the waitress gone than Jacques exclaimed: "How frail it is as yet, your confidence in me!"

In his tone there was not an atom of reproach; only regret, and something of remorse, for he could not forget that his behaviour in the past fully entitled Jenny to mistrust him.

She guessed at once what was passing in his mind and made haste to dissipate, as best as she could, those bitter memories. "The trouble is," she said, "that I'm so badly prepared for trusting anybody. I can't remember ever having"—she groped for the word, and one of Jacques's expressions came to her lips—"having experienced peace of mind, even as a child. That's how I am," she smiled. "Or, rather, that's how I used to be." In a low voice, her eyes bent on the tablecloth, she added: "I've never told that to anyone before." Impulsively, after a glance toward the kitchen door, she stretched her arms out to Jacques across the table; he noted that the delicately moulded hands were trembling. She felt unutterably his, yet her one desire was to be his even more, to lose herself beyond recall in him.

"I was like you," he whispered; "alone, always alone, and never, never at peace."

"I've been through that too." Gently she withdrew her hands.

"Sometimes I'd fancy myself superior to the common run, and fuddle myself with pride. And at other times I'd tell myself I was ugly, ignorant, a hopeless dunce—and wallow in humility!"

"I was just the same."

"Always, everywhere out of place."

"So was I."

"The slave of my temperament."

"So was I. And with no hope of breaking away from it, of getting to be like other people."

"And if in some black moments I didn't utterly despair of myself," he exclaimed in a sudden burst of gratitude, "do you know to whom I owed it?"

For an instant she had a wild hope that he would say: “To you!” But Jacques went on: “It was to Daniel I owed it. Our friendship was founded on mutual trust. It was Daniel’s affection and his trust that saved me.”

“It saved me too,” she said in a low voice. “Daniel was my only friend.”

It seemed that they could never have enough of explaining themselves each to each—each through the other’s lips; they gazed spellbound at one another with rapturous, insatiable eyes, eagerly watching for the other to smile a benison, a joyful affirmation of their perfect mutual understanding. It was like a glorious miracle, this intuitive, effortless interplay of mind on mind, the discovery that they were so amazingly alike. And it seemed to them that their store of confidences was inexhaustible and nothing in the world just now had more importance than this reciprocal discovery of each other’s secrets.

“Yes, I owe it to Daniel that I didn’t go hopelessly under. And of course to Antoine too,” he added as an afterthought.

A look of coldness she could not disguise settled on Jenny’s face. He observed the change at once and, perturbed by it, threw her a questioning glance. As no answer came, he asked point-blank: “Do you know my brother at all well?” He was ready to launch out into an enthusiastic eulogy of Antoine.

She all but frankly said: “I loathe him!” but thought better of it. “I don’t like his eyes.”

“What about his eyes?”

She wondered how to explain herself without wounding Jacques. Still, she was determined to keep nothing back from him, painful though it might be.

Greatly mystified, Jacques asked again: “What have you got against his eyes?”

She pondered for a while. “They give an impression of not knowing . . . of having ceased to know the difference between right and wrong.”

A curious comment, and it left Jacques puzzled. But just then a remark Daniel had made to him one day, speaking of Antoine, crossed his mind. “Do you know what attracts me about your brother? It’s his open-mindedness.” What Daniel admired in Antoine was his capacity for appraising any problem on its own merits, as if he were examining an anatomical specimen, quite apart from any ethical preconceptions. It was a mental outlook that inevitably appealed to the descendant of a long line of Huguenots.

Jacques looked as if he wanted to hear more from her, but she met his gaze with eyes so calm and secret that he dared not question her further. “Inviolable!” he thought.

The waitress had come up again to change the plates. “Some cheese? Dessert? Two nice strong cups of coffee?”

“Nothing more for me, thanks,” Jenny said.

“One coffee, please.”

They waited for the girl to bring it before resuming freely their conversation. Jacques, who was watching Jenny furtively, was struck once again by the contrast between her eyes and her face; the expression of the eyes was so much older than her features, which had the tender immaturity of a young child’s.

“Let me have another look at your eyes,” he said, leaning across the table with a smile to make amends for the inquisition. “I’d like to learn them, to really know them. They’re so marvellously limpid, ice-blue, crystal-clear. And the pupils keep changing all the time. Please don’t move! It’s fascinating.”

She too gazed at him, but unsmiling, a little wearily.

“Do you know,” he went on, “whenever you stare hard at something the iris contracts, and the pupil dwindles away till it’s like a tiny round hole punched in the blue surface. And what tremendous will-power there is in your eyes!”

It flashed on him that Jenny might prove an invaluable helper in his life’s work. And suddenly all his anxieties surged back into his mind; instinctively he glanced up at the wall-clock beside him.

Seeing a frown settle on his brows, Jenny felt suddenly afraid. “What are you thinking about, Jacques?” she whispered nervously.

He thrust back his forelock with an angry movement; unwittingly he had clenched his fists. “I’m thinking that at this moment there are in Europe perhaps a hundred men who foresee what’s coming, who are straining every nerve to save their fellows from disaster—and they can’t succeed in making themselves heard by the men they want to save. Can you imagine anything more grotesquely tragic! Will they manage to rouse the masses from their apathy? And will the masses . . . ?”

He went on speaking and Jenny seemed to listen, but her thoughts were far away. From the moment of seeing Jacques glance up at the clock, her attention had begun to wander and she had been unable to still the tumult of her heart. Three whole days without him! Mastering the onset of panic which at all costs she was determined to conceal, she gave herself up so hungrily to the sad delight of feeling him beside her, if for just these few brief minutes more, that all she could do was to watch each fleeting change of his expression, each flutter of his brows, each sudden gleam that kindled in his eyes. And, watching, she did not try to follow what he said, but let her mind grow blurred under the rush of words and theories that seemed crepitating round her like flurries of bright sparks.

Suddenly Jacques stopped short. “You’re not listening!”

Her lashes quivered; she flushed. “Sorry . . . !” Impulsively, like a child asking to be forgiven, she held out her hand. He clasped it, turned it over, and pressed his lips to her palm. Suddenly he felt a tremor ripple down the slender arm and recognized with a strange thrill such as he had never known before that the little hand, not merely yielding passively, was pressing itself fondly to his lips.

But time was passing, and there was something he had still to tell her. “Jenny, there’s something I absolutely must let you know—tonight. Last year, after my father’s death, I refused to hear anything about—about my share of the estate. I didn’t want to touch a sou of that money. Well, yesterday I changed my mind.”

He paused. Startled by his words, she had shrunk back a little, lowering her eyes; despite herself, all sorts of confused, contradictory fancies were racing through her head.

“I intend to take delivery of the money and turn it over to the International Party Fund, to be used for the anti-war campaign.”

She drew a deep breath; the colour came back to her cheeks. Why, she wondered, was he telling her about it?

“You approve of this intention, don’t you?”

Instinctively Jenny shunned his eyes. What thought was at the back of his head that made him emphasize as he had done that word “approve”? It almost looked as if he were granting her the right to control his conduct. She gave an almost imperceptible nod and looked up timidly. He was careful to maintain an interrogative expression.

“So far,” he went on, “I’ve always managed to earn my living, writing articles. The absolute minimum, I admit—but that doesn’t matter. The people among whom I live are all quite poor; I’m like them, and that’s as it should be.”

He drew a deep breath. When he spoke again, a feeling of embarrassment made his voice sound almost gruff. “If you, Jenny, can put up with this . . . this humble existence, I haven’t any fears about our future.”

She bowed her head. It was the first time he had broached the subject of their future, their life in common, and the rapturous vision opening up before her made her inarticulate.

He waited for her to raise her head; then, when he saw the radiant ecstasy transfiguring her face, he murmured: “Thank you.”

The waitress brought the bill. After paying it, he looked up again at the clock. “Nearly twenty to. I haven’t even time enough to see you home.”

Jenny had risen without waiting for a sign from him. Suddenly she remembered with a sinking heart: “He’s going away. Where will he be tomorrow . . . ? Three days to wait! Three intolerable days!”

As he was helping her into her coat, she turned abruptly and gazed deep into his eyes. “Tell me, Jacques . . . anyhow, it isn’t dangerous, is it?”

“What?” he asked, to gain time.

He recalled the wording of Richardley’s letter. He wished neither to lie nor to alarm her. Forcing a smile to his lips, he answered: “Dangerous? I don’t expect so.”

A glint of terror showed in her eyes. But she dropped her eyelids at once and, after a moment, bravely returned his smile.

“She’s perfect,” he told himself.

Without speaking, side by side, they walked to the nearest subway station. At the top of the stairs Jacques halted. Jenny, who had gone down the first step, turned round and faced him. The moment had come. . . . He placed both hands on her frail shoulders. “Till Thursday, then. Friday at the latest.”

He gazed at her with troubled eyes, on the brink of saying: “You are mine. Let’s stay together, come with me.” Then he remembered the crowd, the likelihood of street-fighting. Very quickly, under his breath, he said: “You must go now. Good-bye, dear.”

His lips parted in an ambiguous flutter—not quite a smile, not quite a kiss. Then abruptly he withdrew his hands, gave her a last lingering look, and was gone.

XXIII

THERE was still some daylight left; the air was sultry, laden with menaces of storm. The boulevards presented an unwonted aspect; all the steel shutters of the shops were down and most of the cafés were closed. Under police orders the few that had stayed open had cleared their terraces of chairs and tables lest these should be used for building barricades and to leave a clear field for charges of the mounted police. People were flocking up to watch the demonstration. Few private cars were about, though some buses were still plying, honking without cease.

The crowds were particularly thick along the Boulevards Saint-Martin and Magenta, and round the C.G.T. headquarters. A never-ending stream of men and women was pouring down from Belleville Hill. Workmen, young and old, in their work clothes, who had come in from the suburbs and outlying parts of Paris, were gathering in groups that steadily grew denser. In every street-bay, at every corner, in all the roads closed for repair, squads of policemen were mustered in black swarms round police cars, ready to transport them, at a moment's notice, to any danger-point.

Vanheede and Mithoerg were waiting for Jacques in a café on the Faubourg du Temple.

On the Place de la République all traffic had been stopped, and the whole square was a seething mass of people. Jacques and his friends did their best to elbow a way across the serried crowd and join the editorial staff of the *Humanité*, who, Jacques knew, were posted at the foot of the central monument. But already it was impossible to get through to the central portion of the square where the vanguard of the procession was forming ranks.

Suddenly, with a loud rustle, like a flurry of wind rippling the sea of heads, some fifty banners, invisible till now, soared aloft over the eddying crowd. Then with the ponderous deliberation of some monstrous reptile straightening out its coils, the procession got under way and moved off toward the Porte Saint-Martin. In a few minutes, like a lava stream finding its natural channel, the surging mass had flooded the ravinelike boulevard and, swelled at every moment by affluents from side-streets, was slowly rolling westward.

Wedged in the crowd, half stifled by the heat, Jacques and his friends had linked arms, so as not to be separated. Their ears were buzzing with the low continuous roar of the human flood that bore them on, sometimes immobilizing them for a moment, then sweeping them ahead, or tossing them this side and that toward the sombre house-fronts, where every window was a mass of craning heads. Night had fallen and the arc-lamps shed a wan, tragic glow upon the teeming chaos of the streets.

"Yes," Jacques jubilated, in an ecstasy of joy and pride, "they'd best take heed! A whole nation has risen up to block the way to war. The masses have understood. They've answered the call to action. If only Rumelles could see them now!"

A longer halt than usual penned them against the pillared façade of the Gymnase Theatre. Then came a confused shouting up front, giving the impression that the vanguard, on entering the Boulevard Poissonnière, had come up against an obstacle.

After ten minutes had elapsed, Jacques lost patience. "Come on!" he said, taking little Vanheede by the hand.

Mithoerg followed, grumbling to himself, as they threaded their way through the crowd, circling round impenetrable groups, swerving left and right, but steadily gaining ground.

"There's a counter-demonstration," someone informed them. "The League of Patriots is blocking the road ahead of us."

Jacques let go of Vanheede's hand and scrambled up onto the coping of a shop-front, to see what was happening.

The banners had come to a halt at the crossing in front, beside the red building of the *Matin*. The front ranks of Patriots and Socialists were flinging abuse at each other and not a few had come to blows. There were some vigorous affrays in progress, but their area was limited. The crowd was in an ugly mood; fists were being brandished on all sides. Little black squads of police had forced their way into the mass of people, but, though they made a show of activity, did not seem disposed to intervene just yet. Then somebody waved a white flag and, as if it were a signal, the Patriots broke into a rousing "*Marseillaise*," while the Socialists riposted with the "*Internationale*," in a swelling chorus that presently drowned out all other sounds with its tempestuous refrain. Suddenly the dense mass of people began to surge and eddy like a river in spate. From side-streets right and left, detachments of police led by inspectors had charged into the mass, so as to clear the crossing. The fighting redoubled in intensity; "*Marseillaise*" and "*Internationale*" died down and swelled up again, cut across by shouts —"On to Berlin!" "*Vive la France!*" "Down with war!" Driving ahead into the thick of the fray, the police were belabouring the pacifists, who retaliated with a will. Whistles shrilled, arms and sticks were brandished, cries rose: "To hell with the police!" "Dirty swine!" "Let 'em have it!" Jacques saw the policemen fling themselves on a demonstrator, who resisted vigorously, lay him out, and fling him into one of the police cars.

Jacques was furious at being too far away to take a hand. Perhaps, he thought, if he wormed his way along the houses, he might get through to the fighting-line. In the nick of time he remembered his mission, the train to catch. Tonight he was on active service; he had no right to gratify such impulses.

A low reverberation echoed up the boulevard; in the distance helmets glinted. A squad of mounted police was trotting down the street toward the demonstrators.

“Look out! They’re going to charge!”

“Let’s get out of this!”

The crowd round Jacques surged back in terror. But it was caught between the onset of the mounted police and the vast rearguard of the procession still pressing forward, making retreat impossible. Perched on his ledge, as on a rock lashed by wind and wave, Jacques gripped the iron shutter to prevent himself from being dislodged by the stampede of panic-stricken men and women immediately below. He looked for his companions; they had vanished. Anyhow, they knew where to find him and would come back if it could be managed. “What a fortunate thing I didn’t bring Jenny with me!” The mere thought of it made him shudder.

Horses were plunging wildly in the forefront of the crowd, knocking pedestrians over. Living jetsam—faces pale with fury or fright, blood-stained foreheads—bobbed up among the eddies. It was impossible to make out what actually was happening.

The central portion of the roadway had been cleared; under the combined onslaught of mounted police and ordinary patrolmen the pacifists had been thrown back. The road was littered with sticks and hats and wreckage, among which police officers with silver badges and some men in mufti, presumably plain-clothes men from headquarters, were moving to and fro. Round them a cordon of police was gradually widening out in all directions till presently the full width of the boulevard was occupied by the authorities.

Like a restive flock with the sheepdogs snapping at their heels which, after a spell of huddled-up confusion, turns about and scurries in the opposite direction, the crowd turned tail and stampeded toward the Boulevards Sébastopol and Strasbourg.

“Fall in at the Drouot corner!” someone shouted.

It struck Jacques that it would be imprudent to linger where he was; should he be arrested, the only identity papers he had with him were in the name of J. S. Eberlé, student, of Geneva.

He worked his way into the Rue d’Hauteville, where he stopped and pondered. There was little hope of getting in touch again with Mithoerg and Vanheede. What should be his next move? If he made for the Rue Drouot and took part in the demonstration, there was the chance he might be arrested or, quite likely, be jammed between two police cordons and have to miss his train. He glanced at his watch. Five to eleven. The wisest course, however distasteful it might be, was obviously to turn his back on the demonstration and make for the Gare du Nord.

Some minutes later he was walking past the La Fayette Square, in front of Saint Vincent de Paul’s Church. In that little garden, he and Jenny . . . He felt an impulse to make a pilgrimage, as to some hallowed shrine, to the bench where they had sat and talked. But the steps leading up to it were black with police.

His throat was parched. It came to his mind that quite near by, in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, there was a little tavern patronized by Socialists of the district. He could spend half an hour or so there before going to catch his train.

The backroom in which the militants usually gathered was empty. But in the public bar, some half-dozen customers were discussing with the proprietor, a Socialist of long standing, the latest news from that part of Paris, where some serious street-fighting had taken place. Near the Gare de l’Est an anti-war meeting had been forcibly dispersed, only to form again in front of the C.G.T. headquarters. There a veritable riot had ensued, necessitating a police charge. A number of people, it seemed, had been wounded, and the police stations of the district were full of people who had been arrested. There was a rumour that the superintendent of police in charge of the men on duty along the boulevards had been stabbed. One of the customers, who had come from Passy, said that he had seen the Strasbourg statue at the Place de la Concorde hung with tricolour flags and guarded by a group of young patriots under police protection. Another customer, an elderly workman with a grizzled moustache, whose coat had been torn in the fray and was now being mended by the barkeeper’s wife, declared that several fragments of the procession that had been dispersed on the boulevards had joined up again at the Bourse and were marching on the Palais-Bourbon, headed by a red flag and shouting: “Down with war!”

“Aye, down with War!” the barkeeper muttered. He had seen service in ’70, and taken part in the Commune. With an angry toss of his grey locks he added: “A fat lot of use it is shouting: ‘Down with war!’ today. It’s as if you shouted: ‘Stop the rain!’ after the storm has broken.”

This was not to the liking of the old workman, who after a long puff at his pipe retorted: “It’s never too late, Charles. If you’d seen ’em this evening at the Place de la République. Thick as a shoal of herrings they was.”

“I was there,” Jacques put in, and moved toward the old fellow.

“Well, if you was there, young fellow, you can back me up when I say there’s never been anything like it before. And I’ve seen some demonstrations in my time, my boy! I was there when they raised hell because of Ferrer’s execution; we were a hundred thousand strong that day. And I was in the protest meeting against the military convict prisons, for the release of Roussel, you remember; we were a hundred thousand strong that time as well. And there were more than a hundred thousand of us at the Pré Saint-Gervais, to demonstrate against the three-year military service law. But tonight, how many do you think we were? Three hundred thousand? Half a million? A million? All I know is there was a solid mass of us from Belleville to the Madeleine, yelling: ‘*Vive la paix!*’ like one man. No, boys, I ain’t never seen anything like that before, and I’m an old hand at the game. Lucky the cops hadn’t brought their guns or, by the look of it, there’d have been blood running in the gutters tonight. Tonight, I tell you, if we’d had the nerve, the Constitution was a goner; only somehow, damn it, we missed the chance! Aye, Charles, when we marched off from the Place de la République with all our flags flying—if at that moment some fellow had shown up that had the guts—a leader, what?—he’d have led us straight to the Elysée, and the revolution’d be begun tonight.”

Beaming with pleasure, Jacques gazed at the veteran fighter. “It’s postponed, that’s all. We’ll pull it off in a day or two, never you fear!”

As he walked to the station, his heart was full of joy. He had no trouble in getting a third-class ticket to Berlin.

On the platform he had a surprise; Vanheede and Mithoerg were there to say good-bye to him. Vanheede had lost his hat; he was looking pale, the picture of dejection. Mithoerg, on the other hand, was flushed and furious; his clenched fists made his pockets bulge. He had been arrested and given a good drubbing by the police. Then, as they were dragging him to a police car, there had been a scuffle and he had managed to break away. He described his adventure in a mixture of French and German, spluttering and spitting, and rolling rageful eyes behind his glasses.

“Don’t stay here,” Jacques said. “We don’t want to attract attention, you know.”

Vanheede had clasped Jacques's hand with sudden fervour; on the blank, blind-seeming face the pale lashes fluttered nervously, as in a tone of passionate entreaty he whispered: "Be careful, Baulthy!"

To hide his emotion, Jacques gave a cheerful laugh. "See you in Brussels on Wednesday!"

At that same moment Anne was standing in her boudoir, dressed to go out, with the telephone receiver to her ear, and gazing with misted eyes into space.

Antoine had switched off all the lights and, after a perusal of the evening papers, was dropping off to sleep. The buzz of the telephone that Léon placed on the bedside table every night made him sit up in bed. A far-away, tender voice murmured in his ear: "Is that you, Tony dear?"

"Hello? What's the matter?"

"Nothing, really."

"There must be! Tell me what it is, please." He sounded anxious.

"There's nothing wrong, I assure you. I only wanted to . . . to hear your voice. In bed already?"

"Yes."

"Were you asleep, darling?"

"Yes . . . well, almost. So everything's all right? Sure you're not worrying over anything?"

"Not a thing," she laughed. "But it's nice of you to feel anxious like that about me. I only wanted to hear your voice, that's all. Can't you understand, Tony dear, that one can get a sudden longing to . . . to hear a voice?"

Propped on an elbow, scowling at the light that stung his eyes, he nursed his growing irritation.

"Tony?"

"*What is it?*"

"Nothing. Only—I love you, Tony darling. If you only knew how I'd like to be in your arms tonight . . . at this very moment!"

Some interminable seconds passed before Antoine spoke. "Look here, Anne! Didn't I make it clear that . . . ?"

"Yes, yes," she broke in. "I know. Don't mind. I only wanted to say good night, dearest. . . ."

"Good night."

He hung up first. The brittle click jarred her like a blow. Shutting her eyes, she kept the receiver to her ear, waiting for a miracle. Then, “I’m a fool!” she exclaimed almost loudly.

Absurdly she had hoped—had managed to convince herself—he would reply: “Come over to our place at once. I’ll be there right away.”

Flinging her gloves, hat, and bag onto the table, she adjured herself: “You’re a fool! An utter fool!” And suddenly, starkly, the truth that she had kept at bay forced itself upon her: she was the miserable victim of her need for him, her need of him who had no need of her!

XXIV

AFTER an all but sleepless night, at about eight, when the train stopped at Hamm, Jacques got out to buy the morning papers.

With one accord the German press censured Austria for having declared herself at war with Servia. Even such right-wing papers as the Pan-Germanist *Post* and Krupp’s organ, the *Rhineland Gazette*, “deplored” the high-handed methods of Austrian diplomacy. Bold headlines announced the Kaiser’s hasty return and that of the Crown Prince. Paradoxically enough, most papers, after mentioning the fact that on the Kaiser’s arrival at Potsdam he had held forthwith a long and important conference with his naval and military Chiefs of Staff, expressed high hopes that, thanks to his influence, peace would be preserved.

When Jacques went back to the car he found his fellow-passengers had likewise bought the morning papers and were discussing the latest news. There were three of them: a young clergyman whose thoughtful eyes turned oftener to the open window than to the paper lying on his knees; an elderly, white-bearded man who appeared to be a Jew; and a fat, jovial German in the fifties with a smooth-shaven face and cranium. Catching Jacques’s eye with a wave of the *Berliner Tageszeitung* he was holding, he addressed him in German. “I see you’re interested, too, in politics. You’re a foreigner, aren’t you?”

“Swiss.”

"French Swiss?"

"From Geneva."

"That means you get a closer view of the French than we do. The individual Frenchman is a delightful fellow, don't you think so? Why is it that as a nation they're so obnoxious?"

Jacques turned the question with a non-committal smile.

The loquacious German made sure of having caught the clergyman's and then the Jew's eye, before proceeding. "Personally, I've travelled a lot in France, on business, and I've plenty of friends in that country. For quite a while I imagined that our desire for peace would win the French around to our way of thinking and we'd end by burying the hatchet. But no, there's nothing to be done with those fire-eaters across the frontier; they've got 'revenge' on the brain! That, of course, explains the line they're taking now."

"If Germany's so keen on peace," Jacques ventured to observe, "why doesn't she prove it to better effect today—by frankly insisting that her ally, Austria, keep the peace?"

"Why, that's what she's doing—there's no doubt about it! Read the papers, man! But look at France. If France isn't spoiling for a war, why does she back up Russia as she's doing now? You've only got to read Poincaré's speeches in Saint Petersburg. Yes, it's with France that the decision rests—for peace or war. If tomorrow Russia was informed she couldn't count on the support of the French army, she'd back down at once, she'd agree to arbitration, and we'd hear no more talk about a war."

The clergyman nodded approval; the man with the white beard likewise. He had taught law for several years at Strasbourg and cordially detested the Alsatians.

With a friendly gesture Jacques declined the fat man's offer of a cigar. For safety's sake he preferred not to be drawn into an argument, and feigned to be deep in the perusal of his papers.

The professor of law began to air his views. His opinions on Bismarck's policy in the years following 1870 were obviously prejudiced and superficial. He was, or pretended to be, unaware of the old Chancellor's desire to crush France once for all by another defeat in the field; he seemed determined to recall only the friendly moves made by the German Empire toward the French Republic—to the exclusion of all others. Under his lead the conversation took a historical turn. All three men were in accord, and the ideas they voiced were those of the great majority of Germans.

To their mind it was plain as daylight that until recent years Germany had persistently endeavoured to meet France half-way and further. The conduct of Bismarck himself was a case in point. Conciliatory to the point of rashness, he had permitted the vanquished nation to make a rapid recovery, though he might quite well have hindered it; all he would have needed to do was to put a stop to the colony-grabbing activities that had become a sort of mania with the French soon after their defeat. The Triple Alliance was not aimed at any outside power; it had come into being not as a military pact, but as a covenant among three monarchs who, alarmed by the revolutionary unrest pervading Europe, jointly guaranteed the preservation of established order. During the fifteen years from 1894 to 1909, and even after the Franco-Russian Alliance had been concluded, Germany had repeatedly invited France to co-operate in settling the political problems of the day, especially those relating to Africa. In 1904 and 1905 the government had made effort after effort, in the most cordial spirit, to come to a friendly understanding with France. Invariably France had turned down the Kaiser's appeals for an entente, and had met the most tempting proposals with mistrust, with perfidious quibbles, sometimes with open threats. If, then, the nature of the Triple Alliance had altered, the blame for it rested with the French, who, by their unaccountable military alliance with Tsarism, by the line their ministers (especially Delcassé) were taking, made it quite clear that the whole trend of their foreign policy was hostile to Germany and its object the "encircling" of the Central Powers. Thus the Triple Alliance had perforce become a weapon of defence against the activities of the Triple Entente, which openly flaunted itself in the world's eyes as a cabal of filibusters. The term was none too strong, and it was justified by facts: thanks to the Triple Entente, France had been able to lay hands on her vast Moroccan territories, Russia had been able to promote a Balkan League which would permit her some day to expand as far as Constantinople, and, lastly, thanks to the Triple Entente, England had been enabled to make her sea-power invincibly supreme in every quarter of the globe. The one obstacle to this blatantly imperialistic drive was the Germanic coalition, and all that now was needed to make absolute the world power of the Triple Entente was the disruption of that coalition. An opportunity for this had now arisen. France and Russia had promptly snatched at it; by exploiting the unrest in the Balkans and Austria's rash procedure, they aimed at making Germany repudiate her one and only faithful ally. Once embroiled with Austria, Germany would stand alone, surrounded by foes; France would have achieved the object of ten years' intrigues.

Such were the views expounded by the churchman and the Jewish professor. The fat German, however, was of the opinion that the Triple Entente had more aggressive plans in view. Russia was set on a war that would leave Germany crushed and prostrate. “Every German,” he said, “who watches events with an observant eye has found his confidence in peace ebbing away year by year. He has seen Russia building one strategic railway after another in Poland; France increasing her manpower and piling up armaments; England entering into a naval pact with Russia. The only possible explanation of these activities is that the Triple Entente intends to make sure of its supremacy by defeating the Triple Alliance in the field. They are determined, in fact, to force a war on us. If war doesn’t break out this year, it certainly will in 1916, or 1917 at the latest. But”—he smiled—“the Triple Entente is counting its chickens before they’re hatched. The German army is prepared. It’s a dangerous game to play, challenging the might of Germany!”

The old professor approved with a smile, the clergyman with an earnest nod. With the fat man’s last dictum they were whole-heartedly at one.

Jacques had stayed in Berlin on several occasions. He decided to get off at the Zoo station. In the West End there was less risk of running into people he knew.

His mysterious rendezvous in the Potsdamerplatz was not due till two hours later, and he decided to take cover meanwhile with Karl Vorlauf, who lived near by in the Uhlandstrasse. This man was a friend of Liebknecht and a good comrade of proved dependability. He was a dentist, and Jacques had every chance of finding him in at this hour.

In the waiting-room into which he was shown, two people were already seated: an old lady and a young student. When Vorlauf opened the door to summon the old lady, he shot a quick glance at Jacques but gave no sign of recognition. Twenty minutes passed; then Vorlauf appeared again and beckoned to the student. Almost immediately he reappeared by himself.

“You, Jacques!” he exclaimed.

Though he was quite young, a strand of greying hair ribboned his brown curls. The dark eyes, deep-set and faceted with glints of gold, still had the feverish brilliance Jacques so well remembered.

“I’m on a mission,” Jacques said in a low voice. “I’ve just come from the train and have an hour in hand. Got to lie low meanwhile.”

Vorlauf showed no surprise. “I’ll let Martha know you’re here. Come along!”

He led Jacques to a bedroom; a woman was sitting at the window, sewing, with her back to the light. The room was cool. Jacques saw two beds side by side, a table piled with books, a basket on the floor with two Siamese cats sleeping in it. And suddenly a picture rose before him of a room, cosy and calm like this one, the room which some day he would share with Jenny.

Composedly Frau Vorlauf stuck her needle into the material on her lap, and rose. The flattish face, crowned with a wealth of flaxen tresses, conveyed an impression of placidity combined with energy. Jacques had often met her in Berlin, at Socialist gatherings, which she always attended with her husband.

“Stay as long as you like,” Vorlauf said. “I’ve got to go back to my work.”

“Do have a cup of coffee.” Frau Vorlauf put the coffee-tray in front of Jacques. “Help yourself, won’t you? I suppose you’ve come from Geneva.”

“No, from Paris.”

“Really?” She sounded interested. “Liebknecht thinks that just now a great deal depends on France. He says the majority of your proletariat are definitely against a war and that you’ve the luck of having a Socialist minister in your Cabinet today.”

“Viviani? He’s an ex-Socialist.”

“If France chose, what a wonderful example she could set the world!”

Jacques described to her the demonstration on the boulevards. He had no trouble in understanding all she said to him, but he expressed himself in German rather laboriously.

“There was some street-fighting here as well,” she said. “About a hundred people were wounded and five or six hundred were arrested. This evening there’ll be more disturbances. Over fifty public anti-war meetings are taking place today, in every part of the city. At nine o’clock there’s a mass meeting at the Brandenburger Tor.”

“In France,” Jacques remarked, “we have to contend with the shocking apathy of the middle-class.”

Vorlauf had just come back. “It’s the same thing in Germany,” he said. “Nobody seems to bother. Would you believe it, urgent though the danger is, no one in the Reichstag has moved, so far, that the Foreign Affairs Committee should be convened! The nationalists are conscious that the government's behind them, and the ferocity of their press campaign is simply incredible. Every day they clamour for martial law to be declared in Berlin, for the arrest of all the leaders of the opposition, for a ban on pacifist meetings. But there's no need to worry; we shall put a spoke in their wheel! Everywhere, in every town in Germany, the proletariat is stirring, agitating, in revolt. It's like those glorious days of October 1912, when with Ledebour and the rest of them we roused the masses with the slogan 'War against war!' The government realized then that the outbreak of a conflict between the capitalist nations would be a signal for immediate revolutionary counter-action throughout Europe. So they got scared and put the brakes on. This time, too, we'll pull it off." Jacques had risen. "What? Got to go already?"

Jacques nodded and took his leave of Frau Vorlauf.

"War against war!" she cried. Her eyes were sparkling.

"Yes, this time too the cause of peace will triumph," Vorlauf assured Jacques as he escorted him to the hall. "But—for how long? I've come to think, like many others, that a world war's inevitable, and that the revolution won't make good till we've been through one. . . ."

Jacques was reluctant to take leave of Vorlauf before hearing his opinion on one of the problems foremost in his thoughts.

"What exactly is known in Germany as to the understanding between Vienna and Berlin? What's the point of all this play-acting they've been indulging in for the benefit of the rest of Europe, and what's been going on behind the scenes? In your opinion, is there complicity between them—yes or no?"

Vorlauf chuckled. "Oh, you Frenchman!"

"What do you mean?"

"It's so typically French, that 'Yes or no?' of yours. You Frenchmen have a perfect mania for clean-cut distinctions, you want every notion to be hard and fast! As if a clean-cut idea were *a priori* a correct one!"

It was Jacques's turn to laugh. Still, the remark had struck home; he fell to wondering to what extent his friend's view was justified and how far it applied to him personally.

Meanwhile Vorlauf's face had grown earnest again. "Complicity? Well, that's according! If you mean: 'Are they consciously, callously working hand in glove?' I'm not so sure of it. My answer to your question would be: yes *and* no. Of course there was some humbug in the surprise our politicians affected at the ultimatum. But, mind you, only a bit of it. The general view is that the Austrian Chancellor bamboozled our representatives, just as he bamboozled the other European chancelleries, and the most that can be said against Bethmann-Hollweg is that he acted with shocking imprudence. They say that what Berchtold submitted to the Wilhelmstrasse was an abridged, innocuous version of the ultimatum and, what's more, to make sure of enlisting Germany's support, that he promised it would be toned down still further. Bethmann believed him. In all good faith, if with extreme unwisdom, Germany pledged her word. When Bethmann, Jagow, and the Kaiser learned the real terms of the ultimatum, they were appalled."

"When did they learn its terms?"

"On the twenty-second or perhaps the twenty-third."

"That's the whole point! If it was on the twenty-second—as I was assured in Paris—that the German Foreign Office had still time to bring pressure to bear on Vienna before the dispatch of the ultimatum. And it neglected to do so!"

"No, Thibault, I sincerely believe that Berlin had too short notice; even on the night of the twenty-second it was too late. Too late to get Austria to modify her terms; too late to repudiate publicly the line that Austria was taking. Germany had been jockeyed into a false position and the only way open to her to save her face was to bluff it out and by intimidating Europe to win—by hook or by crook—the foolhardy diplomatic game into which she had been inveigled. That is what people here are saying, anyhow. And it's even alleged—this, too, on excellent authority—that until yesterday morning the Kaiser fancied he had carried out a masterstroke, that he could count on Russia's standing out."

"Oh, come now, that's absurd!" Jacques exclaimed. "He must have known quite well that Russia was spoiling for a war."

"Well, it's positively asserted that not till yesterday did our government realize the gravity of the situation; that they had been cornered. And that"—his face lit up with juvenile enthusiasm—"is why the demonstrations taking place tonight are so important. When a government's still undecided, such an outburst of popular feeling may very well tip the scale. You'll attend, won't you?"

Jacques shook his head and left Vorlauf without vouchsafing any explanation.

As he went down the stairs he was pondering on his German friend's remark about his mania for "clean-cut ideas," the "typically French" assumption that only what is clear is true. "No," an inner voice protested, "that's not my case. For me, ideas, whether they're clear or muddled, are never more—worse luck!—than half-truths, stepping-stones at best. And that, precisely, is my weakness."

XXV

IT was striking six when Jacques entered Aschinger's Café in the Potsdamerplatz, one of the largest establishments owned by the Aschinger catering firm, which had branches in every part of Berlin.

He saw Trautenbach sitting at a small table by himself, with a plate of vegetable soup before him. The German seemed absorbed in the perusal of a newspaper he had propped against the carafe, but his keen eyes were watching the entrance. He manifested no surprise and the two young men shook hands as casually as if they had last met only the day before. Jacques took a seat facing Trautenbach and ordered a plate of soup.

Trautenbach was a blond, athletic-looking Jew. He had curly, close-cropped reddish hair and a forehead massive as a young ram's; his cheeks were white and freckled, and the thick, coarse lips had hardly more colour than the cheeks.

"I was afraid they'd send me someone else," he whispered in German. "I don't trust the Swiss for this sort of job. You're just in time. Tomorrow would have been too late." He smiled with studied nonchalance, twiddling the mustard-pot now and again as if conversing on some trivial topic. "It's a tricky little business—for us, anyhow," he added cryptically. "You personally have nothing to do."

"Nothing to do?" Jacques sounded disappointed.

"Nothing except what I tell you to do."

In the same low tone, with the same look of smiling unconcern, interspersing his remarks with little amicable laughs to put off the scent anyone who might be watching them. Trautenbach outlined his plan. Following a natural bent, he had specialized as the directive "hidden hand" of a sort of secret service functioning in the interests of the international revolutionary cause. Some days previously he had obtained information that an Austrian officer, Colonel Stolbach, was coming to Berlin. It was believed that Stolbach had been sent on a secret mission, to confer with the German War Office, and there was every reason to suppose that in the present circumstances the object of his visit was to draw up with the German General Staff a scheme of co-operation with their Austrian opposite numbers. Trautenbach had conceived the daring plan of purloining the documents in the Colonel's possession and to this end had recruited two colleagues, "professionals in this line of business," as he described them with a wink, men on whose loyalty he'd "stake his last pfennig." This piece of information came as no surprise to Jacques. He knew that Trautenbach had spent many years in the Berlin underworld and had kept up contacts with members of the criminal class, contacts which he had already turned to account in the service of the cause.

Early that evening Stolbach was due to have his last interview with the War Minister. He had informed the management of the hotel where he was staying that he was catching the night train to Vienna. Thus there was no time to be lost; the documents would have to be stolen between the time when Stolbach left the ministry and his departure for the railway station.

Jacques was not asked to take part in the crime itself, and he could but own to himself that he preferred it should be so. All he had to do was to take delivery of the papers, rush them out of Germany, and hand them over as soon as possible to Meynestrel, with whom during the past few years Trautenbach had been keeping in close touch. If the papers proved to be important, the Pilot would impart their contents to the Socialist leaders who were due to meet in Brussels on the following day.

Jacques was told to go to the Friedrichstrasse station and after buying a ticket for Brussels to enter the third-class waiting-room; there he was to lie down on one of the wall-benches and pretend to be sound asleep. The documents, wrapped in a newspaper, would be surreptitiously placed near his head by a man who would leave at once without having spoken a word. These final instructions were repeated to him twice.

"Let's have another glass of beer," Trautenbach suggested, "before we part for the night's work."

Jacques had listened to him in silence, with a vague feeling of discomfort. This business of stealing documents, however useful it might be, went against the grain. When he had undertaken the mission to Berlin he had not expected to be mixed up in an enterprise of that sort. His first reaction had been a sense of relief at being asked to play only a very minor part in it. But at the same time he felt cheated, and rather vexed to find his role reduced to that of a receiver of stolen goods, a mere pawn in the game.

Before leaving Trautenbach he put him the same question as he had put to Vorlauf: Did he think the German and Austrian governments were acting in collusion?

"I can't say if there was any definite understanding between Berchtold and Bethmann. But it's quite on the cards that the Austrian General Staff and ours had fixed it up between them. I shouldn't be much surprised if our

Chancellor's been hoodwinked simultaneously by the Austrian Ambassador and our own General Staff."

"Ah," Jacques exclaimed, "if only one could get some concrete evidence that the German military clique has been working hand in glove with the Austrian Staff! If only one could definitely affirm that what's leading Germany at the present moment to turn down the English proposals for a peaceful settlement is an intrigue between your generals and their accomplices in Vienna!" Unconsciously, to justify his taking part in the theft that Trautenbach had planned, he was trying to convince himself that the documents in question would do yeoman service to the Socialist cause.

"I quite agree," the German answered, "that evidence of that kind might have incalculable effects. Even the most patriotic of our Socialist leaders would no longer feel any qualms about standing up against the government. That's why it's so important to have a squint at that Austrian colonel's papers. Don't get up," he added, rising from his seat. "I'll leave first. Remember: ten-thirty at the station. And till then, you'd best lie low and steer clear of crowds. The town is overrun with police today."

The German Minister of War had not been deterred by reports of the mass demonstrations taking place in Berlin from continuing to its end the final and decisive conversation he had embarked on with the official envoy of the Austrian General Staff, Colonel Graf Stolbach von Blumenfeld.

The interview terminated at nine-fifteen in an atmosphere of extreme cordiality. His Excellency even deigned to escort his visitor to the head of the huge ceremonial staircase of the War Office. There, under the eyes of the guards on duty and an aide-de-camp, the Minister took leave of the Colonel, who courteously bowed as he shook hands. Both men were in mufti and both looked tired and worried; the parting glance they exchanged was rife with unsaid implications. Then, tucking his fat, fawn-coloured brief-case under his arm and preceded by the aide-de-camp, the Colonel began walking down the wide, red-carpeted steps. At the foot of the staircase he turned and looked up; his Excellency had carried amiability so far as to remain standing at the top of the staircase in order to wave him a friendly adieu.

In the courtyard a War Office car was waiting. While Stolbach, lighting a cigar, settled into his place at the back of the car, the aide-de-camp bent forward to the chauffeur and told him the route to take so as to keep clear of demonstrations and avoid unpleasant incidents on the way back to the Colonel's hotel on the Kurfürstendamm.

The night was sultry. There had been a short, sharp downpour which, instead of cooling the air, had made it close and muggy. In view of possible rioting the lights in all the shops were out and, though it was not yet ten, Berlin already wore that aspect of portentous gloom which as a rule came only with the last hours of the night. Deep in thought, the Colonel gazed bemusedly at the wide vistas of the German capital. He was pleased with his day's work, the practical results achieved during his stay in Berlin, the report he would submit next day in Vienna to General von Hötzendorf. On entering the car, he had carelessly dropped the brief-case on the seat beside him; now he picked it up and placed it on his knees. It was a handsome affair, brand-new, in fawn-coloured leather with plated locks. Though of a common pattern, it had a dignified appearance befitting it to cross the august thresholds of high officialdom. The Colonel had bought it at a fancy goods shop in the Kurfürstendamm on the day of his arrival in Berlin.

When the car stopped at the hotel, a porter dashed forward obsequiously and escorted the Colonel to the entrance-hall. Stolbach paused at the reception office to tell the clerk to have a light meal sent up to his room and his bill made out, as he was catching the night express. Then with quick strides despite his corpulence, he went to the elevator and was taken up to the first floor.

The brilliantly lighted corridor was empty but for one of the hotel staff sitting outside the servants' pantry. Stolbach had not seen this man before; he was evidently acting as a temporary substitute for the regular room-valet. The man got up on seeing the Colonel and, preceding him, opened the door of his room, turned on the light, and lowered the Venetian blind. It was a high-ceilinged room, papered in black and gold, with two tall windows. Opening into it was a blue-tiled bathroom.

"Is there anything you require, sir?"

"No, thanks. My luggage is ready. But I'd like to have a bath."

"You're leaving tonight, sir?"

"Yes."

The valet had thrown a casual glance at the brief-case which the Colonel, on entering, had placed on a chair near the door. Then, while Stolbach, after tossing his hat onto the bed, was dabbing with his handkerchief the sweat that glistened on the back of his thick, glabrous neck, he went into the bathroom and turned on the tap. When the man came back into the bedroom, he found the special envoy of the Austrian Chief of Staff stripped to the waist, in socks and mauve silk drawers. Picking up the dusty shoes lying on the carpet he said: "I'll bring them back in a minute, sir," and left the room.

There was only a thin partition between the bathroom and the servants' pantry; pressing his ear to the wall, the valet listened to every sound, meanwhile polishing the shoes he had brought with him. He smiled on hearing the Colonel's heavy bulk settling tumultuously into the water. Then he extracted from his cupboard a handsome new brief-case in fawn-coloured leather with plated locks, tightly packed with waste paper. Wrapping it in a newspaper, he put it under his arm and, carrying the shoes, knocked at the bedroom door.

"Come in!"

The servant saw at once that his plan had miscarried. The Colonel had left the bathroom door wide open; his pink, chubby head was well in view, craning over the edge of the bath.

The valet placed the shoes on the carpet and without more ado left the room, his parcel under his arm.

Stolbach let himself slip down into the bath and, with the water up to his chin, was lolling luxuriously in its gentle warmth when suddenly the lights failed; bathroom and bedroom were plunged simultaneously into darkness. Stolbach waited for a few minutes; then, as the lights showed no sign of coming on, he felt with his fingers along the wall till he found the bell-push and pressed it furiously.

He heard the valet's voice in the bedroom: "Did you ring, sir?"

"What the devil's up? Have all the lights given out in the hotel?"

"No, sir. The light's on in the pantry. I expect the fuse in your room has blown. I'll fix it up for you, sir. Just a moment."

After a while the Colonel asked: "Well, have you fixed it?"

"Not yet, sir. I ain't found the fuse-box. It should be just beside the door."

The Colonel sat up in his bath and peered into the darkness; he could hear the man fumbling about in the adjoining room. A voice came from it: "Very sorry, sir; I don't seem able to find that fuse. It must be in the corridor. I'll step outside and have a look."

The man hurried out of the room, rushed to the pantry, stowed away the Colonel's brief-case, ran back, and replaced the fuse.

Three-quarters of an hour later, after Colonel Graf Stolbach von Blumenfeld had duly sponged, perfumed, and clad his portly form, had partaken of a light meal of ham and fruit, washed down with tea, and had lit his cigar, he consulted his watch. There was time and to spare, but, as he disliked being hurried, he rang up the hotel office and asked to have his luggage taken down at once.

“No, I’ll carry that myself,” he said when the porter picked up the brief-case lying on the chair beside the door.

Taking it from the man, he made sure that the locks were secure, then, wedging it firmly under his arm, he left the room, after a final glance round to make sure nothing had been forgotten; for the Colonel was, first and foremost, a stickler for method.

Before taking the elevator he tried to find the room-valet, with a view to giving him a tip, and even peeped into the servants’ pantry. It was empty. “Well, if the man’s such a fool, so much the worse for him,” the Colonel muttered. A quarter of an hour later he stepped into the Vienna express.

At almost the same moment the Genevan student, Jean Sébastien Eberlé, was stepping into the Brussels express at the Friedrichstrasse station. He had no luggage, only a parcel that looked as if it might contain a good-sized book. Trautenbach had found time to force the locks, wrap the documents in a newspaper and tie up the packet with string; he had thrown away the brief-case, as a needlessly compromising object.

Jacques was thinking: “If I get caught with these papers in German territory, there’ll be the devil to pay!”

But that the fancied perils of his “mission” should have dwindled to a risk so trivial struck him as almost comical and he was furious with himself for having let Jenny be alarmed over so paltry an adventure.

Nevertheless, in the course of the journey he retired to the lavatory, opened the parcel, and stowed away the documents about his person, in his pockets and in the lining of his coat, to avoid awkward questions from the customs officers. To make doubly sure, he bought a box of cigars at one of the last German stations before the frontier, so as to have something to declare.

These precautions notwithstanding, he had some anxious moments when passing the customs. But it was not till he felt the train gathering speed on Belgian rails that he took stock of his condition, and he found he was dripping with sweat. He settled back in his corner, crossing his arms over his tightly buttoned coat, and indulged in the luxury of a few hours’ sleep.

XXVI

THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE in Brussels, where, since an early hour the extraordinary meeting of the International Socialist Committee had been in progress, was buzzing like a hornets' nest in every one of its six stories. A heroic, concerted effort was being put forth to scotch the baneful activities of the imperialist powers, and to this end there had gathered in the Belgian capital not only Socialist leaders from every part of Europe but a large contingent of the militant rank and file. All were determined that the monster indignation meeting fixed for that Wednesday evening should attract world-wide attention.

Thanks to the money Meynestrel had placed at the disposal of his group—no one had ever found out how he and Richardley contrived always to replenish the secret service fund maintained at Headquarters—ten of its members had been enabled to come to Brussels. They had fixed on a *brasserie* known as the Taverne du Lion, just off the Anspacher Boulevard, as their meeting-place. Here it was that Jacques had rejoined his friends and handed over to Meynestrel the Stolbach documents.

The Pilot had at once dashed off to his hotel for a preliminary inspection of the booty in the seclusion of his room. Jacques was to join him there a little later.

Jacques's appearance was greeted with exclamations of delight. Quilleuf was the first to catch sight of him.

"Look, boys!" he roared. "There's young Thibault come back, bless his heart! . . . And how's yourself, lad? Hot as hell, ain't it?"

All Jacques's friends from Headquarters were gathered there: Alfreda, Richardley, Paterson, Mithoerg, Vanheede, Périnet, Saffrio the pharmacist, Sergei Pavlovitch Zelavsky, fat old Boissonis, Skada the Pundit, and even Emilie Cartier, her may-blossom complexion half hidden under a Red Cross veil that, all the way from Geneva, Quilleuf had been trying to make her remove, protesting that the weather was "too darned hot for such contraptions."

Jacques smiled with pleasure at the sight of all the friendly hands outstretched to him. He was delighted, and moved far beyond his expectation, at suddenly finding himself back in the congenial fervour of their gatherings at Geneva.

“Eh, boy,” Quilleuf grinned, under the impression that Jacques had just arrived from France, “I see they’ve acquitted that Caillaux dame o’ yours in Paris. . . . What’ll you have? Beer, did you say? You’re as bad as the rest of ’em!” For Quilleuf had a profound disdain for the “dishwater” that passed for beer in Flanders and remained faithful to his southern tipple, vermouth neat.

Quilleuf’s noisy cheerfulness was symptomatic of the almost universal optimism that still prevailed in Geneva. Conversations at the Talking Shop (where of late Meynestrel had seldom put in an appearance) had rarely come down from the clouds of international idealism, and the news that had poured in of the anti-war demonstrations in the cities of: Europe had been hailed with an enthusiasm that less encouraging reports had failed to dampen. And now that the Swiss group had come to Brussels and made its first contacts with the delegations from other parts of Europe, the impressive spectacle of this vast coalition against war gave most of them the feeling that the brotherhood of nations was an active reality and victory assured. True, they read in the morning papers that Austria had declared war on Servia, and the bombardment of Belgrade had actually begun in the course of the night; nevertheless, they had been convinced easily enough by the statements in an Austrian communiqué that a few shells had been dropped on the citadel alone, and the bombardment had no real weight behind it: it was to be regarded not so much as a prelude to hostilities as an emphatic warning, a symbolic gesture.

Périnet had Jacques sit down beside him. He had spent the morning at the Atlantic Café, the headquarters of the French delegation, and was full of the latest news from Paris. On the previous day a delegation of Socialist members of Parliament, headed by Jaurès and Guesde, had had a long interview with the acting Foreign Minister. After the interview the Socialist members had drawn up a manifesto emphatically declaring it was for France alone to decide what line she should adopt; in no event should the country “be plunged into an appalling war in virtue of a more or less arbitrary interpretation of certain secret treaties.” They also insisted that, the official holidays notwithstanding, the House should be convoked forthwith. This showed that the French Socialists were intending to take vigorous action in the parliamentary field. Périnet had been favourably impressed by the enthusiasm and the calm, indomitable hopefulness evinced by the delegation.

Jaurès, notably, had maintained a tone of staunch confidence. Various remarks he had let fall of recent days were being retailed by his admirers. He had been heard to say to Vandervelde: “History will repeat itself; it’ll be like the Agadir affair. There’ll be some ups and downs, but things are absolutely bound to straighten out.” And in proof of the Skipper’s optimism a picturesque anecdote was going the rounds, of how, having an hour to spare after lunch, he had ambled off to the museum and spent it leisurely gazing at the van Eycks.

“I saw him,” Périnet said to Jacques, “and I assure you he looked anything but discouraged. He passed just beside me, with his fat brief-case hunching up one shoulder, his straw hat, and black tail-coat—looking as usual like an old professor on his way to college. He was arm in arm with a chap I hadn’t seen before. Afterward I learned it was Haase, the German. But that’s not all. Just as they came past my table the German stopped and I heard him say in French—he had an accent you could cut with a knife: ‘The Kaiser, he do not vant a var, not he! Much too frightened is he of ze conseqvences.’ Jaurès turned to him with a smile and his eyes were sparkling. ‘Well,’ says he, ‘just you see the Kaiser takes a firm line with the Austrians. And at our end, we’ll see to it our people take a firm line with Russia.’ Just in front of my table they were. I could hear every word as plain as you hear me now.”

“A firm line with Russia!” Richardley muttered. “It’s a bit late in the day for that!”

Jacques met his gaze and had an impression that Richardley, who in this respect was probably reflecting Meynestrel’s opinions, was far from sharing in the general optimism. His impression was confirmed a moment later when, bending toward him, Richardley added under his breath: “One almost wonders if France, if those who rule France, I mean, in tolerating Russia’s mobilization, in tolerating Russia’s conduct—her answer to Austria’s challenge by a counter-challenge, and to the German ultimatum by a plea-in-bar—haven’t tacitly connived at a war.”

“The Russian mobilization’s only *partial*,” Jacques protested, but his tone lacked conviction.

“A partial mobilization? Much the same as a general mobilization, I should say, masquerading for the moment under another name.”

Mithoerg, who was sitting near Richardley and Charcovsky, suddenly roared out: “Russia! She’s mobilizing, make no mistakes about it! She’s in the hands of Tsarist *Militarismus*. All the European governments today, they are in the grip of the reactionary gang, and, what’s more, they’re under the thumbs of a regime, a system, which of its very natural makes for war. And that’s the long and short of it, *Kamerad*. The liberation of the Slavs? Just—how do you call it?—eyewashing. Tsarism’s never done nothing but oppress the Slavs. In Poland it has squashed them. In Bulgaria, it pretends to make them free so as to keep them under all the surer. Yes, indeed, it's the old fight itching to outbreak again—between Russian *Militarismus* and Austrian *Militarismus*."

At a neighbouring table Boissonis, Quilleuf, Paterson, and Saffrio had launched into an interminable discussion as to the German government's projects, which grew, it seemed to them, more puzzling with each new move. Why should the Kaiser, while loudly proclaiming his desire for peace, persistently refuse to act as mediator, when a strong hint from him would have been enough to bring Franz Josef to reason and acquiescence in the signal diplomatic triumph he had already won? Germany stood to gain nothing by an Austrian incursion into Servia. And if, as the Social-Democrats alleged, the Germans did not want a war, why should they wantonly expose themselves, and Europe, to the risk of one? Paterson suggested that the attitude of England was equally hard to fathom.

"The eyes of Europe," Boissonis remarked oracularly, "will soon be fixed on England. Now that the Austrian declaration of war has cut direct communications between Vienna and St. Petersburg, further negotiations can proceed only by way of London. Thus England's role of mediator acquires a new importance."

On his arrival in Brussels, Paterson had hastened to get in touch with the delegation of British Socialists, who, as he now told his friends, were greatly perturbed by a rumour that had been going round the Foreign Office. It was said that certain influential persons, who had Sir Edward Grey's ear, were alarmed at the idea that a declaration of British neutrality might indirectly favour the bellicose intentions of the Central Powers and were therefore urging Sir Edward to make a stand or, at least, to warn Germany that if, in the event of an Austro-Russian war, British neutrality could be positively counted on, no such presumption should be made as regards a Franco-German war. The British Socialists feared Sir Edward would yield to the pressure being brought on him, all the more so as a declaration on such lines would not now come up against the same opposition in the country as it would certainly have met during the previous week. For English public opinion had been profoundly shocked by the extreme harshness of the Austrian ultimatum and Austria's manifest determination to force a war on Servia.

Tired after his journey, Jacques listened to their conversation with a languid ear. The pleasure he had felt at seeing his friends again was evaporating more quickly than he would have wished.

He crossed over to the table where little Vanheede, Zelavsky, and Skada were conversing in undertones. “Today,” the albino was lamenting in his piping voice, “we live side by side, each for himself, without a spark of charity. That’s what we’ve got to change. And we must begin with men’s hearts. Fraternity isn’t something one can impose from outside, with laws and so on.” A brief smile lit up his face, as if he were contemplating some secret vision. “If you leave that out, well, you may be able to build up a Socialist regime, perhaps. But that won’t be socialism—not even the dawn of socialism.”

He had not noticed that Jacques had joined them. Suddenly he observed him, blushed, and stopped talking.

Skada, whose pockets were always stuffed with miscellaneous literature, had propped against his beermug some dilapidated books. Jacques glanced idly at the titles: Bakunin’s *Works*, vol. IV; Elisée Reclus, *L’Anarchie et l’Eglise*.

Skada turned to Zelavsky. Behind the enormously thick lenses of his glasses Skada’s goggle eyes looked big as two poached eggs. “Me, I haf no impazience,” he explained blandly, while with maniacal regularity his fingernails raked his close-cropped, fuzzy hair. “I do not vant ze revolution for mine own sake. In twenty, dirty, fifty years maybe vill come ze revolution. Dat I know, and dat is all I need to keep me living, doing tings.”

Richardley had begun speaking again at the far end of the room. Jacques pricked up his ears; from the young man’s vaticinations he might glean an inkling of the Pilot’s outlook on the crisis. “A war would compel the nations involved to ease the burden of debt by devaluing their currencies. And that would pitchfork them into bankruptcy. By the same token it would spell the ruin of the small investor, and cause world-wide distress. There’d be a whole host of victims of the capitalist system, up in arms against it, and they’d join in with us. And that would mean the end . . . !”

Mithoerg broke in before he could finish; Boissonis, Quilleuf, and Périnet all started speaking at the same time.

Jacques ceased listening. “Is it I who’ve changed?” he wondered. “Or is it they?” He was conscious of a vague uneasiness which he tried in vain to diagnose. “This threat of war has taken our group by surprise, set us at cross-purposes. Each of us has reacted in his own way, according to his temperament. We all have a desire for action, a passionate desire, but not one of us can gratify it. We’ve always been a group apart, outside the pale of action, undisciplined, unofficered. Who is to blame for that? Meynestrel, perhaps.” He looked up at the clock. “I’d better be getting back to him.”

He went up to Alfreda, who was sitting beside Paterson. “What tram will take me to your hotel?”

Paterson stood up. “Come along,” he said. “Freda and I will go a bit of the way with you.”

He was due to meet an English Socialist, a friend of Keir Hardie. Linking his arm with Jacques’s, he drew him toward the exit. Alfreda followed. Paterson was in an excited mood. The man he was to meet, a journalist, had suggested he should go to Ireland on an assignment for a Socialist paper. If the plan went through, he, Paterson, would have to leave for England next day, the first thing in the morning. He had not crossed the Channel once in the last five years, and the prospect of this trip had, as he put it, “fairly bowled him over.”

Outside, the sun blazed pitilessly down; the sidewalks were scorching underfoot. Unstirred by any breath of wind, the heat lay like a pall of fire upon the city. Coatless, puffing at his pipe, his tennis-shirt open at the neck, in his old grey flannel trousers, Paterson looked more than ever like an Oxford undergraduate on a walking tour.

Alfreda accompanied them. The dress she was wearing had paled, as a result of frequent washings, to a delicate cornflower-blue. With her black fringe, tip-turned little nose, large doll-like eyes, and air of being on her best behaviour, she looked like a little schoolgirl out for the day. As was her habit, she had listened without putting in a word. Now, however, she asked with a slight tremor in her voice: “Supposing you go to Ireland, Pat, when will you come back to Geneva?”

The young man’s face darkened. “Haven’t a notion!” he answered glumly.

She hesitated for a moment, then gazed up at him, only to drop her eyelids almost at once with a quick movement that made the shadows of the long lashes flicker on her pale cheeks.

“Will you come back?” she whispered.

“Yes.” His tone was confident, emphatic. Dropping Jacques’s arm, he moved up to Alfreda and laid his big paw on her shoulder with clumsy affection. “Yes, Freda. You can stake your life on that.”

They walked a few steps in silence.

Paterson took his pipe from his mouth and, cocking his head on one side, fell to examining Jacques’s face as if it were some curious object that had just caught his notice.

“I’m thinking about your portrait, Thibault. With another two sittings, quite short ones, I could have got the damned thing finished. Rotten bad luck! Looks as if there was a hoodoo on that portrait, doesn't it, old boy?"

He gave a hearty boyish laugh. As they were crossing a square, Paterson pointed to a small, hutchlike house at the corner of an alley. "Observe that mansion. It has the honour of sheltering William Stanley Paterson, Esquire. I've quite a big bedroom and if you like, old boy, you can share it with me—for an ounce of tobacco *per diem*."

Jacques had not yet settled where to stay.

"Right you are," he said with a smile.

"It's on the first floor, that room with the open window. Got it?"

Alfreda had stopped walking and was staring up at Paterson's window.

The Englishman turned to Jacques. "Here we part company. See the station? The Pilot's place is in the street immediately behind it."

"You'll come along with me?" Jacques asked Alfreda, supposing she would accompany him to the Pilot's rooms.

She gave a little start, then gazed at him, and in the dark, dilated pupils Jacques seemed to glimpse a tragic indecision.

There was brief silence. Then Paterson spoke in a casual tone. "No, you'll have to go there by yourself. So long, old chap."

XXVII

FOR the last fortnight, Meynestrel had been denouncing war as passionately as any member of the group at Headquarters. But nothing had shaken his conviction that no action on the part of international socialism would avail to prevent war from breaking out. "War's an essential," he would say to Alfreda, "for the development of really revolutionary conditions. Of course one can't be sure if revolution will come as a result of this particular clash, or of a subsequent war, or of some other type of crisis. That depends on a heap of things. For instance, on who has the 'first-fruits.' Who'll bring off the first victories—the Central Powers or the Franco-Russians? There's no telling. For us, however, that's immaterial. It's up to us, just now, to act as if we were certain of being able, at an early date, to convert this imperialist war into a proletarian revolution. To intensify the present pre-revolutionary conditions by every possible means. In other words, to co-ordinate all the well-meaning pacifist activities, in whatever quarter we may find them, and foster unrest in every possible way. To stir up trouble wherever we can and handicap the various governments to the utmost.” Inwardly he thought: “Always provided we don’t go too far. We must take care to refrain from any too effective move which might definitely stave off war.”

On arriving in Brussels, he had deliberately chosen lodgings at some distance from the Taverne and was staying behind the Gare du Midi, in a small house at the end of a courtyard.

After putting in a couple of hours alone in his bedroom studying the Stolbach papers, he no longer felt the slightest doubt as to the collusion between the General Staffs of Germany and Austria; these documents proved it to the hilt. The information procured by Jacques consisted almost exclusively of memoranda jotted down by Colonel Stolbach in the course of his talks with the German High Command and the War Minister. These notes had evidently served for drafting the messages Stolbach sent to Vienna after each such interview. Not only did they throw a lurid light on the present state of the pourparlers between the respective General Staffs, but they contained many references to the immediate past which gave a clear idea of the negotiations that had been taking place between Vienna and Berlin during the last few weeks. These retrospective revelations were of the highest interest. For Meynestrel they were a confirmation of the suspicions the Viennese Socialist, Hosmer, had instructed Boehm and Jacques to impart to him in Geneva on July 12, and they enabled him to reconstruct the whole sequence of events.

Only a few days after the Sarajevo outrage, Berchtold and Hötzendorf had set about trying to persuade the old Emperor to take advantage of the incident, to order immediate mobilization, and to crush Servia by force of arms. But Franz Josef had proved unmanageable. He raised the objection that military action on the part of Austria would meet with the Kaiser’s veto. (“Oh, ho!” Meynestrel murmured at this point. “That proves, incidentally, that he was already alive to the danger of Russian intervention and a world war.”) In order to overcome the Emperor’s reluctance, Berchtold had thereupon conceived the bold idea of sending his own chief private secretary, Alexander Hoyos, to Berlin, with instructions to solicit Germany’s approval. As might have been expected, neither the Kaiser nor the German Chancellor would hear of any such adventure; they were much too apprehensive of Russian reactions and were not disposed to let themselves be drawn into a European war by Austria. But now the Prussian military party took a hand in the game. Hoyos found in them well-prepared and highly influential allies. Since February 1913, the German General Staff had been, fully aware of the Slav peril as well as of the plots that were being hatched by Servia and Russia against Austria, and by the same token against Germany. They even suspected St. Petersburg of having, with the connivance of Belgrade, played a more or less indirect part in the Sarajevo murder. But the German generals held it for an axiom that Russia could not possibly face the risks of an immediate war and would not let herself be involved in any form of hostilities for at least two years to come—that is, until she had completed her armaments. Urged on by Hoyos, the Germany army chiefs had managed to satisfy Wilhelm II and Bethmann-Hollweg that, as things were, the danger of Russia's taking a firm line and bringing on a general conflict was negligible and that here was a heaven-sent opportunity for increasing German prestige in the eyes of the world. The upshot was that Hoyos succeeded in obtaining a free hand for Austria and took back with him to Vienna the promise that Germany would unflinchingly support her ally in all her claims. Here at last was an explanation of Austria's incomprehensible tactics during the last few weeks. It proved, moreover, that even then the Kaiser and his immediate associates more or less dimly perceived, if not the likelihood, at least the possibility of a general war.

"A lucky thing I'm the only one to have set eyes on this!" Meynestrel chuckled. "And to think I came mighty close to asking Jacques and Richardley along to lend a hand!"

He was bending over the bed, on which, for lack of space elsewhere, he had been sorting out the papers into little heaps. Taking up the memoranda he had placed on his right, all of which referred more or less to the past, to the events of early July, he put them in an envelope and sealed it, marking it No. 1.

Then he pulled up a chair and sat down. "Now let's have another squint at the rest of it." He reached toward the papers he had gathered on his left. "All this has to do with friend Stolbach's mission. This lot is the Austrian plan of campaign—strategy, technical details. Not in my line! We'll put it in envelope No. 2. Good. It's the rest that's so . . . enlightening. These memoranda are dated, so it's easy to follow up the progress of the 'conversations.' What exactly was the object of the mission? Roughly speaking, to speed up German mobilization. Here are the earliest papers. On arrival in Berlin, a talk with von Moltke. And so forth. The colonel urges the German Staff to push on their military preparations. 'Impossible!' he's told. 'The Chancellor won't have it, and he's backed up by the Kaiser.' Well,

well! Why this opposition on Bethmann's part? 'Too early,' he declares. Just let's have a look at the reasons he gives. In the first place, reasons of home policy: he fulminates against the popular demonstrations, the attacks in *Vorwärts*, and so forth. That's just too bad! Yes, he's terribly put out by the violent opposition of the Social-Democrats. Secondly, reasons of foreign policy: for one thing, the need to enlist the approval of neutrals, chiefly of the English. Then he insists on the advisability of waiting for the Russian menace to become more definite; only when the imperial government's confronted with 'a patently aggressive Russia,' will it be able to satisfy both the German Socialists and the world at large that for Germany it is a case of self-defence, that she is driven to mobilize as a measure of common prudence. Good for Bethmann! There's no getting behind that! Well, then, how will Stolbach and the German generals set about forcing comrade Bethmann's hand? These documents show quite clearly how their little scheme took form. The aim, of course, is to jockey Russia into adopting some line of action which might be construed as 'definitely provocative.' 'Why not oblige her to mobilize?' Stolbach suggests on the evening of the twenty-fifth. The wily old bird! The answer to which is: 'Exactly so! And there's only one sure way of doing it—to mobilize in Austria, and that's easily fixed up.' They're not such fools as one might think, these generals. They quite realize that, were Franz Josef to decree the mobilization of his entire army (which, Stolbach here points out, 'would no longer be merely a threat to little Servia, but an obvious challenge to imperial Russia'), the Tsar would inevitably be led to reply with a *general* mobilization of his own army. And being confronted with a general mobilization on the part of Russia, the Kaiser would no longer withhold his own decree for mobilization. And the Chancellor would have no further say in the matter, for a German mobilization directly due to a threat of Russian invasion could be justified in the eyes of everybody, both abroad and at home. It would satisfy not only German opinion, already worked up to fever-pitch against the Russians, but European opinion as well. Even the Social-Democrats would approve.... Yes," Meynestrel observed to himself, "that's perfectly true. Sudekum and Company have been dinning the Russian peril into our ears for ever so long, at every Congress. Bebel himself is as bad as the rest of 'em. As far back as 1900 he proclaimed that in the face of a Russian menace he would shoulder a gun. The Socialists, this time, would be hoist with their own petard. They would have to make good their words. It would be impossible for them, as Social-Democrats, not to co-operate with the government when it was a question of preparing to defend the German proletariat against Cossack imperialism.... An excellent scheme, my masters! So, very soon we'll have general mobilization in Austria. And that’s why, the very next day but one after his arrival in Berlin, friend Stolbach sends wire after wire to Hötzendorf, urging upon Austria the advisability of taking measures for a *general* mobilization. Capital! A Machiavellian trap set for Russia by the Berlin generals, with the complicity of Austria. And meanwhile the Kaiser and his Chancellor peacefully puff at their cigars, without an inkling of what’s going on.”

Meynestrel squeezed his temples between forefinger and thumb—a familiar gesture with him—then slid his hand quickly along his cheeks down to the tip of his pointed beard.

“Splendid! They’re heading straight for it. And at a good pace, what’s more!”

He gathered up the papers spread out on the counterpane and stuffed them into a third envelope, muttering again: “What a stroke of luck that I’m the only one to have set eyes on this!”

He leaned back in his chair, crossed his arms, and remained for a few minutes without moving.

These papers clearly represented a “new factor” of tremendous importance. With but few exceptions, the German Social-Democrats had no idea of any such intrigue between Vienna and Berlin. Even the most rabid critics of the imperial regime refused to believe the latter would be foolish enough to imperil world peace and the future of the Empire for the sake of saving Austria’s face. They therefore accepted the official statements as reliable. They believed that the Wilhelmstrasse had really been taken unawares by the Austrian ultimatum and had had previous knowledge neither of its precise wording, nor of its aggressive tone, and that Germany was making a bona fide attempt to mediate between Austria and her adversaries. The better informed among them did, indeed, suspect a possible understanding between the General Staffs of Vienna and Berlin. Haase, the German delegate at Brussels, whom Meynestrel had run across in the morning, had told him how he had approached the government on the previous Sunday and reminded them emphatically that the Austro-German alliance was a strictly defensive one. He had betrayed a certain uneasiness as regards the answer he had received. “That’s as it may be. But supposing Russia *did* resort to some unprovoked act of aggression against our ally, what then?” So far, however, Haase was far from suspecting that the Austrian general mobilization was actually intended to serve as a skilfully baited trap set by the German military party to lure their enemy, Russia, into war. This incontrovertible proof provided by the Stolbach papers, were it to fall into the hands of the Social-Democrat leaders, would prove a potent weapon in their fight against war. They would promptly turn upon their own ministers the furious attacks they had hitherto reserved for the Vienna government.

“It’s a regular charge of dynamite!” Meynestrel muttered. “There’s no telling what its effects might be if it fell into competent hands. Why, anything might happen—it might even blow the prospects of a war sky-high!”

For a few seconds, he pictured to himself the Kaiser and his Chancellor trembling at the thought of this revelation of the Austro-German intrigue, of seeing themselves exposed to a virulent press campaign which well might turn against the German government not only the German people but world opinion as well, and being faced with the alternative of either putting every Socialist leader under arrest and thus declaring war upon the whole of the German proletariat and the European Socialist International (which was hardly to be thought of), or of yielding to Socialist pressure and abruptly setting the gears into reverse—withholding from Austria the co-operation promised to Hoyos. What would ensue? Probably, for lack of German support, Austria would not dare to persevere in her warlike schemes, and would have to be content with diplomatic “conversations” ending in a compromise. And every capitalistic war plan would thus be brought to naught.

“That remains to be seen!”

He rose to his feet, took a few steps up and down the room, drank some water, returned, and seated himself once again before the documents.

“And now, Pilot, my friend, let’s have no slip in our tactics. There’s the choice between two alternatives. Suppose I make over these papers to a man like Liebknecht, and let scandal do its damnedest. In that case, one of two things will happen: either the scandal will prevent a war or it will not. Supposing, as is quite likely, it fails to do so, what have we to gain by it? Naturally the proletariat would go to war with the certainty of having been bamboozled. Excellent propaganda for a civil war. Yes, but the wind is blowing in the opposite direction—people everywhere are ‘war-minded’ already. That’s quite obvious here in Brussels. Indeed, as things are, it’s problematic if the leaders of social-democracy would unanimously agree to touch off the dynamite I’d hand them. Most problematic, indeed. Let’s assume, however, they decide to print the documents in *Vorwärts*. The paper would be seized, the government would publish a categorical denial, and the mood in Germany is already such that the official denials would carry more weight than our indictments. On the other hand, let us now suppose, against all likelihood, that Liebknecht, by making the most of the resentment of the people and the world-wide indignation that would ensue, obliges the Kaiser to draw in his horns and thus prevents the outbreak of war. Obviously, in that case the influence of the Socialist International and the will to revolution of the masses would benefit. So far, so good—but by preventing a war, we'd be throwing away our best trump-card."

For a while he stared at the documents before him, weighing the implications of the decision he had now to take.

"It's unthinkable," he told himself half aloud. "Unthinkable! Why, even if there were only one chance in a hundred of preventing war, that risk must *not* be run!"

Again he pondered deeply.

"No. From whatever angle one looks at the problem—no! For the present there's only one solution—to put our dynamite into cold storage!" Stooping, he dragged a small suitcase from under the bed. "Must keep the stuff under lock and key, not breathe a word about it. Until the appointed hour . . ."

The "appointed hour" he had in mind was the hour when ineluctably the morale of the rank and file of the contending armies would begin to falter. Then, as a means of speeding up the general demoralization and exacerbating it, this conclusive proof of the machinations of the governments concerned would come in very handy; its disclosure would enable him to deal a knock-out blow.

A grim smile flitted across his face, the smile of a man possessed.

"How curiously things hang together!" he mused. "To some extent, perhaps, on these three envelopes I'm holding in my hand, depend vast issues, war and revolution!"

There was a knock at the door.

"Is that you, Freda?"

"No, it's Thibault."

"Ah!" Quickly he stowed away the envelopes in the suitcase and locked it before going to open the door.

Instinctively Jacques began by casting a sweeping glance round the disordered room; where were the documents?

"Didn't Freda come with you?" Meynestrel could not keep out of his voice an undertone of petulance that was almost anguish, though he mastered it at once. "I won't ask you to sit down," he added with a touch of humour, pointing to the two chairs in the room, both strewn with feminine apparel. "I was just going out, anyhow. I'd rather like to see what they're up to at the People's House."

“What about those documents?” Jacques tried to keep the eagerness out of his voice.

While speaking, the Pilot had pushed the suitcase under the bed. “I’m afraid Trautenbach had all his trouble for nothing,” he said coolly. “And so had you.”

“What!” Jacques was less mortified than dumbfounded; the idea that the documents might prove valueless had never crossed his mind. Reluctant to ask the Pilot to explain himself, he merely said: “What have you done with them?”

Meynestrel pointed a foot in the direction of the suitcase.

“I thought you intended to show them to Jaurès and Vandervelde at tonight’s committee meeting.”

A smile crept over Meynestrel’s face, an ice-cold smile that glimmered in his eyes and hardly stirred his lips, and in the corpselike pallor of the face that smiling, keenly lucid gaze seemed so little human that Jacques shivered, looked away.

“Show them to Jaurès and Vandervelde?” Meynestrel repeated in his high falsetto. “Why, they wouldn’t even find the materials for another harangue in them!” Seeing Jacques’s look of disappointment, he added, dropping his sarcastic tone: “Of course I shall study all these memoranda in detail when I’m back in Geneva. But my first impression is we’ve drawn a blank. They deal with questions of strategy, manpower, and the like, nothing that can be of the slightest use to us at present.” He had put on his coat, picked up his hat. “Will you come with me? We’ll walk slowly, if you don’t mind. This heat is perfectly damnable; I shan’t forget in a hurry what a summer day in Brussels can be like I . . . What can have happened to Alfreda? She said she’d call for me. Go ahead, I’ll follow.”

During his walk he plied Jacques with questions about Paris, and did not mention the documents again. He was limping more than usual, and apologized for it rather testily. In the summer, especially when he had been overtiring himself, his leg-muscles hurt him as much as in the period following his flying accident. “I must look quite the wounded hero,” he observed with a quick laugh. “In a month or two that’ll be all the rage.”

At the entrance of the People’s House, as Jacques was taking leave of him, Meynestrel suddenly tapped his arm. “Tell me, Jacques, what’s come over you?”

“Come over me?”

“You’ve changed a lot.”

His keen, dark, penetrating gaze lingered attentively on Jacques.

For a moment the picture of Jenny hovered before Jacques's eyes, and he felt himself blushing. To tell a lie or to explain things was equally distasteful; smiling evasively, he looked away.

"See you later," the Pilot said, without further comment. "I'll dine with Freda at the Taverne before the meeting. We'll keep a seat for you beside us."

XXVIII

BY eight o'clock not only were the five thousand seats in the Royal Circus all occupied but there was no standing-room left and, outside, the narrow streets surrounding the Circus were already packed with a seething crowd whose numbers were reckoned by enthusiastic militants as five or six thousand at the lowest estimate.

Jacques and his friends had much difficulty in pushing through the crowd and reaching the seats allotted them.

The officials had not arrived; they had been detained at the People's House, where the International Committee was still in session. Rumour had it that the debate was fast and furious, and looked as if it would go on well into the night. Keir Hardie and Vaillant were making a determined stand to get the delegates to agree unanimously on the launching of a general strike as a preventive measure and to take active steps in their respective countries for organizing such a strike. Only thus, they argued, could socialism balk the warlike projects of the various governments. Jaurès had energetically backed their proposals, regarding which a hot debate had been in progress since early morning. The clash always came between two opposite schools of thought. Some were quite prepared to approve of the promotion of a strike in the country taking the offensive, but, in the case of a defensive war, since a country paralysed by a general strike was doomed inevitably to be invaded by the aggressor nation, they maintained that the attacked country had the right, indeed the duty, to defend itself by force of arms. This was the view of most of the Germans, of many Belgians, too, and Frenchmen, and this group confined itself to looking for a satisfactory definition of the term "aggressor nation.” The other group, taking its stand on history and citing as modern instances the government-inspired news items that had been appearing lately in French, German, and Russian newspapers, would have nothing to do with theories of so-called wars in self-defence. “Once a government,” they said, “makes up its mind to plunge a nation into war, it will always find some pretext for getting itself attacked, or seemingly attacked. The one and only way to outwit such tactics is to announce in advance that the weapon of a ‘preventive’ general strike will be resorted to in any case, that the response to any threat of war will be automatic. It is essential that this proposal should be unanimously voted *forthwith* by the Socialist leaders of all countries, in terms that leave no loophole for evasion. Only thus can our collective action against war, that one effective form of action which is the entire stoppage of the nation’s industries, come into operation in the hour of peril, simultaneously in every country.”

The results of the debate, in which perhaps the immediate destinies of Europe hung in the balance, were not yet known.

Jacques felt a touch on his elbow. Saffrio had just caught sight of him and edged his way to his side. “I wanted to tell you about the letter Palazzolo’s just received from Mussolini. It’s a grand letter, *bellissima*.” He drew some sheets from the place where he had preciously bestowed them under his shirt. “I’ve copied the best bits. And Richardley’s translated it into first-class French, for the *Beacon*. Listen to this!”

The hubbub was so great that Jacques had to bring his ear near Saffrio’s lips to hear him.

“Listen to this! Here’s a bit to begin with: ‘War enables the bourgeoisie to confront the proletariat with terrible alternatives: either to revolt or to take a hand in the shambles. A revolt is promptly quelled in blood, and the shambles whitewashed with such fine sentiments as Duty and Patriotism.’ Are you listening? Benito writes this too: ‘War between nations is the bloodiest form of middle-class collaboration. The bourgeoisie gloats over such immolations of the workers on the altar of the Fatherland.’ And this: ‘The march of events leads inevitably to International Socialism.’ Yes,” he cried, passionately, “Benito says that world-wide socialism is on the way! Already the *Internazionale’s* strong enough to save the world. You can see it here tonight: the union of the proletariat means peace on earth.”

He drew himself up proudly, his eyes sparkling. He went on talking, but the growing uproar prevented Jacques from catching what he said. For the immense crowd, half stifled by the heat, was waxing restive. By way of distraction, the Belgian militants launched into their fiery hymn, “Workers of the World, Unite!” and soon everyone was joining in, in unison. Faltering at first, each voice gained, as it were, a fulcrum on its neighbour's, till not voices only but men's hearts took courage and the anthem swelled to a thunderous affirmation of their unity.

When at last the long-awaited delegates showed up at the entrance, the whole audience rose to a man, with a wild roar of joyous, friendly, triumphant acclamation. And spontaneously, unheralded, the "Internationale" broke from every throat, drowning the volleys of applause. When the chairman, Vandervelde, raised his hand, the singing ceased—reluctantly, it seemed. All eyes were turned toward the little knot of leaders, as silence gradually settled on the vast arena. The faces of the men on the platform had been made familiar to all by the Party newsheets, and people pointed to them, whispering names. Every nationality had responded to the summons. In this solemn hour when Europe's destinies hung in the balance, the working-class of every nation was represented on that little platform, upon which a myriad eyes converged, all alike fired with the same indomitable hope.

That collective, mutually contagious confidence redoubled when they learned from Vandervelde's lips that, at the suggestion of the German Socialists, the Committee had decided that the much-talked-of International Socialist Congress originally convened for August 23 in Vienna was to take place in Paris on the ninth. In the name of the French Party, Jaurès and Guesde promised to make all necessary arrangements, and, appealing for the hearty co-operation of their hearers, planned to give this demonstration—to be entitled "The Proletariat at War on War"—an epoch-making significance.

"At a time when two great nations are being hounded on to fight each other," said Vandervelde, "it will be an eye-opener for all concerned to see the representatives of the trade unions and working-class associations in one of these countries, with four million votes behind them, crossing the frontiers of the so-called 'enemy country,' fraternizing with the 'enemy,' and declaring their will to peace between the nations."

Haase, a Socialist member of the Reichstag, rose amid general applause. His courageous speech left no shadow of doubt as to the loyal support of the Social-Democrats.

"The Austrian ultimatum was an act of flagrant provocation. Austria is out for war. She seems to assume that Germany will back her. But we German Socialists will not tolerate the proletariat's being bound by secret treaties. This is the German proletariat's slogan: *No Intervention*, even if Russia joins in the war."

Each phrase was greeted with a burst of cheers. The forthright tone of the pronouncement came as a relief to all.

“Let our adversaries beware!” he said in conclusion. “It well may be that the working-class in every land, weary of poverty and oppression, will at long last wake from slumber and unite in building a classless world.”

Morgari the Italian, the Englishman Keir Hardie, and the Russian delegate Rubanovich proceeded to address the meeting. With one voice proletarian Europe execrated the wildcat imperialism of its governments and demanded that such concessions should be made as were needed for the maintenance of peace.

When Jaurès came forward to deliver his speech there was an unprecedented storm of applause. He moved even more ponderously than usual, for he had a hard day’s work behind him. His head sagged between his burly shoulders, and his hair, matted with sweat, hung in wisps over his low forehead. When, after slowly climbing the steps, he took his stand solidly, composedly, facing his audience, he brought to mind a stocky giant straining forward, bent-backed, his feet deeply planted in the soil, to stem the onrush of some catastrophic landslide.

“Citizens!” A clarion call.

By some prodigy of nature, which recurred whenever he mounted a platform, Jaurès’s voice suddenly drowned the fitful clamour of the crowd and a religious hush ensued: the stillness of a forest before the storm breaks.

He seemed to ruminate a moment, clenched his fists, then abruptly crossed his stubby arms upon his chest. (“Like a seal starting in to preach,” as Paterson irreverently put it.) He began speaking without haste or vehemence, with no apparent effort; nevertheless, from his first words, the full-throated clangor of his voice, like the first peals of a great cathedral bell, set the air throbbing, and suddenly the vast hall grew resonant as a belfry.

All eagerness not to miss a word, craning forward, his chin propped on his hand, Jacques gazed at the uplifted face, which seemed always rapt on some far-off prospect beyond space and time.

Jaurès had nothing new to tell. Once again he exposed the danger of policies of conquest and prestige, the shortcomings of diplomacy, the crack-brained patriotism of the chauvinists, the futility and horrors of war. His line of thought was obvious to a degree, his vocabulary rather limited, and his rhetorical effects came often from the stock-in-trade demagogy. And yet these magnanimous banalities induced in the serried mass of listeners, Jacques included, a high-tension current, causing it to vibrate at the speaker’s will, to thrill like a harp in the wind with anger or fraternity, hope or indignation. What was the secret of that spellbinding glamour, what the magic of the insistent voice that rose and swelled in eddies of sound above those thousands of upturned faces? Was it his faith, his poetic vision, the perfect concord of his personality, in which were so miraculously harmonized a gift for speculative word-spinning and a keen aptitude for action, a historian's clarity of judgment and a poet's fantasy, a taste for order and a zeal for revolution? That night especially an obstinate conviction that sank deep into his hearers' hearts emanated from his words, his voice, his rocklike immobility—the certitude that victory was near at hand, that already the refusal of the working-classes to co-operate was holding up the governing cabals, and it had become impossible for the forces making for war to vanquish those striving for peace.

When, after a dramatic peroration, his face convulsed, his lips flecked with foam, his body shaken by a mystic frenzy, he left the platform, the whole audience rose as one man to acclaim him. Like thunder reverberating in a mountain gorge, the din of clapping hands and stamping feet rolled from wall to wall of the huge arena, while everywhere arms shot up, frantically waving hats and handkerchiefs, newspapers, walking-sticks. Jacques pictured a tall cornfield lashed by a stormwind. In such moments of delirious mass emotion, one word from Jaurès, a mere wave of his hand, would have sufficed to launch the crowd, in a wild onrush of fanatical enthusiasm, to storm a new Bastille under his lead.

Little by little a rhythm took form across the pandemonium of sounds. To shake off the oppression that gripped their heaving chests, the crowds once again were finding relief in song.

"Arise, ye prisoners of starvation . . ."

And outside the building the thousands who had been unable to enter and, despite the efforts of the police to disperse them, were massed in all the neighbouring streets, joined in the chorus of the "Internationale."

"Arise, ye prisoners of starvation,
Arise, ye wretched of the earth! . . ."

XXIX

THE hall was gradually emptying. Jostled, sometimes almost swept off his feet, Jacques did his best to protect little Vanheede, who clung to him like a drowning man. Jacques kept his eyes fixed on the group, some yards away, composed of Meynestrel, Mithoerg, Richardley, Saffrio, Paterson, and Alfreda. The problem was how to get through to them. Steering Vanheede in front of him, and taking advantage of every eddy of the crowd in the direction of his friends, he contrived little by little to cover the few yards intervening. Once he had joined them, he let himself be borne helplessly along amid the crowd streaming toward the exit.

With the chorus of the "Internationale" that sometimes blared out like a trumpet-call and sometimes sank to a low drone of voices, there mingled strident yells: "Down with war!" "Socialism for ever!" "We want peace!"

Meynestrel shouted to Alfreda: "Keep close to us, little girl, or you'll be getting lost."

But Alfreda did not hear. Clinging to Paterson's arm, she was craning her head to see what was happening in front.

"Just a moment, dear!" Paterson said. Clasping his hands firmly in front of him and stooping forward, he made a sort of stirrup with his interlocked fingers, on which Alfreda, after some trouble, managed to get a foothold. Then, "Up you go!" he cried, and with a jerk straightened his back, hoisting her above the crowd. She was laughing. To keep her balance, she pressed herself against Paterson's chest. Wide with excitement, her big, doll-like eyes had a strange, barbaric glitter that night.

"I can't see a thing." There was a febrile languor in her voice. "Only a . . . a forest of flags."

She seemed in no hurry to get down. With her skirts flapping in his eyes, Paterson stumbled ahead.

A moment later all were outside, hardly knowing how they had got there. The crowd in the street was even thicker than in the hall, and the din so deafening and incessant that after a while they all but ceased to hear it. For some minutes the surging mass swayed this way and that uncertainly; then, as if some herd instinct gave the lead, all with one accord began forging slowly ahead across the darkness, crashing through the police cordons, drawing into their ranks the onlookers lining the sidewalks.

"Where are they leading us?" Jacques inquired.

"*Zusammen marschieren, Kamerad*," was Mithoerg's reply. His flabby cheeks were puffed and crimson, as if he had just stepped out of a Turkish bath.

“I expect we’re going to demonstrate outside the government offices,” Richardley remarked.

“*Wir wollen keinen Krieg! Frieden! Frieden!*” bawled Mithoerg.

Zelavsky’s guttural voice joined in. “*Dóloi vóinu. Mir! Mir!*”

“Where’s Freda got to?” Meynestrel asked in a low tone.

Jacques looked back over his shoulder. Immediately behind him was Richardley, holding his head high, the usual rather braggart smile playing on his lips. Then came little Vanheede between Mithoerg and Zelavsky; he had linked his arms in theirs and they seemed to be carrying him along. He was neither shouting nor singing; his cheeks were so pale as to seem translucent; his half-closed eyes were turned toward the zenith in a look of mingled ecstasy and distress. Alfreda and Paterson followed at some distance, and Jacques could only see their faces, almost touching—as though their bodies were locked in an embrace.

“Where on earth can she have got to?” Meynestrel asked again fretfully, like a blind man who has lost his dog.

On the warm summer night brooded a velvety darkness. The shop-fronts were unlit, but lights showed at some of the upper floors, and in every window were outlined black forms bending toward the street. At the junctions of the larger thoroughfares files of lightless, empty tramcars were drawn up on the rails. Streams of pedestrians were pouring in from side-streets, incessantly swelling the moving flood. Most of the demonstrators were workmen from the city and suburbs, but militant Socialists from all over the country, from Antwerp, Ghent, Liège, Namur, and all the colliery districts, had flocked in to join forces with the Brussels group and the foreign delegations. That night Brussels had become the headquarters of European pacifism.

“We’ve done it!” Jacques silently exulted. “Peace has triumphed. We’ve set up a barrier that nothing in the world is strong enough to overthrow. This crowd has only to assert its will to peace, and war’s averted.”

The police had given up attempting to do more than protect the Royal Palace, the park, and government buildings with a fourfold cordon. The procession passed these points without halting on its way toward the heart of the city. But, as they passed, a great roar rose in unison, challenging the lordly silence of the tall façades: “Socialism for ever!” “Down with war!”

In the forefront, groups of men in ordered ranks marched proudly under their various banners. The rest of the procession streamed after them higgledy-piggledy, like the tumultuous rout of a Flemish *kermis*, the women clutching their menfolks’ arms, children perched on their fathers’ shoulders and staring at the scene below. All were superbly conscious of being the vanguard of a world-wide force, the proletariat. Stern-eyed, with set faces, they marched ahead, rarely speaking to each other, and when they halted, all marked time in step. Bare heads shone under the street-lamps, faces rapturous with confidence, steeled with firm resolve, the proud conviction that that night the people's victory was won. And above the surging tide of marching forms rolled the long, thunderous rhythms of the "Internationale," roared out unceasingly in punctual cadence, like the beating of a vast collective heart.

Several times Jacques had an impression that Meynestrel was trying to move nearer so as to have a word with him, but each time a flurry of the crowd or a sudden increase in the tumult made this impossible.

"At last!" Jacques shouted to him. "At last we have 'mass action.' " A lingering sense of decorum led him to accompany the words with a conventional smile, but his eyes were sparkling with the same fanatic exultation as the eyes of those around him.

The Pilot made no reply. His face was hard, and his lips were set in a bitter line for which Jacques could not account.

An eddy in front made the procession waver; the vanguard had evidently come up against an obstacle. As Jacques was craning his neck to find out what was amiss, he heard the Pilot's voice in his ear, gabbling a few words in that shrill, squeaky voice which always had such a disconcerting effect on his hearers. "I rather think, my dear Jacques, that Freda won't . . ."

The last words were all but drowned in the general uproar, but Jacques swung round, dumbfounded; surely he had heard ". . . won't come back to the hotel tonight!"

Their eyes met. The Pilot's face was in shadow. The black pupils of his eyes, expressionless as a cat's, had a greenish, feral sheen.

Another sudden backwash of the crowd almost lifted them off their feet. At the Boulevard du Midi crossing, a little band of nationalists gathered round a flag had rashly tried to bar their way. The scuffle was soon over and held up the Socialist advance for a moment only, but the abrupt halt and momentary confusion had been enough to separate Jacques from Meynestrel and the others.

Carried away to the right, he was jammed against a house-front in a sort of backwater while the main stream swept Meynestrel's group resistlessly ahead. From the place where he was standing, unable to advance or retreat, he had a sudden glimpse of Paterson only a few yards away. Alfreda was still with the young Englishman. They did not notice him as they went by, but he had time to observe their faces—changed almost out of recognition. The dim light showed up in strong relief the salient features of the young man's face, giving it a curious harshness, and the eyes, usually bright with merriment, were set in an unblinking stare akin to madness. Alfreda's expression was no less changed; all the gentleness had gone out of it, giving place to a look of vulgar, brazen sensuality. It was the face of a whore; worse still, a drunken whore. Her forehead resting on Paterson's shoulder, she was screaming out the "Internationale" in a hoarse, staccato voice, as if exulting in her personal triumph, her deliverance, the victory of her instincts. What had Meynestrel said? "I rather think that Freda won't come back to the hotel tonight!"

Fear gripped his heart and, without a notion what he meant to say to them, Jacques tried to force his way in their direction, shouting "Pat!" But there was no breaking through the crowd that hemmed him in; after a few vain attempts, he gave it up. For a while he followed them with his eyes; then, when he had lost sight of them completely, yielded without resistance to the human torrent that was in full flow again.

And now he was left to himself, that mysterious entity the collective crowd-mind took possession of him. Space and time ceased to exist; his individual consciousness fell back in a dazed recession into some dark limbo of the primitive. Merged in the marching ranks of these men, his brothers, he felt he had cast away his personal self. If in the depths of his being, like a warm wellspring hidden far below the surface, there still lurked a dim awareness that he was an individual atom in a whole, an aggregate that stood for truth and justice for the greatest number, he paid no heed to it. He marched on and on, his mind void of thoughts, in a light-headed ecstasy restful as sleep.

This pleasant state lasted an hour or more—till, happening to stub his toe on the sidewalk's edge, he was jerked out of his trance. And then he knew he was dog-tired.

Channelled between dark cliffs of house-fronts, the procession was still advancing with the serene persistence of a rising tide. In the rear the singing had died away. Now and again, some repressed emotion would break bounds, a lonely voice soar in a cry: "No war! No war! Socialism for ever!" that like an early cockcrow wakened answering clamours on every side. Then calm returned and for a while all was silence but for a low sound of tramping feet, measured breathing. . . .

Looking for an opportunity to slip away, Jacques swerved so as to be carried to the edge of the main stream beside the dark, shuttered shop-fronts. He caught sight of a narrow side-street thronged with people watching the procession, contrived to edge his way among them, and presently reached an open space where there was a drinking-fountain inset in a wall. The water was falling cool and crystal-clear, with little, friendly gurgles. He drank greedily, held his hands beneath the flow, and, after bathing his forehead in the limpid coolness, took a deep breath. Overhead the summer night sky was bright with stars. He recalled the fighting in the streets of Paris two days before; the riots in Berlin. In every European city the masses were rising in the same vehement protest against the futile butchery of war. Similar scenes were taking place in Vienna in the Ringstrasse, in Trafalgar Square in London, on the Nevsky Prospekt in St. Petersburg, where the Cossacks were riding down the masses with drawn swords. Everywhere, in every tongue, the same cry was rising: "*Friede!* Peace! *Mir! La paix!*" Across the frontiers of Europe the workers were stretching forth fraternal hands toward the same ideal, in a like gesture of fervent hope. How could any qualms be felt as to the future? Very soon the clouds would lift and men of every nation set to work again building a better world.

The future . . . Jenny!

Suddenly her face had risen before him and all else was blotted out; the violent emotions of the past few hours gave place to a desperate longing for gentler things, for love.

He started forward again in the warm darkness. And now his one desire was to sleep. Anywhere, on the first bench he came across. He was unfamiliar with this part of the city and had no idea in what direction he was going. Suddenly, as he came into an empty square, he recognized it as the square he had crossed earlier in the day with Paterson and Alfreda. "Now for a last effort!" he adjured himself; the place where Paterson was staying must be quite near. He found it without much trouble. He had just energy enough to take off his shoes and discard coat and collar before dropping like a log onto the bed.

XXX

HE opened his eyes abruptly; the room was flooded with light. It took him some seconds to regain a foothold in reality. Then he saw a man's back, someone on his knees packing a suitcase at the other end of the room. . . . Paterson. Could he be leaving already? What was the time?

"That you, Pat?"

Without answering, Paterson closed the suitcase, carried it to the door, then walked across to Jacques's bed. His face was pale, his gaze defiant. "I'm taking her away with me," he said in an almost aggressive tone.

His eyes blurred and swollen with fatigue, Jacques stared at him, aghast.

"Sh! Don't say anything!" Paterson broke in nervously, though Jacques had shown no sign of speaking. "I know. . . . But that's how things are—and there's nothing to be done about it."

Suddenly Jacques understood. . . . He gazed at the young Englishman with the look of a child just roused from sleep in the middle of a nightmare.

"She's waiting for me outside in a taxi. Her mind's made up. So is mine. She hasn't told him; she's sorry for him. She won't go and say good-bye, won't even call for her things. We're taking the first train to Ostende; we'll be in London tomorrow evening. That's how it's had to be, and there's nothing to be done about it."

Jacques had drawn his shoulders up onto the pillow; resting his head against the woodwork of the bedstead, he listened in silence.

"I'd felt like that for months," Paterson went on. He was standing motionless under the lamplight. ("That's a murderer's face," Jacques thought.) "But I never dared to speak. Not till tonight, when she told me that she, too . . . The poor darling, you can't imagine the life she's been leading with that man. No, he's not a man, he's less than that; he's—nothing! Oh, he did the proper thing; he told her in advance how it would be, and she accepted life with him on those terms. She thought she could stick it out. She didn't know. But now that she loves me, it's too much to ask of her. Don't judge her harshly!" he suddenly exclaimed, as though he had caught a look of reproach behind the stupefaction written on Jacques's face. "You've no idea what that man's like. There's nothing he'd draw the line at—because he's a desperate man, desperate at not being able to believe in anything, anything whatever, even in himself—because he himself *is* nothing!"

Jacques had listened without stirring; his arms stretched out before him on the bed, he was gazing up at the ceiling, his eyes still smarting with the glare. The window stood open. Mosquitoes hummed close against his ears, but he made no effort to brush them away. He felt the listlessness, mingled with a faint nausea, of one who has lost a great deal of blood.

"Everybody has a right to live!" Paterson broke out ragefully. "You can ask a man to jump into the sea to save a life, but you can't ask him to keep on holding the other fellow's head above water till he's drowned, himself. She wants to live. Well, I say she has the right to, and I'm taking her away. . . . What's that?"

"I'm not blaming you in any way," Jacques said quietly, without turning his head. "I'm thinking about *him*."

"You don't know him. He's capable of anything. That man is a monster, a perfect monster."

"It may kill him, Pat," Jacques said, casting a sad glance at his friend.

Paterson's mouth fell open, the pale features twitched as if he had been dealt a blow, and of a sudden the young man's face struck Jacques as so repulsive that he looked away at once. "A murderer's face," he thought again. After a short pause he went on speaking, in a low, constrained voice. "It's the Party I'm concerned about. It needs its leaders—more today than ever before. What you're doing, Pat, is a betrayal. Double-dyed treachery. Treachery on every count."

The Englishman had backed toward the door. With his cap awry, his sallow cheeks, shifty eyes, and gaping mouth, he now looked less like an assassin than an escaping burglar.

"Good night," he said. His eyes were veiled; he went out quickly without meeting Jacques's gaze.

No sooner had the door closed behind Paterson than the thought of Jenny flashed into Jacques's mind with a poignancy that was almost unbearable. He was still wondering how to account for this when he heard the sound of a car starting in the silent street below. For a long while Jacques remained sitting up in bed, staring at the closed door. Two faces came and went before his eyes: the face of a bright-eyed, smiling, light-hearted youngster—Pat, as he had known him at Geneva—and the face he had just seen with the sullen features of a dismissed servant or a thief caught red-handed and brazening out his crime. A face hideously twisted by passion, with the look that he himself must have had that night when he had cornered Jenny in the subway station. And that night had not he, too, been capable of the foulest infamies, betrayals . . . ?

At half-past six Jacques, who had been unable to go to sleep again, hastened to the boarding-house where Meynestrel was staying.

No one was up yet except an old woman scrubbing the tiled floor in the hall. For a moment Jacques wondered whether to go upstairs or leave. But, if he was to catch the eight a.m. train, there was no question of calling in again later on, and after the night's happenings he could not bring himself to leave Brussels without seeing his friend once more.

He knocked at the Pilot's door. No answer. Was it the right door? Yes, that was No. 19, the room he had entered on the previous day. Perhaps, after a night of vain waiting, Meynestrel had fallen asleep. Jacques was about to knock again when he heard a sound of bare feet padding across toward the door and a hand fumbling with the lock. A fantastic, terrifying thought sped through his mind. Without pausing to think, he grasped the doorknob, turned it. The door swung ajar, catching Meynestrel in the chest just as he was about to turn the key.

They stared at each other. The Pilot's frozen features betrayed no visible emotion except, perhaps, a hint of annoyance. For a moment he seemed to hesitate, in half a mind to eject his visitor and close the door again. Guessing his intention and acting on the same intuition as that which had led him to turn the handle, Jacques thrust the door wide open with his shoulder and entered.

His first glance showed him that the room looked somehow different, seemed to have grown larger. Tables and chairs had been pushed against the walls, leaving an open space in the middle of the room in front of the wardrobe mirror. On the bed the counterpane was neatly drawn back, hiding the disordered sheets. The room gave an impression of having been tidied up in readiness for some event. Meynestrel, too, looked spick and span in a pale-blue, laundry-fresh pyjama suit. Nothing was hanging on the coat-pegs, nor were there any toilet articles on the wash-stand. It looked as if everything had been packed up for a journey, in the two suitcases lying beside the window. And yet—surely the Pilot had not intended to go out barefooted, in pyjamas?

Jacques's eyes came back to his friend, who had not moved and was still gazing at him. Meynestrel did not seem quite steady on his legs; he brought to mind a patient recovering from an anesthetic, a man who has just been snatched from the jaws of death.

"What were you going to do?" Jacques faltered.

"Eh?" Meynestrel retreated shakily toward the wall opposite the door and, as if he had not quite caught Jacques's question, murmured vaguely: "What *am* I going to do?" Then he sat down at the table and buried his head in his hands.

Even on the table a curious order reigned. Two sealed envelopes were aligned side by side, face downward, and on a neatly folded newspaper lay some personal effects—a fountain-pen, a wallet, a watch, a bunch of keys, and some Belgian money.

Jacques gazed silently at the bowed back for some moments, not daring to make the least movement. At last he walked toward the table. Meynestrel looked up at once.

"Hush!" he whispered, then, rising with an effort, said once more, but in a quite different tone: "What am I going to do? Well, old man, I'm going to get dressed, and then I'm going to clear out of this, with you."

Without looking at Jacques, he opened one of the suitcases, unpacked some clothes and laid them out on the bed, extracted a dusty pair of shoes from the newspaper they were wrapped in, and proceeded with his toilet as calmly as if he had been alone. When he had finished dressing, he went up to the table and, still taking no notice of Jacques, who was sitting some distance away from it, tore both letters into tiny fragments and tossed them into the fireplace.

Then for the first time Jacques, who had been following each of Meynestrel's movements with his eyes, noticed a large pile of ashes on the hearth; obviously some papers had recently been burned there. He was puzzled by the quantity of ashes; had Meynestrel really brought so many private papers with him? Suddenly the Stolbach dossier came to his mind and he shot a glance at the open suitcase. It was nearly empty; there was no sign of a bundle of documents. "Of course he put it in the other suitcase," Jacques said to himself, brushing aside the grotesque suspicion that had just entered his mind.

Meynestrel went back to the table, picked up keys, wallet, and loose change, and stowed them methodically into his pockets.

Only then did he seem to grow aware of Jacques's presence, and walked toward him. "You did well to come, old man," he said, gazing into Jacques's eyes. "Who knows? Perhaps you've done me a great service." His face was calm; a strange smile hovered on his lips. "Nothing really matters, you know. There's never anything worth setting one's heart on—and nothing that's worth fearing. Nothing in the world."

He stretched out both hands toward Jacques—a quite unlooked-for gesture. As Jacques clasped them with a rush of deep emotion, Meynestrel said softly, the enigmatic smile still playing on his lips: "*So nimm denn meine Hände, und führe mich. . . .* Now let's be off," he added, freeing his hands. He went up to the suitcases and picked up one of them. Jacques made as if to pick up the other. “No, that one doesn’t belong to me. I’m leaving it.”

In his eyes a brief smile glimmered and was gone, forlorn with desperate grief and love.

Jacques said to himself, aghast: “He’s burned the documents!” but dared not put a question.

They left the room together, the Pilot limping rather more than usual. Meynestrel walked past the cashier’s office in the vestibule without pausing. “What a man!” Jacques thought. “He even remembered to pay his bill!”

“Let’s see now,” Meynestrel said, his eyes bent on a time-table pinned to the wall beside the door. “I have an express for Geneva at seven-fifty. What about you? The eight o’clock to Paris, I suppose? You’ll have just time to see me off. How well it all pans out, doesn’t it?”

PART

III

I

A BRISK, warm shower had just washed Paris clean; the noonday sun was blazing down relentlessly when Jacques alighted from the Brussels train.

He was in a gloomy mood; portents of disaster were piling up, and such impressions as he had gathered on his journey were of an alarming order. The train was packed. An atmosphere of consternation prevailed among the inhabitants of the frontier districts. Soldiers on leave and officers on furlough in that part of the country had received telegraphic orders to rejoin their regiments. Jacques had lost touch with the French delegates who were coming back from Brussels in the same train, and had had to share an overcrowded car with people from the North, who struck up conversations with their fellow-passengers, exchanged newspapers, and bandied scraps of information. Their comments betrayed at once anxiety and amazement, curiosity and even a certain scepticism, but very little panic. Indeed, it seemed that most of them were already becoming reconciled to the possibility of a war. The news that they passed round regarding the precautionary measures taken by the French government was highly significant. Already, it seemed, railways, bridges, aqueducts, and munition factories were under military surveillance. A regular army battalion was occupying the mills at Corbeil, the manager of which had been denounced by the *Action Française* as being an officer in the German army reserve. In the Paris area the waterworks were being guarded by troops. A well-dressed man, wearing a ribbon in his buttonhole, gave an elaborate, seemingly expert description of the changes which were being pushed through in the wireless installation on the Eiffel Tower to increase its efficiency. A Parisian auto manufacturer bewailed the fact that several hundred cars that had been got together for an exposition had been, if not actually requisitioned, ordered to “stand by” for further instructions.

Jacques had managed to buy a copy of the *Humanité* at the Saint-Quentin station and, to his amazement and indignation, had learned that the government had gone so far as to prohibit, at the eleventh hour, the meeting that the C.G.T. had convened for the previous day—Wednesday, July 29—at the Salle Wagram, a meeting all the workers’ organizations in Paris and the suburbs had been asked to attend, for a mass anti-war demonstration. Such demonstrators as, defying the official ban, had gathered in the Ternes district had been dispersed by charges of the mounted police. Street-fighting had gone on far into the night, and some bands of militants had come close to forcing their way through to the Presidential Residence and the Home Office. The prevailing view was that Poincaré's return accounted for these high-handed measures, which seemed to indicate a definite intention on the part of the government to stem the rising tide of left-wing protest, disregarding the right of public meeting and defying the best-established principles of republican freedom.

The train was half an hour late. Jacques dropped in at the buffet for a sandwich and, as he was leaving, it, ran into an elderly journalist by the name of Louvel whom he had met several times at the Café du Progrès, and who was a subeditor on the *Guerre Sociale*. He lived out at Creil and came to Paris every day for his afternoon's work on the newspaper. They left the station together. The station yard and neighbouring buildings were still beflagged. The President's return on the previous day had been the occasion of an outburst of patriotic enthusiasm in Paris which Louvel had witnessed and now described with an emotion that took Jacques by surprise.

"I know all about that," Jacques broke in. "The papers are full of it. It's sickening. I suppose that at the *Guerre Sociale*, anyhow, you didn't join in the patriotic chorus."

"At the *Guerre Sociale*? Haven't you been reading the Chief's leaders during the last few days?"

"No. I've just come from Brussels."

"Then you're behind the times, my boy."

"You mean that Gustave Hervé . . ."

"Hervé's no damn-fool idealist; he sees things as they are. For the last few days he's been aware that war is bound to come and it would be sheer folly—worse, a crime—to go on making difficulties for the government. Read his article of the day before yesterday, and you'll see."

"So Hervé's gone jingoist!"

"Jingoist, if you like. 'Realist' would be nearer the mark. He's honest enough to recognize that not a single act of provocation has been committed by our government, and his conclusion is that, if France is compelled to fight to keep the invader off her soil, there's been nothing in the line French policy has followed during the last few weeks to justify the proletariat in letting the government down."

"What! Did Hervé say that?"

"Yes, and he went further; he said in so many words that it would be an act of treachery. For, after all, this soil that we are called on to defend is the soil from which the French Revolution sprang."

Jacques had halted and was staring silently at Louvel. All things considered, he was not greatly surprised. He remembered that Hervé had made an emphatic stand, a fortnight earlier, against the proposals for a general strike put forward by Vaillant and Jaurès at the Congress of French Socialists.

Louvel spoke again. “Yes, my boy, you’re behind the times. Just go and hear what they’re saying at the *Petite République*, for instance, or at the Centre du Parti Républicain, where I was last night. Everywhere you’ll find they’re falling into line. Everywhere their eyes are opened. Hervé isn’t the only one who’s grasped the situation. It’s all very fine and big, talking about the fraternity of nations. But we’ve got to face the facts. . . . Well, what do you propose to do about it?”

“Anything rather than . . .”

“A civil war, to prevent a war with Germany, is that the great idea? As things are, you wouldn’t get a man to follow you. With a foreign enemy at our gates, any attempt at a revolt would simply fizzle out. Yes, my boy, even in the workers’ associations, in internationalist milieux, the great majority have come to share the views of the general public and are all for defending our frontiers against invasion. Universal brotherhood’s a fine ideal, but just now it’s got to bide its time; what everyone’s conscious of today is a narrower sort of bond—our *French* fraternity. And anyhow, damn it, we’ve put up with those Boches and their damned nonsense quite long enough! If they’re spoiling for a war, well, we’re ready for ’em!”

The street was suddenly invaded by a pack of newsboys, yelling at the top of their voices as they dashed past: “*Paris-Midi!*”

Louvel ran over to buy a copy of the paper. Jacques was about to follow when a taxi, cruising for fares, slowed down in front of him. He jumped into it. The first thing was to get in touch with Jenny.

“*Et tu*, Hervé!” he murmured to himself despondently. “If such men flinch, how can the others be expected to stand firm—the masses, the small fry, people who’re reading daily in their papers that there are just and unjust wars, and that a war against Prussian imperialism, to have done once for all with the *Deutschland über Alles* fanatics, would be a just war, a holy war, a crusade in defence of democratic freedom?”

As the cab entered the street where the Fontanins lived, Jacques looked up toward their balcony. All the windows were open. Perhaps, he thought, her mother has come back.

No, Jenny was alone. That he recognized the moment he set eyes on her, pale but quivering with joy, as she opened the door and quickly stepped back into the shadows of the hall. She cast on him a troubled gaze but so instinct with love that he walked up to her and unthinkingly stretched out his arms. Trembling, with closed eyes, she flung herself upon his breast. Their first embrace. Neither had intended it, and it lasted only a few seconds. Suddenly, as if some urgent need, forgotten for the moment, had just come back to her, Jenny freed herself and, pointing to the hall-table on which a newspaper was lying, asked: "Is it true?"

"What?"

"What they say there about mobilization."

He picked up the newspaper. It was a copy of *Paris-Midi*, one of the many thousands that for the last hour had been spreading the alarming news in Paris. The concierge, all in a flutter, had just brought it up to the apartment.

Jacques felt the blood rush to his cheeks, as he read:

> A council of war took place last night. The Third Army Corps is on its way to the frontier. The men of the Eighth Corps have been issued their full equipment, ammunition, and field rations, and are in readiness to move at a moment's notice.

She was gazing at him, haggard with apprehension. Then, abruptly, as though she had just vanquished a long reluctance, she asked:

"Supposing there's a war, Jacques, will you . . . will you join up?"

For five days he had been awaiting that question. He looked up and resolutely shook his head.

She thought at once: I knew it—then, brushing aside a distasteful suggestion that had crept insidiously into her mind, said to herself: It takes a lot of courage to refuse to fight.

She was the first to break the ensuing silence. "Come!" Taking his hand, she led the way. Her bedroom door stood open. After a momentary hesitation she drew him into the room. He followed, unnoticing. . . .

"Perhaps it isn't true," he sighed. "But it may well be true tomorrow. This war is closing in on us; there's no breaking through the vicious circle. Russia won't make the least concession; neither will Germany. In every country the men in power go on putting forward the same absurd proposals, refusing to listen to reason. . . ."

No, she thought, it isn't fear; he's brave. And true to himself. He shouldn't act like others; he can't give way, he must stand out of it.

Without a word she went up to him, pillowed her head on his breast. Suddenly she thought: Then I won't have to lose him; and her heart leapt with joy.

Jacques gathered her in his embrace, bending above the darkness of her hair, kissed the half-hidden forehead. Dazed with happiness, she nestled in his arms, with a vague, childish yearning to be caught up and carried far, far away, she knew not whither. Eager as she was to question him about his trip, she did not dare. By the pressure of his face alone he gently forced the small, bowed head to rise, and his lips brushed the silken smoothness of her cheek, kissing their way to the fast-closed mouth, which did not yield but did not turn aside. She felt her breath failing under the soft insistence of his lips, and slipping her hand between their faces, drew her head back a little. There was an unlooked-for serenity and thoughtfulness in her expression; never had she seemed more sure of herself, more self-composed. Passionately, but without the least roughness, he clasped her in his arms again, and she surrendered herself unresisting to his embrace, in happy trustfulness, asking no kinder gift of life than to feel herself prisoned thus in his arms. Cheek to cheek, still clinging to each other in a tranquil ecstasy, they sank onto the low sofalike bed opposite the window, and remained for several minutes without moving or speaking.

At last she said in a low voice: "And I've still no letter from Mamma."

"Ah, yes, of course. Your mother. . . ."

For a moment she felt indignant with him for seeming so indifferent to her natural anxiety.

"No news at all from her?"

"Only a postcard to say she'd 'arrived safely,' which she sent from the Vienna station on Monday."

This card had reached Jenny only on Wednesday morning, the previous day, and ever since then she had vainly awaited further news by each successive mail. No letter or telegram had arrived, and she was feeling desperately anxious, completely at a loss to account for her mother's silence.

Jacques's gaze was roaming vaguely round this bedroom that he had never seen before, the discovery of which would have thrilled him so profoundly had he made it some days earlier. It was a small, bright, tidy room, with a wallpaper in blue and white stripes. The mantelpiece served as dressing-table; ivory brushes and a pincushion lay on it, and some photographs were slipped into the frame of the mirror above. The white leather-bound blotter on the table was closed. Nothing was lying about, except some loosely folded newspapers.

Suddenly he murmured in Jenny's ear: "Your room . . . !" Then, as she made no response, he hastily changed the subject. "I never dreamt your mother would persist in going to Vienna."

"You don't know Mamma! Once she's got an idea into her head, nothing will stop her! And, now that she's there, she'll insist on carrying out her programme to the end. But—will she be able to? What do you think? Isn't it rather risky, being in Austria just now? Do tell me what you think will happen. Supposing she stays on, will they even let her return?"

"I haven't an idea," Jacques confessed.

"What am I to do? I don't know her address. And her silence—what am I to make of it? If she'd started back, surely she'd have sent me a wire to say so. That means she has stayed in Vienna, and as she's certain to have written to me, her letters must have gone astray." With a trembling hand she pointed to the newspapers. "When you read about what's happening, you can't help feeling dreadfully alarmed."

Jenny had run out to buy the papers the first thing after getting up, and hurried back to the apartment to make sure of not missing Jacques. All morning she had been poring over them, obsessed by the perils threatening those she loved: Jacques, her mother, Daniel.

She stood up. "Daniel's written to me, too." She went and fetched a letter from the writing-case, and handed it to Jacques. Then, impulsively, with the trustfulness of a frightened child, she snuggled up against him.

Daniel made no secret of the consternation with which Mme. de Fontanin's journey inspired him, and he commiserated with Jenny for being left to bear the brunt of these chaotic hours alone. He advised her to go and see Antoine and the Héquets, but begged her not to be unduly alarmed; there were still hopes that the crisis would blow over. In a postscript, however, he told her that his division was under marching orders, he expected to leave Lunéville that night, and it might be hard for him to communicate with her during the next days.

Her head pillowed on Jacques's breast, she watched him read the letter, gazing up at him. As he folded it and gave it back to her, he was aware that she was waiting for some heartening word from him.

"Daniel's right; there's still time for a peaceful settlement. If only the nations understood, if the masses would make up their minds to *act* . . . ! That's what we've got to work for, up to the very last moment."

Carried away by the subject nearest his heart, he gave her a brief account of the demonstrations in Paris, Berlin, and Brussels. He told her how thrilled he had been by the sight of those enormous crowds, every man of them fired with a like enthusiasm, dauntlessly proclaiming his will to peace for all the world to hear. And suddenly he felt ashamed of lingering in this room while his comrades were on active service in the pacifist cause; he remembered the meetings set for that day in the various Socialist centres, and all the things he personally had to do, the money he had to place at the disposal of the Party at the earliest possible moment. He raised his head and, fondling Jenny's hair, said in a tone whose bluntness was softened by regret: "I can't stay with you, Jenny. There are so many things I've got to do."

She did not move but he felt her body stiffen, saw the disappointment in her eyes. He clasped her still more closely to his heart, strewing with kisses the forlorn, upturned face. He felt an infinite pity; and all the load of world-wide apprehension seemed to add its burden to this silent personal grief he knew no way of consoling.

"It's out of the question"—he sounded as if he were talking to himself—"I can't take you with me."

She gave a start, then ventured: "Why not?"

Before he had time to realize what she was doing, she had slipped from his arms, opened her wardrobe, taken out a hat and gloves.

"Jenny! I said that, but—! No, really it's out of the question. I've heaps to do, any number of people to meet. I've got to look in the *Humanité* office, at the *Libertaire*, and all sorts of other places, and, later on, to go to Montrouge. What'll you do with yourself all the time?"

"I can stay outside in the street." The note of pleading in her voice took them both by surprise. She had cast off all pride; those three days of separation had completely changed her. "I'll wait for you as long as necessary, I won't be the least drag on you. Let me come with you, Jacques, let me share your life. No, I don't ask that; I know it's impossible. But don't leave me alone here—with these dreadful papers!"

Never had he felt her so near to him; it was a new Jenny at his side, a comrade in arms. Gaily he cried: "I'll take you with me, I'll introduce you to my friends. And tonight we'll go together to the Montrouge meeting.... Come on!"

Once they were in the street, he said composedly: "The first thing is to get that business settled about my father's estate. Next, to find out how much truth there is in what they say in *Paris-Midi*."

His voice was gay; Jenny's company was making him feel in the best of spirits. He slipped his arm through hers and swung her along at a good pace toward the Luxembourg.

At the broker's office—the same thing was happening at all credit establishments, postoffices, and savings-banks—the counters were being mobbed by a people changing notes for coin. For the past two days panic conditions had prevailed on the Bourse, and the leading firms of stockbrokers had petitioned the government to sanction a moratorium permitting postponement of the July settlement till the end of August, anyhow.

The broker greeted Jacques with tokens of the utmost esteem. "You may congratulate yourself, sir, on being remarkably well informed. Had you given us your instructions two days later we shouldn't have been able to carry them out."

"I know that," Jacques replied calmly.

Some hours later, half the considerable fortune left by M. Thibault—with the exception of 250,000 francs invested in South American securities, which it had been impossible to dispose of at such short notice—had been deposited, thanks to Stefany's good offices, in discreet and competent hands. Within twenty-four hours this anonymous donation would be at the disposal of the International Socialist Committee.

II

AT about the same hour Antoine was walking up the staircase at the Foreign Office, to give Rumelles his injection. For several days, especially since the Foreign Minister's return, Rumelles, kept busy day and night, had had to give up visiting Antoine. More than ever under the incessant strain his nerves required their daily fillip, and it had been agreed that Antoine was to call in regularly at the Ministry. He did not grudge the time thus lost; those twenty minutes spent in Rumelles's office kept him posted as to the latest moves on the diplomatic chessboard, and enabled him to believe that by a fortunate chance he was one of a favoured few Parisians really in the know.

A number of people were in the corridor and the small ante-room, waiting to see Rumelles. But the attendant, who knew Antoine, showed him in at once by a side-door.

"Well," Antoine said, taking a copy of *Paris-Midi* from his pocket, "it looks as if events are moving apace just now!"

Rumelles had risen from his seat. He was scowling. "That rag! Tear the damned thing up, please! We denied it at once; what's more, the government is going to take proceedings. Meanwhile the police have confiscated all the copies they could lay hands on."

"Ah! Then it's a lie!" Antoine exclaimed, only too eager to be reassured.

"Well—not entirely."

As he laid out his instruments on a corner of the desk, Antoine looked up and cast a searching glance at Rumelles, who was slowly undressing, with a harassed air.

"It's quite true, last night we had a pretty nasty shock!" It struck Antoine that the quality of Rumelles's voice had changed: fatigue muffled its wonted resonance. "Yes, at four this morning we were all at our posts, and I don't mind telling you our hearts were in our boots. The Secretary of War and the Minister of the Navy were summoned post-haste to the Elysée, where the Premier was awaiting them. For two hours they did, in fact, contemplate . . . extreme measures."

"But they didn't decide to take them?"

"In the end, no. Not for the present. The order has gone round to say that the situation looks a little better this morning. The German government has advised us that it isn't mobilizing; on the contrary, it's in active pourparlers with Vienna and St. Petersburg. So it would be unwise for us, at the moment, to take any steps that might seem . . ."

"But surely it's a good sign, the way Germany's behaving?"

Rumelles cut him short with a look. "It's only a blind, my dear fellow. That's all it amounts to. A gesture of moderation to try, if possible, to win Italy over to the cause of the Central Powers. A gesture that can have no practical effect; Germany knows as well as we do that, in the pass that things have come to, Austria can't, and Russia won't, draw back."

"But, it's appalling, what you're telling me. . . ."

"Neither Austria nor Russia. Nor the other powers, for that matter. It's just that, my dear fellow, that makes the situation so devilish. In almost every European cabinet there are men who're out for peace, but everywhere, too, just now there are others out for war. There's not a single government that hasn't found itself brought to bay by the alarming possibilities of the situation and isn't thinking: 'After all, it's a gamble—and, who knows, a war may stand us in good stead'! Yes, I assure you! Don't you realize that every European nation has always had some secret axe to grind, and if it gets involved in a world war, reckons on making something out of it?"

"Surely that's not true of us?"

"Even the most pacifist-minded of our leaders are already saying to themselves: 'After all, perhaps this is a chance of settling Germany's hash and getting back Alsace and Lorraine.' Germany feels herself 'encircled' and wants to break through the ring; England to destroy the German fleet and filch their colonies and commerce from the Germans. Yes, each country is looking beyond the catastrophe—which it still hopes to avert—and already reckoning up what it stands to gain, if a war breaks."

Rumelles's voice had sunk to a low, toneless muttering: he seemed bored to death with talking, yet too tired to make the effort of refusing speech.

"But what's going to happen?" Antoine asked. So strong was his physical repugnance for suspense and indecision, that he would almost rather have been told then and there that war had been declared, and that he had only to go to his post.

"And there's something more," Rumelles began, ignoring the question. He broke off, slowly finger-raked his shaggy mane, then buried his forehead in his hands.

It seemed as if by dint of arguing round and about these problems, hearing them threshed out from morn till night during the past two weeks, he had ceased to recognize the gravity of the political situation. With his eyes fixed on the floor, his hands pressed to his temples, he was smiling. His shirt-tails billowed round the plump, white thighs covered with a golden down. The smile, a vague, almost fatuous smile—as little "leonine" as it could be—was not meant for Antoine. It was obvious that the man was at the end of his tether; his face was puffed, and on the sallow, deeply lined forehead sweat had plastered wisps of greying hair. He had spent the last two nights at the Ministry. He was more than tired; the repeated shocks of that dramatic week had worn out his powers of resistance, had left him helpless as a fish that has been played upstream and down till it has no fight left. Thanks to the injections and the cola tablets which, despite Antoine's prohibition, he was taking every two hours, he managed somehow to get through his daily task, but in a condition resembling a sleepwalker's. The machine had been wound up and continued working, but he had the feeling that some vital part of it had snapped; it was no longer under his control.

He was in a pitiable state, but Antoine's desire to know the truth overrode his sympathy.

"Well then?"

Rumelles started and looked up, without removing his hands from his forehead. His head was buzzing and felt curiously brittle, incapable of resisting the slightest shock. No, things couldn't go on like that, something inside his skull was dangerously near the breaking-point. At that moment he would have cast everything to the wind, sacrificed his career and ambitions, for a mere half-day's rest and solitude—anywhere, even in a prison cell.

Nevertheless he spoke again, in a still lower voice. "Well, then, we *know* this much: Berlin has warned St. Petersburg that if the Russian mobilization goes any further, Germany will promptly mobilize. A sort of ultimatum."

"But what's there to prevent Russia from calling off her mobilization?" Antoine cried. "Weren't we told yesterday that the Tsar was proposing matters should be referred to arbitration at The Hague?"

"Quite so; only, my dear fellow, we can't get behind the facts. While Russia talks of arbitration, she's mobilizing day and night." Rumelles's voice sounded curiously apathetic. "Russia started mobilizing, not merely without warning us, but deliberately keeping us in the dark. And *when* did she start? Some say as early as the twenty-fourth, *four days* before Austria declared war. His Excellency M. Sazonov told us quite plainly last night that Russia's speeding up her military preparations. M. Viviani, who, I believe, is more sincere than most in his desire to avoid war at all costs, was simply horrified. If a ukase for general mobilization is officially issued tonight in St. Petersburg, it will be no surprise to any of us. As a matter of fact, that's why a council of war was held last night. And that's much more significant than any well-meaning proposal to refer matters to arbitration or even the 'affectionate' letters that are said to be passing every few hours between the Kaiser and his cousin the Tsar. Why should Russia persist in this provocative line of conduct? Is it because M. Poincaré has constantly affirmed, as a measure of prudence, that France will give military aid to Russia only in the event of Germany's intervening? That well may be so. It almost looks as if Russia wanted to force Germany into making the aggressive move that would compel France to join in with her ally."

He fell silent, staring glumly at his knees and patting his plump legs. Was he wondering if he should make any further disclosures? Antoine hardly thought so; he had the impression that just now Rumelles was in no state to judge what he should disclose and what keep back.

"M. Poincaré made a clever move," he said, without looking up. "Very clever, indeed. Listen! Last night he wired to our Ambassador in St.

Petersburg telling him to express the French government's strong disapproval of the Russian mobilization."

"Good for him!" Antoine exclaimed in innocent delight. "I've never been among those who think Poincaré will let us be dragged into a war."

Rumelles paused before replying. "Poincaré's idea," he said at last with a faint smile that came as a surprise to Antoine, "his main idea, was to shift the responsibility from our shoulders. Now, you see, belated or not, whatever happens, that telegram has been sent; it's there on record to prove our desire for peace. The honour of France is saved. In the nick of time. A very neat piece of work."

A buzz came from the telephone. He picked up the receiver.

"Impossible. Tell him I can't see any newspapermen just now. No, I can't make an exception even in his case."

Antoine was pondering.

"But if France wishes even at this stage to put a stop to the Russian mobilization, surely there's a much more effective way of doing it than announcing her official 'disapproval.' From what you told me the other day I gather that, if Russia mobilizes *before* Germany, our treaties don't oblige us to give aid to Russia. In which case you've only got to remind friend Sazonov, with a certain emphasis, of that fact, and he'll have no choice but to put the brakes on."

Rumelles gave a little indulgent shrug, as if he had been listening to a schoolboy airing his views. "My dear fellow, what remains of the Franco-Russian treaties of the past? History will say if I'm mistaken, but I've a pretty shrewd idea that, thanks to the wily game played by those arch-intriguers the Slavs—and perhaps also to the unwise trustfulness of our statesmen—our alliance with Russia was renewed *unconditionally* at some time during the last two years. Which means that France is bound, from the start, to join in any military measures taken by her ally. And I suspect," he added in an undertone, "that it's not our Foreign Minister's doing."

"Still, Viviani and Poincaré are of the same mind, aren't they?"

"Of the same mind? Well, obviously the answer's yes. With this reservation—that M. Viviani has always stood up against the influence of the army group. You know that before he became Premier he voted against the Three Years' Service Act. And yesterday, too, when he got here, he seemed quite convinced that a peaceful settlement was feasible. I'd like to know his thoughts at the present moment! Last night, when he left the council of war, he looked a broken man—it was quite painful to see him! I shouldn't be surprised if he resigns, in the event of mobilization."

While speaking, Rumelles had moved with dragging steps to the sofa, and stretched himself on it, on his side, with his nose half buried in the cushions. “It’s the right thigh today, isn’t it, my dear doctor?” he asked, still in the rather pompous tone he had been using throughout the conversation.

Antoine bent over him to make the injection. There was a brief silence before Rumelles spoke again, his voice muffled by the cushions.

“At the start it was the Austrians who seemed deliberately out to defeat all our efforts to avert a war. Today, there’s no mistaking it, it’s Russia.” He rose and began dressing. “Yes, it’s the Russian government that has just queered the latest British proposals of mediation, by refusing to hear of any compromise. The Cabinet was hard at it all day yesterday in London; it had sketched out a programme. England proposed to recognize provisionally the occupation of Belgrade as a guarantee taken by Austria and no more, but to insist, in return, on Austria’s frankly stating her intentions. That would provide, anyhow, a starting-point for negotiations. But, of course, the unanimous consent of all the powers was needed, and Russia flatly refused to give hers. She laid it down as a primary condition that hostilities in Servia were to be officially put a stop to and the Austrian troops were to evacuate Belgrade. Well, obviously, one couldn’t expect Austria to agree to a retreat like that. So it all fell through once more. No, it’s no use hoodwinking ourselves. Russia has a cut-and-dried plan, which, I suspect, has been thought out long in advance, and she’s resolved to see it through. She won’t listen to reason, she won’t forgo a war by which she hopes to gain, and she’ll end by dragging us all into it. Yes, we’re in for it, my friend!”

He had put on his coat and was crossing the room mechanically toward the fireplace, to straighten his tie in front of the mirror above it. Half-way across, he turned and said: “And do you suppose that any of us here know what actually is happening? Far more false news than true comes in. How’s one to tell which is which? Just think, my dear fellow, during the last fortnight the telephones have been buzzing night and day in every Foreign Office and War Department, the men in charge are being worked off their feet, they haven’t a moment to sit back and think things out! Just picture to yourself the code telegrams piling up hour by hour on the tables of the Foreign Secretaries in every country, the reports pouring in of the alleged secret intentions of neighbouring countries! It’s a witch’s cauldron of news, of contradictory assertions, all equally urgent and alarming! How can one get a single clear idea in this infernal tangle? A strictly confidential report comes in from one of our special agents telling us of an imminent, unlooked-for danger that can still be averted by a rapid counterstroke. Well, if we decide to deal that counterstroke and the news turns out to be false, our action will have made the situation worse; we may even find that we've provoked the enemy into taking some decisive step and ruined the prospects of negotiations that were on the point of being pushed through. But, supposing the danger is a real one, and we don't take action? Tomorrow it well may be too late to act. . . . Yes, Europe is literally staggering, like a drunken man, under this avalanche of news, half true, half false."

He was stumping up and down the room, settling his collar with a shaky hand, himself staggering a little—like Europe—under the intolerable burden of his thoughts.

"Just now everyone's throwing stones at the diplomats, poor devils," he sighed. "Yet they're the only people who might have saved the cause of peace. And quite likely they'd have managed it, had they been able to get down to it, to concentrate on the real issues; the trouble is they have to dissipate the best part of their energies on humouring the *amour-propre* of individuals and nations. Yes, it's a sad business!"

He halted beside Antoine, who was closing his instrument-case. "And then," Rumelles continued, as if he had lost the knack of silence and had to think aloud, "the diplomats and statesmen aren't the only ones controlling things at present. Here at the Quai d'Orsay, for some days past we all have had the feeling that politics, diplomacy, have had their hour. In every country another set of men is taking charge: the army. They have the whip-hand, for they speak in the name of national defence, and the civil administration has to bow to their decisions. Yes, even in the least militaristic countries, the reins of power are already in the hands of the General Staff, and when things have come to that, my dear fellow . . ." A slight lift of the shoulders completed the sentence, and again a joyless, almost fatuous smile hovered on his lips.

The telephone rang. For some seconds he stared at it without moving. "Yes, we're in a perfectly appalling jam," he murmured without looking up. "It's as if the gears had got locked somehow of their own accord and the engine out of control. We're heading straight for the abyss, the brakes won't act, and we're being carried downhill by our own momentum, gaining speed every second. It takes one's breath away. . . . The situation seems to have got out of hand. Nobody wants a war. Not a soul. Neither the statesmen nor the kings. Nobody that we know of. We all have an impression of having been stampeded, reduced to impotence, and of having been tricked—but how or by whom none can say. Everybody's doing just what he vowed he'd never do; what, only the day before, he was absolutely determined not to do. It's as if the leading men in every country had suddenly turned into automata, the puppets of ruthless occult powers that are pulling the strings from some infinitely remote point high above our heads. . . .”

He was still gazing bemusedly at the telephone, his hand resting on the receiver. At last he straightened himself up. Before answering the call, he waved a genial farewell to Antoine.

“See you tomorrow, old man. . . . Excuse me if I don’t escort you to the door.”

III

WHEN he left the Ministry, Antoine was feeling so tired, so upset and on edge, that though he had a very full day’s work ahead he decided for a short rest at his place before continuing his round. He kept on telling himself, without quite succeeding in making it seem plausible: “Within a month, perhaps, I’ll be in uniform, plunged into the unknown.”

As he was turning into the portico he saw, leaving the vestibule, a man who stopped on catching sight of him.

It was Simon de Battaincourt. “The husband!” Antoine bethought himself, on the defensive.

He had not recognized the man at once, though they had met several times in former days and once, more recently, when Anne’s little daughter had been put into a plaster cast.

Simon was apologetic. “Silly of me! I thought it was your consulting-day, doctor. Anyhow, I’ve made an appointment for tomorrow. But I’m particularly anxious to get back to Berck tonight and, if it wouldn’t inconvenience you too much . . .”

“What the devil does he want of me?” Antoine was thinking. His suspicions were aroused, but he was resolved to put a good face on it and not seem to shirk the interview.

“Ten minutes,” he said rather unamiably. “My whole day’s booked up, and I’m afraid that’s the most I can spare you. Come up with me.”

Wedged beside him in the stuffy elevator, disagreeably conscious of the mingling of their breaths, the odours of their bodies, Antoine felt his antipathy for the man heightened by a curious physical disgust, as he repeated to himself: “The husband . . . this fellow is Anne’s husband.”

Suddenly, with a gentle, rather boyish smile flickering on his face, Battaincourt asked abruptly: “Listen, you don’t really think we’ll be dragged into a war, do you?”

“I’m beginning to fear it,” Antoine replied gloomily.

The young man looked aghast. “But, look here—it’s unthinkable! I can’t believe we’ve let things come to that!”

Antoine did not reply. He was fumbling with his keys. As he opened the door, he said: “Go ahead.”

“I’ve come to ask your advice about my little Huguette,” Simon began. There was something appealing in the emotion with which he uttered the little girl’s name; he had come to love her as if she were his own daughter and was, indeed, devoting his life to nursing her back to health. He plunged into a detailed account of her condition. She was bearing, he said, the constant immobility imposed on her by the plaster cast, with “angelic” patience. She spent nine or ten hours a day in the open air. He had bought for her a little white donkey to draw the coffinlike wheelchair in which she always lay, to sunniest corners of the sand-dunes. In the evenings he read to her, and taught her a little history and geography.

Guiding Battaincourt toward his consulting-room, Antoine listened in silence; professional interest had got the upper hand again, and he was trying to piece together, from his companion’s desultory chatter, a picture of the girl’s actual state of health. Anne had passed clean out of his mind. It was only when he saw Battaincourt settling into the armchair in which his mistress had so often sat that a curiously insistent thought assailed him: “That man over there who’s speaking, and has just poured out his heart to me, is a man whom I’m deceiving, cheating of his rights—and he has no idea of it.”

At first the only feeling produced in him was a vague discomfort of a physical order, like the vexation caused by a distasteful, not to say, slightly revolting contact. But then Simon stopped talking rather abruptly, looking a little embarrassed, and a faint suspicion crossed Antoine’s mind: “Is it possible he *knows*?”

“But I haven’t come to Paris,” Battaincourt said after a while, “just to tell you about my experiences as a male nurse.” He paused, and Antoine could not keep out of his expression a certain eagerness, which encouraged

Battaincourt to proceed. "Yes, it's because I'm up against some rather tiresome problems, and letters are so apt to be misleading, aren't they? So I preferred to come and see you and talk things over."

Antoine reflected quickly: "After all, why shouldn't he know?" In the brief silence that followed, his thoughts ran riot.

"It's this," Simon said at last. "I'm far from certain that the Berck air really agrees with Huguette." Then he launched into a long-winded description of the climate. He explained that there had been a definite slowing-down in Huguette's convalescence since Easter. The local doctor, who surely might be expected to stand up for the advantages of the Berck climate, was rather inclined to think sea air was unsuitable for his little patient. Perhaps mountain air would be better. As it happened, Mary—Huguette's English governess—had received from some English friends glowing accounts of a young doctor in the western corner of the Pyrenees who, it seemed, specialized in this type of malady and had had some quite remarkable successes.

Unmoving in his chair, Antoine gazed at the finely drawn features, with the deerlike, elongated profile, and fair, almost pallid cheeks that even the brisk air of the dunes had failed to tan. Antoine seemed to be listening, weighing the pros and cons of Battaincourt's suggestions. Actually his thoughts were far away. He was recalling what Anne, in her rare moments of expansiveness, had told him about her husband's character. She had accused him of being a "waster," treacherous, selfish, vain, and spiteful in an underhand way. Until now he had seen no reason to mistrust the portrait she had given him of the man, for she always spoke of Simon in a tone of airy detachment and disdain which seemed to vouch for her impartiality. But now that he had the original before his eyes, he was beginning to feel puzzled, hopelessly at sea.

"Don't you think I'd better take Huguette to Font-Romeu?" Battaincourt inquired.

"Certainly," Antoine murmured. "It's quite a good idea, very likely."

"Naturally I'd stay with her down there. It's the back of beyond, of course, but I don't mind, if it's likely to do the child good. As for my wife"—at the thought of Anne a look of vague distress, quickly repressed, flitted across his face—"she doesn't come to see us often at Berck," he confessed with a smile that tried to be indulgent. "Paris is so near, you understand. She's always being invited out by friends and lets herself get snowed under by her social duties. But if she settled at Font-Romeu with us, perhaps she'd manage to break away from all that."

A far-away look came into his eyes as he fondly pictured a renewal of their life together, but it could be seen that he had little real hope of it. Obviously he still loved Anne, and suffered by his love, as much as ever.

Then in an enigmatic tone he muttered: “Perhaps everything would be different.”

Antoine could clearly see how, on a superficial view, Anne’s opinion of Simon could be justified. Nevertheless, a conviction was forcing itself upon him with ever-increasing cogency that the man opposite him in the armchair was totally different from the portrait Anne had drawn of him. “Treacherous, selfish, spiteful!” Five minutes’ observation of Battaincourt, the impression gleaned from even a brief contact with him by an observer with the slightest alertness, the least intuition, was enough to refute these epithets. On the contrary, straightforwardness, goodness of heart, and modesty shone out in everything he said, even in the clumsiness of his manners. “A weakling, yes,” Antoine decided. “The prey of scruples and perhaps a bit of a fool. But a monster of duplicity—most assuredly not!”

Meanwhile Simon was tranquilly proceeding with his monologue. His gentle eyes aglow with gratitude, he was explaining that of course he would never have dreamed of taking any step of such a serious nature without first consulting Antoine. He knew Antoine’s skill and devotion, and put himself unreservedly in his hands. He had even ventured to hope that Antoine might find time to run down to Berck for a few hours and see his little patient before making a final decision. Though he quite understood that under the present circumstances this might well be difficult. . . .

Antoine was listening intently now. He had just resolved to break with Anne for good and all. Had he really settled on this course only during these last minutes? Or was it not truer that this resolve had been hovering in the background of his mind for many a long day? Could it even be called a “resolve,” this prompt, unthinking surrender to an inner need which had suddenly become urgent, ineluctable? Given the leisure for analysing his feelings, he would certainly have found that his persistence during the past week in refusing to answer Anne’s telephone calls and in evading the various appointments she had tried to make with him through Léon had indicated a secret, unformulated desire to break with her. He would even have had to own to himself that, though politics might seem utterly irrelevant to his affair with Anne, the tragic hours through which Europe was passing had played their part in estranging him from her. It was as if this liaison had become unworthy of certain new emotions and dwindled to a poor and paltry thing by contrast with the world-shaking events in progress.

Be this as it might, it was Simon's visit that had led him to decide on an immediate break, and even to regard it now, unwittingly, as something already perpetrated and irrevocable. The experience of facing this forlorn, bewildered man, of accepting his confidences and consideration with a hypocritical air of innocence, of finding him, in his ignorance of the wrong that had been done him, appealing to himself as to a loyal friend—all this had been too much for Antoine. Half-formulated thoughts had gone racing through his mind. "No, it doesn't pan out. Such things shouldn't happen. That's not how life should be. I come first, yes; my pleasures, my satisfactions. But they're not all. Others may be involved, human destinies that it would be criminal to sacrifice light-heartedly. It's because of people like me and lives like mine that the world's so topsy-turvy, so full of lies, injustice, wretchedness."

The curious thing was that the moment he had made that silent, immutable decision, "Everything's over between Anne and myself," all the past seemed to be blotted out as if by magic; it was exactly as if nothing had been between them. He could look Battaincourt in the eyes without the least discomfort; could smile, give him advice and encouragement to his heart's content. When, bashful as a schoolboy, Simon said something about having "overstayed the ten minutes," Antoine laughed and gave him a friendly tap on the shoulder. They walked side by side to the hall-door in friendly conversation. Antoine even promised to come to Berck some day the next week. For the moment he had forgotten everything, even the war. . . . Suddenly a thought of it flashed back, and it struck him that the imminence of a catastrophe which looked as if it would play havoc with all conventional values might well account, to some extent, for his being able to take this *tête-à-tête*, singular as it was, so composedly. "In a month or two quite possibly both of us will be dead," he mused. "And, that being so, how trivial everything else seems!"

"The eight-thirty train gets you to Rang about eleven, and to Berck in time for lunch," Simon explained, beaming with delight.

"Circumstances permitting . . ." Antoine pointed out.

The young man's face fell; the blood left his cheeks. For a moment he pressed his clenched fist to his lips, his eyes wide with anguished apprehension. And at that moment Antoine had a positive conviction that the old Huguenot, Colonel Count de Battaincourt's son was quaking at the prospect of service in the field.

"What will become of Huguette," Battaincourt sighed, looking away from Antoine, "if I'm called up for service? She'll only have that English governess. . . .” At that moment both men were thinking about Anne, on almost the same lines.

Battaincourt said no more till he was on the landing. He looked back at Antoine standing in the doorway. “Which day do you join your regiment?”

“On the first day. As Medical Officer in an infantry regiment. The 54th, at Compiègne. And you?”

“The third day. As sergeant in the 4th Hussars, at Verdun.”

They shook hands with almost fraternal warmth. After a last friendly wave of his hand Antoine slowly closed the door. For a moment he stayed unmoving, staring at the carpet. A vivid picture had forced itself upon his consciousness; of Sergeant Battaincourt, incongruous in his hussar’s uniform, galloping at the head of his troops across the Alsatian plains.

A shrill peal of the telephone jerked him out of his musings. “I wonder if it’s *she*?” A tight smile pursed his lips, and a sudden impulse came over him to hurry to the telephone and tell her brutally that it was all over. Then he heard Léon lift the receiver and say at the far end of the hall: “Yes, sir. Friday, August the seventh, at three? Professor Jeantet speaking? Very good, sir, I’ll make a note of it.”

Antoine was going down the stairs, turning over the pages of his pocket diary, when a sound of familiar voices on the first floor made him look up. Opening the door, he glanced into the record-room of his laboratory.

Studler and Roy were engaged in an argument. They were not wearing their white coats, and the tables and chairs were strewn with newspapers.

“Well, young fellows, is that your idea of doing your jobs?” said Antoine with a laugh.

Studler shrugged his shoulders gloomily, while Roy rose from his chair and shot a questioning glance at Antoine. “Have you seen Rumelles, Chief?”

“Yes. The news in *Paris-Midi* is false. It’s been officially denied. But things are going from bad to worse.” After a pause, he added glumly: “Yes, we’re on the brink of the abyss.”

“And meanwhile Germany’s making her preparations,” Studler grunted.

“So are we—thank goodness!” Roy exclaimed.

There was a pause. Then, “Our last chance of peace,” Studler sighed, “lies with the working-classes. But they’ll catch on only when it’s too late. There’s a shocking fatalism in the attitude the man in the street takes toward war. And of course it’s easy to account for: people have their minds warped in school—by the way their masters talk to them about past wars, and glory, and the flag, and the fatherland, and so on—and after that, by their military service. Today we're paying dear for all that tomfoolery."

Roy kept an ironic silence.

Antoine put on his hat again. "*Au revoir*," he said abruptly. "I'll never have time for all my visits. See you this evening."

After he had gone, Roy went up to the Caliph and planted himself squarely in front of him. "As we were bound to be in for it some day or other, you can't deny that the present moment suits us as well as any!"

"Oh, stop it, Roy old man!"

"No. Look here! Try to take an unprejudiced view for a change. By and large, things look pretty good for us just now. It's all to the interest of France that the war should start off as between Germany and Russia; that ensures the Russians' coming in with us, and we'll be able to take the line of standing by an ally—always the best line to take. Then, again, we've had time enough—at least I hope so—to put through our mobilization on the quiet without having had to face that famous 'lightning attack' which was the bogy of our General Staff. All of which improves our prospects."

Studler gazed at him silently.

"Look here!" Roy said again. "If you're honest with yourself, you're bound to admit that the moment's pretty well chosen for having it out with them and at long last restoring our national honour."

"Our national honour!" Studler roared, spluttering with rage.

The door opened and Jousselin entered. "Still at it, you two?" he wearily inquired.

Unlike the others, he was in his white laboratory coat. Not that he had any more illusions than they as to the future; only too well he guessed that in three weeks' time he would no longer be there to observe the results of the inoculations to which he had devoted his morning. But he made a point of carrying on as if nothing untoward was to happen. "For one thing," he had said to Antoine, a melancholy smile glimmering in the grey depths of his eyes, "for one thing, it keeps one from thinking."

"Everywhere," Studler cried with a contemptuous gesture, "they're talking the same damn-fool nonsense! At this end about 'the honour of France,' over there about Austrian '*amour-propre*,' and in Russia about 'Slav prestige,' the duty of protecting the Balkan states. As if there weren't a thousand times more 'honour' in preserving peace among the nations—even if one's got to eat one's words to do it—than in launching them into the shambles of a war."

It infuriated him to see the nationalists always claiming for themselves a monopoly in noble sentiments, unselfish motives, and the heroic virtues. For, though not a member of any political party, he was well aware that the militant revolutionaries who in every capital were putting up a desperate fight against the forces making for war were, more authentically than any other group of men, inspired by feelings of the loftiest self-abnegation, by a firm resolve to spare no pains in the pursuit of an arduous ideal, by the valour and great-heartedness that are the stuff of heroism.

The Caliph was not looking at Jousselin or Roy; the trancelike fixity of his gaze brought to mind an oriental prophet rapt in his vision.

At last he seemed to waken from his trance, and continued indignantly: "National honour, indeed! Yes, they've already mobilized all the high-sounding slogans to help them drown the voice of conscience. Anything to cloak the idiocy of it all, to stifle the least glimmer of common sense! Honour, patriotism, justice, civilization! And what's behind all those fine catchwords? Commercial interests, competition for world markets, rackets put up by business men and politicians, the never-ending greed of the ruling-class in every land! Did you ever hear such nonsense? They propose to 'save civilization' by behaving like bloody savages, by giving man's basest instincts a free run. To defend the cause of justice by organized, anonymous murder, by shooting down poor devils who don't wish us any harm but have been induced by the same infernal claptrap to join up against us. It's preposterous, preposterous!"

"Hear, hear!" Roy put in disdainfully.

"Steady there, old man!" said Jousselin soothingly, placing his hand on Roy's shoulder. He shared Antoine's feelings toward Manuel Roy, the youngest of their trio. He was genuinely fond of him, though he would have been puzzled to say exactly what attracted him in the young man. Perhaps his quiet courage, his open-hearted spontaneity. In the personality of this young fire-eater, with his zest for action and his chivalrous naïveté, he discerned a certain beauty—precisely that type of beauty which could but appeal to him, a man of the laboratory and researches on the abstract plane. And he respected the pure and selfless idealism he found in Roy, his simple faith in the regenerative virtues of war, for which quite probably he would pay with his life.

" 'Honour'!" he mused aloud. "I think we've made a great mistake in letting moral standards intrude where they have no concern—in the economic struggle that's going on between the nations of the world. That mistake has falsified, embittered the whole business, and it rules out any realistic compromise. It camouflages as a conflict of ideals and a 'holy war' what should be, and indeed is, no more than trade rivalry between competing firms."

"Caillaux, in 1911, understood that very well," the Caliph broke in excitedly. "If it hadn't been for him . . ."

Roy cut him short. "I suppose you'd rather see your friend Caillaux bossing it in the Foreign Office today than standing trial in court!"

"One thing's sure, my boy: if he had stayed in power, things wouldn't have come to the pass they've got to now. If it hadn't been for him, this damned war, the prospect of which seems to fill you and your fellow-patriots with such delight, would have come off three years earlier—for the greater joy of the nations. He didn't rant about 'national honour,' not he! He talked business and, in the teeth of general opposition, stuck to hard facts, kept to the level of the interests at stake. Thanks to which he was able to stave off disaster."

Seeing a glint of anger kindle in Roy's eyes, Jousselin hastened to intervene. "I quite agree that, providing statesmen can bring themselves to keep severely to hard facts, there's no quarrel between nations that can't be settled on diplomatic lines, by mutual concessions. It's easier to reconcile interests than ideas. I agree, too, that Caillaux is the man to bring it off. And, if this war materializes, I rather think that the historians—who've made so much of Cleopatra's nose!—will ascribe its due importance to that tragic revolver shot at the *Figaro* office when they're unravelling the causes of the war."

Roy emitted a self-confident guffaw. "Right! We'll let it go at that—I leave it to the future to refute you."

IV

"LET'S go with them," Jacques had said to Jenny, referring to a dozen of his friends who had met at the Café du Croissant and were going on together to the Montrouge meeting, at which Max Bastien was to speak.

Socialist gatherings were taking place that night in all the Paris districts. Vaillant had promised to address the Belleville meeting. The students in the

Latin Quarter had arranged for a meeting of their own in the Bal Bullier.

They took a bus to the Châtelet, then a tram to the Porte d'Orléans, where they changed to another tram that brought them as far as Montrouge Church. There they had to alight and make their way on foot, along crowded streets, to the disused theatre in which the gathering was taking place.

It was a stifling night and the air in this working-class suburb was full of unpleasant smells. The whole population seemed to have turned out into the streets after the evening meal; everyone looked anxious, uneasy. The larger thoroughfares were loud with the cries of newsboys selling late special editions.

Jenny kept stumbling on the cobbles that paved the old-fashioned streets. The heavy crepe veil she wore and the smell of dye the heat was bringing out of it were giving her a headache. And she felt out of place in her mourning costume among all these people in working attire; instinctively she had taken off her gloves.

Jacques, as he walked beside her, could not help seeing the effort it cost her to keep up with him, but he was chary of giving her his arm; in his friends' company he treated her as a "comrade." Now and again he shot her an encouraging glance while discussing with Stefany the latest news that had come in at the *Humanité* office.

Stefany took a hopeful view; he expected much of the agitation among the working-class which had, so he averred, blazed up into life again. Public anti-war demonstrations were growing more and more numerous. There had been a manifesto from the Socialist Party, another from the Parliamentary Socialists, another from the C.G.T., another from the Trade Union Federation of the Seine Department, another from the Freethinkers' League.

"Everywhere our people are up and doing," he declared, his dark eyes aglow with hope. "Everywhere they're bringing pressure on the government."

An Irish Socialist just back from Westphalia, who had been dining at the Croissant, had told him that that very night a monster pacifist demonstration was to take place at Essen, the headquarters of the German steel industry and of Krupp's munition works. The Irishman had gone so far as to assure him that a great many workers had decided, at secret meetings, to sabotage their jobs, so as to force the imperial government to abandon any thought of war.

In the course of the afternoon, however, an alarming rumour had gone round the editorial department of his paper. It was said that the Kaiser, after having in terms amounting to an ultimatum called on Sazonov for further information regarding the mobilization in Russia, and having received the reply that the mobilization was only "partial," but there could be no question of countermanding it, had given instructions to draw up an order for mobilization. For two hours the situation had looked desperate. Then the German Ambassador had denied the rumour in such categorical terms that it seemed certain the rumours of a German mobilization were, in fact, unfounded. It had been ascertained that the responsibility for this false alarm—a counterblast across the frontier to the canard fathered by *Paris-Midi*—lay with the *Lokalanzeiger*. Meanwhile these alternations of alarm, and reassurance were keeping the public dangerously on edge, and Jaurès feared more than anything else the evil influence of such recurrent waves of panic. He was insisting on every possible occasion that the duty of each group, of every household, was to fight down these vague apprehensions, which infected people's minds with notions of an "inevitable" war in self-defence and played into the hands of the war-mongers.

"Have you seen him since he came back?" Jacques asked.

"Yes, I've just spent two hours working with him."

No sooner was the Skipper back from Belgium—even before getting in touch with the parliamentary group of Socialists and reporting to them the work done at the Brussels Congress—than he had convened his associates with a view to making plans for the International Congress to be held in Paris on August 9. The French Party had a mere ten days ahead for organizing this highly important conference and ensuring its success; there was not a moment to waste.

Jaurès's presence at the *Humanité* offices had given a fillip to the energies of his staff. He had come back greatly heartened by the firm stand taken by the German Socialists, full of confidence in the pledges they had given him, and keener than ever on speeding up the peace campaign. The conduct of the government in prohibiting the meeting at the Salle Wagram had greatly shocked him; he had promptly decided to take up the challenge of authority and give the defenders of the cause of peace a brilliant revenge, by arranging for a monster protest meeting on the following Sunday, August 2.

"Stick it out, Jenny!" Jacques touched her arm. "We're almost there."

She saw a police squad drawn up under a portico. Young men were selling copies of *La Bataille Syndicaliste* and *Le Libertaire*.

They entered a blind alley in which groups of men, absorbed in heated debate, were dawdling instead of entering the theatre. The meeting, however, had already begun, and the house was full.

"Have you come to hear Bastien?" asked a militant who was just leaving. "Seems he's kept back at the Council and won't be coming."

Greatly disappointed, Jacques was about to turn and go when he saw that Jenny was too exhausted to make a move at once. Paying no more attention to his friends, he led her to one of the front rows where he had noticed two empty seats.

The local secretary, a man named Lefaur, was seated on the stage behind a garden table.

The speaker facing the footlights was a municipal councillor. In the course of his address he announced several times that war was an "annychronism."

The audience apparently paid no attention; they were chattering among themselves.

Now and then the chairman rapped the metal table, bellowing: "Silence!"

"Have a good look at their faces," Jacques whispered. "One can almost classify revolutionaries by their looks. Some have revolution in the set of their jaws, others in the expression of their eyes."

Jenny thought: And *he* . . . ? Instead of looking at the people near her, she scrutinized Jacques's face, his prominent, stubborn chin, his restless, rather harsh eyes, glowing with vital energy.

"Are you going to speak?" she whispered shyly. She had been asking herself that question all the way; she wanted him to speak, so as to admire him all the more, but a kind of bashfulness made her dread the prospect of it.

"I don't expect so." He slipped his hand under her arm. "I'm not much good at that sort of thing. On the few occasions when I've spoken in public, I've always been paralysed by a feeling I was being carried away by the sound of my own voice and everything I said gave a wrong twist to my ideas, actually falsified them."

That was her greatest joy: hearing him analyse himself for her benefit, and yet she usually had the impression of having already guessed all he told her about himself. While he spoke, she could feel his hand fondling her elbow, and it thrilled her so that she could think of nothing but the sensation of gentle warmth stealing up her arm.

"Always, you know," he went on, "I've a vague feeling that what I say isn't quite the truth, that I overstate what I believe. It's a ghastly feeling, I assure you!"

It was true. But it was equally true that the experience of speaking in public worked on him like a heady liquor, and that he rarely failed to establish contact, even an active intimacy, with his audience.

Another militant, a burly, bull-necked man, had replaced the previous speaker. His deep bass voice had held his audience from the start. He proceeded to hurl at them a series of peremptory assertions, so disconnected that it was impossible to follow the thread of his ideas.

"The reins of power have fallen into the hands of the exploiters of the masses. Universal suffrage? It's a fake, a rotten swindle. The workers are at the mercy of a gang of profiteers. Thanks to the capitalist armament-manufacturers and their dirty scheming, all Europe's been turned into a powder-magazine that may blow up at any moment. Say, men, are you going to let 'em turn you into cannon fodder just to earn nice fat dividends for the shareholders in Creusot's?"

Bursts of cheering greeted each of the short, breathless phrases that fell like sledge-hammer blows upon his listeners' heads. He was obviously used to applause; he stopped with a jerk after each phrase and stayed a full minute gaping at his audience as if he had a may-bug stuck in his throat.

Jacques turned to Jenny. "It's ridiculous. That's not what they should be told. The thing is to convince them that they stand for the greatest number, they have the last word. They're vaguely aware of it, but they don't *feel* it. It's something they can realize only by putting it actually, decisively, to the test. And that's still another reason why it's so important that the proletariat should win today. Once they've discovered that in actual practice they're strong enough to put an absolute stop to any aggressive policy and force their governments to back down, then, and then only, will they realize their strength and know there's nothing they can't do. And when that day comes . . . !"

Meanwhile the audience was beginning to weary of the spate of incoherent slogans launched at their heads. In one corner of the theatre a mild dispute had developed into a brawl.

"Silence!" roared the chairman. "Party discipline must be observed. Don't you know the orders? Keep calm, men, please keep calm!"

He was obviously terrified at the prospect of a disturbance which might bring the police in; his one desire was for the meeting to pass off quietly.

Silence was momentarily restored by the appearance of a new speaker, the last on the list. Lévy Mas, professor of history at Lakanal, was famous for his Socialist pamphleteering and his brushes with the university authorities. The theme he had chosen for his speech was a review of Franco-

German relations since 1870. With a great parade of erudition he set forth the issues at stake, and had been on his feet fully twenty-five minutes before coming to deal with the Sarajevo crime. He spoke of “plucky little Servia” with a break in his voice that set the eyeglasses trembling on his pointed nose. Then he launched into an elaborate comparison between the two allied groups, between the Austro-German treaty and the Franco-Russian.

Out of all patience, his hearers were beginning to heckle the professor.

“Brass tacks! Get down to brass tacks!”

“Tell us what to *do*!”

“Yes, tell us how to stop this war!”

More and more flustered, Lefaur pleaded in vain for silence.

“It’s just sickening,” Jacques whispered in Jenny’s ear. “All these people have come here to be given a lead, to be told what to do, in plain, practical terms. And now they’re going to be sent back home with their heads stuffed with political history, and the impression that the whole business is too complicated for them to fathom and there’s nothing for it but to bow to the inevitable.”

Shouts were ringing out across the tumult.

“What’s the truth about it? What’s the government playing at?”

“We want to know the truth.”

“Yes, the truth. That’s the goods!”

Lévy Mas faced up to his hecklers. “You want the truth? Well, the truth is that France is a peace-loving nation and has been proving it to the hilt during the last couple of weeks—to the consternation of the imperialist powers. We may criticize our government for its domestic administration, but today it’s doing its best in most difficult circumstances. It’s up to us Socialists not to make those difficulties worse. Needless to say, we are disgusted by the jingoist claptrap of the bourgeois press. But one thing is sure, and it’s our duty to proclaim it for all the world to hear: not a single Frenchman would refuse to defend his native soil against another invasion.”

Jacques, who was boiling with rage, turned to Jenny again. “Do you hear? If he wanted to prepare these people’s minds for a war he couldn’t go about it better. It would be enough tomorrow to tell them that the Germans are going to attack us—and they’d obey any order that was given them, meek as lambs!”

Her gaze lingered on his face. “*You* speak to them.”

Without answering, he stared at the orator. He felt the audience growing more restive every moment, and in their mood discerned an undercurrent of pent-up, generous emotion, a readiness for revolutionary action, which it was a crime not to turn to good account.

"I will!" he suddenly declared, raising his hand to ask leave to speak.

The chairman gazed at him attentively for a moment, then deliberately looked away. Jacques scribbled his name on a piece of paper, but could find no one to take it to Lefaur.

Meanwhile, in an increasing hubbub, Lévy Mas was winding up his homily. "I grant you that things have come to a highly critical pass. But we need not despair so long as the government has the full weight of public opinion behind it in seeking a peaceful solution of the crisis. Read once again the articles of our great leader Jaurès. Those swashbucklers across the frontier who are trying to pick a quarrel with us must be made to realize that our statesmen and diplomats are backed by the unanimous desire of all French Socialists to defend the cause of peace and justice."

He settled his eyeglasses, glanced at the chairman, and without more ado vanished into the wings, followed by some applause from his personal friends, interspersed with half-hearted protests and timid catcalls.

Lefaur rose to his feet, sawing the air with his arms in an appeal for silence. Under the impression that he was about to make a speech, the audience calmed down for a moment. He seized the opportunity to shout: "Comrades, I declare the meeting adjourned!"

"No!" Jacques shouted.

But already all present had turned their backs on the stage and were trooping out by the three exits leading to the alley. What with the clatter of flap-seats springing up, the din of voices raised in greeting or dispute, the noise was such that it was impossible to make oneself heard.

Jacques was bursting with rage. It was intolerable that these worthy people who had come here to be given a definite lead should leave the meeting feeling all at sea, without an idea what international socialism expected of them. He forced his way through the crowd to the edge of the orchestra pit. Beyond its dark abyss lay the stage, inaccessible. Jacques was frothing at the mouth with rage.

"I wish to address the meeting."

He edged his way along the orchestra pit as far as a stage-box, vaulted into it, and ran across the corridor, where he found a side-door leading into the wings. At last he found himself on the empty stage, shouting: "I ask to be heard!"

But his voice was drowned in a babel of other voices. In front of him yawned the dusty, dingy auditorium, three-quarters empty already. He ran up to the iron table and fell to beating it frenziedly with both fists, making it reverberate like a gong.

“Comrades, I ask to be heard!”

Those who had not yet left the theatre—some fifty men at most—looked round at the stage. Some of them shouted: “Silence! Let’s hear what he has to say!”

Like a sentry sounding the alarm, Jacques went on pounding the table. He was pale, dishevelled. Swiftly his eyes raked the auditorium from end to end, and at the top of his voice he shouted: “War! War!”

A sudden hush fell on the tumult.

“War! War is at our gates. Within twenty-four hours all Europe may be plunged into a terrible war. You want to hear the truth? Well, you shall have it. Before a month is over, you who stand before me, every one of you, may be lying dead on the battlefield.”

Furiously he thrust back a lock of hair that had fallen over his left eye.

“*You* don’t want a war, do you? Well, *they* want it. And they’ll force it on you. You’ll bear the brunt of it, but you’ll bear the blame for it as well. Because, if you choose, you can stop this war. . . . I can see what you’re thinking. Each of you is asking himself: What’s to be done? And that’s why you came here tonight. Well, I’ve an answer for you. There *is* something to be done. There’s still a way to save the situation. One way only: for all of us to band together like one man—and to say: ‘No!’ ”

More calmly, strangely self-possessed, forcing his voice, rapping out each word so as to make sure of being heard, he went on after a moment’s pause: “They say to you: ‘What makes war possible is capitalism, competition between imperialist powers, high finance, the armament-manufacturers.’ And it’s all quite true. Only—stop and think! What is war really? Is it only a conflict of interests? Unhappily, no! It’s a conflict of living men, of flesh and blood. War means nations under arms, butchering each other. And all the statesmen, bankers, high financiers, and armament-manufacturers in the world couldn’t start a war if the peoples of all nations refused to let themselves be mobilized, refused to fight. Guns and rifles don’t go off of their own accord. Soldiers are needed to make a war. And who are these soldiers on whom capitalists rely to carry out their money-making schemes, at the cost of their lives? Who but ourselves, the rank and file? No legal authority, no mobilization order, can have the least effect unless we choose to submit to it. We hold the trump cards, we are the masters of our fate, for we are the greatest number, and the greatest power on earth.”

Something seemed to snap in his head, the walls seemed tottering around him. He had just had a sudden, shattering intuition of his responsibility. Had he been right to launch into this speech? Could he be sure the truth was in his message to these people? And, for a while he felt himself floundering helplessly in a fog of doubts, of black despondency.

Just then there was a stir at the back of the auditorium, where the stragglers who had been on their way toward the exits had changed their minds and were now slowly drifting back to the seats, like iron filings drawn by a magnet. And in a flash the cloud of doubt had lifted, dissolved into bright air. Once again all that he believed, all he meant to tell these men whose mute inquiry rose insistently toward him, seemed clear, indisputable.

He took a step toward the footlights and, leaning forward, cried: “Don’t believe the papers! They’re full of lies!”

“Bravo!” someone shouted.

“Everywhere the newspapers are in the pay of nationalism. To whitewash their sordid ambitions, every government maintains a venal horde of newspapers whose task it is to gull the public; to urge them into the shambles; to convince them that the men who fall are heroically sacrificing their lives in a holy war, for the defence of their native soil, for the triumph of right, of freedom, civilization, justice. As if there could ever be *just* wars! As if it could be just to doom millions of innocent victims to suffering and death!”

“Hear! Hear!”

The three exits at the far end which opened onto the blind alley had filled with listeners, who, gradually pushed forward by the crowd outside, were re-entering the theatre and filling the seats.

Whispers came from the back. “Quiet there! Let’s hear what he’s saying.”

“Will you go on allowing a handful of scoundrels to dispatch millions of peace-loving Europeans to their death on the battlefield? If the situation has got out of hand, it’s they who’ve brought things to this pass. It’s never the masses who want war; the war-mongers are always and only the governing-class. The only enemies of the masses are those who exploit them; the people of one country aren’t enemies of the people of another. There’s not a single German workingman who wants to leave his wife and children and his job, just to shoulder a gun and shoot down French workingmen!”

A ripple of approval sped through the audience. Looking round, Jenny saw that there were two or three hundred of them now, perhaps more, all attention to the speaker.

Jacques's eyes ranged the seething mass, silent yet buzzing like a hornets' nest. Their faces showed as mere blurs of white beyond the footlights, but each face radiated an appeal, conferring on him a terrific importance—unmerited, he knew, yet strangely quickening his hopes, his faith. He had just time to think: "Jenny's listening," before taking a deep breath, a new draught of enthusiasm.

"Are we going to stand by idly, waiting like sheep till they dispatch us to the slaughter-house? Are we to trust the various governments with their fine talk about their desire for peace? Who are the people who've plunged Europe into the hopeless muddle it's in today? Can we be mad enough to hope that these same men—statesmen, premiers, monarchs, and the rest of them—who by their plotting and scheming have brought us to the brink of disaster, will now succeed, by their precious conferences, in preserving peace—this peace that they've cold-bloodedly imperilled? No! It's too late in the day to expect the governments to preserve the cause of peace. The issue, peace or war, is in the hands of the masses. In our hands and no others!"

Jacques was interrupted by another burst of cheers. He mopped his brow, and for ten seconds stood still, panting like a sprinter getting back his wind. He was conscious of his power; he seemed to feel each of his phrases striking home in his hearers' minds and, like well-aimed shells falling on a powder-magazine, releasing a mass of high-explosive thoughts accumulated there.

With an impatient gesture he imposed silence. " 'What's to be done?' you ask. I say: 'Don't let yourself be "done"!' "

"Hear! Hear!"

"As isolated units, none of us can do anything. But all together, solidly united, there's nothing we can't do. For don't forget this: the life of the country, all the factors vital to the well-being of the nation, depend entirely on the workers. And the masses have an all-powerful weapon, a weapon that's irresistible. And that is . . . to down tools. A general strike!"

From the back of the room someone cried: "Yes, and play the Fritzes' game, and have 'em on us like a ton o' bricks!"

Jacques straightened up and tried to catch the heckler's eye.

"Not a bit of it! The German workers will join in with us. I've just got back from Berlin and I *know*. I've seen the Unter den Linden demonstrations. I've heard them shouting for peace under the Kaiser's windows. The German worker's every bit as ready as you are to start a general strike. The one thing that's stopping him just now is fear of Russia.

And whose fault is that? Ours and our rulers': their absurd alliance with the Tsarist government. That's what has made the Germans more afraid than ever of an attack by Russia. Now think! Who is it best can calm the Germans' apprehensions—in other words, call a halt to Russia, warn her off a war? It's you. . . . Yes, we Frenchmen can do it by refusing to fight. So, by deciding for a strike, we Frenchmen will kill two birds with one stone. Not only will we checkmate the Tsarist war-plans, but we will break down the barriers that prevent the German worker from fraternizing with his French comrade. Yes, that's the road to peace—let Frenchmen and Germans make good their fraternity, and defeat their governments, by launching simultaneously a general strike."

Carried away, his hearers were about to break into applause, but Jacques cut them short. "A strike," he cried, "that's the one form of action which can save us all. Just think what it means! Our leaders issue their appeal, and on the same day, at the same hour, everywhere simultaneously, all the activities of the country come to a standstill. Automatically the strike order empties factories, shops, and government offices. Along the main roads pickets hold up supplies on their way to the city markets. Bread, meat, and milk are rationed by the strike committee. Water, gas, and electricity are cut off. There are no more trains, or buses, or taxis. No more letters or newspapers. No more telegrams or telephone calls. Every cogwheel of the machine has stopped with a jerk. The streets are full of panic-stricken crowds drifting to and fro. But there are no riots, no street-fights. Only silence and consternation. What could the government do against that? What chance would they have of stemming such an onslaught with the police and a few thousand volunteers? How could they collect supplies at such short notice or have them distributed to the population? Why, they couldn't even feed their own policemen and troops! Even the supporters of their nationalist pretensions would turn against them—and there'd be nothing left them but to capitulate. How many days—no, not days—how many hours could they hold out against such a deadlock, a total stoppage of every public utility? And, faced with such a demonstration of the power of the masses, what statesman would ever dare again even to contemplate a war? What government would dare to issue guns and ammunition to a nation in revolt against it?"

Each phrase he uttered was greeted by a wild burst of cheers. As he mastered all his strength to dominate the uproar, Jenny could see his face grow crimson, his jaws quivering, the veins and muscles of his neck standing out like whipcord.

"The hour is critical, but we still have the last word. The weapon in our hands is so tremendous that I don't really think we'd need to use it. The mere threat of a strike—once the government was convinced that the whole working-class without exception was determined to resort to it—would be enough to give a new turn to the policy which has brought us to the brink of the abyss. My friends, you ask: 'What is our duty?' Well, it's simple, and it's clear. We must have one aim only: peace. We must drop party differences and unite. Unite in saying 'No!' and fighting against war. We must rally round the leaders of the International, and bid them spare no pains to organize the general strike, the mass attack of the forces of the proletariat, on which hangs the fate of France, the destiny of Europe."

He stopped abruptly. He felt suddenly empty, voided of his substance.

Jenny could not take her eyes off him. She saw his eyelashes flutter, saw him raise his arm and wave his hand. A wan smile hovered on his face, illuminated by the footlights. Like a drunken man, he swung round clumsily, vanished into the wings.

The crowd gave tongue at last.

"Good for you! Bravo! No war! A general strike! *We—want—peace!*"

The applause continued for several minutes; the audience remained standing in their places, clapping lustily, clamouring for the speaker to come back.

At last, as he showed no sign of returning, there was a general stampede toward the exits.

As for the speaker, he had collapsed in a dark corner of the wings. Huddled on a crate behind a pile of old scenery, dripping with sweat, his blood at fever-point, he had propped his elbows on his knees, pressing his fists to his aching eyes. His one desire was to be left alone as long as possible, for no one to see him in this state of abject collapse.

It was thus that Jenny found him after some minutes' search under Stefany's escort.

He looked up, and suddenly all was well with him again, his face lit with an affectionate smile. She gazed at him intently, without a word.

"The next thing," Stefany counselled, "is to get away from here."

Jacques rose to his feet. The auditorium was empty and in darkness, and the exits had been closed. But a glow-lamp at a corner of the stage showed the way to a passage leading to the stage-door at the back of the theatre. After groping their way past a coal-cellar, they came out into a small backyard cluttered up with planks and scaffolding. It opened onto a seemingly deserted street.

But no sooner were they in the street than a couple of men darted forth from a dark corner. “Police” one of them said gruffly, whipping out a card from his pocket with the deftness of a conjurer and shoving it under Stefany’s nose. “Be good enough to show me your identity papers.”

Stefany handed the inspector his press card, saying: “I’m a journalist.”

The police officer gave it only a cursory glance. It was the speaker who interested him. Fortunately, in the course of the day’s peregrinations in Jenny’s company, Jacques had looked in at Mourlan’s and retrieved his wallet. But he had been unwise enough to keep in his trouser-pocket the passport in the name of a Swiss student which had served for his crossing of the German frontier. “Supposing they search me . . . !” he thought.

The inspector did not, however, carry inquisition to that point and merely examined Jacques’s personal passport under a street-lamp. With an expert glance he compared the passport photograph with the face before him. Then he jotted down some notes in his notebook, moistening his pencil-tip from time to time.

“Where are you living?”

“In Geneva.”

“Where are you staying in Paris?”

Jacques hesitated for a moment. He had learned, when visiting Mourlan, that the room in the Rue du Jour where he put up before his trip abroad and which passed for “safe” was no longer available. He had not yet looked round for new quarters, but he had thought of sleeping that night in the lodging-house near the Seine where he had stayed on previous occasions. This was the address that he now gave and the police officer duly recorded.

The inspector turned to Jenny, who was standing beside Jacques. She had nothing with her except some visiting-cards and a letter from Daniel, still in its envelope, which, it so happened, she had left in her bag. The police officer was quite satisfied with these and did not even record her name in his notebook. “Thank you,” he said politely, then, touching his cap, walked off, followed by his satellite.

“Society has to protect itself.” Stefany grinned ironically.

Jacques, too, smiled. “So I’m a ‘marked man’ now.”

Jenny seized his arm and clung to it, her face convulsed with alarm. “What are they going to do to you?” she asked in a tremulous voice.

“Why—nothing!”

Stefany gave a laugh. “What do you expect them to do to us? We’re on the right side of the law.”

“There’s one thing that worries me,” Jacques confessed. “It’s having given them my address at Liébaert’s place.”

“That doesn’t matter. You can move somewhere else tomorrow.”

The night was sultry; the heat had brought out all the smells of the squalid little street. Worn out by the day’s emotions, Jenny clung desperately to Jacques. Suddenly she tripped over a loose paving-block, twisted her ankle, and would have fallen had Jacques not steadied her with his arm. For a moment she halted, leaning against the wall of a warehouse. Her foot was hurting her.

“Oh, Jacques,” she sighed, “I’m so dreadfully tired!”

“Lean on me, dear.”

Somehow her weariness made her dearer to him than ever.

The narrow street led into a boulevard where noisy knots of people were just beginning to disperse.

“Sit down on this bench, both of you,” Stefany said peremptorily. “I’ve got to hurry on or I’ll miss the last train. There’s a cab-stand beside the Town Hall; I’ll send a taxi for you.”

When three minutes later a taxi drew up beside them, Jenny felt suddenly ashamed of her weakness. “It’s silly of me. I could quite well have walked as far as the tram.” She was vexed with herself for being a drag on Jacques’s activities, all the more so as she had always made it a point of honour to fend off attentions on the part of others. Yet, the moment they were in the car, she took off her hat so as to nestle up to him more closely. Warm on her cheek she felt his heaving breast, sonorous with the pulsing tide of life. Without moving her head, she raised her hand and groped for Jacques’s face. He smiled—she knew it when her fingers touched his lips. Then, as if she had wanted only to make sure he was really there, she dropped her hand and snuggled up again into his arms.

The car slowed down. “So soon?” she thought, with a stab of regret. Then she recognized her mistake; they were only at the Porte d’Orléans, at the toll-gate.

“Where are you staying tonight?” she whispered.

“Why, at Liébaert’s, of course. . . . Why?”

Words trembled on her lips, died away unspoken. He bent over her. She closed her eyes. For a while Jacques’s lips lingered on the fast-shut eyelids. In her ears droned a low cadence of whispered words: “Darling . . . my dearest . . . my beloved . . .” She felt his warm mouth slipping down her cheeks, kissing its way toward her lips—which instinctively shrunk away.

He dared not insist and, raising his head, folded his arms still more closely round her in a passionate embrace. And then, of her own will, she proffered her lips to his mouth's kiss. But he did not notice, he had straightened up; gently unlocking his embrace, he reached for the door. She knew then that the car had stopped. Looking out, she saw the familiar doorway. . . . How long had they been there? she wondered.

Jacques alighted first and helped her out. While he paid the driver, she moved mechanically, like a sleepwalker, toward the door, laid her hand on the bell. Suddenly a mad temptation sped through her mind. . . . But her mother might be back. And with the thought of Mme. de Fontanin, something inside her seemed to snap, and all the old anxieties were back again. Trembling, her fingers groped again for the bell.

When Jacques rejoined her, the door stood ajar and the lights were turned on in the vestibule.

"Tomorrow?" he asked hurriedly.

She nodded. She could not utter a word. He had taken her hand and was fondling it between his palms.

"Not in the morning." His voice came in jerks. "I'll come at two in the afternoon. That suit you?"

Again she nodded, then withdrew her hand and pushed the door open.

He watched her move stiffly across the zone of light and vanish into the dark beyond without once looking back. And then he let the door swing to.

V

JACQUES had had a wretched night at Liébaert's. After tossing and turning on the narrow iron bedstead, after wondering time and again if the pale light glimmering on the panes were not a hint of daybreak, he had sunk into a sort of coma that had lasted two hours and left him wearier than ever, aching in every limb. . . . At last, daylight had come.

After dressing, he packed his few belongings in his valise, making a separate package of his private papers. Then he drew the chair to the window and remained there for some time, his elbows propped on the sill, unable to fix his mind on anything. The picture of Jenny came and went before his eyes, and all his being yearned to have her sitting beside him now, silent, unmoving, cheek to cheek, as in the taxi on the previous night. No sooner was she out of reach than he seemed to have such hosts of things to tell her!

He watched the signs of morning life invade the street and river-bank below; milkmen and scavengers going about their tasks. Garbage-cans still lined the edges of the sidewalk. In a corner house facing him the shutters were still closed, except on the second floor, which was occupied by a china-shop; across the windows he could see masses of miscellaneous crockery half swathed in straw: porcelain vases, sweetmeat jars, misassorted dinner sets, statuettes of dancing-girls, and busts of eminent men. On the ground floor the premises of a Jewish butcher flaunted a gilt shopsign lettered in Hebrew, which held his interest for a desultory moment.

As soon as it had struck seven and he could pay his bill for the night's lodging, he made his escape. The first thing he did was to buy the morning papers and settle down to read them on a bench beside the Seine. There was a trace of coolness in the air; beyond the river white trails of morning mist were floating round Notre-Dame.

Over and over again, with sickening, insatiable avidity, he read the latest dispatches and the comments on them, identical in all the papers like the reflections in a labyrinth of mirrors.

For now at last the entire French press was unanimous in sounding the alarm. Clemenceau's article in *L'Homme Libre* was headed "On the Brink of the Abyss."

Most republican newspapers joined with those of the right in rebuking the French Socialists for having "at such a moment as the present" promoted the organization of an International Peace Congress in Paris.

Jacques felt strangely reluctant to leave the seat beside the river and broach the activities of the new day: Friday, July 31. Yet his perusal of the papers had gradually lifted him out of his lethargy, braced him for contact with the outside world. He had a momentary impulse to hasten forthwith to Jenny, but fought it down. For he was aware that this impulse was due less to his love for Jenny than to a desire to shirk the claims of life; and he blushed for himself. War was *not* inevitable, all was not yet lost, much could still be done. In every Paris district at this hour men were awakening, eager to fight the good fight. . . . And, in any case, he reminded himself, he had warned Jenny that he could not see her before two.

It was much too early to go to the *Humanité* office, but not too early for the *Etendard*. It struck him, too, that he could leave his valise with Mourlan. The prospect of calling on the old printer brought him to his feet. He decided to go to the Bastille on foot, along the river-bank; he was beginning to feel fitter already, and the walk would give him a final lift.

At the *Etendard* premises the door was shut. "I'll come back later," he thought. Meanwhile he might look up Vidal, who kept a bookshop in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. The back room of his shop was the meeting-place of the group of intellectuals who edited the *Elan Rouge*, a periodical of anarchist leanings to which Jacques had contributed reviews of Swiss and German books.

Vidal was sitting by the window, in his shirtsleeves, tying up parcels containing pamphlets. He was alone.

"No one turned up yet?" Jacques asked.

"Not a damned one of 'em."

Jacques was struck by the rancour in his voice.

"Why? Is it too early?"

Vidal sniffed. "There weren't many of 'em showed up yesterday, either. Looks as if they wanted to lie low just now. . . . Ever read that?" he added, pointing to a book several copies of which lay on the table.

"Yes." It was Kropotkin's *Spirit of Revolt*.

"Great stuff!" said Vidal.

"Have the police been searching people's houses?" Jacques asked.

"I'm told so. They've not been here; not so far. But everything's set. Let 'em come if they want to. . . . Sit down."

"No, I can see you're busy. I'll call in again later."

As he stepped out onto the sidewalk a police officer accosted him. "Your identity papers, please."

Jacques noticed three men watching the scene from a distance of some twenty yards—plain-clothes detectives he inferred from their demeanour. The policeman examined his passport and handed it back to him without a word, touching his cap-peak politely.

Lighting a cigarette, Jacques walked leisurely away, but he was feeling uneasy. "That's twice it's happened within twenty-four hours," he muttered to himself. "Really, we might be under martial law!" He took some steps down a side-street to see if he was being followed. "No, they haven't done me that honour."

It struck him that while he was in these parts he might drop in at the Modern Bar in the Rue Traversière, the headquarters of a particularly active Socialist group, that of the Third *Arrondissement*. The treasurer of the group, one Bonfils, was an old schoolmate of Périnet's.

"Bonfils?" the barman replied. "I ain't set eyes on him the last three days. As a matter of fact, no one's been round this morning, either."

Just then a man of about thirty, with a saw slung across his back, entered the café, wheeling his bicycle.

"Morning, Ernest. Bonfils around?"

"No."

"Any of the men?"

"Nary a one."

"Ah! Any news?"

"No."

"You're still waiting for orders from the Committee, eh?"

"Yes."

The carpenter fell silent and gloomed perplexedly around the café, opening and shutting his mouth like a fish out of water as he flicked the cigarette dangling from his mouth from one lip to the other.

"It's mighty awkward," he said at last. "They hadn't ought to leave us in the dark like that. I got a mobilization order calling me up on the first day, and I ain't got a notion what I ought to do. What do you think about it, Ernest? Ought we to join up?"

"No!" Jacques cried.

"I can't advise you," Ernest said gloomily. "You got to decide that for yourself, my boy."

"It's playing the game of the men who started the war, if you let them rope you in," Jacques said.

The carpenter made as if he had not heard the remark and turned to the barman. "Yes, you're right; I must decide that for myself." Though he spoke in a confident tone, the man's perplexity was obvious and he shot a surly glance at Jacques, as if to say: "I don't want advice from you, young fellow. I want orders from the Committee."

He turned his cycle round, saying: "So long, men," and slowly walked out.

"I'm getting damn well fed up with 'em," the barman grumbled, "all these fellows asking me the same thing. What the hell can I do about it?

Seems that the Committee can't settle among themselves what orders to give. But what's the good of a committee, I'd like to know, if they can't give a lead?"

Before retracing his steps to the *Etendard*, Jacques spent some pensive minutes roaming the neighbouring by-streets, to which their daylong animation was steadily returning. Files of pushcarts piled with fruit and vegetables had drawn up along the curb. What with pedlars crying their wares and the busy throng of workers and housewives all keeping to the shady side and jostling one another on the narrow sidewalks, these streets had the cheerful din and bustle of an open-air market.

He noticed that men's underwear bulked large in the dry-goods windows and the garments displayed were singularly out of keeping with the season: heavy flannel shirts, knitted vests, woollen socks, and the like. The shoe-shops flaunted notices hastily blocked out on cards or strips of cloth. Some—the more discreet—merely advertised "Hunting Boots" or "Stout Walking Shoes"; others, more enterprising, offered "Hobnailed Shoes" or, yet more frankly, "Army Shoes." A good many men stopped to inspect them, but did not buy. Women with shopping-bags hung on their arms pawed and prodded the woollen garments, picked up the heavy boots and carefully appraised them "on the off-chance. . . ." No one was buying so far, but the interest shown by the public in these window displays spoke for the universal preoccupation.

The growing scarcity of silver currency was beginning to hamper trade. Pedlars, turned money-changers for the nonce, were moving to and fro, rattling the money-boxes slung round their waists. For a hundred-franc note they gave ninety-five francs in coin; the police seemed to shut their eyes to this illicit exchange.

On the previous day the Bank of France had made an extensive issue of five-franc and twenty-franc banknotes; these were being shown round as curiosities. "You see! They had it all ready in advance," someone observed; the tone conveyed mistrust and rancour, tempered with a certain admiration.

Jacques, who had had nothing to eat since the previous day, was beginning to feel exhausted. He seated himself at a table on the terrace of a café in the Place de la Bastille.

From the Gare de Lyon, from the tramway terminus and the subway station, floods of workers, come in from the suburbs, were streaming past. Most of them halted for a moment in the sunlit square, newspaper in hand, and cast an anxious look around as if to make sure, before going on to their work, that the imminence of war had not changed Paris overnight.

The café was crowded with people exchanging remarks at the top of their voices. One man told how he had sent his wife to the Town Hall to check up on certain entries in his service-book, and seemed gratified at being able to declare that the personnel in the military information bureau had had to be tripled to cope with the rush of inquiries. Grinning, a taxi-driver displayed a magazine with pictures on the same page of the Kaiser's return to Berlin and Poincaré's to Paris; side by side, significantly parallel, the pictures showed the two great men standing on the running-boards of their respective cars and acknowledging with the same martial gesture the acclamations of their trustful peoples.

A middle-aged couple went up to the counter. With a scared expression the woman scanned the faces of the people drinking at it, as if pleading for a kindly, reassuring glance. Suddenly they began speaking. The man said: "We come from Fontainebleau. Things are going hot and strong down there."

More loquacious, the woman launched into details. "Yesterday evening a fellow came and told the officer who has a room on the same floor as us—he's in the 7th Dragoons—to pack up his kit right away. Later on, in the middle of the night, we were woke up by the noise of horses. The cavalry were moving out."

"Where to?" asked the girl at the cash-desk.

"No one knows. We went onto our balcony. All the folk in town were watching at their windows, but you didn't hear a cheer, not a word spoken. They rode by quiet as mice, in their field uniforms. Without the band. After them came the transport wagons with the kit and so on. They never stopped passing, not till it was daylight."

"At the Town Hall," the man put in, "they've posted notices requisitioning horses, mules, carriages—even fodder."

"Looks mighty like trouble brewing!" said the cashier with an interested, almost gratified air.

"The territorial reserves have been called up already," someone remarked.

"What? The old fellows? Tell us another!"

"It's gospel truth," said the waiter, stopping on his way to a customer. "Seems they need troops right away to guard the bridges and junctions—all the vital points, as they call 'em. Listen! My brother, who's turned forty-three and lives near Châlons, was told to report at the station. Seems they rigged him out with an old képi, and a rifle, and a coupla cartridge-pouches slung on his chest, and, 'Off you go!' they says. 'You're on for sentry duty at the viaduct.' And it's no laughing matter, let me tell you. Nobody can get near a bridge without a permit. The orders are to shoot on sight. They say there's spies all over the place."

"I've orders to report on the second day." The speaker was a house-painter in white overalls. No one had questioned him and when he spoke he did not raise his eyes from the liqueur-glass he was twirling between his fingers.

Another voice: "So've I."

"And yours truly on the third day!" cried a fat, jovial-looking plumber. "But I'm stationed at Angoulême. And before the squareheads get that far into France . . . !" With a mighty heave he slung across his shoulder the tool-bag jangling at his side, chuckling to himself. "And, anyhow, who cares a hoot one way or the other? Let 'em all come! There's worse things than a spot of active service."

"Duty's duty," the girl at the cash-desk sagely summed it up.

Inwardly raging, Jacques clenched his fists and scanned the faces round him. He could not believe his eyes: not a trace was there of any violent reaction, not the least glimmer of revolt. It seemed as if the turn of events had come as such a surprise to all these people that their main feeling was one of stupefaction, of having lost their bearings. Under the bravado may have been dismay, but all were resigned, or almost so.

He rose, picked up his valise, and left in haste, more than ever eager to get in touch again with Mourlan.

He found the old printer, his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his black overalls, stumping up and down the three rooms of his ground floor, the communicating doors of which stood open. He was alone. Without halting, Mourlan bawled: "Come in!" and did not turn till his visitor had closed the door.

"Ah, it's you, boy!"

"Good morning. Would you mind keeping this for me?" Jacques said, holding up his valise. "There're only some clothes in it, unmarked. No papers or name."

Mourlan nodded curtly, glaring at Jacques with harsh, resentful eyes. "Why the hell are you staying on here?" he flung out.

Jacques stared at him, dumbfounded.

"Don't you realize we're in for it this time, you fathead?" Mourlan continued. "And the sooner you show a clean pair of heels, the better."

"And it's you of all people, you, Mourlan, who give me that advice?"

“Yes, it’s me!” he growled. “Who else should it be?” He brushed off some crumbs caught in his beard, thrust his hands again into his pockets, and resumed his angry pacing to and fro.

Never had Jacques seen him so upset, his gaze so forlorn. There was nothing for it but to wait till this black mood had passed. Without being asked, he drew up a chair and sat down.

After striding up and down the three rooms like a caged beast for a few minutes more, Mourlan came to a stop in front of Jacques. “Who are you counting on today, I’d like to know? On your famous ‘proletariat’? On a general strike?”

“Yes.” Jacques’s tone was resolute.

The shoulders of the old evangelist of revolution heaved disdainfully. “A general strike! What bunk! Who talks of it today? Who dares even to think of it?”

“I do.”

“What? Can’t you see that even in the herd of poor damned fools we’re trying to save despite themselves there’s an unbelievable majority of hotheads, fellows who’re always out for a scrap and get all worked up at the least provocation? You’ve only got to tell them a couple of Germans have crossed the frontier and those fellows will be fairly howling for their rifles. Take any one of ’em apart and talk to him and you’ll generally find he’s a decent sort of fellow who says he doesn’t wish anyone harm and believes he means it. But look beneath the surface and you’ll find there’s a mighty lot of the caveman lingering on—instincts he’s not proud of and keeps mum about—only he just can’t help himself. They’re always plaguing him and, when a chance crops up, he has to give ’em their run. Human nature’s built that way, and there’s nothing to be done about it. So who the hell can you count on, if you can’t count on the men themselves? The leaders of the European proletariat, or our charming friends the Socialist deputies? Just see how they’re behaving now! Backing Poincaré every damned time! He’s only got to ask for it and they’ll sign his precious declaration of war, blindfold!”

He turned on his heel and began striding up and down again.

“No, no,” Jacques muttered. “We’ve men like Jaurès with us. And abroad they’ve men of the stamp of Vandervelde and Haase.”

“Oh, so you’re counting on our grand panjandrums, are you?” Mourlan said, bearing down on him from the far end of the room. “But you saw with your own eyes how they carried on at Brussels. Do you think that, if those fellows had been genuinely prepared to defend the cause of peace by revolutionary acts, they wouldn’t have managed to come to some agreement and given a definite line to the Socialists of Europe? No, they got their rounds of applause by slinging mud at their governments. And what did they do next? They dashed over to the postoffice and sent off imploring telegrams to the Kaiser and the Tsar, to Poincaré and the President of the United States and—did you ever hear the like?—to the Pope, asking him to threaten Franz Josef with hell fire! What's your friend Jaurès doing about it now? He trots round every morning, like a well-trained little lapdog, to pluck Viviani by the sleeve and beg his 'dear friend' to 'bring pressure to bear on Russia.' No, the workers have been let down by their leaders. Instead of giving a strong lead to the revolutionary movement against the forces out for war, they've let the nationalists have it all their own damned way, they've lost the chance of launching a revolution, they've let capitalism trample on the proletariat."

He took a few strides across the room, then suddenly swung round on Jacques. "And, anyhow, no one will ever get the idea out of my head that your pal Jaurès isn't just playing to the gallery. In his heart he knows as well as I do that the game is up, that tomorrow Russia and Germany will join in the dance, and that Poincaré will deliberately let us be dragged in too. Because, for one thing, he intends to fulfil the scandalous pledges he gave at St. Petersburg, and because . . ." He broke off, went to the door, and gently opened it to let in a grey cat followed by her kittens. "Come in, pussy! Come in! . . . And because he's itching to play the hero and win back Alsace and Lorraine for France."

He had gone up to the set of shelves stacked with books and pamphlets which occupied the space between the windows. Taking out a book, he gave it some gentle slaps, like a fancier patting a horse's neck. "See here, my boy," he went on in a calmer tone as he put the book back in its place. "I don't want to blow my own horn, but I wasn't far wrong when, after their Basel Congress, I wrote that book to prove to them that their famous 'International' was based on a misconception. Jaurès told me off for it. So did all the others. But today there's no getting away from the facts. It was folly to hope to reconcile Socialist internationalism—ours, the real thing—with the nationalist governments that still have all the power, everywhere. To hope to put up a fight, to hope to win, by law-abiding methods only, by merely 'bringing pressure to bear' on governments and limiting our tactics to fine speeches in Parliament, was sheer blithering idiocy. Nine out of ten of our famous revolutionary leaders—shall I tell you what I really think about them? They'll never be able to bring themselves to adopt 'unconstitutional' methods. That being so, well, the conclusion's inescapable. As they've never had the wits, or indeed the will, to overthrow the Constitution and set up a Socialist regime, the only thing that's left to them today is to defend it at the point of the bayonet, once the first German soldier shows up on the frontier. And that's just what they're preparing to do, behind the scenes. . . . God! To think I've lived to see this day!" he burst out, and, turning on his heel again, took a few angry strides toward the other end of the room. "You'll see: they'll all turn their coats, every man jack of 'em—like Gustave Hervé. You've read the papers, haven't you? 'A call to arms.' 'Your country needs you.' 'We will not sheathe the sword. . . .' Etcetera. Whanging the patriotic drum. . . . Forward, the boobs' brigade! In a week's time, there won't be left in France—perhaps not in Europe—a dozen Socialists, the genuine article. Only the turncoats, Socialists-in-uniform!"

Again Mourlan swept down on Jacques, and now he laid a hand, trembling with emotion, on Jacques's shoulder. "That's why I'm telling you, boy, take old Mourlan's tip and—clear out! Don't hang about here. Get back to Switzerland. Maybe there's still something for fellows like you to do in Switzerland. But here we're licked—down and out!"

Jacques parted with Mourlan in a mood of despondency that, try as he would, he could not shake off. In quest of consolation, he hurried to the *Humanité* office.

But Stefany and Gallot were in conference with the Skipper. Cadieux, hurrying from one office to another, shouted to him as he dashed past that Jaurès had just had an interview with two members of the government, Malvy and Abel Ferry, and returned with the news that there were still good grounds for hope.

No sooner had Jacques left him than he ran into young Pagès, Gallot's second-in-command, who took a very pessimistic view. Military preparations were, it seemed, being speeded up in Russia; the rumour that the Tsar had secretly signed on the previous day the ukase for general mobilization was being confirmed on every hand.

At the Croissant, where Jacques looked in for a moment only, he saw no one he knew except Old Mother Ury, who seemed to be acting as chairwoman at a feminist gathering taking place in a corner of the café. Hatless, perched uneasily on the leatherette-upholstered wall-sofa, which was much too high for her stumpy legs, she was holding forth, surrounded by a group of female militants roped in, presumably, to hear her latest gospel. Round the fanatical old face fluttered an aureole of wispy grey hair. Jacques made as if he had not seen her, and left immediately.

At the Progrès in the Rue du Sender several people had collected already in the ground-floor room. Across a haze of tobacco-smoke Jacques recognized the faces of Rabbe, Jumelin, Berthet, and a newcomer from Nancy, the secretary of the Meurthe-et-Moselle Trade Union Federation, who had reached Paris that morning, bringing the latest news from Eastern France.

A German Socialist with whom he had travelled up had assured him that a council of war had been held the previous evening in Berlin. It had been decided to convene the Federal Council. The opinion was that “very grave decisions” would be reached in the course of the day. Bridges on the Moselle were occupied by German troops. Any incident might start a conflagration. Already on the previous day a troop of German light cavalry had—by way, it almost seemed, of wanton provocation—crossed the frontier near Lunéville and galloped over several hundred yards of French territory.

“At Lunéville, you say?” Jacques’s thoughts swerved abruptly to Daniel—to Jenny.

Thereafter he listened with only half an ear. The man from Nancy was telling how during the past few nights people had seen passing on all the eastern railway-lines endless trains of empty cars on their way to reserve depots in the vicinity of Paris.

Sick at heart, Jacques held his peace; a starkly realistic vision of Europe slipping downhill toward the abyss held his mind. At this stage nothing short of a miracle could bring about a salutary reversal of opinion and brace the peoples’ will to swift, unanimous resistance.

Suddenly a desire to see his brother again came over him. They had not met during the whole of the week. It was lunchtime; Antoine was sure to be at home. And, Jacques told himself, this interlude would while away the time till his appointment with Jenny.

VI

“HAVE you heard, sir, there’s going to be a war?” Léon asked. Impossible to say if he was laughing up his sleeve; the tone was mildly interrogative, as was the expression of the man’s goggle eyes, but there was a hint of slyness in the set of his under-lip. Without waiting for a reply, he added: “I’m called up for the fourth day. But I’ve always been an orderly.”

They heard the clang of the elevator-door on the landing outside.

“The doctor’s come, sir,” Léon said, going to open the door.

Antoine shepherded into the flat a little, bespectacled, grey-haired man in an alpaca coat, whom Jacques recognized as M. Chasle, sometime his father’s secretary.

M. Chasle gave a start on seeing Jacques. Whenever he met anyone he knew, he brought his hand up to his mouth, as if to stifle an exclamation of astonishment. “Ah, so it’s you?”

Antoine shook his brother’s hand absent-mindedly, evincing no surprise at finding him there. “M. Chasle was waiting for me in the street. I’ve persuaded him to come to lunch with us.”

“Just for once in a way,” demurely chirped the little man.

After telling Léon to serve lunch, Antoine took M. Chasle and Jacques to his consulting-room, where Studler, Roy, and Jousselin were awaiting him. Chairs and tables were strewn with newspapers.

“I’m a bit late,” Antoine said, “as I had to call at the Foreign Office on my way back from the hospital.”

A silence followed; all eyes were gloomily intent on Antoine.

“Well?” Studler said at last.

“Things look bad,” Antoine said laconically. “Damned bad, in fact.” An expression of gloom settled on his face. Then, more briskly: “Well, let’s have some lunch.”

The meal began in absolute silence, as if the process of eating the first course—boiled eggs—called for their utmost concentration.

Suddenly Antoine spoke, without looking up from his plate. “From what Rumelles tells me, we’ve good reason to hope that England’s coming in with us. Anyhow, not against us.”

“In that case,” Studler asked, “why doesn’t England buck up and say so? That might save the situation yet.”

Jacques’s indignation got the better of him. “Obviously because it’s far from certain that England wants to ‘save the situation.’ She’s the only country that really stands to win something in the mad gamble of a world war.”

“You’re quite mistaken,” Antoine put in fretfully. “I hear that none of the British statesmen want a war.”

M. Chasle, sitting bolt-upright on the edge of the chair next to Antoine's, was all ears. Wherever he sat he gave the impression of being perched on an office-stool. He perked his head right and left, gazing at each speaker with such agonized attention that he forgot to eat. These world-wide alarums and excursions passed his understanding, and had wrecked his nerves. What with reading the newspapers and listening to what was said around him, he had succumbed two days previously to a mood of blind panic, and now, at his wit's end, he had come to Antoine for reassurance.

"The British Cabinet"—Antoine's tone, for all its self-assurance, somehow rang false—"is composed of genuinely peace-loving men. And I'm given to understand it's a picked team, the best in Europe. The Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, is particularly level-headed; Asquith and Churchill combine honesty with shrewdness, while Haldane's extremely energetic and knows Europe inside out. Lloyd George's pacifist views are common knowledge; he's always been against extensive armaments."

"Yes, they're picked men," M. Chasle agreed in the tone of one announcing a deeply rooted conviction.

Jacques, on the defensive, gazed at his brother but did not speak.

"With such men in power, there's no fear of England's acting with undue precipitancy," Antoine concluded.

Studler spoke again. "In that case, why has Grey been wasting the last ten days trying to patch things up by diplomatic hocus-pocus when the one certain way of making the Central Powers draw in their horns was to warn them they'd have England against them if war broke out?"

"And that's just what he did, so I'm told, at his interview yesterday with the German Ambassador."

"Well, what came of it?"

"Nothing's come—so far. As a matter of fact, our Foreign Office fears this warning came too late to take effect."

"Naturally!" Studler grunted. "Why the devil did he wait so long?"

"On purpose, likely as not," Jacques suggested. "Of all the crafty politicians who hold the reins of power in Europe, Sir Edward is, to my mind the most . . ."

"That's by no means what Rumelles says," Antoine cut in testily. "Rumelles was an attaché at our London embassy for three years and often came in contact with Sir Edward. So he knows what he's talking about. And I must say his estimate of the man carries conviction."

“That’s what makes the charm of it,” M. Chasle muttered inanely as if speaking to himself.

Antoine fell silent. He had no wish to join in a discussion or even to repeat what he had heard at the Quai d’Orsay. He was tired out. He had spent most of the previous night docketing, with Studler’s help, his files of medical observations; he was determined, come what might, to leave his records in good order. After the Caliph had left he had gone up to his study, burned old letters, and sorted out his private papers. He had snatched two hours’ sleep as dawn was breaking. No sooner was he awake than the news in the papers had aroused in him a state of febrile unrest which the pessimistic outlook of all whom he had spoken to in the course of the morning and the general atmosphere of consternation had intensified hour by hour. Moreover, his morning work at the hospital had been particularly heavy and, when he left, he had felt completely exhausted. That depressing colloquy with Rumelles had been the last straw. His morale, till now intact, was badly shaken. The tempest breaking over Europe was rocking the very foundations on which he had built his life: science and human reason. He was suddenly discovering the impotence of intellect; and, confronted with this uprush from the world of instinct, the futility of the virtues which had been the mainstay of his industrious career: common sense, moderation, wisdom and experience, the cult of justice. He would have preferred to be alone, with leisure to think things out, to fight down his depression and collect his strength, in stoic preparation for the ineluctable. But everyone was looking at him, waiting, it seemed, for him to speak. He frowned and, summoning up all his energy, went on.

“This fellow Grey, I gather, is the conscientious type of Englishman, always a bit mistrustful and slow to act, and not particularly expansive, but wholly dependable in word and deed. Quite the opposite of what you think,” he added, turning to his brother.

“I judge him by his foreign policy,” Jacques said.

“Rumelles has an excellent explanation for that. But it’s complicated and I doubt if I can remember all he told me.” Antoine gave a sigh and passed his hand across his forehead. “For one thing, as to fixing up a definite alliance with France, Grey hasn’t a free hand. There are several members of the Cabinet with pro-German leanings; Haldane, for instance. And, as for the British nation, everyone was far more concerned—until the last few days—with the Irish imbroglio, than with the consequences of the Sarajevo murder. The nation would have refused point-blank to let itself be dragged into a Continental war for the defence of Servia. So, even if Grey had felt inclined to pledge his country’s aid more explicitly and at an earlier date, he ran the risk of being repudiated by his colleagues, by Parliament, and by the nation at large."

He helped himself to a glass of wine—a thing he rarely did at luncheon—and drank it off. "That's not all," he continued. "As always, there's a psychological aspect of the problem as well. It seems probable that Grey, from the start, fully realized that the issue—peace or war—lay with the English. But he also realized that the weapon in his hands was a double-edged one. Supposing that a week ago the British government had pledged itself publicly to come to the aid of France and Russia . . ."

". . . we'd have found Berlin singing another tune," Studler interjected; "Germany'd have backed down, told Austria to draw in her claws, and everything'd have been settled amicably, after a few days' haggling between the various governments."

"Possibly; but it's far from certain. In fact, it seems Grey had good reasons for fearing just the opposite result. If Russia had felt sure she could count not only on our army and our financial aid, but on the British fleet and British money too, the temptation to risk a war, with such trump cards in her hand, might well have proved irresistible." Antoine cast a glance at Jacques. "Seen from that angle, Grey's attitude takes on a very different aspect. We may well believe that his policy of blowing hot and cold may have been prompted by a genuine desire to preserve peace. He said to France: 'Go slow! Bring pressure to bear on Russia; she may drag you into a war in which, I tell you plainly, you can't reckon on our help.' And at the same time he was saying to Germany: 'Take care! We don't approve of your truculence. Don't forget our fleet is mobilized in the North Sea, and we've made no undertaking to remain neutral.' "

Studler shrugged his shoulders. "With all his high principles, your dear friend Grey seems to have been playing a very childish game. For Russia must have known, through her secret service agents, the threats that London was making to Berlin. And inevitably that encouraged her to hope that England would come in against Germany. And meanwhile the German secret service was reporting to Berlin that England had given France and Russia little encouragement to count on British support. Which meant that Germany had no reason to take overseriously the warning given her by England. Yes, that policy of 'blowing hot and cold' seems to have actually promoted the likelihood of a war."

As a matter of fact, Rumelles had expressed practically the same opinions. But Antoine did not mention this. He drew a clean-cut line between the news of a general order which he felt justified in passing on to others and such comments and remarks of his statesman friend as seemed of a confidential nature let fall in the course of conversation. And Jacques's presence tended to make him still more circumspect than usual. So he resolved not to mention that the French authorities were beginning to wonder if the time were not ripe for making a frank and urgent appeal for British support—in the form, for instance, of a personal letter from the President of the Republic to King George.

Likewise he refrained from speaking of an incident which had, according to Rumelles, at long last induced Sir Edward Grey definitely to inform the German Ambassador at their interview on the previous day that Britain would throw her weight into the scales. The Germans, it appeared, had committed a serious blunder on the twenty-ninth by making proposals to the British Foreign Office to this effect: "If you will give us a guarantee of your neutrality, we undertake, after our victory, to seek no territorial aggrandizement at the expense of Continental France; we will merely annex her colonies." This outrageous proposal, coupled with the German refusal to undertake to respect the neutrality of Belgium in the event of war, had (so Rumelles said) not only aroused the ire of the Foreign Office but had effectively converted all the members of the Cabinet to a Francophile frame of mind and led the British government to declare itself unequivocally on the Franco-Russian side.

Jacques had heard out Antoine without contradicting him, but he did not yield. "All very well," he said. "But Rumelles seems too much inclined to forget the real issues of the problem."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning that ten years ago Great Britain was still the unchallenged mistress of the seas, and that, if she doesn't find some way of checking at all costs the growth of the German fleet, she may find herself one of these days playing second fiddle to Germany. That's a positive fact which everybody knows, and which I can't help thinking throws much more light on the situation than all Rumelles's theories about Grey's 'psychology,' his shillyshallying and scruples."

Studler nodded approval. "And one wonders how far that business of the Baghdad Railway has influenced British policy. It means that Germany's got hold of the line linking up Constantinople with the Persian Gulf—the railway that leads straight to India and may compete disastrously with the Suez Canal."

"And what exactly does all that prove?" Roy asked with seeming casualness.

"What, indeed?" echoed M. Chasle.

"It proves," Jacques said, "that England has very strong reasons for wanting a war that will cripple Germany. To my mind, that explains everything."

"Those English had a bit of trouble one fine day with Bonaparte, didn't they?" said M. Chasle with a knowing air. And he added with a quiet chuckle: "But of course there'll never be a 'stratagem' like Napoleon on the German side. What?"

During the pause that followed, glints of discreetly veiled amusement twinkled in all eyes but M. Chasle's.

Then Jousselin turned to Jacques. "All the same, don't you think we can trust the English statesmen when they say they're out for peace?"

"No, I don't. The Kaiser's famous remark about Germany's future being 'on the water' was a definite challenge to England, and, in my opinion, England is taking up the challenge at this moment. She's grasping at the chance of crushing the one European nation that stands in her way. I believe that Grey was well aware of Russia's intentions and had no illusions as to the futility of his repeated offers of mediation. I believe he has been consistently throwing dust in our eyes, and that in actual fact the British government has come to look on everything that makes this war inevitable as so much to the good. For it's a war that England *needs*, though she has never yet dared, and perhaps would never have dared, left to herself, to start it."

He looked toward his brother. Antoine was peeling an apple and seemed determined to stay out of the discussion.

"Already, in 1911," Studler remarked, fixing his eyes on Roy, "England did everything she could—without showing her hand too openly—to embroil France with Germany over Morocco. But for Caillaux . . ."

Jacques, too, had turned toward Roy, who was sitting at the far end of the big dining-table. At the mention of Caillaux, he had looked up abruptly and Jacques caught a sudden flash of the keen young teeth.

Just then Jousselin, who for some minutes had seemed lost in musings, began speaking. A little pile of green almonds lay on his plate; he had been shelling them methodically, impaling them one by one on his fork and neatly paring off the husks with his knife. Now laying down knife and fork, he sent his mild gaze roaming around the table.

"Do you know how I think historians of the years to come will describe the phase of history through which we're passing? They'll say: 'One summer day in July 1914, suddenly a conflagration broke out in the heart of

Europe. It started in Austria where the incendiaries had prepared the ground with skill and foresight.' "

"But," Studler interrupted, "the spark that set it ablaze came from Servia—driven by a treacherous north-east wind blowing straight from St. Petersburg."

"And the Russians," Jousselin continued, "promptly fanned the fire."

"With France inexplicably approving them," Jacques added. "And, acting in concert, they flung onto the fire nice little bundles of dry faggots that they'd stored up years before, for the occasion."

"What about Germany?" Jousselin asked. As all were silent, he continued. "Germany, meanwhile, stood pat, watching the flames roar up, sparks flying in all directions. . . . Why? Out of cunning?"

"Undoubtedly!" cried Studler.

"No," Jacques put in. "Out of stupidity, perhaps, and pride. Because she was mad enough to believe that, whenever she thought fit, she could stop the spread of the conflagration, call off disaster."

"And rake some nice roast chestnuts out of the fire," Roy added.

"Such things," M. Chasle murmured dolefully, "shouldn't be allowed."

"We've not dealt with England yet!" Jousselin reminded them.

"Oh, England!" Jacques exclaimed. "Her part strikes me as very obvious. From the start she had ample supplies of water, quite enough to put the fire out. And—what makes her conduct blacker—she clearly saw the fire catch, and spreading. But she contented herself with shouting: 'Fire! Fire!' and took good care not to open her sluice-gates. A fact which, for all the pacifist airs and graces she affects, will go heavily against her at the bar of posterity. She'll surely be adjudged an aider and abettor of the incendiaries."

Bending above his plate, Antoine did not seem to be listening.

The Caliph rolled his large, liquid eyes on Jacques. "There's one point on which I can't agree with you, and that's the German attitude today." His voice had suddenly assumed a brittle, nervous quality as though he failed to master some secret discomposure. "I believe Germany wants a war."

"Why, of course!" Roy exclaimed. "Germany's taken over, lock, stock, and barrel, the ambitions of Charles V, the programme of Napoleon. The Seven Years' War, Sadowa, the campaign of 1870, were stepping-stones on the way to German supremacy in Europe. And every spell of peace was used by Germany for piling up armaments so as to realize the sooner her dream of dominating Europe."

Studler, who had heard out Roy's tirade with lowered eyes, turned again to Jacques. "Yes, I'm certain Germany is deliberately following up a well-thought-out plan. From the outset hers was the 'hidden hand' that pulled the strings and directed every move of Austria's."

Jacques made as if to speak, but the Caliph, who seemed the prey of an unwonted agitation, gave him no time, and almost shouted: "Just think! It stares you in the eye! Would Austria, old ramshackle Austria, left to herself, ever have dared to adopt such a tone, to bluff and bully? Would she have dared to defy all the great powers by refusing reasonable time for the Servian reply? Or to reject so conciliatory a reply without a vestige of deliberation? Why, it's absurd! If you assume Germany had no warlike intent at the back of her mind, how do you account for her systematic hostility to every proposal—sincere or not—anyhow, diplomatically acceptable—made by England? Or her refusal to refer the issue to the Hague Tribunal, as the Tsar suggested?"

"Still," Jacques put in, "Germany's conduct can be justified to a large extent. She was well aware of the warlike intentions of Russian Pan-Slavism. And she maintained throughout that for this reason any meddling by the powers in the Austro-Servian dispute involved more risks than if they elected to stand out."

Antoine dissented vigorously. "At the Quai d'Orsay they've never trusted Germany's pacific declarations. They've long since taken it for a moral certainty . . ."

"A moral certainty!" Jacques echoed scornfully.

". . . that the Central Powers have made their minds up to turn down anything that might prevent or even postpone a war."

All this political table-talk was getting on Antoine's nerves; to end it, he put down his napkin and rose.

His guests followed suit.

"Let's not forget," Jacques said to Studler as they slowly filed out of the dining-room, "that Germany made several conciliatory moves, and the French and Russian governments would not even entertain them."

"Mere eyewash, those conciliatory moves! After all, Germany couldn't afford to disdain European opinion altogether."

"Still, in fairness," Jousselin pointed out, "you must admit that Germany's proposals—urging the necessity of a punitive expedition against Servia and strict localization of the conflict—by no means indicated any desire to start a European war. And still less a war against *us*."

“Not to mention,” Jacques added, “that if Germany’d really had that desire for war and for crushing France, why should she have waited so long? During the last fifteen years she had any number of opportunities, far more favourable than the present one—why did she let them all slip past? Why didn’t she take advantage of the Franco-British tension over the Fashoda incident in 1898? Or the Russo-Japanese war in 1905? Or the Bosnian annexations in 1908? Or the Agadir incident in 1911?”

“All that’s neither here nor there!” the Caliph declared obstinately, thrusting his hands into his pockets. “Neither here nor there, I tell you!”

In the doorway, M. Chasle was nibbling a slice of bread, hopping aside as each of the others left the room. To Antoine he showed the piece of bread, with a twinkle in his eye. “That was one of my old dad’s crotchets; with his dessert he had to have his little snack of bread. I take after him, M. Antoine. It’s my *bonne bouche*, as they say.” His smile, which seemed to deprecate such childish self-indulgence, conveyed also a hint of pride in so singular a propensity. M. Chasle was much too natural to be modest.

As Jacques and Jousselin were entering the consulting-room, where coffee awaited them, Studler slipped between them, gripped their arms, then burst out again, but in a confidential, tremulous tone:

“ ‘Neither here nor there,’ I said, because one can go on arguing till the crack of doom, and finding a reason for everything. Neither here nor there, because we all *must* believe that Germany’s guilty and we’ve been bluffed. Personally, each time I pick up a paper these days, the thing I look for first—I’m only too well aware of it—is some further proof of German double-dealing.”

“But why?” Jousselin asked, coming to a stop just inside the door.

The Caliph looked down. “So as to be able to face what’s coming to us all. Because if we began to question the guilt of Germany, it would be too hard to do what they call ‘our duty.’ ”

Jacques could not repress a wry smile. “Our duty as good patriots?”

“Yes,” Studler said.

“And you can still take it seriously, this duty that they rant about—even when you see all that they’re putting over on us in its name?”

The Caliph shook his shoulders furiously as though trying to extricate them from the meshes of a net. “Oh, damn it!” He sounded at once irate and plaintive. “Don’t make things harder for me. We all know that if the worst came to the worst and France were to go to war tomorrow, we wouldn’t shirk our duty, whatever our private opinions were.”

Jacques's mouth opened. He was on the point of crying: "*I* would!" when he noticed his brother gazing fixedly at him from the middle of the room. The cry froze on his lips; the strangely imploring look he read in Antoine's eyes arrested his impulse to speak out. Ever since Antoine's arrival, Jacques had been painfully conscious that, under the surface, Antoine's nerves were frayed to the breaking-point. And he was as profoundly moved as he had been at the bedside of his dying father when he had seen his elder brother, whom he had thought so imperturbable, break down, sobbing like a child.

Antoine looked away. "Manuel, old boy," he said, "will you pour out our coffee, please?"

"What's more," the Caliph went on with ever-increasing vehemence, "I say to myself: 'Who can tell? A European war on the grand scale would very likely do more to bring about the triumph of socialism than twenty years of peacetime propaganda.' "

"There," Jousselin replied, "I really cannot follow you. I know that some of your theorists assert that a war is needed to usher in the revolution. But I've always regarded that view as—to use the understatement old Philip is so fond of—'one way of looking at it.' Those who hold it can have no idea of what a nation under arms, the mobilization of a whole people, means today. What a curious kink they must have in their minds to imagine that a movement of revolt which hasn't yet been able to make good under our easy-going democratic system should suddenly become feasible when all the revolutionaries have been clapped into uniform and are at the mercy of a military clique with powers of life and death over every one of them!"

His eyes riveted on Jacques, Studler had not heard a word. "A war," he muttered. "What exactly would it mean? Three or four hellish months, I suppose. . . . But after that why shouldn't the working-classes of the nations come out of their ordeal proved by the fire, welded into a stabler union? And supposing it really meant an end of imperialism and armament races, and at last the peoples of the earth settled down to an enduring peace, based on the International?"

Jacques shook his head, unconvinced. "No, I've no use for that hypothetical Utopia you speak of, if it's to cost a war. Anything's better than having to see justice and reason demolished by brute force and butchery. Anything rather than the madness, the horrors of a war!"

Roy, who had been listening, put in a remark. "*Anything*, you say? Do you include the occupation of France by a hostile army? In that case, why not immediately offer the Germans the Meuse district and the Ardennes, for the sake of peace? Why not give them the North of France and control of the Straits of Dover while you're about it? They'd welcome another outlet on the sea."

Jacques's shoulders lifted slightly. "The big business interests in the North would suffer, I admit. But do you really think that the greater part of the workers and miners would find their lot substantially worse than it is now? Or that, if their opinion were taken, most of them wouldn't prefer even that to dying gloriously on the battlefield?" His eyes were glowing with serene courage. "I know your theory that war and peace must alternate in the life of nations, like the movement of a pendulum. A monstrous theory! We've got to stop that pendulum for good and all. Humanity must somehow be got out of this fatal rhythm and be allowed to devote its energies to building up a better social order. War doesn't solve a single one of man's vital problems. It only makes the worker's plight worse than before. During a war he's mere cannon fodder, and afterward more cruelly enslaved than ever. That's all war means for him." In a lower voice he added: "It's quite simple: I see nothing, literally nothing, that could be worse for a nation than a war and all that it involves."

"Quite simple," Roy retorted dryly. "And even a little oversimplified, if you'll permit me to say so. As if a nation had nothing to gain by a successful war!"

"Nothing! Under any circumstances whatever!"

Antoine's voice rang out authoritatively. "That's untenable!"

Jacques looked round with a start. Till now, seated at his desk, with lowered eyes, Antoine had seemed absorbed in the perusal of his morning mail. In point of fact he had not missed a word of what was being said a few yards from him. Without getting up or looking at his brother, he went on. "Historically untenable. All history—beginning with Joan of Arc . . ."

"I wonder!" Jousselin put in lightly. "Who knows? If it hadn't been for the Maid, perhaps France and England would have become united into a single kingdom. To the demerit of Charles VII, I grant, but perhaps to the great advantage of the two nations, which would have been spared no end of unpleasant happenings."

"No, Jousselin," Antoine expostulated, "do let's talk seriously. . . . Would you deny, for instance, that Germany gained anything at Sadowa and Sedan?"

"Germany," Jacques retorted, "as a nation, as a figurehead—yes. But what about the German people? What did the man in the street gain by those 'glorious victories'?"

Roy stiffened up. “And supposing by next Easter—Easter, 1915—France has reconquered Alsace and Lorraine, extended her frontier to the Rhine, annexed the mines of the Saar basin, and added the German colonies in Africa to her empire; supposing that, by force of arms, she has become the greatest power on the Continent, will anyone dare to say that France has gained nothing by the sacrifice of her sons?”

He gave a good-humoured laugh and, obviously supposing he had said the last, irrefutable word, took out his cigarette-case and, drawing a chair toward him, perched himself astride it.

“I’m afraid it’s not so simple as all that,” Jousselin, who was standing beside Jacques, remarked in a low, brooding voice.

Jacques turned to him, and he, too, lowered his voice. “No, I won’t condone the use of violence—even in self-defence. I won’t leave any loophole open in my mind to any thought whatever that can lure me into violence. I won’t take part in any war, whether they label it ‘just’ or ‘unjust,’ whatever its origins and motives.”

He stopped abruptly, breathless with emotion, and inwardly added: “Not even in a civil war,” as he recalled the heated discussions he had had with Mithoerg and his like, revolutionaries who drew the line at nothing. To such men he would say: “It’s not to an orgy of blood and hatred that I wish to owe the triumph of the cause on which my heart is set, the cause of human brotherhood.”

VII

“IT’S not so simple as all that,” Jousselin repeated, sweeping the others’ faces with his slow, mild gaze; then he relapsed into silence. After a while, as though his thoughts had taken a new turning, he added in another tone: “Of course, we doctors are privileged in a sense; we shouldn’t be asked to take a hand in the slaughter. We’d be mobilized not as killers but as healers.”

“That’s right,” Studler put in quickly and turned to Jousselin, his mild eyes beaming with impulsive gratitude.

“And suppose you weren’t doctors?” Roy rapped out, staring at each in turn with a challenging gaze. All present knew that he had not given the army authorities formal notice of his medical qualifications, and that, during his period of military service, he had, after a brief spell in a hospital unit, had himself returned to duty with his regiment and at present held the rank of second lieutenant in an infantry regiment.

“Look here, Manuel old boy,” Antoine grumbled, “aren’t you *ever* going to give us our coffee?”

He gave the impression of grasping at any pretext for cutting short the discussion and breaking up the group of disputants.

“Right you are, Chief!” The young man leaped briskly to his feet, swinging a leg over the back of the chair on which he had been sitting astride.

“Isaac!” Antoine called.

Studler approached and Antoine handed him a letter. “See this? Those fellows at the Philadelphia Institute have at last deigned to answer us.” And, by force of habit added: “For the file, please.”

Studler merely stared at him amazedly, without taking the letter. Forcing his lips into a would-be smile, Antoine tossed the letter into the wastepaper-basket.

Jousselin and Jacques had remained standing at the far end of the spacious room, at some distance from the others.

“Doctor or not,” Jacques began, without looking in his brother’s direction but in a louder tone than he would have used were the words intended for his neighbour only, “any man who obeys the mobilization order is assenting to a nationalistic policy and, by the same token, to war. For, to my thinking, the issue is the same for everyone: Does the mere fact that a government has given you orders to do so warrant your taking part in the butchery?” He bent closer toward Jousselin. “Even if I weren’t . . . what I am, even if I were a law-abiding Frenchman, well-pleased with his country’s institutions, I shouldn’t admit the notion that any ‘reason of state’ could force me to overrule what is for me a duty to my conscience. A government that arrogates the right of dictating to the consciences of its subjects must not reckon on their support. And a social system that doesn’t take account, first and foremost, of the moral standards of its members only gets what it deserves if they despise it and revolt against it.”

Jousselin nodded, remarking: “I was a passionate defender of poor Dreyfus.”

Antoine, who had seemed to be working at his desk, swung round. “The problem’s badly stated.” His voice rang clear, incisive. He had risen and, his eyes fixed on Jacques, walked toward the middle of the room. “A democratic government like ours, even when its policy is disapproved of by the minority in opposition, is in power only because it legally represents the will of the greatest number. Thus the man who joins his regiment when he is called up for service is obeying the collective will of the nation—whatever his personal views may be as to the line of policy the government in power is following.”

“You speak of the will of the greatest number,” Studler said. “But at the present moment by far the greatest number, not to say the whole population of the country, are hoping that there will not be a war.”

Jacques spoke again, taking care not to seem to address his brother and fixing his gaze rather awkwardly on Jousselin. “What possible justification can there be for asking the great mass of people to act against their considered, legitimate opinions and to subordinate their most cherished convictions to a blind obedience to the state?”

“What justification . . . ?” Roy exclaimed, stiffening up as if he had been dealt a blow.

“What, indeed?” echoed M. Chasle.

“The justification,” Antoine firmly retorted, “is the social contract.”

Roy looked Jacques and Studler up and down, as though defying them to answer. Then with a scornful lift of his shoulders he turned on his heel, strode across the room to a chair beside the window, and ensconced himself in it, turning his back on the others.

Antoine seemed in a brown study; his eyes fixed on the carpet, he was stirring his coffee with an insistence that betrayed the tension of his nerves.

Jousselin’s voice broke the ensuing silence. “I quite understand you, Chief,” he said in an amiable tone, “and, all things considered, I believe I think as you do. The existing social system, with all its alleged shortcomings, is nevertheless a reality for us, for the men of our generation. It’s something solid, or fairly so, a sort of platform that previous generations have built up and made over to us—a platform on which we too have found our footing. I feel that . . . very strongly indeed.”

“Just so.” Antoine went on stirring his coffee, without looking up. “As individuals, we’re feeble, isolated, ineffectual units. Our strength, or the greater part of it—in any case, the possibility of applying our strength to fruitful ends—is something we owe to the social group that holds us together, co-ordinates our activities. And for us, in the present state of things, this group isn't a mere fiction; it's something quite definite and localized in space—and its name is . . . France."

He spoke slowly, in a sad but resolute tone, as though he had long pondered over what he had to say and was glad to have an opportunity of giving voice to his conclusions.

"Yes," he continued, "all of us are members of a national association, and thus to all intents and purposes subordinate to it. It is this association which enables us to be what we are, to live in almost complete security and to carry on our lives as civilized beings within its framework. Between us and this association there has existed an age-old pact, a voluntary pact, which is binding on every one of us. It isn't a matter of choice; it's a matter of fact. So long as men live in social groups, I don't see how individual members of a group can cry off their duties toward the community which protects them and in the amenities of which they share."

"Not all," Studler interjected.

Antoine threw a quick glance at him. "Yes, all. Unequally, perhaps, but all to some extent. You and I; the worker and the bourgeois; the ward-attendant and the house-physician. By the mere fact that from birth we are members of a community and each of us occupies a place in it, a privilege which he turns daily to account. And, in return for this, it's up to him to abide by the social contract. Now one of the first clauses of the contract is this: everyone must respect and obey the laws of the land, even if, in the course of his private ruminations on things in general, some of them may seem to him unjust. If people started repudiating their duties to the state, it would mean a break-up of the whole system of institutions which make a national community like that of France a living, thriving organism. It would undermine the whole social structure. . . ."

"Yes," Jacques murmured.

"And what is more"—there was an almost vicious edge to Antoine's voice—"it would be a short-sighted line of action. It would work against the true interests of the individual as well. For the chaos that would come of this anarchic revolt against law and order would entail for him infinitely more disagreeable consequences than if he had submitted to the law of the land, for all its imperfections."

"I wonder!" Studler put in quickly.

Antoine cast another glance at the Caliph and this time took a step toward him. "As members of the community, haven't we got to submit time and again to laws of which as private citizens we disapprove? Meanwhile, of course, the state authorizes us to break a lance with it if we so wish; freedom of thought and speech is still permitted in France. What’s more, we have a legal weapon always at hand—the ballot.”

Studler riposted with an ironic snort. “The ballot, indeed! It’s a barefaced fraud, this so-called universal franchise here in France. In a population of forty millions barely twelve millions have the vote. So if six millions and the odd man out vote one way it constitutes what they’ve the nerve to call a majority of the nation. Thirty-four million poor benighted fools bow to the will of six million voters, and I needn’t tell you how they vote—with their eyes shut, under the influence of barroom gossip. No, the Frenchman has no real political power. Has he, for instance, any means of altering the Constitution, of protesting against or even discussing the new laws that are foisted on him? He isn’t even asked for his opinion on alliances that are entered into in his name and which may land him in wars that may very well cost him his life. So much for what in France we call the ‘sovereign rights of the people’!”

“I beg your pardon,” Antoine replied composedly. “I can’t say I feel so helpless as all that. Obviously I’m not personally consulted about every detail of the nation’s life. But if the powers that be adopt a line of policy distasteful to me, I can always vote for those who will oppose it in Parliament. Meanwhile, so long as my vote has failed to put out of power the parties which, as things are, represent the wishes of the majority, and to replace them by others which will modify the national policy on the lines that I desire—until that happens, my duty is plain and there’s no getting around it. I’m bound by the social contract. I must make the best of it. I must obey.”

“*Dura lex*,” M. Chasle was heard to twitter sagely in the pause that followed, “ ‘sad’ *lex*, indeed.”

The Caliph was stamping up and down the room. “It’s a moot point,” he grunted, “whether, all things considered, the revolutionary troubles that would follow a general refusal to obey the mobilization order mightn’t be a vastly lesser evil than . . .”

“Than even the shortest of wars,” Jacques concluded the phrase.

From the far end of the room came a sudden creak of chair-springs; Roy had moved, but he said nothing.

“Personally, Chief,” Jousselin said quietly, “I think as you do; I’ll obey. Still, I can well understand that to some people, at so dramatic a moment—on the brink of a catastrophe like the one that’s threatening us now—obedience may seem a duty that’s inhuman, intolerable.”

"On the contrary," Antoine rejoined. "The more a man is conscious of the gravity of the situation, the more compelling he should find the call of duty."

There was a pause while he replaced his coffee-cup on the tray, untasted. His lips were twitching.

"I've been having it out with myself during these last few days," he suddenly confessed in a voice so shaken and forlorn that involuntarily Jacques swung round and gazed at him. Antoine had pressed his thumb and forefinger into the sockets of his eyes, and he stayed thus for some moments before looking up and darting a keen, enigmatic glance at his brother. Then, weighing his words, he spoke again. "If an order for mobilization were issued tonight by a government elected by the majority—even if I had voted against it—well, it's not because of any personal views I may have about war, because I belonged to a minority in opposition, that I'd give myself the right to break the social compact deliberately and sneak out of duties which are the same, exactly the same, for every one of us."

Jacques heard him out with only the faintest impulse to protest against these remarks, so obviously intended for himself. He felt far less revolted by Antoine's views than touched, in spite of himself, by the profoundly human, vibrant, personal emotion that lay behind the dogmatic tone in which they were expressed. Moreover, however great the cleavage between his brother's outlook and his own, he had to admit that under the circumstances Antoine's attitude was wholly logical, self-consistent.

Testily, as though someone had voiced a flatly contrary opinion, Antoine folded his arms, exclaiming: "Damn it all, that would be really too convenient if one could keep one's nationality up to the outbreak of a war and then discard it!"

A silence followed, tense with unspoken thoughts. Jousselin, whose sensitive mind had registered every shift of feeling, made haste to create a diversion. Genially, as if the debate were closed and agreement had been reached, he voiced the summing up. "In the last analysis, the Chief is right. Life in a community is a sort of game; either one abides by the rules or one stands out. It's up to each of us to choose."

A low voice beside him said: "I have chosen."

Jousselin looked round; his eyes lingered on Jacques with involuntary emotion. It was as if he glimpsed beyond the living, real presence the vision of some tragic destiny.

Léon's hairless face appeared in the chink of the half-open door. He said to Antoine: "You're wanted on the telephone, sir."

Antoine stared at the servant, blinking as if he had just been startled out of sleep. At last he pulled his wits together. "That's Anne again," he thought.

"Right. Coming."

He paused a few moments, frowning with lowered eyes, then slowly walked out of the room.

"What's she going to say to me?" he murmured as he entered his study. " 'You don't care for me any more. You don't love me as much as you used to.' The time comes, ineluctably, when a woman starts saying that—every woman. She'd have quite a shock if someone told her *what* it is we 'don't care for any more'; that it isn't she but ourselves we've ceased to care for—oneself as one has come to be with her. She shouldn't say: 'You don't care for me any more,' but: 'You've ceased caring for the man that you become when we're together.' "

His eyes fell on the telephone; without quite being aware of what he was about, he took up the receiver.

"Is that you, Tony dear?"

He gave a start, almost of revolt, and stood still, listening to the familiar, too familiar voice, its low, bell-like cadences of exquisitely studied softness. He could not bring himself to answer. A cold rage came over him. For two days past he had felt delivered from her, from the thrall of passion. Not only freed, but cleansed, as if he had washed himself clean of some defilement. A thought of Simon crossed his mind. No, it was over and done with; their ways had parted for good and all. Why toy with any prospect of return?

Laying down the receiver gently in the center of the table, he drew back a step. He could hear an intermittent buzz, then a series of little, panting gasps that gruesomely evoked the stridence of a death-rattle. . . . No, there was no help for it; cost what it might, he must not resume contact with her. . . .

But, instead of going to rejoin his friends in the reception room, he turned the key of his study door, went back to the sofa, lit a cigarette, and, with a last glance at the table on which the telephone receiver, silent now, lay sleek and coiled like a small dead reptile, let his bulk sink heavily among the cushions.

Meanwhile, in the reception-room, M. Chasle had planted himself in front of the fireplace, where he had buttonholed Studler, and, delighted at being able in his turn to hold forth and be listened to, was trying to explain in his quaint jargon, muddled and malapropian, the nature of the business he had launched. "The latest wheezes, small inventions, gadgets, don't you know? The Very Latest, that's our slogan. What's that? Look here, I'll send you our little L.R. magazine. (‘L.R.’ stands for League of Researchers.) You’ll see what I mean. We’re thinking up new outlets, on the side, so to say. Got to, what with this war. Yes, we’re going to strike out in a new direction. National defence. Everyone must do his bit. What’s that?” He sprinkled such inquiries through his monologue in a tone of querulous anxiety, as if he had just failed to catch some vital question. “Why, already our researchers are turning in some most sensational inventions,” he went on at once. “Got to keep ’em in the dark, of course, but I don’t mind telling you that one is a portable filter. The soldier’s friend. For filtering rain-water and pond-water. All the dangerous bacillaries that decimate the soldier’s constitution, don’t you know?” He gave a gleeful little chuckle. “And we’ve something even more sensational up our sleeve: an automatic gunsight with a trigger release, for infantrymen with bad eyesight. Or even for gunners.”

Roy, who had been vaguely listening from his chair to the old fellow’s divagations, now stood up.

“An automatic sight? How on earth . . . ?”

“Exactly,” M. Chasle piped, highly flattered. “That’s the charm of it.”

“But, damn it, how does it work?”

Chasle replied with a lofty flourish of his hand: “All by itself.”

Jacques and Jousselin had not moved from the corner near the bookshelves, and were conversing in low tones. An angry frown furrowed Jacques’s brow. “The most exasperating thing,” he was saying, “is to think that a day is bound to come, in the near future very likely, when people simply won’t be able to understand how this business of military service, nations in arms, and so forth, ever came to be regarded as something necessary and warfare as an almost sacred duty; a day when it will seem unthinkable that a representative tribunal could have a man shot for refusing to take up arms. Exactly as it seems preposterous to us today that in the past thousands of men were tried and tortured for their religious beliefs.”

Before Jousselin could reply, Roy’s voice was heard. “Just listen to this!” He had picked up a newspaper from the desk and was skimming its contents. In clear, crisp tones, his eyes dancing with laughter, he read:

> “Young married couple with one child wish to rent for three months country cottage with old-world garden, and good fishing in the vicinity, preferably in Normandy or Burgundy. Write Box 3418.”

His laugh rang crystal-clear. He was the only one of them who knew how to laugh that day.

“Cheerful as a schoolboy off for the holidays,” Jacques observed.

“No,” Jousselin amended. “Cheerful as a true hero should be; when there’s no joy, there isn’t any heroism—only valour.”

M. Chasle had taken out his watch and, as he always did before looking at the dial, held it to his ear with the absorbed air of a doctor listening to a patient’s heart. Then, lifting his brows over the rim of his spectacles, he announced: “One-thirty-seven.”

Jacques gave a start. “I’m late,” he said, shaking hands with Jousselin. “I must be on my way; I can’t wait for my brother.”

Antoine, who was lying on the sofa, heard Jacques’s voice in the hall as Léon showed him out. He flung the study door open, and shouted: “Jacques! Wait!”

As Jacques, much surprised, turned and walked toward him, Antoine added: “Going away already?”

“Yes.”

Antoine laid his hand on Jacques’s arm. “Come in for a moment,” he said rather unsteadily.

Jacques had come to his brother’s place with the intention of having a private talk with him; he proposed to let him know the use to which he was putting his father’s legacy, for he did not care to seem to be making a secret of it from Antoine. He had even had an idea of mentioning Jenny as well. So he fell in with his brother’s suggestion readily enough and entered the study.

Antoine closed the door, and remained standing near it. “Listen!” he said. “Let’s talk seriously now, old man. What exactly do you intend to do?”

Jacques feigned an air of bewilderment, and made no reply.

“You’ve been exempted,” Antoine went on, “on grounds of health. But if there’s a general mobilization, they’ll revise all such exemptions and pack off pretty nearly everyone to the firing-line. What do you propose to do about it?”

Jacques saw that he was cornered. “Well,” he said, “I’ve no idea as yet. For the moment, they can’t get at me; so far as the law’s concerned, I’m out of their clutches.” Seeing his brother’s eyes still fixed on him insistently, he added: “Anyhow, this much I can tell you—I’d rather cut off both my hands than let myself be mobilized.”

For a moment Antoine looked away. “That, in my opinion, is the attitude of . . .”

“A coward?”

"No," Antoine protested affectionately, "that's not what I meant at all. . . . The attitude of—shall we say?—an egoist." Jacques took it without flinching; Antoine continued: "Don't you agree? To refuse to do one's duty at such a moment is to sacrifice the public interest to one's own."

"To sacrifice the *national* interest, yes. But the interest of the general public, of the masses, lies most obviously in peace and not in war."

Antoine made a vague gesture, as though to wave away such purely theoretical considerations. But Jacques pressed his argument home. "It's I who am furthering the interests of the public by refusing to join up. And I'm certain, absolutely certain, that the voice within me which says 'No' is the voice of all that's best in me."

It cost Antoine an effort not to betray his impatience. "That's all very well, but—! Look here, what practical effects do you expect your standing out to have? None whatever. Once a general mobilization is decreed, and the vast majority (as is bound to happen) answer the call to national defence, what could be more futile, more surely doomed to failure, than an isolated gesture like yours, a one-man mutiny?"

Antoine's tone was so carefully controlled and so affectionate that Jacques was touched by it. He gazed at his brother quite calmly, even conjuring up the ghost of a smile. "Why go over all the ground again, old man? You know quite well what my views are. I'll never tolerate the idea that a government can force me into taking part in an enterprise I look on as a crime, a betrayal of truth and justice and human solidarity. Heroism, as I see it, isn't in Roy's camp; it doesn't consist in shouldering a gun and marching to the frontier. No, the truly heroic thing is to refuse to fight, to let oneself be led before the firing-squad rather than submit to being roped in as an accomplice. 'A futile sacrifice,' you say? Who knows? What has made wars possible in the past and makes them possible still is the tame submission of the masses to their governments. 'A one-man mutiny,' you say? Well, if those with the courage to say 'No' are few in number, it can't be helped. It may be simply because"—he hesitated—"because a certain type of moral courage is pretty rare."

Antoine had listened standing statue-still but for an almost imperceptible tremor of his eyebrows. He was staring fixedly at his brother, breathing rather heavily, like a man asleep. At last he replied in a gentle, understanding voice. "I don't deny that it needs a rare moral courage to stand out, alone or almost alone, against an order for general mobilization. But it's a courage put forth in vain, that runs its head idiotically against a brick wall. A man of strong convictions who refuses to fight and gets himself shot for his principles has all my sympathy, and pity. But I regard him as a futile dreamer—and I say he's wrong."

Jacques's only response was a slight raising of his arms—the same gesture as he had made when saying: "It can't be helped."

Antoine gazed at him in silence; but he had not yet given up hope. "The facts are these," he said at last, "and there's no getting away from them. Tomorrow the serious turn events have taken—it looks as if they'd got completely out of hand—may compel the government to call on our services. Do you seriously think this is the moment for us to start questioning if the duties imposed on us by our country fit in with our personal opinions? No, the men in charge have got to decide for us and tell us how to act. In my profession, when I prescribe for some urgent case a course of treatment that I judge advisable, I don't allow anybody to question it."

He raised his hand toward his forehead and for a moment pressed his fingers on his eyelids; when he spoke again, the words came with an effort.

"Think it over, boy. It's not a matter of approving of the war—do you think I approve of it?—but of seeing it through. In a spirit of revolt, perhaps, if we're built that way, but a revolt that we keep to ourselves, that our sense of duty reduces to an inward protest. To haggle over doing one's share in the hour of danger would be to let down the nation as a whole. Yes, I see the conduct of the man who insists on standing out as nothing less than treachery, a crime against his fellow-men. Mind you, I don't say one hasn't got the right to criticize decisions that the government may think fit to make. But only later on—after one has done one's duty."

Again the ghost of a smile flitted across Jacques's lips. "I'm afraid I don't agree; my view is that the private citizen has the right to dissociate himself entirely from the nationalist ambitions in the name of which countries go to war. I deny that the state is justified in forcing a man, for any reason whatsoever, to go against his conscience. High-sounding phrases—I hate to be always using them! But there it is! Somehow my conscience makes itself heard above time-serving arguments like those you've just been using. Above the laws of the land as well. The only way to prevent violence from being the deciding factor in world affairs is to refuse point-blank to take a hand in violence. In my opinion, the refusal to take part in killing one's fellow-men is a sign of nobility of mind and entitled to respect. If your codes and judges don't respect it, so much the worse for them. Sooner or later the day of reckoning will come."

“Have it your own way!” Antoine sounded annoyed; it vexed him to find the conversation diverted once more toward generalities. Folding his arms, he asked: “But what *actually* do you propose to do?”

He walked up to Jacques and, with one of those impulsive gestures that were so rare between the brothers, affectionately clasped Jacques’s shoulders with both hands. “Tell me, Jacques old man. They’re mobilizing tomorrow. What are you going to do?”

Quietly but firmly Jacques freed himself. “I’ll go on fighting against war. To the end. By every method. Including, if need be, revolutionary methods, sabotage.” Despite himself, his voice had sunk to a whisper, and now he paused as if struggling with a dark oppression. After a while he added: “I say that . . . I don’t know. . . . But one thing’s absolutely certain, Antoine. You’ll never see me in uniform!”

With a forlorn, ineffectual smile, a hasty gesture of farewell, he turned and walked to the door. Antoine made no effort to detain him.

VIII

JENNY was dressed to go out when Jacques came. Her haggard, woebegone appearance betrayed her state of feverish anxiety. No news of any sort had come from her mother or from Daniel, and she was the prey of vague, unformulated apprehensions. The newspapers had added to her alarm and, to crown all, Jacques was overdue. She could not rid her mind of memories of their brush with the police after Jacques’s speech; something had happened to him, she was convinced. . . . Unable to utter a word, she flung herself into his arms.

“I’ve tried,” he said, “to discover exactly what they’re doing about foreigners in Austria. I’m afraid we must face the fact that the country’s under martial law. German subjects are still being allowed to go back to their country; so, I believe, are Italians, though relations between Italy and Austria are extremely strained. But it’s another thing for French, British, and Russian subjects. If your mother didn’t leave Vienna some days ago—and, if she had, she'd have been here by now—I'm afraid it's too late. I mean, she'll be prevented from leaving."

"Prevented? How? Will they put her in prison?"

"Of course not. The most they'll do will be to refuse permits to travel. That will last a week or two while they wait to see the turn events are taking and the international situation is being cleared up."

Jenny made no reply. Already Jacques's presence had laid the spectres of her fear. She clung to him, giving herself up blindly, rapturously, to the ecstasy of their embrace, for the return of which she had been longing through the hours of absence. At last she slipped from his arms, imploring brokenly: "I can't bear being left alone, Jacques! Take me with you. I want to be beside you always, everywhere."

They set off on foot toward the Luxembourg Gardens. "We'll catch a tram at the Médicis corner," Jacques said.

Usually crowded in the afternoon, the gardens were almost empty that day. The tree-tops rustled in a light breeze and a cloying scent of marigolds rose from the flower-beds. On an isolated bench a pair of lovers, pressed so closely to each other that their features were hidden, seemed to fill the languid air with amorous vibrations.

After crossing the gardens, they were plunged again into the seething tumult of the streets, whose fitful rumble seemed an echo of the alarming rumours which on that fine summer afternoon were speeding from one end of Europe to the other. Two days before, Paris had been depleted by the exodus of holiday-makers; now, abruptly, it was full again. The air was strident with the cries of news-venders selling special editions. While Jacques and Jenny waited for their tram, a station bus drawn by two horses rattled past. Inside, several families—parents, children, nurses—were huddled close together; among the piles of luggage on the roof were to be seen a shrimping-net, a parasol, and a perambulator.

"People who don't know when they're beaten," Jacques observed, "defying destiny!"

There was no break in the traffic along the Boulevard Saint-Michel and adjoining streets. Yet here was neither the bustle of a weekday nor the leisurely disorder of a fine Sunday afternoon; rather the chaotic ferment of a flustered ant-heap. People hurried along as though pressed for time, but their absent gaze and vacillation over which way to turn at the street-corners showed plainly enough that few of them knew or cared where they were going. Unable to face up to themselves—or to the look of things—alone, they had left homes and jobs, with the sole object of escaping from their thoughts and being able for a while to merge their personal forebodings in the collective apprehension of the crowd.

All afternoon, silent and faithful as his shadow, Jenny followed Jacques, from the Latin Quarter to the Batignolles, from the Glacière to the Bastille, from the Bercy docks to the Château d'Eau. Everywhere they heard the same chorus of indignation at the turn events had taken, but everywhere, too, they found most people already bowing to the storm, meekly preparing to see it through.

Now and then, when they happened to be alone, Jenny would begin talking about herself, or the weather, without the least constraint. "Really, I shouldn't have worn this veil. Let's cross the road and look at that flower-shop. It's getting a bit cooler now, don't you feel it? One can breathe again." Jacques felt slightly irritated by this harmless small-talk, which seemed abruptly to place on equal footing a florist's display, the European crisis, and a drop in the temperature. At such moments he would cast an indifferent, almost surly glance at his companion, and the dark fires that slumbered in his eyes would suddenly abash her into silence. But sometimes, too, he would turn away and, in gentler mood, ask himself: "Am I right in mixing her up in all this?"

At C.G.T. headquarters he caught one of his friends, whom they chanced to meet in the hall, casting a severe, appraising glance at Jenny. And suddenly he became conscious of how out of keeping she must look in these dusty precincts, among these workingmen—in her neat tailor-made costume, with her crape veil, and, in her bearing and expression, that subtle difference which bespeaks a certain social milieu. It made him so uncomfortable that he hurried her out of the place at once.

Clocks were striking seven. By way of the boulevards they walked to the Bourse quarter. Jenny was tired. The vital force that emanated from Jacques, while dominating her, sapped her energies. She remembered how in the old days she used often to have the same feeling of exhaustion and strain when she was with him. It was due to the continuous mental effort that he seemed to expect from those around him and, indeed, forced upon them by his tone of voice, his compelling gaze, and his sudden shifts of thought.

As they were nearing the *Humanité* office, Cadieux came running from the opposite direction. "We're in for it!" he bawled. "Germany's mobilizing. Russia has brought it off!"

Jacques swung round abruptly, but Cadieux was almost out of sight.

"I've got to find out. Wait for me here." He was chary of taking Jenny with him into the newspaper office.

Crossing the road, she began pacing up and down the sidewalk. Like bees coming and going at a hive, people were swarming in and out of the building Jacques had entered.

He came back after an hour, looking greatly disturbed. “It’s official. The news comes from Germany. I’ve seen Groussier, Sembat, Vaillant, Renaudel. They’re all gathered there, waiting for more details. Cadieux and Marc Levoir are running to and fro between the Quai d’Orsay and the newspaper office. Germany’s mobilizing because Russia’s speeding up her preparations. The question is: Is it a real mobilization? Jaurès swears it isn’t. It’s what they call in German *Kriegsgefahrzustand*—something we’ve no exact equivalent for in French. Jaurès, dictionary in hand, gave us the literal translation: ‘A state of danger of war.’ He’s a marvel, the Skipper. Nothing makes him give up hope. He’s still under the influence of the conversations he had at Brussels with Haase and the German Socialists. He keeps on saying: ‘So long as those fellows are with us, nothing’s lost.’ ”

He had taken Jenny’s arm and hurried her along beside him, walking blindly ahead. They went round the block of houses several times in this way.

“What is France going to do?” Jenny asked.

“It seems that a Cabinet Council has been summoned for four o’clock. A communiqué has been issued to the effect that the Cabinet has decided ‘to take all necessary steps for safeguarding our frontiers.’ The Havas news agency reports this evening that our covering troops have taken up their advanced posts, but the General Staff proposes to leave an unoccupied zone a mile or two deep along the frontier so as not to give the enemy a pretext for launching an attack. The German Ambassador is in conference with Viviani at the present moment. Gallot, who’s well up as regards German methods, takes a gloomy view; he says it’s no use our nursing illusions as to what is meant by a *Kriegsgefahrzustand*; it’s merely a backstairs form of mobilization, pending its official announcement. In any case Germany is now under martial law; which means that the press is muzzled, and anti-war demonstrations can no longer take place over there. That, to my mind, is perhaps the most serious thing; I see no hope of saving the situation except by a rising of the masses. . . . Stefany, however, is like Jaurès—obstinately optimistic. They say that the Kaiser, by taking this preliminary measure instead of mobilizing right away, has shown his peaceable intentions. After all, there may be something in that view. Germany’s left the door open for the Russian government to make a conciliatory move at the eleventh hour, perhaps to call off mobilization. It seems that since yesterday there’s been a steady stream of private telegrams between the Kaiser and the Tsar. Just as I was leaving Stefany, Jaurès was called to the phone. Brussels had rung him up and they all seemed full of hope that the message would prove important. I didn't stay, as I'd kept you waiting so long already. . . ."

"Don't bother about me!" Jenny exclaimed promptly. "Go back at once, Jacques. I'll wait for you."

"What, in the street? No—look here. I'll take you to the Progrès; at least you can sit down there."

As they were hurrying to the café, a hollow voice behind them growled: "Good day!"

Jenny looked round. The speaker was an old man whose face brought to mind that of the Saviour in early works of art; round him billowed the flowing black smock worn by French printers. It was Mourlan.

"Germany's mobilizing," Jacques said at once.

"Of course she is. It was a sure thing, anyhow." He spat. "There's nothing to be done. There never is! And there'll be nothing to be done for many a long day yet. Everything's got to be smashed, to start with. Our whole damned civilization's got to go before we can bring any decency into the world." After a pause he added: "Going to the Progrès? Yes? So'm I."

They took a few steps in silence before the old printer spoke again. "Look here! Have you thought over what I told you this morning? Aren't you going to clear out of here?"

"Not yet."

"Please yourself, boy. But I've just been told . . ." He hesitated, glanced at Jenny, then fixed his eyes meaningly on Jacques. "I've something to say to you."

"Say it." Jacques laid his hand on Jenny's arm and, to emphasize the gesture, he added: "You can speak freely. Anything you say won't go further."

"Right!" Mourlan placed two gnarled fingers on Jacques's shoulder and lowered his voice. "Here's a tip straight from the horse's mouth. The War Minister signed an order today for the arrest of all the suspects on the B List."

"What!" Jacques exclaimed.

The old man nodded and muttered between his teeth: "So all concerned had better watch their step!"

Then he noticed that Jenny had gone quite white and was staring at him aghast. He smiled to her. "Now, now, young lady, there's no need to take on like that. It don't mean we'll all be lined up against a wall tonight. But the order's been signed so as to have it ready when the time comes. When they want to get us out of the way and stage their big parade without anyone to say 'Boo!' to them, they'll only have to tell their special squads to carry out the order. The dicks have started already in the suburbs. I hear they've searched the premises of the *Drapeau Rouge* and *La Lutte*. Iszakovitch was very nearly copped this morning in a police raid at Puteaux. Fuzet's in jail; he's charged with having made that poster 'Blood on Their Hands'—you know, the one against the General Staff. There's trouble brewing, young 'uns, and you'd best keep your eyes skinned."

They entered the café. Jacques led Jenny to a table in the lower room, which was practically empty. He turned to Mourlan. "Have a drink with us."

"No, thanks." Mourlan pointed to the ceiling. "I'm going upstairs for a bit to see what they're up to now. What a lot o' bunk must have been talked up there since this morning!" Shaking Jacques's hand, he said again in a low voice: "Take my tip, boy, and clear out of Paris!"

He bestowed on the two young people a large, genial, unexpected smile before turning and stumping noisily up the narrow spiral staircase.

"Where will you sleep tonight?" Jenny asked anxiously. "Surely not at that hotel whose address you gave them last night?"

"Oh," he replied carelessly, "I'm far from certain they've done me the honour of putting me on their famous blacklist." Then, seeing the consternation in her eyes, he added: "Anyhow, you needn't worry, I'm not going back to Liébaert's. I deposited my bag this morning at Mourlan's place. And the only documents I have which might be compromising are in that package I left with you."

"Yes," she said, looking him in the eyes. "Our apartment is perfectly safe."

He had not sat down. He ordered tea but had not patience enough to wait till it was brought. "You're all right here, aren't you? I'll just run round to the *Humanité*. Don't move from here."

"Sure you'll come back?" she asked in a frightened voice. A sudden panic had swept over her; she looked down to hide from him her discomfiture. But then she felt the pressure of Jacques's hand on hers and the unspoken reproach brought a blush to her cheeks. "I didn't mean that. Go at once. I'll be quite all right."

After he had gone, she took some sips of the so-called tea the waiter had set on the table; it tasted bitter; pushing the cup away, she rested her elbows on the cool marble.

Through the wide-open window, with the noises of the street, a flood of dazzling sunshine came pouring in, flashing upon the mirrors, glinting on the brass fittings, glass, and smooth mahogany of the counter. Behind it, in a haze of broken lights, to a sound of running water, the café owner was busy rinsing out pitchers. Newspapers lay scattered on the tables. Jenny gazed idly at the scene, her mind void of thought. As the slow minutes passed, her tired brain grew peopled with a phantom horde of dark forebodings, sudden fears, obsessions of her early youth. She tried to fix her attention on a grey cat curled up on the seat beside her. Was it really sleeping? Its eyes were closed, but its ears twitched and its whole attitude struck her as constrained, as though it were trying to force itself to sleep. Had the vague panic brooding in the air somehow affected even the cats of Paris? *Was* it asleep—or only pretending? Pretending for whose benefit? For its own, perhaps. . . . Night was falling. Every minute workmen were coming in, exchanging a conspiratorial glance with the café owner, then marching upstairs. Each time the door of the room above was opened, there came a gust of noise, of voices raised in argument mingling with the rumour of the street.

"Here I am!"

Jenny gave a start; she had not seen him coming.

He sat down beside her. His brows were beaded with sweat. With a toss of his head he jerked back his dangling forelock, then began mopping his face. "There's a bit of news come in," he said in an undertone, "that's like a ray of light in the 'encircling gloom.' That telephone call was a message sent us by the German Social-Democrats via Brussels. They're not giving up the struggle; quite the contrary. Jaurès is right: those fellows are loyal to the core, nothing will make them flinch. Of course, they're up against it at that end, just as we are. And they're more eager than ever to keep in touch so that we all can act in concert. Only, with martial law proclaimed in Germany, it's going to be pretty hard to keep in communication. So by way of Belgium they're sending a delegate named Hermann Müller; he'll be in Paris tomorrow and, I gather, he'll have full powers to pledge his Party. The idea is that he will arrange with the French Socialists to take immediate action on a large scale against the forces making for war. You see? At the *Humanité* all hopes centre on this unlooked-for opportunity, this eleventh-hour meeting that will take place tomorrow between Müller and Jaurès—the pact of the two proletariats. There's no doubt that far-reaching decisions will be reached between them. Stefany tells me the idea's to organize in both countries a vast, simultaneous revolt of the whole working-class. It was overdue. But it's never too late. With a general strike we've still good prospects of success."

He spoke rapidly, in jerky phrases; his excitement was infectious.

“The Skipper’s going to publish tomorrow a really terrific feature article —something on the lines of Zola’s famous *J’accuse*.”

Jenny’s slightly puzzled look told him that the Zola allusion—which, in fact, was not his own, but came from Pagès, Gallot’s secretary—was lost on her; for a few moments he was dismayed at the thought of all that still divided her from him.

“Did you talk to Jaurès?” she innocently inquired.

“No, not this time. But I happened to be with Pagès on the stairs when Jaurès was leaving. As usual he had a number of friends with him, and I heard what he was saying to them. ‘I’ll leave nothing out in the article I’m publishing tomorrow. I mean to denounce everyone who’s been mixed up in the dirty business. Yes, this time I’ll tell all I know.’ And—would you believe it?—he was laughing as he spoke, I’ll swear to it. Positively guffawing. He has a laugh that’s all his own, a big, hearty, heartening chuckle. After that he said: ‘Let’s have some dinner first, anyhow. The nearest place, eh? What about Albert’s?’ ”

She gazed at him without speaking.

“Would it amuse you to have a close-up view of him?” Jacques asked. “We’ll go and have something to eat at the Croissant. I’ll point him out to you. I’m famished. We’ve earned our dinner, too, don’t you agree?”

IX

It was after half-past nine and most of the Croissant’s regular customers had left. Jacques and Jenny chose a table in an empty corner, to the right of the entrance.

On the left, several tables had been run together parallel to the Boulevard Montmartre, for Jaurès and his party.

“There he is,” Jacques said. “In the middle, with his back to the window. Now he’s turning to talk to Albert, the proprietor.”

"He doesn't look so awfully worried." Jenny's tone of naïve surprise enchanted Jacques. He gently squeezed her elbow. "Do you know those people with him?" she continued.

"Yes. The man on Jaurès's right is Philippe Landrieu. The fat man on his left is Renaudel. Dubreuihl is facing Renaudel, and Jean Longuet's beside him."

"Who's the woman?"

"Mme. Poisson, I think—the wife of the fellow opposite Landrieu. Next to her is Amédée Dunois. The two Renoult brothers are sitting in front of her. The man who's just come in and is standing by the table is a friend of Almereyda's and on the staff of the *Bonnet Rouge*, but I can't recall his . . ."

A crisp report, like the bang of a bursting tire, cut him short. Quickly there followed a second detonation, a shrill clash of breaking glass. A mirror on the back wall of the café had been shivered into fragments.

A moment of appalled silence, then a deafening uproar. Everybody was standing up, staring at the broken glass, talking excitedly. "Someone fired a shot at that glass!" "Who?" "Where from?" "From the street." "Why?"

Two waiters dashed outside. Shouts came from the street.

Instinctively Jacques had jumped up and, shielding Jenny with his arm, was trying to catch sight of Jaurès. He had a brief glimpse of the Skipper seated quite calmly at his place amid his friends, who had risen to their feet and gathered round him. He seemed to be slowly stooping to pick up something on the floor. Then Jacques lost sight of him.

The restaurant owner's wife ran past Jacques's table, screaming: "They've shot M. Jaurès!"

"Stay here!" Jacques pressed Jenny's shoulder, to make her sit down, then dashed over to the Skipper's table. A number of people had gathered round the little group of Jaurès's friends and barred the way. He heard breathless cries: "A doctor, quick." "Call the police!" Elbowing his way round the long table, he managed to reach a corner whence he could see a body lying on the wall-sofa, half concealed by Renaudel, who was bending over it. Then Renaudel straightened up, letting fall on the table a blood-stained napkin. Jacques caught sight of Jaurès's face; his lips were parted, his cheeks pale, and his eyes shut. He seemed to have fainted.

One of the men who had been dining in the restaurant—a doctor, apparently—pushed his way through the group. With a quick jerk he pulled off Jaurès's tie, opened his collar, and, grasping the drooping wrist, felt for the pulse.

Imperious cries broke through the hubbub: “Keep quiet there!” “Sh!” All eyes were riveted on the man holding the Skipper’s wrist. He was bent double over the prostrate form, but his face was upturned and his eyes were fixed on the cornice in a trancelike stare. Then, without changing his position or looking at any of those present, he gently, sadly, shook his head.

People were flocking into the restaurant from the street. M. Albert shouted: “Shut the door! Close the windows and let down the shutters!”

An eddy of the crowd forced Jacques back into the middle of the room. Some of Jaurès’s friends had lifted the body and were carefully transporting it to two empty tables that had been pushed together. The knot of people round the body was growing steadily denser, and all Jacques could make out was the white rim of a marble table-top and two huge, dusty, upended soles.

“Make way for the doctor!”

André Renoult had gone to get a doctor and the two men had entered together. They forced a way through the serried mass that yielded and closed in again behind them. The minute or two of agonized suspense that followed seemed interminable. Then Jacques saw the bent shoulders of the men in front of him straightening up and those who had kept their hats on taking them off. Low whispers passed from lip to lip: “He’s dead.” “Jaurès is dead.”

His eyes full of tears, Jacques glanced over his shoulder in Jenny’s direction. She had been waiting only for a look from him to hasten to his side. Threading her way toward him, she clasped his arm, without a word.

Meanwhile some policemen had entered the restaurant and begun to eject the public. There was a stampede toward the door; Jacques and Jenny were involved in it and hustled, clinging to each other, out into the street.

A man who had been parleying with the police officer outside managed to thrust his way past them into the restaurant. Jacques recognized him as Henri Fabre, a Socialist and an old friend of Jaurès. His face was pale; he was asking brokenly: “Where is he? Has he been taken to the hospital?”

No one dared reply, but a hand pointed awkwardly to the interior. Fabre followed the indication with his eyes and saw, in the centre of an empty space bathed in garish light, what looked like a bundle of black clothes laid on a marble slab, as dead bodies are laid out in the Morgue.

In the street, an emergency squad of police was trying to disperse the crowd that had collected and was blocking the thoroughfare. Jacques saw Jumelin and Rabbe talking excitedly to a police officer. Dragging Jenny in his wake, he pushed his way through to them. They had just come from the newspaper office and had themselves seen nothing, but it was from them he learned that the assassin had fired point-blank at Jaurès through the open window and taken to flight, but had speedily been caught by passers-by.

"Who is it? Where is he?"

"At the Rue du Mail police station."

"Come on," Jacques said to Jenny.

There was a crowd outside the police station. In vain Jacques showed his reporter's pass; no more persons were being allowed in.

They were about to go away when Cadieux, hatless, dashed out of the police office. Jacques managed to grab his arm as he ran past. Cadieux swung round and stared blankly at Jacques for a moment without recognizing him, though they had been talking to each other near the *Humanité* offices only an hour or so before. At last he pulled himself together. "Ah, it's you, Thibault. Well, there's the first blood shed, the first victim. . . . Whose turn next?"

"Who was the murderer?" Jacques asked.

"His name is Villain. Nothing's known about him. I saw him just now; quite a young fellow, twenty-five or so."

"But why kill Jaurès? *Why?*"

"A patriot no doubt. A fanatic."

He freed the elbow Jacques was holding, and started off again at a run.

"Let's go back there," Jacques said.

Clinging to Jacques's arm, tense and silent, Jenny did her best to keep in step.

"You must be dead tired," he said. "Supposing I leave you to rest somewhere? I'll come back for you later."

She was worn out with the day's activities and emotions, but the thought of parting company with him at such an hour was unbearable. Without replying, she pressed herself more closely to him. He did not insist; this warm living presence at his side helped him to fight down his despair; he, too, did not relish the idea of being left to himself.

The night was sultry; hot fumes were still rising from the sun-baked asphalt. All the streets round the Rue Montmartre were thick with people. Traffic had halted. Every window was festooned with downward-peering faces. Strangers accosted each other as they passed. "Heard the news? Jaurès has just been murdered."

A cordon of police had gradually cleared the sidewalk in front of the Croissant and now was busy keeping back successive waves of sightseers pouring up from the boulevards, where the tragic news had spread like wildfire.

As Jacques and Jenny came to the corner, a troop of mounted police came trotting from the Rue Saint-Marc. They began by clearing the approaches to the Rue des Victoires, as far as the Bourse. Then they deployed in the middle of the street facing the restaurant and, swinging their horses round, began pressing back the crowd toward the house-fronts. In the resulting confusion, while the more timid spirits were scattering up side-streets, Jacques and Jenny managed to edge their way into the front rank. Their eyes were fixed on the dark front of the restaurant, where all the iron shutters were down. Policemen were posted at the door; now and then it opened for a moment as a police officer went in or out, and there was a brief glimpse of the brilliantly lighted interior.

The cordon parted to make way for a couple of taxis and some official cars. The men alighting from them, after being saluted by the officer in charge, at once entered the restaurant. The door closed behind them immediately, while their names or titles were passed round in an undertone by those in the know. “That was the Chief Commissioner.” “Dr. Paul.” “The Prefect of the Seine.” “The Public Prosecutor.”

At last, clanging its bell persistently, an ambulance van drawn by one small horse came trotting down the Rue des Victoires. There was a sudden hush in the crowd. Police officers directed the ambulance to the entrance of the restaurant. Four attendants jumped out and went inside, leaving the big door open at the back of their van.

Ten minutes passed.

The crowd was growing restless. “What the hell are they up to in there?” “They have to draw up a formal report, you know, and it all takes time.”

Suddenly Jacques felt Jenny’s fingers tighten on his sleeve. Both leaves of the door stood open. Silence fell on the crowd. M. Albert stepped forth onto the sidewalk. Swarming with the black forms of policemen, the interior of the restaurant was a blaze of light, like a mortuary chapel. The black forms drew aside, making way for the stretcher. It was covered with a tablecloth. Four men, bareheaded, carried it; Jacques recognized them as Renaudel, Longuet, Compère-Morel, and Théo Bretin.

Instantaneously, all across the street bared their heads. From an upper window a single timid cry floated up into the darkness: “Death to the assassin!”

Slowly, in a silence so deep that the footfalls of the bearers were clearly audible, the white-hung stretcher crossed the sidewalk, swayed for a moment in mid-air, then abruptly slid forward into the darkness of the van. Two men sprang in after it. A police officer climbed onto the seat beside the driver. The door was slammed to. Then, as the horse broke into a trot and, escorted by policemen on bicycles, the ambulance started clanging its way toward the Bourse, there rose a sudden clamour, like the roar of an angry sea that drowned the jangling of the bell; it was as though at last flood-gates had fallen, releasing the pent-up emotions of the crowd. “Jaurès!” “Jaurès!” “Jaurès!” “Jaurès for ever!”

“Now,” Jacques whispered in Jenny’s ear, “let’s try to get to the *Huma*.”

But the crowd around them seemed rooted to the spot, unable to tear their eyes off the dark, mysterious façade, still guarded closely by the police.

“Jaurès . . . dead!” Jacques murmured brokenly. And, again, after a pause: “So Jaurès is dead! Somehow I can hardly believe it, and still less imagine what the consequences will be.”

Gradually the serried ranks of bystanders were loosening; it was getting possible to make a move.

“Come,” Jacques said.

The problem was how to get to the Rue du Croissant. The roads leading directly to it were certainly under police occupation and closed to the public.

“Let’s try a detour,” Jacques suggested. “We can take the Rue Feydeau and then turn into the Passage Vivienne.”

No sooner had they left the Passage, a quiet side-street, and entered the seething Boulevard Montmartre, than a sudden onrush drove them helplessly forward.

They had blundered into a patriotic demonstration; a procession of young men waving flags and shouting the “Marseillaise” was marching down the boulevard, filling its whole width and driving all before it.

“To hell with Germany! Hang the Kaiser! Next stop—Berlin!”

Swept almost off her feet, Jenny felt herself losing her balance. She pictured herself wrenched from Jacques and trampled underfoot, and gave a faint scream of terror. But then she felt his arm round her waist, steadying her, pressing her closely to him. Somehow he managed to steer her athwart the torrent into the backwater of a doorway. The door was closed. Half blinded by the dust raised by the marching crowd, deafened by the noise and terrified by the frenzied, gaping faces brushing past hers, she suddenly caught sight of a brass knob on the door, just within reach. Summoning up what little energy remained to her, she stretched forth her arm and grasped the knob with all her might. A moment later and she would have fallen in a faint on the sidewalk. As it was, her eyes closed, but her fingers did not relax their grip. She heard Jacques panting in her ear: “Hang on! Don’t be alarmed. I’m holding you.”

Some minutes passed and at last it seemed to her that the tumult was ebbing into the distance. She opened her eyes and saw Jacques’s heartening smile. The human torrent was still driving past them, but in fitful waves, more slowly, and the shouts had ceased. These people were not taking part in the demonstration, but following out of curiosity. Jenny was still trembling all over, and could not get back her breath.

“Stick it out!” Jacques smiled. “You can see—it’s almost over now!”

She pressed her hand to her forehead and, straightening her hat, discovered that her veil was torn. Absurdly, her first thought was: “What shall I say to Mamma!”

“Let’s try to get away,” Jacques said. “Do you feel strong enough to move?”

Their best plan was to follow the stream and turn at the first side-street. Jacques had given up his idea of going to the *Humanité* office, though it had cost him a brief pang of annoyance. But tonight something of his old self had changed—now that a frail, infinitely precious being had trustfully surrendered to his care. He knew that Jenny’s nerves were near the breaking-point, and his one thought now was to get her safely back home. And Jenny no longer put a bold front on it or said: “Don’t bother about me!” but hung on his arm and let him guide her steps. The way she leaned on him with all her weight told Jacques that, though she would not own to it, she was dropping with fatigue.

Walking slowly, they reached the Bourse, without having seen a taxi. Roadway and sidewalks alike were crowded with pedestrians. All Paris seemed out in the streets that night. News of the crime had been flashed onto the screen at all the motion-picture houses, in the course of the performance, and the audience had left in a state of consternation. Everybody they passed was talking loudly, on the same subject. Jacques caught scraps of conversation: “The railway-stations are under military occupation tonight.” “Why are they so behindhand? Why didn’t they mobilize before this?” “Well, as things are, nothing short of a miracle can save the situation.” “I wired today to Charlotte to tell her to come back tomorrow with the children.” “I says to her: ‘My good woman, if you’d a son o’ twenty-two, perhaps you wouldn’t talk like that!’ ”

Newsboys were zigzagging across the crowd. “Murder of Jaurès! Latest Details!”

No taxis were at the rank in the Place de la Bourse. After getting Jenny to sit down on the stone plinth of the railings, Jacques remained standing beside her, staring at the flagstones.

“Jaurès is dead!” he murmured.

He was thinking: Who’s to meet the German delegate tomorrow? And who’s left to lead us now? Jaurès was the one man who would never have lost hope. The only man whom the government could never have managed to gag. The only one, perhaps, who might even now have put a stop to mobilization.

The lighted windows of the Bourse postoffice, into which belated customers were hurrying, threw a yellow glow on the sidewalk. It was there he had come to send the telegram to Daniel, on the night when Fontanin lay dying, the night Jenny had come back into his life. Less than two weeks ago! . . .

The special night editions of the papers on the news-stand flaunted alarming headlines: “All Europe under Arms.” “The War-Clouds Gathering.” “Germany on the Warpath. Cabinet Will Decide Tonight on Measures to Be Taken.”

A drunken man staggering past them let out a maudlin cry: “No war! We don’t want war!” and it struck Jacques that this was the first time he had heard such a cry tonight. It would have been rash to jump to any general conclusion. Still, the fact remained, and he duly noted it: neither the sight of murdered Jaurès’s body nor the war-cries of the patriots on the boulevard had elicited a single cry of protest from the crowd—the selfsame crowd that yesterday in every public demonstration was still protesting loudly against war.

An empty taxi passed on the far side of the road. Some people signalled to it. Jacques dashed across, jumped onto the running-board, and had the driver draw up in front of Jenny.

They flung themselves into it without a word. The day’s emotions had been overwhelming, and their nerves were on edge as if they had narrowly escaped an accident. Here at last was a haven from the outside world. Taking Jenny in his arms, Jacques strained her to his breast. Exhausted as he was, he felt a sort of paradoxical exhilaration, a zest for life that he had never known before.

“Jacques dear,” Jenny whispered in his ear, “where will you spend the night?” Then very quickly, as if she had learned the words by rote, she added: “Come to our place. You won’t be in any danger there. You can sleep on Daniel’s sofa.”

He did not reply at once. Very tenderly his fingers toyed with Jenny's hand, and now it was not only soft and yielding, as in the past, but warm with feverish, exultant life, returning his caresses.

"All right," he said.

It was only some minutes later, at the foot of the staircase, when, following Jenny, he became aware that instinctly he was walking on tiptoe as he passed the concierge's room, that he consciously took stock of the situation and, with it, of the proof of love and trust that Jenny was giving him. She was alone in Paris and, without her mother's or her brother's knowledge, had proposed that he should spend the night in the apartment with her. Jenny, he supposed, must be feeling the same discomfort that he himself felt at this moment—only far more acutely. He was mistaken. Jenny had thought it out, had satisfied herself that in acting as she now did she was doing right, and no other considerations weighed with her. Since their encounter with the police, she had been trembling for Jacques. The hope that he would agree to take shelter in her mother's apartment had become an obsession with her. This project, which a week earlier she would have judged unthinkable, had rooted itself so firmly in her mind that she had lost sight of its temerity; her only feeling now was one of gratitude to Jacques for having assented so promptly.

No sooner were they inside the flat than she pulled off her hat and gloves and settled down to work. Her fatigue seemed to have vanished as if by magic; she fell to making tea, tidying up Daniel's room and laying sheets on the sofa that was to be Jacques's bed.

Jacques vainly protested; finally he had to prison her wrists to stop her. "Now, my dear," he smiled. "We've had quite enough of it! Do you realize it's nearly two a.m.? I'll be gone at six. I'm going to sleep on the sofa in my clothes—if I sleep at all, which isn't very likely."

"Anyhow," she pleaded, "do let me give you a blanket."

He helped her to arrange the cushions and connect a bedside lamp with the wall-plug.

"Now," he said, "you've got to think about yourself, forget that I'm here, and sleep, sleep soundly. Promise?"

She nodded affectionately.

"Tomorrow morning," he went on, "I'll slip out quietly, without waking you. I want you to have a really long night's rest. Who knows what tomorrow has in store for us? I'll come back after lunch and give you the news."

Again she nodded.

“Good night,” he said.

Standing in this room so full of vivid memories for him, he took her gently in his arms. He could feel the light pressure of her breast on his and, as he drew her closer to him, she swayed a little and their knees met. Both felt the same faint thrill, but he alone was conscious of it.

“Hold me,” she sighed. “Hold me closer.”

She had flung her arms round Jacques’s neck and, carried away by a surge of emotion, was kissing him passionately. And the audacity of innocence made her the more reckless of the two. It was she who pressed him back toward the bed, onto which they sank, still in each other’s arms.

“Hold me close,” she repeated. “Closer—still closer,” and to hide the emotion on her face she reached to the table and switched off the lamp.

Jacques was trying to keep control of himself, but he knew now that Jenny would not go to her room; they would spend the night together. “We too!” he thought in a flash of cruel lucidity. “We’re just like all the rest!” A vague chagrin, an access of despair, came over him, mingling with his desire. But then his thoughts grew blurred in an ungovernable rapture, his breath came in quick gasps, and he clasped her in a fierce embrace that the kindly darkness redeemed.

A sudden thrill sped through his body, taking him unawares, leaving him breathless, incapable of movement. Then gradually his limbs relaxed, his breath came back. With a feeling of deliverance and a brief pang of shame as well—with a rankling sense of loneliness and regret—he came back to self-awareness.

Meanwhile Jenny remained nestling in his arms, lost in an ecstasy of love, unthinking, all fond desire that this wonderful moment should never, never end. Her cheek lay on the roughness of his coat, and the muffled beating of his heart so close to hers throbbed in her ear like the low echo of a dream. Moonlight—or was it the first pale glimmer of dawn?—was flooding through the open window, bathing the room in a milky sheen, a spectral radiance in which walls and furniture, all opaque and solid things, seemed to have suddenly become translucent. And after the tempestuous hours they had lived through together, to sleep, to sleep in each others’ arms, had the glamour of a quiet landfall.

He was the first to close his eyes. She heard him murmur some faint, faltering words through a last kiss, and then with a thrill of inexpressible emotion felt him falling asleep upon her breast. For a little while she held weariness at bay, trying to keep conscious of her happiness a little longer, and when at last she too sank into oblivion, it was with an exquisite sensation of surrendering not so much to sleep as to her lover.

X

JACQUES woke first. For several moments, while slowly consciousness returned to him, he lay gazing with rapturous eyes at the beloved face, on whose young beauty lay but the faintest traces of the excitement and exhaustion of the day before.

The half-parted lips seemed on the verge of a smile, and on the peach-bloom smoothness of her cheeks lay, like faint strokes of an artist's brush, the frail, translucent shadows of her eyelashes: it cost him an effort not to touch that softness with his lips. Gingerly he shuffled over to the edge of the couch, and swung himself off without disturbing her repose.

As he stood up he caught sight of his reflection in the mirror—his rumpled clothes, ashen cheeks, and tousled hair. The mere possibility that she might see him in such a state sent him hurrying to the door. None the less, before leaving, he took some sprays of sweet-peas from the vase on the mantlepiece, placed them on the couch beside her, where he had been lying, then tiptoed from the room.

It was just after seven, on Saturday, August 1. A new month was beginning, the holiday-makers' month. What would it bring forth? War, revolution, or peace?

The day promised to be a fine one.

He decided to visit the baths next door to the Closerie des Lilas in the Boulevard du Montparnasse. On his way he bought the morning papers.

Several of these, the *Matin*, for instance, and the *Journal*, were printed on one sheet only. War economy already? They were packed with information for the benefit of those called to the colours—what to do in certain emergencies, and the like.

The day's issue of the *Humanité* had come out as usual. Heavily bordered in black, it gave full particulars of the outrage. Jacques was surprised to find among its contents a sympathetic letter from M. Poincaré to

Jaurès's widow: "At a time when national unity is more vital than ever, it behoves me to . . ." As it happened, Jacques knew for a fact that Mme. Jaurès was out of town and that the friends of the dead leader had decided to postpone making arrangements for the funeral until she came back. Obviously, therefore, the letter had been communicated directly to the press by Poincaré himself. With what motive? Jacques wondered.

A stirring proclamation signed by Viviani on behalf of the Cabinet laid much stress on the fact that "in these anxious days Jaurès had endorsed the government's patriotic measures with his personal approval." The concluding paragraph held a discreetly veiled threat: "In the grave crisis which has befallen the nation, the government has confidence that the patriotism of the working-classes and the entire population will lead them to maintain a calm demeanour and refrain from causing further apprehension in the mind of the public by any agitation of a nature calculated to bring disorder into the life of Paris." Was the government in fear of riots? In a gossip column Jacques read that when M. Malvy, the Minister of the Interior, was apprised of the murder, at the Cabinet Council, he at once rushed off from the council room to his own ministry so as to keep in touch with police headquarters.

All the papers, moreover, with a unanimity that suggested they were acting under orders, dwelt upon the necessity of sinking political differences, and without exception made the murder a pretext for extolling "the lead given to his Party by the great republican" and insisting on the fact that shortly before his death he had endorsed the government's action in "taking the necessary measures of precaution to meet an emergency of a most formidable nature . . ." Anyone reading these passages would be led to suppose that the voice now silent for ever had never been raised for any other purpose than to promote the nationalist policy of France.

The move was both a subtle and a dastardly one. Now that the adversary was laid low, it was the height of ingenuity to seize upon his dead body, to make of it a symbol of loyalty to the government, to use it as a weapon—a spearhead in the fight against the now leaderless Socialist Party. "I shouldn't be surprised if they went to the length of giving him a state funeral," Jacques muttered to himself.

The news-sheets were sodden with the steam from his bath; he rolled them up into a ball and tossed it ragefully into a corner before plunging into the tepid water.

"That being so," he said to himself, "we've got to look things squarely in the face."

Obviously the jingoists were gaining ground at such a rate that it now seemed impossible to keep up the struggle. Journalists, schoolteachers, writers, scientists, the intelligentzia—all vied with one another in adjuring their critical independence, in preaching the new crusade, inciting all to hatred of the hereditary foe, urging blind obedience, and preparing men's minds for the futile holocaust. Even in the papers of the left, the elite of the popular leaders—who only the day before were loudly proclaiming with the full weight of their authority that this monstrous struggle between the states of Europe would only be an amplification of class war on the international plane, another triumph of the fuglemen of profiteering, competition, and private ownership—all now seemed willing to put their influence at the service of the government. One or two did have the grace to make some halting reservations. "Our dream was too ambitious to come true," and so forth. But they had capitulated, one and all; they now declared that national defence was the bounden duty of all citizens and were already urging their working-class readers to co-operate with a clear conscience in the deadly work. Their collective default opened the flood-gates to a spate of patriotic propaganda and bade fair to uproot from the minds of the masses, already wavering in their allegiance, that instinct of revolt which Jacques had counted on till now as the one and only hope of preserving peace.

Yes, he reflected with a bitter sense of helplessness, they've made their preparations with diabolical skill. War is possible only with a nation wrought up to fever-pitch. First men's minds are mobilized; then it's child's-play to mobilize the men themselves. He recalled a public meeting he had once attended. Was it Jaurès, or Vandervelde, or another leader, who, addressing an audience eager for words of reassurance, had likened the individual action of each revolutionist to the cartloads of rubble which, from father to son, generations of dwellers by the sea tip out along the shore. "The sea breaks over them," he had cried. "The waves disperse each mound of dust. But every cartful leaves a small residue of heavy stones, which the sea does not sweep away. And thus the heap grows higher year by year till in the fullness of time the ridge of stones has risen to a massive breakwater on which the raging seas take no effect, a solid causeway along which future generations will march ahead triumphantly." Bold metaphors, which at the time were frantically applauded by the audience. But, Jacques thought, when this tidal wave that's coming has swept over us, what will be left of all our paltry dikes?

But then he reproached himself for his faint-heartedness. What right had he to give way to despair? The battle's never lost so long as the best of us stand to our guns and refuse to cringe to that tyrant of the will—

determinism. Events are as we shape them. We should never lose hope, whatever happens. It’s up to us to fight to the end against all that saps our confidence, to sterilize the virus of collective panic. Nothing is lost as yet.

But he felt terribly alone. Alone as those who cling tenaciously to an ideal must be alone. And yet his very isolation gave him a curious feeling of security. For, whatever his distress, he knew he was right, that he was fighting for the truth, and no power on earth could make a renegade of him.

Without returning to Jenny’s apartment, he hurried over to the offices of the *Humanité*. The building had the aspect of a house of mourning. Early though it was, staircases and passages were thronged with militants coming and going, but all the zeal had gone out of their faces, giving place to looks of profound dejection and distress. The murderer’s name was being passed from mouth to mouth: Raoul Villain. Nobody seemed to know him. Was he of unsound mind? An agent of the nationalists? Who had incited him to the crime? When taken to the police station, he had professed himself unable to account for his act. A sheet of paper found in his pocket bore the words: “The country is in danger; let the criminals atone.”

Like the rest of the staff, Stefany had stayed up all night. His cheeks were ashen pale and his beady black eyes blinked incessantly as the result of hours of weeping and a sleepless night.

A dozen Socialists were conversing excitedly in his room.

News had come in that von Schoen, the German Ambassador, had ventured on an incredible démarche at the Quai d’Orsay, with a view to inducing France to remain neutral and withhold her military support from Russia. Germany, it was alleged, undertook in return not to make war on France, provided the French government, as a pledge for France’s neutrality, would allow her to occupy the forts of Toul and Verdun during the whole of the campaign against the Russians.

A few of those present, men like Burot and Rabbe, suggested that this eleventh-hour bargaining provided a means, after all, of keeping France out of the war. But the majority somewhat unexpectedly came forward as champions of the Franco-Russian alliance. Young Jumelin, in a tone which reminded Jacques of Manuel Roy’s patriotic outbursts, put in a heated protest. “It would be the first time in history that France failed to honour her signature!”

Burot promptly sprang to his feet. “Excuse me,” he cried, “but I must say you’re ‘way off the track there! Just have a careful look at the order of events, the dates of the successive mobilizations. I’ll even leave out of account what we may happen to know about the military preparations the

Russians set on foot quite a while ago—secretly, of course—and have gone on with ever since, in spite of all the efforts made by France to stop them. Let's consider for the present only the official pronouncements. Well, the Tsar's ukase was signed on Thursday afternoon; he was fully aware of the solemn warning that had been given by Germany, in good time and in perfectly plain terms, that mobilization by Russia would mean war. On *Thursday*, mind you, the day before yesterday. Now Franz Josef, for his part, only signed his decree on *Friday*, that's to say, yesterday, late in the morning. Then, yesterday too, but several hours later, Germany proclaimed the *Kriegsgefahr*—which we all know is not the same thing as a general mobilization. That's the correct order of events. And the fact is no secret's made about it," he added, taking a newspaper from his pocket. "On the admission even of a government organ such as the *Matin*, the Russian general mobilization preceded the Austrian general mobilization. There's no getting around that, and it's a fact of much importance. History, I expect, will look on it as *the* decisive fact. Unquestionably Russia must be regarded as the aggressor nation. Well"—he paused for a moment, then went on in a slow, emphatic tone—"I'm as deeply concerned as any one of you for the honour of France. But I hold that these proved facts would amply justify France, today, in withholding her support from Russia. And what's more, I hold that such a refusal to stand by the aggressor state would enable our government at long last to prove in a dramatic and decisive manner that it is not, and never has been, out for war."

There was a brief silence, and something like a sudden revival of hope.

Even Jumelin could not think of any objection to raise. But, as he was not inclined to admit that he was mistaken, he gave the discussion a new turn. "We've been talking about treaty obligations incurred by France. Have we any clear idea of what they are? Who can say what further obligations Poincaré, led on by Isvolsky, hasn't let us in for during the last two years?"

"And what was the Foreign Minister's reply?" Jacques asked. "I suppose, of course, he regarded it as being a 'trap' and turned it down? That's the line our Foreign Office always takes in such cases!"

"If not a 'trap,' " replied Cadieux, who prided himself on being well-informed, "anyhow as a veiled provocation, in fact a kind of ultimatum."

"For what purpose?"

"Obviously, to oblige France to show her hand then and there. Everybody knows the German General Staff's plan of campaign is to gain a decisive victory on the French front in the first week or so, which would then enable them to swing round their army to the eastern front. It's essential, therefore, that Germany should be able to attack France at the earliest moment. And that's why the Germans are trying to jockey France into war before actual fighting has begun on the Russo-German front."

Stefany had for some time been showing signs of restiveness. Now his strident voice cut short the discussion. "Damn it, you're all arguing as if war was already declared, or going to be declared any minute! And you are doing this just when French and German Socialists are getting into closer touch than ever before; just when the coming of Müller—he'll be here tonight—is going to give us a chance at last of taking really drastic and decisive action."

All fell silent. For an eerie moment it was as if the shade of Jaurès were hovering in the room. Stefany had used the very words the Skipper would have used. It was borne in on them that the sending to Paris of an official delegate of German social-democracy at such an hour, for the purpose of concluding a pact between the peoples despite their governments, was an unprecedented event, justifying the wildest hopes.

"What fine fellows these Germans are!" cried Jumelin. And his boyish confidence, following so closely on the pessimistic views that were being aired a moment before, was to Jacques a further proof of the confusion reigning in their minds.

The entrance of Renaudel created a diversion. His cheeks were pale and puffy and his eyes expressionless. He had spent the night keeping vigil over his friend's body. He had come to attend a hastily convened general meeting of the Socialist Federation of the Seine, taking place that morning in the *Humanité* office. Its object was to review the situation created within the Party by the disappearance of its leader. And he wished, before the meeting, to have a talk with Stefany about an appeal just issued by the Trade Union Congress. At Lyon, at Marseille, at Toulouse, Bordeaux, Nantes, Rouen, and Lille—everywhere, in fact, as he averred—demonstrations were being organized. "No," he exclaimed, clenching his fists, "we mustn't give up hope!"

The little group dispersed, and Jacques, after looking in at Gallot's office and finding him away, walked downstairs to the street. Before going to see Jenny, however, he decided to call at the *Libertaire* offices to find out what was being said and done in anarchist circles.

In the Place Dancourt he ran into the Cauchois brothers, two stonemasons whom he had often met at the *Libertaire*, and they dissuaded him from going any farther.

“We’ve just been there. Not a soul about. All the boys have taken to cover. The cops are on the warpath. What’s the use of getting nabbed?”

Jacques kept them company for a short distance. They walked ahead aimlessly. For once they had downed tools, “because of what’s happening.”

“What’s your idea about this rotten war?” the elder of them asked. He was a big, freckled, red-haired young man, with rather coarse features; this morning his light-blue eyes had an unaccustomed gentleness.

“A fine lot he cares. He’s a Swiss!” put in the younger man, who, though they were not twins, was the image of his brother—but as the finished statue resembles the rough-hewn block.

Jacques saw no point in going into details. “I’m afraid I *do* care,” he said gloomily.

The youngster turned to him with a friendly smile. “Of course, of course. But it ain’t the same for you; you’re not up against it like we are.”

The elder brother, who had no doubt been “having one or two” to celebrate his escapade, waxed talkative. “Oh, it’s simple enough, what *we* think. We’ve only one skin apiece and we ain’t so keen on losing it. See? I don’t say we wouldn’t risk our skins if we were called to fight for our ideas. See what I mean? But as for fighting for them damn ‘patriots’ as they call themselves, nothing doing. There’s fellows who like that sort of thing, I know; well let ’em go ahead! ‘You got to love your country,’ they say. Well, *our* country’s any place where there’s a chance of doing our job in peace and quiet. Ain’t that so, Jules?”

The younger man emitted a non-committal whistle.

“Well, then,” Jacques asked, “supposing they do mobilize, what are you going to do about it?” (He was thinking of his own case; the answer he had given to Antoine’s question: “What exactly do *you* intend to do?” had been quite straightforward. He had no idea. All he knew was that he would struggle to the end. But where? And with whom? And in what way? He refused to let his mind dwell on it; that would be like doubting the certain victory of peace.)

The younger man shot a stealthy glance at his brother and, as though fearing he might let his tongue run away with him, made haste to put in: “Anyhow, we’re not due to be called up till the ninth day. That gives us time to look around a bit.”

The elder brother had failed to catch the other’s warning look. He turned to Jacques and said in a low tone:

“D’you know Saillavar? A fellow with a pockmarked face. No? Well, he comes from Portbou. See what I’m getting at? He knows the Spanish frontier by heart, same as we know the streets of Ménilmontant.” He gave a knowing wink. “In Spain, even if there is a war, neutrality’ll be the ticket, so they say. Once a fellow’s there, it’s all plain sailing; there’s nothing to prevent a man from turning an honest penny, like anyone else. And as for work, we ain’t work-shy, are we, Jules?”

The younger brother gave Jacques a suspicious glance. His blue eyes had a steely glint. He muttered: “Now don’t you ever go and repeat that, Thibault!”

“No fear,” said Jacques with a smile as he shook hands with them. In a brown study he watched them go; then shook his head despondently. “No,” he murmured, “not that. That’s not for me. To cross into a neutral country—there’s something to be said for it. But if it’s only to ‘do your job in peace and turn an honest penny’ while half the world’s being butchered—no!” He took a few steps, stopped again. “Then—what?”

XI

ANNE marched up to the telephone with a decided step. But as she was about to pick up the receiver, she paused. “I’m a fool. It’s twenty-past eleven; he’s still at the hospital. Why not go and catch him as he’s coming out? That way, he can’t escape me!”

She remembered having given her chauffeur the morning off. To save time and, all the more so, because she could not bear the thought of waiting, she snatched up her hat and gloves, ran to the door, and hailed the first taxi. “Drive to the Rue de Sèvres. I’ll tell you where to stop.”

The janitor at the hospital had not seen Dr. Thibault go out yet. Anne glanced along the cars drawn up by the curb. Antoine’s was not among them. But he might very well have parked it in the hospital yard and, in any case, he did not always use his car in the morning.

She got back into the taxi and, leaning from the window, kept close watch on the people coming and going through the big gateway. Five to twelve. Noon. Twelve chimes from the hospital clock, followed after a brief pause by twelve clangs from a church near by. A stream of nurses and attendants poured forth into the street.

Suddenly a cold sweat broke out on her forehead. She had just remembered that there was another way out of the hospital, on a side-street. Quickly alighting, she hastened up it, after telling the janitor to ask Dr. Thibault to wait, should he leave by the main exit.

The narrow sidewalk seethed with a hurrying crowd, the road was full of wagons and trucks; all around her was the nerve-racking din of a busy street at rush hour. A fit of dizziness came over her, there was a buzzing in her ears, and, as she shut her eyes and halted for a moment, she caught herself thinking quite seriously: Who knows? Perhaps I'd be better dead! But at once she braced her nerves and, moving like an automaton, continued on her way to the side-entrance.

"Dr. Thibault? Yes, Madame, he's gone. He left some minutes ago."

Without even stopping to thank the man, she dashed away like a demented woman. What was to be done? Another telephone call? But she had called him several times yesterday in vain, and once again this morning, just after he had left the apartment—so Léon had informed her, anyway. "So early?" she had asked him incredulously, for it was only a quarter-past seven.

She went back to the janitor. "Can I use your phone? It's urgent."

The line was not free and she had to wait for some time. At last an answer came.

"Dr. Thibault's out, Madame. He said he would not be back for lunch."

Léon's tone was studiously impersonal. Anne had come to hate the man. She could no longer bear to hear that unctuous, deferential voice which always intervened between her and her lover and deprived her of the direct, living, almost physical contact for which she pleaded helplessly over the line.

She hung up without a word and went out into the street. There's nothing for it, she thought. I'll go there. Then I'll know if they are lying to me.

First she had to find her taxi again. She threaded her way through the crowd, in frantic haste, inwardly raging against this weak surrender to the passion ravaging her heart but unable to withstand it.

"4A Rue de l'Université."

No sooner did the tall façade, the gaudy blinds, the portico of Antoine's house, come into view at the far end of the street than abruptly panic gripped her. She had visualized Antoine rising from his luncheon-table, coming out to meet her in the hall, napkin in hand, scowling. . . . What could she say to him? Only "I love you, Tony!" And suddenly she was seized with fear, fear of his frowning brows and stubborn under-jaw, of the look of irritation in his eyes, that she could picture only too well. . . .

Why not write a letter?

"Stop at the postoffice, please—at the corner."

She asked for a special-delivery form, scribbled a few lines.

> Tony dear, I *must* see you, if only for a moment. Anywhere, at any time you like. Ring me up. I'll stay at home. I *must* see you, Tony dear.

That phrase had been running through her mind all day. "I *must* see you." She felt sure that, could she but meet him once again, even for a minute, she would find the words to win him back.

After slipping the note into the special-delivery box, she hurried home—heartily ashamed of herself. . . .

Antoine was still at table when the letter arrived. Glowing with enthusiasm, Roy had been giving him a description of the chauvinist demonstration in which he had taken part the previous evening. "Yes, old man," Antoine was saying, "I can well believe all you tell me. I've only too good reasons for doing so. Just now we're indulging in an orgy of patriotism that takes one's breath away. But—do you know what they remind me of, all those bright young friends of yours flag-wagging down the boulevards to let the world know they approve of war?"

Léon handed him the note. As he recognized the writing, a shadow fell on his face.

"They remind me of a poster that used to be seen all over Paris when I was a kid." While he spoke he was stripping off the perforated band of the envelope, his eyes fixed on Roy. Then he glanced at the letter, tore it up at once into tiny shreds, and went on speaking. "The poster showed a flock of geese. They were making googoo eyes at a cook armed with a long, pointed kitchen-knife. And the inscription ran: '*Hurrah for the Strasbourg Pâté de Foie Gras!*' " He strewed the flakes of paper on his plate and fell silent.

No "explanation" had taken place between Anne and himself. After his talk with Simon, Antoine had quietly let Anne drop out of his life; had given up visiting her, making appointments, or even answering her phone calls. These escapist methods were unpremeditated and even went against the grain, for Antoine was all in favour of clean-cut situations. And it was his firm intention to have things out with Anne in a decisive interview, regarding which his memory was jogged effectively several times a day—every time Léon accosted him with lowered eyes and the masonic formula: "You're wanted on the phone, sir." But the hours passed, each fraught with new anxieties, and in his rare spells of leisure from the calls of his profession he either plunged into a feverish perusal of the newspapers or, with morbid complaisance, let himself be drawn into confabulations with all and sundry—people who, like himself, had lost the faculty of thinking or talking about anything except war. Now and then he wondered at himself for feeling no more than a hostile indifference toward a woman whom he had no reasons to reproach and who only a week before (he was bound to admit) had still held so large a place in his life.

He supposed that his case was an exception. It did not occur to him that the same influences were everywhere at work. The storm breaking over Europe was disrupting private lives as well; human relationships founded in untruth were crumbling, falling helplessly asunder. The first gust of the tempest sweeping the world was already shaking from the boughs the tainted fruit.

XII

JACQUES was back at Jenny's place some minutes before noon. She was not expecting him so early. Rather guiltily she confessed that she had slept soundly till nine. Since then she had been poring over the papers, trying to find out what exactly was happening in Austria. Her voice shook when she referred to her mother's plight in Vienna. Rising, she took a few steps across the room, burying her face in her hands.

He wondered how to reassure her without lying. To the burden of anxiety imposed by world events was added this frail, personal distress touching him so closely, and for a while the motives urging him to fight a losing battle in the cause of peace were reinforced by his eagerness to bring peace to Jenny's troubled mind.

"Do sit down," he said. "I can't bear to see you standing up like that, darling, looking so miserable. All is not lost yet, you know." He conjured up a heartening smile.

She asked nothing better than to believe him, and he launched out into an enthusiastic description of Stefany's indomitable hopefulness, of Müller's mission and all that might come of it. Carried away by his own words, he went so far as to suggest with all but unfeigned fervour: "Who knows? Perhaps it's a good thing the whole world has been led to the brink of this catastrophe! For it may well bring about that vast change of public opinion which is what we're aiming at."

"Yes!" Jenny cried, her eyes intent on his.

Then again her nerves got the better of her; she went to the window and began fidgeting with the blind. So abrupt were her gestures that the cord snapped in her hand.

He went up to her, put his arm round her shoulders, and pressed her to him. "Now, dear, keep calm—no, don't look away. You can't imagine the good it does me being with you! I've come here to take breath a little, to get a new lease of energy. And I need your help. I need all your *confidence*."

Jenny's expression changed at once; she smiled bravely up at him.

"Splendid! Now, put on your hat and we'll go out and have some lunch."

"Why not have lunch here?" The cheerfulness in her voice took him by surprise, so unforced it seemed. "Please say 'Yes.' I've some eggs and peaches in the pantry, and we can drink tea."

He smiled assent.

Gaily she ran to the kitchen and lit the gas-range. Jacques followed and, momentarily forgetting his anxieties, watched her laying the table, aligning knives and forks and spoons, neatly disposing pats of butter in the butter-dish—with the application that all women with the housekeeping instinct bring to the most trivial domestic rites. How supple and spontaneous were her least gestures! Love had weaned her from her stiffness, set free that womanly grace which until now some secret inhibition had held in leash.

"Our first meal at home!" she remarked with a certain earnestness, while placing the eggs on the table.

They sat at opposite ends of the table, and it was as if they had faced each other thus for years. She was in high spirits, which he did his best to reciprocate, but the look of care remained. Seeing her steal a furtive glance at him, he smiled. "It's awfully nice here."

"Isn't it!" she cried enthusiastically, and added: "We need each other more than ever in times like these."

Suddenly he thought of the days to come, and panic gripped his heart. He could not meet her eyes.

For some reason they could not shake off the silent mood that had enveloped them. Now and again Jacques's eyes rested on Jenny in a long, lingering gaze of tenderness and, unable to find words to express his feelings, he reached across the table and pressed her hand for a few moments.

His moodiness distressed her. During these last days a change had been coming over her; for the first time, despite the studied reticence that had become second nature with her, she would have welcomed a chance of talking about herself. The hours she spent alone were one long, silent monologue addressed to Jacques, in which she dissected her character and laid bare to him unflinchingly her faults, her capacities, and her limitations. For she was obsessed by the dread that he had formed a wrong opinion of her and would be horribly disappointed later on when he came to know her better.

When they had eaten their dessert, she had him fold his napkin and handed him Daniel's napkin-ring. Then, taking his arm, as she had used to take Daniel's, she led him back to her room.

The drawing-room door was ajar, and as they passed it Jacques caught sight of the piano lit up by a sunbeam and, seized by a sudden fancy, halted.

"Jenny, please play for me that—that piece, you know the one I mean. The one you played—that evening."

"What was it?" She knew quite well what he meant, but this abrupt recall of their summer at Maisons-Laffitte had played havoc with her composure. Then, "Oh, Jacques!" she cried. "Not—not today!"

"Please . . . !"

She yielded, entered the room, seated herself at the piano, and, haunted by memories of one of the most emotionally tragic evenings of her life, began playing Chopin's Third Etude.

Jacques moved behind her so as to be out of her sight and stood there in a coign of shadow, with folded arms. His eyes fast shut to veil his tears, his heart melting with remembered rapture, he heard the song of infinite joy, infinite regret, rise trembling on the silence. When the last note was played she rose, stepped back, and leaned against him.

"Forgive me," he whispered in her ear. Never before had she heard such an extremity of anguish in his voice.

"Why?" she asked in alarm.

"We might have been so happy, you and I, and since so long . . ."

A tremor shook her body. Quickly she laid her hand upon his lips. She drew him gently to the open window and out onto the balcony. Below, the tree-tops wove a close-set canopy of green above the avenue, and from it rose now and again, like the twittering of a flight of sparrows, the merry voices of unseen children. In the distance the foliage of the Luxembourg Gardens was already taking on the faintly burnished sheen that precedes by a few weeks the russet panoply of autumn.

Jacques gazed with unseeing eyes at the sunbright panorama. His obsession had returned and he was thinking that Müller must have just left Brussels.

Then he heard Jenny saying in a low, pensive tone: "I know every tree. And I know every seat beneath those trees, every line of every statue. My whole childhood's linked up with that garden." After a short pause she added: "I like remembering things—do you?"

"No, I don't," he answered bluntly.

She turned and gazed at him, suddenly abashed. "Neither does Daniel." There was a hint of disapproval in her voice.

Feeling he must explain his words, Jacques brought himself to say: "For me the past is past. Each day I've lived through drops into oblivion; I've always kept my eyes turned toward the future."

The remark wounded her more cruelly than she dared tell. The present meant so little to her, and the future nothing; memories were the focus of her inner life.

"You can't mean it, Jacques! You say that just to make yourself seem different from others."

"Different from others?"

"No," Jenny caught herself up, blushing, "that's not what I meant. . . ." She pondered for some moments. "Don't you sometimes feel a desire to—to mystify people? Not just for the joy of baffling them, of course, but so as to slip through their fingers. Isn't that so?"

"What do you mean by 'to slip through their fingers'?" He thought it over, then confessed: "Well, perhaps you're right. I must say I loathe feeling that people have a cut-and-dried opinion of me. It's as if they tried to pin me down, to circumscribe my mind. And I dare say I do sometimes mystify people deliberately—just to prevent their pinning me down in that way."

It struck him that Jenny had compelled him to take stock of himself—as he certainly would not have done on his own initiative. Now he felt grateful to her, and no less angry with himself for having wounded her by professing a cheap scorn for the sentimentalities of memory. His arm tightened round her waist.

"I hurt you just now. I'm sorry; I talked like a fool. Naturally times like these play the devil with one's nerves!" He smiled. "And now, to excuse my stupidity a bit, shall we say that Jenny is a little girl who's . . . extraordinarily sensitive?"

"Yes, that's true," she replied at once. "I'm disgustingly sensitive." After a moment's thought she added: "Thin-skinned—but not a bit good at heart!"

Jacques gave an incredulous smile.

"It's true," she said. "I know myself only too well. Every time I do something that makes me seem kind-hearted, I do it deliberately, after thinking it over—as an act of duty. I haven't a scrap of natural, spontaneous kindness—the only kindness that counts. Mother's, for instance." She was on the point of adding: "And yours, too, Jacques," but kept silent.

He shot her a puzzled glance. He had an impression that some aspect of her had matured with surprising suddenness. Never did she seem to him so puzzling as when she analysed herself aloud. At such moments her face grew set and hard and her eyes steely, and Jacques had a feeling he was losing contact, that she had turned to stone: an obdurate, enigmatic, sphinxlike Jenny whose secrecy galled his masculine self-esteem.

In a low voice he said: "Jenny, you remind me of an island, a sunny smiling island—but quite inaccessible!"

She gave a start. "Why do you say that? It's not fair!"

A cold, dank air seemed to blow between them, chilling her blood. For some moments they stood in silence, leaning on the balcony rail, their minds estranged, lost in dark forebodings. . . . Then two slow, distant chimes sounded from the Senate clock. Jacques glanced at his watch and straightened up.

"It's two." His obsession had returned to him. "Müller is on his way."

They went back into the apartment. He had not suggested she should accompany him, and she, too, had said nothing about it. Yet he was not at all surprised—so natural did it seem—when she called to him as she ran into her room.

"Just a moment, dear, and I'll be with you."

Jacques decided this time to take Jenny with him into the *Humanité* building. On one of the landings they met Rabbe, and Jacques's first question was what arrangements had been made for meeting the German delegate and when his train came in. At five o'clock, Rabbe said, adding that all Socialist members had been convened to meet him in one of the reception-rooms of the Chamber of Deputies at six o'clock. It was expected that, by reason of its crucial importance, this conference would go on well into the night.

"We're all going to meet him at the Gare du Nord," the old militant announced.

"We'll go there too," Jacques said, turning to Jenny.

The mere name of the railway-station had suddenly evoked in her mind a picture, clear in every detail, of her encounter there with Jacques, her flight along the passages of the subway, their talk in the little garden beside the church. Naïvely convinced that the same thoughts had risen in Jacques's mind, she turned and looked at him. But he was engrossed in conversation with Rabbe, asking what resolutions had been passed that morning at the meeting of the Socialist Federation.

"None!" old Rabbe growled indignantly. "The committee broke up without having come to any decision. The Party's leaderless now."

The various departments of the newspaper were humming with activity. In Gallot's room Pagès, Cadieux, and others were engaged in a discussion. A rumour had gone round that, ever since the German declaration of *Kriegsgefahr*, the French General Staff had been pestering the government to issue orders for mobilization without more ado, and it was only a matter of hours. Pagès went further and, on the authority of an army clerk employed in General Joffre's office, stated that the order in council had actually been signed by Poincaré at noon. But Cadieux, who had just returned from the Foreign Office, declared that the news must be false. "Else I'd be sure to have heard of it," he boasted.

He said that the chief topic of conversation at the Foreign Office just now was the attitude of England. According to him, Caillaux and some other politicians of his group intended to ask the French Socialist leaders to approach Keir Hardie, with a view to getting the English Socialist Party to retract its insistence on British neutrality. Meanwhile, he said, Poincaré had taken it on himself to write directly to King George V, urging the necessity of England's declaring herself on the side of France, since in British intervention lay the last hope of preserving peace.

"When did Poincaré send the letter?" Jacques inquired.

"Yesterday."

"Exactly! When he knew that the Russian mobilization had been officially announced and war had become inevitable."

No one challenged the statement.

A communiqué, presumably official, had been issued in the course of the morning to the effect that the French and British General Staffs were keeping in close touch and "a plan of action had been drawn up." Was military action meant? Anyhow, there was good authority for the report that the British Admiralty had ordered the fleet to patrol the Straits of Dover, that merchant ships were prohibited from entering the naval bases, the forts commanding these bases had been manned at full war strength, and that the coastal lighthouses had been forbidden to light up that night.

Marc Levoir came in. According to him, another interview had taken place between Viviani and von Schoen. The former had said: "Germany's mobilizing; we know it." When the Ambassador made no reply, Viviani had added (so Levoir's informant told him): "Our attitude is necessarily dictated by that of Germany. Nevertheless, to prove to the world our resolute desire to avert a war, General Joffre has issued orders to our troops to withdraw to a minimum distance of ten kilometres from the frontier. Thus if any 'incident' occurs, it will be none of our making."

Pagès, who had friends in the War Office, made haste to qualify this statement. He asserted that the withdrawal from the frontier had no real significance; as a concession to the cause of peace it was more window-dressing, for it did not interfere in any way with the plan of campaign drawn up by the French General Staff. In certain ministerial circles, so Pagès said, they made no secret of the fact that this temporary retirement was no more than a piece of skilful diplomatic tactics, a device for impressing European opinion—above all, British opinion.

"I'm quite ready to believe," Jacques said, "that *one* of their ideas is to enlist the sympathy of England. But personally I think it's *we*, the pacifists of France, whom they are getting at in the first instance. They're out to cut the ground from under our feet, to trade on our feelings, and have us think their hands are clean of war-guilt. Also, it's an honourable pretext they're affording us for sinking our scruples and collaborating with the powers that be, now they've shown themselves so peacefully inclined. Yes, I can guess already what we'll be reading tomorrow in the opposition press."

Indifferent to the talk going on around him, Gallot had continued sorting out a pile of documents stacked on the table. Now, more hedgehoglike than ever, perking up his head behind the paper rampart, he said: "And what proves it is the mighty hurry the government was in to inform the leaders of the Party about this move—before they'd even made it."

His peevish tone, taken with his insignificant appearance—puny arms and legs, and the look of a petty bureaucrat with a chronic cold in the head—tended to make him sound unconvincing, even when eminently right. Just now, Jacques noticed, indignation had not quelled in his eyes their look of profound sadness, which lent pathos to the face for all its ugliness.

A group of young militants burst in. A report had just gone round that the League of Patriots had organized a procession which was heading for the Place de la Concorde, for a demonstration in front of the Strasbourg statue.

“Shall we go?” Pagès asked.

Everyone was already on his feet. As a matter of fact they seemed less eager to engage in a bout with their adversaries than to snatch at an opportunity for doing something at last.

Jenny had a feeling that Jacques was intent on accompanying them, but holding back on her account.

“Let’s go there,” she said resolutely.

XIII

SUNLIGHT, dulled by a sultry haze but fierce as ever, beat down on people’s heads, raising the temperature in the heart of Paris to furnace-heat. More and more perturbed, and wrought up like flies by the thunder in the air, the populace seemed unable to quit the streets. The police were busy trying, without recourse to violence, to disperse the excited crowds that had gathered outside banks, police stations, and municipal buildings. The yells of newspaper-venders, piercing the low-pitched clamour of the streets, rasped nerves already strained to breaking-point.

At the Place des Pyramides the plinth of Joan of Arc’s statue was heaped with flowers, like a catafalque. The arcades in the Rue de Rivoli were densely thronged with people hurrying in both directions. Most shops had their shutters down. The traffic in the street was as thick as at the height of the shopping-season. The Tuileries Gardens, however, were deserted but for a detachment of mounted police drawn up under the trees; as the horses stirred, glossy flanks and burnished helmets dappled the green shade with sudden gleams.

Evidently the news of the projected demonstration was incorrect, for nothing unusual was happening in the Place de la Concorde. The traffic had not been diverted, and only a rather small police cordon barred the approaches to the Strasbourg statue, which, too, was banked with wreaths ribboned in the national colours.

Regretfully the little band of *Humanité* stalwarts dispersed.

Jacques and Jenny turned up the crowded Rue Royale. “It’s half-past four,” Jacques said. “Let’s go and see Müller arrive. If you’re not too tired, we might walk along the boulevards to the Gare du Nord.”

Suddenly, as they were walking past the Madeleine, a jangled clamour broke out overhead; the big church bell was tolling, rending the air with its punctual, solemnly reiterated clang.

All the people in the street stopped dead, exchanging puzzled glances, then, with one accord, began running blindly forward.

“What is it?” Jenny cried apprehensively—Jacques had gripped her by the arm. “What ever is happening?”

Someone beside them muttered: “It’s come!”

Near and far, other belfries were giving tongue; Saint Augustin’s, Saint Louis d’Antin’s, Saint Roch’s, the Holy Assumption. And soon the louring sky seemed like a dome of bronze lugubriously tolling in every quadrant, to the same stubborn rhythm, the passing-bell of a generation.

“What ever is happening?” Jenny asked again. “Where are they all running?”

Without a word, Jacques drew her onto the roadway across which hundreds of people were flocking, regardless of the traffic.

A steadily increasing crowd was massing on the far side, in front of the Madeleine postoffice. A slip of white paper had just been pasted on the window from the inside. But Jacques and Jenny were too far away to read it. They heard people round them exclaiming: “It’s come!” Those in the front rows stood for some moments peering up at the notice in a sort of dazed absorption, as if they were laboriously spelling it out. When presently they turned their heads, their eyes were aghast, their faces haggard, clammy with sweat. Some, without a word, without a glance for anyone, forced their way through the group and made off, their chins sagging on their chests. Others shook their heads mournfully and with misted eyes searched the faces round them for a look of fellow-feeling; then, after murmuring some desultory phrases which met with no response, tore themselves reluctantly away.

At last Jacques and Jenny worked their way up to the window. A small rectangular sheet was fixed to the pane by four pink seals; on it was an inscription in an impersonal copperplate script, a woman's handwriting, neatly underscored with a ruler:

GENERAL MOBILIZATION

THE FIRST DAY OF MOBILIZATION IS
SUNDAY, AUGUST 2

Jenny pressed to her breast the hand that Jacques had slipped beneath her arm. He stood stock-still, thinking like all the rest: "Well, it's come!" Then other thoughts came racing through his mind and with them a sense of wonder at feeling so little distress. Had it not been for the bells pounding their tocsin on his brain, he might have felt a certain relaxation of the nerves—like the physical relief that presently, after the long day of brooding storm, would come with the first drops of rain. A spurious respite that lasted for only a second or two, the respite of the wounded man who at the first shock is not aware that he is injured. But after a moment the wound opens, begins to bleed, and pain comes into its own; Jacques felt a stab of anguish pierce his heart. He clenched his jaws, but Jenny heard him give a hoarse groan.

"Jacques, oh, Jacques . . . !"

He would not speak. He let her lead him away from the crowd, to an empty bench at the sidewalk's edge. They sat down in silence. People were still flocking up to the postoffice window and, over the seething mass of heads, stared at the fateful slip of paper, unable to take their eyes off it.

So it had come to this! For weeks he had lived in a fool's paradise, fondly trusting that justice, truth, and man's fraternity would triumph in the nick of time. His attitude had been, not that of the visionary expecting a miracle, but that of the scientist awaiting the results of an infallible experiment. And now—his world had tumbled about his ears. A cold, disdainful rage swept over him. Never had he felt so mortified. Not so much outraged or discouraged, as baffled and humiliated—humiliated by the masses' feebleness of purpose, by the incurable futility of human nature, the ineffectiveness of reason. And I, he thought, what am *I* to do now? In a vivid rush of introspection he explored the secret places of his heart, the hinterlands of consciousness, trying to find a clue, a presage, the glimmer of a guiding light. In vain. And, with the knowledge of his helplessness, something like panic came upon him.

Jenny deferred to his silent mood. Without speaking, with mingled curiosity and dread, she watched the scene around her. She had only the vaguest ideas of what was meant by mobilization or, for that matter, war. Yet her thoughts had harked at once to her mother and Daniel, but principally to Jacques. Still, she lacked imagination to picture with any clearness what war might mean for these three loved ones.

When at last she spoke, her whispered question was an echo of Jacques's thoughts. "What are you going to do?"

Her voice was calm, unshaken. Jacques found himself thinking: How splendidly she's facing it! But he was too cast down to reply. He averted his eyes, and mopped his perspiring forehead. At last he rose from the bench. "We may as well go to the station, I suppose."

All afternoon, huddled in an easy-chair beside the telephone, Anne had been hoping in vain for a call from Antoine. Time and again her hand strayed toward the receiver, but, though her nerves were overwrought, she had kept to her resolve not to ring up first but wait for him to call her. A newspaper lay at her feet. What she had read in glancing through it had exasperated her. What did it matter to her, this nonsense about Austria, Russia, Germany! Fanatically absorbed in her own troubles, she kept on picturing the scene she meant to have with Antoine once they were together in their little room. And each time the picture rose before her she eked it out with fresh details, thought up new things to say, fiercer and fiercer taunts to hurl at him—with a sense of momentary relief. And then, suddenly, her anger subsided, she begged him to forgive her, flung her arms round him, drew him toward the bed.

A door banged near by, there was a sound of hurrying feet. Instinctively she glanced at the clock; twenty to five. The door opened and her maid rushed in.

"Oh, ma'am, Joe says they've just put up the mobilization orders at the postoffice. There's going to be a war."

"Really?" Anne drawled. She repeated to herself: "There's going to be a war," without fully grasping what it meant. First came an irritating thought: "Simon will be coming back." Then: "They'll send him to the front—and a good riddance!" Suddenly her mind went dark with horror. "My God, if there's a war, Tony will have to go! He'll be killed." She sprang up from the chair. "Get me my hat, gloves. Quick now! Send for the car!"

In the glass above the fireplace she caught sight of her reflected self: peaked nostrils, crow's-feet. No, she thought despairingly, I'm looking really too hideous today!

When the maid returned, Anne was sitting again in the armchair, hunched forward, her hands locked between her knees. Without straightening up, she said gently: "Thanks, Justine, but I've changed my mind. Tell Joe I shan't want him. Get a bath ready, please. Very hot. And make the bed; I'll try to rest a bit."

A few minutes later she was lying in the twilight of her bedroom. The curtains were drawn. The telephone was within reach; if he called, she had only to stretch out an arm. Yes, bed was the best place; cool, soft sheets were the best anodyne for her distress. Obviously, she could not expect to feel really well all at once; it would need half an hour or so for her pulse to steady down, the fever to die from her blood, a gentle drowsiness to numb her brain. Only—what an appalling, impossible effort was needed to lie quite still, with fast-shut eyes, without a flutter of the eyelids, waiting, waiting! . . . Tony! . . . War! . . . Ah, if only she could see him again, win him back! . . .

She jumped out of bed, and ran stumblingly, barefooted, to her boudoir, pressing her hands to her face. Without troubling to draw up a chair, she knelt on the carpet beside the desk, snatched a sheet of paper from the rack, and scribbled frantically:

> I can't bear it any longer, Tony. I'm suffering too dreadfully. I can't bear it. You may have to go. When? You've cut me out of your life. Why? What have I done? Tony dear, I *must* see you. Tonight. At our place. I'll be waiting for you there all evening, all night. Come at your own time. Only—do please come. I've *got to* see you again. Promise that you'll come. Please, *please* come, my Tony.

She rang for the maid. "Ask Joe to take this note immediately. Tell him to deliver it himself at Dr. Thibault's apartment."

It struck her then that Simon might well have taken the morning train, in which case he might be turning up at any moment. She dressed rapidly, and left the house.

To steady her nerves she forced herself to go all the way on foot, her impatience notwithstanding, to their apartment in the Avenue de Wagram. Though she could not have given a reason for it, she was sure, this time, that Antoine would come.

She entered "their place" by the private door in the side-street. Just as she was turning the key in the lock she sensed that he was there, and smiled to herself, so convinced was she of her clairvoyance. Closing the door soundlessly, she tiptoed across the rooms, the doors of which stood open, and called in a low voice: “Tony! Tony!” But the bedroom was empty. Obviously he had heard her and was hiding in the bathroom! She ran into the bathroom, into the kitchen, then wearily dragged herself back to the bedroom and sank onto the bed.

Antoine had not come yet—but, “He will come,” she murmured.

Slowly she undressed. First she took off her shoes, then with a long, swift, sliding gesture—like the peeling of a fruit—stripped off her stockings, laying bare the smoothness of her skin. Thinking she heard footsteps, she looked round. No, he had not come yet. Her eyes slowly roved about the room and settled on the bed. One of her delights was to wake early in the morning and at her leisure pore over the beloved face, the unwrinkled forehead, the lightly parted lips relaxed in slumber with all the harshness gone out of them, gentle as the lips of a child. Only at such moments did she feel that he was truly hers. “*My Tony!*” Well, he was coming to her now. She was certain, absolutely certain. He would come tonight.

She was not mistaken.

XIV

THE GARE du Nord was under military occupation. At every turn one came on red-trousered groups and pyramids of piled arms; ticket-offices and station yard echoed with words of command, the clatter of rifle-butts. Civilians, however, were allowed to enter, and Jacques had no trouble in making his way, accompanied by Jenny, to the platform.

Some sixty members of the militant left wing had come to meet the train. Each, as he greeted a comrade, muttered the now familiar epitaph of peace—“Well, it’s come!”—with an angry toss of the head and, clenching his fists, exchanged a look of indignation with his friend. But under this too easily controlled violence one could already discern symptoms of fatalistic resignation, as if all were thinking: “It was *bound to come*.”

“What would the Skipper have made of all this?” old Rabbe sighed, after shaking Jacques’s hand in silence. “What would he have done?”

“I expect great things of the conference with Müller.” Jacques sounded confident enough; he had pledged himself to hopefulness, and stood by his resolve.

At the far end of the platform a small, isolated knot of men stood apart from the rest: the delegation of Socialist deputies.

Followed by Jenny and Rabbe, Jacques made his way past the various groups, without joining any. With a far-away look, like one speaking in a dream, he murmured: “I’m thinking of the man who’s coming to us from Germany at this most tragic hour and of all the terrible responsibilities he may well have to shoulder. When he left Berlin the day before yesterday, he had no idea of the turn events would take. Then, stage by stage, on his journey toward Paris he learned of the Russian mobilization, the Austrian mobilization, the *Kriegsgefahrzustand* and—this morning—of Jaurès’s assassination. And now, when he alights from the train, he’ll be told that France is mobilizing. And, as the last straw, he’ll probably be told tonight that orders for general mobilization have been issued in Germany as well. It’s appalling!”

When at last the engine loomed up across a haze of vapour, driving billows of steam before it, a ripple of excitement passed down the crowd waiting on the platform; with one accord, all moved forward. But the station staff were evidently on the lookout for this; lining up at once, they stemmed the rush, allowing only the parliamentary delegation to proceed.

Jacques saw them gather outside a car, on the running-board of which two men were standing. One he recognized at once as Hermann Müller. The other, whom he did not know, was a well-built, youngish man with a determined-looking face which gave an impression of energy and straightforwardness. Jacques turned to Rabbe. “Who’s the man with Müller?”

“Henri de Man, a Belgian. A very fine fellow, with no nonsense about him. The sort of fellow who uses his brains and never knows when he’s beaten. Didn’t you see him in Brussels on Wednesday? He speaks German perfectly, as well as French, and he’s probably going to act as interpreter.”

Jenny laid her hand on Jacques’s arm. “Look! They’re letting people through now.”

They hastened toward the official group, but a flood of outgoing passengers barred the way, and when they had managed to get past the platform barrier, the parliamentary deputation whose task it was to take

Müller at once to their private conference at the Chamber was already out of sight.

In the ticket-offices a number of people were gathered round a notice that had just been posted. It was headed in block letters: "REGULATIONS APPLYING TO ALIENS."

Someone behind them gave an ironical guffaw. "Looks like our people weren't caught napping, anyway! They must've had these notices all printed in advance."

Jenny looked around. The speaker was a young workman in blue overalls, a cigarette between his lips. A pair of stout, brand-new, hobnailed boots dangled across his shoulder.

"You too!" a bystander remarked, pointing to the boots. "You weren't caught napping, either!"

"Right," the workman chuckled as he moved away. "Them boots is going to give old Kaiser Bill one in his fat German ass!"

There was a burst of laughter. . . . Jacques had not stirred; his eyes were fixed on the notice, his fingers tensely gripping Jenny's elbow. Now with the other hand he pointed to a paragraph printed in heavy type:

> Aliens, without distinction of nationality, are permitted to leave the fortified area of Paris up to the close of the first day of mobilization. They will be required, on leaving, to produce their identity papers for examination by the railway police authorities.

A host of thoughts were coursing through his brain. "*Aliens . . . !*" The parcel he had left at Jenny's apartment still contained the false passport that had served for the Berlin adventure. Even if he produced his certificate of exemption from military service, issued in his right name, he might well have trouble getting through to Switzerland as a French subject. Whereas there should be nothing to hinder the Genevan student Eberlé from returning to his country before "the close of the first day of mobilization"—tomorrow, Sunday.

And suddenly he thought: What's to become of Jenny if I leave before tomorrow night?

He had put his arm round her shoulders and was guiding her out of the crowd. "Listen," he said abruptly, "I've absolutely got to go and see my brother."

Jenny had scrupulously read the passage in heavy type beginning: "Aliens . . ." But what, she wondered, was there to make Jacques suddenly so upset, and why should he be in such a hurry to see Antoine?

Jacques himself could hardly have explained his motive. It was to Antoine that his first thought had turned when he heard the great bell at the Madeleine sounding the alarm. And now, on seeing that notice, across the chaos of his thoughts, he had suddenly grown aware of an urgent, irrational desire to see his brother again.

Jenny had no mind to question him. This railway-station and all this relatively unfamiliar part of Paris were associated for her with that eventful evening when she had seen Daniel off and with her panic flight from Jacques; and the flood of memories had overwhelmed her.

In an hour's time the look of the city had changed considerably. There were as many people about, if not more, but no loiterers. Everyone they saw was in a hurry, intent solely on his own concerns. It was as if each passer-by had suddenly discovered a host of problems to be solved without delay, arrangements to be made, a job to be handed over, friends and relatives to visit, an eleventh-hour reconciliation to essay, or a rupture to be consummated. Their eyes fixed on the ground, with tight-set lips and troubled faces, all were hurrying along, swarming out across the roadway, dodging and doubling through the traffic, which had perceptibly diminished. There were very few taxis, most drivers having garaged their cars and gone home at once. Buses had ceased running; public conveyances of all kinds had been requisitioned as from that evening.

It was a struggle for Jenny to keep up with Jacques, but she did her best to hide it. Like everyone else, he was hurrying ahead, his face tense, his chin well forward, as if escaping from some dread pursuer. Though she had no inkling of his thoughts, she guessed that he was grappling with some inner problem.

In point of fact the sight of the mobilization order had crystallized certain ideas which had been floating in his mind and of which till now he had been almost unaware. A sudden memory of the Pilot had flickered into his consciousness as he had seen him in the bedroom in the Brussels hotel, in blue pyjamas, with haggard eyes, standing in front of a mound of ashes in the grate. He had had no news since Thursday last; often he had wondered what Meynestrel was doing over there. Up to his ears, no doubt, in revolutionary work. "Aliens are permitted to leave Paris. . . ." In Geneva, at the Pilot's side, he would find a group of energetic men who had kept intact their loyalties, their single-mindedness. He pictured Richardley and Mithoerg and the others as a dauntless phalanx, an islet of resistance in the midst of Europe under arms. The temptation to hurry back to Switzerland was strong. Yet he could not make up his mind. Was it on Jenny's account?

he asked himself. Yes—but Jenny was not the real cause of his irresolution. Had he any qualms about being a "deserter"? None whatever; on the contrary, his first duty was to refuse to serve in defence of all that he had never ceased to loathe and fight against. No, what galled him was the thought of scuttling to cover while others took their chance of death. He knew that he could never feel at peace with himself unless in standing out he took personal risks equivalent to those his brothers under arms were bound to take. What, then, should he do? Give up the idea of seeking refuge in a neutral country and remain in France? But how make active war on war, defy the warlords, in a country under martial law, where every form of pacifist propaganda would be ruthlessly suppressed, where he would be suspected, watched by the police, and perhaps thrown into prison to keep him muzzled? Unthinkable! What, then? Obviously Switzerland was the solution, but what was he to do there?

"Merely to be oneself is nothing!" he exclaimed vehemently. Then he caught Jenny's puzzled look and added: "Being oneself, thinking this or that, believing this or that, is futile. Futile, so long as one can't transmute one's life and thoughts and faith into *acts*."

"Into acts?" She had an impression that she had misheard him; almost necessarily, what he meant lay outside her range.

"This is what I think," he went on in the same harsh, emphatic tone. "I think that this war is going to hold up the internationalist ideal for many years to come. For many, many years; perhaps for generations. Well, if there were some definite *act* that could be done to save our ideal from this momentary setback, I'd do it—even if it were an act of sheer despair. But *what* act?" he muttered despondently.

Jenny halted abruptly. "Jacques! You're going away!" Seeing his eyes fixed on her, she added: "You're going to Geneva, aren't you?"

He gave a vague nod.

She was torn between conflicting feelings, joy and distress. If, she thought, he goes to Switzerland, he'll be safe. But how shall I live without him?

"If I do leave Paris," Jacques said, "it will be to go to Geneva. For one thing, that's the only place where one can still try to get something under way. For another thing, I've a false passport which makes it easy for me to go back to Switzerland. . . . You saw what that notice said?"

She broke in eagerly. "Go, Jacques! Start tomorrow!"

The firmness in her voice took his breath away.

"Tomorrow?"

She could not stifle a little thrill of hope; his tone had seemed to imply: “No; presently perhaps, but not tomorrow.”

Jacques had started walking again. Her legs seemed giving way beneath her, and she had to cling to his arm.

“I’ll leave tomorrow,” he said at last, “if—if you’ll come with me.”

A rapturous tremor shook her body; the cloud of anxiety had miraculously lifted. He was going away—he was saved! And she was going with him; they were not to part!

Jacques fancied she was hesitating. “You’re free, aren’t you,” he said, “with your mother unable to leave Vienna?”

Her only answer was to press herself more closely to him. Her heart was pounding away, she could feel its pulses throbbing in her temples, her head was swimming. She was his, body and soul. They would never part again. She would be always at his side, shielding him from danger.

Soon they were chattering about their departure as if it had been arranged long in advance. Jacques had forgotten the exact time the night express left for Switzerland, but there was sure to be a time-table at Antoine’s place. Then they would have to find out if Jenny could travel without a passport; the regulations would surely be less strict for women. Next, they discussed the cost of their tickets; between them they would have enough and to spare, and in Geneva, Jacques assured her, he could “manage.” Of course, he reminded her, everything still depended on the outcome of the pourparlers with the German delegate. Who could tell? Supposing suddenly, at the last moment, the proletariat of both countries decided to launch an insurrection . . . ?

They had come to the Tuileries Gardens without noticing where they were going. Jenny was streaming with perspiration; she felt her muscles suddenly go limp. Timidly she pointed to a bench hidden away among the flowers. They sat down. They had the place to themselves. The storm which had been brooding all the afternoon seemed to keep down the scent of the flowers to the ground-level.

Jenny thought: I’ll be able to write to Mamma from Switzerland. And as it’s a neutral country, she’ll be able to come and join us there. . . . Already she was picturing her home-to-be in Geneva, with her mother restored to her and Jacques immune from danger.

Jacques’s thoughts were turning in the same dreary circle. Obviously he must leave France. But—to do what? Try as he might to stake his hopes on Meynestrel and persuade himself that in Geneva, anyhow, the spirit of revolution was still intact and active, he could not help recalling the Talking

Shop or overcome his doubts as to the real efficacy of the tasks that would be assigned to him once he was there.

Unable to sit still any longer, he said: “Come on, Jenny. You’ll be able to have a rest at my brother’s place.”

She gave him a startled look.

“Of course you must come,” he smiled.

“What? To your brother’s place? Don’t you think . . . ?”

“Oh, what does anything matter now? And, anyhow, Antoine had better know. . . .”

He seemed so sure of himself, so determined, that she made no further protest and followed him submissively.

XV

IN the hall lay an officer’s uniform-case, brand-new, the price-ticket still attached.

“The doctor’s in, sir,” Léon said as he opened the door of the consulting-room.

Jenny entered without hesitation. There was silence in the room. Jacques saw his brother standing at his desk. His first impression was that Antoine was by himself; then, to his disappointment, he espied Studler and Roy rising from the large armchairs in which they had been entrenched, Roy’s at the window and Studler’s some way off, beside the bookshelves. Antoine was sorting out papers; the wastepaper-basket under the desk was full, and scraps of torn paper littered the carpet.

He went up to Jenny and shook her hand paternally, with no indication of surprise. That day no one was surprised at anything. Moreover, he remembered that Mme. de Fontanin, in the note she had sent after Jerome’s funeral to thank him for his visits to the hospital, had mentioned that she was going away. He assumed that Jenny, left by herself in Paris, had come to ask him for advice; probably she had run into Jacques on the staircase.

As the two brothers’ glances met, the rush of affectionate emotion that came over both showed itself only in a vague, quick smile, no more than friendly in appearance but charged with undertones of feeling. For, despite all that estranged them, never had they felt so near in spirit to each other; not even at their father’s deathbed had they been so vividly aware of the mysterious response of blood to blood. They shook hands in silence.

Antoine, after drawing forward a chair for Jenny, had begun to ask her about her mother’s journey, when the door opened. Dr. Thérivier entered, accompanied by Jousselin. The former went straight up to Antoine. “Well, it’s come! And we can’t do a thing about it!”

Antoine did not reply at once. His look was earnest, almost calm. “No, we can’t do anything about it,” he repeated slowly. Then he smiled, for it was exactly what he thought himself, and the thought was a rowel to his energy.

Antoine had been in Jousselin’s laboratory when young Roy had burst in with the news of mobilization. He had not flinched; had coolly lit a cigarette. For three days now he had felt no longer a free agent, but an atom caught in the flux of world events, helpless as a pebble in a load of gravel dropped by a dump-cart upon the roadside. All his world lay in ruins—his career, his plans, the life he had mapped out so precisely for himself. Yet at this moment he felt solidly at one with his country and his class. Before him lay the unknown. The unknown; but action too. And this prospect, with all its stirring possibilities, had promptly given him new heart to face the future. He had a way of never protesting for long against what could not be mended, the inescapable. An obstacle for him was a new *datum*, posing a new problem to be solved. And, to his thinking, there was no obstacle that might not, if a man rose to the occasion, be used as stepping-stone to further progress.

“When do you join up?” Thérivier inquired.

“Tomorrow morning, at Compiègne. What about you?”

“The day after, Monday, at Châlons.” He turned to Studler, who had joined them. “How about you?” Good humour was so much a second nature with Thérivier that even today his voice sounded cheerful and his plump, red-cheeked, bearded face had a jovial expression. But the apprehension in his eyes made a painful contrast with it.

“How about me?” The Caliph’s eyelashes fluttered. The question seemed to have roused him from a dream. He turned toward Jacques as if it were to him that explanations were due. “I’m off, too,” he growled. “But a week later. I’m to report at Evreux.”

Jacques refrained from looking at him. He did not blame the Caliph, whose life, he knew, had been one long series of self-immolations. And he knew, too, that by consenting to serve, against his convictions, in this “defensive” war, this man, the soul of loyalty, was obeying once again what he believed to be the call of duty.

Jacques’s eyes, roving about the room in quest of Jenny, discovered her standing a little apart from the others beside the fireplace. She seemed quite self-possessed, but in a brown study. Presently he saw her straighten up, look round for a chair, take a few steps, and sit down. How lithe she is! he thought, and for an ecstatic moment fancied he was still holding her in his arms. He remembered her sudden, quickly repressed shudder when he had kissed her for the first time. And his senses tingled with a fond delight that he made no effort to restrain. Their eyes met; he smiled and felt the colour rising to his cheeks.

Antoine, who had gone up to Jenny, was making inquiries about Daniel when Thérivier broke into their conversation. “Say, Thibault, how are they going to replace you at the hospital? What arrangements are being made?”

“The older men are being asked to return to duty. At our place Adrien, Daumas, and even that old stick-in-the-mud Deléry have undertaken to replace the younger men.” Suddenly he pointed an accusing finger at Thérivier. “Look here, you rascal! You’ve never brought back the notes that Jousselin lent you the other day—the ones about ‘Vegetable Growths and Glossoptosism.’ ”

With a laugh Thérivier called Jenny to witness. “He’s incorrigible! All right, I’ll send back your precious manuscripts to Studler. So you can go on service with your mind at rest, my budding medical officer!”

One of the windows stood open on the street and through it for some moments sounds had been coming in of singing, shouting, clattering horse-hoofs. There was a general move toward the window and, taking the opportunity, Jacques went up to his brother, who had stayed behind in the middle of the room. But just then Antoine started across to join the others and Jacques followed him.

A company of artillery coming from the Invalides had just encountered a procession of Italian demonstrators marching up the Rue des Saints-Pères, preceded by four drums and a flag. The Italians had halted and were singing the “Marseillaise” and cheering the troops. The drums were beating; the noise grew deafening.

Antoine closed the window and for a moment remained lost in thought, his forehead pressed to the pane. Jacques stayed beside him. The others had gone back to the middle of the room.

“I had a letter from England this morning,” Antoine said, without moving his head.

“From England?”

“Yes. From Gise.”

“Oh!” Jacques shot a quick glance at Jenny.

“She wrote on Wednesday. She wants to know what to do if there’s a war. I’ll tell her to stay over there, at the convent. That’s the best thing she can do, don’t you think so?”

Jacques nodded vaguely. Then he looked around to see if the others were out of earshot. He wanted to speak of Jenny and was fumbling for an opening when Antoine turned abruptly and gazed at him. A look of deep anxiety had settled on his face. Under his breath he murmured: “Are you still quite de-determined to . . . ?”

“Yes.” Jacques’s tone was firm but devoid of any self-assertiveness.

Antoine was still bending forward, shunning his brother’s eyes, nervously tapping the windowpane to the rhythm of the drum-beats receding up the street. He was aware that he had just stammered, always a symptom with him of profound disquiet.

From the hall came Léon’s voice, announcing: “Dr. Philip.”

Antoine drew himself erect at once, and a swift change came over his expression.

Philip’s lanky, shambling form loomed in the doorway. His twinkling gaze surveyed the room and settled on Antoine. He was wagging his head lugubriously. Drawing a handkerchief from his flapping coat-tails, he mopped his brow.

Antoine had gone up to him. “Well, Chief, it’s come!”

Philip touched his hand limply, without a word; then, like a marionette whose strings are suddenly let go, he seemed to crumple up onto the nearest seat he could find—the end of the settee, already swathed in slip-covers.

“When’re you leaving?” he asked in his curt, wheezy voice.

“Tomorrow morning, Chief.”

Philip’s lips emitted a watery little click as if he were sucking a lozenge.

“I’ve just come from the hospital,” Antoine remarked to break the silence. “Everything’s been fixed up. I’ve turned things over to Bruhel.”

There was a pause. His eyes fixed on the carpet, Philip was shaking his head in an odd manner. “I suppose you realize, my dear boy,” he said at last, “that ‘it’ may last a long time, many years in fact.”

“A good many experts,” Antoine ventured to observe, though his tone lacked assurance, “maintain the contrary view.”

“Do they?” Philip snorted, as if he had long since made up his mind about experts and their forecasts. “All of them base their notions on cut-and-dried theories about food-supplies, credit, and so on. But suppose the governments in power are mad enough to stake their last penny and risk utter ruin rather than give in! After what we’ve been witnessing during the past week, anything’s possible. No, personally I foresee a very long war in which all the nations involved will wear themselves out and none will have the desire, or even the ability, to call a halt.”

After a short pause, he spoke again. “Really, the whole thing passes my understanding. Who’d have believed that such a thing as this war was possible today? Yet all that was needed, it seems, was for the press to persist in fogging the issues in people’s minds, with the result that no one now has any clear idea who is and who isn’t the aggressor, and every nation fancies its ‘honour’ is at stake. A week of imbecile scare-mongering, bluster, and exaggeration has been enough to set all the nations of Europe at each other’s throats, like a band of lunatics, yelling blue murder! Yes, the whole thing passes my understanding. It’s like the tragedy of Œdipus. He, too, was forewarned. But when, on the day fixed by destiny, the alarming events which had been predicted took place, he failed to recognize them. It’s the same with us. Our prophets had foretold everything; we knew exactly where the danger lay—in the Balkans, in Austria, in Tsarism and Pan-Germanism. We were forewarned. We were on the watch. Many sensible people did everything they could to stave off disaster. And yet—it’s come! We couldn’t escape it. Why? I keep on turning the question over in my own mind: Why? Perhaps the answer is that among the events we had dreaded and expected, some small unforeseen factor crept in, the merest trifle, just enough to modify their aspect and of a sudden make them unrecognizable. Just enough to enable fate to spring its trap, despite men’s vigilance. And now we’re caught in it!”

At the far end of the room Jousselin, Thérivier, Jacques, and Jenny were sitting in a group round Manuel Roy. His cheerful, boyish laugh rang out. “Oh, come now!” he cried to Thérivier. “You don’t expect me to start wailing about it, do you? After these stuffy labs, a breath of clean, fresh air will be a vast relief. We’re going to live through exciting times!”

“To *live*?” Jousselin murmured.

Jenny, who had been gazing at Roy, averted her eyes; the look of exaltation on the young man's face distressed her.

Philip, who had caught the remark, turned to Antoine. "Young folk can't imagine what it's like. And that explains a lot. I'm different; I went through the 1870 war. Young folk don't know."

He took out his handkerchief again, passed it over his cheeks, lips, and beard, then dabbed his palms with it.

"You younger men are going to the front," he said in a low, brooding tone. "I suppose you think that old men like me are lucky to be out of it. You're wrong. Our lot is even worse than yours. Because our lives are ended."

"Ended?"

"Yes, my dear boy. Over and done with. July 1914 marks the end of something of which we formed part; a new era is beginning—in which we don't 'belong.' "

Antoine gazed at him affectionately, but could find no answer.

Philip fell silent. Then, as if tickled by some joke that had just crossed his mind, he gave a little reedy chuckle. "I've had three black moments in my career," he began, in the prim, carefully enunciated tones he employed in the lecture-room and which led his pupils to say of him: "Old Sawbones is listening to the sound of his own voice." "The first changed the whole course of my youth; the second bowled me over in my middle years; the third, I can see, will play the devil with my old age."

Antoine's look was an invitation to his old friend to explain himself.

"The first was when the pious, provincial-minded youngster I was then found out one night, after reading the four Gospels in succession, that they were a tissue of inconsistencies. The second was when I realized that a certain poisonous fellow named Esterhazy had done a piece of dirty work known as the Dreyfus *bordereau*, and that instead of punishing the culprit the French authorities were torturing a wretched man whose only crime was to have been born a Jew."

"And the third," Antoine put in with a melancholy smile, "is, of course, today."

"No, it came a week ago, when the papers published the text of the ultimatum, and I saw the billiard-stroke that was being prepared for, a cannon to be made at the expense of millions of lives."

"A 'cannon'? I don't follow, Chief!"

Under the bushy brows Philip's eyes twinkled with almost cruel irony. "Yes, Thibault, a cannon that was the foulest of foul strokes. There was a red ball, Servia, hit by a white ball, Austria, which in its turn had been hit by the cue ball—that's to say Germany. Who held the cue? Russia? Or was it England?" He gave vent to his rageful, whinnying laugh. "I'd like to know the truth before I die."

Jacques came up to the corner where Antoine and Philip were sitting.

"Chief," Antoine said, "I've introduced my brother to you already, I think?"

The old doctor shot a keen glance at Jacques.

Jacques bowed, then turned to Antoine. "Have a time-table anywhere handy?" "Yes." Their eyes met. A question hovered on the tip of Antoine's tongue, but he merely pointed, saying: "Over there. Under the telephone directory."

"And when are you joining your regiment?" Philip inquired.

Jacques stiffened, hesitated, and cast a glance at Antoine, who stammered hastily:

"Oh, my b-brother—it's—er—not—in his line."

A short silence followed.

Had Philip understood? Did he remember the conversation he had had with Jacques? He gazed at the young man with extreme interest and, as Jacques moved away, followed him with his eyes.

Antoine bent toward Philip. "My brother refuses on principle to serve in the army."

Philip reflected for a moment. Then, "All forms of idealism are legitimate," he said in a weary voice.

"No," Antoine interrupted. "In times like these a man's duty is perfectly simple, clear as daylight. No one has the right to back out of it."

Philip, who did not seem to have heard him, went on speaking in his nasal drone. "Legitimate and perhaps necessary. Could humanity progress without mystical beliefs? Read your history again, Thibault. No great social change has ever come about without some religious aspiration underlying it. Intelligence can but lead to inactivity. It's faith that supplies the driving-force to get things done and the persistence men need for carrying on with the good work."

Antoine said nothing; in the Chief's company he automatically became the docile pupil once again. Then he noticed Jenny standing by the fireplace beside Jacques, studying the time-table. It surprised him for a moment; then he assumed that she must be looking up the trains by which her mother might return from Austria.

Philip, meanwhile, had continued voicing his reflections.

"Who knows, Thibault? Perhaps those who think like your brother are forerunners. Perhaps this war's a necessary evil, an upheaval of this Old World that will throw up a crop of new half-truths of which we have no inkling. It would be pleasant to think so, anyway. And why not? All the nations of Europe will be compelled to fling their resources, material and spiritual, lock, stock, and barrel, into the melting-pot of war. It's an unprecedented phenomenon, and we can't foresee what will come of it. Who knows? Perhaps the whole structure of our civilization will come out of the crucible recast in a new form. Yes, men have some terrible experiences to go through before the dawn of enlightenment—the day when they're content humbly to avail themselves of what science has to tell them for the ordering of their lives on earth."

Léon's clownish face peeped in at the half-opened door. "You're wanted, sir." Antoine scowled, but rose from his seat. "Excuse me a minute, Chief."

Léon stood waiting in the hall. Imperturbably as usual he held out the letter-tray, on which lay a blue envelope.

Antoine picked it up and thrust it into his pocket without opening it.

"The person wants to know if there's an answer," the valet murmured, his eyes fixed on the floor.

"What person?"

"The chauffeur, sir."

"No," Antoine said, turning on his heel. He had just heard the door behind him open. Jacques and Jenny entered the hall.

"What? Are you off?"

"Yes," Jacques replied in the same curt, peremptory tone that Antoine had used a moment before when saying "No" to Léon. He gazed fixedly at his brother and in his eyes there was a veiled reproach, a look that seemed to say: "So when we come to see you on a day like this, you can't find a moment to give us!"

Antoine said awkwardly: "Already? And you, Mademoiselle, have you, too, got to leave now?" His thoughts moved quickly: if Jenny had come to ask for his advice or help, why was she hurrying off without mentioning it—and with Jacques?

He ventured on a direct question. "Can I do anything for you before I go?"

Jenny's only answer was a slight movement of her head and a smile that might mean anything. Completely at a loss, he turned to Jacques, who was moving deliberately toward the hall-door. "And you, Jacques? Shan't I see you again?"

The note of affection in his voice made Jenny raise her eyes quickly and Jacques swing round. And his look betrayed such emotion that Jacques forgot his grievance. "Are you leaving tomorrow?" he asked.

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"Very early. I'll have to be out of the apartment by seven."

Jacques glanced at Jenny, then said rather gruffly: "Shall I come and call for you then?"

Antoine's face lit up. "Yes, do! Be here at seven. Will you come and see me off at the station?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, old man." He gazed tenderly at his brother and repeated: "Thanks."

They were all three beside the hall-door. Jacques opened it for Jenny and crossed the threshold without meeting his brother's eyes. From the landing he said in a low voice: "Good-bye, then, till tomorrow," and drew the door shut behind him.

Suddenly he changed his mind. "Go down without me," he said to Jenny. "I'll meet you in the street." Hastily he thumped the door with his fist.

Antoine was still in the hall. He went back to the door and opened it. Jacques came in alone, closing the front door after him. "There's something I want to tell you." His eyes were fixed on the floor.

Antoine guessed it was something important. "Come," he said, leading the way to the small study.

Jacques followed in silence. When the door was closed, he leaned against it, facing his brother. "You've got to know it, Antoine. Jenny and I came here together to tell you."

"What's that? Jenny *and* you?"

"Yes," Jacques said firmly, with a curious smile.

Antoine was utterly bewildered. "But look here, what do you mean? Jenny *and* you!"

"It goes back to years ago." The words came out hastily, in rapid jerks, and Jacques felt his colour rising. "But it's been settled only now. During the last week."

“What’s been settled?” Antoine backed to the sofa, sat down. “No, look here—you don’t mean that seriously, do you? You and Jenny . . . ?”

“It’s true.”

“But you hardly know each other. And then—as things are now . . . getting engaged when we’re on the brink . . . does it mean you’ve given up the idea of leaving France?”

“No. I’m leaving tomorrow night—for Switzerland.” After a short pause he added: “With her.”

“With her? But, Jacques, you must be mad! Stark, staring mad!”

Jacques was still smiling. “Not a bit of it! It’s quite simple: we love each other.”

“Oh, don’t talk such nonsense!” Antoine exclaimed, casting discretion to the winds.

Jacques gave an angry laugh. He was cut to the quick by his brother’s attitude. “I daresay it surprises you that people can have feelings of that sort; no doubt you disapprove of them. So much the worse . . . for you! I only wanted to let you know. Well, I’ve done it. So—*au revoir*.”

“Wait!” Antoine cried. “It’s absurd. I can’t let you go away with your head full of silly notions like that.”

“*Au revoir.*”

“No. It’s my turn to speak and I’ve something to say to you.”

“What’s the use? I’m beginning to think we’ll never be able to understand each other.”

He had begun moving toward the door, but something held him back. There was a short silence.

Antoine made an effort to regain his self-control. “Listen, Jacques. Let’s talk seriously.” An ironical smile curled Jacques’s lips. “There are two things to take into account. One’s your temperament. The other is the moment that you’ve chosen for—for acting in this way. Well, let’s take your temperament to begin with, the sort of man you are. Let me tell you the plain truth; you’re fundamentally incapable of making anyone happy. Even in other circumstances, you’d never have been able to give Jenny a happy life.”

Jacques shrugged derisively.

“No, let me have my say. Even in other circumstances. But less than ever at the present moment, what with the war and—and your ideas! What are you going to do, what future lies before you? No one can say, but it won’t bear thinking of. Well, if you choose to run such risks, that’s your lookout.

But how can you link up another person's life with yours at such a moment? It's a monstrous thing to do, and you should know it! Only, you've lost your head. You've given way to a childish fancy that won't stand a moment's scrutiny."

Jacques gave a cackle of pert, insolent laughter that stopped short abruptly. There had been overtones of hatred, almost of madness, in its sound. Then he tossed back his forelock, folded his arms, and burst out ragefully: "So that's how it is! I come to you to tell you of our happiness—and that is all you can find to say!" Again his shoulders lifted in a disdainful gesture. Then, holding the doorknob, he turned and flung out over his shoulder: "I used to think I knew you. It's only in the last five minutes I've come to know the sort of man you really are. Yes, I've found you out! You've a heart of stone. You've never loved, and you never will love anybody. A heart of stone that nothing, nothing will ever bring to life." He gazed down on his brother, scornfully surveying him from the proud aerie of his inviolable love. Then, with a tight smile, forcing out the words, he added: "Do you know what you really are—you with all your diplomas, all your pride? You're a poor creature, Antoine. No more than that: a poor, pitiable creature."

He gave a short, quickly suppressed laugh, and went out, banging the door behind him.

Antoine remained for a while with bowed back, staring at the carpet. Then, "A heart of stone!" he murmured half aloud.

His breath was coming in quick gasps, and the tumult of his blood gave him a physical discomfort like the dizziness brought on by a high altitude. He held his arm out in front of him; it was trembling uncontrollably. "My pulse must be a hundred and twenty," he thought.

Slowly he straightened his shoulders and stood up; then, going to the window, threw back the shutters.

No sound came from the courtyard, beyond which, pent between two grey walls, the yellowing foliage of a chestnut tree made a patch of colour. But Antoine saw nothing of it; the foreground of his sight was all a picture of Jacques's face, truculent, twisted in a supercilious smile, and his eyes ablaze with sullen rancour.

"You've never loved," he muttered to himself, clenching his fingers on the iron balustrade. "Well, if that's what love means, you damned young fool, you're right: I've never loved. And I'm proud of it!"

A girl appeared at one of the windows of the adjoining building and looked up at him. Had he spoken out loud? Leaving the window, he went back to the middle of the room.

"Love! Country folk, anyhow, aren't afraid of calling a spade a spade; they say an animal's 'in heat.' But that would be too simple for our young friends—and too humiliating. So it's got to be romanticized. You're expected to roll your eyes to heaven in a sort of swoon. 'We love each other. I adore you. Sweetheart mine!' The 'heart,' of course, is the specialty of your devout lover. As for me, I've a heart of stone. Be it so! And, naturally, 'I can't understand.' The same old story; the priggish craving all these people have to pose as being 'misunderstood.' It glorifies them in their own eyes. Like madmen; yes, exactly like mental cases. Every lunatic prides himself on being misunderstood."

He caught sight of himself in the mirror, waving his arms, glaring at an unseen foe. He thrust his hands into his pockets and fell to searching for some loftier pretext for his indignation.

"It's the *silliness* of it all that makes me see red. Yes, that's what rubs me on the raw—the outrage to my common sense. Now that I think of it, I've noticed it before: a wound inflicted on one's common sense can sting like a whitlow."

The thought of Philip waiting in the consulting-room helped him to steady his nerves. Squaring his shoulders, he made a move toward the door.

He grew aware that his fingers were nervously crushing some paper in his pocket. Anne's letter. He took it out, tore it in two, and dropped the pieces into the wastepaper-basket. His eyes fell on his military service-book laid out on his desk. And suddenly his mind stopped and stood still. Tomorrow—war, the risks of war; perhaps mutilation, death! "You've never loved." Tomorrow the chapter of his youth would be closed untimely; perhaps the hour of love would be past for ever.

Stooping over the wastepaper-basket, he fished up half the letter and unfolded it. Words pitiful as a broken cry, tender and passionate as a caress.

> Tonight. At our place. I'll be waiting . . . to see you again. Promise that you'll come. Please, *please* come, my Tony.

He sank heavily into an armchair, his mind in a turmoil. For the last time, to feel her body nestling against his, her fondling hands; for the last time, the last, to fall asleep, slip into oblivion, in her arms! Then suddenly a wild regret, a black wave of despair, swept over him. He rested his elbows on the table and for some minutes sobbed like a child, his hands pressed to his cheeks.

XVI

PARIS was in calm, if tragic, mood. The clouds which had been gathering since noon formed a grey dome overhead, plunging the city into twilight gloom. Prematurely lighted, restaurants and shops cast livid trails of light across the sombre streets, where crowds of excited people, deprived of the usual means of conveyance, were hurrying in all directions. Subway stations were being mobbed, queues of waiting passengers filling the passages and overflowing onto the sidewalk; it took a full half-hour to get down to the platforms.

Abandoning their intention of travelling by subway, Jacques and Jenny started on foot across Paris.

Newspaper-venders, posted at every street corner, were doing a rushing trade in special editions. Each buyer of a paper stopped for a moment and ran eager eyes over it before going on his way. For each was secretly hoping against hope to read in it the news that European statesmen had suddenly come to their senses and found a peaceful way out; that the world had got over its preposterous nightmare with nothing worse than a bad scare.

At the *Humanité* offices, as in most Paris offices since mobilization orders had come out, no one was to be found. Vestibule and staircases were empty. The solitary office-boy on duty was pacing up and down the hall; he told Jacques that Stefany was not in his room. Current business was being dispatched by Gallot, but he had closed his door against all visitors, so as to prepare the next day's issue. Jacques and Jenny—who, exhausted though she was, kept to him like his shadow—did not venture to disturb him.

"Let's go to the Progrès," Jacques said.

In the ground-floor room of the restaurant nobody was about. Even the proprietor was away; his wife, seated at the cash-desk, looked as if she had been crying and took no notice of Jacques's entry.

They went up to the mezzanine. The only people there were some young militants, none of whom Jacques knew, grouped round one of the tables. At the entrance of the newcomers they fell silent for a minute or so, then all at once resumed their talk.

Jacques was thirsty. He installed Jenny in a seat beside the door and went down to get a bottle of beer.

"And what else d'you propose to do, fathead? Wait for the police to come, and get yourself shot like a goddamned fool?" The speaker was a youth of twenty-five, pink-cheeked, with a cap thrown well back on his head. His hard jet-black eyes settled on each of his friends in turn as he spoke. “Anyhow”—there was an undertone of excitement in the coarse, harsh voice—“anyhow, don’t you forget this! For fellows like us who’ve followed the whole show pretty closely, there’s one thing clear, and it’s the only thing that matters. *Our* country, anyhow, wasn’t out for war, and *we* have nothing on our conscience.”

“But that’s exactly what all the others are saying!” the eldest of the group put in. He was a man in the forties, wearing the uniform of a subway employee.

“The Germans can’t say as much, anyway! They’ve had a dozen chances in the last couple of weeks of preventing a war, and not one of ’em did they take!”

“What about us? We only had to tell them Russkys straight from the shoulder: ‘You go to hell! We ain’t going to back you.’ ”

“That wouldn’t have changed anything. It’s plain as can be today that them Boches had their dirty little game all planned out in advance. The bastards were spoiling for a war; well, that’s their funeral. We’re all for peace, sure enough, but we ain’t bloody cowards, not we! France is being attacked; well, France has got to defend herself. And France means you and me and all the rest of us.”

All but the subway employee seemed to agree with him.

Jacques cast a despondent glance at Jenny. A memory came to him of Studler’s remark: “I’ve *got* to believe, I *must* convince myself of the guilt of Germany.” Without drinking his beer, he rose, beckoning to Jenny. But, before going out, he went up to the group at the other table.

“A defensive war! A war that’s forced upon us! A just war! Don’t you realize they’re throwing dust in our eyes—as they’ve always done? Are you, too, going to let yourself be fooled? It’s only three hours since the mobilization order came out, and you’re backing down already! You’re giving way to those brutal passions that the press has been working up to fever-pitch for the last week, passions that the army leaders will exploit to the utmost! Who’ll stand up against this wave of madness if even Socialists like you give in?”

He did not address any particular member of the group, but his gaze fell on each in turn. His lips were quivering.

The youngest, a plasterer whose cheeks and hair were still smeared with white, perked up a birdlike face toward Jacques. “I think the same like old Chataignier here,” he announced in a brisk, determined tone. “I’m ordered to join up tomorrow, the first day. I've no use for war, not me. But I'm a Frenchman and France is being attacked. My country needs me, and I got to go. I may hate it like hell, but I got to go."

"Same here," said the young man beside him. "I join up on Tuesday, the third day. I come from Bar-le-Duc and my old folks are living there yet. Well, I don't want to see my hometown taken over by them Germans."

Jacques thought: "Nine Frenchmen out of ten are like that today. Eager to exculpate their country and convince themselves that their enemies have foisted this war on them—so as to justify the reactions of their combative instinct. And as a matter of fact one can't help wondering if young fellows like these don't get a sort of gloomy satisfaction out of suddenly feeling at one with an outraged nation, breathing the heady atmosphere of collective hatred." And it struck him that nothing had changed since the days when Cardinal de Retz made bold to write: "Nothing is of greater consequence in handling a nation than to make it appear to them, even when one attacks, that one has only self-defence in mind."

He addressed the young men again in a low, mournful voice. "Anyhow, please think it over! If you throw in your hand now, tomorrow it will be too late. Don't forget that on the other side of the frontier it's exactly the same as it is here: hatred, lies, and blind, unreasoning hostility. Every nation has become like those young hooligans who scrap like tiger-cats just for scrapping's sake and blame it on to the other fellow. '*He* started it!' Isn't it too ridiculous?"

"Then what the hell . . . ?" the plasterer growled. "Fellows like us that's mobilized, what do you want us to do?"

"If you think that violence and justice are two different things, if you think that human life is sacred, if you think there aren't two kinds of morality—one that condemns murder in peacetime and another that insists on it in wartime—refuse to let yourselves be mobilized. Keep out of the war! Be loyal to yourselves—and to the International!"

Jenny, who had been standing at the door, made a sudden move, and came and stood beside him.

The plasterer had risen. Folding his arms, he retorted indignantly: "To get myself stood up against a wall and shot like a dog? No, sir, nothing doing! Anyhow, at the front a fellow has a chance; with a little luck he saves his skin."

"But," Jacques cried, "can't you see how cowardly it is to shirk your personal responsibility, to let other people, just because they're stronger, decide for you? You tell yourself: 'I disapprove, but I can't do anything about it.' It goes against the grain, but you salve your conscience easily enough with the thought that it's a struggle for you to submit, yet it's the decent thing to do. But can't you see you've been bamboozled by a gang of criminals? Have you forgotten that governments aren't put in power just to tyrannize over their subjects and send them to the slaughter, but to serve, to protect them, to give them happy lives?"

A swarthy-faced man in the thirties, who had said nothing so far, banged the table with his fist. "No, I tell you! You're wrong there. None of that's true today. God knows I've never truckled to the authorities. I'm as good a Socialist as you. I've five years' Party membership behind me. Well, Socialist as I am, I'm ready to shoulder my rifle and stand by the government." Jacques made as if to put in a word, but the man raised his voice. "Just now 'convictions' are neither here nor there. Nationalists, capitalists, all the big boys—we'll see about 'em later. And when it comes to settling their hash, I'll take a hand in it, don't you worry! But just now isn't the time for ideals and all that. We got to settle up with them Fritzes, first of all. Those swine are out for a war. Well, let 'em have one! And, take my word, I'll do my bit to make 'em regret the day they started it!"

Jacques turned away with a vague gesture of resignation; there was nothing to be done here. Taking Jenny's arm, he drew her toward the staircase.

"Still—socialism for ever!" a voice cried behind them. . . .

In the street they walked in silence for a few minutes. Distant rumblings heralded a storm; the sky was black as ink.

"It's a curious thing," Jacques said, "I've always believed—I've said it dozens of times—that wars have nothing to do with emotion, that they're inevitably due to a clash of conflicting economic interests. Well, when I see today how every class of society, without distinction, has worked itself up so easily into a patriotic frenzy, I'm almost beginning to wonder if wars aren't, rather, the result of some instinctive, uncontrollable upsurge of emotions and if the conflict of interests isn't merely a pretext for letting the instincts have their run." He broke off, letting his thoughts run on before he spoke again. "And the most grotesque thing of all is the need they feel, not only to justify themselves, but to proclaim that if they've given in they've done so for good reasons and of their own accord! Their own accord! All these poor wretches who yesterday were fighting doggedly to stave off a war and now are dragged into it against their will are resolutely putting up a show of acting on their own initiative." Again he paused before continuing. "It's positively tragic that all these shrewd, sharp-witted men should suddenly become so gullible once their patriotic emotions are played on. Tragic and almost incomprehensible. Perhaps it’s simply this: the average man identifies himself unthinkingly with his country, his nation, and his government. He gets into the habit of saying: ‘We Frenchmen . . .’ or ‘We Germans. . . .’ And, as each individual genuinely desires peace, it’s impossible for him to admit that *his* country is out for war. Almost one might say that the more a man is keen on peace, the more inclined he is to exonerate his country and his countrymen and the easier it is to convince him that all the provocations come from the foreigner; that his government isn’t to blame and he belongs to a community which is being victimized, and that if he fights for it he’s acting in self-defence.”

He stopped abruptly; big drops of rain were beginning to fall, and they were crossing the open square facing the Bourse.

“Run for it!” he cried. “You’ll get soaked through!”

They reached the arcades of the Rue des Colonnes just in time. The storm that had been threatening all day had broken with dramatic suddenness and violence. The flashes were continuous, nerve-shattering; crashes of thunder rolled their long reverberations between the lofty buildings with the incessant din of a storm in the high mountains. Along the Rue du 4 Septembre a detachment of mounted police trotted past, the riders crouching under the downpour over their steaming horses’ necks, while spray flashed up under the horse-hoofs and, as in a lurid battlepiece, helmets glistened under a sullen sky.

“Let’s go over there,” Jacques suggested, pointing to a dark, already crowded little restaurant under the arcades. “We can have something to eat while we wait.”

After some trouble they found two adjoining empty places in the ring of occupied seats around a marble-topped table.

No sooner was Jenny seated than she felt herself collapsing with fatigue; her knees were trembling, her back and shoulders aching, and her head weighed like a lump of lead. For a moment she fancied she was going to be sick. If only she could lie down, close her eyes, snatch a few minutes’ sleep—delicious sleep, nestling in his arms! Suddenly a memory of the previous night swept over her, and with it came a swift access of energy. Jacques had noticed nothing. She saw his face in profile, the lock of dark hair, shot with glints of red, falling across his forehead. She came near gripping his arm and saying: “Let’s go home. What does all the rest matter? Take me in your arms, hold me, clasp me to your breast!”

All the people round them were engaged in animated conversation, their eyes sparkling with excitement, exchanging fraternal glances as they passed each other salt-cellar or mustard-pot. The wildest, most contradictory rumours were being bandied about with serene assurance and swallowed without a qualm. “What a dreadful storm! Let’s only hope it doesn’t hold up our attack!” sighed a middle-aged lady, her lobster-red face glowing with combative, if vicarious, patriotism. “In 1870,” put in a fat man opposite Jenny, wearing the Légion d’Honneur rosette on his lapel, “the actual fighting didn’t start till long after war was declared, at least two weeks after.” “I hear,” someone remarked, “there’ll be a shortage of sugar.” “And of salt,” added the heroic lady. Turning to Jenny, she whispered in a confidential tone: “I saw it coming, and I’ve taken my precautions, if you know what I mean, my dear.”

The fat man with the rosette, addressing the company at large, launched out into a story he had heard about a colonel in a frontier regiment. His voice was vibrant with an emotion that seemed to act contagiously on his hearers. The gallant colonel, it seemed, on receiving the order to march his men back ten kilometres from the frontier, had taken it to mean that France was flinching before the enemy; preferring death to dishonour, he had blown his brains out in the presence of his regiment.

At the end of the table a workman was eating his meal in silence. Warily his eyes roved the table before settling on Jacques. Then he began speaking in an angry tone. “That’s all very fine and big, for the rest of you. But where do we come in, eh? When we went to draw our wages at the shop this evening, they wouldn’t pay us—not a sou!”

“That’s tough luck!” observed the rosetted gentleman. “Why?”

“Seems, from what the boss says, that all the money’s in a bank, and the bank’s shut. We raised Cain about it, you bet! But there wasn’t nothing to be done. ‘Come back Monday,’ says he.”

“Of course,” the red-faced lady reassured him, “you’ll all get paid on Monday.”

“Monday’s neither here nor there. A lot of my pals is joining up tomorrow. And that means they got to leave their wives and kids without a penny.”

“There’s no need to worry,” said the wearer of the rosette in the tone of one who knows his subject. “The government has made provision for that, as for all other war emergencies. Distributions are going to be made at all the town halls. Our men can feel quite easy about the families they leave behind; the state will look after them. They won’t go short of anything.”

“Eh? Is that so?” the workman muttered, obviously impressed. “Then why didn’t they tell us about it?”

A man beside Jacques who had managed to procure a copy of the late special edition of an evening paper, mentioned Poincaré's message "To the French People."

"Let's see it!" Eager hands were stretched toward him, but the man would not part with his treasure-trove.

"Read it out, then!" commanded the gentleman with the rosette.

The owner of the paper, a weasel-faced little man, settled his glasses on his nose. "It's signed by every member of the Cabinet," he announced dramatically, then began reading in a high-pitched voice. " 'Alive to our responsibilities, and aware that, were we to take no steps to meet the present emergency, we should be failing in our most sacred duties, we have issued the orders which it has rendered imperative.' " He paused to take breath. " 'Mobilization does not necessarily mean war.' "

"Do you hear, Jacques?" Jenny breathed, with a flutter of sudden hope.

Jacques shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "It's a trick for getting the mice into the trap. But, once he's got them in, he'll see they stay there."

" 'On the contrary,' " the shrill voice continued, " 'under the present circumstances, mobilization seems the best means of ensuring peace with honour.' "

All, including those at neighbouring tables, were now listening in silence.

"Louder!" someone called from the end of the room. The man who was reading rose to his feet. And now, as he read on, his voice at whiles broke with emotion; there was something comic and pathetic in the little man's evident illusion that it was he himself who at this moment was addressing France. Solemnly he repeated: " 'Peace with honour. The government counts on our valiant nation to keep its self-command and not give way to unjustified emotion.' "

"Bravo!" cried the red-cheeked lady.

" 'Unjustified'!" Jacques muttered.

" 'We rely on the loyalty of every Frenchman, knowing full well not one of us will fail the call of duty. The hour of party politics is over. For us today nothing counts but France, immortal France, peace-loving, indomitable France; the land of right and justice, a nation standing shoulder to shoulder in dauntless calm, in vigilance and dignity.' "

When the man ceased reading, there ensued a long, tense silence. Then, fired by the exalting theme, everyone began speaking at once. The middle-aged lady's heroism was not an exceptional phenomenon. The man facing

Jenny had gone scarlet as his rosette, and the eyes of the workman who had not been paid had filled with tears. Each had yielded with a sort of rapture to the collective enthusiasm, agreeably lifted above his workaday self, dazed with sublimity, braced up to welcome a martyr's death.

Jacques kept silent. He was picturing the very similar declarations that at the same hour had presumably been signed in other lands, by leaders of the other nations, by the Kaiser and the Tsar. In every country, he mused, those spellbinding phrases are charged with the same power; everywhere they evoke the same ridiculous frenzies of devotion.

He noticed that Jenny had pushed away her plate of soup almost untasted. Making a sign to her, he rose.

The rain had ceased, though drops were still falling from balconies. Torrents of muddy water were swirling along the gutters and plunging with loud gurglings down the drains. People had come out of shelter and the glistening sidewalks were thronged as before the storm with aimlessly hurrying crowds.

"Now let's go to the Chamber of Deputies," Jacques said, feverishly dragging Jenny along beside him. "I wonder what they're up to there with Müller."

Even now, preposterous as it might seem, he could not have affirmed that he had lost all hope.

XVII

UNOBTRUSIVE watch was kept over the Palais-Bourbon by the municipal guards. Alongside the railings enclosing the outer court, however, groups of men were standing about and toward these Jacques made his way, accompanied by Jenny.

In one of the groups, under the light streaming down from the arc-lamps, he had glimpsed Rabbe's tall figure. "The conversations are still under way," the old militant explained. "They've just come out, on their way to dinner. The discussion will be resumed presently. But not here; at the offices of the *Humanité*."

"Well? What are the first impressions?"

"None too good. But it's mighty hard to get to know anything. They were all red in the face, half dead for want of a drink, and kept strictly mum. The only one at all approachable was Siblot, and he made no attempt to hide his disappointment. Isn't that so?" he added, turning to Jumelin, who was coming up.

Jenny scrutinized the two men in silence. Jumelin's looks displeased her. The long, lean face, sallow and perspiring, the beardless, abnormally prominent jaw, the way he had of speaking in short, abrupt phrases without opening his mouth sufficiently, the square shoulders, the hard glitter of the small jet-black eyes, made the girl uncomfortable. Old Rabbe, on the contrary, with his gnarled forehead and the limpid, melancholy gaze, which always rested on Jacques with fatherly affection, greatly appealed to her; she felt he could be trusted.

"That fellow Müller doesn't seem to have any definite instructions," Jumelin observed. "He brings us no firm offer of any kind."

"If that's so, what was the point of his coming?"

"Just to collect information."

"Information!" Jacques exclaimed. "When, as likely as not, the time has passed even for action!"

Jumelin shrugged his shoulders. "You and your precious action! D'you suppose it's still possible to decide on anything, with the situation changing from one hour to the next? Don't you know that Germany, too, has ordered general mobilization? The order came out at five, shortly after ours. And this very evening, they say, Germany will declare war on Russia officially."

"Look here," Jacques put in testily, "has or has not Müller come here to arrange for close co-operation between the German proletariat and the French, to fix up, belated though it has to be, a general strike in both countries?"

"A strike? Certainly not," Jumelin replied. "He has merely come, I believe, to find out whether the Party in France will or will not vote for the military budget the government intends to put before Parliament next Monday. That's all."

"Well, it would be that much gained," Rabbe put in, "if the Socialist members of both Parliaments, French and German, agreed to a common policy on that point."

"I wonder now," Jumelin observed enigmatically.

Jacques was hardly able to restrain his impatience.

"What one *is* entitled to say," Jumelin went on in an impressive tone, "and what our Party leaders, so I gather, have not failed to impress upon Müller in every possible way, is that France has done her utmost to avert war. Down to the very last minute. Even going so far as to move back her covering forces. We French Socialists, anyhow, have a clean conscience in that respect; and we've a perfect right to look upon Germany as the aggressor."

Jacques stared at him in amazement. "In other words," he exclaimed indignantly, "the French Socialist deputies are prepared to vote in favour of the war credits!"

"Anyhow, they can't vote against them."

"They can't? What do you mean?"

"What they're most likely to do is to abstain from voting one way or the other," Rabbe suggested.

"Oh," Jacques cried, "if only Jaurès were still with us!"

"Jaurès? In my opinion, under the present circumstances even the Skipper wouldn't have dared to vote against the government."

"But don't you know"—Jacques's voice was shrill with anger—"that Jaurès showed up time and again the absurdity of attempting to discriminate between the 'aggressor nation' and the 'victim of aggression'? It's a mere pretext for endless quibbling. You all seem to have lost sight of the real causes of the appalling situation we are in today—capitalism and the imperialistic aims of governments. Whatever impressions we may have about who fires the first shot, it's against war—aggressive and defensive equally—that international socialism must protest. Otherwise . . ."

Rabbe approved, but with reservations. "In principle, I agree. And Müller certainly seems to have said something on those lines."

"Well, then?"

Rabbe made no reply, but flung out his arms despondently.

"So that's as far as they've got? And off they marched to dinner, arm in arm?"

"No," Jumelin amended. "You've forgotten to mention that Müller said he wanted to phone Berlin and confer with his Party leaders."

"Good!" Jacques was only too thankful to clutch at the least straw. He turned on his heel, took a few rageful steps, came back, and faced the two men again. "Do you know what my opinion is? I suspect that fellow Müller came here simply to see how far the French Party would go in the way of internationalism and pacifism. And if he'd had to deal with genuine diehards, ready to go to any length, to call a general strike so as to thwart the imperialistic schemes of the government—well, in that case, let me tell you, peace might still have been preserved. Yes, even now, at the eleventh hour, even after orders have gone out for mobilization. Peace might still have been saved if the French and the German workers had united and thrown their weight into the scales. Instead of this, what did he find? A gang of word-spinners, of parlour Socialists, ready enough to denounce war and nationalism in their speeches, but quite prepared to vote in favour of the war credits tomorrow and to give the General Staff a free hand. Down to the very last minute we'll have persisted in the same absurd and criminal anomaly—the same damned shillyshallying between the internationalist ideal, to which we all adhere in theory, and our so-called national interests, which no one, even among the Socialist leaders, is prepared to sacrifice in practice."

While he was speaking, Jenny, exhausted as she was, never took her eyes off him. Jacques's voice worked on her like music, soothing her nerves with its familiar cadences. She seemed all attention, though she was far too weary to listen to the words. She watched Jacques's face and, above all, his curiously expressive lips, restless as though endowed with independent life, and the sight of them gave her a physical sensation, as if his mouth were pressed on hers. Memories of the night spent in his arms made her heart grow faint with yearning. "Oh, why don't we go home?" she kept on saying to herself. "What is he waiting for? Why can't he come away? Let's go home. What does anything else matter?"

Cadieux, bustling from one group to the other, broadcasting "the latest," accosted them. "The Minister of the Interior has just been approached with a request for Müller to be allowed to call Berlin, but—nothing doing! All communication has been cut off. It's too late for anything to be done. There's martial law on both sides of the frontier."

"There went perhaps our last chance," Jacques whispered, turning to Jenny.

Cadieux overheard the remark. "The last chance for what?" he mocked.

"For action by the proletariat, for international action."

Cadieux had a twisted smile. "International, did you say? My dear fellow, let's see things as they are; from now on, there's only one thing that is international, and it's not the pacifist movement—it's war."

Was this only a forlorn attempt at wit? Shrugging his shoulders, Cadieux slipped away into the darkness.

"It's true," Jumelin muttered, "only too true. War has broken out. Whether we face the fact with good grace or bad, we Socialists—like all other Frenchmen—are from now on at war. Some day, I suppose, we'll get a chance of starting our international activities again, but that day's far ahead. For the time being pacifism is . . . a dead letter!"

"Can it be you, Jumelin, who talk like that?" Jacques exclaimed.

"Yes, it's me! We're up against a new state of affairs; there's a war on. To my mind, that alters everything, and our duty, as Socialists, is perfectly plain; we mustn't make things harder for the government."

Jacques stared at him in amazement. "And so you'd let yourself be mobilized?"

"Why, certainly. Next Tuesday, let me inform you, Comrade Jumelin will be a humble private in the 239th Territorial Regiment at Rouen."

Jacques stared at his feet, but made no comment. Rabbe came up and patted him on the shoulder. "Don't make yourself out more mulish than you are. If you don't think as he does today, I'll bet you will tomorrow. Why, it's as plain as can be: the cause of France is the cause of democracy. It's up to us as Socialists to stand up for democracy against those ruffianly imperialist powers that are attacking us."

"So you, too . . . ?"

"Surely, my boy. If I was a few years younger, I'd volunteer for active service. I'll have a shot at it, even as it is. They may possibly find some use for these old bones of mine. Why do you stare at me like that? I haven't changed my mind. I sincerely hope to live long enough to be able some day to take up the fight against militarism once more. I still loathe militarism like poison. But it's no good blinking the facts. Militarism isn't what it used to be. One mayn't like it, but militarism today is the salvation of France; more than that, it's the salvation of democracy in the hour of peril. So I'm burying the hatchet—for the time being. And I'm quite prepared to act as the rest of the boys are acting—get hold of a gun and do my bit for the country. Later on—we shall see what we shall see."

He boldly met Jacques's disapproving gaze. The ghost of a smile, in which confusion and pride struggled for mastery, hovered about his lips, making the forlorn expression of his eyes more poignant still.

"Even Rabbe!" Jacques murmured to himself, averting his eyes. The air had suddenly become unbreathable. Catching Jenny's arm, he walked away with her abruptly, without a word of farewell.

Outside the gateway an excited crowd had gathered. In the middle of the crowd Pagès, Gallot's private secretary, was holding forth, gesticulating wildly. Among the younger militants surrounding him, Jacques recognized several familiar faces: Bouvier, Hérard, and Fougerolle; Latour, a leading trade unionist; Odelle and Chardent, editors on the *Humanité* staff.

Pagès caught sight of Jacques and beckoned to him. “Have you heard the news? A wire from St. Petersburg has just come in. Germany declared war on Russia this evening.”

Bouvier, a sickly-looking man in the forties, with a sallow complexion, who often figured as a speaker at public meetings, turned toward Jacques. “It’s an ill wind blows no one any good. Out there at the front there’ll be work for everyone. Let ’em supply us with rifles and ammunition, and let’s get on with the job.”

Jacques did not answer him. He distrusted Bouvier; the man’s shifty eyes displeased him. Mourlan had observed to him one evening as they left a political meeting at which Bouvier had delivered himself of a particularly violent harangue: “I’ve got no use for that fellow. He’s a bit too zealous for my taste. Every time arrests are made, he’s one of the first to be snapped up, but by some mysterious chance he always gets discharged.”

“The biggest joke,” Bouvier went on with a smothered laugh, “is that they think they’re sending us to fight a nationalist war. They haven’t the faintest notion that within a month from now it’s a civil war we shall be fighting.”

“And within a couple of months, a revolution!” cried Latour.

Jacques inquired icily: “So you, too, are going to let yourselves be mobilized?”

“Why, of course! It’s too good a chance to let slip.”

“What about you, Pagès?”

“What do you suppose!” His features did not have their usual expression, and there was an unwonted shrillness in his voice. He spoke, in fact, as if he had been drinking. “Now, this war that’s starting, we’re not to blame if it’s not been possible to stop it. It had to come, and it’s no use crying over spilt milk. At least let it bring about the end of this rotten social order which doesn’t even realize that it’s compassing its own destruction. It rests with us to make sure that capitalism doesn’t survive the disaster it has brought upon itself. Let this war at least serve the cause of social evolution, let it be to the advantage of mankind, let it be the last, the freedom-giving war!”

“War on war!” a raucous voice yelled from the shadows.

“We’re going to fight,” Odelle exclaimed, “but as soldiers of the revolution, for the final disarmament and emancipation of every people of the earth.”

Hérard, a postoffice employee, who always commanded attention on account of his extraordinary likeness to Briand—whose deep voice also he brought to mind, with its rich, passionate overtones—added slowly: “Yes, thousands and thousands of innocent people are going to be slaughtered. It’s foul! And the only thing that can possibly reconcile one to such an abomination is the thought that we shall thus be paying the ransom of the future. Those who survive this baptism of blood will have newly tempered souls. They will see nothing before them but ruins. But on those ruins they will at last be able to build up the new social order.”

Jenny, standing behind Jacques, saw his shoulders lift a little. She thought he was about to take part in the discussion. But he turned toward her without saying a word. She was struck by the change in his expression. Again he linked his arm in hers and moved away from the group, pressing her to his side. He was glad to have her with him; the feeling of loneliness that had come over him lost something of its bitterness. “No,” he thought. “No! Far better die than tolerate what my very soul abhors! Far better die than be guilty of such a betrayal!”

“Did you hear them?” he said after a while. “It’s simply incredible the way they’ve changed!”

Just then Fougerolle, who had not uttered a word during the talk outside the gates, came up to them. “You’re quite right,” he blurted out, abruptly forcing them to come to a standstill. “I had half a mind to desert, let me tell you, rather than play false to my ideas. Yes, that’s how I felt. But if I were to do so, I’d never feel certain of having done it from conscientious motives and not out of sheer panic. For there’s no denying it, I’m scared stiff! And so, ridiculous as it is, I’ll act as they will; I’ll join up.”

Without giving Jacques time to answer, he marched resolutely off.

“I dare say lots of others feel as he does,” Jacques murmured pensively.

Skirting the Palais-Bourbon along the Rue de Bourgogne, they walked down to the Seine.

“Do you know what struck me most?” Jacques said after another silence. “It was the look in their eyes, the tone of their voices, a sort of involuntary exhilaration one couldn’t help noticing in their behaviour. In fact, one can’t help wondering, supposing they were to hear tonight that orders had been issued for demobilization, whether their first reaction wouldn’t be one of disappointment. And the most tragic thing of all,” he went on in the same breath, “is the tremendous amount of energy expended by them in the service of war. The courage, the contempt of death. The waste of so much steadfastness of spirit, a hundredth part of which would have been enough to stop war from breaking out if only it had been employed, while there yet was time, in the service of peace!”

On their way across the Pont de la Concorde, they met Stefany, walking alone, with bowed head, horn-rimmed spectacles straddling the big, bony nose. He, too, was hurrying to the spot, eager to learn the outcome of the negotiations.

Jacques informed him that the conversations had been adjourned and were to be resumed a little later on, in the *Humanité* building.

“In that case I’ll go back to the office,” Stefany declared, turning back.

Jacques was still lost in sombre thought. He took a few steps without speaking; then, remembering Mourlan’s prophecy, he plucked Stefany’s sleeve. “It’s all over,” he said. “There are no true Socialists left. There are only Socialists-in-uniform.”

“What makes you say that?”

“They’re all prepared to take part in the war. They imagine they’re obeying their conscience by sacrificing their revolutionary ideals to the ‘my-country-is-in-danger’ mumbo-jumbo. The bitterest opponents of war have been the most eager to join up: Jumelin, Pagès, every one of them! Why, old Rabbe himself is prepared to volunteer if they’ll have him!”

“What? Rabbe?” Stefany sounded incredulous, but caught himself up at once. “No, I’m not really surprised. Cadieux is off as well, and Berthet, and Jourdain. They’ve all had their marching-orders in their pockets since yesterday. Even Gallot, near-sighted as he is, has begged Guesde to put in a word for him at the ministry to get him approved by the commissariat and sent on active service.”

“The Party’s leaderless, in fact,” Jacques gloomily summed up.

“The Party? I wouldn’t go so far as that. But what certainly is leaderless is the opposition to the forces that make for war.”

Jacques drew closer to his friend in a rush of brotherly affection. “You, too, are of the opinion, aren’t you, that if Jaurès were still with us . . . ?”

“Of course, he’d be on our side! Or rather the Party would have stood by him to a man. Dunois it was who put the matter in a nutshell: ‘The Socialist conscience wouldn’t be divided against itself.’ ”

In silence they crossed the Place de la Concorde, which, now there was no wheeled traffic, seemed more spacious, more brilliantly lighted than usual. Stefany’s sallow face kept twitching spasmodically. All of a sudden he stopped dead. The light from a street-lamp, lengthening his features, made them stand out in clean-cut relief and struck brief, intermittent flashes from the glasses masking the darkness of his deep-set eyes.

“Jaurès!” he exclaimed. As he uttered the name his melodious Southern voice took on so tender, so heart-broken an intonation that Jacques felt a lump rise to his throat. “Do you know what he said in my presence, last Thursday, just as he was leaving Brussels? Huysmans was starting back to Amsterdam and saying good-bye to him. The Skipper looked him squarely in the eyes, and said: ‘Look here, Huysmans. Even if war should break out, mind you keep the International afloat. If friends beg you to take sides in the struggle, do nothing of the sort. Keep the International afloat. Even if I myself were to come and beg you to declare yourself for one side or the other, don’t listen, Huysmans! At all costs, whatever happens, stand by the International.’ ”

Jacques was stirred to the depths of his being. “Yes, even if there are but ten of us left. Even if there are but two. Our duty is to keep the International alive, whatever happens.” His voice was vibrant with emotion. Jenny, deeply moved herself, drew close to his side, but he did not seem to notice her. Once again he repeated slowly, as though making a vow to himself: “To keep the International alive!”

But how is one to go about it? he mused. And it seemed to him that he was setting forth alone into the heart of darkness. . . .

It was past midnight when Jacques and Jenny left the *Humanité* offices, where a crowd of militants had gathered to hear the latest news. Though he had lost all hope, Jacques had been unwilling to leave the place without knowing the upshot of the conversations with the German delegate. Time and again, distressed by Jenny’s look of utter weariness, he had begged her to go home to bed, saying he would join her later on; but on every occasion she had refused to go. Finally, in Stefany’s private office, where they had taken refuge in company with a score of other Socialists, Gallot informed them that the conference was drawing to an end. Indeed, Müller and de Man had cut things fine; it was as much as they could do to make the Gare du Nord in time for the last train to Belgium that was available for civilians. Jacques and Jenny saw them rushing down the passage. Cachin, who was wearing the sash that proclaimed his rank as deputy, was detailed to see them to the train and safely off. Even so, there were doubts as to whether Müller would be allowed to cross the Belgian frontier.

Under a volley of questions, Gallot irritably shook his tousled head. In the end, however, a few scraps of information were wrung from him. By and large, he admitted, this final contact between the French and German Socialists had yielded no result whatever. After six hours of heart-to-heart discussion, it had been found necessary to be content with the expression of a pious hope that both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Reichstag the Socialists, without actually voting against the war credits, would at least abstain from voting at all. The meeting had adjourned, after reaching the pathetically lame conclusion that, "considering the unsettled nature of the situation, there was no immediate possibility of entering into more definite commitments."

In fact, it had been a complete fiasco. The doctrine of international solidarity had been proved a mere delusion and a snare.

Jacques turned and gazed at Jenny, as though seeking from her some consolation for his frustrated hopes. She was seated at a little distance from him on a stool, leaning against a bookcase, with her hands listlessly resting on her knees. The light from a lamp above fell slantwise on her profile, forming deep pools of shadow under her eyelids and cheekbones. The effort it cost her to keep her eyes open had dilated the pupils. He had a sudden longing to fold her in his arms, rock her to sleep, bring respite to her weariness. And the pity Jacques was feeling for mankind that night suddenly crystallized into a vast compassion for this frail, tired girl who from now on was to mean all the world for him.

He went up to her, helped her to rise, and silently led her from the room. She hurried down the staircase in front of him, her weariness a thing of the past. But once outside in the street, when she felt Jacques's feverish arm steal round her waist, she suddenly was conscious in the midst of her joy of a curious, indefinable thrill of something still more potent than the deep emotion linking her to him body and soul—a thrill quite new to her and terrifying in its violence, and bringing such a rush of blood to her head that she felt dizzy, all but lost her balance, and raised her hand to her brows.

"Why, Jenny, you're worn out!" he exclaimed in dismay. "What's to be done? I'm afraid there's no prospect of getting a cab tonight."

Clinging to each other, their tired nerves all on edge, they made their way across the darkness.

There were still quite a number of people in the streets. Small groups of policemen and municipal guards were posted at every crossing.

In the Place de Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, they were surprised to find the doors of the church wide open. The nave glowed in the darkness like some magic grotto, its coigns of shadow lit with clustered candles that made the apse a haze of broken lights. Late though the hour was, the aisles were full of silent figures bent in prayer; on their knees round the confessionals, a number of young men were awaiting their turn. Jacques was greatly interested and could not help being moved at the thought of the distress of mind that lay behind this uprush of religious feeling. He even made as if to enter the church, but Jenny indignantly pulled him away. Instinctively, no doubt, with three centuries of Protestantism in her blood, she balked at the pomp and “idolatry” of Roman Catholic ceremonial.

They began walking again, without exchanging their impressions.

Jenny was growing more and more exhausted, and leaned heavily on Jacques’s arm. At one moment, for no apparent reason, she took his hand and pressed her cheek to it. He stopped short, his senses tingling. Casting a quick glance round, he drew her into a doorway and caught her in his arms. “At last!” she thought. Her lips grew soft and now she made no effort to elude his kiss, the kiss she had been awaiting so many weary hours. Shutting her eyes, with a thrill of pleasure she gave her lips to his.

After crossing the Central Market, they walked up the Boulevard Saint-Michel. The time, by the Law Courts clock, was a quarter-past one. There were no longer so many pedestrians about, but, in the main streets leading to the city gates, the roadway was occupied by an endless stream of commandeered vehicles, horses led by the bridle, motor-cars driven by soldiers in uniform, regiments marching in silence to secret destinations. That night there was no rest anywhere in Europe.

They made slow progress. Jenny was limping, and she confessed to Jacques that one of her shoes was hurting. He insisted on her leaning more heavily on his arm, and held her up, all but carried her bodily. It made her feel at once mortified and deeply touched. As they drew nearer home, an undercurrent of anxiety mingled with their impatience. Both were conscious of having reached the extreme limit of mental and physical endurance, yet all the same, across the dusk of weariness and foreboding, glowed a steady flame of joy.

Jenny’s first glance, after switching on the light in the hall, was to make sure, as she never failed to do when she came in, that the concierge had not slipped a telegram from Vienna under the door. Nothing. Her heart sank. There was no longer any chance of hearing from her mother before they left.

“Let’s hope communications between Austria and Switzerland haven’t been cut,” she murmured. That was now her sole remaining hope.

Jacques tried to comfort her. “The moment we get to Geneva, we’ll go round to the French consulate.”

They lingered in the hall, each obsessed by memories of the previous night; and suddenly they were abashed at finding themselves alone again under the garish light that ruthlessly revealed their faces drawn with fatigue and their eyes haunted by the same recollection.

"Come," Jacques said, but dared not make a move. Unthinkingly he stooped to pick up a newspaper, folded it slowly, and replaced it on the hall-table. "I'm simply dying for a drink of water," he remarked with somewhat forced unconcern. "How about you?"

"So'm I."

In the kitchen the remains of their midday meal still littered the table. "Our first lunch together." Jacques smiled. "And didn't I enjoy it!"

He turned on the tap, waited till the water ran cold, then handed the glass to Jenny, who had sunk into the nearest chair. She took a few sips and gave the glass back to him, turning away her eyes. She was sure he would put his lips to the place where she had put her own. He gulped down two glassfuls in quick succession, gave a little grunt of satisfaction, and came over to her. Taking her face between his hands, he bent toward her. But he merely gave her a long look, his face almost touching hers. Then he said very gently: "You poor darling, it's terribly late, and you're quite fagged out. And tomorrow night there's that dreadful train journey before us. Now you just go and have a good long sleep in your own bed."

She did not answer, but her shoulders suddenly drooped. He forced her to rise; swaying on her feet, she let him draw her to the door of her room.

It was in darkness but for the faint glimmer of the summer night sky entering through the window.

"Now you must go to sleep, go to sleep," he whispered in her ear, like an incantation.

She straightened up and remained standing in the doorway, pressed close against him.

"Over there!" Her voice came in a whisper.

"Over there" meant the couch in Daniel's room. He took a deep breath, but gave no answer. When Jenny had consented to go with him to Switzerland, his first thought had been: It's in Geneva she'll be mine. But after the tempestuous emotions of that eventful day, the balance of the universe seemed to have been shattered. The unforeseen had become normal; the exceptional, the rule; no pledge held good.

For a few moments yet, fully conscious of the struggle within him, he stood fast. Then, moving back a step, he gazed earnestly at her.

She looked up at him; her eyes were crystal-clear. The same unrest, the same joy, pure and profound, possessed them both.

Then, “Yes,” he said at last.

XVIII

DUE in Paris shortly before five in the afternoon, the Simplon express did not reach Laroche Junction till after eleven p.m. There it was promptly relegated to a siding so as to leave the main line free for army supply trains. Composed almost entirely of third-class cars, the train was packed, with thirteen or fourteen passengers wedged into compartments intended to take ten. At one in the morning, after much shunting and several false starts, it drew out laboriously from Laroche. Three a.m. found it feeling its way through Melun station, soon after leaving which it came to a stop on the Seine bridge. Night was waning, and the bend of the river glimmered faintly in the dusk; lines of street-lamps twinkling across the dawn-mist revealed the nearness of the city. Little by little, behind the hills, a pale sheen was spreading up the sky, and against the light a long line of moving forms came into view, a regiment on the march along the river-bank.

At last, at half-past four, after innumerable delays and stops in tunnels, whistling incessantly and pulling up at every signal as it crawled through the suburbs, the train drew up at a platformless siding three hundred yards from the Paris terminal.

Mme. de Fontanin joined the stream of passengers whom railway employees had bundled out of the train onto the roadbed and were shepherding along the tracks toward the station. The heavy suitcase she was carrying hit her ankles at every step and made her stagger.

When she left Vienna in one of the last trains conveying foreigners to Italy, the city had been in a fever of war activity. She had been travelling for three days, had changed trains seven times, and had not slept for three nights. Nevertheless, she had succeeded in getting the charges against her husband withdrawn, and the name of Fontanin was not to appear in the proceedings.

The Gare de Lyon looked more like a bivouac than a railway terminal. Red-trousered men were everywhere, and Mme. de Fontanin had to thread her way between piles of arms. At every turn she came against barriers guarded by sentries and was compelled to retrace her steps a dozen times before finally leaving the station. Her haunting anxiety for her son was intensified by the sight of all these men in uniform. She had had no news of him since her departure; but, she consoled herself, there would certainly be letters awaiting her at home. What destiny lay in store for him? she wondered. A picture rose before her of her soldier son in his smart uniform, his helmet flashing in the early light as he reined in his horse beside some frontier boundary-post, ready to defend his country in its hour of peril. He is in God’s keeping, she mused, and to fear for him would be unfaith in Providence.

No taxis or buses were to be found outside the station. No matter; she could very well walk home. The joy of feeling so near her goal made her almost forget how tired she was. But what about her baggage? Outside the baggage room she had seen a waiting line of people more than a hundred strong. On the far side of the wide square facing the station she descried an open café; with an effort she carried the heavy bag across to it. The tables were in disorder, the waiters half asleep, and, though the sun was getting high, several lamps were still on; evidently the café, regulations notwithstanding, had remained open all night. The girl at the cash-desk, moved to pity by the white-haired lady’s pleading smile, agreed to look after the valise for her, and, relieved of her burden, Mme. de Fontanin set out homeward. At last she was near the end of her tribulations; in half an hour or so she would be back at home with Jenny, sipping her morning tea. The prospect gave her a new lease of energy.

On that morning of the second of August, despite the early hour, the streets of Paris were so full of people that she was surprised to find the street-door closed. Her watch had stopped; as she walked past the concierge’s room, the curtains of which were drawn, she made a hasty guess at the time—half-past five or earlier. Jenny’s asleep, she thought as she climbed the stairs to the apartment; she’ll have put up the chain—I wonder if she’ll hear the door-bell.

Before ringing, on the off-chance, she tried her key in the lock. The door opened at the first turn; it was not even double-locked.

The first thing her eyes fell on in the hall was a man’s hat, a black felt hat. Could it be Daniel’s? Impossible. All the doors stood open. A sudden panic seized her. She took a few steps forward. At the end of the corridor the light was on in the kitchen. What did it mean? Could she be dreaming? Her mind seemed to have gone blank; she steadied herself against the wall and listened. Not a sound. It looked as if the apartment were empty. What about that hat, though, and the light on in the kitchen? Burglars? Without thinking, she began walking down the corridor. Suddenly, at the open door of Daniel's bedroom, she stopped short, stared aghast. On the sofa lay two bodies locked in a close embrace.

For a second the still more horrible idea of murder glanced across her mind; a second only, for at once she recognized the faces nestling on the rumpled cushions: Jenny was sleeping in Jacques's arms.

Hurriedly she shrank back into the shadows of the corridor, pressing her hand to her bosom as though the clamour of her heart might betray her presence. Her one thought was to escape, to banish from her sight that hideous humiliation, theirs and hers.

She tiptoed hastily back into the hall. A sudden faintness came over her; her limbs seemed giving way beneath her. She felt inclined to wonder if she had not been the victim of a hallucination till her eyes fell again on Jacques's hat insolently lording it on the hall-table. Then, bracing herself, she opened the door softly, softly drew it behind her, and, clinging to the banisters, walked, step by dragging step, down the interminable flights of stairs.

And now . . . ? To get the street-door open would she have to wake up the concierge, give her name, tell of her return, account for this precipitate departure? As it happened, the concierge, awakened presumably by her arrival, had got up and was dressing. There was a light behind the curtains and the street-door stood open. She crept out like an escaping thief.

She had no idea where to go, where to seek refuge. Crossing the street, she entered the public gardens. No one was about. Wearily she dropped onto the nearest seat. About her all was silence, the limpid calm of a summer dawn. The only sound was a remote, incessant drone of trucks and transport wagons rumbling down the Boulevard Saint-Michel.

Mme. de Fontanin made no effort to understand; she did not even speculate as to what could have been happening during her absence or how things could have come to that pass. Indeed, coherent thinking was beyond her. But she still could *see*, and the picture hovering before her mind's eye had all the vividness of reality—the crumpled cushions on the sofa, the pale gleam of Jenny's bare foot in the dawnlight filtering through the curtain, Jacques's arm round her neck, their attitude of languorous abandon, and, lingering on their lips drawn near in sleep, an expression of rapturous, half-anguished ecstasy. Ashamed and scandalized though she was, she could not help murmuring: "How nice they looked!" Already her indignation, her first reaction of disgust, was being tempered by that other sentiment so deeply engrained in her: her respect for others' freedom of action and personal responsibility, for human destiny. . . .

It seemed almost as if Jacques had grown dimly aware in sleep that something had stirred in the apartment; his eyelids fluttered, he opened his eyes. In a flash it all came back to him. Before resting on Jenny's sleep-bound face, his gaze roved over a bare foot, the soft curve of a breast, a shoulder. What sadness, he thought, is in the set of her young lips; how those calm features seem marked by suffering! By suffering and yet by infinite repose—like the death-mask of a child whose last agony has been intense.

Holding his breath, he kept his eyes fixed on the tormented lips and for the while his love was mastered by a vast compassion, by remorse and apprehension for the days to come. They were puppets of fatality—no, not of fatality; he had all along intended this should happen, he alone had sought it. From the first he had marked Jenny down as his prey. As a boy at Maisons-Laffitte it was he who had thrust himself upon her, forced her love—only to take flight immediately, leaving her to her despair. And now, this summer, once more he had returned to the attack, just when she was beginning to regain her peace of mind, to forget. Now the irreparable had happened; a week ago she could still have lived without him. No longer was that possible. Henceforth she was his, must follow where he led. Toward what unknown, what desperate adventure? Without him now she would find no savour in life. And with him—would she be happy? No; only too well he knew it. Antoine was right: he was not the kind of man to bring happiness to another.

The thought of Antoine slewed his gaze round toward the clock. He had to see his brother off this morning. Twenty to six. In five minutes he must be up.

Through the open window came an intermittent rumble; regiments, transport wagons, artillery trains were passing through the city. War was there beside them, sounding its malevolent reveille with the break of day. August 2. Paris had wakened to a world at war.

He sat up, listened attentively, staring straight before him, his brows clammy with sweat. Now and then the sounds died away, and a tense silence followed; a silence broken only by the twittering of birds and the rustle of wind in the tree-tops. Then in the distance the ominous rumble set in again. Another regiment was debouching into the boulevard; the tramp of marching feet drew nearer, swelled to a steady roar that crowded out the silence, drowning the small, gay sounds of birds, jarring the bright air with its ponderous rhythm.

Very gently he slipped his arm again around Jenny's shoulders and drew her sleeping form toward him. He felt her body suddenly becoming tense as flesh touched flesh, and heard her whisper: "No, dear—*please*!" But then her eyelids parted; a tender, timid smile grew on her lips and slowly, very slowly, the fear died from her eyes. For a moment they stayed thus, linked in each other's arms, their limbs quivering a little with memories of the night. But their memories were not the same. When Jacques tightened his embrace, Jenny instinctively shrank away; the fear of suffering again paralysed her emotion. At last, vanquished by love, by weakness, by the thrill of self-sacrifice no less than her own desire, she yielded. Deliberately yielded—but to her act of self-surrender she imparted just enough passion, and even joy, for Jacques to be misled and fail to guess the dread, the resignation, and the effort of will that lay behind it. . . .

Leaning back on the seat, her hands folded on her lap, Mme. de Fontanin was gazing vaguely into the distance, too tired for thought, unaware of the lapse of time.

The morning sun shone bright, birds were singing everywhere, and the garden with its greenery and flowers and statues casting their long shadows on the grass seemed like a neutral haven from the world's unrest. Of the men and women who hurried past across the avenue none came near or cast a glance at the lonely woman in mourning sitting by herself. The trees hid from her the windows of her apartment, but she could see beyond a shrubbery the front door of the building.

Suddenly she lowered her head, let down her veil. Jacques, followed by Jenny, had appeared in the doorway. They were too far off to recognize her. When after some moments she looked up again, they were walking rapidly away.

She drew a deep breath; the blood was racing wildly in her veins. Haggard-eyed, she watched the two receding forms till they were out of sight. For a little while she sat on, without the heart to move. At last she rose and almost briskly—the long wait, in spite of all, had rested her a little—started walking home.

XIX

"YOU'D better stay here and rest," Jacques had said to Jenny. "I'm going to see Antoine off. After that I'll say good-bye to Mourlan, and look in at the C.G.T. and *Humanité* offices. I'll be back here to fetch you somewhere around noon."

But Jenny would hear nothing of this programme. She was quite determined not to stay in the apartment by herself.

"And how about your packing? And the famous tidying-up you were talking about yesterday? Why, you'll never be ready in time for the evening train," he added teasingly.

She smiled. There was something quite new in her smile, and a shy, sensuous languor misted her gaze.

"Oh, I've my morning all fixed up. I'm going to have another look at that little garden, *our* garden, beside St. Vincent's Church. You can meet me there, after you've seen your brother off at the station, or later if you prefer. That all right, Jacques dear?"

They agreed to walk together across the Luxembourg Gardens to Antoine's place. After that, she would go to St. Vincent's Church and wait patiently for him to rejoin her in the garden. She ran to her room to dress.

Antoine had left Anne at three in the morning. Unable to resist a nostalgic craving to see her once again, he had indulged in this last joyless joy—without illusions, like the condemned man taking his last repast before he mounts the scaffold. But Anne's outburst of wild despair as he said good-bye, and his own regret for having thus weakly yielded to desire, had left him profoundly shaken. He had returned in the small hours and spent the rest of the night on his feet, turning out drawers, burning old letters and the like, and enclosing small sums of money in envelopes marked with the names of various recipients-to-be: M. Chasle, the maids, Mlle. de Waize—not forgetting the two young orphans living in the Rue de Verneuil: the bright little office-boy Robert Bonnard and his brother. For he had kept in touch with them, if intermittently, and did not wish them to find themselves stranded in the financial chaos of the first weeks of the war. Then he had written a long letter to Gise, advising her to stay in England, and another letter to Jacques—addressed to Geneva, for he was convinced that, after what had passed between them on the previous day, his brother would not come to bid him good-bye. In a few affectionate phrases he told Jacques how sorry he was to have wounded him and begged him to write now and then.

Then he had gone to his dressing-room and put on his uniform. Once in uniform, he felt his calm returning—as if he had taken the plunge and the worst was over.

As he buckled on his leggings he mentally recapitulated all he had planned to do before his departure. Nothing had been overlooked. A comforting thought that added to his self-composure. It suddenly struck him that a good many more things would be needed if he was to carry out efficiently his duties as medical officer in the field. Promptly he bundled out the contents of his army medical kit—though he had given much care and thought to packing it the night before—and replaced the greater part of his personal effects, clothing, and even the books which in a moment of weakness he had decided to take with him by everything he could find in his cabinets in the way of bandages, compresses, forceps, syringes, anæsthetics, and antiseptics.

The two maids had been up and about for some hours, and were roaming in the passages. Léon had already left Paris; before joining his regiment he had wanted to go to his hometown to say good-bye to “the old folks.”

Adrienne entered and announced that breakfast was served in the dining-room. Her eyes were red. She begged Antoine to find room in his kit for a cold roast chicken, wrapped in paper, that she had brought with her. . . .

As he was rising from the breakfast-table there was a ring at the bell. He sped to the door and an affectionate smile lit up his face. Could it be Jacques?

Jacques it was. He halted in the doorway. Antoine went up to him rather awkwardly. Both were tongue-tied with emotion and they shook hands in silence, as if nothing had passed between them on the previous day.

At last Jacques managed to get out a few words. “I was afraid I’d be too late. Were you just going to start?”

“Yes. It’s seven. Time to be moving.”

He did his best to steady his voice. With a would-be careless gesture he picked up his service-cap and put it on. It did not fit and sat comically perched on the top of his head. Had his head grown since his last period of military service? he wondered. Or was he wearing his hair longer nowadays? Catching sight of himself in the hall-mirror, he frowned. As he clumsily buckled on his belt, his eyes lingered on the familiar scene, in a last leave-taking of home, civilian life—his pre-war self. But always they strayed back to the unflattering reflection in the glass.

The two maids, who had been hovering in the background, watching him, burst into loud sobs. Vexed though he was, Antoine conjured up a smile and shook hands with each. "Now, then, you two, what's all the fuss about?"

His martial tone did not ring quite true. Noticing it, to cut things short, he turned to Jacques. "Lend us a hand with this contraption, like a good fellow."

Each gripping a handle of the medicine-chest, they walked onto the landing. As they crossed the threshold, a corner of the chest grazed the open door, scoring a long furrow in the newly varnished woodwork. Noticing it, Antoine made an involuntary gesture of annoyance, promptly amended to one of unconcern. No moment, perhaps, brought home to him more vividly than this the rift between his past life and the days to come.

They went down the two flights of stairs without exchanging a word. Antoine felt half stifled in his stiff collar and tight-fitting jacket, and his service-boots seemed made of lead. By the time they reached the foot of the stairs he was quite out of breath.

"Silly of me!" he panted. "I'd quite forgotten about the elevator!"

Foreseeing that no taxis would be available, he had decided to use his own car. Victor, his chauffeur, had been called up for service in a motor transport unit, so he took with him an elderly mechanic from a neighbouring garage to drive the car back.

The concierge, in a white dressing-jacket, was waiting under the portico to see him off. "Oh, M. Antoine!" she whimpered.

"Good-bye, see you again soon!" he cried cheerfully, then, after installing the mechanic in the back of the car and Jacques in the seat beside him, took the wheel.

The streets were getting crowded already. The sanitation services had partly broken down and unemptied garbage-cans stood in the doorways.

On the road beside the Seine the car had to make a long halt to allow a column of trucks and dismantled buses with army drivers to go by. They were held up again at the Pont Royal, where the middle of the road was blocked by a crowd of people gazing skyward and waving their hats enthusiastically. Leaning out to look up, Jacques saw five airplanes in V-formation flying very low and heading north-east. The tricolour badges on the lower wings were plainly visible.

In the Rue de Rivoli, between two lines of spectators, a regiment of colonial infantry in field-service uniform marched by without a band. The silence was impressive and, as the commanding officers rode past, the men in the crowd raised their hats.

The balconies in the Avenue de l’Opéra were gay with flags. They passed a Red Cross ambulance unit, then a detachment of soldiers in fatigue coats, carrying packs and shovels. At the Place de l’Opéra they had to halt again as an artillery train, followed by ten armoured cars, roared down the boulevard toward the Bastille. On the roof of the opera-house workmen were busy installing searchlights in view of a possible night-raid by “*Taubes*.”

Despite the efforts of the police to disperse them, excited mobs were massed in front of Austrian and German shops that had been looted during the night. The sidewalk beside the Cristallerie de Bohême was strewn with broken glass and china. The Brasserie Viennoise looked as if a storming-party had gone through it; the front had been completely, wrecked and inside was a chaos of shattered mirrors, tables, and chairs reduced to matchwood.

Silently Jacques noted these earliest symptoms of patriotism running amuck. He found these street-scenes and the expressions of people’s faces extraordinarily interesting. He would have liked to say something to his brother, but nothing came; he hoped his silence would seem due to the presence of the garage hand behind them. Meanwhile thoughts were racing through his mind in feverish haste: of Jenny, of their night together, and of their impending journey to Geneva. . . . But then—what next? Always his mind came up against the problem and found no issue. The Talking Shop, Meynestrel. . . . No, on no account would he let himself be drawn back into that life of futile conspiracies, vain palaverings, eternal marking time. Not words but deeds he wanted now; a life of action with all its perils.

Suddenly he gave a start. Antoine, who had been driving at a snail’s pace, sounding the horn at every moment to clear a way through the crowds that kept swarming over the roadway, had seized the opportunity of a momentary halt to take one hand off the wheel and, without a word, without even turning his head, to lay his hand gently on Jacques’s knee. But before Jacques had a chance of responding to this fraternal token of affection, the car had started moving again and Antoine had withdrawn his hand.

The Rue de Maubeuge was black with men about to join their regiments, pressing forward up the hill that led to the station; many were accompanied by wives and parents.

“What a hurry they’re in!” Jacques’s voice betrayed his amazement.

“And the chances are,” Antoine remarked ironically, with a forced laugh, “that all these poor devils will have to wait half the day or longer, parked on a platform, before they are entrained.”

Yes, Jacques thought, they want to report on time, they’re eager to start their war with a punctual kowtow to discipline! How little they must understand that they’re the greater number and could, if they chose, have the last word about it all!

A wooden paling run up during the night, and picketed by troops, barred access to the station. There was no question of driving up to it, so dense was the crowd, and Antoine stopped the car and alighted. Jacques helped him across the road with his field-chest. The narrow entrance was guarded by an infantry platoon with fixed bayonets. Only mobilized men were allowed to pass the barrier.

A sergeant-major was inspecting the reservists’ service-books. Glancing up, he saw Antoine’s bands, saluted, and at once detailed a private to carry the officer’s kit.

Antoine turned his head and looked at Jacques. Each read the same question in the other’s eyes: “Shall we meet again?” And both at the same moment felt their tears welling up uncontrollably. All their youth, every detail, trivial yet unique, of their home life together in earlier days, stored up in their memories and theirs alone, flashed into consciousness like pictures on a screen. Simultaneously they opened their arms and clumsily embraced each other. The peak of Antoine’s field service-cap jogged Jacques’s felt hat. Years and years had passed since they had thus embraced—in fact, they had never done so since those childhood days which memory had just now brought back to them so vividly.

The man detailed to carry Antoine’s kit had shouldered it and was beginning to move away. Hastily Antoine freed himself, and now his one idea was to follow the man, not to lose sight of his field-chest—the only thing in this new world that still was truly his. He had ceased looking at his brother and was stretching out his arm fumblingly. His hand found Jacques’s and clasped it fiercely, desperately; then, stumbling a little, he joined the stream of people entering the station.

Blinded by his tears, jostled by new arrivals, Jacques backed to the paling and leaned against it. One by one, without a pause, the men called up were being passed in. All looked alike and all were young. All had put on the old clothes they could best dispense with, caps and heavy shoes; each carried slung across his back a bulging canvas bag and a brand-new haversack from which the neck of a bottle and a chunk of bread protruded. Their faces wore a look of mournful resignation, the look of men who have lived down despair and fear. Jacques watched them crossing the street, service-books in hand; already they were alone, and yet, half-way across, some paused, glancing back to the sidewalk they had just left, to wave a hand or hearten with a jaunty smile the man or woman watching them with anguished eyes. Then, setting their jaws, they strode forward to the opening of the barrier, into the "rat-trap."

"Don't stand about, my boy. Move on, there!"

The "regular" on sentry duty along the barrier, rifle at the slope, his stubby fingers clamped upon the butt, was a strapping lad with an incipient moustache, boyish though rather shifty eyes, and a portentous frown betokening his sense of the importance of his duties.

Jacques complied and moved back to the road.

A luxurious car drove past with an inscription on the windshield: *Free Rides for Men Called Up*. The chauffeur was in livery. Half a dozen youths with haversacks lolled inside, yelling at the top of their voices: "We want Alsace! We want Lorraine!"

As Jacques stepped onto the sidewalk he saw beside him a man and woman bidding each other good-bye, gazing into each other's eyes for the last time. A little boy of four was clinging to the woman's skirt, dancing round her, singing to himself, delighted with this unexpected outing. The man stooped, snatched up the boy, and kissed him—so roughly that the youngster flew into a temper, kicked and struggled till his father put him down again. The woman did not move, said nothing. Her hair straggling down her neck, cheeks wet with tears, she stared at her husband with insatiable eyes. As if he feared that she would fling herself on him and there would be no shaking her off, instead of taking her in his arms he drew back a step, his eyes still fixed on hers. Then abruptly he turned on his heel and strode toward the station. His wife did not try to call him back, or linger watching his receding form; she too turned abruptly and walked rapidly away. The child trailing after her tripped and almost fell; she reached down and hoisted him onto her shoulder, without stopping. She gave the impression of being in a desperate hurry to get back to her home, her empty home, where at last, behind closed doors, she could cry her heart out.

Jacques looked away, profoundly touched by the little scene. Then he fell to roaming aimlessly in the neighbouring streets, but, try as he might to keep away, something drew him back time and again to this tragedy-laden corner of Paris to which that morning many and many a victim was hastening to keep his rendezvous with fate, severing his life from every human tie. In those sad, courageous eyes his eyes sought for an answering glance, a single look in which, behind the stolid grief, he might discern a glimmer of the pent-up indignation that clenched his fists in his pockets and set him trembling with baffled fury. In vain. Diverse as were the expressions on the faces he scanned, all had the same air of discouragement, the same forlorn passivity. Here and there he caught a gleam of reckless heroism, but elsewhere only a blind acceptance of the sacrifice imposed, the same craven or unconscious betrayal of personal independence. At that moment, indeed, it seemed to him that what little was left of liberty in the world had taken refuge in himself alone.

And suddenly this thought made his heart swell with pride and a sense of power. *His* faith, anyhow, was inviolate as ever, and it exalted him above the herd. Misunderstood though he might be, an outcast, yet he felt stronger, single-handed, in his rebellion than all these people doped with lies and tamely acquiescent. Justice and truth were in him; reason and the dark forces of the future, on his side. This momentary defeat of pacifist ideals could not impair their grandeur or imperil their final victory. No force in the world could prevent what was happening today from being an absurdity, a monstrous error, even though millions of victims chose to endorse it, to accept it with courageous stoicism. “No force in the world,” he told himself, in a rush of mingled confidence and despair, “can prevent a true idea from being true. A day will come, when, despite these setbacks, despite conspiracies to stifle it, truth will break through and triumph.”

But in a world at war how was he to serve the cause of truth? Determined to keep his freedom of action, he was leaving France; but what would he make of his liberty?

His lukewarmness of the past few days as to the revolutionary cause struck him now as weakness. He was inclined to put the blame upon his love. And now that Jenny had come back to his thoughts, he was amazed to find how easily and utterly he had forgotten all about her during the past hour. Almost he felt a grievance against her—for existing, awaiting him, wresting him from the rapture of his lonely dream. “Supposing she died suddenly?” he thought, and for a moment savoured a grief that was half joy, joy for his independence given back to him.

Less than ten minutes after Antoine had left home for the station, a venerable four-wheeler, more in place in a museum beside an old sedan-chair than in a Paris street, drew up at the door. The girl who stepped out of it cast a bewildered glance at the fence and freshly painted façade, then paid the cabman, picked up two valises lying on the seat, and walked rapidly to the entrance.

The concierge peeped out of her doorway. “Why, bless us, it’s Mlle. Gise!”

From the consternation in her eyes Gise guessed she had some bad news to impart.

“What a shame, Mademoiselle! You’re just too late. M. Antoine left a few minutes ago.”

“Left?”

“Why, yes, to join his regiment.”

Gise made no reply. Her gentle, trustful eyes grew misted; she put the valises down beside her. On the small round face that had now gone greyish-brown, making the dark strain in her blood still more pronounced, a look of stupefaction seemed to sit quite naturally, as if its pattern had been traced out in advance. She had been spending her summer holidays, with the other girls from her convent, at an English seaside resort and had followed what was happening in Europe in only the vaguest way. It was not till the previous day that, on reading in a paper that France was mobilizing, she had taken alarm and, refusing to listen to advice, without even going back to London, had rushed to Dover and caught the first boat across.

“All the menfolk here have been called up, Mademoiselle, like everyone else. Léon left yesterday evening; so did Victor. There’s only the servants, Adrienne and Clotilde, upstairs.”

Gise’s face lit up with relief. Adrienne and Clotilde had stayed; she felt no longer “lost.” After all, they had brought her up and they stood for her family, all the family left to her. She drew herself up determinedly and, preceded by the concierge carrying her valises, walked toward the elevator.

“How everything’s been changed!” she murmured, gazing at the white staircase, the banisters. Old, half-effaced images were crowding back into her brain, fuddled a little by her sleepless night; she felt more bewildered in these changed surroundings, where she looked in vain for some familiar landmark, than she would have been in a house wholly unknown to her.

Half an hour later, having exchanged her travelling clothes for a wrap of flowered cretonne and bedroom slippers, she had settled down with the two maids in Antoine’s big dining-room, with a steaming cup of chocolate and a plate of the thick buttered toast of her childhood days in front of her. Resting her arms on the table, she slowly stirred her chocolate, and gave herself up childishly to the satisfaction of the moment. She had never been particularly bright, and convent life in England, with all the activities of each day kept to a strict routine, had not developed her capacities for taking the initiative. When she went slack as she did now, her rounded shoulders, overripe bosom, and rather flabby cheeks robbed her suddenly of all the charm of youth. No longer “Blackie,” the graceful gipsylike young creature, she brought to mind a plump mulatto, thick-lipped and vacant-eyed—a woman of slave blood, with all the fatalistic apathy of a servile race.

The two maids had not known what to do with themselves, and Gise’s coming was a godsend. Sitting on either side of her, they chattered away to their hearts’ content, laughing and weeping turn by turns. They had much to tell Gise about her aunt, Mlle. de Waize; every other Sunday, as in duty bound, they went to see her at the Superannuates’ Home, bringing a bag of caramels and bananas. Clotilde made no secret of the fact that the old lady was getting “a bit soft in the head,” and took no interest now in anything except trivial happenings at the home. Sometimes she greeted her visitors almost rudely and seemed to regard them as intruders about whose intentions she had the gravest doubts. Usually she packed them off long before the visiting-hour was over so as not to miss her game of bezique.

As Gise listened, her eyes grew blurred with tears. “I must go and see her before I leave,” she sighed.

“You’re leaving, Mademoiselle?” both maids exclaimed at once. They vehemently protested against her idea of returning to England, and explained that M. Antoine had left them enough money to keep house for several months. Adrienne gave a rosy picture of the life the three of them would have together if Gise stayed on in Paris. She had cut out of the morning paper an “Appeal to the Women of France,” inviting them to aid in the defence of their country. There were, it seemed, many forms of useful war work open to devoted Frenchwomen. They could work in day-nurseries for the children of men at the front, could form centres for distributing milk for babies, could cut bandages, join sewing-circles for making soldiers’ garments, and so forth. Every woman was called on to do her bit, and of women’s work there was an abundant variety to choose from.

Gise beamed with pleasure; the idea delighted her. Here was a chance of making herself useful.

Neither the concierge nor the maids had thought to mention Jacques’s name. Gise, supposing him to be in Switzerland, put no question. It was only two days later that a chance remark of Clotilde’s informed her that Jacques had been in Paris on the day of her arrival. Still, she reflected, even had she learned this sooner, would she have managed to get in touch with him? No one knew his address. And, anyhow, would she even have tried to see him again?

XX

WHILE he was going up the stairs to the *Etendard* office, before even he had reached the landing, Jacques noticed a milk bottle on Mourlan's doormat.

"That means he's out!" he exclaimed despondently.

He rang the bell. No answer. On the off-chance, he knocked on the door three times, with intervals between each rap.

"Who's there?"

"Thibault."

The door opened. Mourlan was naked to the waist, his hair and beard covered with soap. "Pardon!" he exclaimed on seeing Jenny. "The boy ought to have warned me he had a lady with him." He pushed the door shut with his foot. "Have a seat, lady."

A rush-bottomed chair stood by the door. Jenny sat down in it at once.

The windows were closed and the air reeked of cardboard, paste, saltpetre, dusty paper. Bundles of newspapers tied with string lay everywhere, on the table, on a garden-seat, in a battered tub. In a corner on the floor, beside a pan of sawdust, an antiquated gas-meter, the pipes of which had been cut short and hammered flat, thrust its squat bulk forward like the stump of an amputated leg.

Mourlan had returned to his kitchen. "I've only just got back," he shouted as he soused his head and shoulders under the tap. "I looked like a tramp, my boy." A moment later he reappeared, still scrubbing his head vigorously with a towel; he had put on a clean shirt. "I spent the whole night out in the streets, like the fathead I am. I was pretty scared. Mobilization, I says to myself, that means the cops getting busy, rounding us up. They could search this place for all I cared. I'd made my arrangements, see? They wouldn't have found nothing. But as for getting jugged—well, I'd rather wait a bit. Oh, it ain't that I mind that much being put away for a while," he added with a roguish look at Jenny. "I've never had such peace and quiet as the spells I did in the jug. If it hadn't been for them I'd never have had the time to think up my books, much less write 'em. No, but somehow I didn't like the idea of being in the first batch to get nabbed. Yesterday the dicks were nosing round in all the joints—Pulter's, Guelpa's, even the Eglantine. They know where to look, I'll give 'em credit for that! Only it was just too bad; they didn't find a thing! Only Pierre Martin's manifesto, *An Appeal to*

Common Sense, which they pinched just as the comrades were taking the bales from the printer's. You haven't heard the news about Claisse, Robert Claisse, the fellow on the *Vie Ouvrière*—a youngster who'd been permanently exempted from military service? Well, it seems someone set the police on his tracks because he'd written an anti-war leaflet, and he's been put away till the next exemption board has a look at him and they can pack him off to the front line. I heard about that last night. That's a warning for you, my boy, thinks I; don't you be a mug and let yourself get pinched. So I made myself scarce."

"Where did you go?"

"Well, I thought of lying low at one of the comrades' places. Nothing doing. At Siron's 'twouldn't have been any better than here. I looked in at old Guyot's; nobody home. Same for Cottier, Lasseigne, Molini, Vallon. All the boys had cleared out—same as me! So I mooched around town all night, on my lonesome. And this morning when I bought the papers I realized I'd been behaving like an old jackass. So I just trotted home, and here I am!" He swung his shaggy-browed eyes on Jacques. "Have you read the papers, boy?"

"No."

"Eh?" Mourlan's eyes roved to Jenny, came back to Jacques. He seemed tracing a connexion between Jenny's presence and the fact that at ten in the morning on the day following mobilization Jacques had not read the latest news. From the pocket of his black smock, which was hanging on a nail, he took a sheaf of newspapers. Gingerly, with the tips of his fingers, as if he feared to soil his hands, he drew one paper from the wad, letting the others drop onto the tiled floor.

"Have a look at this, my young friend; it'll amuse you, if you've the heart to laugh today. Personally, though I've taken some pretty hard knocks in my time, this one came like a punch below the belt. Think of it! Merle and Almereyda's paper, *Le Bonnet Rouge*, turned mouthpiece overnight of Poincaré and his gang! Well, wonders will never cease! . . . Yes, read it out, boy."

Bubbling over with rage, Mourlan slipped on his black smock while Jacques read in a low voice.

" 'We are glad to announce, on high authority, that the government will not make use of the police B List. The government has faith in the loyalty of the French people and especially of the working-class. It is common knowledge that the government has spared no efforts, and still is doing its utmost, to preserve peace. The unequivocal declarations of the most inveterate revolutionaries . . .' "

" 'The most inveterate revolutionaries,' " Mourlan muttered. "Grr! The swine!"

" '. . . are such as fully to reassure the government. Not one Frenchman will fail to do his duty. By refraining from making use of the B List, the government shows its recognition of this fact.' "

"Well, my boy, what do you say to that? I had to read the darned thing twice before I caught onto what it really means. Well, there's no getting around it; it means this: the French proletariat is joining in *their* war so cheerfully, and the workers' opposition is so little dangerous, that the government's dropped the notion of interning suspects as a precautionary measure. Get it? It's as good as if they gave us revolutionaries a friendly tweak o' the ear and said: 'Go to it, you young scallawags; we'll overlook your naughtiness! Just toddle off and do your duty at the front.' So our nice, kind government does the sporting thing, tears up the blacklists, chortles to itself, and leaves the suspects at large. Because today, you see, the suspects just don't matter."

He burst into a loud guffaw; there was something terrifying in the sight of the old, saintlike face twisted thus in bitter mirth. "Suspects! There ain't any left. Get it? Well, you can guess the sort of pledges our precious Party leaders had to give, for the government to feel so sure of its ground! To risk an act of generosity like that on the very first day of the war! Yes, our leaders, they've sold us out nicely to the government, damn their souls! This time we're done in good and proper, and there's no getting away from it. The General Staff has the whip-hand. The man that's going to serve in the war won't have a say any longer; that's left to the men who run it."

He took a few paces forward, his hands locked behind his back, under the billowing smock. "And yet, damn it all," he suddenly broke out, spinning round and facing Jacques, "I simply can't believe it! I can't believe we're really licked!"

Jacques gave a slight start. "Neither can I," he muttered. "I can't believe there's nothing more to be done. Even as things are!"

"Even as things are!" Mourlan echoed. "And, better still, in a few days' or a few weeks' time, once those poor devils have had their 'baptism of fire' as they call it. Oh, if only Kropotkin were with us! Or anyone who'd say the things that need to be said, and found a way to get a hearing. Our comrades have given in today because they've been stuffed with lies, because their credulity has been exploited once again. But a mere trifle, the least thing, might bring them to their senses, change the whole position in a moment."

Jacques sprang to his feet as if a whip had flicked his loins.

"What? 'A mere trifle,' you say? What mere trifle?" He strode over to Mourlan. "What do *you* think could be done? Tell me!"

His voice had gone so queer that Jenny turned and stared at him, wide-mouthed, in sudden panic.

Mourlan, too, was startled and fixed his eyes on Jacques, who said uncomfortably: "Yes, I wish you'd tell me; what exactly have you in mind?"

Mourlan shrugged his shoulders with a slightly embarrassed air. "What have I in mind? Just nonsense, likely as not. I let my tongue run away with me, you know, boy—that's how I am! But the whole thing's so damn silly that I can't help hoping still, hoping against hope, as they say. It's plain as day that the peoples of the earth—our people just as much as those against us—have been fooled. And—who knows?—it might be enough . . ."

He broke off. Staring eagerly at the old man, Jacques prompted: "It might be enough . . . ?"

"Oh, I ain't a very clear idea, you know. But suppose suddenly, like a lightning-flash, there fell between the two front lines a single ray of truth, dispelling the fog of lies! Suppose all at once those poor damn fools facing each other in the firing-lines was to pull their wits together and catch on that they'd been taken in, don't you think they'd rise like one man, half mad with fury, and turn on the fellows who'd fooled 'em and set 'em at each other's throats?"

Jacques was blinking as if a burst of light had dazzled him. Then, looking down, he walked back toward Jenny without seeming to see her and sat down again.

There followed a moment of constrained silence—as if some eerie happening had befallen, that all three had dimly apprehended but none had fully understood. Mourlan was the first to speak again.

"Anyhow, the whole nation, it seems, is of one mind. In the provinces all the Socialist town councils have passed resolutions declaring that the country is in peril, that it's every Frenchman's duty to defend it, that Germany's outlawed from the ranks of civilization, and so forth. See here!" He picked up the newspapers he had dropped on the floor. "Here's the C.G.T. manifesto. 'To the Proletariat of France' it's called. Do you know what they've the brass to say, our C.G.T. friends? 'The turn of events has taken us unawares. The proletariat has not realized with sufficient unanimity all the strenuous efforts needed to preserve humanity from the horrors of war.’ Which means, in plain words: ‘There’s nothing to be done, boys; you’re in for it, and you got to see it through.’ Then here’s what the Railway Workers’ Union—the railwaymen, boy, just think, our diehard railwaymen—have thought fit to post on every wall in Paris: ‘Comrades! In this hour of common peril, party differences are wiped out. Socialists, trade unionists, and revolutionaries, all will join in frustrating Kaiser Wilhelm’s knavish schemes, all will answer “Present!” when they hear the call of the Republic.’ Wait a bit, though! There’s better to come. What do you say to this? ‘An Open Letter to the Minister of War.’ And who do you think it’s signed by? Gustave Hervé, of all people! Listen. ‘Convinced that France has done her utmost to avert war, I have the honour to request that I may be enrolled in the first infantry regiment leaving for the frontier.’ And that’s that. Yes, my boy, that’s how they’re turning their coats, our Socialist champions. Our Hervé, too, editor of the *Guerre Sociale*, who once declared there never was a country in the world worthy of having one drop of the workers’ blood shed in its defence! So it comes to this, my boy: the government’s on velvet; it can shelve the B List without a qualm. They’ve all been brought to heel, our faithful watchdogs of the revolution, one after the other.”

Someone knocked at the door.

“Who’s there?” Mourlan asked before opening.

“Siron.”

The newcomer was a man in the early fifties with a flat face spanned by a grey moustache, a low, wide forehead, deeply sunken nostrils. His eyes, set far apart, had an ironic twinkle. The face gave an impression of quiet energy tinctured with disdain.

Jacques knew him by sight; he was the only man often to be seen about with Mourlan. Formerly a militant trade unionist, Siron had done several spells in jail for his revolutionary activities, but for some years past had been standing apart from the movement. He, like Mourlan, belonged to the group of Socialist free-lances, men of shrewd wits and haughty independence, of uncompromising standards and few illusions, more devoted to the cause than to their comrades, who had no truck with fools and, while universally respected, were looked askance at for their aloofness and apt to be envied for their obvious superiority.

“Take a chair,” said Mourlan, though the only chair available was occupied by Jenny. “Have you seen ‘their’ papers?”

The slight lift of Siron’s shoulders seemed intended to suggest at once his contempt for the press and the fact that he had not come here to discuss events.

“There’s a meeting tonight at the Jean Bart restaurant.” His eyes were fixed on the old printer. “I said I’d let you know. You must come.”

“Can’t say as I’m so keen on it,” Mourlan grunted. “Don’t I know just what they’re going to . . . ?”

“That’s not the point,” Siron cut in. “I’ll be there myself. There’s some things I’ve got to tell ’em. And I want you to stand by me.”

“That’s another matter. You’ve things to tell ’em, eh? What things?”

Siron did not reply at once. He gazed at Jacques, then at Jenny, went to the window, opened it a few inches, then came back to Mourlan.

“Various things. Things that need to be done and which, it seems, no one has the least idea of. We’re in a nasty jam, I grant you, but that’s no reason to stand by idly and let them have it all their own damned way.”

“Meaning?”

“Meaning that if the Socialist and trade union leaders think fit to join up with the government, the least they can do is, in return for their collaboration, to insist on getting definite promises that the government will do something for the men they represent. Don’t you agree with me? This war has created, in fact, revolutionary conditions. Well, let’s turn ’em to our advantage. Jaurès would have seen to that, you bet! He’d have wangled concessions for the proletariat sure enough. And that’d be always so much to the good. This war’s going to impose sacrifices, restrictions, on everybody. The least one can demand, on behalf of the workers, is for them to have a voice in the measures that are going to be taken. There’s still time to lay down our conditions. The government, just now, can’t do without us. Well, let’s insist on a *quid pro quo*. Don’t you agree?”

“ ‘Conditions,’ you say. Give an example.”

“For instance, we must compel them to nationalize all the munition factories, so’s to prevent the owners from profiteering at the expense of the people who’re being packed off to the shambles. And the management of the factories must be made over to the unions.”

“Not such a bad idea,” Mourlan said.

“Another thing is to prevent a rise in prices. It’s started already—as we all know. Personally, I see only one way of stopping it, and that’s to force the government to take over all the stocks of foodstuffs and the like and arrange for their distribution—cutting out, of course, the middlemen and profiteers.”

“That’s a pretty tall order, ain’t it? It’d need a hell of a lot of organizing.”

“Why? The staff is here, all ready to their hand. All they’d need would be to turn the job over to the co-operatives; they’re going concerns, and they know the ropes. Don’t you agree? Well, all that’s got to be discussed. But, now that martial law’s been proclaimed in the whole of France, even in Algeria, the least we can do is to see it helps to protect the little man against the sharks!”

He was stumping up and down the room, which echoed with his clear, level tones. His remarks were meant for Mourlan only, but now and then he cast a fleeting glance at Jacques or Jenny. Beads of sweat stood out on his handsome forehead.

Jacques kept silent. Though he seemed to be attending closely and his eyes were glowing, he was not listening. Lost in the maze of his own thoughts, his mind was leagues away from Siron’s projects for the nationalization of factories and the rest of it. What was it Mourlan had said? “Suppose suddenly, like a lightning-flash, there fell between the two front lines just a single ray of truth, dispelling the fog of lies!”

Taking advantage of an interruption by the old printer of his friend’s harangue, Jacques rose, beckoning to Jenny.

“Off already?” Mourlan said. “Shall we see you at the Jean Bart tonight?”

Jacques seemed to waken from a dream. “No,” he replied. “Foreigners leaving France have got to be out of Paris by tonight at the latest. We’re off to Switzerland, she and I. I came to say good-bye.”

Mourlan gazed at Jenny, then at Jacques. “Ah? So you’ve made your minds up? To Switzerland, you said? Good for you.” Suddenly he looked extremely moved, though he believed he was concealing his emotion. “Well, well,” he added gruffly, “off you go! And try to put in some good work for us over there. Good luck to you, children!”

Jacques felt his mind in such a tumult of excitement and unformulated thought that for the moment he had but one desire—to be alone.

“Now, Jenny dear, please be sensible,” he said once they were in the street. He had taken Jenny’s arm, and his tone was gentle but firm. “You’ve still heaps of things to do before tonight, and I can see how tired you are. Go home now. No, don’t refuse. You absolutely must have some rest. It’s a quarter-past ten. I’ll see you home, and then go to the *Huma* by myself. Then, there may be some formalities about your leaving France; I’d better make inquiries. A couple of hours will see me through all that. . . . Do you agree?”

“Yes.”

What he had said about her tiredness was quite true. She felt feverish, exhausted, bruised all over. For a long time she had sat waiting in the little garden by the church, on a hard bench that made her back ache more than ever. It was the place where Jacques had said: “No one has ever loved before as I love you.” Lost in a day-dream, she had gone over in memory all that had taken place on that eventful evening, so near and yet already so remote, and on the days that had followed—up to the unthinkable, shattering climax of the previous night. . . . And when, after two hours of waiting, she had seen Jacques coming down the steps, with a harassed, combative look on his face and absent gaze, she had recognized, with a cruel pang of grief, that their minds were not in unison. She had not dared to tell him of her reverie, and had listened patiently to his account of Antoine’s departure. Then she had let him take her on foot to Mourlan’s lodgings. Now she was at the end of her tether, too utterly worn out to think of accompanying him elsewhere. All she wanted was to go home, to let her aching limbs relax among the cushions, to rest. . . .

Though trams were few and far between, they were fortunate enough to catch one, after a short wait, that took them as far as the top of the Boulevard Saint-Michel. Jacques helped her to walk to the street-door.

“Good-bye for the present. I’ll be back between one and two.” With a smile he added: “And this evening we’ll have our last little dinner in a Paris restaurant.” But he had not gone twenty yards when he heard an anguished, hardly recognizable voice calling to him from behind: “Jacques!”

He swung round, and in two strides was beside her.

“Mother’s back!” She stared at him, wild-eyed. “The concierge stopped me as I was going in. Mother came back this morning.”

They gazed helplessly at each other; their minds had suddenly gone blank. Jenny’s first thought had been for the disorder in which they had left the apartment, what with Daniel’s bed unmade and Jacques’s toilet articles lying about in the bathroom.

Abruptly she came to a decision, and clutched his arm. “Come!” A dark, inscrutable look had settled on her face. “Come upstairs with me, Jacques!”

“Jenny!”

“Come!” she repeated, almost harshly.

She seemed so determined and he felt his mind so fogged, his will-power so relaxed, that he made no further protest. She led the way up the flights of stairs almost at a run; she had forgotten her exhaustion and her one idea now seemed to be to get it over as quickly as possible. But at the door she stopped, faltering a little, as she put her key to the lock. In the hush that followed, each heard the other's laboured breathing. Then, bracing herself, Jenny opened the door, caught Jacques's wrist, and, tightening her fingers on it, drew him after her into the apartment.

XXI

MME. de Fontanin had spent the morning at home, the prey of an unrest such as she had never known before, even at the darkest moments of her married life.

By a kindly chance the door of Daniel's room was shut, and she might almost have managed to persuade herself that she had been the victim of a nightmare, had she not felt a sudden desire for a cup of tea, which took her to the kitchen. On catching sight of the table laid for two, instinctively she had closed her eyes, fled from the place, and taken refuge in her bedroom.

That first phase of prostration had been followed by one of febrile, irrational activity. Finally, when she had changed from her travelling clothes into an old tea-gown, after tidying up the room and performing the series of more or less futile tasks she had set herself, she resolved to keep absolutely quiet for a while, and settled into her favourite chair beside the window. At all costs she felt she must regain her self-possession. But the little Bible, which she knew would help her to it, was in her valise. Rising, she went to the bookshelf and took the old family Bible, the margins of which had been filled by her father, Pastor de Fontanin, with pencilled notes and comments. Opening it at random, she set herself to read. But her mind was restive, it would not settle on the text and, despite all her efforts, wandered off into a phantasmagoria of scenes and fancies in which thoughts of Daniel grotesquely mingled with her memories of the business men she had dealt with in Vienna, of the complications of her journey, and railway-stations packed with troops. But behind the phantom rout of her imaginings always there loomed up a vision of Jenny and Jacques as she had seen them sleeping in each other's arms. The rumble of troops marching down the near-by boulevards seemed reverberating in her brain like a grim accompaniment to her thoughts. For the first time in her life a feeling of sheer panic, against which she was unable to react, overwhelmed her; a feeling of being caught by a hurricane, swept helplessly away. The Spirit of Evil was let loose in the world, the powers of darkness and disorder were spreading havoc in Europe—and in her home.

Then she heard sounds in the hall, footsteps approaching up the passage. Her face grew rigid; she had not the strength to rise; the most she could do was to straighten herself up in the chair. The door opened. Her cheeks pale as death under the black veil, her eyes distraught, Jenny entered.

The familiar yet unlooked-for sight of her mother in her flowered tea-gown, placidly sitting in her usual chair with the Bible on her knees, stirred Jenny to the depths of her being. Her whole past seemed, after long years of absence, to have suddenly risen before her eyes and, without a thought for Jacques, who lagged behind wondering if he should follow, she ran across the room and flung her arms round her mother. Then, slipping down onto the carpet, she pressed her forehead to her mother's dress.

"Oh, Mamma dear!"

In a flash, love and pity had swept away Mme. de Fontanin's apprehensions; in an access of indulgence her heart softened toward the young people whose secret she had stumbled on so dramatically, and now their conduct seemed no longer outrageous but a very human lapse. Already she was stooping toward the daughter who had come back to her, on the brink of folding her in her arms, prepared to hear her confession, weigh the consequences of what had happened, counsel and befriend her—when suddenly her heart missed a beat. On the wall beyond the open door a shadow had stirred; Jacques had come too, he was about to enter! The fingers resting on Jenny's bowed neck grew tense. Some moments passed while Mme. de Fontanin gazed fixedly at the doorway. The harsh, astringent odour of Jenny's crape veil hovered in the air. At last Jacques's form showed on the threshold, and once again a picture of the two young faces side by side, lost in a dream of remembered pleasure, rose before her eyes.

"My dears! My poor children!" She could hardly bring out the words; her voice was tremulous with consternation—and reproach.

Jacques had crossed the threshold and stood facing her with a look of mingled shyness and bravado. Then in a clear voice she said: "Good morning, Jacques."

Jenny looked up quickly, her face contorted in a strange grimace that, though there was no laughter in it, seemed the expression of a diabolical glee; a hard light that brought to mind a lower instinct shamelessly laid bare shone in the blue depths of her eyes. She stretched her arm toward Jacques, caught his wrist dragged him toward her; then, turning to her mother, said in a voice that tried to be affectionate but had a ring of triumph, with overtones of challenge, almost of truculence: “He’s come back to me, Mamma. And for ever!”

For a moment Mme. de Fontanin gazed at each in turn. She did her best to smile, but could not; a faint sigh escaped her lips.

Jenny was watching her mother’s face. It was quivering a little, with consternation but with tenderness as well; in its expression, as in the little sigh, Jenny might have found a presage of consent, but that her morbid aptitude to take offence read into it only regret and disapproval. Mortified, her filial love cut to the quick, she drew away from her mother and sprang to her feet with a quick movement that brought her standing to Jacques’s side. Her defiant attitude, the glitter of her eyes, told of inordinate pride up in arms and ready to take the offensive.

Jacques, on the contrary, gazed at Mme. de Fontanin with a look of calm, affectionate instancy, and had he spoken, it would have been to say: “I understand your feelings. But you, too, should try to understand ours.”

Mme. de Fontanin cast a quick, shy glance at the two young people, then dropped her eyes; that hateful picture of the scene in the bedroom had risen again before her.

There was a long silence. Then, by force of habit, she said, with a courteous wave of her hand to Jacques: “Don’t remain standing, my dears. Do sit down.”

Jacques drew up a chair for Jenny, then, at a sign from Mme. de Fontanin, sat down on her left.

The few simple words seemed to have cleared the atmosphere. Now that all three were seated in a circle, as at a friendly call, the tension in the air seemed to relax. Jacques found he was able to ask Mme. de Fontanin about her journey back to France in an almost natural voice.

“Didn’t you get my last letter?” Mme. de Fontanin asked Jenny.

“No. I haven’t had a single letter from you. Not a line. Only this postcard. The first. Written at the station in Vienna on Monday.” She spoke in rapid jerks, through half-closed lips.

“On Monday?” Mme. de Fontanin repeated vaguely. The effort of trying to work out the sequence of the days spent in Vienna set her eyelids fluttering. “But I posted two letters every night, one for you and one for Daniel.”

Once again the thought of her son made her heart miss a beat.

“I didn’t get any letters,” Jenny said harshly.

"What about Daniel? Have you heard from him?"

"Yes. Once."

"Where is he?"

"He said he was leaving Lunéville. Since then I've had no news from him."

Again there came a silence, which Jacques, feeling embarrassed, was the first to break.

"And—when did you leave Vienna, Mme. de Fontanin?"

She had some trouble in remembering, then said: "On Thursday. Yes, Thursday morning. But we didn't reach Udine till late that night, and only started off again next day at noon."

"Had they news in Austria as soon as Thursday morning of the bombardment of Belgrade?"

Mme. de Fontanin gazed at him in perplexity before confessing: "I've no idea." During her stay in Vienna she had devoted all her attention to the task of clearing her husband's good name and had paid little heed to what was happening in the world.

A new thought waylaid her. Why, Jenny hasn't even asked if I succeeded in my attempt to straighten up our affairs! And, looking at her daughter, suddenly she put herself a poignant question: Isn't she a wee bit disappointed at my having managed to get back?

Jacques, just to say something, went on inquiring about the mood prevailing in Vienna, about the demonstrations. Mme. de Fontanin did her best to answer; she, too, was clinging desperately to impersonal topics of that order, which postponed the dreaded explanation for the while. For all three at that moment still believed an "explanation" was impending and inevitable.

Jacques kept on turning toward Jenny, trying to draw her into the conversation. But she had ceased even pretending to listen. The stiff poise of her head, the tense expression of the gaunt young face, the harsh aloofness of her gaze, the curious way she had that morning of pursing her lips and holding her chin up, all implied not only a desire to stand apart but a rankling constraint, an estrangement amounting to hostility. Planted on a chair the back of which was too low to give her any support, with her nerves on edge, her body tingling with fatigue, she let her gaze stray casually round the room, sometimes lingering on her mother as on an actress playing a minor part in a stage-setting insubstantial as a dream. It seemed to her as if Mme. de Fontanin had been sitting thus, with her Bible on her lap, in that old armchair upholstered in green velvet and placed eternally at the same angle to catch the light from the window, from the beginning of time; a symbolic figure of the past—pathetic maybe, but, above all, exasperating—that bygone past which gradually, minute by minute, was slipping away from her, fading into the distance, as a group of friends standing on the pier fades from the traveller's view as his ship puts out to sea. Already, she was under way toward far other shores, and in her heart the strong rhythms of the new life beginning for her throbbed like the pulsing of the engines driving the ship ahead. If at that moment Jacques had taken her arm, saying: "Come, leave all this behind for ever," she would have followed him without one backward glance.

In the silence the little clock standing beside Daniel's photograph on the bedside table chimed lengthily.

Jacques glanced at it and, seized by a sudden longing to escape, turned to Jenny. "Why, it's eleven! I must be on my way."

They exchanged a hasty glance; Jenny assented with a nod and was the first to move.

Watching them, Mme. de Fontanin had a particularly painful impression: her Jenny, once so frank and loyal, had changed beyond recognition. She had acquired an evasive manner, a "guilty conscience" demeanour. Yes, for all their pose of assurance, just then they struck her—both alike—as hypocritical, insincere. She saw them eyeing each other with a smug, slightly ridiculous air of superiority, like two augurs solely in the secrets of the gods. And she could not help adding to herself: "Like two accomplices." That was, in fact, true; between them was the intoxicating complicity of their love, which they wished to see as something apart and absolute, unfathomable and unique—unique above all; a love so exceptional that no one but themselves could penetrate its mysteries.

Emboldened by Jenny's approval, Jacques went up to Mme. de Fontanin to say good-bye.

She was flustered by this abrupt leave-taking. Were they really going to leave her thus, with all that mattered left unsaid? How unfair that they should trust her so little! She did her best to think herself into acceptance of this, too—the heartlessness of their behaviour. Perhaps it was she who should have made the first move, prompted them to confide in her. Well, now it was too late. She had not the energy left to make that move. What was more, she felt that, what with physical exhaustion and the emotional shock she had received, her nerves might get the better of her at any moment, she might easily give way to an impulse of ill-humour or injustice.

It was best, perhaps, that this first interview should pass off without an explanation.

Still, she found it hard to forgive Jenny, though for the while it was less the moral lapse that weighed with her than Jenny's rebellious attitude, as unaccountable as it was unwarranted. Toward Jacques she felt no resentment; on the contrary, she had been favourably impressed by him throughout their conversation; she had glimpsed behind his shyly deferent manner an unspoken comprehension, and had noted that *his* conscience, anyhow, was crystal-clear, that there was nothing mean or ignoble in his personality. Moreover, he was Daniel's friend and she was ready, if it was God's will, to love him as a son.

So little hostile did she feel toward him that, at the moment of shaking hands, she was on the point of drawing him to her as she would have done with Daniel, and saying: "No, my dear, don't be so formal! Let me kiss you." Unhappily, just then she looked up and saw Jenny's eyes intent on her, shrewd, ruthless, charged with smouldering animosity, and read their silent message. "Yes, I'm watching, I know what's in your mind, and I'm waiting to see if you'll make the motherly gesture I've been expecting from you ever since I brought Jacques into this room." And then Mme. de Fontanin's rankling irritation got the better of her, all her pride was up in arms. No; she would not let herself be browbeaten by her daughter into doing what she was prepared to do spontaneously!

So she merely held out her hand to Jacques, and he alone perceived in the pressure of the trembling fingers all the emotion, the secret acquiescence and affection that went into that commonplace leave-taking.

It was all over in a moment. But as Jacques moved away, accompanied by Jenny, Mme. de Fontanin had a harrowing intuition that, in that fateful moment, all the happiness of her future relations with Jenny had been at stake and that the bond between her and her daughter had been flawed beyond redress. A sudden panic came over her.

"What, Jenny, are you going out too?"

"No," the girl answered curtly, without looking round.

In the passage Jenny clutched Jacques's arm and, without speaking, hurried him into the hall. There they gazed at each other, each reading in the other's eyes a like perplexity.

"You'll come away with me, all the same?" Jacques asked in a low voice.

Jenny gave a start. "Of course!" She sounded as indignant as if he had questioned her love.

“How . . . how are you going to tell her?” he said after a short pause.

She was standing facing him, one arm raised, grasping a jamb of the old oak cupboard. “Oh,” she exclaimed with a quick toss of her head, “nothing matters to me *now*!”

He looked at her in surprise. His eyes roved to the little hand, white against the dark-brown wood, the faintly quivering fingers. He pressed his lips to them.

Suddenly she asked: “Would you take her with us?”

“Whom? Your mother?” He hesitated for the fraction of a second. “Yes, if you think . . . Certainly. But why do you ask? Do you think she’ll want to come with us?”

“I don’t know,” she replied hastily. “No, I don’t expect so. I only wanted to know, in case . . .” She fell silent, a faint smile on her lips. Then, “Thank you,” she said. “Where shall I meet you?”

“Don’t you want me to come and call for you here?”

“No.”

“What about your luggage?”

“It’ll be quite light.”

“Will you be able to carry it by yourself to the tram?”

“Yes.”

“And my papers? The parcel I left in your room the other day?”

“I’ll pack it with my things.”

“Right. Then we’ll meet at the Gare de Lyon. What time?”

She pondered. “At two. Half-past two at the latest.”

“I’ll wait for you in the refreshment-room, will that do? We can leave your valise there till the train starts.”

She went up to him, took his face between her hands. “My beloved!” she murmured to herself and slowly let her ardent gaze sink into Jacques’s eyes, till their lips met and clung together.

She was the first to loosen their embrace.

“Go now.” Her voice no less than her face betrayed the tension of her nerves and her utter exhaustion. “Now I’m going back to Mamma. I’ll have a talk with her and tell her everything.”

XXII

NO sooner had the door of the apartment closed behind him than Jacques felt a resurgence of the nervous unrest that had given him so keen a desire to be alone when he left the *Etendard* office. For a moment he asked himself what was this desperately urgent thing he had to do? Then Mourlan's words came back to him: "Suppose suddenly, like a lightning-flash, there fell between the two front lines just a single ray of truth . . ."

It came with the blinding light of a revelation. "Between the two front lines." So violent was the impact of the words, so vivid and precise their meaning, that he stopped short half-way down the stairs, dazed and dumbfounded, his pulses racing with new-found hope and purpose. The plan which, for several hours, had been germinating in the depths of his subconscious mind, had risen matured to full awareness and dominated his whole being. It was no vague aspiration, no utopian dream; what had so swiftly taken form within him was a quite definite programme, feasible single-handed, one of those fixed ideas that strike root in the secrecy of anarchist brains. Now he knew why he was going to Switzerland and what task lay before him there. He knew the decisive act he was to carry out unaided, an act which after these long days of aimless drifting, sterile agitation, would enable him to battle for his faith, declare war on war. An act which would undoubtedly involve the sacrifice of his life. That he had been aware of from the start and accepted without indulging in heroics, without even taking stock of his courage. His sole motive was a mystic faith that this plan of his, for which he was ready to give up his life, was now the one and only way of rousing the masses from their torpor, of abruptly changing the course of events and countering the forces that had combined against the toilers of the earth, against fraternity and justice.

He had completely forgotten Mme. de Fontanin's return, their strange encounter of a moment ago; he had forgotten even Jenny.

It was not so with her. Before going back to her mother's room, she had slipped out onto the balcony to watch Jacques leaving the house, and already she was growing anxious at not seeing him appear. At last she saw him fling out of the portico and, paying no heed to the people on the sidewalk or the busy traffic, dash like a madman across the street in the direction of the Boulevard Saint-Michel. She kept her eyes fixed on him till he was out of sight. But he did not once look back. . . .

Mme. de Fontanin, after Jenny left her, had let her head sink back, and remained thus for some minutes, stunned and motionless. She could not set her thoughts in order, but one vague, despairing phrase, an echo of her dark forebodings, kept ringing in her brain: “No good can come of it.” Before her eyes still hovered the forms of Jacques and Jenny, standing side by side, like twin stems springing from the same root, and by an involuntary association of ideas another picture rose before her: her father’s dingy parlour and, standing by the window, Jerome, her young fiancé, in a light-grey, black-braided morning coat that showed his willowy figure to the best advantage, smiling at her with a look of gay, triumphant unconcern. How confidently that day they, too, had faced the years to come! How valiant had been their stand against the family and, with him beside her, how little there had seemed to fear! And in a flash all her illusions, the glamour of those golden days, came back to her; the certainty of happiness in store, the conviction that they were the first to know a love so rapturous. Far from deriving from this evocation of the past an aftertaste of bitterness or even sadness, she felt gloriously exhilarated, as though life had, indeed, fulfilled those promises of bliss!

She gave a slight start when she heard Jenny coming back. Her daughter’s resolute tread, the way she closed the door, the strained look on her face, and the unseeing, fanatic eyes seared and burning still with sombre fires, alarmed her.

Love and love alone, she thought, has power to charm away that dark obsession; she murmured nervously: “Come, Jenny darling, come and kiss me.”

Jenny flushed a little; on her lips was a lingering savour of Jacques’s kiss. She made as if, busy taking off her hat and veil and laying them on the bed, she had failed to catch her mother’s remark. Then, overcome by fatigue, she walked across the room to the couch and stretched herself on it.

From where she lay, forcing her voice a little and with rather clumsy eagerness, she cried to her mother: “Oh, Mamma, you can’t imagine how happy I am!”

Mme. de Fontanin turned quickly toward her daughter. There had been a note of challenge in Jenny’s cry, but her mother’s ear had seemed to detect as well an undertone of sadness. That was enough to convince her that she had a bounden duty to fulfil, whatever the risks in doing so. Obeying an impulse which she believed came from Above, she drew herself up and said almost imperiously: “Tell me, Jenny, have you prayed? Really and truly prayed? And can you say: ‘The Lord is on my side’?”

Her mother's words stung Jenny to revolt. The religious issue lay like a gulf between her mother and herself, a gulf whose depth she alone had plumbed.

Mme. de Fontanin went on speaking. "Jenny, my child, cast off your pride. Let's pray together, you and I, and seek help from Him to whom all things are known. With His aid, look into the dark places of your soul. Tell me, Jenny, don't you feel something within you that—that protests?" Her voice shook. "A warning voice that tells you—that perhaps you're making a mistake, perhaps you're lying to yourself?"

Jenny's silence gave her mother the impression that she was communing with herself, about to pray for guidance. But, after a while, the girl said with a sigh: "No, you can't understand." Her voice was harsh, discouraged, hostile.

"No, darling—I *do* understand, I assure you!"

"No, you don't." Jenny's sullen eyes glowed with obstinate irritation; she was finding a morbid pleasure in picturing herself as misunderstood, a victim of injustice. It was on the tip of her tongue to say: "You've no idea of what a love like ours can mean," but she could not bring herself to utter the word "love" aloud. A tight smile pursed her lips. "I saw quite well just now," she said, "that you didn't understand—not one little bit!"

"What do you mean, Jenny? Do you mean I didn't behave nicely to you and him just now?"

"I do."

"But why . . . ?"

"You weren't nice at all." Jenny gazed up at the ceiling; then, sitting up on the couch, she went on in a morose, aggrieved voice. "If you'd understood us, you'd have found something to say to us, something to show you shared our happiness."

Mme. de Fontanin had averted her eyes. After a pause she said: "You're unjust, Jenny. How can you reproach me with that? When I came here this morning I hadn't an idea. . . . You'd kept me in the dark, you'd never told me anything."

Jenny cut her short with a shrug of her shoulders, a gesture that did not come natural to her and which her mother did not remember having seen her make before (she had picked it up from Jacques). With an obdurate, enigmatic, self-complacent look she said: "I didn't keep you in the dark. There you are again—you're accusing me without knowing the truth! Two weeks ago I myself hadn't the least idea of it."

“But it’s not two weeks since I left you; it’s just a week today. When I went away you—you ‘hadn’t an idea of it’?”

“No.”

This was untrue; her mother was still in Paris on the evening she had met Jacques at the Gare du Nord. Her head thrown back, she kept her face out of view, but her voice had betrayed her so flagrantly that both women blushed.

“Why, two weeks ago,” Jenny went on, accompanying the words with a brief, constrained laugh to cover her confusion, “if you’d mentioned Jacques to me, I’d have told you that I loathed him and would never consent to meet him again.”

Resting her hands on the arms of her chair, Mme. de Fontanin bent forward impulsively. “Then it all happened in a few days—before you’d had time to think . . .” She all but said: “and talk it over with me,” but merely added: “. . . and ask Daniel’s advice.”

“Daniel’s advice?” Jenny echoed in feigned surprise. “Why ever should I do that?” Driven on by a sense of growing exasperation that she would have been hard put to justify—the climax perhaps, though she did not suspect it, of years of affectionate restriction, petty vexations silently endured—she gave again that brief, disdainful laugh. Then, yielding to an unaccountable impulse to wound her mother at the most vulnerable point, she said: “As if Daniel could know, could understand! What would Daniel have said to me? The stupid things that everyone says in such cases! What they call ‘talking sense’!”

“Oh, Jenny!” Mme. de Fontanin implored.

But now there was no holding Jenny. “The things that, I expect, you too are thinking. Why not come out with them? Why not tell me there’s a war on? Or that Jacques and I hardly know each other? Or that I won’t be happy?”

“Jenny!” Mme. de Fontanin gazed at her daughter in stupefaction. The girl before her, with the frowning brows, set features, and shrewish voice, had not the least resemblance to the Jenny who had never left her side during the past twenty years. This new Jenny was the prey, she saw, of instincts that had suddenly broken loose during these last few days. “She’s irresponsible,” the mother thought with a feeling of despair, but at the same time of indulgence, almost of relief.

Her mother’s disapproval, even, her obvious distress, far from softening Jenny, goaded her on. “And supposing I tell you I don’t care, I don’t mind being unhappy *with him*? That’s no concern of Daniel’s. That’s my affair and mine alone. I don't care what other people think. Now that I have *him*, why should I go for advice to anybody, anybody in the world?"

The blood left Mme. de Fontanin's cheeks as this new blow struck home. What hurt most was her consciousness that Jenny had deliberately set out to hurt her. The Spirit of Evil, the Powers of Darkness, had taken up their abode in her daughter's heart. She launched a trembling appeal to God. The atmosphere of the room seemed tainted, her power of resisting its morbid contagion was weakening, anger breaking through her self-control. Still, she managed to keep to a tone of quiet firmness for a few moments more.

"You've always had your entire liberty of conscience, Jenny. You know it quite well; ever since you've been old enough to hear the voice of your own conscience, I've never imposed my will on you, never tried to force my ideas on you. And today, too, I assure you, you're perfectly free to act as you choose, without taking my advice. But I feel it is my duty . . ."

"Really, Mamma!"

"Yes, it's my duty to speak to you, to warn you against yourself—even if nothing comes of it. Jenny! Jenny, my dear child, do let me appeal to the better side of your nature. Can you have lost all notion of good and evil? Only open your eyes, try to see things clearly. You've been led astray by an infatuation I'd never have dreamed possible. And you've come to a point where you give way blindly to your passion, not only without the least remorse but as if you were doing something courageous, something to admire!" Her breath was coming in quick gasps. She had a galling impression that she was too worn out to cope with the situation, that she had taken a wrong line and was not saying the words that ought to be said, or in the proper tone. And perhaps she would have desisted had not the sight of Jenny lying on the couch called up in a hateful spasm of remembrance the picture of two young bodies locked in an embrace on Daniel's sofa.

"You should be ashamed of yourself!" she blurted out.

"Really, Mamma!" Jenny said again, with an ominous calmness.

"Yes, heartily ashamed of yourself!" Mme. de Fontanin cried again, throwing prudence to the winds. "I'd never have believed it of you—of my little Jenny. That you should take advantage of my being away to—to yield to all sorts of wicked impulses!"

She pulled herself up, feeling that indignation was giving a wrong direction to her words, and swerved off on a new line of argument. "Are a few days enough for making a decision that's so terribly important, that will shape the whole course of a life? And not your life only, ours as well. Your brother's life and mine. For don't you realize it's our whole future, the future of all three of us, that's at stake? Did you stop to think of that? No, you—you simply . . ."

"Stop, Mamma! For pity's sake, stop!"

"You lost your head. You behaved like a silly child!" Mme. de Fontanin cried in a last, despairing outburst. And the words that had been running through her head all the time rose to her lips: "No good can come of it."

Jenny felt a cold fury surge up within her like a great wave, lifting her onto her feet. Today she seemed to read her mother like an open book and find there nothing but selfishness, aridity, incomprehension. "Let me tell you something!" she said, walking up to Mme. de Fontanin. "If there's one of us two doesn't see clearly into her own heart, it's you. Yes, you're thinking all the time of your own future, not of mine. I've just made a discovery: that it's for yourself you've always loved me, only for yourself. It's jealousy that's setting you against us now. You're jealous, and you've only one idea in your head—to try to keep me with you out of pure selfishness. Well, you'd better not count on doing that. Too late! I'm sorry to have to cause you this distress, but the sooner you know, the better: Jacques is leaving for Switzerland tonight. And I am going with him."

"What? Tonight? To Switzerland?" Mme. de Fontanin's voice was barely audible.

"It's not a sudden fancy; we fixed it all up before your return. It's the last train that Jacques . . ."

"Tonight, did you say?"

"Yes, I'll be starting quite soon."

"No, Jenny, you mustn't do that. Really you mustn't."

"Nothing you can say, Mamma, will make the slightest difference." There was a vicious edge to her voice. "No one now can make us change our minds."

"I forbid you to go, do you hear?"

Jenny's only reply was a scornful lift of her shoulders.

"Do you hear what I say, Jenny? I *forbid* you to go."

"It's no use talking like that, Mother. My mind's made up. In any case, instead of disapproving of me, if you weren't so utterly heartless . . ." She left the phrase unfinished.

"Utterly heartless!" Mme. de Fontanin repeated weakly. This cruelest cut of all made her forget all the rest.

"Yes!" cried Jenny, losing all self-control. "Yes, if you really cared about my happiness, if you loved me for myself, today you'd . . ."

But Mme. de Fontanin could bear no more. Clasping her forehead with both hands, she stopped her ears with her fingers so as to hear no longer that angry voice shrilling in her weary brain. “Man proposes,” she thought, closing her eyes, “but God disposes. Thy will be done.”

A sudden noise made her look up with a start. Jenny had left the room, slamming the door. Her hat and veil were no longer on the bed.

“I must pray,” Mme. de Fontanin thought, still haunted by the picture of Jenny as she had seen her a moment since, half mad with rage, brazenly defiant.

“O Heavenly Father,” she entreated, “help me, give me strength. Nothing is ever past redress. We must never despair of any of Thy creatures.” And slowly, twice in succession, she repeated the holy words: “ ‘Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.’ ”

A dark cloud settled on her mind, but only for a moment; unexpectedly the shadows lifted, and thought began to march again. She remained seated in the easy-chair, her shoulders drooping, her hands clasped, unmoving. But her brain was working with extreme lucidity. She was searching her conscience indefatigably and, as always in time of trial, trying her utmost to analyse her grief and circumscribe its limits, so as to make of it a precise, clean-cut entity, as it were, which could be set apart and committed to the God of infinite compassion.

For her, the worst shock had not been Jenny’s hasty decision to go abroad; indeed, she could not quite bring herself to believe it would materialize. What, rightly or wrongly, grieved her more than all the rest was the discovery of Jenny’s double-dealing. That was the deepest, crudest wound of all. Guilelessly she had believed that her affectionate comprehension, the freedom she had allowed Jenny even as a mere child, had created such an atmosphere of mutual trust between her and her daughter that Jenny would never dream of coming to any grave decision without letting her know beforehand and seeking her approval. And now, at the most critical moment of her life, Jenny had kept her in the dark. Taking advantage of her absence, she had behaved in the underhand way one would expect of a girl who had been brought up in conditions of strict dependence and, roused to revolt, had broken loose at last from a state of irksome, unjustifiable subjection. Of course, despite the heated words that had passed between them, Mme. de Fontanin felt no more doubts about her daughter’s love than she did about her own love for Jenny. It was her trust that had been profoundly injured. A trust like that which she had placed in Jenny, once it has been betrayed so flagrantly, is maimed beyond redress. She might love her daughter as much as ever, but never again could she trust her as in the past.

The thought of it reduced her to despair. Again she opened her Bible at random. Without much trouble she fixed her attention on the words, and felt her peace of mind slowly returning to her—a peace so strange and unexpected as to be almost ominous. And suddenly, looking into herself more closely, she seemed to discern its latent cause, and her heart sank again. A moment ago there had risen, unsummoned, within her a feeling that was steadily, insidiously gaining ground, a state of mind that she knew only too well, for it had come over her before, during the tragic period of her life when the prospect of further years of futile suffering had seemed too odious to be borne and she had resolved to part from Jerome. Less a mood, perhaps, than an instinctive reaction, like the defensive reflex of a threatened organism. “It’s an antidote,” she used to say, “that nature in her wisdom creates within us to make certain pains endurable.” Putting down the book, she tried to analyse and give a name to the sensation she was experiencing. Resignation, perhaps, or detachment; but most likely there was no one word describing the blend of two so contradictory feelings: affection and indifference. Indifference! The crudeness of the term revolted her. The thought that a mother’s love like that which for so many years had glowed within her heart, that such a love may, under the stress of circumstance, grow tainted with indifference (though, for the moment, such a thought might bring a certain comfort), filled her with dismay for the future. Closing her eyes, she banished from her thoughts the after years. And once again murmured: “Thy will be done.” But then a flood of grief swept over her again; burying her face in her hands, she wept.

XXIII

JENNY was fiercely determined to go, and instinct warned her that, if she was to carry out without faltering this act in which her whole future was at stake, on no account must she see her mother again, or even allow time for thought.

She had run to her bedroom, feverishly bundled into a small valise the few black dresses she possessed, and then, with set lips and flaming cheeks, rapidly put on her hat and veil, and, without even a glance at the mirror, dashed out of the apartment like a hunted creature.

"I'm alone now, and I'm free," she told herself with a sort of rapture, mingled with alarm, as she sped down the stairs. "Now it's absolutely true, I've no one in the world but *him*."

In the street she felt momentarily at a loss. Where was she to go? Jacques was not due to meet her at the buffet until two, and it was only just past twelve. That couldn't be helped, she reflected; she had her valise with her—the best thing was to go straight to the Gare de Lyon and wait.

She was in luck. Almost immediately a tram came up which would take her to the Boulevard Saint-Germain, where she could change to a line going to the station. She secured a place on the back platform.

"I mustn't let myself think," she kept on repeating to herself. This was the easier to do as all the people in the car were loudly chattering to each other, as people do after an accident. "And the number of marriages, you'd never believe it! Yes, ma'am, the staffs in the registry-offices are being fairly worked off their feet, what with so many boys that have been called up wanting to get spliced before they go." "But what about the formalities?" "Oh, they've been simplified. A good job too. Red tape's *de trop*, as they say, when there's a war on. All you've got to do is to hand in two copies of your birth-certificate and your military service-book and you can make an honest woman of your girl in less than no time." "Well, now, I'm very glad to hear that. It shows the boys who're going to the front want to do the right thing." "Do the right thing? You can trust 'em to do that, ma'am, and at the front as well. No one can say a Frenchman doesn't rise to the occasion when his country needs him." "There's a recruiting-office next door to my house. Well, from the moment it was daylight, all morning, it's been fairly mobbed by fellows wanting to enlist. They're signing up by thousands." "No," a medical officer in uniform corrected him. "Nobody's being allowed to sign up for the present. Those fellows went there to get information, or perhaps to have their names put on the list."

The Bastille tram to which Jenny had to change was no less crowded; people were standing wedged together in the aisles. However, thanks to the kind offices of a middle-aged woman who, seeing Jenny laden with a valise, told her daughter to give up her seat to the young lady, she was able to sit down.

The rumble of the tram-wheels and the hum of voices had a calming effect on Jenny, but, to escape from her own thoughts, she made a point of listening to the remarks being exchanged over her head.

At the Rue Saint-Jacques the tram stopped to let a company of light artillery go by in the direction of the Sorbonne.

“The whole garrison has marched out of Paris already, so they say, though nobody saw them go.” “Yes, one feels there’s a firm hand behind it all. Everything’s running like clockwork. Those soldiers know their job, eh?” “Sure! By the way it’s starting, you can see they mean to make things hum!” “I was on vacation in the Vosges, at Ribeauvillers. Well, let me tell you, when you’ve seen those fine lads serving on the frontier, the light infantry regiments especially—well, you don’t worry.” “Still, you can’t deny that was a rotten thing to do, retiring ten kilometres from the frontier.” “That doesn’t matter. When the Boches find they’ve twenty million Russian bayonets prodding them behind, and us in front . . .” “The proprietor of my hotel told me a fellow who’d just come from Luxembourg had seen a French airman dive head first on a Zeppelin, and burst it like a soap-bubble.” “Got to watch out for false news,” the tram conductor observed. “Just now a passenger told me we’d had a decisive victory last night in Alsace.” “Well, yes, that’s going a bit too far. But I’ve been told that Boche patrols have been seen round Nancy.” “Nancy! Tell us another!” “Any of you fellows hear they’ve blown up the bridges at Soissons?” “Who’s blown ’em up? Our people or *them*?” “Our people, what do you think?” “Might have been a spy, though.” “Yes, the whole place is fairly crawling with spies, so I’ve been told. The police can’t cope with ’em. It’s up to each of us to keep an eye on the people about him.” “My brother has a job at the Gare d’Orléans. Well, his wife told us she saw the man who lives in the room opposite hers hiding a German flag under his bed.” “Personally,” a bespectacled gentleman announced sententiously, “I don’t deny that a German has the right to shout: ‘God save Germany!’ if he wants—provided he doesn’t do it in a provocative way. After all, they were born over there; it’s not their fault.”

There was another stop at the Place Maubert. The road was blocked by a huge crowd, and Jenny saw a band of young men carrying a long beam, battering in a window bearing the sign “Maggi’s Dairy.”

The passengers in the tram were thrilled. “That’s the stuff!” someone cried. “Maggi,” the gentleman with the glasses explained, “is a Hun. In fact, he’s a cavalry colonel in the German army. The *Action Française* showed him up some time ago. He’s been biding his time till mobilization came, to do us a bad turn.” “Yes, I hear he poisoned over a hundred kids this morning in the Belleville district with his milk.”

Jenny heard the dull thuds of the battering-ram pounding on the iron shutters. At last they caved in with a tinkle of broken glass as the windows shattered into pieces. The crowd surrounding the shop broke into cheers and cries: “Down with Germany! Lynch the traitors!” At a corner of the square a squad of bicycle police had dismounted and were watching the scene without interfering. After all, France had been attacked; people were dispensing rough-and-ready justice—why prevent them?

At last the tram came to the Gare de Lyon. The station entrances were thronged. Carrying her valise, Jenny threaded her way across the crowd to the refreshment-room.

The windows stood wide open and the room was flooded with garish light. Huddled up in a corner, her moist hands clasped, she kept her eyes fixed on the door, though it was far too early to hope for Jacques’s arrival. The room was stiflingly hot. After the jolting of the tram, the hard, narrow bench on which she was sitting made her painfully conscious of her aching limbs. Her eyes smarted with the glare. People were running in and out all the time; others hurrying past the window, their baggage piled on porters’ trucks which they themselves were pushing. She stopped watching the door for a moment, lifted her valise off the seat beside her, and stowed it under the table; a second later, she dragged it out, put it beside her again, then resumed her watch over the people coming in—inconsequent behaviour which betrayed the state of her nerves. In the crowded tramcar she had managed to keep her mind in a sort of lethargy; now, left to her own resources, she was at the mercy of the emotions running riot in her heart, and the prospect of having to stay thus by herself, for a full hour quite likely, seemed past enduring. She did her utmost to keep her mind busy with trifles, conjuring up a host of harmless little thoughts, but always she felt hovering round her brain, like a bird of prey wheeling in ever-narrower circles, the nightmare idea that till now she had managed to keep at a distance. To fend it off she fell to examining the objects on the table, counting the rolls in the bread-basket, the lumps of sugar in a saucer. Then she looked up at the door again and watched the people moving in and out. A woman with greying hair came in, noticed an empty table near the door, and sat down at it, burying her face in her hands. And in a flash the idea that Jenny had been warding off swooped down on her, struck home. Before her eyes rose a picture of her mother as she had left her, bowed and broken, her hands clasping her forehead. What was she doing now? Perhaps she had decided to have lunch. With her mind’s eye Jenny saw her in the kitchen discovering the table laid for two, the dirty dishes. And now it was she who closed her eyes and, bending forward, pressed her hands to her aching brows.

Some minutes passed before she made a movement. Words she herself had said were echoing in her brain. “You’re jealous . . . utterly heartless.” It passed her understanding how she had ever come to say such things, and how, after saying them, she had brought herself to go.

When at last she raised her head her expression was calm, determined; the pressure of her fingers had left marks on her cheeks. “What’s the use of thinking about it?” she murmured to herself. “My duty’s plain; there’s only one thing to do.” For a moment yet she remained staring with unseeing eyes in front of her, crushed by the weight of her resolve. On only one point was she still uncertain how to act; should she wait for Jacques to come before she took the momentous step, obeyed the call of duty? But why should she do that? To ask his advice? Had she a furtive hope he would attempt to dissuade her? No, her decision was irrevocable. And, that being so, no time must be wasted; she must not keep her mother in suspense a moment longer.

She called a waiter. “Where can I mail a special-delivery letter?”

“The postoffice is just over there, Mademoiselle, by that blue lamppost. It’s Sunday, but I expect they’ve stayed open—on a day like this!”

“Look after my baggage, please. I’ll be back in a moment.”

She ran out of the refreshment-room.

The waiter had judged correctly: the postoffice was open; civilians and men in uniform swarmed at the counters. She bought a special-delivery form and wrote:

> Mother darling, I must have been mad; I’ll never forgive myself for the pain I’ve caused you. I implore you to understand, and to forget. I will stay with you. I’ve given up my idea of going to Switzerland with Jacques. I don’t want to leave you by yourself. *He* is bound to go. It’s the last day he has for leaving Paris. I will go to join him later. With you, I hope. Please, please, don’t refuse to go away with me, so that I can be with him again. I ought to have hurried back home at once, to kiss you and tell you all this. But these last few hours before he leaves—I couldn’t bear not to spend them with him. This evening I’ll be back at home and I’ll explain everything to you, Mother dear, so that you can forgive me.
>
> J.

She thrust the letter into the envelope without reading it again, with shaking hands. Her whole body was trembling, clammy with perspiration; her underclothes were sticking to her skin. Before putting the note into the special-delivery box, she ascertained that it would be delivered within an hour. Slowly she walked back to the station and returned to her seat in the corner of the refreshment-room.

She asked herself if what she had just done had brought any appeasement to her mind, but found no answer. Her sacrifice had left her in a state of utter prostration like that which follows a copious loss of blood. And so despairing was her mood that now she dreaded Jacques's coming; with Jacques away, she felt surer of being able to keep to her decision. She tried to think herself into reassurance. "In a few days, a week, at most two weeks, we'll be together again." But the prospect of two weeks without him was dreadful as death's instance.

When at last she saw Jacques entering the refreshment-room, she stood up and remained thus, pale, stiffly erect, staring helplessly toward him. No sooner did he catch sight of her than he became aware that something serious had happened.

With a tragic gesture she cut short the question hovering on his lips. "Not here. Let's go outside."

Taking her valise, he followed her out. After a few steps along the sidewalk, amid the busy throng, she stopped abruptly, and said in low, hurried tones, raising on him her haggard eyes: "I can't go away with you tonight."

Jacques's lips parted, but he did not speak. He stooped to set down the valise, and when he looked up again had had time to steady, almost unknowingly, his expression. His horror-struck, incredulous look betrayed nothing of the first thought that had flashed unbidden through his mind. "This means I'm free . . . to carry out my task."

They were being jostled by soldiers and civilians hurrying to the station; Jacques led Jenny to a recess between two pillars. Then she said: "I can't go away. I can't leave Mamma. Not today. If you knew! I've behaved abominably to her."

She was staring at the ground, afraid to meet his gaze. He was bending toward her, as though trying to help her to speak, his lips quivering, his eyes dark with unspoken thoughts.

"You understand, don't you?" she pleaded. "I can't go now, after what's happened."

"I understand, I understand," he muttered between his teeth.

"I've got to stay with her. For a few days, anyhow. I'll come and join you. Very soon. As soon as I possibly can."

"Yes," he said vehemently, "as soon as you possibly can." But in himself he thought: "No. Never. This is the end."

For some minutes they stood thus, impotent to move or speak or meet each other's eyes. She had intended to confess to him all that had passed between her mother and herself. But it had somehow gone blurred in her mind; she could not now recall how one remark had led on to another. Anyway, what would have been the good? She felt so hopelessly alone in this her personal tragedy; it was incommunicable, Jacques had no place in it, would always remain outside it.

He, too, at this moment felt hopelessly aloof from her. Aloof, indeed, from everyone; the heroic imaginings with which he had been drugging himself during the past two hours had made him impervious to ordinary emotions. Like a watch that a sudden jolt has stopped, his mind had halted on the first words Jenny had said, his warrant of release: "I can't go away with you." The grief and disappointment conveyed by his demeanour were not feigned, but they were on the surface only. The last impediment had fallen; he was leaving alone, as a free man. Everything had become simple.

She watched him hungrily, thinking: "I shan't be seeing him tomorrow," and was struck by the impression of power that emanated from his face. But in the chaos of her thoughts she did not perceive the nature of the change that had come over him, of the new cast that his resolve had already given his features. Dim with emotion, her eyes lingered fondly on the strong, sensitive mouth, the stubborn jaw, the shoulders, the stalwart, resonant chest on which she had pillowed her head a whole night through. And the thought that she would not be able to pass the coming night in his arms, held in his warm embrace, came with a rush of anguish that was sheer physical pain, pain so intense that, forgetting all, she gave a little sobbing cry: "Oh, my beloved . . . !"

A sudden gleam that kindled in Jacques's eyes told her how rash she had been thus to betray her emotion. And the memories which that gleam evoked in her gave her a little shiver of dread. She had yearned to sleep again in his arms—no more than that.

The darkly glowing eyes bored into hers. Through lips that hardly moved, he murmured: "Before I go away . . . our last afternoon . . . will you, dear?"

She dared not refuse him this last joy. Her cheeks crimson, she looked away with a wan little smile.

Wandering from her, Jacques's gaze roamed for some moments the sunlit square, scanning the high façades on which blazed gilt inscriptions: Hôtel des Voyageurs, Central Palace, Hôtel du Départ.

Then, “Come!” he said, taking her arm.

XXIV

SAFFRIO glowered at him suspiciously. “Who told you?”

“The concierge at his place in the Rue de Carouge,” Jacques replied. “I’ve just come from the train. I haven’t seen anyone yet.”

“*Si, si.* Yes, he’s been staying with me since he came back from Brussels,” the Italian admitted. “He’s lying low. I could see he didn’t relish the idea of going back to his old rooms, with Alfreda gone. So I said: ‘Come and put up with me, Pilot.’ His room’s upstairs. He lives like he was in jail—lying in bed all day long, reading the newspapers. He complains of rheumatism—but that’s only a *pretesto*,” he added with the ghost of a smile. “It’s so as not to go out and have to talk to people. He won’t see anyone, not even Richardley. And how he’s changed! You’d never believe it. That bitch, she’s just about done him in, damn her! I’d never have thought it possible.” He threw up his arms despairingly. “Yes, the Pilot is a broken man.”

Jacques made no reply. Saffrio’s words came to him through a sort of haze; he could not manage to shake off a feeling of still being in the waking dream that had persisted during the eighteen interminable hours he had spent in the train between Paris and Geneva. To make things worse, he was suffering from a gum-boil which had several times during these past few weeks prevented him from sleeping and which the draughts in the train had aggravated.

“Had anything to eat? Want a drink? No? Well, make yourself a cigarette with this tobacco; it’s pretty good, comes from Aosta.”

“I want to see *him*.”

“Wait just a *momento*. I’ll go upstairs and tell him you’re back. P’r’aps he’ll want to see you, p’r’aps not. You’ve changed, too, you know.” His soft, caressing gaze lingered on Jacques. “*Si, si.* But you don’t listen to me, you’re ‘thinking war,’ eh? Everybody’s changed, of course. Tell us what you saw in Paris. So they let you come here? I’m surprised. The most terrible thing, my boy, is the way they've all gone quite crazy, now they're soldiers. Their *furia*, their songs! All the trainloads of men going to the front, their eyes sparkling, and shouting: '*A Berlin!*' and on the other side: '*Nach Paris!*' "

"Well," Jacques said gloomily, "the men I saw leaving for the front weren't singing." Then, as if abruptly wakened from a trance, he broke out excitedly: "What's so terrible about it all isn't that. It's the International. It's done nothing, Saffrio; absolutely nothing! It's played the traitor. When Jaurès died, they all ratted. All, even the best. Renaudel, Jaurès's bosom friend. Guesde, Sembat, Vaillant. Yes, even Vaillant, a man like Vaillant, who had the pluck to declare in Parliament: 'Rather a rebellion than a war!' Even the T.U.C. leaders. To my mind, that's the most baffling thing of all. Yet those men weren't tainted with the 'parliamentary spirit,' and the resolutions passed at all the congresses were perfectly plain: 'A general strike will follow automatically on a declaration of war.' On the eve of mobilization the proletariat was still undecided. They could have brought it off. But they didn't even try. 'Your country needs you.' 'We must stand shoulder to shoulder.' 'We must defend socialism against Prussian militarism.' That's the sort of thing they said—they brought themselves to say. And when people asked them: 'What are we to do?' all they found to answer was: 'Obey your mobilization orders.' "

Saffrio's eyes were full of tears. "Even here," he said after a short pause, "everything's topsy-turvy. Nowadays the comrades, they speak in whispers. The whole world's changed. People are afraid. The government here is neutral for today; it leaves us in peace. But what about tomorrow? And if we've got to leave, where shall we go? Everybody's nervous. The police have their eye on everything. Nobody shows up at Headquarters. Richardley holds meetings at night in his room or at Boissonis's place. Foreign newspapers are passed round; those who understand them translate for the others. Then off they start discussing, and get all worked up! Over nothing. What can anybody do? Richardley's the only one who goes on working. He has the faith. He says the *Internazionale*, it cannot die, it will resurrect itself stronger than ever. He says that Italy ought to speak right now. He wants the Swiss Socialists to combine with the Italian Socialists and make a start at saving the good name of socialism. Because"—he raised his hands proudly—"in Italy the proletariat, it is faithful. Italy is the true home of the revolution. All the group leaders, Malatesta and Borghi and Mussolini, they are fighting harder than ever. Not only to prevent the government from joining in the war, but to bring peace to the world very soon, by the union of all the Socialists in Europe, the comrades in Germany and Russia."

Jacques thought: But they've not realized that there are quicker ways of bringing peace to the world.

"In France, too," he said aloud, in a quiet, detached tone, as though these matters had ceased to concern him, "you will find some isolated groups who're still holding out. You'd do well to keep in touch with the Ironworkers' Union, for instance. There are individuals as well. You've heard of Merrheim, I suppose? Then there's Monatte, and die Vie Ouvrière group. None of them have knuckled under. And you'd find others like them: Martov, Mourlan, and the fellows on the *Etendard*."

"In Germany there's Liebknecht. Richardley's already got in contact with him."

"And Hosmer, in Vienna. You should be able to arrange through Mithoerg . . ."

"Mithoerg!" the Italian exclaimed, rising to his feet. His lips were quivering. "Haven't you heard about Mithoerg? He's gone."

"Gone?"

"To Austria."

"What!"

Saffrio dropped his eyes; the handsome Roman features wore a look of naked, uncontrolled, almost animal grief. "The day when Mithoerg came back from Brussels, he said: 'I'm going back to Austria.' All of us, we said: 'Nonsense, man, you're crazy. Why, you already have been sentenced as a deserter.' But he just says: 'That's why. A deserter, he is not a coward. A deserter, he comes back when there is a war. I must go.' Me, I said to him: 'To do what, Mithoerg? Not to join the army, surely?' Then he said: 'No, not to join the army. To be an example. So that they may shoot me dead in front of everybody.' *Si, si*, he said that. And that night he left." The words ended in a sob.

"So Mithoerg did that!" Jacques's voice shook, and a far-away look came into his eyes. For some moments he kept silent, then he turned to the Italian. "Now would you go and tell him that I'm here, please?"

When Saffrio had left the room, Jacques repeated to himself: "So Mithoerg did that!" Yes, Mithoerg had done something, the utmost he could do, to prove that he remained loyal to himself. He had chosen an *exemplary act*, and to it given up his life.

When Saffrio came back he was amazed at the look he caught on Jacques's face, the vestige of a smile. "You're in luck, Thibault. He says he'll see you. Come upstairs."

Following the Italian, Jacques made his way up the spiral staircase that led off from a corner of the shop. When they reached the attic, Saffrio stood aside, pointing to a door at the far end, where a room had been partitioned off with a plank wall.

"He's there. Go in alone; it's better."

As the door opened, Meynestrel looked round. He was lying on the bed; his cheeks were streaming and sweat had matted his black hair, making his forehead look more prominent and his skull smaller. His hand, clasped on a newspaper, dangled beside the bed. A skylight just above him framed a patch of glaring sky, and the air was furnace-hot. The tiled floor was strewn with newspapers and half-smoked cigarettes.

Jacques's friendly smile had won no response from Meynestrel, and his first eager advance had stopped short half-way to the bed. But with a briskness of which a victim of rheumatism would have certainly been incapable—"His rheumatism's a '*pretesto,*' " Jacques thought to himself—Meynestrel had sprung to his feet. He was wearing an aviator's overalls, and the faded-blue collar, open at the neck, revealed a hairy, scraggy chest. He was ill-kempt, almost dirty; the overlong hair curling up on the back of his neck made a sort of feathery ruff, like the plumage on a duck's rump.

"Why did you come back to Switzerland?"

"What was there for me to do over there?"

Meynestrel was standing with his back to the chest of drawers; his arms were folded and he was tugging at his beard, his eyes intent on Jacques. He had developed a new tic; his left eye was continually twitching.

Put out of countenance by this unlooked-for reception, Jacques began talking more or less at random. "You can't imagine, Pilot, what things are like over there. All meetings are forbidden, and there's a censorship in force. Even if it wanted to, no newspaper could publish anything against the government. I saw a fellow on the terrace of a café nearly torn to pieces because he didn't stand up and salute the flag. What's to be done? If one tried distributing leaflets in the barracks, one would be arrested right away. And sabotage, as you know, isn't my line. In any case, what's the use of blowing up an arsenal or a supply train when there are hundreds of other arsenals, thousands of supply trains? No, for the moment, there's nothing doing over there. Nothing!"

Meynestrel shrugged his shoulders. A wan smile hovered on his lips. "There's nothing doing here, either."

"That depends." Jacques looked away.

Meynestrel did not seem to have heard. He went back to the chest of drawers, dipped his fingers in a basin standing on it, and moistened his forehead. Noticing that Jacques had remained standing, there being no chair free, he cleared a stool of the heap of papers of all sorts encumbering it. The unseeing gaze he cast round the room, as he did so, was that of a haunted man. Then he went back to the bed, seated himself on the edge, his arms limply dangling, and heaved a sigh.

Suddenly he spoke. “I miss her terribly, you know.” The cool, almost indifferent tone was that of a man drawing attention to an evident fact.

“They shouldn’t have behaved like that,” Jacques said after a moment’s pause.

Again, Meynestrel did not seem to hear. Abruptly he rose and walked to the door, kicking aside a newspaper. For some minutes, dragging one leg like a wounded insect, he paced up and down the room with a sort of febrile listlessness.

Jacques could hardly believe that such a change should have come over the Pilot. Meynestrel seemed to have forgotten his presence and this gave him a better opportunity of observing him. His face had grown leaner, the look of restrained energy and shrewdness had disappeared. The eyes were restless still, but the sparkle had gone out of them; they were curiously mild and, at moments, had a look of calm serenity. “No,” Jacques corrected himself at once, “that’s not serenity; it’s weariness, the unmeaning peace that comes of sheer exhaustion.”

“They ‘shouldn’t,’ you said?” Meynestrel’s tone was vaguely questioning. Suddenly he stopped pacing to and fro and planted himself in front of Jacques. “If there’s one idea I’ve been effectively cured of—after all that—it’s the idea of moral responsibility.”

“After all that.” Jacques had the impression that Meynestrel had in mind not only what had befallen him personally, the conduct of Alfreda and Paterson, but was thinking, too, of Europe, its statesmen and diplomats, and the Party leaders—himself perhaps included, and his deserted post.

Once again the Pilot walked across the room, then came back to the bed and stretched himself on it, saying in a low voice: “In the last analysis, what man’s responsible—for his acts or for himself? Do you know anyone who is? Personally, I’ve never come across such a one.”

A long silence ensued; a dense, oppressive silence that seemed one with the stifling heat, the ruthless glare.

Meynestrel lay on the bed unmoving, his eyes closed. He gave an impression, seen thus, of being taller than his height. A hand with tobacco-stained nails and fingers half clenched as if gripping an invisible ball, rested, palm outward, on the edge of the sheet. The sleeve had slipped back, uncovering his wrist. Jacques stared at the fingers, like the talons of a bird of prey, and the wrist, which never before had seemed to him so frail, so feminine. "That bitch, she's just about done him in." No, Saffrio had not exaggerated. But recognition of the fact did not explain anything; once again Jacques came up against the enigma of the Pilot's personality. Why should a man of his calibre throw in his hand at the very moment when it looked as if at last his hour were going to strike?

Suddenly, without moving, Meynestrel said: "Mithoerg, you know, has gone—to meet his death."

Jacques gave a start. "Each of us can choose his death," he thought. After a few moments he said in a low voice: "That shouldn't be so very difficult when one can make one's death an act, a conscious, final act, that *serves a purpose*."

Meynestrel's hand twitched slightly; the cadaverous face with the closed eyes seemed turned to stone.

Jacques drew himself up and with a fretful movement swept back the lock of hair dangling across his forehead. "Look here!" he said. "This is my plan."

There was sudden resonance in his voice, an accent so compelling that Meynestrel turned his head quickly, opening his eyes. Jacques's gaze was fixed on the skylight, and the light streaming down on his upturned face brought out its look of fierce, invincible resolve.

"There's nothing to be done behind the lines. For the present, anyhow. There's no fighting against the governments; against martial law, press censorship, the patriotic war-fever. But at the front itself it's another matter. It's possible to act upon the man who's being marched up to the firing-line. And that's the man we've got to get at." Meynestrel made a slight movement which Jacques took as indicating doubt, but which was only a nervous twitch. "No, let me explain. Oh, I know very well how things are today. The 'Marseillaise,' the 'Wacht am Rhein,' roses stuck in the rifle-slings. But what of tomorrow? Tomorrow that man who is singing as he marches to the front will be no more than a poor devil up against the realities of war. A man who's underfed, whose feet are bleeding, who's dropping with fatigue and scared out of his wits by the first bombardments, the first attacks, the first wounds and corpses he sets eyes on. That's the man to whom we can speak. That's the man to whom we've got to say: 'You fool, you're being exploited once again. They're trading on your patriotism, your loyalty, your courage.

Everyone’s humbugged you. Even the men who had your trust, the men you chose to defend your rights. Now, anyhow, you can see what they wanted of you. Revolt! Refuse to let them rob you of your lives. Refuse to kill. Hold out your hand to your brothers in the opposite lines, men who’ve been fooled and exploited just as you were. Drop your rifles. Revolt!’ ” His emotion choked him. He took a few deep breaths before speaking again. “The thing is to find a way of getting in touch with the men at the front. You’ll ask me—‘How?’ ”

Meynestrel had propped himself up on an elbow, and in his eyes intent on Jacques there was a hint of irony which he was unable to conceal. The look implied: “Exactly! *How?*”

“In an aeroplane!” Jacques cried, without waiting for the question to be uttered. Then in a lower voice, more slowly, he continued. “We can get in touch with him from the air. We must fly over the front lines, French and German. We must drop on them thousands and thousands of leaflets, in both languages. The French and German Staffs can prevent propaganda from making its way into the soldiers’ barracks. But they can do nothing against an avalanche of propaganda dropping from the sky along a front of hundreds of miles. Our leaflets will be broadcast on villages, camps—everywhere troops are massed together. People will read them in France and Germany. And they’ll be understood. They’ll be passed from hand to hand; they’ll find their way into base-camps behind the lines, even into the hands of the civilian population. They’ll remind every peasant, every worker, French and German, what he is, what he owes to himself, and they’ll tell him what sort of man is facing him in the enemy lines, and that it was a monstrous, unthinkable crime to have launched them at each other’s throats.”

Meynestrel’s lips parted as if he were about to speak. But he said nothing and stretched himself again on the bed, gazing up at the ceiling.

“Oh, Pilot, try to imagine the effect of our leaflets, how they’ll stir men to revolt! Why, their effects may be absolutely shattering, decisive! Supposing in a single sector of the lines the opposing troops should fraternize, the contagion would spread like wildfire all along the front. Mutinies everywhere. The General Staffs at their wit’s end. The very day I brought off my flight, the French and German High Commands would be held up; no action would be possible in the sector on which I’d dropped my leaflets. And what an example it would be! How it would grip the imagination of the world at large! ‘The Peace Plane!’ ‘A message from the air!’ Yes, the victory that international socialism failed to win before the nations mobilized may still be won today. We failed to bring about the union of the proletariat, the general strike. But we can still bring about the fraternization of the fighting-forces.”

A brief smile twisted the Pilot’s lips. Jacques took a step toward him; he too was smiling with the assurance of unshakable conviction. Without raising his voice, calmly as before, he went on speaking. “There’s nothing in all this that’s not completely feasible. But I can’t do it single-handed. I need your help, Pilot. You know the ropes, you can get the plane for me. And you can teach me in a few days how to fly it—just well enough to travel for some hours in a straight line. The battlefields are within easy reach; it’s quite a short flight from the north of Switzerland to the French and German lines in Alsace. No, don’t shake your head; I’ve thought it all out. I’ve weighed the difficulties and the risks. If only you’ll help me, the difficulties can be overcome. As for the risk—for there’s only one risk, really—that’s my affair.” A flush rose to his cheeks, and he fell silent.

After a quick glance to make sure that Jacques had said all he wanted to say, Meynestrel slowly swung himself round and sat up, his legs dangling on the side of the bed. He refrained from looking at Jacques. For a few moments he sat thus, gently stroking his knees. At last he said: “So you think that you, a deserter from the French army, could take a flying-course here in Switzerland without arousing suspicion, do you? And you seriously think that after a few days’ training you could take off by yourself, read the maps, pick out your landmarks, and keep the air all on your own, for several hours?” He spoke quietly, with hardly a trace of irony; his expression was inscrutable. Then he raised one hand level with his chin and for some moments examined absent-mindedly the grimy fingernails, one after the other. “And now,” he added almost harshly, “will you please leave me to myself!”

Jacques was so taken aback that he halted stock-still in the middle of the room, trying to catch the Pilot’s eye and wondering if he had heard aright. Was he really to go away like that, without a word of approval or advice, without a heartening smile?

“*Au revoir*,” Meynestrel said in a clear voice without raising his eyes.

“*Au revoir!*” Jacques murmured and began walking to the door. As he was going out, a feeling of revolt surged up in him; he stopped and turned abruptly. The Pilot was watching him, his eyes shining as in the old days; there was a glint of wonder in their depths, but their expression was inscrutable as ever.

“Come and see me again tomorrow.” The words came in a rush; Meynestrel’s voice, too, had regained its former ring, its rapid, clean-cut enunciation. “Tomorrow morning, kind of late. Make it eleven. And lie low meanwhile. Don’t let yourself be seen—by anyone. Nobody must know you’re back.” And suddenly his face lit up with a most disconcerting smile, a smile of tenderest affection. “Till tomorrow, then, old man.”

No sooner had the door closed behind Jacques than Meynestrel murmured half aloud: “After all, why not?” Not that he had any faith in the efficacy of Jacques’s romantic scheme. Later on, perhaps, after long months of suffering and bloodshed, possibilities of fraternization between the hostile armies might arise. Still, anything that might undermine morale and sow the seeds of mutiny was, to his thinking, so much to the good.

“Yes, I understand the boy’s feelings very well; he’s hungering for his slice of heroism, that’s what it comes to.” He rose, latched the door, and took a few steps across the room. “It’s not a bad idea, perhaps,” he muttered, as he laid himself again on the bed. “A chance worth snatching at, of . . . a way out.”

XXV

RESTING his head on the wooden wall of the compartment, Jacques let the steady rumble of the train vibrate through his body, jarring every sinew, tautening his nerves. He had the third-class car to himself. The air was furnace-hot, though all the windows were open. Dripping with sweat, he had flung himself full length on the seat, on the side away from the sun. And now the clangor of the train changed to the drone of a motor, an aeroplane in flight. With his mind’s eye he saw a flurry of white leaflets spinning down in myriads through the bright air.

The wind that fanned his brows was hot, but the flapping blinds gave an illusion of coolness. On the opposite seat lay his bag, bouncing at each jolt of the train; it was a capacious bag faded to a dingy yellow and bulging like a pilgrim’s scrip—an old travelling-companion, faithful to the last. Jacques had hastily bundled into it some clothes and miscellaneous papers, without troubling to sort them out, in a mood of utter indifference; he had reached the station just in time for his train. In accordance with Meynestrel’s instructions he had left Geneva within an hour, without seeing anyone. Since the early morning he had not eaten, had not even had time to buy a pack of cigarettes at the station. No matter. He had set forth. And this time it was a setting forth anonymous, alone—without return. He would have felt at peace but for the heat, the swarms of flies, the anvil-blows hammering incessantly on his brain. At peace and valiant. The mental anguish, the despairs of the days he had been living through, were left behind.

He closed his eyes, but opened them again almost at once. No retreat from the visible world was needed for him to lose himself in his dream. . . . Cities, fields, and forests glide by beneath the wings as the plane skims hilltops, dives down into blue valleys. In the cockpit just in front of him sits the Pilot. Bundles of leaflets lie around his feet. The Pilot makes a sign; the plane is flying lower; underneath is a motley chequerwork of blue greatcoats, red trousers, field-grey uniforms. Stooping, he picks up a sheaf of leaflets, scatters them on the wind. The drone of the motor swells to a roar as the plane goes zooming sunward. Jacques stoops and rises, stoops and rises, launching white cloudlets of dancing butterflies. Meynestrel looks back at him over his shoulder; he is laughing. . . .

Meynestrel! He was back on solid ground again. Meynestrel was the pivot on which his whole endeavour turned. He had just left Meynestrel—and how different a Meynestrel from the "broken man" of yesterday! His shoulders sagged no longer; he was once more the leader born, the man of action, of quick, precise gestures.

When they met that morning the Pilot had greeted him with a triumphant smile. "It's all fixed up. We're in luck. It'll be much simpler than I expected. We can take off in three days' time."

"We?" Still wondering if he had heard aright, Jacques had murmured something about "valuable lives, men who are indispensable to the cause, whom it would be a crime to expose to danger." But the Pilot had cut him short with a rapierlike glance, the sharpness of which was tempered by a slight shrug of the shoulders seeming to imply: "I'm of no use for anything or anyone nowadays." Then he had drawn himself up and, speaking very rapidly, continued: "Let's cut all that out, if you don't mind, old man. You've got to clear out right away—to Basel. For a lot of reasons. If we take off at the frontier, we're over Alsace at once. Now let's fix up our respective tasks. I'll see about the 'bus'; you'll see to the pamphlets. Get the text written, to start with. None too easy, that. But I expect you've thought it out already. Next get it printed. That's a job for Plattner. You don't know Plattner? Here's a note for him. He has a bookshop in the Greifengasse; also a printing-press. Everyone there speaks both languages, French and German, equally well; they'll translate your manifesto for you. Running a million copies in both languages off the presses should mean a few nights' work. Anyhow, see that everything's set for Saturday. That gives you three full days. It's feasible. Don't write to me or anyone; the mail's under observation. If anything crops up, I'll send you news by a man I can trust. The address is in this envelope. Also detailed instructions—and some maps. No, don't look at them now; you can study them in the train. We meet, then, near the frontier; the exact place and time I'll let you know later. Agreed?" Then only, his face had lost its hardness, and a trace of emotion entered his voice. "Right. You've a train for Basel at twelve-thirty." He took a step forward and placed his hands on Jacques's shoulders. "I want to thank you, Jacques. You've done me a tremendous service." His eyes were misted. For a moment Jacques had thought that Meynestrel was going to embrace him. But, on the contrary, the Pilot had withdrawn his hands abruptly. "I'd have been bound to end up by doing some damned silly thing. What I'm doing now may at least be of some use." Then, limping, he had escorted Jacques to the door. "Hurry up or you'll miss your train. *Au revoir.*"

Jacques rose and went to the window, hoping for a breath of air. For a while he gazed out at the lake and mountains bathed in August sunshine, a familiar scene that for the last time met his eyes. But his eyes saw nothing of it.

He was thinking of Jenny. Only yesterday, in the train from Paris, each time a thought of her had flashed across his mind, it had brought a stab of unbearably sharp pain that made him gasp for breath. And all his heart had been a mad desire just once again to hold that little head between his hands and gaze into the blue of her eyes, to stroke her rippling hair just once again and watch her eyes grow dim with love under his gaze, her lips slowly parting to his kiss. Just once again to hold that warm, slim, supple body pressed to his! . . . And then he had sprung up from the seat, gone out into the corridor, clenched his hands on the window-rail, and, leaning forward, exposed his face to the stinging wind, the smoke, the flying cinders—trying to subdue the fever of his blood. Now, however, he could think of her less poignantly; she lay shrined in his memory like the dead body of a passionately loved woman. The ineluctable bears within itself its own appeasement. Now that the end was so near, everything—the days he had lived through at Paris, the emotions of the past week—had suddenly receded to a great distance. He could look back now on his love as on his childhood—a dead past that nothing could resuscitate. And all the future held for him was one wild, crowded moment, a burst of vivid light on his life's horizon.

Unthinkingly he had raised the blind; now he let it fall again. He thrust his hands into his pockets and withdrew them at once, clammy with sweat. The heat, the flies, the din were maddening! He sat down again, pulled off his collar and, slumped in a corner, one arm trailing outside the window, tried to collect his thoughts.

The all-important thing had yet to be done; he had to write that manifesto on which everything hung. It must be a lightning-flash across the darkness, something that went straight to the hearts of men seeking each other's death, something that would carry swift conviction and provoke a simultaneous upsurge of revolt.

Already, disconnected words were jangling in his brain; even scraps of phrases, the clarion-calls of oratory.

"Hostile armies—why 'hostile'? Frenchmen and Germans. The accident of birth. All fellow-men. Workers and peasants, a majority in every land. Workers all. Why enemies? The difference of nationality? But interests identical. Linked together in every way. Everything conspires to make them natural allies."

Taking a notebook from his pocket, he began jotting down phrases as they occurred to him.

> Frenchmen and Germans, you are brothers. All alike, and all alike victims. Victims of the lies dinned into your ears. Not one of you has left of his own accord his home, wife and children, his factory, shop, or farm, to serve as a target for other workers exactly like himself. All of you alike fear death, all hate the idea of killing, all believe that human life is sacred. All realize that war is folly. There's not one of you but longs to escape from this nightmare war, to get back as soon as he can to his wife, children, and work, to peace and liberty. And yet here you are today, facing each other, with loaded rifles in your hands, ready blindly, at the first word of command, to slaughter men you've never seen, men whom you have no reason to hate, without having any idea why you are being forced to act as murderers.

The train slowed down, stopped. "Lausanne!" Memories flashed across his mind. The *Pension Kammerzinn*, his room with the glossy pitchpine floor, Sophia.

Fearing to be recognized, he resisted the temptation to alight. Holding aside the curtain, he peeped out and gazed at the platforms, the news-stand. Over there was No. 3 Platform—he had walked up and down it one winter night, at Antoine's side, before catching the train that was to bring him back to Paris, to his father's deathbed. It seemed to him now as if that journey with his brother had taken place a full ten years ago.

Two police officers walked by, inspecting the train. An elderly couple entered Jacques's car and settled down. The man, an old artisan with gnarled hands, had put on his Sunday best for the journey. Now he took off his coat and tie, mopped his brow, and lit a cigar. The woman took the coat and, after folding it carefully, laid it on her knees.

Jacques settled himself in his corner and took out his notebook again. Feverishly he scribbled:

> Within less than two weeks, a monstrous collective madness has come over Europe. The press, lying journalists. All nations doped with the same lies. What only yesterday no self-respecting man could bear to contemplate has come to seem inevitable, necessary, and legitimate. Everywhere we see the selfsame crowds of people, goaded deliberately into fanaticism, ready in a white-hot frenzy to spring at each other's throats, not knowing why they do it. To die and to kill have become synonyms of heroism, badges of honour. Why should it be? Who are the men responsible for this state of things?

He took from his pocketbook a folded sheet of paper; on it was a phrase that Vanheede had copied for him from a book on Wilhelm II; an extract from one of the Kaiser's speeches:

> I am convinced that wars between nations are oftener than not an outcome of the ambitions and intrigues of certain statesmen who use these criminal expedients for the sole purpose of keeping in their hands the reins of power and increasing their popularity.

I must get hold of the German original, Jacques reflected, so as to be able to say to them: "Look! That's what your Kaiser himself says." How shall I get it? Vanheede? No; Meynestrel forbade me to write letters to anybody. The public library at Basel, perhaps. But I don't even know the name of the book. Might manage to trace it. No; no time. Still—I've got to find that German original somehow. . . . He felt the blood rush to his head, fuddling his thoughts. "The men responsible," he murmured blankly. He could not keep still, shifted his position. Annoying, those people in the car! The old woman was following his movements with obvious curiosity. She was in the seat facing him; it was too high for her and her stumpy legs rocked to and fro with the swaying of the train. White stockings, black shoes. To and fro. “The men responsible . . .” Got to find that original. If that old woman keeps on staring, I’ll . . . She fished out of her basket some plums, a hunk of bread; fell to munching the plums slowly, methodically, spitting the stones into her hand. A wedding-ring glinted. On her forehead a fly settled, flew off, settled again. She did not seem to feel it. Like a corpse. . . . Intolerable!

He rose to his feet.

How to trace that book? At Basel? No; useless. Waste of time. Too late. . . . He knew he would never trace it.

Hungering for a breath of fresh air, he went out into the corridor and rested his hands on the window-ledge. Black clouds were massing round the mountain crests. A storm coming. That’s why it’s so sultry. Seen from above, the water of the lake had the density of quicksilver, and its dull sheen. Thickly sprayed with sulphate, the leafage of the vineyards descending to the water’s edge shone a poisonous metallic blue.

The men responsible. When you want to trace an incendiary, the first thing is to discover who will profit by the fire. He mopped his face, took out his pencil again, and, leaning against the doorjamb, tried to think himself into indifference—to everything, to the old woman, the suffocating heat, the flies, the noise, the jolts, the landscape, the whole hostile universe around him. Feverishly he scribbled:

> A hidden power, the state, has dealt with you as a farmer deals with his cattle. What is the state? Is the French state or the German state truly and effectively representative of the people, does it stand for the interests of the majority? No. In France as in Germany the state represents a mere fraction; it is the mouthpiece of a gang of speculators who owe their power to their wealth alone and who have under their control today the banks, trusts, public utilities, newspapers, munition factories—everything! They are the absolute rulers of a servile social system that promotes the interests of a favoured few at the expense of the majority. We have seen this system at work during these last weeks. We have seen it crushing like a Juggernaut under its wheels every effort to advance the cause of peace. And it is this same system that’s hounding you on today across the frontier with fixed bayonets, in the defence of interests that are no concern of yours, that actually are ruinous to almost all of you. Men who are being sent to their death have surely the right of asking who stands to profit by their sacrifice, of knowing to whom and to what end they are giving up their lives.

Well, those responsible, in the first place, are the small group who exploit the public—the big business men engaged in ruthless competition with each other, nation against nation; who have no qualms about dispatching the helpless herd to the slaughter-house so as to assure their own privileges and pile up greater and greater wealth. Wealth that, far from enriching the masses and giving them a better life, will serve only to enslave still more completely such of you as escape the shambles.

But these exploiters of the people are not the only men responsible. In every land they've enlisted confederates in the ranks of their respective governments. Among those responsible are these men, their satellites, that handful of windbag politicians, whom the Kaiser himself denounced.

Got to trace that original, he thought again. I simply *must* get hold of it.

A gang of swindlers, ambassadors, ministers of state, ambitious generals, who, working behind the scenes in Foreign Offices and High Commands, have by their plotting and scheming callously brought you into peril of death, without asking your opinion, without so much as warning you—you, the people of France, and you, the German people, the pawns in their vile game. For that is how things are; in this so-called democratic Europe of the twentieth century no nation has managed to get control of its foreign policy; none of the parliaments you have elected, which are supposed to represent you, is ever informed of the secret commitments which from one day to another may plunge you, every man of you, into the horrors of war.

And behind these arch-criminals, in France and in Germany alike, are all those who, more or less consciously, have made war possible—either by conniving at the wildcat schemes of high finance or by encouraging the ambitions of the politicians by their partisan approval. I have in mind the conservative parties, employers' associations, the nationalist press. The churches, too, are blood-guilty; almost everywhere the clergy plays the part of a spiritual police force acting in the service of the propertied class. Everywhere the churches have played traitor to their spiritual function, and become the allies, or cat's-paws, of the powers of high finance.

He stopped and tried to read what he had written. The strain of gripping the short stub of pencil, his fever, his uncomfortable position, and the motion of the train had made the writing almost illegible.

It won’t do, he thought. Too long-winded, too repetitious. I’ll have to trim it down. It’s got to be terse, compact, if it’s to grip their minds. And yet, to start them thinking things over, pulling themselves together, all the fundamental issues have to be included. Difficult!

His legs seemed giving way under him. He thought quickly. Must find a seat. Alone, if possible. He went along the corridor, hunting for an empty car. All full; people talking at the top of their own voices. There was nothing for it; he went back to his old place.

The sun was going down; the car was bathed in a red, angry glare. Prostrated by the heat, the man was snoring, propped on an elbow, his dead cigar still between his lips. The old woman was fanning her face with a newspaper, the coat still spread across her knees. She had looked away as Jacques came in, but now and again he caught her darting a furtive, ill-natured glance in his direction.

Folding his arms, he closed his eyes and counted up to a hundred, to compose his jangled nerves. And suddenly a flood of weariness engulfed him; he fell asleep.

He woke with a start, amazed at having slept. What time was it? The train was slowing down. His travelling-companions were on their feet; the man had put on his coat, relighted his cigar; the woman was closing the lock on her basket. Jacques tried to recognize the station. Berne already?

“*Grützi*,” said the man politely as he walked past Jacques.

The platform was crowded; there was a general rush for the train. Jacques’s compartment was invaded by a loquacious German-speaking family; mother, grandmother, two small girls, a maid. The luggage-rack sagged under a load of hampers and children’s toys. The two women looked tired and dejected. The little girls, whom the heat had rendered quarrelsome, began quarrelling over who was to have the corner seat. These people, Jacques surmised, had been caught by the war on their holiday and were hurrying home; the father, probably, had joined his regiment some days before.

The train began to move. Jacques squeezed his way out into the corridor, which was full of people standing at the windows, mostly men. On his left three young Swiss were conversing in French.

“Viviani’s staying on as Prime Minister.”

“Who’s this fellow Doumergue that’s taking over the Foreign Office?”

On his right a young student, his notebooks tucked under his arm, and an elderly man wearing glasses who looked like a professor, were reading the papers.

“Say, what do you think of this?” The young man grinned as he handed his companion the *Journal de Genève*. “The Pope’s had a bright idea, it seems. He’s just launched an appeal ‘To All the Catholics of the World.’ ”

“Well, it may be news to you, but there are still several millions of Catholics in the world. And if it was perfectly definite and strongly worded—and if it had been launched *before* this started—well, the Pope’s anathema carries weight, you know.”

“Read it,” the student said. “I suppose you think he formally denounces war, tells off the great powers, and lumps all the nations at war together in one and the same denunciation—something really hair-raising in the excommunicative line! Wait a bit, though! What about apostolic prudence? ‘Be ye wise as serpents!’ No, all he finds to say to the millions of Catholics who’re going to start plugging at each other tomorrow, and who’re presumably waiting for orders from His Holiness to put themselves straight with their consciences—what he says isn’t: ‘Thou shalt do no murder! Refuse to fight!’ If he’d done so, quite likely they’d have had to call off the war. No, in a nice paternal tone he says: ‘Go to it, my sons! Go to it, but don’t forget to elevate your souls toward their Maker’—whatever that may mean!”

Jacques listened with half an ear. A memory flashed across his mind of a priest he had noticed—where was it? At the Gare du Nord, when he’d been seeing Antoine off. A young, athletic-looking prelate, bright-eyed—of the “muscular Christian,” “youth leader” persuasion, the recipient, most likely, of some fat advowson—with two haversacks slung across his high-reefed cassock, brand-new mountain-climbing boots, and a sergeant’s forage cap rakishly cocked over an ear. The Gare du Nord, Antoine. Antoine, Daniel, Jenny! All these people whom memory involuntarily conjured up, and all these men and women round him, belonged to another world, one that was his no longer, the world of living men, men for whom there was a future, who would continue without him on life’s way.

The three young Swiss on his left were discussing with indignation the ultimatum sent by Germany to Belgium.

Jacques moved toward them, listened.

“It was on the posters. A German army corps has crossed the Belgian frontier and is marching on Liège.”

A youngish man came out of a neighbouring compartment and joined the group. He was a Belgian, hurrying back to Namur to enlist. “Let me tell you,” he said at once, “I’m a Socialist. And that precisely is the reason why I don’t stand for right being crushed by might.” He launched into a long harangue, raising his voice, declaiming against “German savagery” and vaunting the merits of “Western civilization.”

Some other passengers came up. All alike expressed disgust with the brutal methods adopted by the German government.

“Ze Belgian Parliament met zis morning.” The speaker, a man in the fifties, had a thick German accent. “Tink you zat ze Socialists vill vote for the var credits?”

“Like one man, sir!” The Belgian rounded on the speaker, the light of battle in his eyes.

Jacques kept silent. He knew the Belgian’s forecast was correct. And ragefully he recalled the stand taken by the Belgian Socialists at Brussels, their professions of uncompromising socialism. Vandervelde. . . . Last Thursday, less than a week ago.

“In Paris, too,” one of the Swiss remarked, “it’s today the Chamber meets to vote for war credits.”

“It’ll be the same thing in Paris!” the Belgian cried. “In all the Allied countries the Socialists will vote in the same way. We have justice on our side. This war has been forced on us. In the fight against Prussian militarism the place of every Socialist is in the firing-line.” As he spoke, he shot furious glances at the man with the German accent, who held his peace.

“Your Country Needs You! Down with German Imperialism!” The same cry everywhere. In the latest issues of the radical French papers, which Jacques had read the day before, it was the same story: everywhere the Socialists withdrew their opposition to the war. A few sporadic meetings were still being announced as taking place in the suburbs, but they were only to discuss ways and means of providing relief for families whose breadwinners were at the front. The war had become an accepted fact, against which no one protested. The copy of the *Guerre Sociale* which Jacques had read was particularly revealing. On the front page Hervé had the audacity to write:

> Jaurès, well for you you are not here to watch the wreck of our dreams. But how sad that you are not among us still to see how nobly our highly strung, enthusiastic race, now as always idealist at heart, has responded to the call of duty! You would have been proud of our Socialist workers.

Still more significant was the “Railwaymen’s Manifesto” issued by the Railway Workers’ Union, which only a few days before had been so vigorously proclaiming its anti-nationalism.

> In this hour of common peril, party differences are wiped out. Socialists, trade unionists, and revolutionaries, all will join in frustrating Kaiser Wilhelm’s knavish schemes, all will answer “Present!” when they hear the call of the Republic.

What irony! Jacques had thought. At last, what had seemed impossible—a united front of all the various left-wing parties in every land—has been brought into being. Brought into being by what? By war! Whereas if it had been created *against war* . . . ! The champions of the Socialist International today are everywhere unanimous in approving of the war, from a nationalist viewpoint. Whereas it could have been prevented if, two weeks ago, they’d agreed to launch a preventive general strike. The last faint echo of independence Jacques had discovered was in the English *Daily News*. It contained an article, couched in the terms of a declaration of political faith, which had been written before Germany’s note to Belgium. After protesting against the war-mongering notions that were beginning to be foisted upon the British public, the writer of the article emphatically declared that it was England’s duty to retain her freedom of action, her ability to act as mediator, and to stay out of the war whatever happened, even if one of the belligerents showed an intention of sending troops through Belgium. But that was yesterday. Now Great Britain had officially announced her participation in the dance of death, on highly idealistic grounds.

The ringing tones of the Belgian Socialist echoed down the corridor. “Jaurès himself, were he with us, would be the first to set us an example. Why, sir, Jaurès was all eagerness to join the colours.”

Jaurès, Jacques mused. Would he have stopped the rot? Would even he have held out to the end? And suddenly a picture rose before his eyes of the scene outside the café in the Rue Montmartre, the silent crowd massed in the darkness, the ambulance. . . . Jenny’s pressure on his arm. The funeral’s today. Flowers, speeches, flags, military bands. They’ve taken over the corpse of the lost leader and are parading it as a patriotic emblem through the streets of Paris, through a city under arms. And if at such a moment no one protests, no rioting takes place, it means that all is over, the Workers’ International is dead and done with, may as well be buried with him in the tomb.

For the present, indeed, all was ended in the propagandized cities; behind the lines all the vital cords had snapped. But in the firing-line, Jacques was convinced, the unhappy men facing the grim realities of war were only waiting for a signal to rise and break the fatal spell. One gleam of truth, and revolt would break loose, bringing their long-sought liberation.

Again, disconnected phrases started racing through his mind. “You are young, living men. They are sending you to your death. You’re being violently robbed of your lives—and how will they be employed? To furnish fresh capital for the big bankers to pile into their safes.” He felt in his pocket for his notebook. But how make notes in all this noise, with all these people moving about? Anyhow, in twenty minutes he would be in Basel. There he would have to go and hunt for Plattner, look for lodgings, a room where he could settle down to work.

In a flash his mind was made up. He had done well to sleep. He was feeling fit, clear-headed now. Plattner could wait. It would be idiotic to let this ferment of ideas that had come over him die down unused. Instead of running about the town he would take refuge in a corner of the waiting-room and get down on paper the ideas seedling up in his brain, before they had time to cool. In the waiting-room, or why not the refreshment-room? For he felt desperately hungry.

XXVI

A HEAVEN-SENT refuge, the third-class dining-room was so enormous that its customers, many though they were, took up only the centre of the hall; at the back it was quite empty.

Choosing a large table flanking the wall, one among several similar tables all unoccupied, Jacques took off his coat and eased his collar. He had eaten a plate of succulent, generously larded veal, fricasseed and served with carrots, and drunk a whole pitcher of ice-water.

Electric fans hummed overhead. The waitress placed on his table writing materials and a cup of fragrant coffee.

A waiter, carrying a tray, was moving about the room. “*Zigarren! Zigaretten!*” “*Zigaretten!*”—yes, rather! After twelve hours’ privation the first puff was magical. A heady sense of well-being, a warm plenitude of life, throbbed in his veins, making his hands tremble. Leaning forward, blinking across the smoke, he dashed down the ideas as they came into his head, inconsequently. He would organize later on, when he felt in a calmer mood.

His pen galloped across the paper.

> Frenchmen and Germans, you have been fooled.
>
> This war is being represented to you in both camps not only as a defensive war but as a fight for the rights of nations, for justice and liberty. Why? Because they know well that not one German peasant or workman, not one French peasant or workman, would have let his blood be shed in an offensive war, a war to win new territories or markets.
>
> On both sides they have told you you are fighting to stamp out militarism, your neighbours' militarism, to check their bid for world power. As though there were anything to choose between one militarism and another; as though militant nationalism hadn't had as many champions, of recent years, in France as it has had in Germany! As though both your governments alike had not been deliberately courting the same risks of war! Yes, you have been bamboozled. All of you have been led to think that you were going to defend your country against the dastardly attack of an aggressor nation, while in actual fact both General Staffs, French and German alike, have been studying for years, with the same cynical effrontery, the best method of getting in the first lightning blow. While, all along, in each army alike, the High Command has aimed at reaping the advantage of an "act of aggression," the act at which they now hold up their hands in pious horror, so as to justify in your eyes the war they have deliberately brought upon you.
>
> You have been fooled. The best among you believe in good faith that they are giving up their lives for the cause of justice among the peoples of the earth. Whereas neither justice nor the people of any country have been taken into the least account—except in official speeches—and nowhere have the wishes of the nation been ascertained by a plebiscite. No, you are all being sent to your deaths in consequence of old, stupid, secret treaties, of the contents of which you knew nothing and which, had you known them, not one of you would have endorsed. Both sides have been fooled. You Frenchmen have been led to think that it was your duty to bar the way to the invaders and defend civilization against

the hordes of barbarism. You Germans have been led to think that your country was encircled, that its existence was at stake, and its prosperity was imperilled by the greed of outsiders, against whom it was your duty to defend it. German and Frenchman, each of you has been fooled; each of you has believed in all good faith that this war is a holy war—on his side only. Each has felt he owed it to his country to sacrifice unreservedly his happiness, his liberty, his life, to the national "honour" and the "triumph of justice." But you have been fooled. The campaign of lying propaganda has done its work in a few days; you have been inoculated with the war-fever—you, even you, who will be the victims of the war! And you have marched heroically against each other at the first call to arms from your country—your country that was never in any real danger. You did not realize that on both sides alike the ruling-classes were using you, the workers, as their cat's-paw. You did not realize you were being asked to bear the brunt of their criminal schemes, to serve as the small change of conquest, helpless accomplices and victims of their insatiable greed for power and gold.

It is with exactly the same lies that the powers that be in France and in Germany have tricked you. Never until now had the European governments shown such utter lack of scruple and such devilish skill in piling calumny on calumny, suggesting false motives and spreading false news—in a word, employing every method of creating hatred and alarm—so as to make sure of roping you in as their accomplices. Within a few days, without even having been given the time to look around and count the dreadful cost of what was being required of you, you have been herded into base-camps, supplied with equipment, and hounded on to murder and to death. All your rights as free men have been wiped out. On both sides, on the same day, martial law was declared, a ruthless military dictatorship established. Anyone who tried to think for himself, who dared to ask: "What's it all about?" was in for it! In any case, who of you was capable of taking a clear view? Of the true facts you had not been given an inkling; your only source of information was the national press, the official lie-factory! All-powerful within its own closed frontiers, the press had come to speak with a single voice, the voice of the men in command, for whom your ignorance, credulity, docility, were essential to enable them to attain their ends.

> Your mistake lay in failing to forestall the conflagration while there was yet time. For, though you had on your side an overwhelming majority of pacifist-minded men, you failed to organize it, to bring it into action when the need arose, and to launch against the war-mongers a concerted movement of all classes in all lands that would have forced the governments of Europe to bow to your desire for peace.
>
> Now, everywhere, an iron discipline has gagged the voice of individual protest. Everywhere you have been reduced to the blind subservience of animals in blinkers. Never before has humanity been brought so low, intelligence so completely stifled. Never before have governments forced men's minds into so total an abdication of their rights; so brutally repressed the aspirations of the masses.

Jacques stubbed out on the saucer the end of his cigarette, which was beginning to burn his lips. Then with a fretful gesture he dashed back the lock of hair dangling on his forehead and wiped his sweating cheeks. "So brutally repressed the aspirations of the masses." The cadence of the phrase rang in his ears as if he had spoken it aloud, addressing the two armies, which a vivid hallucination had suddenly evoked before his eyes. He felt the same thrill, the selfsame sense of being lifted above himself, above a listening people massed below him, that had at times swept over him in the past when a sudden uprush of faith, of love and indignation, an urgent passion to convince and move men's minds, had sped him onto the platform of a public meeting and spent itself in a tempestuous flood of oratory.

Without lighting the cigarette that he had taken from his pocket, he let his pen run on again.

> Now you have sampled it, *their* war. You have heard the bullets whining past your ears and the groans of wounded, dying men. Now you can gauge the horrors of the shambles they have in store for you. Already most of you have awakened to realities and deep down in yourselves feel a first inkling of shame—of disgust at having let yourselves be fooled. Memories of home, of the dear ones you were so absurdly ready to forsake, are crowding back into your thoughts. Under the impact of reality your minds are beginning to work again, your eyes are opening. What will it be when you have realized the squalid motives, the lust for conquest and world power, the greed for gain of which none of you will ever see a penny, the stranglehold of high finance—the hidden

hand behind this war—what will it be when you realize that it is for the sake of these that you are being asked to lay down your lives?

What have they made of your liberty, your consciences, your human dignity? What of the happiness of your homes? What of the only precious thing a worker has to safeguard—his life? Has the French state, has the German state, the right to tear you away from your families and from your work and dispose of your lives against your most obvious personal interests, against your will, your convictions, your most human, most sacred and legitimate instincts? What gave them this appalling power over you, the power of life and death? Your ignorance. Your apathy.

All that is needed is to stop and think if only for a moment, to make one fervent effort of revolt, and you can still break free.

Are you incapable of it? Will you tamely wait under a storm of shellfire, suffering hideously in mind and body, for the far-off day of peace? A peace which you will never know, you the first victims of the war. Very likely even the younger generation called to replace you in the firing-line and sacrificed like you in "glorious" carnage, will not survive to see that day.

Do not say it is too late, that nothing is left to you now but to see it through and submit like sheep led to the slaughter. That would be a coward's pretext. And it would be a lie.

On the contrary, this is the moment to throw off the yoke. Liberty, safety, the joy of life—all the happiness that has been snatched from you—you can regain them; it rests with you and you alone.

Take thought, take action, before it is too late.

You have a means, an infallible means, of making it impossible for your High Commands to keep up this fratricidal butchery one day longer. It is—to refuse to fight. To cut the ground under the feet of those in power by a simultaneous revolt.

You can do it.

You can do it tomorrow morning.

You can do it without incurring any risk of reprisals.

But, to bring it off, there are three absolute conditions: that your revolt should be sudden, that it should be general, that it should be simultaneous.

> Sudden, because you must not give your officers time to take precautionary measures. General and simultaneous, because your success depends on mass action begun at the same moment on both sides of the frontier. If there were only fifty of you who refused to do their “duty,” inevitably they would end up before the firing-squad. But if you were five hundred, a thousand, ten thousand—if you rose like one man in both armies on your sector, if your movement of revolt spread like wildfire from regiment to regiment, if at last you brought into play the invincible force of the greatest number—no courts-martial could cope with the situation. And your officers, and the governments that have set these officers over you, would in a few hours’ time find that their powers for evil had been scotched, paralysed, smashed for ever.
>
> Try to realize the tremendous importance of this crucial moment in your lives. To regain your independence forthwith, only three things are needed and those three things rest with yourselves alone: your revolt must be sudden, it must be unanimous, and it must be simultaneous.

His face was convulsed; his breath came in quick, strident gasps. He stared up at a window opposite him with unseeing eyes; the world of reality had faded into mist and in a great silence he was contemplating a sea of anguished faces, the legions of doomed men gazing piteously up at him.

Frenchmen and Germans, you are all men, all brothers. For the sake of your mothers, wives, and children, for the sake of all that is noblest in you, for the sake of that creative impulse transmitted from the dawn of civilization which tends to shape man into a just and rational being—grasp this last chance! Safety is within arm’s reach. Rise up and *act*, before it is too late!

Thousands and thousands of copies of this appeal are being broadcast today in France and Germany, along the whole front. At this very moment, in both camps, thousands of French and German hearts are thrilling with the same hope as yours, thousands of fists are brandished, thousands of men declaring for revolt, the triumph of life over lies and death.

Courage! Do not hesitate! The least delay may ruin everything. Your revolt must break out tomorrow and no later.

Tomorrow, at the same hour, at sunrise, all together, French and Germans, fired by the same heroism and the same fraternal love, throw down your arms and join your voices in a great shout rolling along the lines, the cheers of men set free.

Rise up all together and refuse to take part in the war, compel your governments to declare immediate peace!

Up tomorrow, all of you, with the first ray of dawn!

Carefully he replaced his pen on the inkstand. Slowly he straightened up, drawing back a little from the table. His eyes were lowered. All his movements were gentle, bated, noiseless—like those of a birdwatcher heedful not to alarm his quarry. All the wrinkles on his brow had been smoothed away. He seemed to be waiting for something, for some slightly painful process to run its course within him, for his heart to steady down, the throbbing in his temples to die away, and the arduous ascent toward the world of real things to take place without needless suffering.

Mechanically he gathered together the loose sheets scrawled in feverish haste without erasures. He folded them, smoothed them out, then, on a sudden impulse, hugged them to his breast. For a moment he bowed his head and, without moving his lips, murmured like a prayer: “To bring back peace to the world.”

XXVII

PLATTNER had found a room for Jacques in the house of an old woman, the mother of a militant Socialist named Stumpf, who had been sent by the Party on special service. It was given out that Jacques had come to Basel for research work at the public library. Plattner had even provided him with a written contract for such work. Since the outbreak of war the police had been extremely vigilant; thus, if they showed an interest in Jacques’s doings, he would be able to furnish proof not only of a residence but of an occupation.

Old Frau Stumpf’s house in the Erlenstrasse—a mean street not far from the Greifengasse in which was Plattner’s shop—was a ramshackle shanty due shortly to be torn down. The room let to Jacques had the form of a narrow corridor with a low window at each end. One window gave onto the courtyard, from which rose a mingled stench of rabbit-hutches and decaying refuse. The other overlooked the street with a view across to the coal-yards at the Baden station—German territory, or almost so. The room was immediately under the roof, which was set so low that Jacques could reach it with his hand. The August sun, beating on the tiles all day, kept the room at the temperature of an oven.

In this stifling atmosphere Jacques settled down to the composition of his manifesto. His only meal consisted of the slice of bread and goose-fat that Frau Stumpf put at his door each morning beside a mug of strong black coffee. Sometimes, toward noon, the heat grew so overpowering that he went out in quest of a breath of air. But no sooner was he outside than a craving to return to his hovel came over him and he hurried back. Stretched on his bed, streaming with perspiration, he closed his eyes and eagerly picked up the broken threads of his intoxicating dream. . . . An aeroplane in full flight, Meynestrel in the pilot’s seat, himself in the cockpit reaching down for handful after handful of leaflets and strewing them on the air. The drone of the engine seemed to merge into the pulsing of his blood; that great white bird was he himself, plucking from his bosom the winged words of peace and scattering them upon the world. “Up tomorrow, all of you, with the first ray of dawn!” The various parts of the message had fallen into place; little by little each phrase had taken definite form; he knew them all by heart. And as, lying on his back, he gazed up at the roof, he kept on repeating them to himself. Sometimes he jumped off the bed and ran to his table to modify a paragraph, change the position of a word. Then again he flung himself upon the bed. He was hardly conscious of the squalor of his surroundings, so lost was he in his day-dream. He saw the insurrectionary movement spreading from company to company, the officers excitedly conferring, the N.C.O.’s at their wit’s end, communications cut with General Headquarters, punitive measures ruled out as impracticable. And only one thing left to do if the governments wanted to save their face: to arrange an armistice forthwith.

His fixed idea at once played havoc with his nerves and buoyed him up—like the coffee he kept drinking at all hours. He could dispense with neither. When some urgent task such as a brief visit to the library, or even a chance encounter with Frau Stumpf on the stairs, distracted him for a moment from his dreaming, he felt so prostrated that he rushed back at once to his solitude, like an addict to his drug. No sooner had he entered his room than peace came back to him, and not merely peace but a sort of morbid, feverish exhilaration. When at times his hand started trembling so violently that he had to stop writing or when, in the fragment of looking-glass nailed to the wall, he caught sight of his sweating face and saw his sunken cheeks and haggard eyes, it occurred to him—for perhaps the first time in his life—that he was a sick man. The thought made him smile. What did that matter now?

Sleep was impossible in the burning nights; every ten minutes he rose, dipped a towel in the water-jug, and slaked his fevered limbs. Sometimes he lingered at his window, peering out at what seemed like a glimpse of hell. Bathed in a livid sheen of arc-lamps, a horde of wraithlike forms scurried about the wharves in an incessant din; further on, in the gloom of the coal-yards, drays and trucks clattered to and fro, lights flashed out and sped in all directions. Still further on, again, along a glimmering network of rails, endless freight-trains shunted and whistled before plunging one after another into the black night of Germany at war. Then he smiled. He alone *knew*. He alone knew that all this sound and fury was in vain. Deliverance was at hand. The pamphlet was finished. Kappel was going to make the German version of it; Plattner to print twelve hundred thousand copies. Meynestrel was making arrangements at Zürich for the plane. Only a few days more. “Up tomorrow, all of you, with the first ray of dawn!”

After forty-eight hours’ feverish work he felt the time had come to turn in his manuscript. “Have everything ready for Saturday,” Meynestrel had told him.

Jacques found Plattner at his shop, ensconced among bales of paper in the backroom; its double baize doors were closed, as were the windows, though the morning was well advanced. Plattner was an ugly, unhealthy-looking man in the forties; he had stomach trouble and a bad breath. His thorax jutted out like a bird’s breast, and his bald pate, scraggy neck, and vast hook-nose brought to mind a vulture. The overhang of the enormous nose seemed to throw the whole body out of plumb, pitching it forward, so that Plattner looked always on the point of falling headlong—which gave a feeling of discomfort to all who met him for the first time. But after the first shock caused by his grotesque appearance had worn off, no one could fail to be attracted by the frankness of his gaze, the geniality of his smile, and the gentleness of his rather sing-song voice, apt to wax emotional on any pretext and always vibrant with hearty affability. But Jacques had no need for new friends; from now on he stood alone.

Plattner was in low spirits. He had just received news that the Social-Democrats in Germany had voted in favour of the war credits. “That the French Socialists should have supported the government when it came to a vote was bad enough!" His voice shook with indignation. "Still, after the murder of Jaurès, one rather expected something of the sort. But that the Germans, that our German Social-Democratic Party, the greatest proletarian force in Europe, should behave like that—well, it's the hardest blow I've had in my whole career as a militant Socialist. I'd refused to believe the government-inspired newspapers. I'd have laid any odds that the Social-Democrats would, to a man, grasp this opportunity of inflicting a public rebuff on the imperial government. When I read the official communiqués, I chuckled. 'Tomorrow,' I said to myself, 'they'll have an eye-opener!' And then . . . ! It's no good blinking the facts today. Those communiqués were true, damnably true. I haven't heard yet what went on behind the scenes. Likely as not we'll never know the truth. Rayer's story is that Bethmann-Hollweg sent for Sudekum on the twenty-ninth to get him to arrange for the Social-Democratic Party to withdraw its opposition."

"The twenty-ninth!" Jacques exclaimed. "But on the twenty-ninth at Brussels Haase made that speech. . . . I heard him."

"That may be. Anyhow, Rayer asserts that when the German delegates got back to Berlin, a meeting of the central committee was called and they gave in all along the line. So the Kaiser knew he could go ahead with mobilization, that there wouldn't be an uprising or a general strike. I suspect the Party had a secret meeting before the Reichstag session—and a pretty stormy one it must have been! I still decline to lose faith in people like Liebknecht, Ledebour, Clara Zetkin, and Rosa Luxemburg. Only, they must have been in a minority, they had to bow to the traitors. Still, there's no getting around it; they voted *with* the government. Thirty years' hard work, thirty years of slow, painfully achieved progress—all wiped out! In one day social-democracy has lost for ever the good opinion of the proletarian world. In the Duma, anyhow, the Russian Socialists didn't kowtow to Tsarism. All of them voted against war. In Servia, too. I've seen the copy of a letter from Dushan Popovitch; the Socialist opposition in Servia refuses to haul down its colours. Yet that's the one country where there would have been some excuse for taking a patriotic line, with the invader at their gates. Even in England socialism is putting up a stubborn fight; Keir Hardie won't let himself be beaten. I've read the latest declaration of the I.L.P. That's all encouraging, you can't deny it. We mustn't lose heart. Little by little we'll get a hearing. They won't succeed in gagging all of us. Yes, our one hope is to stand firm, with all the world against us! International socialism will come to life again some day. And that day it will call to account the men who had its trust and whom the imperialist governments have brought to heel so easily."

Jacques let him ramble on, nodding approval more out of politeness than anything else; after what he had witnessed in Paris, defections of this sort had lost the power of surprising him.

Some newspapers were lying on the table. Picking them up, he glanced idly at the headlines: *A Hundred Thousand Germans Marching on Liège. Britain Mobilizing Fleet and Army. Grand Duke Nicholas Appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army. Italy Officially Announces Her Neutrality. Successful French Offensive in Alsace.*

Alsace! He put down the newspapers. So fighting had started in Alsace! "Now you have sampled it, *their* war. You have heard the bullets whining past . . ." All that withdrew his thoughts from the high remoteness of his splendid dream had become odious to him, and now his one desire was to escape from the bookshop, out into the streets, as quickly as possible.

No sooner had Plattner taken over his manuscript and begun the cast-off than Jacques rose and, brushing aside the printer's expostulations, hurried out.

Once in the street, he walked more slowly, at a stroller's pace. Basel lay before him with its great squares and gardens and majestically rolling Rhine; with its abrupt contrasts of light and shade, of tropical heat and sudden coolness; with its many fountains, at one of which he washed his sweat-soiled hands. The city was ablaze with fiery sunlight, the air heavy with the pungent fumes of heated asphalt. As he climbed a narrow street leading to the cathedral close, a thought came to him of the Basel Congress of 1912. The Münsterplatz was empty; not a carriage, not a human being, was in sight. The Cathedral seemed to be shut. Its red sandstone walls had weathered to the hue of ancient pottery; it brought to mind an old, discarded terra-cotta reliquary, forlorn in sunlight, huge and futile.

On the terrace overlooking the Rhine, under the chestnut trees, where the shadow of the apse and the swiftly flowing water below kept the air cool, Jacques was alone. Now and again the merry cries of a swimming party, hidden by the shrubbery lining the river-bank, were wafted up to him. For a while he watched the pigeons fluttering among the trees. Never since he came to Basel had he, the loneliest of men, felt himself so utterly alone as now. And this sense of utter isolation, of the dignity and power it conferred, filled him with rapture; it was a condition he would have abide with him from now on to the end. Suddenly an unlooked-for thought waylaid him: "I'm acting as I'm doing only out of despair. To escape from myself. I shan't stop the war. I shan't save anyone—except myself. That's all; this act of self-fulfilment will save me, but me alone." He sprang up, trying to drive away the hateful thought, clenching his fists. “Ah, but surely it’s something to defeat them, to have overcome the world. And find escape in death.”

Beyond the red-stone parapet and the wide sweep of the river between two bridges, beyond the spires and factory chimneys of the outlying districts, lay fields and forests shimmering in the heat-mist. That was Germany, the Germany of today, a country under arms, already convulsed to its depths by the catastrophe of war. He had a sudden impulse to walk westward to the point where the frontier marches with the Rhine, where within a stone’s throw from the Swiss bank of the river he could gaze at a foreshore and a countryside that were German territory.

Through the Saint-Alban district he made his way to the suburbs. The sun was climbing zenithward across a haze of dazzling light. The smart little villas with their neatly clipped hedges, arbours, swings, white tables spread with flowered tablecloths, and green lawns with sprayers playing on them, bore witness that war’s alarms had not disturbed the calm of this small oasis set in the midst of storm-racked Europe. At Birsfelden, however, he saw a battalion of Swiss troops in field uniform marching down, singing, from the Hard.

To his right was a wooded hillside. A long avenue, parallel to the river, ran through a grove of saplings; the signpost pointing up it was marked “Waldhaus.” On his left, between the tree-trunks, he had glimpses of sunlit green meadows through which wound the Rhine. Jacques walked slowly, his mind void of thought. After his cloistered life of the past few days and, just now, his walk through sweltering city streets, he found a wonderful appeasement in the cool green shadows of the forest. Across a tracery of foliage, beyond a narrow valley, he saw white walls gleaming through the trees. That, he thought, must be their Waldhaus. A footpath leading down to the water’s edge branched off the avenue. The nearness of the water made the air cooler still. A moment later he was standing on the river-bank.

Yonder, separated from him only by that reach of limpid light, was Germany.

Germany was empty. On that morning not one fisherman was to be seen on the farther bank; not a peasant in the apple orchards stretching from the riverside and the hamlet of red-roofed cottages nestling round a spire up to the foot of the hills that compassed the horizon. But Jacques discerned, hidden away near the water’s edge amid the brushwood of the shelving foreshore, the roof of a hut painted in stripes of three colours. What was it? he wondered. A sentry-box? A picket-post? A customs officer’s lookout?

His eyes were held by this foreign countryside, rife with mysterious portents. His hands thrust deep into his pockets, his feet sinking into the water-logged soil, he gazed long and earnestly at Germany—and Europe. Never before had he felt so calm, so lucid, so sure of himself as at this moment when, alone on the bank of the great river fraught with historic memories, he opened his eyes wide upon the world and his own destiny. A day will come, he thought, surely a day will come when at long last men's hearts will beat in unison, all will be equal in a world of dignity and justice. Perhaps it was needful for humanity to pass yet once again through a phase of hatred and brutality before winning through to universal brotherhood. But for me there's no more waiting possible; I've reached a stage when I can no longer postpone the surrender of my life wholly and finally. Have I ever given myself up wholly to anyone or anything? No, not even to the revolutionary cause. Not even to Jenny. Always I kept back something, some vital part of myself. I've gone through life as a dilettante, a man of half-measures who grudgingly doles out only those portions of himself that he is willing to surrender. Only now I've come to know what it means, the utter self-immolation in which one's whole being is consumed.

Like a cleansing flame the vision of his sacrifice irradiated him. Gone was the time when despair hovered in the background of his thoughts, when he had to struggle daily against an impulse to give up the struggle. Death was no surrender, but the fulfilment of his destiny.

A sound of footsteps in the undergrowth behind him made him turn his head. He saw a man and a woman, woodcutters, both dressed in black. The man had a bill-hook slung on his belt, the woman a basket in each hand. They had the rather dour expression of most Swiss peasants, the frowning gaze and close-set lips that seem to affirm that life is no primrose path. Both shot a suspicious glance at the unknown young man they had come on loitering in the brushwood and watching so intently what was happening "over there."

Jacques was aware that he had been unwise to venture so near the frontier. Probably the river-bank was being patrolled by customs officers, if not by Swiss troops as well. Beating a hasty retreat, he cut across the bushes toward the highway.

Late in the afternoon Jacques went to see Kappel, who had made an appointment with him.

"Wait for me in the garden," the medical student said to him. "The Chief will be coming at any moment for his evening round. I'll be with you in ten minutes.”

The Children’s Hospital was a three-story building beside the river, laid out like a sanatorium with sun-terraces on which the patients’ beds were set out in rows. It was surrounded by a small garden with ivy-clad walls. Jacques sat down on a white stone bench placed under a clump of trees. The silence round him was broken only by the twittering of birds in the shrubbery facing him and a ripple of young voices in the distance. Now and then he had a glimpse of a white, childish form, as a little patient sat up in bed to greet the nurse on duty.

Steps crunched the gravel. Jacques looked round and saw Kappel approaching. He had taken off his glasses and white surgical jacket, and in a loose-fitting shirt and duck trousers that showed his slim, lithe figure to advantage, looked unexpectedly boyish. His hair was a very pale yellow, his face thin, his skin smooth, translucent. But his forehead was wrinkled like an old man’s and there was a singularly mature look in the keen blue eyes that belied his youthful build.

Kappel, who was a German, had never so much as thought of returning to Germany from Basel, where he was studying medicine. In the daytime he worked under Prof. Webb at the Children’s Hospital; his nights he gave up to the revolutionary cause. He was a frequent visitor at Plattner’s bookshop, and Plattner had commissioned him to translate Jacques’s pamphlet into German in one afternoon. He had not been informed of Jacques’s plans, and refrained from putting questions about them.

He took from his pocket four sheets of paper covered with neat, angular German script. Jacques ran his eyes over them. His hands were trembling. Should he speak, should he tell the German of the wild hopes surging through his mind? No. The hour for unbosoming himself to friendly ears was past; he was doomed to solitude and silence, the strong man’s lot. He folded the sheets, saying merely: “Thanks.”

Discreetly Kappel changed the subject at once, drawing a newspaper from his pocket. “What do you think of this? ‘At the Academy of Moral Science M. Henri Bergson, the President, in the course of an address voiced a tribute to the Belgian corresponding members of the Society. This conflict with Germany, he said, is none other than the conflict of civilization with the hordes of barbarism.’ Just imagine—Bergson!”

Abruptly he fell silent, as though to listen to some far-off sound.

“It’s too stupid! You’re not like that, are you? Every now and then, especially at night, I seem to hear a sound of distant booms, the guns in Alsace.”

Jacques averted his eyes. In Alsace! Yes, the carnage had already set in over there. His thoughts took a new turn. In this hour when so many innocent men were passive victims, led like sheep to the slaughter, he at least had the proud satisfaction of remaining captain of his fate, of having chosen his death—a death that would be at once an act of faith and a rebel's protest, his last defiance of a world gone mad, and a deliberate achievement bearing his imprint, charged with the exact message he had willed it to convey.

After a pause Kappel spoke again. "When I was a small boy we lived near the jail in Leipzig. One snowy winter evening I heard my parents mention that the executioner had come to town, and a man was to be executed at dawn. I went out into the street without saying a word. The snow lay thick and there was no one about. I kept on walking round and round the prison, all by myself. I couldn't bring myself to go home. I couldn't get out of my head the thought that behind those walls was a man whom other men had condemned to die, who knew it and was waiting. . . ."

Some hours later Jacques was sitting in a corner of the Kaffeehalle, leaning back on the cool tiles of an old-fashioned stove as he dipped pieces of bread into the steaming bowl of *café au lait* in front of him. He was in a reverie. The air reeked with stale cigar-smoke. A shadeless electric bulb dangling before him like a spider on its thread held his eyes dazzled, hypnotized him, cut him off from all around him.

Plattner had pressed him to stay for supper; Jacques had refused on the pretext of fatigue and, after correcting the proofs of his manifesto, had left abruptly. He liked the bookseller and blamed himself for feeling so unable to show his liking. But he could not face another of those interminable palavers, interspersed with the revolutionary clichés he had listened to *ad nauseam* in Geneva. Moreover, Plattner's conspiratorial airs—his trick of constantly nipping his interlocutor's arm with clawlike fingers, suddenly letting his head droop over his misshapen chest, and finishing his sentences in a confidential mumble—were more than Jacques's nerves could bear just now.

The Kaffeehalle was exactly the place he wanted; dark and unpretentious, with big bare tables of worn deal that had weathered to the hue and texture of brown bread. Sausages and cabbage, soup, thick slices of bread, were procurable at a low price. Here, in default of solitude, Jacques found the next best thing: isolation in the anonymous promiscuity of the crowd.

For the Kaffeehalle was packed that night, as usual, with a curious assortment of humanity. All sorts and conditions of lonely souls, homeless bachelors, young men at loose ends, and vagabonds forgathered here. There were students, too, noisy youths who made themselves at home, called the waitresses by their first names, and fell to wrangling, as the mood took them, over Kant's philosophy, the Machine Age, prostitution, bacteriology, the war. There were salesclerks and office workers, neatly dressed people who were restrained from broaching conversations with their neighbours by a semi-bourgeois shyness which, irksome though it was, they could not overcome. There were sickly-looking folk whom it was harder to classify: unemployed labourers, convalescents just out of the hospital and giving off a faint smell of iodoform, and victims of an infirmity like the blind man seated near the door with a piano-tuner's outfit on his knees. At a round table in front of the counter three Salvation Army lasses were having a vegetarian meal and exchanging whispered but doubtless edifying confidences under their poke-bonnets. And there were not a few human derelicts, unhappy creatures stranded here on what ebbtide of poverty, crime, or mischance none could tell. Only too glad for once to have chairs to sit on, they crouched over their plates, as though the burden of a trouble-laden past weighed on their shoulders, and laboriously mashed their bread into the soup before setting their spoons to it. They rarely dared to look up, but one of them, the man who had just taken the seat in front of Jacques, met his eyes for a moment. And in his gaze Jacques caught that fleeting gleam which is the secret countersign between the outcasts of the earth: a subtle contact, as it were, of visual waves, swift as a lightning-flash and always transmitting the same question: Are you one of us—a castaway, a rebel, one of life's misfits?

A girl appeared in the doorway and took a few steps into the room. She was slim, walked with graceful ease, and wore a black tailored suit. She seemed to be looking for someone, and unable to find him.

Jacques dropped his eyes. A sudden pang had stabbed his heart. He rose abruptly, all eagerness to escape. . . .

Where was Jenny at this moment? How was she faring without him, without even news of him except the card he had posted to her at the French frontier? Often and often the memory of her came to him thus out of the blue, bringing a spasm of wild regret, and in the fiery, sleepless nights he strained her phantom hungrily to his breast. Each time the thought of her need for him, of the precarious future to which he had abandoned her, crossed his mind, it was unbearable. But that thought came rarely. Never once had he so much as dallied with the idea of saving his life for her sake.

The sacrifice of his love did not strike him as a betrayal; rather, the truer he was to himself, to the man Jenny loved, the truer he felt to his love for her.

Outside was darkness, solitude, an empty street. He strode ahead at a quick pace, not knowing where he went, keeping step with the strong, buoyant rhythm of the pæan pulsing in his heart. He had escaped from Jenny, from everything; he was immune from all emotion but the fervent, purifying exaltation of the hero.

XXVIII

HIS first task each day was to carry out an injunction Meynestrel had given him. “Walk past No. 3 Jungstrasse every morning between eight and nine. When you see a piece of red cloth at the window, go to the house and ask for Frau Hultz. Say to her: ‘I’ve come about the room you have to let.’ ”

On Sunday, August 9, as Jacques was turning the corner from the Elsässerstrasse into the Jungstrasse, his heart missed a beat. In full view among the tablecloths and napkins hung out to dry on the veranda of No. 3 was a strip of bright-red cloth.

The street at this point was lined with cottages, each with a small front garden. As he was going up the steps of No. 3, the door slowly opened. In the dimly lit hall he made out the form of a fair-haired woman in a sleeveless white blouse.

“Frau Hultz?” he asked, stepping inside.

Without replying, she drew the door to behind him. The hall was narrow, windowless.

“I’ve come about the room you have to let.”

Quickly she slipped her hand inside her blouse, took out something, and handed it to him. It was a tiny spool of thin, tightly rolled notepaper, like the messages conveyed by carrier pigeons. As he put it into his pocket Jacques could feel the paper still warm from its contact with the woman’s breast.

“Sorry,” she said aloud. “I’m afraid you’ve made a mistake.”

As she spoke she opened the front door. He tried to catch her eye, but she was staring at the floor. He bowed and went out. The door closed at once behind her.

Several minutes later, bending with Plattner over a developing-dish, he deciphered the message.

> Information on operations in Alsace indicates prompt action necessary. Have fixed Monday, August 10, for our trip. Take-off at 4 a.m. During night of Sunday convey leaflets to hilltop N.E. of Dittingen. Procure French ordnance survey map. Draw line between the G in Burg and D in Dittingen. Meeting-place is midway between G and D on open plateau overlooking the railway-line. Look out for plane from nightfall on. If possible, spread white sheets on the ground to facilitate landing. Bring twelve gallons gasolene.

"Tonight!" Jacques exclaimed, turning to Plattner. The only emotion written on his face was that of surprise.

Plattner was a born conspirator. Though physically infirm and prematurely aged by the sedentary life he led, he had a fertile imagination, a gift for prompt decisions, all the qualities that go to make a leader. A thirst for dangerous adventure had always bulked as largely in his revolutionary zeal as actual convictions.

"We've thought it all over quite enough during the last two days," he said at once. "There's no question of making any change in our plans. The thing now is to carry them out. Leave it to me. You'd better be seen about as little as possible."

"What about the little auto-truck? Will you be able to have it by this evening? And the driver? Who's to let Kappel know? There'll have to be several of us, I should say, to load the leaflets onto the plane without loss of time."

"Leave it to me," Plattner repeated. "I'll see that everything's ready on time."

Left to his own devices, Jacques could certainly have taken the necessary steps as well as Plattner. But, after several days of inactivity and solitude, and in his present state of physical exhaustion, it was a relief to let the despotic little bookseller have his way.

Plattner had his plans all set. Among the militant members of his group there was a garage-keeper of Polish extraction who he knew could be trusted. He jumped onto his bicycle at once, leaving Jacques alone in the little bookshop gazing at the developing-dish in which Meynestrel's letter was still floating.

During the hour he sat there waiting, Jacques made no movement. He had asked the bookseller for a copy of the ordnance map, had unfolded it on his knees and located Burg and Dittingen; then suddenly everything had gone blurred before his eyes. The burden of his imaginings was so overpowering as to make him incapable of coherent thought. For a week he had been living in a dream, wrapped up in the task assigned him. Only incidentally had he thought about himself and the fate awaiting him. But now he was brought inexorably face to face with the fact that in a few hours he was to perform the last act of his life. Mechanically he repeated to himself the words "tonight," "tomorrow," "dawn." Behind them lay the thought: "Tomorrow all will be over." For he knew there would be no return; that Meynestrel would fly on till his gasolene was used up. What would happen then? The plane would be shot down over the lines most likely, captured. For them, a court-martial, French or German. No defence possible—summary execution. In a flash of cruel lucidity, stiffening with dismay, he gripped his forehead with both hands. "One life is all we have. To cast it away is madness. No, it's worse—a crime, *the* crime against nature. Every act of heroism is absurd, and criminal."

Suddenly a strange calm descended on him. The wave of fear had spent itself, and, in so doing, had swept him past a gloomy headland into sight of other shores and new horizons. He saw the war cut short perhaps; mutinies and fraternization followed by an armistice. "And even," he murmured, "if my effort fails, what an example! Whatever happens, my death's an *act*, an act that will bring honour back again. I'll have been faithful unto death, and useful. Useful at last! I'll have redeemed my life, made up for all the wasted years. And found the peace that passes understanding."

His limbs relaxed, and now his whole being was pervaded by a restful languor, a gentle glow of melancholy satisfaction. At last he was going to lay down the burden, to have done with this tiresome, disappointing world—with the tiresome, disappointing being named Jacques Thibault. He could think of his life without regret; of his life and of his death as well. Without regret, but with a dull, almost brutish stupefaction so overwhelming that he could not fix his mind on anything else. Life . . . and death.

Plattner found him seated at the same place, his elbows resting on his knees and his head between his hands. He rose mechanically, murmuring: "Ah, if only socialism hadn't played false . . . !"

The garage-keeper, a man with greying hair and a calm, resolute expression, had come with Plattner.

“This is Andreyev. His truck is ready. He’ll drive us. There’s plenty of room for the leaflets and gasolene at the back. Kappel’s been warned and will be here in a few minutes. We’ll start as soon as it gets dark.”

Jacques, however, whom the coming of the two men had roused from his lethargy, insisted on reconnoitring the road by daylight. Andreyev approved. “Right! I will take you there,” he said to Jacques. “I’ll go and get my two-seater. That way we’ll look as if we were out on a joy-ride.”

Jacques turned to the bookseller. “But don’t the leaflets need stitching?”

“Most have been stitched already. I’ll be through with the rest in an hour or so. I promise they’ll be ready for you when you’re back.”

Picking up the map, Jacques followed Andreyev out.

Plattner went down to his cellar and there, assisted by Kappel, set about packing the leaflets in bundles. There were four pages of printed matter, two in French and two in German, on extra-thin but tough paper.

Jacques had given instructions that the twelve hundred thousand copies should be divided into batches of two thousand, each batch wrapped with a thin paper band that could be snapped with a flick of the finger. The total weight came to a little more than four hundred pounds. As directed by Jacques, Plattner and Kappel next tied the batches together in packages of ten; each of these packages was attached with string tied in a bowknot that could be undone with a single hand. And to facilitate the handling of these sixty packages Jacques had procured some large canvas sacks like mail-bags. Thus the entire load was contained in six sacks, each weighing about eighty pounds.

The Pole’s car returned at five. Jacques seemed extremely anxious and upset. “Things look very black. The road through Metzerlen is under surveillance. Hopeless; sentries and customs officers at every turn. The other road, the one going through Laufen, is all right up to Röschenz. But from there on we would have to take a country lane; there’s no getting a car up it. We shall have to procure a farm-cart somehow or other. A cart and horse are better anyhow; they can get through everywhere and won’t attract attention.”

“A cart and horse? That’s easy.”

Taking a notebook from his pocket, Plattner ran his eye down a list of addresses, then turned to Andreyev. “Come on. You two,” he added, turning to Jacques and Kappel, “stay here and finish packing the sacks.”

He seemed so sure of himself that Jacques did not insist on accompanying him.

“I can fix up the last sacks,” Kappel said to Jacques. “Have a rest and try to sleep a bit. No?” Taking Jacques’s wrist, he felt the pulse. “You’ve a touch of fever. Have some quinine?" When Jacques shook his head, he added: "Well, anyhow, don't stay in this stuffy room. The stink of paste's enough to make one sick. Go out for a stroll."

The Greifengasse was full of families in their Sunday best taking the air. Jacques joined the stream of passers-by. On reaching the bridge he hesitated, then turned left along the esplanade overlooking the river. I'm in luck for once! he mused. What a gorgeous evening! He braced himself up, forcing a smile to his lips. The main thing's not to think, not to let myself get nervous. . . . Let's only hope they find a cart—and everything turns out all right.

There was hardly anyone about. From the esplanade he gazed down at the moving expanse of water crimsoned by the sunset glow. Beside the towpath at the river's edge a group of bathers lay basking in the level rays, and Jacques paused for a few moments in rapt contemplation of the white forms softly gleaming on the grass. The evening air was full of an aching languor. Jacques felt the tears rise to his eyes and, as he started walking on again, memory lit up facets of the past: Maisons-Laffitte, the banks of the Seine, swimming expeditions with Daniel on bright summer afternoons.

By what paths, what devious ways, had fate led to this journey's end the boy he had been? Had chance played a major part in it? Assuredly not. All his acts hung together; that much he felt convinced of, had always felt convinced of, confusedly but staunchly. The whole course of his existence had been imposed on him by some mysterious directive agency, and, though its compulsion had operated by fits and starts, each phase of his career had followed an inevitable sequence. And now his life had reached his climax—its apotheosis. Death loomed before him glorious with the dying day's effulgence. He had passed beyond fear. Without vain heroics, with firm resolve, joyless but vital and inspiring, he was answering the call. This self-sought death was a fitting culmination of his life. It was the condition of this last act of loyalty to himself, to his instinct of revolt. From his childhood up he had said "No!" It had been the only way he had ever had of asserting himself. Not "No" to life, but to the world. And now he was making his last refusal, saying his last "No" to what men had made of life.

Without noticing where he was going, he had come to the passage under the Wettstein bridge. Overhead passed a steady stream of motor-cars and trams—of living men. Before him lay the cool green shadows of a little public garden, an oasis of silence. He sat down on a bench. Footpaths ribboned the lawns and shrubberies of box. Pigeons were cooing on the low branches of a cedar. A woman wearing a mauve apron was sitting on the bench opposite him. Still quite young, she had a girlish figure, but her face was careworn. In the perambulator in front of her lay a baby, pasty-faced, almost hairless. The woman was eating a slice of bread, gazing toward the river; with her left hand, frail as a child's, she was absent-mindedly rocking the carriage, which creaked at every joint. The mauve apron was faded but clean; the slice of bread was buttered; the expression of the woman's face placid, almost contented. There was nothing to indicate extreme poverty, yet somehow everything about her brought home so poignantly the sufferings of an oppressed world that Jacques rose hastily and fled.

Plattner had just returned to the bookshop. His eyes were sparkling; he threw out his chest. "It's all fixed up. I've got a covered cart. Nobody'll see what's in it. And a good mare for Andreyev to drive. He used to work on a farm in Poland and knows all about horses. It means slower going, but we can be sure of getting there without being held up."

XXIX

TWELVE chimes, midnight, sounded from the tower of the Heiliggeistkirche. The market gardener's cart, which had crawled at a snail's pace through the empty streets of the southern suburb, swung round into the main road leading to Aesch.

Under the thick tarpaulin, lashed down on all sides, it was pitch-dark. Plattner and Kappel, seated just behind the driver, were chatting in undertones. Kappel was smoking; the red tip of his cigarette scored the darkness now and again.

Jacques had wriggled his way to the back of the cart, and was squatting between two sacks of leaflets, doubled up, his arms locked round his knees, trying to quell the tumult of his nerves by remaining quite still and keeping his eyes fast shut.

Plattner's voice came faintly to his ears. "Now, Kappel, old man, let's think about ourselves for a change. An aeroplane at this time of night is bound to attract attention. It'll be a ticklish job getting safely away, the three of us, in our cart, without being held up and asked what the devil we were up to. . . . What's your idea, Thibault?" he added, craning his neck toward the back of the vehicle.

Jacques made no reply. His sole concern was for Meynestrel's landing. As for what might befall the survivors down below, that was outside his range.

Plattner's loquacity, however, was not to be rebuffed. "The trouble is," he continued, "that even if we hide the cart in the bushes we can't feel safe. No, the only thing is to send Andreyev back with the cart before the plane shows up, directly the stuff's unloaded, so that he can reach the highway before daylight."

But Jacques was lost again in dreams of the great adventure. Leaning out of the cockpit, watching flurries of white pamphlets spinning down to earth, settling on fields and forests, on troops standing to for an attack. Shots are whizzing past them; Meynestrel swings round in the pilot's seat, his face streaming with blood, but smiling ironically as though to say: "You see, Jacques, we bring them peace—and by the way of thanks they're plugging away at us!" The machine, one of its wings riddled by gunfire, plunges earthward. Will the papers mention the crash? No, the press is muzzled. Antoine will not hear of it. Antoine will never know.

"Well, what about us?" Kappel broke in on his musings.

"What about us? Why, the moment the plane's loaded up, we'll make ourselves scarce, and get home cross-country as best we can."

"All right," Kappel said.

The cart seemed now to be travelling along a level patch of road, for the mare had broken into a jog-trot. The body of the cart, perched on high springs and lightly loaded, rocked from side to side; the monotonous swaying motion and the darkness were conducive to silence, to sleep. Kappel stubbed out his cigarette and stretched his legs across the sacks.

"Good night, all."

After a moment, Plattner grunted: "Andreyev's a damned fool. At the rate he's driving, we'll get there much too early."

As Kappel made no comment, Plattner turned to Jacques. "The longer we have to wait, the greater the risk of our being spotted, don't you agree? . . . Say, are you asleep?"

Jacques had not heard a word. Another scene had taken form before his mind's eye. He saw himself standing alone in a great hall, wearing the canvas uniform he used to wear at the reformatory. In front of him, seated in a semicircle, were the officers of the court-martial. To them he spoke, holding his head high and rapping out every syllable. "I know what is in store for me, but I shall avail myself of the prisoner's last right. You shall not send me to the firing-squad before you've heard me out." The scene was the big medieval hall of a Law Court, with an elaborately coffered ceiling, its panels picked out with gold. The presiding general was ensconced in a thronelike chair in the centre of the courtroom. He was none other than M. Faîsme, Superintendent of the Crouy Reformatory. He had volunteered for active service, presumably, and been made a general forthwith. The little man was as dapper as ever with his fair hair, plump, clean-shaven, well-powdered cheeks, and spectacles that hid the expression of his eyes, and cut a handsome figure in his black frogged dolman trimmed with astrakhan. At a small table on a lower level were seated side by side two disabled old veterans, their tunics coruscating with medals. They kept scribbling away without a moment's pause, their wooden legs stretched stiffly under the table. "I am not attempting to justify my conduct. There is no need for self-justification when a man has acted according to his conscience. But it is well that all who are present here should learn the truth from one about to die." His fingers tightened on the railing clamped to the floor-boards in front of him. He had an impression of tiers and tiers of seats behind him, crowded with sightseers, like the arena of a bull-ring. Jenny was there too. She was sitting all alone, pale, aloof, at the end of one of the rows. She had on a mauve apron and there was a baby-carriage in front of her. But he was careful not to look round. His words were not for her. Nor were they meant for the invisible multitude whose eerie silence and rapt attention weighed like a monstrous burden on his back. They were not even meant for the row of officers staring intently at him. His words were solely for the man who had so often humiliated him in the past. He gazed fixedly at M. Faîsme's impassive face, yet somehow never could catch his eye. He could not even feel sure that the man's eyes were open; the flashing glasses and the shadow cast by the cap-peak made it impossible to tell. How well Jacques recalled the malignant gleams that used to flicker in the grey depths of those piglike eyes! Yes, judging by the features' statuelike repose, it seemed certain that the eyelids were fast closed. Face to face with the superintendent, how utterly alone he felt! Alone in the world, with only his dog for company, the lame mongrel he had picked up on the Hamburg docks. If only Antoine came along, *he* would somehow or other force M. Faîsme to open his eyes! Yes, he was utterly alone, alone against them all. All alike—generals, veteran colonels, the nondescript crowd of onlookers, yes, and even Jenny herself—all looked on him as an accused man, brought to book for his misdeeds. The absurdity of it! He was greater, truer to an ideal, than any of these people claiming the right to sit in judgment on him. He was facing the whole social system. He heard his voice ringing through the silence of the courtroom.

"There is a higher law than yours, the law of conscience. My conscience speaks louder than all your rules and regulations. I had the choice between a futile sacrifice of my life on your battlefields and a sacrifice of my life as a rebel fighting for the freedom of the men you have hoodwinked. I have made my choice; I have accepted death—but not in your service. I die because this is the only means you have left me of fighting to the end for the one thing that, despite your hymns of hate, still has value in my eyes—the brotherhood of man." At the close of each phrase the little handrail clamped to the floor trembled in his grip. "I have made my choice. I know what is in store for me." A sudden vision of the firing-squad, rifles levelled at his breast, sent a shiver down his spine. In the front rank he saw the faces of Pagès and Jumelin. Raising his head, he found himself back in the court-martial room. The execution scene had been so vivid that his face was still convulsed; somehow he managed to twist the look of horror into a sardonic grin. He gazed at each officer in turn. Then his eyes came back to M. Faîsme, and he stared at him intently, as he used to do at the reformatory, trying with mingled apprehension and bravado to detect what lay behind the superintendent's ominous silence. In harsh, biting tones he addressed the court again. "Yes, I know what's in store for me. But do *you* know what's in store for *you*, I wonder? You think yourselves the stronger, do you? So you are—today. At a sign from you the rifles will speak and you'll be able to boast of having silenced me for ever. But, merely by removing me, you won't avert what's coming to you! My message will outlive me. Tomorrow it will have consequences of which you do not dream today. And even if my appeal finds no response, the nations you have plunged into the shambles will wake up sooner or later to the truth and come to their senses. When I am dead, there will rise up against you in their thousands men like myself, armed with the might of their consciences and the assurance of their solidarity. For you have up against you and your criminal social system something that is intrinsically human, vital, and backed by the spiritual forces of mankind, and all your pains and penalties cannot prevail against it. The march of time, the progress of the world will break you in the end—infallibly! International socialism is forging ahead. I grant you it has faltered on this occasion, and you have ruthlessly taken advantage of its lapse. Yes, you have successfully put through your mobilization. But, I warn you, have no illusions about this triumph of a day! You will not turn back the rising tide, and in the end, inevitably, internationalism will sweep you away, sweep you and all your like from the face of the earth. . . . Do not hope to stem that tide with my dead body.” He peered up at M. Faîsme’s face; it was inscrutable as ever, like a blind mask of wax, the lips faintly curled, with the enigmatic, smiling aloofness of the Buddha. Jacques was trembling with rage. Somehow, at all costs, he must shake that man, his enemy, out of his bland indifference, force his attention if only for a moment! Suddenly he shouted furiously: “M. Faîsme, look at me! Do you hear, sir?”

“What’s up? Did you call me?”—Plattner’s voice.

At last the general’s eyes had opened. Their gaze was soulless as the gaze a man dying in the hospital meets in the eyes of the professional ward-attendant going his rounds; eyes for which the man in his last agony is already no more than another corpse awaiting its turn for the mortuary. And suddenly a hideous thought flashed through Jacques’s mind. “He’ll have my poor dog shot as well.” His eyes fell on the general’s orderly; it was Arthur, the warder who had made his life unbearable at Crouy. “And it’s Arthur he’ll order to do it!”

“What did you say?”—Plattner’s voice again. As no answer came, Plattner reached across the darkness and tapped Jacques’s leg. Jacques opened his eyes. But what he saw first over his head was not the tarpaulin but the gilded panels of the courthouse ceiling. Gradually consciousness of his surroundings came back to him. He was in a cart; Plattner was over there; under his arm lay a sack of leaflets.

“Did you say something to me?” Plattner asked.

“No.”

A silence followed. Presently the bookseller spoke again. “Laufen can’t be very far now.” Then, abandoning his attempt to overcome Jacques’s stubborn silence, he too fell silent.

Stretched on the floor of the cart, Kappel was sleeping like a child. Every now and then Plattner sat up and peered through a slit in the tarpaulin, trying to take his bearings. After some minutes had gone by he whispered: “Laufen!”

It was two a.m. The cart moved through the deserted streets at walking pace. Twenty more minutes passed, then suddenly the mare stopped with a jerk.

Kappel gave a low cry of alarm. “What’s wrong? Why have we stopped?”

“Sh!”

They were just outside the village of Röschenz and about to leave the valley, turning off into a steep dirt road pitted with dry potholes. Andreyev had alighted. After blowing out the cart-lamps, he took the mare by the bridle and began leading her up the road.

The cart lumbered uphill, shaken by violent jolts that made the springs and the wooden hoops supporting the tarpaulin creak incessantly. Jacques, Plattner, and Kappel had all they could do to keep the load of sacks from slipping to and fro. By a paradox of memory the jolts and noises set a tune running in Jacques's head, a plaintive melody throbbing with wild regret, which at first he did not recognize. Then it came to him. It was the Chopin Etude Jenny played. Pictures rose before him of the garden at Maisons-Laffitte, of the drawing-room in Mme. de Fontanin's apartment, of that afternoon, so recent yet now so remote, when, at his instance, Jenny had seated herself at the piano.

After half an hour or so, the cart stopped again. Andreyev began unfastening the straps securing the tarpaulin.

"We're there."

Silently the three others scrambled down from the cart.

It was only three o'clock and, though the stars were shining, the night was still quite dark. Only a faint glimmer in the east heralded the daybreak.

Andreyev tethered the horse to the trunk of a small tree. Plattner had fallen silent; the self-confidence he flaunted in his bookshop seemed to have forsaken him. He peered in all directions into the darkness. "Where's that famous plateau of yours? I can't see a thing."

"Come!" said Andreyev.

The four men climbed a steep wooded slope. Andreyev, who was walking in front, halted when they reached the summit. After taking breath, he laid a hand on Plattner's shoulder and, pointing with the other arm into the darkness, said: "The trees stop just over there—you'll see the place when it gets less dark. It's a sort of tableland. The fellow who picked the place knew what he was about, all right."

"And now," Kappel put in, "we'd better begin right away unloading the cart, so that Andreyev can start back before it's light."

"Right you are." Jacques was surprised at the steadiness of his own voice.

All four came down the slope. Steep as was the rise between the hill road and the plateau, it took them only a few minutes to carry all the sacks and gasoline cans to the summit.

"When it's a bit lighter," Jacques remarked, depositing a bundle of white sheets beside him, "we'll spread the sheets at two or three points round the edge of the plateau to help him land.”

Plattner turned to the Pole, and said gruffly: “Off you go now, you and your rattle-trap!”

Andreyev remained standing where he was for some moments, gazing at the three men. Then he took a step toward Jacques. It was impossible to make out the expression on his face. Impulsively, in a sudden rush of affection for this man whom he would never see again, an emotion of which Andreyev would never have an inkling, Jacques held out both hands to him, too deeply moved for speech. The Pole took his hands and clasped them; then, bending forward, pressed his lips to Jacques’s shoulder. . . .

They heard the sound of footsteps retreating down the hillside. There was a sudden squeak of the axles as the cart swung round, then a brief silence. Evidently Andreyev was strapping the tarpaulin into place and seeing to the harness before climbing back into his seat. At last the cart got under way and little by little the rumble of wheels, the stridence of creaking springs, and the muffled thud of horse-hoofs on the sandy soil died away into the distance. Standing shoulder to shoulder at the edge of the bluff, Plattner, Kappel, and Jacques peered down into the darkness in the direction of the receding sounds. When silence had closed in again, Kappel was the first to move. Turning toward the plateau, he stretched himself flat on the ground. Plattner squatted down beside him.

Jacques remained standing. There was nothing more to be done for the present, but to wait for dawn, the coming of the plane. And in this interval of forced inactivity, his obsession mastered him again. What would he not have given to be alone for these last moments of his life! He moved a little distance away from the others. Everything’s gone well so far, he thought. Now all depends on Meynestrel. Mustn’t forget about the sheets, as soon as there’s a little light. . . . The darkness was throbbing with the innumerable small sounds of insects. A cool night breeze fanned his sweat-dewed cheeks and body racked with fever. Though he was dropping with fatigue, he kept pacing restlessly this way and that on the dark plateau, stumbling over hillocks, but always moving within hearing range of Plattner and Kappel, whose whispered conversation came to him across the gloom. At last, worn out by blind groping in the darkness, he felt his legs give way beneath him and let himself sink heavily to earth, closing his eyes. . . .

Thick as are the prison walls, he has recognized the light footfalls sounding on the flagstones outside. Always he has felt sure Jenny would find some means of entering this place and seeing him once again before the end. He has been waiting, longing for her coming—yet now, preposterously, he resents it. “Leave me in peace! Why don’t they shut the doors?” He hammers on the wall to rouse the guard. Too late. He sees her now across the bars. Coming nearer and nearer. Gliding down a long white hospital corridor, a phantom form draped in a black crape veil that she is not allowed to raise in his presence. They have forbidden it. He stares at her, giving no sign of welcome. He makes no effort to approach her; he will have no more truck with anyone on earth. There is an iron grating between them, but suddenly, without his knowing how it came about, it has happened: he is fondling a small, tremulous, black-swathed head. Across the gauzy veil he glimpses her pale, drawn face. She whispers: "Are you afraid?" "Yes." His teeth chattering so violently that he can hardly speak, he adds: "Yes, but nobody will know it, nobody but you." In a soft, surprised tone, a lilting voice that is not truly hers, she says: "But—it's the end . . . oblivion, peace." "Yes, but you can't understand. You don't know what it means." Someone has entered the cell, behind him. He dares not look round. A spasm contracts his shoulders. The world goes black. He is blindfolded. Fists prod his back, urging him forward. A gust of eager air chills the sweat on his brow. Presently he feels grass underfoot. His eyes are still blindfolded, yet he distinctly sees that he is being marched across the Plaimpalais Esplanade under military escort. Little he cares for the escort. He has no thought left for anything or anyone. All that he is aware of is the light dawn wind on his brows, the soft caress of the night that is passing and the rising sun. Tears are streaming down his cheeks. He holds his head high, walking straight forward. His steps are firm but jerky, like those of a clockwork figure when the spring is running down, for he has lost control of his leg-muscles and the ground is pocked with holes that trip him up at every step. No matter. He is moving ahead. The air around him is murmurous with a low drone like the soughing of the wind. Each step brings him nearer the goal. He lifts up his hands in front of him as if they held a votive offering, something infinitely fragile that he must carry without stumbling to the very end. Someone gives a sneering laugh behind his back—is it Meynestrel? . . .

Slowly his eyes opened. In the blue dome above, the stars were fading. The night was passing and in the east an iridescent sheen, dappled with glints of gold, flooded the horizon, where a jagged mountain range fretted the skyline.

He had not the impression of waking up; his nightmare had passed out of his mind completely. His mind was crystal-clear, limpid as the air after a thunder-shower. The time for action was at hand. Meynestrel was on his way. Once more the phrase from Chopin's Etude echoed in his head, a melody of aching sweetness like a subdued accompaniment to the rapid sequence of his thoughts. . . . A letter to her. Why not? I can give it to

Plattner to transmit. He took his notebook from his pocket, tore out a page, and, without seeing what he wrote, dashed down:

> Jenny, the one love of my life. My last thought is for you. I might have given you years of deep affection. Instead of that I have hurt you, wronged you, always. Yet I would like you to keep a memory of me as . . .

A muffled thud, followed quickly by another, jarred the ground beneath him. He stopped writing, puzzled. A series of explosions in the distance was echoing in his ears, making itself felt in the shocks transmitted to his body through the ground. Suddenly he understood. The guns! Thrusting his notebook into his pocket, he sprang to his feet. Plattner and Kappel were already standing on the brow of the slope. Jacques ran up to them.

"The guns! The guns in Alsace!"

They stood side by side gazing fixedly, craning their necks in the direction of the sound. Yes, that was the war; it had been waiting over there for the first ray of dawn, to break loose again. In Basel they had caught no sound of it as yet.

And suddenly, as they were holding their breath to listen, there came a different sound from far away, in the opposite direction, a sound that swung all three round toward it. Their eyes met, questioning; none dared as yet put a name to the faint drone that was growing louder every second. The guns still were thudding in the distance, at regular intervals—but they paid no heed. All three men were eye-raking the grey southern horizon, buzzing now as with a swarm of hornets, though nothing was visible as yet.

Suddenly, at the same moment, all their arms went up, pointing; a black speck had risen above the Hoggerwald. Meynestrel!

"The landing-marks!" Jacques cried. Each picked up a sheet and started off at a run to a different corner. Jacques had the farthest way to go. Hugging to his breast the folded sheet, he raced across the plateau, stumbling over hummocks, picking himself up again. His one idea was to reach the far edge of the landing-field in time. He dared not waste a moment looking up to watch the plane's descent; he only heard the drone swell to a deafening roar as it circled overhead, then swooped down like a huge bird of prey striking to snatch him skyward.

XXX

AN icy wind lashed his face, filling his throat and nostrils, making him feel as if he were drowning—but he had no impression of moving forward. All he felt was a succession of violent lurches, as if he stood in the "concertina" vestibule between the coaches in an express train, and a terrific drumming in his ears across the flaps of his helmet. When, after a series of bumps on the rough ground, the plane had risen clear, he had not even noticed it. All about him seethed a dense, fleecy mist reeking with gasolene-fumes. His eyes were open, but his vision, like his mind, seemed bogged in a morass of viscous whiteness. After a while he got back his breath; it needed longer to adjust his nerves to the ear-racking din that hammered on his brain and numbed it, making him feel as if electric currents were tingling through his body to his feet and fingertips. Little by little, however, his mind began to work again, to fill with thoughts and pictures. This time, anyhow, it was no dream. He was strapped to his seat, his legs wedged between the heaps of leaflets stacked around him. He straightened his shoulders. Across the boiling cloud of vapour, under the grey sweep of the wings, he glimpsed immediately in front of him a helmeted head and shoulders, black on white like shadows on a silver screen. And the sight of the Pilot filled his heart with a wild jubilation. At last the great adventure had begun. A pæan of triumph, a hoarse, almost animal cry, broke from his lips and mingled with the roar of the gale. Had the Pilot heard? His back remained steady as a rock.

Slewing himself round, Jacques leaned out. The wind rasped his face, screeching past his ears like an adze on a whetstone. As far as eye could reach, an immense chequerwork of grey on green lay spread below, like a colossal fresco laid flat and viewed from a great height, a fresco fissured, flaking, weather-stained, and blotched with patches of dull colour. Or, rather than a fresco, a topographical map, the all but featureless map of an unknown land with vast uncharted spaces. And suddenly it came to him as an amazing thing that there below him at this very moment Plattner and Kappel still went their earthbound ways, living the creeping life of wingless insects. An access of dizziness dimmed his sight. Drawing back his head, he closed his smarting eyes. And in a flash he saw himself a child again; saw his father and Antoine and Gise and Daniel. And, as in a misted mirror, Jenny in a white tennis costume walking under the trees at Maisons-Laffitte. The vision faded. He opened his eyes again. There was Meynestrel in front of him, his back hunched, the cone of his helmet black against the mist. No, it was no hallucination. At last his dream had come true. How it had been done escaped his memory. From the moment he had started spreading the sheet at a corner of the landing-field, the moment when he had ducked instinctively as the winged monster swooped down on him, up to the wonderful moment he was living through now, there was an almost complete gap in his recollection. Only a few dim pictures had stamped themselves on his mind, dreamlike scenes of vague figures moving in a spectral dusk. He tried to piece the memories together, and suddenly he saw again the form of Meynestrel surging up gaunt and helmeted in the cockpit like a modern Lucifer and investing simultaneously with speech and meaning this loud incursion from the skies. “Quick! The leaflets!” Again he saw men running to and fro on the dark hilltop, sacks being tossed from hand to hand. And he remembered how when, carrying a gasolene-can, he had scrambled up the side of the machine, he had found the Pilot kneeling, flashlight in hand, tightening a nut with a long wrench, and the Pilot had looked round and said: “Bad contact. Where’s that mechanic?” “He’s gone back with the cart.” Without a word Meynestrel had bent forward again and resumed his task in the bowels of the machine. But Jacques could remember nothing of getting into the seat where he now was, or of being strapped in, or putting on the helmet he was wearing.

He wondered for a moment if the plane were really moving. It gave the impression of being stationary, poised in a dome of lambent light that echoed with the never-ceasing roar of the engine.

Jacques turned round. The sun was immediately behind him, just above the horizon. That meant they were travelling north-west. Toward Altkirch and Thann, obviously. Again he shored himself up and gazed down over the side. Wonder of wonders, the mist had grown translucent; the ordnance map over which he had strained his eyes day after day lay spread beneath him—sunlit, colourful, sparkling with life.

Thrilled by the sight, Jacques rested his chin on the metal flange and took possession of this unknown world. A wide band of milk-white radiance cut the landscape in two, seeming to mark the course the plane was taking. That must be the valley of the Ill. In the midst of this milky way coiled a long, lethargic reptile, mottled here and there with silvery patches of mist; that was the river. And what was that pale streak ribboning it on the right? A road perhaps, the road to Altkirch. And, no doubt, that filigree of slender lines like a network of veins and arteries was made up of other roads, white on the misted greenness of the plain. And what was that black line which at first he had not noticed, like a penstroke ruled with geometrical precision across the landscape? The railway, presumably. His whole being was focused in that downward gaze. Now he could distinguish clearly every fold and bastion of the hills that flanked the valley. Here and there wisps of lazy vapour were unfurling on the breeze, dwindling away, discovering vast new spaces. That green boss yonder was a densely wooded hilltop. And what was that coming into view, there on his left, through a rift in the fleecy shroud? A town it must be, estraded on the hillside, rose-red in the morning light, teeming with unseen life.

The nose of the plane had lifted. Jacques grew aware that they were climbing, in a sure, steady ascent that made his heart beat faster. By now he had grown so used to the roar of the engine that he could not do without it and let it seep into him, thrilling him with a curious ecstasy. It had become the musical counterpart of his exaltation, like a prodigious symphony interpreting in terms of sound the wonder of this magic hour, this soaring rush toward the climax of his days. Inner conflicts and the clash of warring aims were over; he was dispensed from willing, a free man at last. The rushing wind of speed, the heady air of the great height, a blind assurance of success, set the blood wildly pulsing in his veins. Deep down within him he felt his heart thudding in a rapid, even rhythm, like a human accompaniment, a vital response of his being to the triumphal anthem roaring up the sky.

Just then he noticed Meynestrel lean forward. He had done so once before—to study the map presumably. Or perhaps to get a better grip on the controls. Jacques watched the Pilot's movements with shining eyes. "What's up?" he cried light-heartedly, but the distance between them and the din made conversation impossible.

Meynestrel straightened up, then stooped again and remained some minutes in that position. Jacques watched his movements with interest. He could not see what the Pilot was up to, but the heaving of his shoulders gave the impression that he was tugging at some unseen object, perhaps using the long wrench which he had seen in Meynestrel's hands just before they took off.

Anyhow, there was nothing to worry about; the Pilot knew his job. . . .

Suddenly there was a sort of concussion in the air, a violent jar. What could it be? Jacques looked round wonderingly in all directions; it took him some moments to grasp what had happened. The jolt, the abrupt break of continuity, was merely the shattering impact of silence, a silence dead and elemental like the stillness of the interplanetary spaces, that had replaced the roaring of the engine. But . . . why stop the engine now?

Meynestrel was standing up, it seemed, for his back masked everything in front. Jacques kept his eyes fixed on the unmoving back. Annoying, not to be able to talk to each other!

As if startled by the silence that had come on it, the plane quivered for a moment in suspense, then suddenly began a swift, slanting dive in a straight line, with the silken swish of an arrow in flight. Why had Meynestrel cut off the engine? Jacques wondered. Was he afraid they might be spotted by its sound or did he propose to land? Perhaps they were nearing the front lines and it would soon be time to start broadcasting the leaflets. Yes, that must be it. For quickly, without turning, Meynestrel waved his left arm. Trembling with excitement, Jacques reached out toward a bundle of leaflets. But as he did so, he lost his balance; the machine had given a lurch that made the leather straps bite into his waist. What could be happening? The machine was reeling forward in a nose-dive. Was it intentional? A doubt crept into Jacques's mind, a first premonition of possible disaster. The blind confidence that Meynestrel inspired in him was faltering. Gripping the edge of the cockpit, he braced himself up, looked out. Horror of horrors! The whole countryside was reeling, toppling over. Fields, woods, meadows that a moment before had lain flat as a carpet were crumpling, curling up in all directions like a colour-print going up in flames. A stormwind roared about his ears as the world below leaped up toward him at dizzying, catastrophic speed. With a violent lunge he managed to snap the belt tethering him to his seat, flung himself backward.

The crash. All lost. . . .

No, by some miracle the plane had righted itself, come back almost to the level. Meynestrel still had control, there was still hope.

For a minute the machine drifted on, fluttering like a leaf on the breeze. Then a series of violent eddies caught it, tossed it this way and that, straining every joint. The fuselage creaked heavily, the wings canted over. Was Meynestrel banking, looking for a place to land? Crouching, Jacques gripped the side of the plane with both hands, clawing at the metal rim, on which his nails could get no purchase. One last clear picture stamped itself on his retina: a clump of pine trees, a sunlit meadow. Then instinctively he closed his eyes. His mind went blank. A grip of steel closed on his heart. Time stopped and stood still. Heralded by a blare of horns that split his eardrums, gigantic Catherine-wheels lit up all around him, volleying clots of flame, enveloping him in whirling light. He shouted. "Meynest . . . !" A shattering blow landed on his jaw. His body was thrown forward, flung, flattened out like a trowelful of mortar tossed at a wall.

Intense heat. Flames, a reek of pungent smoke, flurries of sparks. Daggers jabbing at his limbs, knives slashing his flesh. Gasping for breath, he writhed and struggled, made superhuman efforts to force a way out of the welter of flames. Impossible. His feet were welded to the bedplate of the furnace.

Two claws of steel gripped his shoulders from behind, dragged him backward. Every joint cracking, wrenched asunder, he screamed with agony. Men were hauling him over a rack of iron spikes, his body was being torn to shreds.

Suddenly the agony subsided in a great calm. A flood of darkness. Oblivion.

XXXI

VOICES. FAR-AWAY sounds muffled by heavy curtains. Yet the words forced their way imperiously into his consciousness. Someone was talking to him. Meynestrel? Yes, that must be Meynestrel's voice. He struggled, made desperate efforts to rouse himself from the deep coma numbing his mind.

"Who are you? French? Swiss?"

Twinges of excruciating pain shot through his back, knees, thighs. He was pinioned, nailed to the ground. His mouth was a mass of raw wounds, his tongue so swollen he could hardly breathe. Keeping his eyes shut, he slowly swayed his head this side and that, bracing his shoulders in an attempt to rise. Impossible. With a stifled groan he fell back again onto the spikes lacerating his back. His throat and nostrils were filled with gasolene-fumes and the reek of charred cloth. His mouth began to dribble; with a great effort he parted his lips and spat out a small, round, pulpy blood-clot.

"Speak up, man! What's your nationality? Were you on reconnaissance?"

The voice buzzed in his ears, fretting his torpor. For a moment his eyelids opened, his wandering gaze rose from depths of darkness. Overhead he saw a patch of sky, a tree-top. Then a glimpse of dusty leggings, red trousers, a group of French soldiers bending over him. . . . They had killed him and were watching him die.

The leaflets? The plane?

Raising his head an inch or so, he peered between the leggings. There was the plane. Some thirty yards away a tangled mass of wreckage lay smouldering in the sunlight like a dying pyre; a heap of scrap-iron hung with streamers of burnt canvas. Farther away, deeply embedded in the ground, a wing stood upended, gaunt and tattered as a scarecrow. The leaflets! Not one would reach its goal. All were dead and buried in that mound of ashes. An immense pity for their fate came over him and, letting his head sink back, he gazed up dully at the sunlit sky. But then his pain surged up again like vitriol eating through his flesh down to the marrow of his bones. Nothing, nothing mattered except that pain. Ah, let death come to him—quickly, quickly!

"Now, then! Out with it! Are you a Frenchman? What the hell were you up to in that machine?"

The voice dinned panting in his ears; insistent, but devoid of harshness.

Opening his eyes, Jacques saw bending above him a young-looking face, puffy with fatigue; two bespectacled blue eyes under a képi with a blue band. There was a confused murmur of voices round him; he caught a phrase or two. "He ain't got back his senses yet, I tell you." "Have you let the captain know?" "Won't you go through his pockets, sir? He may have some papers on him." "Well, he had a close call, and no mistake!" "The doctor's coming. Pasquin's gone to get him."

The man with the glasses had gone down on one knee. His jacket was unbuttoned at the throat, his chin covered with stubble, his chest criss-crossed with leather and canvas straps.

"Don't you understand French? *Bist du Deutsch? Verstehst du?*"

A hand grasped his lacerated shoulder roughly. He gave a low moan. The lieutenant promptly withdrew his hand.

"Are you in pain? Like a drink of water?"

Jacques's eyes fluttered in assent.

"Anyhow, he understood that," the officer remarked, rising to his feet.

"I'll bet he's a spy, sir."

Jacques tried to turn his head in the direction of the man with the high-pitched voice who had just spoken. But just then some of the men beside him moved away, exposing to view a black object lying on the ground three yards away—a burnt, unrecognizable thing with nothing human about it except the arm doubled up on the grass. The charred fingers were shaped like a bird’s talons—slim, sinewy fingers half clenched on air. Jacques could not take his eyes off them. Around him the sound of voices seemed growing fainter.

“Look, sir! There’s Pasquin coming back with the doctor. Pasquin saw it all—he was on his way to the picket-post with the morning rations when they crashed. He says that the plane . . .”

The voice died out into the distance, muffled by heavy curtains falling from the skies. Overhead, the tree-top had gone blurred. And very slowly the pain, too, died down, dwindling to a nauseating languor. The leaflets, Meynestrel! Ah, to be dead like him . . . !

For what inexplicable, compelling reason should he be lying thus bound and helpless in a little boat, tossed on the waves? Meynestrel had been wiser, he had flung himself overboard an hour ago, when the storm on the lake had made the motion of their little craft past all enduring. Like molten lead the sunbeams seared his cheeks; there was no shelter anywhere from their remorseless impact. In a vain effort to turn over, he half opened his eyes, but closed them again promptly; arrows of gold had transfixed his pupils. The sharp-edged pebbles on the bottom of the boat were tearing his back to shreds. He tried to call to Meynestrel, but a red-hot cinder in his mouth was burning through his tongue. There came a sudden shock, jarring every nerve, sending ripples of bright pain across his body. A wave had caught the boat and bumped it against the pier. He opened his eyes. “Hey, Chinaware, want a drink?” The speaker was a gendarme with an ill-shaven face like a country curé’s. All round was a babble of gruff, uncouth voices. He was suffering. Wounded. He must have had an accident. Yes, a drink. The rim of a tin mug touched his burning lips. “Yes, mate, their rifles is a washout. But their machine-guns, them’s the goods. And they got ’em all over the place, damn their eyes!” “I guess we got machine-guns, too, stowed away somewhere. One of these days they’ll trot ’em out, just you wait and see.”

Water! Though he lay in the full glare of the August sun his teeth chattered against the metal rim. His mouth was a mass of ulcerating wounds. He gulped a draught of water that stuck in his throat; a thin stream trickled down his chin. He tried to raise his arm. In vain; his wrists were shackled, and tied to the sides of the stretcher. He wanted to drink again, but the hand holding the mug had moved away. Suddenly it all came back to him. The plane, the roaring flames, Meynestrel’s charred fingers, the holocaust of the leaflets. His eyes were smarting with the glare, with tears and dust and sweat. He closed them again. More water. No. Pain, all-compelling pain.

Nothing mattered now except his pain. . . . A tumult of voices round him made him open his eyes.

He was in the midst of a crowd of men in bedraggled uniforms, their shirts gaping, their hair matted with sweat, bawling at each other, bustling to and fro. He lay on a stretcher set down on the grass beside a road swarming with troops. A long train of mule-carts was creaking past, raising clouds of dust. On the side-path some gendarmes were passing round a soldier's water-bottle that glinted in the light as they tilted it above their mouths and drank without letting the rim touch their lips. Pyramids of piled arms and dumps of haversacks lined the road as far as eye could reach. Groups of men sprawling on the grassy banks were smoking, arguing, gesticulating. The most exhausted were lying on their backs, their arms folded over their eyes, sound asleep in the full blaze of the sun. Ah, if only he could drink! Every part of him was throbbing with pain: his mouth, his back, his legs. Now and again a feverish shiver ran down his spine, drawing from him a low moan. But the lancinating twinges he had felt shooting through his body just after the crash had ceased. Presumably he had been given medical attention, his wounds had been dressed. A wild idea flashed through the twilight of his mind: his legs had been amputated. . . . What could that matter now? But the idea would not leave him. Could he feel his legs? No, there was no sensation left in that part of his body. Somehow he must find out. Strapped down as he was to the stretcher, he could do no more than raise his head a little, enough to have a glimpse of his blood-stained hands and his legs protruding from the trousers that had been cut off just below his thighs. Evidently his legs had not been amputated. They were swathed in bandages and, from the knees down, set in splints. The splints consisted of strips of wood that had obviously been taken from some packing-case, for one of them still bore a black stencilled inscription: "CHINAWARE. WITH CARE." Exhausted, he let his head sink back onto the stretcher.

Voices all around him. A rumour of voices; soldiers' talk. "A fellow in the Hussars told us the regiment was falling in behind those trees." "The hell he did! I say, let's keep with the column. At the first halt they'll tell us where to go." "Where did you boys come from?" "How d'you expect us to know the names? We came from over there. What about you?" "Same here. And I can tell you we've been having a god-awful time ever since last Friday." "We been through it, too." "Don't know about you fellows, but as for us it's simple: since the push started—that's three days ago, ain't it, Friday, the seventh?—we haven't had six hours' sleep all told. Ain't that so, Maillard? And no grub, neither. On Saturday they issued a spot o' rations, but since the Jerries got us on the hop, not a damn thing to eat. Supplies broken down, they say. Lucky for us we managed to swipe a bit in the villages." Other voices, farther off, hoarse with anger. "And I tell you, we're not through with it yet, not by a long shot!" "Aye, they've got us by the short hairs, good and proper. Ain't that so, Chabaux? And if we try another push, we'll get it in the neck again."

Most painful of all, perhaps, were the wounds in his mouth, which prevented him from swallowing his saliva, from speaking or drinking, almost from breathing. Gingerly he tried to move his tongue. From deep down in his throat welled up a nauseating taste of gasolene and burnt varnish.

"And then, you know, all those nights out on patrol, they get a man down. When the battalion advanced on Carspach . . ."

Yes, it must be his tongue that was injured; it was swollen, raw, in shreds. A fragment of wreckage must have hit him in the face, or else he had been thrown forward onto his chin. Still, the pain was *inside* his mouth. He applied his mind to the problem. "I must have bitten my tongue," he concluded at last. The strain of concentrating had exhausted him; a fit of dizziness made him close his eyes. At once flames leaped up before them, and the twinges in his legs set in again. With a faint moan he relapsed into a coma, a respite without thought.

"Burnt all over . . . legs fair torn to pieces . . . a spy."

He opened his eyes. The gendarmes had come up to have a look at the stretcher and a group had gathered.

"Their plane crashed?" "Yes, a Taube. Bricard saw it." "Bricat?" "No, Bricard, that tall N.C.O. in Company 5." "Burnt out it was, their plane." "Well, that's one lousy Taube out of the way, anyhow." "That fellow, 'Chinaware' we call him, was in luck. His legs are in a nasty mess, but the doc says he'll pull through." Jacques had heard the voice before; looking around, he saw the elderly gendarme with the pale eyes, bald head, and air of a country parson, who had given him a drink. "The hell he will!" The speaker was another gendarme, a swarthy, thick-set little man with darkly glowing eyes, who looked like a Corsican. "Hear that, sir? Marjoulat says Chinaware's out of danger. Not for long, though." The police sergeant grinned. "Yes, Paoli, you're right there. Not for long. The firing-squad'll see to that." He was a big burly man with a jet-black beard and cheeks the colour of raw meat. The stripes on his sleeve were brand-new. "Then why the devil didn't they shoot him out of hand, the scum?" a soldier asked. The sergeant made no reply. "Got to take him far like that?" "We've been told to hand the bastard over at brigade headquarters," the Corsican explained. The sergeant scowled and looked away, then grunted in an officious tone: “We’re waiting for orders.” A regimental sergeant let out a high-pitched cackle. “Waiting for orders, are you? What about us? We’ve been waiting for orders for the last two days, we have.” “Waiting for our rations, too.” “What a bloody mess!” “There’s no battalion runners left, they say. The colonel can’t get orders through nohow.” A peremptory whistle cut the conversations short. “Unpile arms! We’re moving on.” “Put on packs! Jump to it, there! Fall in!”

There was a general commotion as the men ran to their places and the column got under way again. Jacques felt himself sinking into an abyss of darkness. Water was lapping round the boat. A great wave lifted it, rocked it for a moment, then swept it forward.

“On the right, close up!” “What’s up now?” “Close up there! Don’t straggle!” The jolts made him open his eyes. A broad back loomed before them: the gendarme holding the front handles of the stretcher.

A ripple went down the column as it opened out to pass round a dead mule lying in the middle of the road, its belly hideously distended, legs in air. The men spat, sickened by the stench, and flapped their hands against the swarm of flies that rose from the carcass, buzzing round their faces. Then the ranks fell back into line; as they picked up the step again, the clank of hobnailed boots on the hard road resumed its ponderous rhythm.

What time was it? Sunbeams fell vertically, scorching his cheeks. His body ached with pain. Probably ten or eleven. Where were they taking him? It was impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. A train of regimental wagons was lumbering past at walking pace, raising a dense cloud of dust fetid with the mingled stench of horse-dung, hot leather, sodden wool, and sweating bodies. All his strength had been drained out of him by pain; he was too weak to think, to shake off the torpor of his mind. The acrid dust stung his throat; his gums were parched with thirst and fever. He was a helpless atom, lost in this mass of marching men; forlorn, alone, bereft of all, of life and death alike. During his rare spells of lucidity, between the periods of unconsciousness and nightmare hallucinations, he repeated to himself incessantly the one word “Courage!” Now and again the files closed in so densely round the stretcher that his whole range of vision was filled with heaving shoulders and rifle-barrels glinting in the turbid air, and he pictured himself in the midst of a great forest moving tumultuously forward. Mechanically his eyes fixed themselves on a big knapsack swaying like a pendulum on a man’s back, then on a bright tin mug that hung from a canteen enclosed in a blue cotton cover. A good many men had loosened the straps and let their packs down almost to their waists. Their shoulders were bowed, their faces grimed with sweat-sodden dust. Sometimes Jacques caught one of them eyeing him with a curious unfocused stare, at once attentive and unmindful, disconcerting in its strange remoteness.

On and on they trudged, straight forward, shoulder to shoulder, seeing nothing, saying nothing, staggering now and then but never halting in the retreat to safety; wearing down their strength on the straight, stony road as on a grindstone. To Jacques's right was a tall, gaunt soldier with a cameolike profile; he wore a Red Cross armband and walked with gravely measured strides, his head uplifted and on his face the rapt expression of a man in prayer. On the left of the stretcher was an undersized little man who picked his way, limping a little. Jacques's gaze settled dully on the limb that always paused an instant before coming forward and sagged at the knees with every step. Sometimes, when an eddy in the ranks made an opening beside him, Jacques had a glimpse of trees and hedges, a radiant countryside. He had a dreamlike impression of having seen a little way back a grey farmhouse with shuttered windows, a mud-walled barn, a farmyard with a dunghill and chickens pecking at it; the warm, pungent odour of the manure had been wafted to his nostrils. Had it really existed, or was it a figment of his fuddled brain? As the stretcher swayed from side to side, twinges shot through his legs and the pain in his mouth blazed up again. If only that gendarme would think of giving him some more water! At every moment progress was held up by sudden halts, after which the stretcher-bearers had to double, panting, and catch up with the ranks in front when a new start was made, before the cart-drivers took advantage of the gap to force their way into the column. "It's an awful muddle and no mistake! I'd like to know why everybody's using the same road." "The same road—not a bit of it, mate! Why, all the roads round here is cluttered up the same as this, most likely. When a whole division's retreating, what else can you expect?" "A division? It's the whole Seventh Army Corps, so I was told."

"Hey, you there, what the hell are you up to?" "Gone dippy, have you?" "Stop it, you fool!" A man in territorial uniform had cut across the road, against the advancing stream, and was heading eastward, toward the enemy. Paying no heed to the others' shouts, he threaded his way between the transport wagons. He was no longer young; his beard was grey, and not with dust alone. He carried no rifle or pack, and wore a military greatcoat over peasant's corduroys. A bunch of miscellaneous equipment flapped at his waist: cartridge-boxes, canteen, several haversacks. "Hi, Daddy, where d'you think you're off to?" He dodged the arms thrust forth to stop him. His face was haggard, his eyes were wild and resolute, and his lips fluttered as though he were conversing with a ghost in whispers. "Going home, old boy?” “Good luck!” “Send us a picture-postcard when you get there!” Without looking round, without a word, the man strode ahead, climbed over a heap of stones, crossed the ditch, forced his way through the hedge into the fields beyond, and vanished.

“Say! Look at that! Boats!” “On the road?” “What the hell . . . ?” “It’s the pontoon party retiring.” “They’ve cut across the column.” “Where?” “Yes, look! Boats on wheels! Did you ever see the like?” “Looks to me, sonny, as if we’d given up the idea of crossing the Rhine.” “Close up there! Carry on!” The column got under way again.

Five hundred yards on, another halt. “What’s up now?” This time the halt persisted. The road was spanned by a grade crossing, and a train composed of empty cars was crawling by, drawn by a panting, groaning little locomotive. The gendarmes set down the stretcher in the dust. “Looks like things are going badly for us,” Marjoulat remarked with a whinnying laugh, “if they’re moving back the rolling stock.” The sergeant glowered at the train, mopping his face, and made no reply.

“Hoho!” chuckled the little Corsican. “Old Marjoulat’s bucked up no end, ain’t he, since we started falling back!” “Marjoulat,” remarked a third gendarme, a bull-necked, strongly built man who had seated himself on a stone-heap and was munching a slice of bread, “Marjoulat went a bit green in the gills, I noticed, when we were under fire the day before yesterday.” Marjoulat turned crimson. He had large grey eyes, a prominent nose, and beetling brows, and habitually wore an expression of sullen obstinacy tempered by a furtive slyness; it was the typical face of a shrewd, calculating peasant. He turned toward the police sergeant, whose eyes were fixed on him.

“I ain’t ashamed to say it, Sarge. War don’t suit me nohow; I ain’t no Corsican and I’ve never been one for fighting.”

But the sergeant was not listening; his attention was directed to the grade crossing. Across the rumble of the train there sounded a drumming of horse-hoofs. A group of mounted men came trotting up beside the railway-line. “It’s a patrol.” “No, it’s the Staff.” “Bringing orders, most likely.” “Stand back there, damn you!” The troop consisted of a cavalry captain, two N.C.O.’s and some lancers. The horses picked their way between the wagons and the troops, swung round the stretcher, formed up on the far side of the road, and galloped across country, westward. “Them fellows have all the luck.” “Don’t you believe it! They say the cavalry division’s been told off to cover our retreat. Those poor devils are going to get it in the neck, keeping the Germans off our rear.”

Round the stretcher some men were engaged in conversation. Their jackets were open at the throat and on each sweating chest there dangled from a black cord the man's identification tag, a metal disk. There was no way of distinguishing their ages; all alike had dust-stained, wizened faces; all looked old men. "Any water left?" "Not a drop." "Zeps? Yes, we saw one on the night of the seventh flying low over the woods." "What's that you say? We ain't retreating? Tell us another!" "It's the gospel truth. One of the brigade runners heard a Staff officer explaining it to the Old Man. We're not retreating, he said." "No. It's what they call a strategic withdrawal. To get all set for a counter-offensive. It's a mighty fine idea. We'll nip them in a pair of pincers." "In a what?" "A pair of pincers, he said. Ask the C.S.M. about it, he knows. It means letting 'em advance till they're up to the neck in it, then you close the pincers—zip!—and you've got 'em cold. See the idea?" "Look! There's a Taube." "Where?" "Over there. Just above that hayrick." "Forward!" "That's a Taube, Sergeant." "Forward! There's the guard's van passing, the crossing's clear." "How do you know it's a Taube?" "Can't you see? We're popping off at it." Round the tiny speck of brightness in the zenith, puffs of smoke were leaping into view; they hovered for a moment like suspended snowballs before dissolving on the breeze. "Fall in there! By the right! Forward!" The tail of the train was disappearing round a bend.

A general commotion. The sudden jolts sent waves of agony through Jacques. Courage! In a last moment of lucidity he listened to the heavy breathing of the stretcher-bearer behind his head. Then all went blurred; a fit of giddiness came over him. Courage! Like the red-and-blue horses of a merry-go-round the marching files flickered in dizzy circles through the dust and glare. He groaned. Delicate, sinewy fingers, Meynestrel's, blackened, shrivelled up, shrunk to a bird's charred claws. The leaflets! All burnt! All hope lost. Ah, to die, to die!

The blare of a motor-horn. He opened his eyes. The column had halted just outside a little town. A car was coming up from behind, hooting loudly. The men retreated to the sides of the road to make way for it. The sergeant sprang to attention and saluted. It was an open car flying a flag and packed with officers. At the back glinted the gold lace of a general's képi. Jacques closed his eyes, and again the scene of the court-martial rose before him. He was standing in the centre of the courtroom confronting that general with the braided cap—M. Faîsme. The car was hooting continuously. The mist closed in again. When he opened his eyes once more he saw a neatly clipped hedge, a lawn, clumps of geraniums, a villa with striped Venetian blinds. Maisons-Laffitte. A white flag with a red cross floated above the gateway. Drawn up in front of the steps was an ambulance-car riddled with bullets, all its windows shattered. The column marched past it, then halted once more. The stretcher was dumped roughly down on the roadside. Now at every stop the men, instead of keeping their ranks, flung themselves down on the ground, without discarding haversacks or rifles, and lay supine, as if incapable of ever rising again.

The town was some two hundred yards away. “Looks as if we were going to halt there,” the sergeant remarked.

Another move forward. “Fall in there!” After advancing fifty yards the column halted again.

A jerk. What was happening now? The sun was still high and blazing hot. How many hours, how many days had it lasted, this never-ending march? Jacques was in pain. The blood oozing into his throat gave his saliva an acrid taste. The horse-flies swarming round the mules kept settling on his lips and hands.

A lad from the town started talking to a group of soldiers who had gathered round him; his eyes were sparkling. “They’ve been locked up in the Mayor’s cellar,” he said, grinning. “Three German prisoners. Sick as hell they look! You can see ’em behind the grating. They’ve faces just like weasels. The people here say they grab all the kids they can and chop their hands off. One of ’em was led out to piss. We tried to tear his guts out, we did, only the sentry wouldn’t let us.” The police sergeant called to the youngster: “Any wine left in your place?” “Sure! Lots of it.” “Here’s a franc. Go and get a bottle.” “You won’t never see that kid again,” Marjoulat predicted sagely. “Fall in! Forward!” Another fifty yards’ advance brought them to a crossroad where a cavalry troop had just dismounted. To the right, on a big railed-off common, a fair-ground by the look of it, some N.C.O.’s had mustered what remained of an infantry company. In the centre a captain was haranguing his men. Then the ranks fell out. Beside a haystack a field-kitchen was dispensing soup. The air was loud with shouts, the clink of tin canteens, and a buzz of voices like a hornets’ nest. The lad came back again, waving a bottle. “Here’s your wine,” he said with a grin. “Seventy centimes they took for it, the robbers!”

Jacques opened his eyes again. The bottle was misted as if it had been on ice. He gazed at it eagerly; the mere sight of the bottle had filled him with a frantic thirst. The gendarmes had gathered round their sergeant, who was fondling the bottle as if to relish its cool contact before beginning to drink. He took his time. Then, planting his feet well apart, he took a steady purchase on his legs and, before setting the bottle to his lips, cleared his throat and spat. After drinking he beamed on the company, then passed the bottle to Marjoulat, next in seniority. Would Marjoulat think of Jacques? No, he drank and handed the bottle to Paoli, whose nostrils were quivering like a thirsty animal's. Jacques slowly dropped his eyelids so as to see no more. . . .

Voices round him. He shot a glance at the newcomers. Some N.C.O.'s from the troop halted at the crossroad had come over to have a chat with the infantrymen. "We're the Light Brigade. We went into action with the Seventh Army Corps on the seventh. Our job was to smash through to Thann, then wheel round along the Rhine bank and cut the bridges. But we were in too much of a hurry. It didn't pan out the way they'd reckoned on. The poor infantry were walked off their feet; even our horses were done in. So we had to fall back." "The usual lousy muddle!" "Muddle! It's nothing here to what it is up north where we came from. I never saw such a sight. The roads are jammed; there's not only the troops but the villagers who're scared and scuttling for all they're worth." "We," an infantry sergeant put in, in a deep, resonant voice, "we were the advance guard. We reached Altkirch just as it was getting dark." "On the eighth?" "Yes, Saturday, the day before yesterday." "We were there, too. The infantry put up a fine show, there's no denying it. Altkirch was thick with squareheads. Well, in less than no time we'd mopped 'em all up with fixed bayonets. And what's more, we kept 'em on the run right up to Walheim." "Our bunch got as far as Tagolsheim." "And next day the road was clear in front of us. Not a Boche between us and Mulhausen. We were beginning to think there'd be no stopping us all the way to Berlin. But the dirty dogs, they knew very well what they were up to, letting us go ahead like that. Ever since yesterday they've been counter-attacking. Seems we're having a rough house over there." "Anyhow, it's a bit of luck, our being ordered to retire. Else we'd all have been blown to bits by now." An infantry C.S.M. and some sergeants had joined the group. The sergeant-major, a red-cheeked man with bloodshot eyes, began speaking in a jerky voice. "We were in action for thirteen hours on end. Isn't that so, Rocher? Thirteen solid hours! The Germans were in a pinewood in front of us. God! I won't forget that pinewood in a hurry. There was no way of driving them out of it. So our company was ordered to work round the wood and turn their flank. We wriggled along on our bellies for the best part of a mile; it took us two or three hours to cover the distance to the farmhouse we were to occupy. Me, I'm a cashier in civil life and I'm out of training for that sort of stunt. Still, we got to the farm all right. The family were all down in the cellar—the women and kids, poor things, howling with fright. We locked the cellar door on them; you never know with Alsatians. We bored loopholes in the walls. Then we went up to the second floor and bunged up the windows with mattresses. We'd only one machine-gun, but plenty of ammunition. Well, we held that farm for a whole day. 'Sacrificed'—that's what the colonel said we'd been. All the same, we managed to get back, some of us. It's unbelievable what you manage to do once you're up against it. Still, when we got word to retire, we didn't wait to be told twice, I can tell you. There were two hundred of us when we started out of the wood. When we left the farmhouse we were sixty, all told, and of those sixty, twenty men were wounded. And yet, believe it or not, it's not so terrible as it sounds. It's not so terrible because a man loses track of what he's doing. Everybody gets that way, officers and men alike. You don't see anything. You don't understand a thing. You just take cover and plug away. You don't see your mates falling. There was a fellow hit just beside me; his blood spurted over my face. He screamed: 'They got me!' That was all. I can hear his voice still—but I don't even know who it was. Never stopped to look. You keeps on firing, yelling, firing, yelling, till you goes sort of batty. Isn't that so, Rocher?" "Aye, but don't forget one thing," said Rocher glaring at the men around him. "Them Fritzes, as compared with our lot, are just a washout." "Look, sir!" a gendarme shouted. "The column's started off again." "What's that? Fall in, then!" The N.C.O.'s scuttled back to their places. "Close in there! Close in! By the right! Forward!" "So long," said the police sergeant as he walked past the cavalrymen, "and good luck to you."

There were no more halts before the column had entered the little town, filling the narrow street with a herdlike rumble of trampling feet. The pace was slower, and Jacques felt less pain now that the lurching of the stretcher had diminished. He looked about him. Houses. Journey's end at last?

The townsfolk were standing at their doorways in groups: elderly men, women with babies in their arms, children clinging to their mothers' skirts. For hours on end, perhaps ever since daybreak, they had been standing thus, craning their necks, half blinded by the dust and glare, watching with anxious eyes the never-ending stream of men and vehicles pouring down the street: transport wagons, ambulance sections, artillery trains, footsore regiments—all the impressive "covering army" they had seen some days before advancing in good order toward the frontier and now was returning in a disorderly retreat, leaving them to the invader's mercy. The choking dust-cloud welling up into the sunlight brought to mind a housebreaker's yard in full activity. Street, paths, and backyards were buzzing like hives of angry bees. The shops were packed with soldiers making a clean sweep of all the drinkables and foodstuffs. The church square was occupied by army wagons and troops. On the right, where there was a little shade, was a cavalry squadron; the men had dismounted and were holding their horses by the bridles. A cavalry major in a blazing temper was vigorously telling off an aged constable attired in a comic-opera uniform. The big church doors stood open; in the half-light of the nave wounded men were aligned on beds of straw, with nurses, orderlies and white-aproned doctors moving to and fro among them. Outside, a company quartermaster-sergeant, standing on a cart, was bawling across the tumult: “Company 5! This way for rations!”

The column was making slower and slower headway. The main street narrowed into a bottle-neck behind the church. Wedged into a solid mass, the company marked time, chafing at the delay. An old man seated at his door in a grandfather’s chair, his hands played on his knees, watched the scene with the air of a dramatic critic at an indifferent first night. “Say!” he called to the police sergeant. “How far d’you think you’re going on retreating like this?” “Don’t know. We’re waiting for orders.” The old man’s limpid gaze lingered for a moment on the stretcher and the gendarmes; then he wagged his head disapprovingly. “I seen the same thing in ’70. Only *we* held out longer.” But Jacques saw a vague compassion in the old grey eyes, a glint of kindness.

The column was advancing again. It had crossed the middle of the town. “I’m told we’re halting over there, opposite the last houses in the street,” said the police sergeant, who had just consulted his superior officer. “So much the better,” Marjoulat remarked. “We’ll be the first to get away.” The cobbles ended and the street became a country road, flanked by cottages and gardens. “Halt! Let the wagons pass!” “You men,” said the sergeant, “run back and see if the ‘cooker’ ain’t somewhere behind. We could do with a bite. I’ll stay here with Paoli, to keep an eye on Chinaware.”

The stretcher had been laid on the roadside near a drinking-trough at which men of all arms were filling their water-bottles. The water was splashing over the edge, trickling down the side of the trough in glistening runlets which held Jacques’s eyes enthralled. There was a bitter metallic taste in his mouth; his saliva had the feel of sodden cotton-wool. “Like a drink, lad?” Miracle of miracles, the glint of a white bowl in the brown hands of an old peasant woman! A group of people had collected: soldiers, civilians, old men with tanned cheeks, children, womenfolk. The bowl drew near Jacques’s lips. He was trembling, his eyes glowing with doglike gratitude. Milk! He drank it painfully, sip by sip. With a corner of her apron the old woman wiped his chin after each sip.

A medical officer came up. “A wounded man?” “Yes, sir. But you needn’t waste your time on him; he’s a spy—a Boche.” The old peasant jumped away as if she had been stung and tipped out the milk remaining in her bowl into the dust. “It’s a spy, a German spy.” As the news went round, the bystanders closed in on Jacques. They were in an ugly mood. He was alone, defenceless, bound hand and foot. He turned his eyes away. Suddenly a burning sensation on his cheek made him jerk his head back. There were guffaws. He had a glimpse of a young workman in blue overalls bending above him. The youngster gave a jeering laugh; between his fingers was a cigarette, the tip of which glowed brightly. “Let him be,” growled the police sergeant. “But it’s a spy,” the lad protested. “A spy! Come and have a look at the swine!” People flocked up from the cottages beside the road; an angry crowd gathered round. It was all the policemen could do to make them keep their hands off Jacques. “What was he up to?” “Where did you nab him?” “Why didn’t you shoot the bastard at sight?” A small boy picked up some pebbles and flung them. Others followed his example. “That’s enough of it!” the Sergeant bawled. “Stop that, you young devils!” Then, turning to Paoli: “Just shift him into that yard. And don’t forget to lock the gate.”

Jacques felt himself lifted from the ground and carried forward. The sound of angry, jeering voices died away into a restful silence. Where was he? He cast a quick glance around. He was in a farmyard, well out of sight, in the shadow of a barn fragrant with warm hay. Beside him was an antiquated wagonette, the two stumps of its broken shafts projecting into the air; some hens were perched on them, asleep. How delightful were the cool shadows, this heaven-sent solitude! Ah, if only he could die here, in this peace!

He awoke with a start. The gendarmes had burst in like an avalanche. The fowls scattered in all directions, cackling with fright.

What was happening? All around was a wild commotion, shouting, a general stampede. The police sergeant hurriedly put on his jacket and equipment. “Hey, there! Pick up Chinaware! And snap into it!” Along the narrow street on the far side of the farmyard an ambulance unit was trotting past. “Look, Sarge, they’re moving out the first-aid station as well.” “Yes, yes, I know. Where’s Marjoulat got to, damn him! Hurry up, Paoli. What’s this now? What do the engineers want here?” Two trucks, followed by a fatigue party, had entered the yard. The men began unloading coils of barbed wire and pickets. “Stow the wire in that corner! The rest of the stuff here. Look sharp!” The police sergeant went up to the N.C.O. in charge of the fatigue party and inquired anxiously: “Bad as all that, is it?” “Seems so. We’ve been detailed to put this place in a state of defence. I hear they’ve occupied the Vosges already and are pushing on to Belfort. There’s talk of asking for a truce, I hear, so’s to spare the country an invasion.” “Gosh, you don’t say so! Then it’s all up with us?” “See here, the best thing you fellows can do is to hook it right away. No use hanging around here. The inhabitants have been told to clear out. The town’s got to be evacuated within an hour.” The police sergeant swung round on his subordinates. “Well, what about it?

Get a move on with that stretcher! Now, Marjoulat, there's no time for dawdling." A roar of engines in the farmyard. The trucks had been unloaded and were turning. The voice of a captain rang out through the din: "Now, men, forage round for all the ploughs and harrows you can lay hands on. Reapers, too. Tell Lieutenant Martin to stop the people here from taking away their carts. We'll need them to barricade the roads." "Marjoulat! What are you waiting for?" shouted the police sergeant. "Right, Sergeant. We're just starting."

Four arms lifted the stretcher. Jacques groaned. The gendarmes swung into the road, along which the troops were moving forward in marching order. The formation was so close that it was no easy matter finding a place within the serried mass. "Shove for all you're worth!" Marjoulat shouted to Paoli. "We've got to squeeze in somehow, or we'll get left. "*Basta!*" the Corsican exclaimed. "Surely they don't expect us to cart this bird about the country till our legs drop off!"

Jolts. Jolts. In every joint and sinew pain blazed up again.

The little town was in an uproar. In each house and backyard people were shouting, protesting, breaking into lamentations. The farmers were feverishly harnessing their horses to light carts, which the women loaded with trunks, bundles, cradles, baskets of foodstuffs. Many families were escaping on foot. They mingled with the ranks of marching men, some of them wheeling go-carts or baby-carriages piled with their household goods. On the left of the road a line of ammunition wagons drawn by sturdy cart-horses was moving past at a slow trot, making an ear-splitting din. Every side-street was disgorging into the main stream donkey-carts and wains stacked with crates, furniture, and mattresses on which old women and children were perched uneasily. The civilian vehicles wormed their way into the file of regimental wagons that was moving at walking pace along the middle of the road. Forced off the roadway to the right by the wheeled traffic, the troops advanced as best they could along the edge and in the ditch. The sun blazed down relentlessly. With bent shoulders, their caps shoved back and handkerchiefs spread over the napes of their necks to shield them from the glare, laden like beasts of burden—some were even carrying faggots slung across their shoulders—they slogged ahead. No one spoke. They had lost touch with their regiments. They did not know whence they had come, whither they were going. No matter; after a week of war they had given up trying to understand. All they knew was that they were on the run. And the satisfaction of escaping, fear, shame, and exhaustion had stamped all faces with a like expression of tragic fatalism. The only moments when they broke silence were when, jostled by the man beside him, one of them let out a savage oath.

Jacques's eyes opened and shut at the more violent jolts. The pain in his legs had subsided a little during his brief rest in the shadow of the barn, but his inflamed mouth was throbbing violently as ever. The dust, the fetid emanations from the sweating mass around him clogged his lungs, and the wavelike motion of the closely packed bodies gave him a feeling of nausea. He made no effort to think. He was a scrap of human jetsam, rejected by all men—even by himself.

The retreat continued. The road grew narrower, flanked by shelving banks, and there were frequent halts. As at each halt the stretcher was dumped roughly on the ground, Jacques opened his eyes abruptly. "*Basta!* If we crawl along like this, the Fritzes will have easy work. . . ." "Aw, shut your trap!" the sergeant cut in—his nerves, too, were getting jangled. "Can't you see we're starting again?" The column floundered on another fifty yards, then stopped abruptly. The gendarmes halted at the junction of a by-road where a company was drawn up in close formation, their rifles slung across their backs. On the top of the bank a group of officers stood round the captain, studying their maps and confabulating. His interest roused by the stretcher, a sergeant-major approached. The police sergeant asked him: "Where's your lot going?" "Dunno. The C.O.'s waiting for orders." "Things going badly, eh?" "Looks like it. The Jerries have been seen just north, I hear." An officer stepped forward to the edge of the embankment and shouted: "Slope arms! To the right, follow my lead." Leaving the crowded road on the left, he led his men into the fields adjoining it. "That fellow knows his job, Sarge. They'll be there hours ahead of us." The police sergeant chewed his moustache and made no answer.

The halt continued. It seemed that some considerable obstacle was holding up the column. Even the artillery trains on the left had stopped moving. A bicycle unit, wheeling their machines, tried to thread their way between the vehicles, but they, too, soon were brought to a standstill.

Twenty minutes passed. The column had not progressed ten yards. On the right, infantry units were retreating cross-country, westward. The police sergeant began fidgeting. He beckoned to his gendarmes. Their heads met above the stretcher in a whispered colloquy. "Damn it, we can't stay here all day, like stuck pigs! Why don't they get a move on with their lousy column? I been told off to do a job, ain't I, and that's to deliver this young fellow to the provost-sergeant this evening. Well, I'll take the responsibility. Follow me! Jump to it, boys!" The gendarmes complied at once. Thrusting aside the men around them, they picked up the stretcher, charged across the road, scrambled up the bank, and made off through the fields.

The headlong rush across the ditch and up the bank had drawn from Jacques a long, hoarse moan of pain. Twisting his head, he tried to open his swollen lips. Another jolt. Another. Sky and trees swirled in a crimson mist. The plane was going up in flames, his legs blazing like torches, the red death clawing at his thighs, gnawing at his heart. The world went black. He fainted.

A violent impact jerked him back to consciousness. Where was he? The stretcher was lying in a meadow. How long had he been here? It seemed to have lasted days, this interminable journey. The light had changed; the sun was lower. It must be near sunset. Ah, to die! The extremity of pain was acting like an opiate. He felt as if he were buried so deep underground that jolts, sounds, voices came to him from far away, faint and blurred. Had he slept? Had it been a dream? A picture still held his eyes of a clump of acacias, a white goat browsing near it, a marsh into which the gendarmes' jackboots had sunk deep, splashing him with mud. He opened his eyes wide, trying to see. Marjoulat, Paoli, and the sergeant were on their knees. Some way off was a great heaving mass—a company lying flat. Their packs wedged together formed a vast, compact carapace pulsating on the grass.

Standing behind his men, a captain raked the horizon with his field-glasses. On the left was a knoll, with a shelving meadow on which a red-and-blue battalion was deployed fanwise, like a patience pack spread on a green baize card-table.

"What are we waiting for, Sarge?" "Orders." "If we had to run for it," Marjoulat remarked, "how'd we manage to get away with this fellow China ware on our hands?"

The captain, who had moved up to the police sergeant, lent him his field-glasses. Suddenly a cavalry troop galloped up from the right. The N.C.O. in front, a mere boy, was standing in his stirrups, the horse-tail of his helmet streaming in the wind. His eyes were sparkling with excitement, his gloved hand pointed eastward. "They're over there, behind the ridge. Not two miles off. Our rearguard must be in action by now."

His voice rang out clear and gay. Jacques had a glimpse of his face and through the twilight of his thoughts there flashed a memory of Daniel.

A metallic rattle broke out on all sides. Those around had heard what the young man had said and, without waiting for orders, were fixing bayonets. Their conduct was infectious; a forest of slim, shining blades seemed to spring up from the earth. All eyes swung round toward the unseen menace of that quiet hillside bathed in golden light. The horses were nibbling the lush grass. At a sign from their leader the troop fell in and trotted away. The captain in command reined up and shouted: “Tell them to send us orders!” Then, turning to the police sergeant, he added: “Ever seen anything like it? What the devil do they expect us to do when they leave us up in the air like this?” “Look here, Sarge,” Marjoulat muttered, “ain’t it time to make a move?” “Look! They’ve started over yonder.” Paoli pointed to the hillside where the battalion that had been deployed over the fields was doubling, in successive waves, toward the summit. Line by line the men were vanishing over the ridge. “Forward!” cried the captain. “Right!” the sergeant said. “It’s forward for us, too.”

The stretcher was yanked up hastily. Jacques moaned. No one listened, none took notice. Why couldn’t they leave him here and let him die in peace? Jolt upon jolt. Every fifty yards or so, the stretcher was dumped down and the gendarmes, kneeling, took breath before starting up the hill again. Around them troops were still advancing in short rushes. At last the gendarmes had come within a few yards of the ridge. The captain was standing just in front of them. “On the other side,” he said, “in the valley there’s a wood with a road running through it. We’ll be able to move south-west under cover. But no dawdling on the slope, mind you! It’s in full view.” The last batch of troops was sweeping over the crest. “Double!” “Follow them!” cried the sergeant. The stretcher was jerked up again; they reached the summit. A meadow dotted with small trees dropped down toward a wooded gorge, from which a forest stretched as far as eye could reach. “Make a beeline for the woods! Jump to it, boys!” A high-pitched shriek rent the air, swelled to the hurtling roar of an express train. Once again the stretcher dropped heavily to the ground. The gendarmes flung themselves on their faces among the soldiers, each with but one thought—to make himself as flat as possible, to wriggle into the yielding soil as soles burrow into the sand when the tide ebbs. There was a terrific crash in the wood on the far side of the ravine. Panic was visible on every face. “They’ve got us spotted.” “Move on, damn it!” “We’ll be shot to pieces in this lousy wood.” “Hop it to the gully, everyone!” Jumping to their feet, they charged down the slope, dropping under cover of every shrub and hummock on the way, then leaping up and running on again. The gendarmes followed, rocking the stretcher so violently that every joint creaked. At last they reached the wood. Jacques’s body was a quivering mass of bruised, mangled flesh. During the descent his whole weight had borne down upon his fractured legs. The leather straps had bitten into his thighs and shoulders. He had lost track of everything. When the stretcher crashed like a projectile into the undergrowth, he felt a sudden stinging swish of branches on his limbs, thorns tearing his cheeks and hands. For a moment he half opened his eyes; then a great peace descended on him. Life seemed ebbing from his body in a slow, warm, sickly-sweet stream like blood from a punctured artery. A dream of falling, falling through the void. . . . The plane, the leaflets. . . .

A fiery hiss as of a rocket rose on the air, zoomed overhead. There was a buzz of voices. Human sounds. He opened his eyes again. The stretcher lay on a bed of pine-needles, in a bower of green shadows. All around was a confused murmur; men fretting and fuming with impatience, unable to advance or turn, wedged into a solid mass, hampered by their equipment, their packs and rifles entangled in the brushwood. "Stop shoving!" "What are we waiting for?" "We've sent out scouts." "Yes, got to make sure there ain't no Germans in this wood before advancing." Officers and N.C.O.'s were making frantic efforts to get their units together, but without success. "Stop talking!" "Company C, this way!" "Company B, fall in here!" Just beside the stretcher a man was leaning against a pine tree, overcome by profound, deathlike sleep. He was quite young, but his cheeks were hollow, grey, and wrinkled. His right arm pressed the rifle-butt stiffly to his waist as if he were preparing to present arms. "They say the third battalion's been marched round to cover our flank." "This way, lads!" The speaker was a corporal, a sturdy old peasant who was bustling his section into the wood like an old hen convoying her brood.

A lieutenant stepped across the stretcher; he had the arrogant yet flustered look of the officer who has lost grip but is out to save his face at all costs. "Now, then, N.C.O.'s, get the men to stop talking. Will you obey, yes or no, damn you! Section 1, fall in!" Grumbling, the men pushed their way forward, though in fact they asked for nothing better than to find themselves back among their comrades, taken charge of, officered again. Some were grinning, reassured by the near horizons of the wood, in an absurd belief that fighting stopped where open country ended and the trees began. Now and again a battalion runner, panting, perspiring, furious at being unable to find the officer he was looking for, pushed his way through the ranks and vanished into the undergrowth, after darting exasperated glances round him and bawling out the number of a regiment or a commanding officer's name. Again a prolonged whistle, a sound less strident, crisper than before, skimmed the tree-tops. Everyone stopped talking and ducked; packs slid forward, humped bent shoulders. This time the explosion took place some way to the right. "That was a 75." "No, a 77." The gendarmes stood bunched round the stretcher as if it were the only justification of their presence here, in a stolid, compact group, staunch as a rock in the surging mass of men.

At the edge of the wood a voice rapped out a command. “At 1800 metres. At the hilltop, the black copse. Fire!” A volley jarred the air. Then a sudden hush fell on the wood. After another volley sporadic firing broke out in all directions. All who were anywhere near the edge of the wood had turned toward the meadows and brought their rifles to their shoulders; without waiting for orders, glad to have an opportunity at last of doing something, they fired blind across the leafage. The young man who had been leaning against the tree, asleep, was kneeling now at the foot of the stretcher and firing steadily, resting his rifle in the fork of a low branch. Each shot stung Jacques like a whiplash, but he was too weak now to open his eyes.

Crashing through the brushwood, three officers—a colonel and two majors—galloped up. A harsh voice barked out above the rattle of rifle-fire: “Who the devil gave you the order? Are you off your heads? What are you firing at? D’you want to have the whole brigade spotted by the enemy?” On all sides N.C.O.’s started yelling: “Cease fire! Fall in!” The firing stopped at once and, moved by a collective impulse, the clotted mass of men, who had seemed jammed beyond all possibility of extrication, swung round and formed up, facing in the same direction. Then, shoulder to shoulder, slowly, silently, they streamed across the wood, like a great flight of migratory birds, led by their officers. The rhythmic thudding of heavy boots on the soft carpet of pine-needles and a light metallic tinkle of canteens, mugs, and dixies filled the forest. A cloud of red dust, faintly odorous of resin, floated up through the leaves.

“What about us, Sarge?” The police sergeant had already come to a decision. “We’ll follow that lot.” “With Chinaware?” “Yes, damn it! Can’t leave him behind. Follow me, boys!” Lunging forward as if he were charging at the enemy, he butted his way into the stream of troops, with the two gendarmes other than the stretcher-bearers at his heels. The latter grasped the stretcher-handles hurriedly. “Ready, Marjoulat?” the Corsican panted. “Off we go!” But his efforts to wedge himself into the advancing ranks were unavailing; the stretcher was swept violently away each time. “Better wait,” Marjoulat advised him. “They’ll thin out a bit presently.” “*Basta!*” Paoli let his end of the stretcher drop with a thud. “I’ll run ahead and tell the sergeant to wait for us.” “No, no!” the old gendarme cried, dropping his end of the stretcher. “You can’t leave me like that, Paoli. It ain’t fair!” But the Corsican was already out of earshot. Nimble as an eel, he had wriggled into a gap in the ranks; his blue képi was swallowed up at once within the moving mass. “The devil!” Marjoulat muttered, and bent over Jacques as he had done before, to give him a drink. But now there was fury in his eyes. “You’ve given us enough trouble as it is, you swine!” But Jacques did not hear: he had fainted.

Thrusting aside the branches, the gendarme gripped the shoulder-strap of a passing soldier to detain him. “Give us a hand with this contraption.” “Ain’t a stretcher-bearer,” the man replied surlily, wrenching himself free. The gendarme noticed a fat, fair-haired, good-humoured-looking man coming up. “Give us a hand, chum!” “Nothing doing!” “What the hell am I to do with this here?” Marjoulat whimpered, mopping his face with his handkerchief.

The ranks were beginning to thin out. If Paoli came back now, they could make a start for sure! “Sir!” Marjoulat called timidly to a passing officer who was leading his horse. The officer did not so much as turn his head. The men passing now were the stragglers; they trudged forward, limping, staggering with fatigue, but spurred on by the dread of being left behind. No use appealing to them; none would dream of cumbering himself with a stretcher.

Suddenly from the fields beyond the wood there came a babble of voices, a sound of hurrying feet. Marjoulat went pale, swung round; instinctively his hand went to his holster and his fingers closed on the big police revolver. No, those were French voices. “This way, men. This way.” A wounded man showed up among the pines, moving blindly forward like a sleepwalker; there was a bandage round his forehead and his lips were white. A dozen men without packs or rifles plunged after him into the wood—walking wounded, with an arm in a sling, a bandaged hand or knee. “Is this the way, mate? Is that path safe? They ain’t far away, you know.” “What’s that?”—Marjoulat’s teeth were chattering—“Not far away?”

The branches parted again. A medical officer appeared, walking backward, clearing a path for two orderlies who had linked hands cradlewise and were carrying a fat man, bareheaded, with deathly pale cheeks. The unbuttoned jacket had four stripes; above the plump paunch the shirt was blood-stained. “Easy, men. Easy does it.” The medical officer caught sight of Marjoulat with Jacques lying at his feet. He spun round at once. “Ah, a stretcher! Who is it? What’s a civilian doing here?” Marjoulat, standing at attention, stammered awkwardly: “It’s a spy, sir.” “What? A spy! Well, that’s the limit. Shift him off; I need that stretcher for the major here. Get on with it.”

Obediently the gendarme started unbuckling straps, undoing the thongs. A tremor passed through Jacques’s body; his hand stirred feebly, he opened his eyes. A medical officer. Antoine . . . ? He made desperate efforts to understand, to remember. The agony was past. They were setting him free, they would quench his thirst. But—what were they doing now? The stretcher was jerked up. A weak cry broke from his lips. Why need they be so rough? Excruciating torture; the fractured bones were piercing his flesh like red-hot needles, jabbing every nerve and sinew of his mangled legs. No one saw his mouth convulsed with agony, his eyes wide with horror and amaze. He was tipped out of the stretcher like a sand-bag from a wheelbarrow. He fell on his side with a low groan, and suddenly a mortal chill came creeping up, slowly, implacably, from his limbs toward his heart.

The gendarme had made no protest. Now he was gazing timidly about him. The medical officer studied his map, while the orderlies rapidly laid the wounded major, whose shirt was now a mass of blood, upon the stretcher. Marjoulat asked in a quavering voice: “Is it true, sir, that they’re quite near?”

An eerie wail rent the air, followed by a violent concussion close at hand that seemed to make his brain jump in his skull. Almost at once a rat-tat-tat of rifle-fire broke out in the meadows bordering the wood.

“Forward,” the doctor cried, “or we’ll be caught between two fires! We’re goners if we stay here.”

Like the others, Marjoulat had thrown himself flat at the moment of the shell-burst. As he dragged himself laboriously to his feet, he saw the stretcher being carted away and the file of wounded men vanishing behind the trees. Piteously he yelled after them: “Hey, now? What about me? Don’t leave me behind, mates!” A sergeant with a bandaged wrist who was bringing up the rear turned and glared at him but did not stop. “What about me?” Marjoulat wailed again. “What the hell am I to do with this here bird?” The sergeant, a veteran with cheeks bronzed by service in the colonies, raised his unwounded arm and, shaping his fingers into a megaphone, yelled “Whatcher worrying about a goddam spy? Plug him one, you fool, and have done with the bastard! And take my tip: get a move on or you’ll be caught before you know where you are.”

“What the hell am I to do?” Marjoulat repeated helplessly.

But now there was no answer. He was alone with this corpselike body with closed eyes, lying on its side before him. Silence, an eerie, sinister hush, had fallen on the forest. “They’re not far off.” “Plug him one, you fool!” The words echoed in his fuddled brain. He plunged his hand into his revolver-holster. His eyes were pale with terror. He had never killed—not even an animal. And, doubtless, had Jacques’s eyes opened, had Marjoulat met their living gaze for but one instant, his courage would have failed him. But it seemed as if already life had left that bloodless face, that temple lying flat, inert, helplessly prostrate at his feet. Looking away, the gendarme thrust the hand gripping the revolver downward. His lips were twitching, his features contorted with horror. The muzzle touched something. A lock of hair? An ear? To nerve himself, and by the same token to justify himself, he cried, gritting his teeth: “Scum!”

Word and detonation rang out at the same moment.

Free at last! The gendarme drew himself up hastily and, without looking back, plunged into the brushwood. Branches lashed his cheeks, dry twigs crackled underfoot. The retreating troops had left a wide track trampled flat across the undergrowth. His mates were only a little way ahead. He was saved! He took to his heels—in headlong flight from peril, from isolation, from the man he had killed. He held his breath so as to keep the pace, and at each spurt, to vent his rancour and fright, snarled through his clenched teeth:

“The scum! The filthy scum!”

PART

IV

EPILOGUE

I

"HI there, Pierret! Don't you hear the phone?"

The orderly on duty in the office had taken advantage of the hour when the ground floor of the hospital was empty (all the staff and patients being upstairs for the morning course of treatments) to stroll onto the terrace and bask for a moment in the sunny, jasmine-scented air. Dropping his cigarette, he ran to the telephone.

"Hello!"

"Hello! Grasse postoffice speaking. We've a telegram here for Le Mousquier Hospital."

"Just a minute." The orderly drew toward him a writing-pad and pencil. "All right. Go ahead."

The postal clerk had already begun dictating: "*Paris, May 3, 1918. 7:15. To Dr. Thibault, Gas Casualties Hospital, Le Mousquier, near Grasse*. Got it?"

"Near Grasse," the orderly repeated. "Go on."

"*Aunt de Waize*. Waize with a 'z.' W-a-i-z-e. Got it? *Aunt de Waize died yesterday.* Stop. *Funeral Sunday ten o'clock at the Point-du-Jour Home.* Stop. *Love, Gise*. G-i-s-e. That's all. Wait, I'll read it over again."

As the orderly approached the staircase after crossing the hall, an elderly attendant wearing a white apron and carrying a tray appeared at the kitchen door.

"Going upstairs, Ludovic? Be a good fellow and take this telegram for No. 53."

No. 53 was empty, the bed made, the room tidied up. Going to the open window, Ludovic glanced out into the garden, but could see no sign of Dr. Thibault there, either. A number of convalescent officers and men, in blue pyjamas and canvas shoes, some wearing képis, others forage-caps, were strolling in the sunshine, in twos and threes. Others were seated, reading newspapers, in deck-chairs placed on the shady side of a row of cypresses.

The infusion on Ludovic's tray was cooling down. Hastily picking it up again, he turned into Room 57. For two weeks now No. 57 had been confined to bed. His shoulders propped up with pillows, his unshorn cheeks glistening with sweat, his features lined and haggard, he was fighting for breath; the sound of his gasps could be heard far down the corridor. Ludovic measured out two spoonfuls of medicine into the infusion and, as the patient brought the mug to his lips, supported his shoulders to make it easier for him to drink. After emptying the spittoon into the basin and bestowing a few encouraging remarks, he hurried out to look for Dr. Thibault. Just to make sure, before leaving the floor, he looked into Room 49. The colonel, slumped in a wicker armchair, his spittoon beside him, was playing bridge with three other officers. Dr. Thibault was not among them.

“He must be in the inhaling-room,” suggested Dr. Bardot, whom Ludovic encountered at the foot of the stairs. “Give me the telegram; I’m just going up.”

Their heads hooded with towels, several patients were bending over the inhalers. Silence reigned in the little room; the atmosphere was like that of a steam-bath, reeking with fumes of menthol and eucalyptus, and so dense that it was almost impossible to see across it.

“Are you there, Thibault? Here’s a wire for you.”

Antoine’s head emerged from a cocoon of towels, flushed and beaded with perspiration. After sponging his eyes, he took the telegram Bardot held out to him and opened it.

“Not bad news, I hope?”

Antoine shook his head. In a hollow, brittle, toneless voice, he replied: “It’s to announce the death of . . . an old lady, a distant relative.”

Slipping the telegram into his pyjama-pocket, he plunged his head again under the hood of towels.

Bardot tapped his shoulder. “Your report’s in from the lab. Come over to my room and see it, when you’ve finished here.”

Dr. Bardot was of the same generation as Antoine. They had met in the old days in Paris as medical students. But Bardot had been suddenly obliged to cut short his studies and spend two years under treatment at a high altitude. He had been cured, but as his health remained precarious and he dared not face the Paris winters, he had taken his degrees at the Montpellier Medical Institute. He had specialized in diseases of the lungs, and the outbreak of war found him in charge of a sanatorium in South-West France. In 1916 Prof. Sègre, under whom he had studied at Montpellier, had asked him to collaborate in the management of a gas casualties hospital he had been instructed to establish on the Riviera. Together they had organized Le Mousquier Hospital near Grasse, in which fifteen officers and some sixty men were now undergoing treatment.

It was toward the end of November 1917 that Antoine, in the course of a medical inspection on the Champagne front, had been caught in a mustard-gas attack; after having been unsuccessfully treated at various field hospitals, he had finally been sent to Le Mousquier at the end of the following month.

It happened Antoine was the only medical officer gas casualty in the Officers' Section of Le Mousquier Hospital. Their association in earlier days naturally drew him and Bardot together, though temperamentally they were poles apart. Bardot was an introspective type of man, painstaking, with little initiative or will-power. What he had in common with Antoine was a wholehearted devotion to his calling and a high sense of his professional responsibilities. They soon discovered that (as Antoine described it to himself) they "spoke the same language," and a warm friendship had sprung up between them. Bardot, to whom Prof. Sègre left all the executive tasks of the hospital, had no great liking for his assistant, Dr. Mazet, a former medical officer of the colonial army, who had been given his present post after being severely wounded at the front. This made him all the more disposed to impart to Antoine his theories and problems, to solicit Antoine's opinion and keep him posted as to the progress of his research work in this new and, so far, relatively uncharted field of medicine. Naturally there could be no question of Antoine's aiding Bardot in his duties. His state of health did not permit it, in any case. He was subject to frequent relapses, and it was all he could do to look after himself and follow the elaborate course of treatment his malady required. Still, this did not prevent him from displaying a keen interest in the case-histories of the other patients and, whenever a turn for the better gave him a short lease of energy, he made a point of attending Bardot's consultations, taking a hand in his experiments, and sometimes even joining in the nightly conferences which took place in Prof. Sègre's study, along with Bardot and Mazet. Thanks to these activities, he found the atmosphere of the hospital less trying, for he led there the life not merely of a patient but, at whiles, of a physician too. And thus he felt less cut off from all the things which for the last fifteen years, in peacetime as in war, had constituted his true, indeed his only, interest in life.

When the inhalation was over, Antoine knotted a scarf round his neck as a precaution against the cooler air outside and went downstairs to join his friend, who every morning spent half an hour in the annex, fitted out as a gymnasium, supervising the breathing-exercises he had prescribed for certain patients.

Standing among them, Bardot seemed conducting, smilingly intent, a raucous symphony of straining lungs. He topped the tallest of those present by several inches, and his premature baldness disclosed a high-domed forehead that made him seem taller still. The bulk of his body was in keeping with his height; this former consumptive was a positive colossus, and from shoulders to waist, the burly back, under the close-fitting surgical jacket, showed as an almost perfect square, majestically proportioned.

"Good news," he said, leading Antoine at once into the small recess which served as dressing-room, where they could talk without being overheard. "I confess I was a bit afraid. . . . But there was no albumin. A good sign."

He took a slip of paper tucked inside his coat-cuff and handed it to Antoine, who ran his eyes over it. "I'll give this back to you tonight, after I've copied it." From the time he had been gassed, Antoine had kept up, in a special diary, a detailed clinical record of his case.

"You spend the devil of a time in the inhaling-room!" There was disapproval in Bardot's voice. "Sure it doesn't tire you?"

"Not a bit. I'm a great believer in these inhalations." Antoine's voice was weak and rather breathless, but clear. "When I wake, the mucus in my larynx causes complete aphonia. But, as you see, my voice comes back pretty effectively once I've scoured my throat with a good strong inhalation."

Bardot refused to be convinced. "All very well, but don't overdo it. Aphonia's a nuisance, I grant, but it's a lesser evil. Too much inhaling may very well cut short the cough prematurely." The drawling, melodious voice bespoke him for a Burgundian and seemed to enhance the gentleness and gravity of his expression.

He had provided Antoine with a chair, and now sat down himself. He always tried to give his patients an impression that he was not in a hurry, but had ample leisure to devote to them, and that nothing interested him more than hearing every detail of their symptoms.

After asking Antoine how he had felt during the previous day and if he had slept well, he added: "I advise you to start in again one of these days with an expectorant. Terpin or drosera—as you prefer. In a cup of borage tea. Yes, yes, it's an old wives' remedy, I know. But there's nothing like a good profuse sweat just before going to sleep—provided, of course, you take care not to catch a chill." The way his voice lingered on certain vowels gave his speech a fervour of the "warm South," the vibrant richness of the low notes of a 'cello.

He had a weakness for lavishing advice on his patients, staunchly believed in the efficacy of his treatments, and refused to be discouraged by any setback. And there was nothing he liked better than to impart this faith of his to a listener—especially to Antoine, whose superior intelligence he frankly admitted to himself without a shade of jealousy.

"If you want to reduce your expectoration at night," he went on, his eyes still fixed on Antoine, "why not try the sulpho-arsenical treatment for a few days? Don't you agree?" he added, turning to Dr. Mazet, who had just come in.

Mazet did not answer. He had opened a closet at the far end of the room and was changing from his khaki army jacket—threadbare and faded by repeated washing, but lavishly beribboned—into a white coat. A faint odour of perspiration hovered in the air.

"If the aphonia gets more pronounced," Bardot observed, "we can always fall back again on strychnine. It had excellent results last winter with Chapuis."

Mazet swung round with a guffaw. "Chapuis! Well, I must say you might have chosen a more encouraging example . . . !"

Mazet had a square skull, a low forehead cleft by a deep scar, and a thick growth of stubbly greying hair that came down low on his temples. Under the effect of any emotion the whites of his eyes grew bloodshot. The sleek black moustache stood out sharply against his skin, tanned by years of service overseas.

Antoine looked inquiringly at Bardot.

"Fortunately there's no parallel between Thibault's case and Chapuis's," Bardot made haste to declare; but he was unable to conceal his vexation. "Poor Chapuis is in a bad way, I'm afraid," he explained, turning again to Antoine. "He had a very bad night. I was called to his room twice. Heart in an alarming state; he has irregular extrasystoles all the time. When the Chief comes this morning, I shall take him straight to No. 57."

Mazet, as he buttoned his coat, had joined them. For some moments they discussed the various cardio-vascular complications due to mustard gas, "which take various forms," Bardot pointed out, "according to the patient's age." (Chapuis, an artillery colonel, was in the fifties and had been under treatment for eight months.)

"And according to his constitution," Antoine added.

Chapuis's room was next to that of Antoine, who had several times listened to his chest and had formed the opinion that the colonel, before being gassed, had suffered from mitral incompetence—a circumstance which neither Sègre, nor Bardot, nor Mazet seemed to have suspected. He was on the point of mentioning his discovery. Even more than in the past, his pride was apt to be agreeably titillated by catching a colleague in a mistake—even a colleague whom he liked personally—and pointing out his blunders. It was a mild, if slightly malicious, compensation for the feeling of inferiority that illness had imposed on him. But talking was an effort, and he refrained.

"Had a look at the papers today?" Mazet asked.

Antoine shook his head.

"It seems the German push in Flanders is definitely held up," Bardot remarked.

"Yes, it looks that way," Mazet agreed. "Ypres is holding out, and the British official reports state that all attacks on the Yser line have been repulsed."

"Must have cost them a lot in lives," Antoine said.

Mazet's shoulders lifted in a vague gesture that might have signified: "The devil of a lot" or, equally: "Well, what of it?" Then he went back to the closet, fumbled in the pockets of his jacket, and walked up to Antoine. "As it happens, I've a Swiss paper here—Goiran passed it on to me. If we're to believe the German communiqué, the British had over two hundred thousand casualties in one month, April, on the Yser front alone."

"The public in the Allied countries," Bardot observed, "would be rather startled if they heard those figures."

Antoine nodded; Mazet broke into a loud guffaw and, as he went out of the room, flung over his shoulder: "Don't worry! The public only knows what it's allowed to know. There's a war on!"

He always gave the impression of regarding others as fools.

When he had left the room Bardot turned to Antoine. "Do you know what struck me this morning? That nowadays, in every country, the government has ceased to be representative of public opinion. On neither side has anyone the least idea of what the masses really are thinking; the voices of the rulers drown the voices of the ruled. Take France, for instance. Do you think there's one Frenchman in twenty at the front who's so keen on Alsace and Lorraine that he'd willingly prolong the war for a single month to get them back?"

"Not one in fifty."

"And yet the whole world is firmly convinced that Clemenceau and Poincaré are the mouthpieces of public opinion in France! This war has bred an atmosphere of lies, official lies, that's wholly without precedent. And it's the same thing everywhere. I wonder if there'll ever come a time again when people are allowed to say what they really think, if the European press will ever regain——”

He stopped short. Prof. Sègre had entered the room.

The professor acknowledged the two doctors’ greetings with a military salute. He shook Bardot’s hand, but not Antoine’s. A dapper little man, with a tip-tilted chin, hook-nose, and wiglike, fluffy white hair, he brought to mind certain caricatures of M. Thiers. Obviously he devoted much care to his clothes and personal appearance. Curt of speech, he was polite but distant even with his colleagues. He kept severely to himself and rarely left his private office, in which he even took his meals. An indefatigable worker, he spent his days writing articles on the clinical treatment of gas cases for the medical press, drawing his data from case-histories supplied by Bardot and Mazet. His contacts with the patients were limited to a greeting when the patient entered hospital and a bedside visit if he took a sudden turn for the worse.

Antoine watched their receding forms, thinking: A good sort, Bardot. It’s a stroke of luck for me, his being here.

He usually went back to his bedroom at that hour, to continue his treatment and rest till noon. Often the morning inhalation and breathing-exercises left him so exhausted that he dozed off in his armchair and remained thus till the lunch gong woke him with a start.

He rose and followed the two doctors, at a few paces’ distance. Suddenly he thought: All the same, if it had been my fate to die here, all the friendship of a fellow like Bardot wouldn’t have helped me in the least.

He walked slowly, saving his breath. He had two flights of stairs to climb and, if he failed to take the necessary precautions, the effort sometimes brought on a pain in his side, not particularly acute, but lasting several hours before subsiding.

Joseph had forgotten again to draw the blind, with the result that swarms of flies were buzzing round the shelves on which he kept his medicines. A fly-swatter hung on the wall, but Antoine felt too limp to start a fly-swatting foray. Without a glance for the entrancing scene which lay before his window, he pulled down the blind, sank into his easy-chair, and closed his eyes for a moment. Then, taking the telegram from his pocket, he read it through again.

Well, she had lived her span out, poor old Mademoiselle, and life held nothing more for her to do but to say good-bye to it. What was it she used to say? “I don’t want to be a drag on anybody, now I’m too old to be of any use. . . .” And she had set her mind on entering the Superannuates’ Home.

That was soon after Father's death. In December 1913, or perhaps January 1914. May 1918 now. What ages ago it seems! A picture rose before him of the old lady: the little yellow forehead framed in neat grey braids, the wizened, ivory-pale hands trembling as she plied her knife and fork, the tiny eyes that took on the expression of a startled llama whenever someone addressed her. She grew panicky at everything: a mouse in a cupboard, a distant rumble of thunder, the news of a plague death in Marseille, of an earthquake shock in Sicily. A banging door or an overshrill ring at the bell made her gasp with fright. "Bless and save us!" Then, awaiting the worst, she would fold her skinny arms under the black silk cape she always called her "mantle." And that laugh of hers—for she was always laughing, and often over the merest trifle—a tinkling, carefree laugh like a young girl's! . . . Yes, she must have been quite attractive in her girlhood; one could picture her playing badminton with her schoolmates at some provincial girls' school, a black velvet band round her neck, her long plaits neatly gathered in a hair-net. What can her girlhood have been like? he wondered. She never breathed a word about it. None of us ever questioned her. I wonder what her Christian name was? None of us knew it; to all intents and purposes it had ceased to exist. In fact, we didn't refer to her by name at all; she was just "Mademoiselle." Named after her functions—much as we spoke of "the concierge" or, for that matter, "the elevator." Father inspired in her a sort of religious veneration, and for twenty years without a break she put up with his tyranny. For twenty years she went about her duties unnoticed, indefatigable, unheard. She was the driving force that kept our home going, but no one ever gave her a word of thanks for her pains and her devotion to our welfare. Yes, she gave up her life to others; a life of modesty, self-denial, self-effacement; and in her tactful, timid way she loved us too—but how little love we gave her in return!

"Gise must be terribly upset about it," he said aloud. He did not feel quite certain of this, but needed to convince himself of it, invoking Gise's grief to make amends for past injustice.

This means, he thought, I'll have to write a letter—hang it! (Once on active service, he had cut down his correspondence to the strict minimum and, since his illness, had practically given up letter-writing. Now and then, however, he sent a brief postcard to Gise, Philip, Studler, or Jousselin.) Finally he decided to dispatch a long telegram at once; this would give him a few days' breathing-space before writing the inevitable letter. Suddenly he asked himself: "Why did she mention the hour of the funeral? Surely she can't have imagined I'd go all the way to Paris to attend it?"

He had not set foot in Paris since the outbreak of the war. There seemed no point in going there now that all the people he would have liked to meet again were mobilized, like himself. The idea of revisiting his empty apartment, of wandering through his closed and disused laboratories, did not appeal to him. Whenever his turn came for leave he had always made it over to some brother officer. At the front, anyhow, he had been obliged to lead a full and active life and it had helped him to keep from thinking. Only once, just before the Somme offensive, when he was at Abbeville, had he brought himself to take a few days' leave. He had travelled to Dieppe and settled down by himself in rooms there. But the atmosphere of this town, in which he had nothing to do, what with the smell of fish and sea-wrack, the never-ending drizzle, and the hordes of British wounded everywhere in evidence, had depressed him; after two days he had had his fill of it, hurried to the station, and rejoined his regiment. Since the outbreak of the war he had not once seen Gise—or Jenny, or Philip, or any companion of the old days. He had not even allowed Gise to come and visit him during his convalescence at Saint-Dizier, after he had been wounded for the first time. The affectionate but laconic notes she sent him every two or three months enabled him to keep in contact, if only vaguely and at second hand, with the life of those behind the lines and with his past.

It was by letter he had learned that Jenny was pregnant, and by letter that the rumour of Jacques's death had been definitely confirmed. In the course of the winter of 1915 Jenny, with whom he had already been in correspondence on fairly intimate lines, had written to say she wanted to go to Geneva. She gave two reasons for this desire: for one thing, she preferred to be away from her family, by herself, when the child was born; also, a stay in Switzerland would enable her to make inquiries about Jacques's death, the circumstances of which still remained something of a mystery. Jenny had kept in touch with the revolutionary group Jacques had frequented; all they could tell her was that rumour had it Jacques had disappeared at the beginning of August when engaged on "a dangerous mission."

It had struck Antoine that Rumelles, who still held his post in the Foreign Office, might be able to help, and he advised Jenny to call at the Quai d'Orsay. Rumelles did not have much trouble in getting the necessary permit for Jenny. In Geneva Jenny had met Vanheede, and the little albino had helped her in her quest. He had accompanied her to Basel and introduced her to Plattner. Thus at last she had been able to obtain first-hand news of Jacques's last days. She was told about the printing of the leaflets; how Jacques had gone to meet Meynestrel on the hilltop, and they had taken off at daybreak on August 10 and flown toward the Alsatian front. There

Plattner's information ended. But when Jenny had passed it on to Antoine, he persuaded Rumelles to have inquiries made. A scrutiny of the lists of prisoners in German camps drew blank, but finally Rumelles unearthed a report in the records of the War Office in Paris, emanating from the headquarters of an infantry division operating in Alsace and dated August 10. The report in question dealt mainly with the French retreat in Alsace, but contained a mention that a plane had fallen in flames in the French lines. The pilot and his passenger had perished in the fire and could not be identified. It had been ascertained, on inspection of the wreckage, that the plane was a civil machine of Swiss origin. The report added that a number of bundles of charred paper had been found in the cockpit; from what could be deciphered on some sheets it was evident that the plane had been loaded with propaganda of a violently anti-militarist nature. There could be no doubt about it: the bodies found were those of Jacques and his pilot. A futile end, however one might look at it! Antoine had never been able to stomach its ineptitude, and even now, after a lapse of four years, the thought of it outraged him even more than it distressed him.

Springing to his feet, he jerked the fly-swatter off its hook and ragefully slaughtered a dozen flies, then began driving the others out with his towel. But a sudden fit of coughing came over him and he had to stop, bent almost double, resting both hands on the back of the armchair. As soon as he could straighten himself up, he steeped a compress in turpentine and applied it to his chest. This gave him some relief; going to the bed, he fetched two pillows and, putting them behind him, sat down again. Sitting bolt-upright to avoid hypostasis, he cautiously began his breathing-exercises, squeezing his larynx between thumb and forefinger and doing his best to emit perfectly clear vowel sounds, sustaining them longer and longer at each phonation: "A . . . e . . . i . . . o . . . u. . . ."

Meanwhile his eyes roved round the cell-like and blatantly commonplace room. The walls were daubed a pale brick-red that near the ceiling gave place to a frieze of brown convolvuli winding their futile way around the moulding. That morning a sea-breeze was fluttering the blind and the walls were dappled with glints of sunlight. Above the mirror someone had pinned a magazine picture showing a row of six American chorus girls raising aloft six shapely legs with high-arched insteps. It was the sole survivor of the numerous works of art with which Antoine's predecessor, shortly before his death, had adorned the room. Antoine had succeeded in eliminating the others, but the six high-kickers were out of reach and he did not care to face the strain of trying to dislodge them. He had often thought of getting Joseph, the room orderly, to remove this final eyesore, but Joseph was short of stature and the step-ladder was kept on the ground floor; finally Antoine had decided to ignore it. The small deal table was stacked with old newspapers, war-maps, magazines, and phonograph records, wedged among which were a white-china spittoon and an array of medicine-bottles and pill-boxes. When he sat down at night to write up his case-history from observations noted during the day, it was all he could do to find a place for the notebook. The glass shelf above the wash-basin was equally encumbered with medicines. Between the table and the deal wardrobe in which he kept his clothes and personal effects, an empty medicine-chest stood upended with an inscription, still legible though the letters had been almost rubbed away: “Capt. Thibault, M.O., 2nd Batt.” It now served as stand for a decrepit phonograph.

It would soon be nearly five months that Antoine had been cribbed and confined within these brick-red walls, noting the vicissitudes of his disease and watching in vain for definite signs of improvement. Nearly five months he had suffered in this room, counted the slow-paced hours, eaten and drunk and coughed; started reading books that he had never finished, brooded on the past and toyed with future prospects, received visitors, bandied jokes, argued about the war and the peace to follow it, until his breath gave out. That bed, that chair, and that spittoon—mute witnesses of his hours of fever, choking-fits, and sleepless nights—how he had come to loathe them! Luckily he was still well enough to go downstairs fairly often and escape the boredom of this ugly little sickroom. When he went down, he usually took a book with him—not to read, but to ensure a measure of solitude—and took cover in the cypress avenue or the olive-grove; sometimes he went as far as the bottom of the vegetable garden, where there was a Persian wheel and the running water gave an illusion of coolness in the air. At other times, when he felt up to keeping on his feet, he would join Bardot and Mazet in the laboratory. The moment he entered, he breathed a congenial atmosphere. Bardot lent him a white coat, and welcomed his collaboration. True, on leaving, he usually felt dead-beat, but those hours in the laboratory were the highlights of his present life.

If only he could have employed this enforced leisure, these months of waiting for his health to mend, to some profit, with a view to the future! He had several times tried to begin working on his own account. But each time there had been a relapse, compelling him to abandon the attempt before any real progress had been made. One project, especially, tempted him: the idea of embodying in a monograph all the data he had collected, before the war, on diseases of the respiratory system in children and their influence on mental development and the power of attention. He had collected ample material for a short book or, anyhow, a lengthy article in a professional journal. He was eager to have it published at the earliest opportunity, for the subject was in the air and Antoine ran the risk of being forestalled by some other child-specialist. But even if his health proved equal to this task, there was no possibility of tackling it at once, as all his case-books and research notes were in Paris. And there was no way of getting them sent to him. His young assistant Manuel Roy had been reported missing, with his entire section, after an attack near Arras in the second month of the war. Jousselin had been taken prisoner in 1916 and was now interned somewhere in Silesia. Wounded in the same year at Verdun, the Caliph had recovered, but his hearing had been affected; he had specialized in X-ray work and been recently assigned to a hospital unit on the eastern front.

The first clang of the gong announcing lunch brought Antoine to his feet. He switched on the lamp above the wash-basin and, opening his mouth, examined the back of his throat. Before going down to meals he usually had to spray his throat so as to make swallowing less painful; some days, however, his throat was so inflamed that he had to call on Bardot and have it cauterized.

While waiting for the second gong to sound, he drew his chair to the window and pulled up the blind. Facing him was a wide expanse of cultivated fields, stepped-in terraces along a receding slope that ended on a rock-bound summit; to his right the undulating crestline of the Riviera hills, veiled in a shimmering heat-haze, rolled seaward to the blue horizon. From the garden immediately below, there drifted up a sound of voices, the scent of flowers. Leaning out of the window, he watched the patients strolling up and down the cypress avenue. A familiar scene, familiar faces. There was Goiran with his boon companion, Voisenet (they were the only patients who had kept their vocal cords intact and they never stopped talking from morn to night). That was Darros, a book as usual under his arm; the man beyond him was Eckmann, known as “Kangaroo”; just below the window was Major Reymond, surrounded by a group of junior officers, at his usual morning occupation of expounding the latest communiqué, with a map spread out in front of him. As he watched them sauntering to and fro, wagging their heads, gesticulating, he seemed to hear each word that was uttered, and he felt almost as bored as if he had been down there among them.

The gong boomed a second time and the whole garden woke to feverish life, like a panic-stricken ant-hill.

Antoine straightened up with a sigh. “That gong is really too lugubrious for words. Why can’t they have an ordinary dinner-bell?”

He was not feeling hungry, and really, he decided, it was more than he could face, the prospect of once again tramping down those two flights of stairs, of enduring the smell of food, the noise and clatter, the promiscuity of the hospital mess. To have to listen with an amiable smile to the eternal discussion of Germany's next move, forecasts of the war's duration, theories of the hidden meanings latent in the last communiqué—all of it spiced with the same old feeble jokes, reminiscences of the front, smutty stories, and, worst of all, naïve revelations of the amount of spitting indulged in during the night or the exact look of certain mucous surfaces.

About to change from his pyjama coat into an old white drill jacket with three stripes on the sleeve, he took from his pocket Gise's telegram, and suddenly stopped short.

"Supposing I went there?"

He could not help smiling at the absurdity of the idea. Obviously he would do nothing of the kind, and this assurance left his imagination free to dally with the project, fantastic though it was. Of course it was feasible enough, in itself. He would have to take precautions and bring with him an inhaler and his whole outfit of medicines, so as not to interrupt the treatment. There would be no special risk of a relapse. "*Funeral Sunday ten o'clock.*" If he took the afternoon express tomorrow, Saturday, he would be in Paris Sunday morning. Sègre would make no trouble about letting him go; had he not given that fellow Dosse, ill though he was, a few days' leave? A jaunt to Paris was really rather tempting, now he came to think of it. And its unexpectedness made it all the more alluring.

Suddenly he pictured himself as in pre-war days—in the days when life was easy and his health intact—seated, silent and alone, at a little table in the dining-car.

In Paris he would be able to consult his old chief Philip about his health. And, better still, he could collect his case-histories, and come back with a handbag full of files and reference books, which would enable him to set to work, to turn to some account this irksome, never-ending convalescence.

Paris! Two or three days' escape from durance, two or three days without the daily promiscuity of the mess.

After all—why not?

II

THERE was a click, and the little window in the gate-keeper's lodge opened a cautious inch. Antoine had a brief glimpse of a blue-canvas sleeve, a wizened hand, the flash of a gold ring. From her dim retreat the voice of the gate-keeper came to him, mumbling: "Straight in front of you, sir, at the end of the passage, in the courtyard."

A bare, tiled corridor, spotlessly clean, led off the entrance-hall into the silent depths of the main building. On entering the corridor, Antoine noticed on his left two old women with black crocheted shawls wrapped round their shoulders, squatting on the lowest step of a staircase; bending toward each other, whispering in each other's ears, they brought to mind a pair of aged actresses playing the role of gossips.

Bathed on three sides in sunlight, the courtyard was empty. A chapel occupied the entire length of the farther side; one of the doors stood open on a shadowy interior from which issued the strains of a harmonium. Evidently the service had begun. Antoine went up to the door. As his eyes got used to the darkness, he made out a cluster of tiny candle-flames. The floor of the chapel was lower than the courtyard and he had to go down two steps on entering. Cautiously he groped his way between a group of undertaker's men waiting in the aisle. There seemed to be a large congregation in the little nave, the atmosphere of which was dank as in a crypt. Resting one hand on the holy-water stoup, Antoine propped himself up on tiptoe and gazed toward the bier, which was loosely draped in black with four candles at the corners. Standing behind the humble catafalque was a little old white-haired, bespectacled man, with his arms folded; beside him knelt a hospital nurse, her face hidden by a blue veil. When she turned her head, Antoine recognized Gise. "So the poor old thing had no other relative, no friends," he mused. "No one except that old idiot Chasle. It's a good thing I came. Jenny's not here; nor's Mme. de Fontanin, or Daniel. All the better. I'll ask Gise not to tell them that I'm here; that will spare me a trip to Maisons-Laffitte." He cast a final glance of inspection along the half-dozen rows of tightly packed pews. No, there was no one he knew in any of them; only old women in shawls and a few nuns with broad-winged coifs. "I'll never be able to keep standing till the end—quite apart from the fact that it's rather cold in here." As he turned to leave the chapel, there was a rustle, a creaking of pews; the congregation was settling down to kneel. The officiating priest, raising his hands, turned toward the aisle. Antoine recognized the tall, spare form and the bald, domed forehead; it was the Abbé Vécard.

He walked up the steps again and out into the courtyard. Noticing a bench in the sun, he sat down. There was a dull ache between his shoulder-blades. Still, the long railway journey had not tired him as much as might have been expected; it had been possible to lie down most of the night. It was the trip from the Gare de Lyon to the home in an aged taxi, bumping along the cobbled roads beside the Seine, that had been too much for him.

A tiny coffin, he thought. No bigger than a child's. Pictures took form before his eyes of Mademoiselle pattering briskly to and fro in his father's apartment or seated in her room, perched on the edge of a high chair facing the window at the marquetry writing-desk—her "family heirloom," as she called it—which was the only personal effect she brought with her when she came to keep house for M. Thibault. It had a secret drawer in which she kept the money for the household expenses; in it she preserved her sentimental relics, hoarded her savings. She had special compartments for bills, for her notepaper, and her box of vanilla; drawers in which she heaped up the pencil-stubs discarded by M. Thibault, leaflets and prescriptions, her needles and thread, her buttons, her can of rat-poison, her sticking-plaster, sachets of iris petals and tincture of arnica, all the old house-keys, prayer-books and photos, the cucumber lotion she used to soften her hands and the rather sickening smell of which, mingling with that of the vanilla and the sachets, drifted out into the hall whenever her door was opened. For Antoine and Jacques, when they were little, Mademoiselle's escritoire had had the glamour of a fairy treasure-hoard. Later on, Jacques and Gise had nicknamed it "the Village Postoffice" for its resemblance to those little country postoffices where odds and ends of every sort are sold.

A sound of heavy footfalls made him look up. The men in black had opened the second half of the door and were laying out the wreaths on the ground in the courtyard. Antoine rose.

The service was ending. Two white-aproned nuns towing at their heels a large wheeled basket laden with vegetables passed by with lowered eyes and hastily swerved off into one of the buildings. On the first floor the blinds were being drawn up and decrepit old women in dressing-jackets were gathering around the windows. Such of the old people as were able to hobble about had attended the service; they now came out and formed up in groups on either side of the porch. The harmonium had ceased playing. From the darkness emerged a silver cross, a surplice, then the bier carried by two men. Some choir boys followed, then an old priest, and, after him, the Abbé Vécard.

At last Gise walked up the steps and out into the light. M. Chasle was behind her. The pall-bearers halted to enable the undertaker's men to put back the wreaths on the coffin. Gise's eyes, dim with tears, were fixed on the bier. Antoine was struck by the look of maturity on her face, seen thus in pensive contemplation; for somehow his memories of her had crystallized round the little fifteen-year-old girl of long ago. He guessed she had not seen him, had not dreamed he would attend the funeral, and the thought that he was thus observing her unaware made him feel a shade embarrassed. He had forgotten that her skin was so dark a brown. It must be the white band across her forehead, he supposed, that made her complexion seem so much darker.

M. Chasle was wearing black gloves and carrying a top-hat of an outmoded pattern. He was craning his neck and twisting his birdlike little head this side and that. Suddenly his gaze lit on Antoine and his hand went to his mouth as if to check an exclamation. Gise looked round and she too saw Antoine, but for the first two seconds did not seem to have recognized him. Then she ran forward, bursting into tears, and flung herself into his arms. He kissed her, rather awkwardly. Noticing that the pall-bearers had started off again, he gently freed himself from her embrace.

"Keep beside me," she whispered. "Please, Antoine dear."

She went back to her place behind the bier. He followed her. With startled eyes, M. Chasle watched them approach.

"Ah, so it's you," he muttered, as if lost in dreams, when Antoine held out his hand to him.

"Is the cemetery far?" Antoine asked Gise.

"Our vault is at Levallois," she said in a low voice. "I've arranged for carriages."

The little procession slowly crossed the courtyard.

A hearse drawn by a pair of horses was standing at the gate; neighbours and some children had lined up in two rows across the sidewalk. Superimposed on the roof of the antiquated vehicle, like a howdah on an elephant's back, was a small coupé for the principal mourners. A ladder clamped to the side led up to it. There was sitting-room for three only, and these three places were reserved for Gise, M. Chasle, and the man in charge of the funeral arrangements. The last-named, however, waived his privilege in Antoine's favour and climbed into the seat beside the driver. The hearse moved off at walking pace, creaking and rumbling on the rough cobbles. The two priests followed in a mourning coach.

The effort of scrambling up the ladder to his place had irritated Antoine's lungs. No sooner was he seated than a fit of coughing came over him; for some moments he remained doubled up, his handkerchief pressed to his lips.

Gise was sitting between the two men. When Antoine's coughing fit had passed, she touched his arm. "It was nice of you to come. I didn't dare to expect it."

"Ah, but one has to be prepared for anything these days!" sighed M. Chasle sententiously. He had perked his head forward to watch Antoine coughing and was still eyeing him over his glasses. "Excuse me," he added, wagging his head, "if I didn't recognize you at once just now. But you're not looking yourself, if I may say so. Don't you agree, Mlle. Gise?"

The remark produced a disagreeable impression on Antoine, but he put a good face on it. "Yes, that's so. I've lost quite a lot of weight. The effects of yperite, you know."

Gise turned abruptly, startled by the sepulchral voice. A while ago, in the courtyard, she had been somewhat perturbed by Antoine's general appearance, but had not given it close attention. After all, it was not surprising that he should seem considerably changed after five years' absence, especially as she was seeing him in uniform for the first time. Now, however, it crossed her mind that he might be more seriously ill than she had imagined. She knew he had been gassed but had heard no details. All he had told her was that he was under treatment on the Riviera and "on the road to recovery."

"Yperite—just so!" M. Chasle echoed with an air of pleased omniscience. "Ypres gas, that is. Or mustard gas, some people call it. One of these modern discoveries." He was still gazing at Antoine with rapt attention. "It's thinned you out a bit, the gas. But I see it brought you the Croix de Guerre. With two bars, if my eyes do not deceive me. A glorious award."

Gise glanced at Antoine's coat. He had not written a word about these decorations in his letters.

"What do the doctors say?" Gise ventured to ask. "Do they think you'll have to stay much longer in the hospital?"

"Well, my progress isn't exactly rapid," Antoine admitted with a forlorn smile. He wanted to add something, took a deep breath, but gave it up. The horses had broken into a trot, and the jolts made breathing difficult.

"At our Inventors' Mart," M. Chasle put in, with a would-be engaging grin, "you can buy everything that's needed, including gas masks, needless to say."

Gise turned to the old man and inquired amiably: "How's your business doing? Well, I hope."

"Not too badly, not too badly. Like everybody else these days, we're carrying on. One's got to keep up with the times, eh? All our best inventors have been snapped up for the front, of course, and it's no good expecting any useful work from them while they're there. Now and then one of them has an inspiration, though. The thing we've just launched for instance. A bomb-proof crown-and-anchor board. Fits into the pocket. Just the thing for the trenches. . . . Yes, one's got to keep up with the times, Mlle. Gise."

Antoine smiled to himself: You, anyhow, haven't changed.

The hearse had entered the spacious boulevards that follow the line of the old Paris fortifications. There was a foretaste of summer in the bright, sunny air. Soldiers in uniform were sauntering on the grassy ramparts, and at the Porte Dauphine Parisiennes in summery frocks, with children or dogs in tow, were making their way toward the Bois. Along the sidewalks pedlars' pushcarts were drawn up, piled high with flowers. Just as in the past.

"What exactly did—did Mademoiselle—die of?" Antoine brought out the words with difficulty across the jolting of the vehicle.

Gise turned to him, all eagerness to explain. "What did she die of, poor Auntie? Nothing in particular. The works had run down, as they say. Heart, kidneys, stomach, everything. She'd been unable to digest any food for weeks. Then, on the last night, her heart failed suddenly." She fell silent for a while. Then, "You can't imagine," she continued, "how her character had changed since she'd entered the home. She thought of nothing but herself, her diet, her comfort, her savings—and she bullied the servants and the nuns. Would you ever have believed it of her! She grumbled at everything, thought she was being persecuted. She even accused the old woman in the next room of stealing her things; there was a dreadful to-do about it. Whole days would go by and she wouldn't drink anything; she'd got it into her head that the sisters were trying to poison her."

Again she paused. She could not understand Antoine's silence, and took it for a veiled reproach; for during the past few days Gise had been plaguing herself with scruples, wondering if she had done all she should have done for her aunt. "After all," she had told herself, "I owe everything to Auntie—she brought me up; and then, the moment I was able to turn my back on her, I did so! And I hardly ever went to visit her at the home."

She began speaking again, raising her voice a little, as if pleading her cause against an accusation. "You know, our hospital work at Maisons keeps us busy all the time. It was awfully hard for me to get an afternoon off to go and see her. These last months were the worst; I let a long time go by without visiting her. Then the Mother Superior wrote a letter, and I went at once. I'll never forget it, never! I found poor Auntie in the little dressing-room, where she kept her clothes; she was sitting on a trunk, in her chemise and petticoat, one stocking on and one leg bare. She was like a skeleton already; her cheeks had fallen in, and her neck was just skin and bones. But the amazing thing was that her legs had somehow kept quite young, like the legs of a little girl. She didn't ask me any news about myself or anyone else, but at once began complaining about her neighbours and the sisters. Then she went up to that old desk of hers—do you remember it?—and opened a drawer where she kept her savings. 'That's to pay for my keep,' she said. Then she began talking about her funeral. 'You'll never see me again. I shall be dead when you come next.' Then she said: 'But you needn't fret, my dear; I'll tell the Mother Superior to send you your Christmas present, just the same.' I tried to turn it off. 'You've been saying for years, Auntie,' I told her, 'that you were going to die.' She got quite angry. 'I tell you, I *want* to die! Living makes me so dreadfully tired.' All of a sudden she looked at her bare leg. 'Isn't that a pretty foot, now? You're different, you've always had such ugly feet, like a boy's.' When I was leaving, I tried to kiss her but she wouldn't let me. 'No, don't kiss me. I smell horrid; I smell *old*!' It was then she mentioned you. As I was going out, she called me back. 'Do you know, I've lost six teeth! I pulled them out—plop!—like radishes.' And she started laughing quite cheerfully—you remember that tinkly little laugh she had? 'Six teeth,' she said. 'Mind you let Antoine know. And tell him to hurry up, if he wants to see me again alive.' "

Antoine listened, not without emotion. Stories of illnesses and death had come to interest him. Gise's chatter, moreover, relieved him of the necessity for talking.

"Was that your last visit?"

"No. I went there again ten days ago. They'd written to tell me the priest had given her the sacrament. The room was in darkness; she couldn't bear light any more. Sister Marthe led me to the bed. My aunt lay curled up under the counterpane, looking tinier than ever. The sister tried to rouse her. 'Here's your little niece come to see you.' At last there was a movement on the bed. I don't know if she understood, or if she recognized me. But she said quite clearly: 'It's a long, long business!' Then: 'What's the latest news about the war?' I spoke to her, but she didn't answer, didn't seem to understand. She broke in several times while I was speaking. 'Well? What's the news?' When I wanted to kiss her forehead, she pushed me away. 'No, my dear, I won't have my hair ruffled.' Poor Auntie! That's the last thing I heard her say: 'I won't have my hair ruffled.' "

M. Chasle dabbed his eyes with his handkerchief. Then, after carefully refolding it along the creases, he muttered, in a disapproving tone: “That’s so. It wouldn’t have done, it wouldn’t have done at all to ruffle her hair.”

Gise looked down quickly, a young, mischievous, if quite involuntary, smile flickering on her lips. Antoine had a glimpse of it, and suddenly Gise seemed much nearer to him, and he caught himself wanting to tease her, to call her “Blackie” as in the past.

The hearse pulled up at the Porte Champerret for the formalities. On the square were anti-aircraft guns in position, a motorized machine-gun unit, and searchlights, wrapped in camouflaged tarpaulins, guarded by sentries.

After a short wait the hearse moved on again. While they were passing through the crowded streets of the Levallois suburb, M. Chasle heaved a sigh. “Yes, you may say what you like, but poor dear Mademoiselle had a happy life at the Superannuates’ Home. That’s what I’m looking for, M. Antoine, a home like that for men, but nicely appointed, as they say. There, anyhow, one would have some peace, one wouldn’t have to worry about what’s happening.” He took off his glasses and wiped them. His eyes, seen thus without the glasses, had a gentle, tremulous, rather pathetic expression. “I’d make over to them the pension your late esteemed father left me,” he continued, “and I’d feel sheltered . . . for my last years. I’d be able to sleep late of mornings, and think about myself a bit. I visited a men’s home at Lagny, but it’s too far east of Paris for these times. One can never take too much care, with those Boches about, can one? I had a look at their cellars; they weren’t what I’d call *proper* cellars. Much too flimsy for these times.” Each time he said “these times,” a nervous tremor shook his voice and he gestured, as if to ward off an evil portent, with his black-gloved hands. They were suède gloves, shabby and much too long for him, with the finger-ends crinkling and curled into unsightly twists like winkle-shells.

Antoine and Gise kept silent. They no longer felt any inclination to smile.

“Everything’s so unsettled,” the old fellow went on plaintively. “One’s never easy in one’s mind nowadays. The only time one feels really safe is on air-raid nights, when one’s got a *real* cellar to go down to. The one I use, in the house opposite mine—No. 19—now that’s what I call a *real* cellar.” He waited for a coughing fit which had come over Antoine to subside, then added: “Those nights in the cellar—well, in these times, they’re about the best thing one has.”

The horses had dropped into a walk; a high wall flanking the roadway came into view.

“This must be it,” Gise said.

“Where are you going afterward?” Antoine asked; he was buttressing his shoulders against the back of the seat with all his might to counteract the jolts of the ramshackle old vehicle which gave him constant twinges in the side.

“I’m going to the Rue de l’Université; to your place. I’ve been sleeping there the last two nights. The hearse is bringing me back; it’s included in the undertaker’s fee.”

“I think we’ll try and find a comfortable taxi instead,” said Antoine, smiling. Ever since taking his place in the howdahlike contraption on the roof, he had been suffering as much from apprehensions of the moment when he would have to climb down from it as from its immediate discomfort. And he had made up his mind to use another conveyance for the return journey.

Gise shot him a puzzled glance, but made no comment. In any case, the hearse had reached the cemetery-gates and was just turning in.

III

“THEY’VE all taken nicely. You’ll let them stay ten minutes, won’t you?”

“Twenty, if you like.”

With eight cupping-glasses stuck on his bare back, Antoine was sitting astride a chair in his little study.

“Just a moment,” Gise said. “I mustn’t let you catch cold.”

She had dropped her nurse’s cape over the back of a chair. Now she went and fetched it, and wrapped it round Antoine’s shoulders.

He thought: How kind she is, and gentle! And he was greatly moved by the discovery that the old affection still glowed warm as ever in his heart. Why have I kept her at arm’s length all these years? Why didn’t I write to her? And suddenly the hideous pink bedroom at Le Mousquier came back to his mind; the six chorus girls high-kicking above the mirror, the dreary meals, Joseph's clumsy, if well-meaning, attentions. How pleasant it would be to stay here with Gise to look after him!

"I'll leave the door open," she said, "so you can call me if you want anything. Now I'm off to the kitchen. Messtime!"

" 'Messtime'!" he groaned. "You might have spared me that, Gise. After these last four years, I hate the very sound of the word!"

Laughing, she ran out of the room.

Left to himself, he gave his mind up to the pleasure of home life regained, to his dream of a gentle, affectionate companion nursing him back to health.

And now again he grew conscious of the *smell*. He had noticed it first on entering, as he crossed the hall and automatically hung his képi on the hat-peg left of the door, where he always hung his hat in former days. He sniffed it eagerly; it seemed as if he could never glut his nostrils with that characteristic odour of his home, forgotten, but so quickly recognized—a vague aroma that emanated from the carpets, curtains, books, upholstery, and subtly permeated all the air in the apartment; a curious, indefinable blend of diverse smells: of cloth and furniture-polish, of leather, tobacco-smoke, and chemicals.

The journey back from the cemetery (with a detour to the Gare de Lyon to pick up his valise at the parcel-room) had seemed interminable. The pain in his side had grown worse and the oppression on his chest redoubled. In fact, on alighting from the taxi at his door, he had felt so ill that he had damned himself for a fool to have risked this trip to Paris. Luckily he had with him all the necessary equipment, and had promptly given himself an injection of oxygen that had reduced the dyspnœa. Then under his instructions Gise had applied cupping-glasses; they were beginning to take effect, and already his lungs were becoming less congested and it was easier to breathe.

Stooping forward, unmoving, his back taut and his lean arms crossed on the back of the chair, he contemplated his surroundings with an almost sentimental eye. He had never imagined he would be so much moved by the sight of his old home, his study. Nothing had changed. Gise had promptly whisked the slip-covers off the furniture, put the chairs in their usual places, opened the shutters, and let the blind down half-way. Nothing had changed, yet everything seemed oddly unexpected. This little "den" of his, in which he had used to spend so much of his time, was at once familiar and strange, like those memories of childhood which flash up in our minds with a breath-taking vividness and precision after being lost in complete oblivion for many years. In mild amazement his eyes roved the deep-piled brown carpet, the leather armchairs, the sofa and its cushions, the fireplace and its clock, the wall-lamps and bookshelves. “Is it possible I once devoted so much time and thought to the furnishing of this room?” he murmured incredulously. He could name the exact title of each of those books—to which assuredly he had not given a thought during the past four years—as promptly as if he had been handling it yesterday. Each article of furniture, every object—that small round table, that tortoise-shell paperknife, the brass ashtray with the dragon stamped on it, the cigarette-box—evoked some definite association, some incident of his life: the time and place of buying it, the gratitude of a patient each phase of whose illness he could still recall, one of Anne’s gestures, a remark of the Caliph’s, a memory of his father. For the little study had once been M. Thibault’s dressing-room. He had only to shut his eyes to see again the big mahogany wash-stand, the mirror-wardrobe, the copper footbath, the bootjack that used to stand in the corner. Almost, indeed, it would have caused him less surprise to have found this room exactly as he had known it in his childhood than as he saw it now—as he himself had refashioned it.

“Odd!” he murmured. “I had the same feeling just now when I was at the front door—of entering not my own place, but Father’s!”

He opened his eyes again, and his gaze lit on the telephone placed upon a low table by the sofa. And, in a flash, memory had cast across the screen a picture of the hale, vigorous young man who had so often used that telephone, a man proud of his never-flagging energy, authoritative, rejoicing in his strength. Between that young man and his present self lay four years of war, four years of sombre musings and revolt, ending with these last black months of physical pain and breakdown, the premature decrepitude which forced itself upon his notice at every turn. A rush of disheartenment came over him; he buried his face in his arms. He saw the past now bathed in roseate light, the glamour of youth and health. Ah, what would he not have given to retrieve the atmosphere of that bygone family life, that lost serenity! His father, Jacques, Mademoiselle—all were gone; and regret for the days that were no more made today’s lot seem drearier still. He was on the brink of calling Gise to help him escape from himself. . . . With an effort he pulled himself together. Yes, he must face the facts. Really, it was all a question of health. The first thing was to get well again. He resolved, at the earliest opportunity, to have a serious consultation with his old teacher Dr. Philip and with his aid draw up plans for a more rapid and drastic treatment. In the long run, the treatment he was following at Le Mousquier was probably debilitating; it was abnormal that he should have lost so much strength. Philip would put him in the way of regaining it. Philip . . . Gise. Why not bring Gise back with him to Le Mousquier? Yes, then he would . . . get well . . . be fit again. . . . Suddenly his eyes closed, he fell asleep.

When he awoke a few minutes later, Gise, perched on the arm of an easy-chair, was gazing at him. Her brows were knitted with the intensity of her gaze and there was a shade of anxiety in it. She had never been able to control her face so as to hide her thoughts, and Antoine read them now quite easily.

"I look like a wreck, eh?"

"No, but thinner."

"Yes, I've lost nineteen pounds since last autumn."

"Feeling easier in your chest, I hope?"

"Much easier, thanks."

"Your voice is still a bit . . . husky." (Of the change that had come over Antoine, what had impressed her most was the extreme weakness of his voice and its hoarseness.)

"Just now it's nothing. There are times, especially mornings, when I lose my voice altogether."

There was a short silence; then she slipped off the chair onto her feet, saying: "I'll take them off now, if you like."

"Right you are."

Drawing up a chair, she sat down behind him and, slipping her hands under the cape so that he should not catch a chill, began detaching the cupping-glasses from his back with infinite precautions, placing each, as it came off, in her lap. Then, gathering up the corners of her apron, she carried them away to the kitchen, to rinse them out.

Antoine stood up. He noticed that he was breathing much more freely. After scrutinizing in the glass his lean back mottled with violet rings, he dressed again.

Gise had just finished laying the table when he entered the dining-room. His eyes roved its uncompanionable vastness, the twenty chairs aligned along the wall, the marble-topped sideboard at which Léon had officiated in bygone days. Then he said: "When the war's over, Gise, I'm going to sell this place."

She turned and stared at him amazedly, forgetting to put down the plate she had in her hand. "What? Sell the house?"

"Yes, and I don't want to keep anything that's here. Not a thing. I'll take a small apartment, something simple, easy to run. I'll . . ." He paused, smiling at himself. He had no very clear idea of what he meant to do, but of one thing he was sure. That morning he had changed his plans for good and all; nothing would induce him to resume his pre-war life.

"Here's the menu! Veal cutlets with macaroni and butter sauce, and strawberries. That do you all right?" she asked, giving up trying to understand why Antoine should have taken this sudden aversion to a home arranged meticulously to his liking. (In any case, she had little imagination and rarely took much interest in future plans.)

"You're a dear, giving yourself all this trouble!" he exclaimed as his eyes fell on the trimly laid table.

"You'll have to give me another ten minutes. . . . Oh, and I couldn't find the napkins."

"I'll hunt for them."

A folding-bed occupied most of the narrow space in the linen-room. It had been slept in, and he saw a little bunch of rosaries curled on the unmade sheets. Some garments lay on a chair.

"Now why didn't she use the bedroom at the end of the hall?" he wondered.

He opened a closet, a second and a third one. All were filled with brand-new linen: sheets, pillowcases, bathrobes, aprons, and dustcloths tied up in dozens with the price-tickets still on them. "Absurd having all that stuff! I'll have it auctioned off, except what's indispensable." He drew toward him a bundle of napkins and took out two of them. Of a sudden he thought: "I've got it! She didn't want to sleep in Jacques's old room, that's why she put the bed in here."

He sauntered back along the passage, running his fingers over the paintwork of the walls, turning the handles of the doors he passed, and peeping into rooms, as if he were on a tour of inspection in a stranger's apartment.

Back in the hall, he paused for a moment outside the double doors of his consulting-room. He felt a curious reluctance about entering it. At last he turned the handle and went in. The Venetian blinds were down. The furniture, swathed in slip-covers, had been pushed back against the bookshelves, and the room seemed larger than ever. Filtering between the slats of the blinds, the sunlight filled the room with a discreet radiance like that prevailing in big provincial drawing-rooms unused save on at-home days.

Suddenly he recalled those last weeks of July 1914, the newspapers Studler used to bring back by the dozen, their arguments, the nerve-racking suspense. And his brother’s visits. Wasn’t it here that Jacques had come, with Jenny, on the very day that mobilization was announced?

His back against the doorjamb, leaning forward a little, he lightly sniffed the air, as if to test its savour. Yes, that characteristic scent was here—but somehow fresher, more pungent than elsewhere, and a little different too, more aromatic. The big writing-desk, sheeted and forlorn in the middle of the room, had the look of a child’s catafalque.

What on earth can they have stowed away under that sheet? he wondered and, stepping forward, drew it aside.

The desk was stacked with a miscellaneous assortment of envelopes and packages that had come through the mail. From the beginning of the war the concierge had made a habit of placing on it all the printed matter addressed to Antoine: prospectuses, newspapers, samples sent by manufacturing pharmacists. “Now, what’s that smell?” he asked himself again. For with the familiar odour of the room there mingled here a tang of some unusual, strongly aromatic perfume.

Mechanically, he slipped the wrapper off a medical journal and ran his eyes through the contents. Then abruptly, out of the blue, a thought flashed into his mind—of Rachel. “That’s odd,” he mused. “Why should I think of Rachel here, instead of Anne?” Rachel had never crossed the threshold of this house, and for ages he had not given a thought to her existence. “What can have become of her? I wonder where she is now. Somewhere in the tropics, most likely, with that fellow Hirsch, thousands of miles from Europe and the war.” He picked out some medical journals to take with him to Le Mousquier, glanced at the tables of contents, and tossed them onto the mantelpiece. “The only doctors contributing to these journals nowadays are the old fogies, the ones who’ve stayed behind. This war’s been a godsend for them. They’ve been able to place all the old manuscripts mouldering in their drawers.” Now and then, however, he noticed, a younger man found time to contribute a brief report of some unusual case. “Surgery has made enormous strides; that’s the one good thing this war has done.” He continued rummaging in the heap of periodicals, now and again tossing one of them onto the mantelpiece. “If only I could settle down to work on my monograph on infantile affections of the lungs! Sébillon would certainly take it for his review.”

A package covered with gaudy foreign postage stamps caught his eye. He picked it up, then promptly lifted it to his nose, his curiosity whetted once again by the odd, aromatic smell he had noticed on entering the room. Still sniffing, he examined the name of the sender, noted on a corner of the wrapper: “Mlle. Bonnet, General Hospital, Konakri, French Guinea.” The stamps were postmarked March 1915. Three years old. Greatly puzzled, he turned the little package over and over in his hand. What could it be? A medicine? A perfume? Cutting the string, he stripped off the wrappings. Inside was a redwood box, nailed down on all sides. “A bit of a job opening it,” he murmured, and glanced round the room for something he could use to pry the lid off. Nothing suitable presenting itself, he was of half a mind to leave his curiosity ungratified when suddenly he remembered he had his army knife in his pocket. Slipping the blade between two nails, with a slight pressure he had the lid off. A waft of aromatic perfume floated up; it seemed somehow familiar, that blend of incense with some pungent oriental gum, yet he could not identify it. Delicately, with the tip of his nail he stroked aside the layer of sawdust; some small yellowish, egglike objects came into view, dully glowing through a film of dust. And suddenly the past had risen before his eyes, vivid as reality—those were Rachel’s beads, her necklace of honey-golden amber set with tiny rings of ambergris between the beads. He lifted it from the box and carefully wiped off the dust. His eyes grew misted as memory lit up facets of the past. The smooth whiteness of her breast, a glimmer of red-gold hair. And then—Le Havre, their parting, the *Romania* putting out to sea at daybreak. But why had she sent the necklace? Who was this Mlle. Bonnet? What was the meaning of it all?

Hearing footsteps in the passage, he quickly slipped the necklace into his pocket.

Gise had come to summon him to lunch. On the threshold she paused and sniffed. “What a funny smell!”

He drew the slip-cover back over the papers and packages littering the desk.

“They’ve used it to store the patent medicines that came in while I was away.”

“Lunch is ready. Are you coming?”

He followed her out of the room. His right hand was thrust into his pocket and, as he felt the beads growing warm against his palm, a picture hovered before him of lithe white limbs, a glimmer of ruddy gold.

IV

ONCE they were seated side by side at an end of the big table, Gise turned to Antoine with a resolute air. “Now I want you to tell me all about your health, exactly how you stand.”

Antoine made a grimace. Actually he was more than willing to talk about himself, his illness and its treatment; but it gave him a certain pleasure to be coaxed, and he parried her first questions with a show of reluctance. He soon became aware that these questions were far from being inept. His little Gise, it seemed, whom he had always been inclined to treat as a mere child, had turned her three years’ hospital experience to good account. He could now talk shop with her, in fact. Another link between them. The interest she displayed encouraged him to give an outline of his illness, with a detailed description of its various phases during the past few months. Had she shown any tendency to treat his diagnosis lightly or turn it aside with vaguely comforting remarks, he would have purposely exaggerated his apprehensions. But as she listened her expression was so earnest, there was such deep and anxious interest in her gaze, that he took the opposite course and wound up on an optimistic note.

“All things considered, then, I shall pull through.” (Of this, indeed, deep within him, he was convinced.) “It may take some time,” he added with a confident smile, “but there can be no doubt I shall recover. The only thing that worries me is whether my recovery will be *complete*. Suppose my larynx remains impaired, or my vocal cords don’t get back their strength, will I be able to take up my practice again? I can’t be satisfied, you know, with the mere prospect of a reasonably long life. I’ve no use for a life in which I’m only the shadow of my former self. I want to feel assured I’ll get back the physical fitness I had before the war. And that’s another story.”

She had stopped eating so as to give her whole attention to what he said, and the big, candid, wondering eyes intent on him glowed with a childlike devotion that brought to mind the gaze of certain unspoilt savage races. And this affectionate concern of hers, after so many years’ privation, was doubly sweet to him. He gave a short, confident laugh. “Less sure, I grant, but not impossible. Very few things are impossible, if one refuses to be beaten. So far, I’ve always carried out everything I really set my mind on. Why shouldn’t I do so now? I’m determined to get well; I *shall* get well.”

He had forced his voice for the last remark; a prolonged and violent fit of coughing prevented him from continuing. Bending over her plate, Gise watched him furtively, trying to reassure herself. After all, she reflected, what Antoine wants he always gets, and he’ll manage to cure himself—somehow.

When the coughing fit had passed, she turned toward him. He made a gesture to indicate that he would rather not speak again for a while.

“Drink some water,” she said, filling his glass. Then, unable to repress the question which was hovering on her lips, she asked: “How many days will you be staying here?”

He made no reply. It was a topic he would have preferred to shun. Actually, he had been given four days’ leave. But he proposed to abridge it; the prospect of remaining three more days in Paris, unable to continue his regular treatment and with the constant risk of overtiring himself, did not appeal to him.

“How long?” she insisted. “A week? Five or six days?”

He shook his head, took a deep breath, then smiled. “I’m going back tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow!” Her tone betrayed her disappointment. “Then you won’t come to see us at Maisons-Laffitte?”

“Can’t be done, my dear, I’m afraid. Not this trip, anyhow. Later on, perhaps, in the summer.”

“But I’ll hardly have time to see anything of you. What a shame—after all those years! And I can’t even stay with you overnight in Paris, because I must get back to Maisons this evening. I have to be on duty first thing tomorrow morning. It’s three days, you see, since I left the hospital, and six new patients came in just before I left.”

“Anyhow, we’ve the whole afternoon before us,” Antoine pointed out consolingly.

“But I’m not free this afternoon!” she cried in despair. “I have to go back to the home at three. They want Auntie’s room at once, and I’ve got to see about getting her things moved out of it.”

Her eyes were swimming with tears. Antoine remembered the moods of black despair that used to come over her in her childhood days. And again the fancy crossed his mind—how good it would be to have her always at his side, lavishing on him the warm devotion that came so naturally to her.

He felt at a loss what to say; for he, too, was distressed by the thought that they would see so little of each other. “I might be able to get an extension of my leave,” he murmured with affected dubiety. “It’s just possible. Perhaps I’ll have a shot at it.” Her eyes lit up at once, smiling through tears. (This, too, reminded Antoine of bygone days.) “Yes, yes!” she cried, clapping her hands. “That’s what you must do; then you can come and stay a few days with us at Maisons.”

He thought: What a child she still is! And what a charming effect it has—such childishness of mind in a grown-up woman's body!

To give a new turn to the conversation, he asked, as if the thought were puzzling him: "By the way, there's something I want you to explain. How is it that no one came with you to Paris? Maisons isn't so very far away. What an idea, letting you come in alone for the funeral!"

This elicited a vigorous protest from Gise. "But you've no idea of the work we have at Maisons! There's never a moment to spare. And with me away, of course, the others had all the more to do."

He could not help smiling at her indignant air, and, noticing his smile, she launched out into an elaborate account of all they had to do at the hospital, the thousand and one details of their daily life.

From mid-September 1914, Mme. de Fontanin, obsessed by the desire to "make herself useful," had begun working up a scheme for a war hospital at Maisons-Laffitte. The English couple to whom she had rented the house there which she had inherited from her father had left France on the outbreak of the war. Thus her little country place was free. But it was too small and also too far from the station to serve her purpose. She decided then to appeal to Antoine and ask him to lend his father's house at Maisons, much larger than hers and within easy reach of the town. Naturally Antoine had agreed, and he had at once written to Gise, telling her to give Mme. de Fontanin all the assistance she could in arranging the house for its new functions, and to bring the two maids to help. Meanwhile Mme. de Fontanin had enlisted the aid of Nicole Héquet, the surgeon's wife, who had a graduate nurse's diploma. Under the auspices of the National War Casualties Council, a board of governors had been nominated, and six weeks later the Thibault country house had been fully equipped and, under the official title of War Hospital No. 7, was ready to receive its first batch of wounded soldiers. Since then, War Hospital No. 7 and those in charge of it—Mme. de Fontanin and Nicole—had not known an idle day.

Antoine had been kept informed of all that was being done and it had given him pleasure to learn that his father's house was serving so useful a purpose. What pleased him even more was that the Fontanins had taken Gise so warmly to their bosom, for he had felt anxious on her account when he learned that she was staying on in Paris without a settled occupation. But, to tell the truth, he had felt no great interest in the activities of War Hospital No. 7 and still less in the reorganization of the Fontanins' small country house, which, under the capable management of his ex-cook Clotilde, had become a sort of hostel for the younger generation. Here Gise and Nicole lodged; here Daniel had landed after his operation; here, too, since her return from Switzerland Jenny had been living, with her child. Antoine found his curiosity aroused by Gise's enthusiastic account of their life at Maisons, and this little group of people, to whom he had rarely given a thought, began to take living form before his eyes.

"Among us all," Gise was saying, still full of her subject, "it's Jenny who has the hardest time of it. She has not only to look after little Paul, but to superintend the laundry, and you can imagine what that means for a hospital with thirty-eight beds—sometimes we have extras, bringing it up to forty-five; she has to supervise the washing, ironing, mending of the linen, sort it out and issue it every day, not to mention the records she keeps up. She's all worn out when she comes back at night. She works at the hospital all afternoon but stays at home in the morning to attend to the baby. Mme. de Fontanin lives at the hospital, in one of the rooms above the stables."

It struck Antoine as rather odd to hear Gise, the niece of pious and prudish old Mademoiselle, talking thus of Jenny's motherhood, as of something quite legitimate and usual. But then he reflected: "Three years have passed; it's ancient history. And, anyhow, such a change has come over moral standards since the war that things which would have shocked people formerly are more or less accepted nowadays."

"Just think!" Gise sounded quite indignant. "You were going to leave Paris without even having a look at our baby! Jenny'd have been heart-broken."

"Don't be silly!" Antoine laughed. "All you had to do was not to tell her I'd been to Paris."

"No." An unwonted seriousness came into her voice, and she lowered her eyes. "I don't want to have any secrets from Jenny . . . ever!"

He gazed at her wonderingly, but made no comment.

"Anyhow, can you be certain," she went on, "of getting an extension of your leave?"

"I'll have a try."

"How?"

He lied again. "I'll get Rumelles to call up the military authorities, who decide these matters."

"Ah, Rumelles . . ." she murmured pensively.

"In any case, I was meaning to look him up today. I haven't seen him since . . . I want to thank him for all the trouble he took on our account."

This was the first time since they had met that day that either had alluded to Jacques's death.

Gise's face began to twitch and patches of a still darker hue mottled the dusky cheeks.

(Throughout the autumn of 1914 she had refused to believe that Jacques was dead. For her his continued silence, the news of his disappearance communicated by his friends in Switzerland, Jenny's certitude of his death and Antoine's similar belief, carried no weight whatever. She told herself: he has seized the pretext given him by the war for disappearing once again, and once again he will come back to us. And nightly she prayed God for his return, confident that some day her prayers would be answered. It was during this period that she had deliberately set about winning Jenny's affection. There was no denying that at the outset this was prompted by a rather selfish motive. When Jacques comes back, she told herself, he'll find us friends, and I'll be given a place in their life. And perhaps he'll be grateful to me for being nice to her during his absence. Ultimately, however, news had come through Rumelles of the aeroplane disaster and, after reading a copy of the official report, she had been forced to recognize the truth. And yet, deep down in her heart, she always nursed a vague, unreasoning surmise that somewhere, somehow, there had been a mistake, and often in a sudden uprush of hope would murmur: "Who knows . . . ?")

She was looking down again, to avoid meeting Antoine's gaze; an intolerable spasm of remembrance had gripped her and for a few moments she remained unmoving, dazed with grief, struggling to keep back her tears. At last, on the verge of breaking down, she jumped up and ran out of the room.

A little vexed by this distress, of which involuntarily he had been the cause, Antoine watched her receding form. It struck him that Gise had put on considerable weight, especially about the hips. In fact, her figure made her look quite ten years older: one could easily have taken her for a woman in the thirties.

He had drawn the necklace from his pocket. Little balls of leaden-hued ambergris, the size of cherry-stones, alternated with big amber beads which had the shape of mirabelle plums and the hue of them when overripe; a cloudy yellow, here and there translucent. As he idly fingered them, the beads grew warm and fragrant, and for a rapturous moment Antoine had the illusion that he had just removed the necklace from Rachel's neck.

When Gise came back with a basket of strawberries and placed them on the table, her expression was still so woebegone that Antoine, deeply moved, fondled in silence the soft brown wrist, encircled by a silver bangle. A slight shudder passed through her body; her eyelashes quivered. She would not meet his gaze and, as she seated herself beside him, he saw the tears welling up again in her eyes. And now, no longer trying to conceal her grief, she turned to Antoine with a tremulous smile and gazed at him for some moments without speaking.

Then, “It’s silly of me!” she murmured with a little sigh, and fell to sugaring her strawberries. But almost at once she put down the sugar-bowl and straightened herself up with a nervous little jerk. “Do you know what hurts me most, Antoine? It’s that not one of all the people round me ever mention his name. I know that Jenny’s always thinking of him; it’s because he’s Jacques’s son that she dotes on her baby as she does. And Jacques is always there between us, in a way; if I’m so fond of her, it’s because of him, my memories of him. And it’s the same with her, most likely. If she was so ready to make a bosom friend of me, to treat me like a sister, it’s surely on his account. But never, never does she speak to me of Jacques. It’s like a secret that’s always at the back of our minds and links our lives together—but never do we breathe a word about it. And, Antoine, it makes me feel—I don’t know how to put it!—stifled. Jenny, you see,”—the words came with a sort of sob—“she’s so proud, she doesn’t make things easy. I’ve come to know her really well. I’m awfully fond of her, I’d give my life for her and for little Paul. But I can’t help suffering—horribly! Because she is—what she is; so stand-offish, so . . . I don’t know what the word is. Do you know, I think there’s something always preying on her mind, the idea that nobody ever understood Jacques except her. And she clings to that idea—that she was the one person who understood him—with a sort of jealous spite, and that’s why she won’t talk about him with others. Especially with me. And yet, and yet . . .”

Big tears were rolling down her cheeks, though now her face, from which all youth was gone, betrayed no longer grief but only passion, anger, and some other more primitive emotion that Antoine could make little of. He tried to fit things together, for this news of Gise’s intimacy with Jenny had come wholly as a surprise.

“I’ve never been sure whether she knew about my—my feelings for Jacques.” Her voice still shook, but it had lost its shrillness. “Oh, how I’d love to talk to her about it, open my heart to her! I’ve nothing to conceal; I’d much rather she knew everything. Even that I used to hate her—once; yes, hate her bitterly. But that’s all over; since Jacques’s death the love I had for him”—her eyes lit up with fanatic devotion—“is all for her now, and for their child.”

For some moments Antoine had scarcely troubled to listen to her words, all his attention held by the fluttering brown eyelids, the long lashes slowly rising and falling, veiling and discovering, with the regularity of a revolving light, the darkly glowing pupils. His cheek propped on his hand, he was resting his elbow on the table, stirred with faint longings by the perfume of the necklace clinging to his fingers.

"I'm all alone in the world now, except for them." Gise was trying her best to speak more calmly. "Jenny's promised to keep me with her, always."

He wondered: Would she come and live with me, if I proposed it?

"Yes, she's promised it. And that's what helps me to keep going, to face the future. You understand, don't you? There's nothing in the world I care for any longer, except to be with her—and with our little one."

No, he told himself, she wouldn't come to me. Still, he had been struck by certain jarring undertones in her voice which seemed to him revelatory. What curious cross-currents of emotion, he reflected, must pervade the friendship that's sprung up between these two women—these two *widows*! Affection's there undoubtedly. But jealousy as well. And behind it all a rankling hatred, I should say. In fact, a mixture of emotions that's uncommonly like love!

Gise went on talking; it was a wonderful solace thus to unburden herself, and she could not have enough of it. "You know Jenny's a wonderful person, one in a thousand. So noble-minded, so energetic. Yes, she's wonderful. But awfully hard on others. She's worse than hard; she's positively unjust to poor Daniel. And to me, too—I can't help feeling it, sometimes. Oh, I know she has a perfect right to be like that; I'm so futile compared with her. And yet—she makes mistakes, too. She's so sure of herself, it blinds her and she won't hear of other people having different ideas. Still, what I ask isn't anything so out of the way. If she won't let little Paul be brought up in his father's faith, that's her affair, it's no use my trying to go against her. But at least she might let him be baptized by a Protestant minister, don't you agree?" An obstinate expression had settled on her face, and the way she tossed her head in petulant little jerks while her lips set in a hard, peremptory line reminded Antoine of Mademoiselle, on the rare occasions when she put her foot down. "Yes," she cried, swinging brusquely round on Antoine, "she can make a little Protestant of him, if she wants! But at least she shouldn't bring up Jacques's son like a heathen."

Antoine made an evasive gesture.

"You don't know the baby," she said hastily. "He's such a highly strung, impulsive little fellow, he'll *need* religion when he grows up." She sighed, and a note of poignant regret came into her voice. "Like Jacques. Everything'd have been all right if Jacques hadn't lost his faith." Again, with amazing mobility, her expression changed, grew soft, and a rapturous smile dawned in her eyes. “The child’s extraordinarily like Jacques, you know. His hair’s the same reddish brown. He has Jacques’s eyes and hands. And he’s terribly self-willed already for a child of three. Sometimes he won’t do anything he’s told, but he can be awfully sweet when he chooses.” Not a trace of rancour remained in her voice. She laughed. “Just think, he calls me Auntie *Gi*!”

“Self-willed, you say?”

“Just like Jacques. And he has the same fits of sulkiness—you remember how Jacques was?—a sort of suppressed fury. Then he runs off to a corner of the garden and stays there sulking till the mood passes.”

“Is he intelligent?”

“Very. He understands, picks things up at once. But he’s terribly sensitive. There’s nothing one can’t get out of him by gentleness, but if you cross him, or stop him from doing something he’s set his heart on, he flares up, clenches his little fists, and scowls at you. Just like Jacques, again!” She mused for a few moments. “Daniel took a good snapshot of him the other day. Did Jenny send you one?”

“No. Jenny has never sent me any photo of her son.”

Gise looked surprise. She gazed at him inquiringly, but refrained from putting the question hovering on her lips. Then, “I have the photo with me, in my bag,” she said. “Like to see it?”

“Yes.”

She ran out of the room, fetched her bag, and produced two small snapshots. One of them, taken presumably in the previous year, showed little Jean-Paul with his mother. Jenny had filled out a little, her face was fuller, her expression calm, indeed austere. “She’ll be like Mme. Fontanin,” Antoine said to himself. Jenny was in black, sitting on the steps of her mother’s house, with the baby in her arms.

In the other, obviously a more recent photograph, little Paul was by himself. He was wearing a tight-fitting jersey suit that showed to advantage the remarkable sturdiness of the small body. The child stood stiffly erect, with eyes downcast and a sulky look on his face.

Antoine was greatly interested by the two likenesses. The second, especially, reminded him of Jacques. There were the same deep-set, penetrating eyes, the same mouth, and the same chin—the heavy Thibault under-jaw.

Gise, standing behind Antoine, leaning on his shoulder, explained: “When that was taken, he’d been busy building sand-castles, and somebody had interrupted him. He flew into a temper and threw his shovel away; you can see it lying there"—she pointed. "Then he backed to the wall and Daniel snapped him."

Antoine looked up with a laugh. "Why, Gise, you love that child as much as if you were his mother!"

She smiled without replying, but in her smile there was a world of affection, a radiance that said more than words.

Nevertheless, a vague embarrassment, which Antoine failed to notice, had seized her—as always when a chance remark recalled that absurd, unbelievable thing that she had done—when was it? More than two years ago it must have been, for Paul was then quite tiny, not yet weaned. There was nothing Gise liked better than having him in her arms, rocking him to sleep against her breast. Whenever she saw Jenny suckling the baby, a rush of furious jealousy and despair swept over her, all but shattering her self-control. One day, yielding to a sudden, preposterous temptation, she had taken the baby to her room and pressed his lips to her breast. Her senses tingled as she remembered how the tiny mouth had fastened on her greedily, leaving her bruised and sore. Indeed, for the next few days she had suffered almost as much physically as from a sense of shame. Was it a sin she had committed? It was not until she had made avowal of it—though in veiled terms—in the confessional that she had regained some peace of mind, and on her own initiative she had imposed a lengthy penance on herself for this lapse—which she had never repeated.

Antoine asked: "Is he often like that? I mean, does he often have that obstinate look?"

"Oh, yes, very often indeed. Still, that time it was Daniel who'd upset him. Though as a matter of fact he's less disobedient with Daniel than with the rest of us—because he has a man to deal with, most likely. Yet he dotes on his mother, and he's very fond of me. But we're only women. And he seems quite conscious already of his—what shall I call it?—masculine superiority. No, I'm not joking, it's perfectly true. He makes one feel it in a lot of little ways."

"I'd be more inclined to think your authority doesn't work so well because you're always with him. Whereas his uncle, whom he doesn't see so often . . ."

"But he does! He's far more with his uncle than with us, as we've our work at the hospital. It's Daniel who looks after him almost all day."

"What? Daniel?"

She had been leaning over Antoine's shoulder; now she moved away a little and sat down. "Yes. Why not? Does it surprise you?"

"Well, somehow I don't see Daniel in the role of nursemaid. . . ."

Gise did not understand; she had never met Daniel before he had been amputated.

"I assure you he's quite happy to have the little boy for company. It's pretty dull for him at Maisons with nothing to do."

"But now that he's been invalided out, hasn't he started working again?"

"Working? In the hospital, you mean?"

"No. At his painting."

"His painting? I've never seen him with a brush in his hand."

"Doesn't he run in to Paris now and then?"

"Never. He spends his time pottering about the house or in the garden."

"I suppose he has trouble in walking."

"Oh, no, that's not it. One doesn't notice that he's lame unless one watches him closely. Especially now that he has his new artificial leg. He just doesn't want to go out. He reads the papers, looks after Paul and plays with him. Sometimes he goes to the kitchen and helps Clotilde shelling peas or peeling fruit for jam. Now and then he gets a rake and hoe and tidies up the terrace. Not often, though. That's how Daniel is—slack, apathetic; in fact, he seems half asleep most of the time."

"Daniel!"

"Yes, why not?"

"Well, he usedn't to be like that at all. . . . Poor fellow, he must be very unhappy."

"Unhappy? What an idea! He doesn't even seem bored; anyhow, he never complains. Sometimes he's a bit irritable—with the others, never with me; but that's because they don't know how to handle him. Nicole's always fussing round him, teasing him, and it gets on his nerves. Jenny, too, is tactless; she won't answer him or answers in a chilling way. Of course Jenny's kindness itself, but she's no good at showing it; she never seems to say or do anything that makes others happy."

Antoine said nothing, but his face betrayed such amazement that Gise burst out laughing. "Really, I think you've quite a wrong idea of Daniel's temperament. I should say he's always been terribly spoilt—and he's the laziest of men!"

Their meal was long since ended. After glancing at her watch Gise jumped up hastily.

"I'll clear the table and then I really must be off."

Standing in front of Antoine, she gazed at him affectionately. The thought of leaving him alone and ill in the depressing atmosphere of the apartment distressed her greatly, and she racked her brain for something to propose. Then a shy smile lit up her eyes, and settled on her lips.

"Listen, supposing I came back and called for you here later on? You could spend the night with us at Maisons instead of staying here all by yourself."

He shook his head. "Nothing doing for tonight, I'm afraid. I must look up Rumelles this afternoon and I shall see Philip tomorrow. What's more, I've a long job before me, looking for the papers I want to take back with me." He reflected. There was no necessity for him to be back at Le Mousquier before Friday night, so it was quite feasible to spend a couple of days at Maisons-Laffitte. He asked: "But where'll you put me up if I come?"

With a little cry of joy she bent forward hastily and kissed him before replying. "Where? Why, at the Hostel, of course. We've still two bedrooms free."

He had kept the photograph of little Paul in his hand, now and again glancing down at it. "All right, I'll see about getting my leave extended. And I'll be round tomorrow evening." He held up the photograph. "I can keep this, can't I?"

V

THOUGH it was a Sunday, Rumelles was in his office when Antoine called him up after Gise had left. He explained that he had not a moment to spare in the afternoon, but suggested that Antoine should pick him up at eight and they should dine together.

When Antoine called at the Foreign Office, Rumelles was waiting for him at the foot of the staircase. The lights were dimmed to blackout exiguity, and the dark forms of employees leaving after the day's work and a few belated visitors arriving, the play of shadows and the silence, combined to create an eerie, conspiratorial atmosphere.

Rumelles greeted Antoine warmly, if with a vaguely patronizing air, and at once led him to the courtyard, where several cars flying the official flag were lined up.

"I'll take you to Maxim's; that'll make a good change after hospital life, won't it?"

"I'm afraid," Antoine smiled, "a cabaret dinner will be rather wasted on me. I'm only allowed milk at night."

"That's all right." (Rumelles had made up his mind to dine at Maxim's.) "They've excellent iced milk there."

Antoine reluctantly assented. The day's exertions—he had spent a strenuous afternoon rummaging among his books and memoranda—had been too much for him, and he rather dreaded the prospect of a loquacious evening. He made haste to warn Rumelles that he found difficulty in speaking, and had to spare his throat as much as possible.

"What luck for me!" laughed Rumelles. "You know how I love talking." Anxious at all costs not to betray how dismayed he was by his friend's sunken cheeks and hollow, toneless voice, he deliberately forced the jovial note. On entering the brightly lighted restaurant, he was even more shocked to see the change that had come over Antoine. But he took care not to put any too pressing questions as to his health and, after some vague inquiries, made haste to change the subject.

"No soup. Yes, some oysters. It's the end of the season but they're still in condition. . . . I dine here pretty often."

"I used to come here pretty often, too," Antoine murmured. He threw a quick glance round the room; then his gaze came to rest on the old headwaiter, waiting to take their order. "You remember me, Jean, don't you?"

"Remember you, sir? Of course I do." The man bowed with a conventional smile.

Antoine thought: He's lying. He always used to call me "Doctor."

"This place is near my office," Rumelles pointed out. "And when there's an air-raid warning, it's very handy. I've only got to step across the road to the Admiralty building, where they've an excellent shelter."

Antoine watched Rumelles as he selected his dinner. He, too, had changed. His features had grown coarser; the yellow hair, still shaggy as a lion's mane, was streaked with grey, and a network of tiny wrinkles had gathered round his eyes. Under the lower lids bluish pouches had formed, overhanging the pale cheeks, on which a skin affection had left a tracery of scarlet veins. Only the eyes had not aged; they were bright, alert as ever.

At last with a weary gesture he gave back the bill of fare to the *maître d'hôtel*. "I'll choose my dessert later." Letting his head sink back, he pressed his palms to his forehead, his fingers on his aching eyelids, then heaved a deep sigh. "It's appalling, Thibault! I haven't had a day off since the war started—and I'm at the end of my tether."

That was obvious; the cumulative effect of years of constant strain on this high-strung man had taken the form of an extreme restlessness. Yes, Antoine thought, indeed he's changed appallingly from the Rumelles I knew in 1914, the pattern of diplomacy, a bit too cocksure and inclined to lay down the law, but always keeping his tongue well in hand, watching his step! Four years of overwork had made of him a man with vacillating eyes, a short, jerky laugh, who gesticulated, jumped abruptly from one topic to another, and on whose puffy features the expression changed suddenly from feverish alertness to one of utter prostration. Yet he still tried to keep up appearances; after each confession of fatigue, he straightened up for a moment, flung back his head, sleeked his long hair with a sweeping gesture, and conjured up a smile that had much of the old breeziness.

Antoine began by thanking him for taking so much trouble over the investigation into the circumstances of Jacques's death, and for the help he had given Jenny when she went to Switzerland. Rumelles broke in genially: "Don't mention it, old man. It was the least I could do." Then, smiling rather fatuously, he added: "Such an attractive young woman—it was a pleasure, don't you know?"

Too much the man of the world not to play the fool on occasion, was Antoine's silent comment.

Having once cut Antoine short, Rumelles kept the conversation to himself. He launched out into a detailed description of the various steps he had taken, as though the matter were completely new to Antoine. Each fact was amazingly clear in his memory; every date, the names of all who had helped in the investigation, came pat off his lips.

"What a sad end!" he sighed, in concluding. "But you're not drinking your milk, Thibault. It'll get warm. . . ." He shot a furtive glance at Antoine, brought his wineglass to his lips, wiped his catlike moustache, and sighed again. "Yes, a tragic end. I felt for you most deeply, needless to say. And yet—considering the circumstances . . . your views . . . the family honour—one can't half wonder if, for the family, anyhow, his death was not, if I may put it so, a blessing in disguise."

Antoine frowned, but kept silent. Rumelles's words had cut him to the quick. And yet he could not deny that much the same idea had occurred to him when he had learned the truth regarding the last days of Jacques's life. It had occurred to him then, but *now*—well, he had come to take a very different view. Indeed, the mere remembrance that he had once felt thus about Jacques's death made him hot with shame. The last few years of war, the long sleepless nights of solitary musing at the hospital, had played havoc with so many preconceived ideas!

He had not the slightest desire to discuss with Rumelles his personal feelings on the matter, least of all in this place. For he had often taken Anne to dinner here in happier days, and, from the moment he had entered, associations of the past had added to his sensation of discomfort. He had been naïvely surprised to find a *de luxe* restaurant so crowded with people in this, the forty-fourth month of war. That night, indeed, Maxim's was as full as he had ever seen it in pre-war days. There were perhaps fewer women, and those present were less elegantly dressed; there was a suggestion of the hospital nurse about a good many of them. Most of the men present were in uniform, their coats decorated with ribbons of every hue, their Sam Brownes glossy and close-fitting. The majority were staff officers or members of the Paris garrison troops, but some were obviously on leave from the fighting front. The air force, too, was well in evidence: a noisy group, the focus of public admiration, but their eyes held curious experience and sadness, with a glint of desperation, and they gave the impression of being drunk before they had begun to drink. There was a motley assortment of Italian, Belgian, Rumanian, and Japanese uniforms, and a few naval officers were present. But most numerous were the British—in khaki, with stiff collars and immaculate starched shirts—who had come to Maxim's for a champagne dinner.

"Mind you let me know before the time comes for you to leave the hospital," said Rumelles in a friendly tone. "They mustn't send you to the front again. You've done your share, and more."

Antoine tried to put in a word; after having been certified as recovered from his first wound he had been assigned to medical duty in the back areas. But Rumelles went on speaking without a pause.

"Personally, I'm pretty sure to see the war through at the Foreign Office. When M. Clemenceau took over, there was some talk of sending me to London, and I'd certainly have been sidetracked there if President Poincaré, a good friend of mine, and especially M. Berthelot—I know all his little whims and he can't get along without me—hadn't put in a word on my behalf. Of course it would have been quite interesting to be in London just now. But I wouldn't have felt at the centre of things, as I do here. And it's thrilling, I assure you!"

"Oh, I can quite believe it. You, anyhow, are one of the favoured few who're able to understand what's really happening—and, I dare say, to forecast the future, to some extent."

"You're wrong there!" Rumelles broke in. "To understand—no; and to forecast, still less! One can have all the inside information that's obtainable, and yet be unable to make head or tail of how things are going; it's the utmost one can do to understand what has already happened. Don't imagine that any statesman today, even an autocratic, headstrong one like M. Clemenceau, has any real power of shaping the course of events. No, he's at their mercy. Governing a nation in wartime is rather like being captain of a ship that's leaking at every seam; one has to make shift hour by hour, as best one can, to stop the most dangerous leaks—with the risk of foundering always looming in the background. It's all one can do to snatch a moment now and then to take the sun, glance at the chart, set an approximate course. M. Clemenceau is in the same position as the other national leaders: he doesn't shape events, events shape him. The most he does is, whenever an opening occurs, to turn it to account. In my present post I've a close-up view of our great man. He's a curious type." He fell silent and his face grew thoughtful; when he spoke again, he interspersed his summing-up with studied pauses. "Yes, M. Clemenceau's character is a queer mixture of instinctive scepticism . . . considered pessimism and . . . resolute optimism. But there's no denying it's a most effective mixture!" He beamed complacently on Antoine, as if entertained by his own wit and relishing the neatness of the phrases he had just uttered. (As a matter of fact, he gave Antoine the impression of repeating something he had learned by rote and had probably been "unloading" on everyone he met for several months.) "And there's another thing," Rumelles continued. "Thoroughgoing sceptic though he is, he has a simple faith—which never falters: that the nation to which M. Clemenceau belongs is invincible. And that, my dear Thibault, is a tremendous asset. Even at this present moment, when—this is strictly between ourselves, of course—even the most confirmed optimists are feeling definitely rattled, well, this old patriot of ours has not the faintest doubt that we shall win the war. He seems convinced that, by some divine right, the cause of France must necessarily be victorious."

An English officer at a neighbouring table had just lit a cigar and Antoine's throat was tickling. When he tried to speak, his voice was so weak—the napkin he was holding to his lips muffled it still more—that only a few stray words were audible.

". . . help from America . . . Wilson."

Rumelles thought it best to pretend he had heard everything, and even assumed an air of extreme interest. “Ah, yes,” he murmured, stroking his chin meditatively. “President Wilson, as you say . . . but of course we’ve our own ideas about him at the F.O. In France and England we’re obliged to show a certain deference for the fantastic notions of that worthy American professor; but we’ve no illusions as to what he is. He has what I may call a one-track mind; no sense of proportion. And for a statesman, that’s disastrous. He lives in a sort of dream-world he has built up out of his imagination. Well meaning, I grant you, but heaven preserve us if this mystic-minded Puritan starts meddling with the complicated political machinery of our old Europe!”

Antoine would have wished to put in a word, but the state of his throat made it almost impossible. Of all the leading statesmen of the day Wilson was, to his thinking, the only one capable of looking beyond the war and planning for the future on broad lines. But the most Antoine could do now was to show his disagreement by an emphatic gesture.

Rumelles took it smilingly. “Oh, come now, old man! Don’t tell me you’ve fallen for President Wilson’s utopian theories.” He stretched his arm out, leaned forward, and, resting his plump, freckled hand on the tablecloth, continued in a confidential undertone. “In any case, those in the know assure us that President Wilson isn’t quite so simple as he seems, and knows better than his famous ‘Messages.’ It seems that in championing a ‘peace without victory’ he has a wholly practical aim in view—to assure American preponderance in the Old World by preventing the Allies from reaping the fruits of victory, that’s to say, from becoming the dominant force in world affairs. Well, if that’s his plan, it doesn’t say much for his insight. For no one with any sense could suppose that France and England would have bled themselves white during all these years of war if they didn’t stand to get out of it some pretty solid and *material* benefit.”

But, Antoine inwardly protested, if at last a real peace, a foolproof peace, could be contrived, surely that would be the most “material” gain the European nations could possibly get out of the war? But he did not voice his thought. The heat and noise, the fumes of food and the tobacco-smoke, were making him more and more ill at ease. His difficulty in breathing was increasing. He was furious with himself for having been so weak as to accept Rumelles’s invitation, and ruefully reflected: I’ve a fine night in store!

But all this was lost on Rumelles, who seemed to take a personal pleasure in disparaging Wilson. For the bureaucrats at the Quai d’Orsay, Antoine supposed, the American President had come to be a target for their witticisms, their *bête noire*. Rumelles emphasized each sally with an angry little cackle, bobbing up and down on his chair as if he were sitting on live coals.

"Luckily President Poincaré and M. Clemenceau have the realistic outlook of the Latin races and they've realized the futility of the Wilsonian mirage. But don't forget that things have reached a point where reinforcements from America are absolutely indispensable. And once we've a big Yankee army on French soil to take a spell of duty at the front, we'll be able to get our second wind and sit tight while America settles Germany's hash for good and all."

In thoughtful mood Antoine watched Rumelles eating steak ("*Very* rare, please. Blue!" he had told the waiter). Then he raised his arm slightly, as if asking leave to speak.

"So you think the war will last—several years more?"

Pushing away his plate, Rumelles leaned back in his chair. "Several years? No, I shouldn't say that. In fact, I rather think we'll have some pleasant surprises quite soon." He gazed pensively at his fingernails for a moment, then, lowering his voice again, bent toward Antoine. "Listen, Thibault, I remember hearing M. Deschanel say one evening in my presence—it was in February, 1915—'It's impossible to estimate the duration of this war or the course that it will take. To my mind, it's a recrudescence of the wars following the Revolution. There may be *truces*; but a lasting peace is very far away!' When I heard that remark I hardly took it seriously. But today—well, today I'm more inclined to regard it as a flash of prophetic insight." He paused, toyed for a moment with the salt-cellar, then added: "So much so that if tomorrow the Allies win some spectacular victory and the Central Powers ask for an armistice, I shall think, like Monsieur Deschanel: Here's a *truce*, but the final, lasting peace is still far off."

He sighed, then, with that air of reciting a set piece which so exasperated Antoine, he launched into a masterly summary of the course of the war, beginning with the invasion of Belgium. Presented thus, with the successive phases summarized in clean-cut patterns, the march of events was seen to follow an amazingly logical sequence, move following move as in a game of chess. For the first time Antoine saw this war, in which he had taken part day after day, in full perspective, under its historical aspect. In Rumelles's eloquent résumé names like "Verdun," "the Marne," "the Somme," pregnant till now for Antoine with tragically vivid personal associations, were suddenly stripped of immediate reality and became landmarks in a technical epitome, chapter headings in a handbook for the use of history students.

“That brings us to 1918,” Rumelles said in conclusion; “the entry of America into the war, the tightening up of the blockade, and the breakdown of German morale. Logically, their defeat became inevitable. In these circumstances they had the choice of two alternatives: either to try for a patched-up peace before it was too late or to stake all on a mass offensive before the bulk of the American troops had come over. They chose the second solution; hence the ‘big push’ in Picardy last March. Once again it was touch-and-go for us. Now they’re returning to the attack. That’s how things stand now. Will they bring it off this time? It’s just possible that we may find ourselves obliged to sue for peace before the summer’s over. But if they fail, they’ll have played their last card. In short, they’ll have lost the war—whether we stay our hands till the Americans are over in full force or—as, I gather, is Foch’s intention—we fling our last troops into a general attack on all fronts and establish ourselves firmly in enemy territory before the Americans throw their full weight into the scales. That’s why I’m inclined to say that the prospect of a real peace, a lasting peace, may well be still remote, but a *truce* may come at any moment.”

He had to stop talking; the fit of coughing that had come over Antoine was so severe that it would have been difficult for Rumelles, this time, to feign he had not noticed it.

“Sorry, old man; I’m afraid my chatter has been too much for you. Let’s be going.”

He beckoned to the headwaiter, in the best American style, drew a wad of notes from his trouser-pocket, and settled the bill after a casual glance.

In the Rue Royale blackout reigned; the lights of the cars drawn up by the curb were out. Rumelles gazed up at the sky.

“A clear sky. ‘They’ may very well pay us a visit tonight. I must get back to the F.O. to see if anything’s come in. But I’ll drive you home first.”

Antoine stepped into the car. Before joining him, Rumelles bought several evening papers at the bookstall.

“Eyewash!” Antoine muttered.

Before replying, Rumelles took care to close the sliding window behind the driver. “Of course it’s eyewash!” Rumelles retorted almost aggressively. “Don’t you realize it’s just as necessary to supply the country with its daily ration of optimistic news as to supply the troops with ammunition?”

“Ah, yes,” Antoine murmured ironically. “I was forgetting you have the ‘cure of souls.’ ”

Rumelles tapped his friend’s knee reprovingly. “You may laugh, Thibault, but it’s a serious matter. Just think. What can a government do in wartime? Control the course of events? Impossible, as you know. But public opinion's another matter. *That*, anyhow, the government can control; in fact, it's the one and only thing it can control. Well, here's where we come in. Our principal task is—how shall I put it?—this adjustment of the facts before they reach the public. We have to see that the news is such as to reinforce the public confidence in victory. And it's equally important to safeguard day by day the trust the nation has come to repose in its leaders, military and civil."

"By fair means or foul, it's all the same?"

Rumelles's only answer was a slight shrug of his shoulders.

After crawling down the dimly lit Boulevard Saint-Germain and the Rue de l'Université, the car had pulled up at Antoine's door. The two men stepped out. Rumelles was still speaking. "For instance, there was the week of Nivelle's offensive in April 1917." The febrile eagerness Antoine had noticed before had again crept into his voice, and, grasping Antoine's arm, he drew him out of the driver's earshot. "You can't imagine what it was like for us, who followed each stage of it hour by hour and saw blunder heaped on blunder and each night reckoned up our losses. Thirty-four thousand killed and over eighty thousand wounded in four or five days. Followed by a mutiny of the regiments concerned—what was left of them! But there could be no question of admitting the facts or doing justice; at all costs the mutiny had to be suppressed before it spread to other regiments. It was a matter of life or death for the nation. So we had to bolster up the General Staff, camouflage their blunders, save their face. Worse still, with our eyes open to the folly of it, we had to carry on, resume the offensive, throw more divisions into the shambles and sacrifice twenty or twenty-five thousand men more at Chemin-des-Dames and Laffaux."

"But why?"

"To score a small success, however trifling, upon which we could graft the 'serviceable lie.' And to restore confidence, which had been badly shaken everywhere. At last we had a stroke of luck in the Craonne attack. We magnified it into a splendid victory. We were saved! Ten days later the government ousted the generals responsible and put Pétain in command."

Ready to drop with weariness, Antoine was leaning against the wall. Rumelles helped him to the doorway.

"Yes, we were saved. But I assure you I'd rather give up a year of my life than have to live through those few weeks again." He sounded sincere. "Well, I must be off now. So glad to have seen you again." As Antoine was going in, he called after him. "Now do look after yourself properly, old man.

You doctors are all alike: devoted to your patients, but criminally careless when your own health is concerned."

Gise had got the bedroom ready. The shutters were closed and the curtains drawn; the slip-covers had been removed from the chairs and the bed made. A carafe of water and a tumbler stood on the bedside table, within easy reach. Antoine was so much affected by these small tokens of solicitude that he said to himself: "I must be even more run down than I realized. . . ."

The first thing he did was to give himself an oxygen injection. Then he sank into an easy-chair and remained sitting bolt-upright, his shoulders propped against the back, for ten minutes. He caught himself thinking of Rumelles with a sudden, fierce hostility, unjust no doubt, which took him by surprise. Then, "No," he murmured; "between us and *them* there can be no reconcilement, between us who've been at the front and those who stayed behind."

He was feeling a little easier in the chest. Rising, he checked his temperature: 100.6. Nothing exceptional after such a day.

Before turning in, he was careful to take a prolonged inhalation.

"No," he muttered again, as ragefully he buried his head in the pillow, "there's no possibility of pulling along with them. When demobilization comes, the men who stayed behind will have to lie low, stand aside. The France, the Europe of tomorrow will belong, as of right, to the men who fought in the war. And in every country they'll refuse to have any dealings with the men who did not fight."

The gloom weighed on him like a pall, but he refrained from switching on the light. This room, formerly M. Thibault's bedroom, had been the scene of the old man's painful illness and death-agony, and Antoine clearly recalled each detail: the bath shortly before he died, Jacques's assistance, the merciful injection, the watchers at the deathbed, the quiet close. And before his eyes staring wide open into the dark there formed a clean-cut picture of the room as it had looked then, with the huge mahogany bed, the chest of drawers laden with medicine-bottles, and the old tapestry-upholstered prie-dieu.

VI

THANKS to the oxygen injection, Antoine had passed a fairly comfortable, if all but sleepless, night. Finally, toward dawn, he had dropped into a doze, which had lasted long enough to involve him in a preposterous nightmare. It had brought on an attack of sweating so profuse as to awake him and necessitate a change of pyjamas. On returning to bed, with little hope, however, of getting any more sleep, he occupied his mind with conjuring up the sequence of his fantastic dream.

"Let's see. There were three distinct episodes, three scenes, but all in the same setting: the hall of my apartment.

"At first I was there with Léon, half mad with terror at the thought that Father might come home at any moment. It was an appalling situation. I'd taken advantage of Father's absence to take over his belongings; I'd ransacked the whole house. And now Father was going to return; I'd be caught red-handed. What a ghastly mess! I paced up and down the hall, racking my brains to find a way of staving off disaster. There was no question of quitting the house. . . . Now why was that? Because of Gise, who would be back in a few minutes. Léon, as panic-stricken as myself, was keeping watch, his ear glued to the front door. I can still see that goggle eye of his, dilated with alarm. Once he looked round in my direction, saying: 'Hadn't I better go and tell the mistress?'

"That was scene Number One. In the second, Father was planted there in front of me in the middle of the hall, wearing a frock-coat and top-hat with a band of crape—like Chasle's—*because of the funeral*. (What funeral?) On the floor beside him was a brand-new valise, like the one I brought with me to Paris yesterday. Léon had vanished. Father, fussily, but in a very dignified way, was fumbling in his pockets. When he noticed me, he said: 'Ah, there you are! What's become of Mademoiselle?' Then went on in the paternal, pompous tone he used on such occasions: 'Ah, my dear boy, I've lots to tell you; I've been in strange countries, most peculiar places.' My mouth was parched; I couldn't get a word out. I was again a little boy, trembling at the prospect of a well-earned punishment. And all the time I was wondering: 'How on earth didn't he notice all the changes, on his way up the stairs? That the stained-glass windows had gone? The new carpet?' Then, in a rush of panic, I thought: 'How am I to stop him from entering *our* room, and seeing the bed?' Then—no, I can't remember, there's a blank here.

"In the last scene Father was standing at the same spot, but in carpet slippers and that old plaid jacket he used to wear at home. He was in one of his black moods, jabbing forward his small, peaked beard and tugging at his neck to free it from the collar-wings. Then, with that frosty little laugh of his he said: ‘And now perhaps you’ll tell me, my dear boy, where you’ve put my spectacles?’ I knew at once what he meant—the tortoise-shell spectacles I’d found in his study and made over, along with his clothes and personal effects, to the Little Sisters of the Poor. Then suddenly he flared up and strode toward me. ‘And my securities? What have you done with them?’ ‘What securities do you mean, Father?’ I panted. I was sweating heavily and as I mopped my face I remember listening for the click of the elevator-door. I was expecting Gise to appear at any moment—in nurse’s uniform, of course; it was the time she came back from her hospital. And then—I woke up, dripping with sweat, as in my dream.”

The memory of his panic fear made him smile, but he was still labouring under its effects. It struck him that he must have a slight temperature. . . . Yes, 100. Better than yesterday evening, but this morning it should have been practically normal.

When he was in his bathroom two hours later, washing and gargling his throat, his thoughts sped back to the dream. “The queer thing,” he mused, “when one looks into it, is how short it was. Three flashlike episodes, all told: a brief phase of suspense, with Léon; Father’s sudden appearance with the valise; the talk about the spectacles and securities. Yet how much more there was to it than that! It was, so to speak, the uprush of something infinitely vaster, a self-contained totality—my whole past.”

Feeling a slight difficulty in breathing, because of his having stayed on his feet too long, Antoine sat down on the edge of the bathtub, and let his thoughts run on.

“It’s curious how the past always provides the groundwork of our dreams—a fact which must often have been observed and has probably been investigated. Still, it’s a new idea to me. Now, that dream of mine last night—it’s a particularly striking case in point. In fact, I might summon up my energy and write it out, or I’ll have forgotten all about it in a couple of days.”

He glanced at the clock. Plenty of time to spare. He fetched the diary in which every night he wrote up his clinical observations on his illness and which he had been careful to bring with him. Then, after tearing out some blank pages and wrapping himself in the bathrobe hanging on one of the pegs—“Dear little Gise,” he smiled, “she thought of everything!”—he went back to the bedroom and lay down on the bed.

He had been scribbling away enthusiastically for three-quarters of an hour when there was a ring at the bell. It was a special-delivery letter from Philip, couched in affectionate terms, explaining that he had to be away from Paris for two days—he was at the head of a commission appointed to inspect the hospitals of the Northern Command—but hoped Antoine would come and see him on Wednesday evening.

It was a great disappointment for Antoine; still, he reminded himself, things might have been worse; it was lucky he was not obliged to return to Grasse before next Thursday.

The pages from his diary, five in all, were scattered on the bed, covered with his curious handwriting, which had the look of hieroglyphs, each letter being separated from its neighbours—a trick acquired in the days when he had had to do Greek themes. The first two sheets contained an analytical description of the dream, including all the characteristic details he could recall. The other three were devoted to a commentary on these data. It was one of Antoine's pet ideas that clear thinking conduces to clear writing, and it annoyed him to find his annotations somewhat lacking in lucidity. Yet, in earlier days, he had excelled in the art of setting forth in a few pithy sentences all the essentials of an elaborate thought-sequence. "If I'm to start contributing again to the reviews," he told himself, "I'll have to get my mind back into training."

This is what he had written:

> In a dream there are two distinct elements:
>
> (1) The dream proper, its happenings (in which the dreamer always participates to some extent). These happenings (the *plot*) are like a scene in a stage play: they are usually brief, scrappy, but teeming with action.
>
> (2) Environing this tense dramatic nucleus there is a given *situation*, which shapes it, gives it plausibility. This situation lies outside the actual happenings and nowhere intrudes on them. But the dreamer is definitely aware of its presence. And, in the texture of the dream, that situation is presented to him as one in which the dreamer has been involved over a long period. It is comparable with all that a man's past connotes for him in the waking state.
>
> In the case of the dream I had last night, I find that each of its three episodes is surrounded by a complex of circumstances which, though not actually participating in the action of the dream, were implicitly embodied in it. And, in fact, if one looks more closely into it, these "circumstances" are found to be of two kinds, disposed, as it were, in two successive zones. We have the immediate circumstances, closely massed round the nucleus. And then we have a second zone, further removed from it in time: an

agglomeration of much older circumstances, forming an imaginary past without which the dream would not have been possible. This past, of which I, the dreamer, was constantly aware, played no part in the course of the dream itself; it was merely pre-existent as regards the dream, much as the past of the characters in a play is pre-existent to the action on the stage.

Now to go further into detail. What I mean by a “circumstance of the first zone” is, for instance, that I *knew* the time it was, though in the dream there was no question of the hour. I *knew* it was a few minutes before noon and that I was expecting Gise to come home for lunch as usual. I *knew* that earlier in the morning, when she was out and I’d no means of communicating with her, I had received a wire from Father to say he was returning for the funeral. (An obscure point, that. *Whose* funeral? Not Mademoiselle’s. But it must have been the funeral of a member of our household, for we were all affected by this bereavement.) I *knew* that Father was fumbling in his pocket for money to pay his fare, for I *knew* that a taxi, laden with luggage, had just set him down at the front door (I think I might go so far as to say I could see the taxi waiting in the street simultaneously with seeing Father in the hall).

Circumstances of the second zone. By this I mean a group of events fairly remote in time and within the knowledge of the dream Antoine. I cannot definitely affirm that I actually thought about these events while the dream was in progress; but their memory was implicit *in me* (as are one’s memories of real life). Thus I *knew* (more precisely: there was the knowledge in me) that Father had been away from France for a long while, that he had been deputed by some social service group to make investigations bearing on his charities, in some distant land. (A study of conditions in foreign penitentiaries, or something of the sort.) He had had so far to go that it was as if he were never to return. I *knew*, too, exactly how we had felt regarding his departure; it had been for us all as welcome as it was unexpected. I *knew* that, once I had escaped his leading-strings, I had married Gise. Then we had taken possession of the apartment and made a clean sweep of everything within it, selling off the furniture, handing over Father’s belongings to the sisters, pulling down walls, and thoroughly transforming the whole place. (But, in the dream, oddly enough, these changes were not the changes that I actually

> made. Thus, though in the dream the hall had been repainted light yellow as it is now, the carpet was red, not brown, and where the console-table now is there stood the old oak grandfather's clock Father used to have in the morning-room.) There is much more than this; in fact, the list of things I *knew* would run to many pages. Thus I *knew* quite definitely that our bedroom, Gise's and mine (where, be it noted, nothing took place in the dream), was the room that had been Father's and that it had come to look like Anne's bedroom in her Paris house. Still more noteworthy is that I *knew* that Léon had not had time that morning to tidy up the apartment and our big bed was still unmade; and I was appalled at the thought that Father would be sure to enter our room. There were hosts of other details of our domestic life and circumstances that I *knew*. One of the most striking is that, though my brother played no part whatever in the dream, I *knew* that Jacques, desperately jealous, had moved to Switzerland soon after our marriage, and . . .

There, abruptly, the writing ended. . . . Antoine felt no desire now to complete it. He merely added a marginal note in pencil:

> Look up all that's been written on the subject by authorities on the phenomena of dreams.

Then, after folding the sheets, he put a kettle on the gas for his inhalation.

Presently, his head cocooned in towels, eyes closed, and cheeks streaming, he was drawing in deep breaths of the healing vapour—his thoughts still busy with his dream. It suddenly struck him that its whole theme betokened an uneasy conscience, a sense of responsibility, indeed of guilt, which in the waking state his pride kept in abeyance. "And it's a fact," he murmured; "I've no reason to feel proud of my behavior since Father's death." He had in mind not only the luxurious appointments of his home, but also his liaison with Anne, his incursions into Parisian night-life—all symptoms of a steadily increasing self-indulgence. "A regular rake's progress," he ruefully admitted to himself. "And, on top of it all, I've lost the greater part of the fortune left me by my father." He had spent a good half of his father's personal estate on improvements to the house; as for the remainder, dissatisfied with the low yield of the investments made by prudent M. Thibault, he had sold them out and replaced them by Russian stock, which had recently dropped to zero. "Well, well! It's a fool's game, nursing vain regrets," he told himself. It was thus that he had come to call his scruples. And yet—his dream was evidence of this—deep within his heart, he still cherished the middle-class respect for a "family fortune," slowly amassed and handed down from father to son. Although answerable to no one but himself, he felt ashamed of having squandered, in less than a year, a patrimony built up by the industry and prudence of several generations.

He uncovered his head for a few seconds, took some breaths of fresh air and dabbed his swollen eyes, then buried his head again under the swath of moist, warm towels.

His musings on those spendthrift months before the war linked up with the depression that had come over him the previous afternoon, after Gise had left, when roaming through his spacious laboratory, abandoned now to dust and solitude, and his pompously entitled "record room," with its pigeonholes for case-books, and racks of brand-new numbered and lettered filing-cases—all empty. He had entered, too, the lavishly equipped surgery, which had never once been used. And there his thoughts had harked back to the humble little apartment on the ground floor in which he had started his career, the useful career of an energetic young doctor, and he had realized that, after his father's death, he had given a wrong direction to his life.

The inhaler was cooling down, the jet of steam diminishing. Throwing aside the soaked towels, Antoine dried his face, then went back to the bedroom. Facing the mirror, he tested his voice: "Ah . . . eh . . . ah . . . oh . . ." Though still hoarse, it had regained its timbre, and he felt his throat clear for the moment.

"Twenty minutes' breathing-exercises. Then ten minutes' rest. After that I'll pack my things and, as I can't see Philip today, take the first train to Maisons."

On his way to the station, as the car was crossing the Tuileries Gardens, his gaze roved idly from the statues dotted among the lawns, and gleaming white under the morning sun, to the graceful outlines of the Arc du Carrousel, blurred by a haze of tenuous blue. And suddenly there came back to him how on a May morning like this he and Anne had met near by, in the Louvre courtyard, and a new thought waylaid him. He called to the driver.

"Take me to the entrance of the Bois. By the Rue Spontini, please."

When they were near the Battaincourts' house, he told the chauffeur to drive slowly and leaned out of the window. All the shutters were closed; the gateway was shut. On the caretaker's lodge hung a notice:

FOR SALE
THIS DESIRABLE RESIDENCE
Inner Courtyard. Garage. Garden

Under “FOR SALE” the words “OR TO LET” had been chalked in.

The car was slowly passing alongside the garden wall. Antoine felt nothing, literally nothing: neither emotion, nor regret. And now he wondered what had persuaded him to make this pointless pilgrimage.

“Turn back, please, and drive to the Saint-Lazare station,” he called to the taximan.

“Yes,” he said to himself almost at once, as if nothing had interrupted his previous train of thought, “yes, I was fooling myself to the top of my bent when I decided that I had to reorganize my professional career. Reorganize! Why, instead of furthering my work, all those material facilities put a stop to it. All the machinery was there, and running smoothly—only it turned out nothing. Everything was set for some big, epoch-making enterprise. And in reality I just stayed put, twiddling my thumbs!” Suddenly he recalled his brother’s attitude toward the fortune left them by their father, Jacques’s high disdain for money—which Antoine at the time had thought so fatuous. “But Jacques was right. How much better we’d understand each other, he and I, today! Money acts like a poison. Especially money one’s come into, unearned capital. I’d have been done for—but for the war. I should never have got the money-virus out of my system. I had come to think one can buy everything, and to regard the habit of doing little work oneself and making others work for one as the birthright of the well-to-do. Without a blush I’d have personally taken the credit for any discovery made by Jousselin or Studler in *my* laboratory. A profiteer, that’s what I was in a fair way of becoming. I enjoyed the mastery that money gives one, the deference that wealth assured me. And I’d almost come to find this deference quite natural, and to believe that my money really made me a superior being. Pretty disgusting that, when one thinks about it! And there’s something more: all contacts between a wealthy man and those around him are tainted with suspicion, falsified. I was already getting to mistrust everything and everybody. That’s one of the insidious ways money has of rotting a man’s character. Yes, I was beginning to wonder, even where my best friends were concerned: ‘Now why did he say that? Is it my cheque-book that he’s getting at?’ Pretty foul, that! Pretty foul!”

So bitter was the self-reproach that came of stirring up the dregs of his past life that he felt a vast relief at finding the taxi had reached Saint-Lazare. And as he pushed his way through the crowd around the ticket-offices, he hardly noticed the effort that it cost him, so glad was he of this distraction from his thoughts.

“A first—no, a third-class ticket for Maisons-Lafitte, please. When does the next train leave?”

He had rarely travelled third. And in doing so now, he felt a kind of Spartan satisfaction.

VII

CLOTILDE had knocked at the door. Balancing the tray on one hand, she waited a few moments, then knocked again. No answer. Vexed at the thought that Antoine had gone out without having his early cup of milk and rolls, she opened the door.

The room was in darkness. Antoine was still in bed. He had heard the knock, but, as usual in the mornings before his inhalation, his voice was so feeble that he did not think it worth while trying to say: “Come in!” He endeavoured to convey this by signs to Clotilde.

Though he accompanied his curious gestures with a reassuring smile, the worthy woman remained standing on the threshold, her eyebrows arched in consternation. Had he not come and had a nice talk with her in the kitchen last night, soon after his arrival? What could have happened? The idea crossed her mind that he had had a stroke and was partially paralysed. Guessing her thought, Antoine smiled still more genially and beckoned her toward the bed. Then, taking the pad and pencil lying on the bedside table, he scribbled: “Slept well. But I’ve never any voice in the mornings.”

She slowly puzzled out the words, gazed at him incredulously, then blurted out: “That’s as it may be, but we didn’t look to see you in this state. Them Boches made a nice job of you, sir, to be sure.”

She went to the window and drew up the venetian blinds. A burst of sunlight flooded the room. The sky was blue and, through a wreathed trellis of Virginia creeper spanning the wooden balcony, Antoine could see the fir trees in the garden and, farther off, the tree-tops of the Saint-Germain woods, dappled with early green and lightly swaying in the morning breeze.

Clotilde came back to the bedside. “Will you be able to eat, sir, seeing the state you’re in?” she inquired anxiously as she filled the cup with hot milk. While Antoine broke some bread into the cup, she moved back a step and stared at him, her hands thrust in her apron pockets. He had so much difficulty in swallowing that she could not refrain from comment.

“We never dreamt you were that ill, sir. When the news came that you’d been gassed, I said to myself: ‘Anyhow, it ain’t so bad as if the master had been wounded.’ But seemingly it’s just as bad. I’m not like my sister Adrienne; there’s nothing she don’t know about diseases. When you wrote us to go with Mlle. Gise to Mme. Fontanin’s hospital, Adrienne was pleased no end. ‘That’s fine!’ says she. ‘I’m going to nurse wounded soldiers.’ Then I says to her: ‘See here, Adrienne, I’ll do all the chores and cooking that they want—I ain’t work-shy—but as for nursing wounded soldiers, no, it ain’t my line.’ So I stayed back here, and Adrienne went to work for the ladies at the hospital. I don’t complain, though I have to keep at it from morn till night. There’s a sight too much work in this hostel, as they call it, for one woman, without any help, and that’s the truth. But I’d rather slave twenty-four hours a day here than have to go paddling in blood and gore at that there hospital like Adrienne!”

Antoine smiled. Still, he reflected, it was a pity she had this prejudice against hospital work. In default of Gise, it would have been rather pleasant to be nursed back to health by this simple, devoted creature.

To show that he appreciated the arduousness of her daily task, he pursed his lips sympathetically and slowly moved his head from side to side.

“Oh,” she hastily put in, seized by compunction, “when all’s said and done, it ain’t so tiring as it sounds. The ladies are away nearly all day at the hospital. And I’ve only M. Daniel and Mme. Jenny and the kiddie at lunchtime.”

More familiar than in the past—it was as if the war years had levelled out certain differences—she began airing her opinions of everyone in the household, with the utmost freedom. The spate of words was deafening, but Antoine picked up a phrase here and there: “Mlle. Gise, she’s always kindness itself.” “You can’t never talk to Mme. Fontanin; ’tain’t that she’s really so stand-offish, but she doesn’t make you feel at ease.” “Mme. Nicole now, she’s a proper harum-scarum, but you can’t say ‘No’ to her.” “Mme. Jenny ain’t much of a talker, but her head’s screwed on the right way, and she’s a fine worker.” But all her talk centred on the “kiddie,” in tones of love and admiration.

“Ah, he’s a promising child, and no mistake. He takes after the poor master; he’ll make himself obeyed.” (Yes, Antoine reflected, we mustn’t forget he’s Father’s grandson.) “Why, he’d drive us all crazy if we let him have his way. You can’t imagine what that kiddie’s like, sir. Like a bit of quicksilver, a proper little imp of mischief. He won’t obey no one. A good thing M. Daniel’s always there to look after him; you can’t trust him out of your sight a moment. Anyhow, it keeps M. Daniel busy, else he’d be moping about alone there all day, with nothing to do but chew his gum.” She wagged her head knowingly. “But I’ve a notion, sir, there’s some these days who ain’t sorry they got a *leg* that’s ailing.”

Antoine reached for his writing-pad. “Léon?” he wrote.

“Léon, poor fellow!” But it seemed she had little news to give of Antoine’s old butler. (He had been taken prisoner near Charleroi after a fortnight’s active service, on the day following his arrival in the front line. On learning the number of his prison camp, Antoine had instructed Clotilde to send him a basket of food each month. Each was acknowledged by Léon on a three-word postcard. He never gave any news about himself.) “What do you think he wrote and asked us for? A flute! Mlle. Gise bought one and sent it to him.”

Antoine had finished his bread and milk. Clotilde took up the tray. “I’ve got to go down and help Mme. Jenny. Tuesday’s her washing-day and she can’t lift the tub by herself. A kiddie dirties a lot of linen, that’s sure.” Going out, she paused in the doorway to give Antoine a parting glance of inspection. Suddenly the flat features took on a meditative air.

“Eh, M. Antoine, who’d ever have dreamed it—all we been through in the last few years. All these changes! As I often says to Adrienne, ‘If the old master could come back on earth . . . if he could see all that’s happened since he left us . . . !’ ”

As soon as she had gone, Antoine began dressing. He took his time about it; there was no hurry. He intended to give himself a thorough course of treatment before going downstairs. “If the old master could come back . . . !” Clotilde’s remark had reminded him of his dream. What an ascendancy Father still has over us! he thought.

It was past eleven when he reopened the window, which he had closed so as to do his breathing-exercises without being heard.

A man’s voice floated up to him from the garden. “Hi, Paul! Get down from there! Come over here.” Like a distant echo came a woman’s voice, calm and clear: “Now, Paul, be a good boy. Do what Uncle Dan tells you.”

He stepped out onto the balcony and glanced down across the curtain of Virginia creeper. Immediately under him was the narrow terrace overlooking the old ditch that separated the garden from the forest. In the shadow of the two great plane trees—Mme. de Fontanin's favourite retreat in the old days—Daniel was lounging in a wicker chair, a book on his knees. Some yards from him a little boy in a pale-blue jumper was trying to climb the parapet, with the aid of a small bucket placed bottom upward, evidently for that purpose, beside the wall. At the far end of the terrace, through the open, sunlit doorway of what used to be the gardener's cottage, Jenny could be seen bending over a washtub, her sleeves rolled up, arms flecked with soapsuds.

"Come along, Paul!"

A lock of red-brown tousled hair glinted in the sunlight; the child had deigned to turn. But, to show his independence, he composedly sat down on the ground and, drawing his shovel toward him, began filling the bucket with sand.

When, a few moments later, Antoine came down the steps, little Paul was still seated at the same spot.

Daniel called: "Come and say good morning to Uncle Antoine!"

Squatting at the foot of the wall, the child went on shovelling sand into the bucket, as if he had not heard. As Antoine approached, he lowered his head still more. Feeling himself seized, swung off his feet, he struggled for a moment with his captor, then, with a merry laugh, gave in.

"So Uncle Antoine's a nasty man?"

"Oo, yes! Awful nasty!"

Breathless with the exertion, Antoine set down the child and came back to Daniel. But no sooner was he seated than little Paul ran up, clambered up on his knees, and, snuggling against his tunic, pretended to fall asleep.

Daniel had not stirred from his chair. He was wearing an old striped tennis-shirt without a tie and shabby dark-grey trousers. On the foot of his artificial limb he had a black boot; on the other, which was bare, a carpet slipper. He had filled out; his features still had their grace of outline, but they had coarsened. With his blue, stubbly chin and overlong hair he brought to mind one of those elderly provincial actors who, careless of their person in the daytime, nightly regain something of the old glamour by benefit of footlights. Antoine, who ever since rising had been busy attending to his throat, noticed—without attaching undue importance to it—that the young man, after languidly shaking hands with him, did not make the least inquiry about his health. (As a matter of fact, however, they had compared notes on the previous evening regarding their respective plights.) At a loss what to say, Antoine made a vague, interrogative gesture toward the large, album-like volume Daniel had just closed and placed on the gravel path.

"Oh, that's an old *Round the World*, the travel magazine, you know. For the year 1877!" Picking up the book, he fluttered the pages idly. "It's full of pictures. We have the whole set in the house."

Absent-mindedly Antoine was fondling little Paul's hair; the child seemed lost in reverie, his head pillowed on his uncle's chest and his eyes wide open.

"What's the news this morning? Have you seen the papers?" Antoine asked.

"No."

"They gave us to understand, these last few days, that the Supreme War Council proposed to extend Foch's command to the Italian front."

"Really!"

"I dare say it's been announced officially today."

Jean-Paul wriggled down from Antoine's knee, as if he had just discovered he was bored. In one breath Uncle Dan and Uncle Antoine asked: "Where are you off to?"

"I'm going to Mummy."

Hopping twice on each foot in turn, the little boy scampered toward the gardener's cottage, under the amused observation of the two grown-ups. Daniel took a package of chewing-gum from his pocket and held it out to Antoine.

"No, thanks."

"It helps to pass the time," Daniel explained. "I've given up smoking." He put a large chunk into his mouth and began chewing.

Antoine smiled. "That reminds me of an experience I had in the war. At Villers-Bretonneux. We'd installed our dressing-station in a farmhouse that had been used for some months by an American Red Cross unit. Well, our orderlies had to spend a whole day chipping the lumps of chewing-gum from walls and doors and chairs and tables. I never saw such a disgusting mess! The filthy stuff was as hard as cement; they had to chisel it off. If the Anglo-Saxon occupation lasts another year or two, the furniture in North-East France will lose its form completely, buried under a foot or two of solid chewing-gum." A slight access of coughing made him pause for a moment. "Like those rocks in the Pacific . . . you know . . . which have become . . . huge mounds of guano."

Daniel smiled. Like Jacques, Antoine had always been particularly susceptible to the charm of Daniel's smile, and it gave him pleasure now to see that the smile had lost nothing of its fascination. True there was some grossness now about the features, but the upper lip curled up in the same odd, lopsided way and with the same tantalizing slowness, while a roguish twinkle crept into the half-shut eyes.

Antoine could not stop coughing; he made a gesture of mingled vexation and disheartenment. "You see . . . what a wheezy . . . old fogy I am these days." He got the words out with an effort. On recovering his breath, he added: "Yes, as Clotilde said just now, them Boches made a nice job of me. And even so I suppose we must count ourselves amongst the privileged few."

"You, perhaps," Daniel said hastily, under his breath.

There followed a minute's silence, broken, this time, by Daniel. "You asked me if I'd read the papers. I hadn't—I read them as little as possible. I'm only too apt to think about—all that. I've lost the power of thinking about anything else. And as for reading those communiqués, when one knows, as we do, exactly what the words signify. 'Slight activity in such-and-such a sector.' 'Successful raid at such-and-such a place.' No!" He let his head sink onto the back of the chair, and closed his eyes. "One has to have gone over the top, to have taken part in an infantry attack, to . . . understand. So long as I was in the cavalry, I knew nothing about war. Still, I'd been in one or two charges. A charge—that, too, doesn't bear talking about. But it's nothing compared to an infantry attack, waiting behind the parapet for zero hour, and going over with fixed bayonets." He shivered, opened his eyes, and stared up for a moment at the tree-tops, chewing his gum ragefully. "Actually how many of us are there, all told, in the back areas who know what it's like? The men who've come back from the front —how many are they? And, anyhow, why should they talk about it? No, they can't, or they won't say anything. They know that nobody would understand them."

He fell silent. The two men remained for some minutes without exchanging a word, without even looking at each other. Then Antoine spoke in a slow, uncertain tone, pausing at whiles to cough. "There are times when I tell myself this is the last war, that it's unthinkable there should ever be another. Yes, sometimes I feel sure of it. But there are other times when . . . I'm not so sure."

Daniel chewed away in silence, gazing into the distance. His face was expressionless.

Antoine said no more. The strain of speaking for several minutes on end was too much for him. But inwardly he followed up the same train of thought, for the hundredth or thousandth time. “When one reckons up dispassionately all that stands in the way of ‘peace among men,’—it’s appalling! How many centuries will elapse before the course of moral evolution (assuming there is such a process) has purged man of his congenital intolerance, his innate respect for brute force, and the insensate pleasure the human animal feels in beating an enemy to his knees and forcibly imposing his own ways of living and feeling on others weaker than himself, who live differently, feel otherwise? And then, of course, there’s the political factor, the self-interest of governments. When a government’s in a tight corner, it’s always a temptation for the men in power, the men who can start a war and make others bear the brunt of it, to fake a *casus belli*—and save their precious skins. It’s such an easy way out; one hardly dares to hope that governments will never have recourse to it again. Which can only be if that way out is marked: *No thoroughfare*; if pacifist ideas have taken root so firmly in men’s minds and become so widespread as to set up an impassable barrier against the war-mongers. And that’s too much to hope for, as things are. What’s more, even if pacifism triumphed, would it really mean that peace had come to stay? Even if some day, in certain lands of Europe, pacifist parties held the reins of power, how could one be sure they would not yield to the temptation of starting a war for the satisfaction of imposing, by force, their pacifist ideology on the other countries that did not share their views?” Clotilde’s voice rang out gaily from the kitchen door. “Now then, Master Paul!” She came toward them, carrying a tray on which were a bowl of porridge, some stewed prunes, and a mug of milk, and placed them on the garden-table.

“Hurry up, Paul!” cried Daniel.

The little boy came running across the sunlit terrace as fast as his small, sturdy legs could carry him. The blue of his jumper, faded by repeated washings, exactly matched the pale blue of his eyes. Once again Antoine was struck by his resemblance to Jacques, when Jacques was the same age. “The same forehead,” he mused, “the same ridge in his hair, the same rather blotchy complexion with a chequerwork of tiny freckles round the small, wrinkled nose.” Stalwart Clotilde had swung him oft his feet and was settling him on a chair. He submitted docilely to her attentions. Antoine gave him a smile, but little Paul, supposing he was being laughed at, looked away, then shot a furtive, hostile glance in Antoine’s direction. There was the same elusive quality in his regard that used to be in Jacques’s; changeful as an April sky, his eyes were now laughing or cajoling, now fretful or, as at the present moment, fiercely defiant, hard as steel. But behind all these surface fluctuations always their expression remained keen, precociously alert.

Jenny came through the sunlight toward them; her sleeves were rolled up, her hands swollen from the hot water, her apron spattered with suds. She gave Antoine a brief, affectionate smile.

"What sort of night did you have? . . . No, my hands are all wet. . . . Did you sleep all right?"

"Better than usual, thanks."

Watching Jenny now, Antoine could hardly believe that this buxom young woman, who accepted the duties of motherhood, the drudgery of menial tasks, with such natural ease, had once been that stiff, reserved young person in a dark, severely cut tailor-made costume whom Jacques had brought to his place on the day of mobilization.

She turned to Daniel. "Please be a dear and see he eats his porridge. I've got to go back. I haven't hung out my washing to dry yet." She tucked a napkin into her son's collar and fondled the little birdlike neck. "Now, Paul, be a good boy and eat your porridge. Uncle Dan will help you. I'll be back in a moment."

"Yes, Mam-ma." He made a little pause between the syllables, as Daniel and Jenny always did.

Daniel had risen from his easy-chair and seated himself beside the child. He had evidently been following up his previous train of thought, for no sooner was his sister gone than he went on as if there had been no interruption: "And there's something else, something one can hardly find words for and of which nobody who hasn't been at the front has the least notion. I mean that sort of miracle which always took place when one went up the line. For one thing, that incredible sense of liberation which came of knowing one was a mere puppet in the hands of fate, that one had made a blind surrender or one's will, and that one had no personal choice about anything at all. And then"—his voice was vibrant with emotion—"there was that marvellous *camaraderie* of the trenches, that feeling of brotherhood which came of sharing the same hardships, the same perils. . . . One had only to be moved back into a rest-camp, a few hours' march behind the lines, to realize how miraculous that mood had been—and to become an individual again."

Antoine nodded without speaking. His own memories of the war were chiefly of mud and blood, but he understood what Daniel meant: that unique fellowship of the men under fire, co-partners in calamity, in which, as in a mystical communion, the individual self was fined away and merged in a collective soul.

Intimidated by Antoine’s presence, little Paul submitted to being spoon-fed by Daniel, whose dexterity in tipping spoonfuls of porridge into the child’s open mouth, while carrying on a conversation, proved him no novice in the technique of male nursemaid.

It suddenly struck Antoine that this little scene was as unpredictable four years ago as anything could be. Who ever could have foreseen Daniel ill-dressed, decrepit, playing the part of nursemaid; or the existence of this child, son of Jacques and Jenny? “And yet,” he mused, “thus and thus it has turned out—and I feel little or no wonder. It’s amazing how what *is* usurps the mind—to the exclusion of all the might-have-beens. Once anything has happened, we seem to lose the power of even conceiving that it might equally well not have happened. Or could have happened quite otherwise. . . .” For some moments he let his thoughts drift on in desultory speculation. Then he chuckled to himself: “If Goiran were here and heard me, I’d be in for a full-dress lecture on free will . . . !”

“Now, then, mind what you’re up to!” grumbled Uncle Dan. The spoon-feeding process had become more ticklish now that porridge had given place to prunes. The little boy’s eyes kept on straying toward his mother, who was busy hanging out washing on the wire-netting round the chicken-yard. Now and then Daniel had to wait for quite a while, the spoon poised in mid-air, till Master Paul condescended to open his mouth again. But he showed no impatience.

Once Jenny had hung out her washing, she hastened to come to her brother’s aid. Antoine watched her crossing the sunlit terrace a second time. She had taken off her apron and was pulling down her sleeves as she walked. Daniel waved away her offer of assistance. “No, don’t bother. We’ve finished.”

“What about our milk?” she gaily cried. “Hurry up! What will Uncle Antoine say if Paul hasn’t drunk his milk?”

The child had already raised his arm to push away the cup; now he paused and glared at Antoine defiantly. He was evidently expecting to be lectured. But when, instead, he glimpsed a twinkle in Antoine’s eye, a smile of humorous connivance, Paul hesitated, changed his mind. The little face lit up with mischievous delight and, gazing all the time at Antoine as if inviting him to admire this marvellous docility, the child drank off his cup of milk without more ado.

"Now, Paul, come along to bye-bye," Jenny said as she removed the bib and helped her son down from the chair. "Then Mummy can have her lunch in peace, with Uncle Dan and Uncle Antoine."

The two men were left to themselves. Daniel rose, walked over to the nearest plane tree, tore off a strip of bark, gazed at it listlessly, then crumbled it in his hand. Taking another piece of gum from his pocket, he began chewing again. Finally he went back to the easy-chair and once more stretched himself on it.

Antoine kept silent. He was thinking of Daniel, of the war, of that "mystical communion" of the men in the front trenches. He remembered a remark made to him at the Le Mousquier mess by young Lubin, who reminded him in so many ways of his former assistant, Manuel Roy: "You may say what you like, but war has a *glamour* all its own." There had been a break in the young man's voice and a far-away look in his eyes as he said this. Of course, Antoine reflected, Lubin was a youngster of twenty who had been shifted at a moment's notice from the lecture rooms of the Sorbonne into active service, pitchforked from playing fields into the front line. He had not yet made a start in life when he was caught by the war; he had no career to leave behind him. That was one reason why he could talk so airily about war and even find a "glamour" in it. But, Antoine mused, what does that "glamour" come to when one thinks of all the horrors that I've witnessed?

Into his mind a memory flashed of a certain night in early September—in the course of that long-drawn-out struggle which Antoine always thought of as "the fighting at Provins" but which the world knew as the Battle of the Marne—when he had had to move his first-aid station at a moment's notice, under a violent bombardment. After successfully evacuating the wounded he had managed to crawl, followed by his orderlies, along a trench to a somewhat less heavily shelled area, where there was a decapitated farmhouse whose thick walls and vaulted cellar seemed to offer temporary shelter. But just then the enemy guns had lengthened the range; shells came dropping nearer and nearer at every moment. The first thing Antoine had done was to send all his men down into the cellar and close the trap door on them. After that he had gone back to the entrance and stood leaning against the doorpost, waiting for a lull in the gunfire. It was then the thing had happened. There had come a shell-burst only thirty or forty yards away, making him stagger back into the living-room under a shower of bricks and plaster. And there, in the darkness, he had run into his men grouped together in the centre of the room. He guessed why they were there. Seeing that their officer disdained to join them in their “funk-hole,” they had pushed up the trapdoor and of their own accord had lined up silently behind him.

“We were in a damned tight corner just then,” Antoine reflected, “and I must admit this proof of my men’s devotion, their loyalty, gave me a thrill of pleasure that I’ll never forget. Yes, if some young fire-eater like Lubin had said to me that night: ‘War has a glamour all its own,’ I’d have agreed, likely as not.”

Then, catching himself up angrily, he said: “No!”

Unwittingly he had spoken the word aloud. Daniel turned in surprise.

“What I meant to say . . .” he began; then, excusing himself with a smile, gave up attempting to explain, and fell silent.

From a window on the first floor came a sound of crying: little Paul protesting against being put to bed.

VIII

JENNY had tucked the child up in his cot and was waiting for him to fall asleep. Meanwhile, as was her daily practice, she changed into her work-clothes so as to be able to go to the hospital immediately after lunch and take up her duties in the linen-room. Happening to pass one of the windows, she had a glimpse across the light tulle curtain of the two men conversing under the plane trees. Antoine’s voice was too low-pitched to reach her, but Daniel’s had sudden bursts of shrillness which, though she did not catch the words, were clearly audible.

Sadness fell on her as she remembered the two young men the way they once had been—active, robust, and cheerful, full of ambitious projects for the future. War had made them what they were today. . . . Still, they had come through it alive, anyhow. Their health would improve; Antoine would recover his voice, Daniel get used to his lameness. One day they would pick up again the broken threads of their careers. But for Jacques—all was ended. Ah, could he, too, have been alive this bright May morning, she would have left everything to follow him, to the ends of the earth if need be, and they would have brought up their son together! But no—all was over . . . for ever.

She could no longer hear Daniel’s voice. Going up to the window, she saw Antoine walking toward the house. Since yesterday she had been seeking an opportunity of speaking to him alone. A glance at the baby told her he had fallen asleep; she rapidly did up her skirt and tidied up the room, then went to the door and held it open.

Antoine was climbing the stairs slowly, clinging to the banisters. When he looked up and saw her, she smiled and, laying a finger on her lips, went toward him. “He’s asleep. Come and have a peep at him.”

Too out of breath to reply, he followed her on tiptoe.

It was a very large room, and the Jouy wallpaper with a gay pictorial design in blue increased the effect of airiness. At the far end were two identical twin beds with the child’s cot between them. This, Antoine conjectured, must have been the bedroom of M. and Mme. de Fontanin in the past. But he was puzzled by the fact that both of the full-sized beds were apparently in use; the bedside table next to each was strewn with miscellaneous toilet articles. Hung on the wall between the beds was a portrait of Jacques, life-sized and as arresting as a living presence. It was an oil painting in the modern style. Antoine had never seen it before.

Little Jean-Paul was sleeping, curled up between the sheets, one shoulder tucked under the bolster, his hair ruffled, the pink, moist lips a little parted. His free arm lay on the counterpane, but there was no slackness in its poise—the small fist was clenched like a boxer’s.

Antoine pointed to the portrait, throwing a questioning glance at Jenny.

“I brought it back with me from Switzerland,” she whispered. Her gaze settled on the picture, then sped back to the child. “Isn’t it extraordinary, the likeness between them!”

“Ah, but you should have known Jacques when he was Paul’s age. . . .” Yet, he reflected, it doesn’t follow in the least that they’ll resemble each other in character. This child’s mental make-up must have countless elements which did not enter into that of Jacques. He followed up his thought aloud, in a low voice: “Isn’t it strange to think of all the multitude of ancestors, near and remote, that have contributed their share to this little life? Which influences, one wonders, will predominate? Impossible to guess. Birth is a sort of miracle, bringing something unique into the world; all the elements that go to make up a human being may come from the past, but the way they’re combined is always wholly new.”

Abruptly, without opening his eyes or unclenching his fist, the child drew up his arm and crooked it over his face, as if to screen himself from their gaze. Antoine and Jenny glanced at each other, smiling.

Strange, too, he thought, as silently the two of them retreated to the far end of the room, how strange that of all the possibilities of different beings Jacques had within him, this one alone—this particular composite of elements that is Jean-Paul—and no other—should have fulfilled itself and been called into life!

Still keeping her voice rather low, Jenny asked: "What was Daniel, poor fellow, talking about to you just now? He seemed quite worked up."

"About the war. However much one tries to keep off it, one always comes back to that topic—worse luck!"

Jenny's face grew hard. "It's a subject about which I've given up talking . . . to Daniel."

"Really?"

"He's too fond of airing opinions which make me blush for him. Opinions he picks up from the nationalist newspapers. Jacques would never have allowed him to say such things in his presence."

What papers does *she* read, I wonder? Antoine thought. The *Humanité* most likely, in memory of Jacques.

Suddenly she drew closer to him. "On the evening of the day of mobilization—I can still see the place, just beside a sentry-box in front of the Chamber of Deputies—Jacques clutched my arm and said to me: 'Remember this, Jenny. As from today we'll have to divide people into two classes: those who tolerate the idea of war and those who abhor it!' "

For some moments she remained lost in thought; Jacques's words were echoing in her brain. Then with a stifled sigh she turned, walked to a writing-desk the flap of which was open, and sat down in front of it. She signed to Antoine to draw up a chair.

But he remained standing, looking at the portrait. It showed Jacques seated, gazing up toward the light, a hand splayed on his thigh. There was a certain bravado in the pose, but it was true to life; Jacques often used to sit in just that attitude. The lock of reddish hair made a vivid streak of colour across his forehead. (Antoine thought: When he's older, the child's hair will darken to that shade.) The deep-set eyes, the bitter droop of the large mouth, and the tautness of the chin gave the face a look of anguish almost painful in its intensity. The background had been left unfinished.

"It was painted in June 1914," Jenny explained, "by an Englishman named Paterson. I understand he's fighting now in the ranks of the Bolshevists. Vanheede had brought the picture to his place, and he presented it to me, in Geneva. Vanheede's that nice young Dutchman who was so devoted to Jacques. I think I mentioned him in my letters to you, didn't I?"

One memory leading to another, she gradually gave Antoine a full account of her experiences in Switzerland. She had never breathed a word of them to others and it was with evident pleasure that she unburdened her heart to Antoine. She described how Vanheede had led her to the Hôtel du Globe and shown her Jacques's room. "It was a small, dark garret; the only window gave onto a landing." He had taken her to the Café Landolt, to Headquarters, and introduced her to the survivors of the Talking Shop group. Among them she had found Stefany, who had been on the *Humanité* staff in Jaurès's time; Jacques had introduced him to her in Paris. Stefany had succeeded in escaping to Switzerland, had started a paper there entitled *Their Great War*, and become one of the most active members of the Geneva group of diehard internationalists. "Vanheede came with me to Basel, too." Her eyes grew pensive.

Bending over the desk, she unlocked one of its drawers and with extreme precaution, as if handling a precious relic, took out a small bundle of manuscript. She held it for some moments in her hands before passing it to Antoine.

Greatly mystified, Antoine fell to examining the sheets, and at once something struck him about the handwriting.

> And yet here you are today, facing each other, with loaded rifles in your hands, ready blindly, at the first word of command, to slaughter men you've never seen, men whom you have no reason to hate. . . .

Suddenly he recognized it. What he had in his hands was Jacques's "*Message*," written shortly before his death. The sheets were crumpled, covered with erasures, smeared with printer's ink. The handwriting was undoubtedly Jacques's, though haste and fever had made it almost unrecognizable; in some places deeply scored and rugged, in others wavering as a child's.

> Has the French state, has the German state, the right to tear you away from your families and from your work and dispose of your lives against your most obvious personal interests, against your will, your convictions, your most human, most sacred and legitimate instincts? What gave them this appalling power over you, the power of life and death? Your ignorance. Your apathy.

Antoine looked up.

"It's the rough draft of the 'Message.' " Jenny's voice was tense with emotion. "Plattner gave it to me in Basel. He's the bookseller who saw to the printing of it. They'd kept the manuscript. They told me . . ."

" 'They'? Whom do you mean?"

"Plattner and a young German called Kappel, who'd known Jacques. He's a doctor, and was awfully nice to me when I was having my baby. They showed me the horrible little room where Jacques lodged when he was writing that. And they went with me to the hilltop from which the plane took off." As she spoke, pictures were forming in her mind of her stay in the Swiss frontier town crowded with troops and foreigners and spies. While she described her experiences to Antoine, she seemed to see again Frau Stumpf's tumbledown house and the cell-like room which Jacques had occupied, with its narrow dormer window overlooking wharves and sidings black with coal-dust, the banks of the Rhine where he had walked, and the bridges guarded by troops. How vividly it came back to her, her journey to the plateau on the hilltop, in a decrepit vehicle driven by Andreyev—the same that Jacques had used on his last journey! Plattner's guttural voice still echoed in her ears. "Here's where we scrambled up the hillside. It was pitch-dark. Here we lay down to wait for daybreak. It was over there, in that notch between the hills, that we first sighted the plane. It landed over there, and Thibault climbed into it."

"I always wonder what were the thoughts that occupied his mind during those hours of waiting on the hilltop," she said in a low, brooding voice. "They tell me he walked away from the others and lay down on the ground some distance off. He must have had a presentiment of his death. What were his last thoughts? I shall never know."

Antoine, too, his eyes fixed on the portrait as he listened, was musing on that lonely vigil on the hilltop, the coming of the death-fraught plane, the fruitless sacrifice of his brother's life. What horrified him most, perhaps, was the tragic absurdity of such heroism, as of so many forms of heroism—of almost all, indeed. How many instances had he not seen in the war of deeds of valour, sublime but senseless! "Nearly always," he reflected, "it's an error of judgment that leads men to these acts of heroic folly—a blind belief in certain standards, certain views of life, as to which they've never stopped to ask themselves coolly, dispassionately: 'Are these views, these standards, worth the sacrifice of my life?' " The cult of energy and will-power was second nature with Antoine, yet he had an instinctive aversion for heroism, and four years of war had only intensified this aversion. He had not the least wish to belittle his brother's act; Jacques had died in the defence of his convictions, he had been true to himself up to the end, and such an end could inspire nothing but respect. Yet whenever Antoine pondered on Jacques's "ideas," he always came up against an inconsistency that riddled them through and through. How could Jacques, hating as he did all forms of violence, both temperamentally and intellectually—the fact that he had deliberately risked his life in fighting against violence, in preaching fraternization and sabotage of the war, was proof of this—how could Jacques have been for years a militant advocate of the social revolution, in other words an advocate of the most brutal form of violence, the scientific, cold-blooded, merciless ferocity of the doctrinaire? He could not bring himself to believe that Jacques was so naïve, or so ignorant of human nature, as to imagine that the "total revolution" he had staked his hopes on could take place without involving the most shocking cruelty and injustice, a hecatomb of countless innocent victims.

As he wandered back from the perplexing face delineated in the portrait, his gaze settled again on Jenny, who was continuing her narrative. Her tone was calm, but her face seemed transfigured, illumined by a secret, boundless exaltation.

After all, he asked himself, what have I made of my own life? What right have I to sit in judgment on others whose faith impels them to extremist acts, men who are bold enough to attempt the impossible?

"One of the things that distress me most," Jenny went on after a short pause, "is the thought that he never knew I was going to have a child." As she spoke she gathered up the sheets and put them back in the drawer. Again she fell silent; then, as if she were thinking aloud—Antoine was deeply touched by this proof of her perfect trust in him—she murmured: "You know, I'm ever so glad my little Paul was born in Basel, the city where his father spent his last days on earth, where he must have lived through the most intensely crowded hours of his whole existence."

Whenever she evoked the memory of Jacques, the blue eyes darkened, a slight flush rose to her cheeks, and a strange expression settled for a moment on her face—a look of ardent, insatiable yearning. Her love, Antoine thought, has left its stamp on her for ever; and somehow, though he could not account for it, the thought vexed him. He could not help feeling that this love was rooted in absurdity. Between two people so patently unsuited to each other as Jacques and Jenny, it could only have arisen from a mutual misapprehension. A misapprehension which, had Jacques lived, would probably have yielded to experience, but, as things were, was shrined in memory, irrefragable. The way she spoke about him made this clear. . . . For it was one of Antoine's pet theories that such extreme devotion is always based on misunderstanding, defect of judgment, a sentimental fallacy. But for the false idea each has of the other, it would be impossible for lovers to keep up their mutual adoration.

“My task,” she said, “is none too easy; it’s to shape Jean-Paul into the son Jacques would have wished for. Sometimes that task almost terrifies me.” She looked up; a gleam of pride shone in her eyes, as if she were thinking: “But I’ve confidence in myself.” Aloud she said: “But I’ve confidence in our son.”

It was a joy to him to find her so courageous in her outlook on the future. From the tone of some of her letters he had expected to find her less sure of herself, less qualified for her task. Now he saw how effectively she had resisted the dark allurements of despair. Too often had he seen bereaved women nursing their grief with morbid assiduity, so as to sublimate their stricken love in their own eyes and the world’s. Jenny had done nothing of the sort; she had shaken off these morbid impulses, faced the situation, and reorganized her life on healthy lines. He could not refrain from voicing his appreciation. “And by acting thus, you showed the stuff that you are made of,” he concluded.

She had heard him out in silence. Quite unaffectedly, she replied: “I don’t deserve any credit, really. What made things easier, I imagine, was that Jacques and I had never really lived together. His death made no change in the course of my daily life. That helped me through the first period. Then the baby came—but even before he was born, his presence was a tremendous help. I had something to live for: to bring up Jacques’s child and mine.” Again she paused before continuing. “It’s no easy task, I assure you. Small though he is, Paul has a mind of his own and he’s difficult to handle. Sometimes, you know, he frightens me. . . .” She cast him a keen, almost suspicious glance. “But I suppose Daniel’s been talking to you about him?”

“About Paul? No, hardly at all.”

Antoine guessed that brother and sister did not agree in their views as to the child’s character, and that this difference of opinion had led to a certain estrangement.

“Daniel insists that Paul *enjoys* being disobedient. That’s unkind—and untrue. The matter’s much more complicated than that. I’ve thought over it, deeply. It’s true that instinctively the child says ‘No.’ But it’s not bad will on his part; it’s a need he feels for standing up for himself. Asserting himself, if you prefer. As if he wanted to prove to himself that he exists. And it’s so obviously the outcome of a natural impulse, something innate and irresistible, that one can’t be angry with him. It’s an instinct with him, like the instinct of self-preservation. And so, oftener than not, I can’t bring myself to punish him when he's been naughty. You see what I mean, don't you?"

Antoine nodded, and his look invited her to continue. He was slightly amused by her extreme earnestness, but deeply interested.

"I knew you'd understand," she said with a smile, reassured by his approval. "Of course you're used to children, and I don't suppose that sort of thing surprises you. Personally, I always feel I'm up against a mystery—in that strange unruliness of his. Yes, often I watch my son disobeying me, with a sort of amazement, of apprehension, I could almost say 'of awe'; the same feelings as I have in watching him grow up, develop, get to understand things. If he has a spill when he's by himself in the garden, he cries; but I've very rarely seen him cry, however much he's hurt himself, if any of us are in sight. If I offer him a sweet, he'll refuse it, for no apparent reason; but when my back is turned, he'll come and steal the box. Not out of greediness; he won't even try to open it. He'll go and hide it under the cushions on a sofa or bury it in his sand-pile. Why? With the simple object, I suppose, of proving his *independence*. When I scold him, he doesn't say a word, but all his little muscles stiffen up, his eyes change colour and their expression grows so hard I daren't go on scolding him. Somehow I can't stand out against that look—it's hard as steel, but pure as well . . . and, oh, so lonely! I suppose Jacques had that look, when he was tiny. . . ."

"So perhaps had you, Jenny!" Antoine smiled.

She waved away the suggestion and went on at once: "But there's this, too: if he flares up at the least constraint, he's equally responsive to the least show of affection. If when he's in the sulks, I can tempt him into my arms, he snuggles up at once, kisses me, and starts laughing. It's as if there was something hard inside him that had all of a sudden gone soft, melted. As if he'd cast out an evil spirit that possessed him."

"I expect he's even more disobedient with Gise, isn't he?"

"It's not the same thing!" A certain stiffness had come into her tone. "When 'Auntie Gi' is about, nothing else counts for him. He's crazy about her!"

"Can she get him to do what she wants?"

"Even less than I or Daniel. He'd like to have her with him all the time, but that's because she bows to all his whims. And the services he gets out of her are usually those he'd be too proud to ask of anyone else: unbuttoning his trousers, for instance, or fetching some object that he's too small to reach. And if I'm not there, never once does he say 'Thank you' to her. You should hear the way he orders her about! One would almost think . . ." She hesitated for a moment. “It’s not very nice for Gise, what I’m going to say, but I believe it’s true; yes, one would almost think he’d sensed the slave blood in her.”

This last remark took Antoine by surprise and he threw her a questioning glance. But Jenny would not meet his gaze. The lunch bell had just begun to ring; she rose from her chair.

They walked together to the door. Jenny seemed to have something still to say; she placed her hand on the knob, then withdrew it. “This talk has done me ever so much good,” she said in a low tone. “I’ve had nobody to talk to about Jacques since I got back from Switzerland.”

“What about Gise?” Antoine remembered the regrets Gise had expressed on this very subject when unburdening her heart to him.

Jenny was leaning against the doorjamb, with lowered eyes; she seemed not to have heard. After some moments she repeated: “What about Gise?” as if the words had only just sunk in.

“Gise is the only person who could understand you. She loved Jacques. And she, too, is suffering—terribly.”

Without looking up, Jenny shook her head. It seemed as if she was determined to withhold any explanation. Then, raising her eyes to Antoine, she said with a harshness that took him by surprise: “Gise? She has her rosary. It keeps her fingers busy and it helps her not to think.” She lowered her eyes again and, after a short pause, remarked: “Sometimes I envy her!” But her tone and a sound in her throat like a suppressed laugh belied the words. She seemed, indeed, to repent of them at once. In a gentler voice and with obvious sincerity she added: “I’ve come to regard Gise as a true friend. Whenever I think about our future, she has a big share in it. And it’s a sort of consolation to me to think that doubtless we shall always have her with us.”

Antoine waited for a “But . . .” It came, though after a moment’s hesitation. “But Gise is . . . as she is, you know. One must take people as they are. Gise has splendid qualities; she has her failings, too.” Again she hesitated. “For instance, Gise isn’t quite straightforward.”

Antoine’s immediate reaction was a protesting exclamation: “Gise not straightforward—with her candid eyes!” But on second thought he fancied he had guessed what Jenny meant. Without being actually insincere, Gise tended to be secretive. She avoided stating her likes and dislikes, shirked explanations, had a knack of hiding her antipathies and treating those she least cared for with smiling friendliness. Was it due to shyness, or modesty, or cunning? he wondered. Or was it not, more probably, the instinctive double-dealing of those black races some drops of whose “slave blood” flowed in her veins: the self-defensive reflex of peoples long inured to servitude? He caught himself up at once.

“Yes, I see what you mean.”

“Then you see why, fond of her though I am and intimate as we are in our daily lives—well, there are some subjects I can’t talk to her about.” She drew herself up. “No, it’s out of the question.”

Then quickly, as if to cut short the conversation, she opened the door. “Let’s go down to lunch.”

IX

LUNCH was served in the open air under the kitchen porch.

It was a rapid meal. Jenny had little appetite, and Antoine, who had not had time for his treatment that morning, found difficulty in swallowing. Only Daniel did justice to Clotilde’s excellent veal cutlets and green peas. But he seemed bored and listless, and made no effort to talk. Only at the end of the meal did he come out of his shell. Antoine had just indulged in some comments on Rumelles and his kind, the “Back Areas Brigade,” and Daniel promptly launched forth into a truculent defence of the profiteers, “the only men who took a common sense view of the war.” By way of illustration he cited the case of his former employer, Ludwigson, “that inspired crook,” and in a tone of burlesque admiration described how he had dashed across to London at the outbreak of the war and, rumour had it, multiplied his capital a dozen times by founding, in co-operation with a group of City magnates and British politicians, the concern known as Allied Oilfields Ltd.

Antoine was gazing at Jenny, struck by the change that had come over her appearance in the last four years. Later on, he thought, she’ll be the very image of her mother. Maternity and its obligations had filled out her hips and bosom, thickened the lower portion of her neck. But the change, to Antoine’s mind, was all to her advantage; it had brought some relaxation to the “Protestant stiffness” (as he inwardly described it) in her general bearing, the poise of her head, the rather angular grace of the delicately moulded features. The expression of her eyes, however, had not changed;

they still had that far-away look—of loneliness, serene courage and melancholy—which had so greatly impressed Antoine on the first occasion when he saw Jenny, then a mere child, at the time of his brother's escapade with Daniel. "And yet," he reflected, "she seems much more at peace with herself now than in the past. . . . I never could make out why Jacques was so attracted by her. She used to be so unapproachable, so 'prickly,' what with her pride and shyness and stand-offishness. An iceberg! Now, anyhow, she doesn't give one that impression of having to make a superhuman effort to talk to one about herself. This morning she seemed positively eager to unburden herself to me. Just perfect she was this morning. Still, she'll never have her mother's charm and graciousness of manner. No, there'll always be something in her attitude that seems to say: 'I'd rather not be noticed. I don't care if people like me or not. I'm sufficient to myself.' Well, well, it takes all sorts to make a world. She'll never be my type. But I must say she has vastly improved. . . ."

It had been settled that, immediately after luncheon, Antoine was to go with Jenny to the hospital and call on Mme. de Fontanin.

While Daniel settled down again on his long chair, Jenny ran upstairs to get little Paul out of bed. Antoine seized this opportunity to go to his room and take a hasty inhalation, for he foresaw a tiring day.

Jenny usually cycled to and from her work. Taking her bicycle with her for the return journey, she set off on foot across the park with Antoine.

"Daniel seems greatly changed," Antoine remarked as they were entering the avenue. "Has he really given up working?"

"Oh, yes, completely."

Her tone was one of reprobation. Several times in the course of the morning and during lunch, Antoine had noticed indications that brother and sister were not on the best of terms. This had surprised him, for he remembered how in the past Daniel had been all attention for Jenny, the kindest of brothers. And he wondered if, in this respect too, Daniel was not growing remiss.

They walked in silence for a few minutes. The young leafage of the limes spread the avenue with soft green shadows dappled with gleams of sunlight, and the windless air was close and oppressive, as if rain were threatening, though the sky was cloudless.

Antoine raised his head and sniffed. "Smell it?" he asked.

The air was laden with the fragrance of a clump of lilacs in a garden by which they were passing. But Jenny paid no heed to the lilacs.

"He might make himself quite useful at the hospital, if he chose to. Mamma is always asking him to help. But he says that, with his wooden leg, he's not up to work of any kind." She changed hands on the handle-bars, so as to come nearer Antoine. "The truth is, he's never felt like doing much for others. And less than ever now."

He thought: She's unfair to her brother. Anyhow, she should be grateful to him for looking after the child.

There was a pause. Suddenly she declared in an almost strident voice: "Daniel has never had any sense of his duties to society."

The remark took Antoine by surprise. Then he thought with annoyance: She refers everything back to Jacques. And it's by Jacques's standards she's judging her brother now.

"Personally," he said in a low, sad voice, "I think a man's to be pitied when he feels that he is only a shadow of his former self."

But she had only Daniel in mind. "He might quite easily have been killed!" she exclaimed callously. "What's he got to complain about? He came through it with his skin!" With unthinking cruelty she added: "Why does he make all that fuss about his leg? What's a slight limp? Anyhow, it wouldn't prevent him from helping Mother with her accounts at the hospital. Or, supposing he has no desire to be of service to the community" (That's another expression she's picked up from Jacques, Antoine thought to himself) "what's to prevent him starting painting again? No, the truth is there's something else; it isn't just a matter of health with him, it's something in his character." In her excitement she had been gradually forcing the pace, and Antoine was getting out of breath. Noticing this, she slowed down at once. "Life had always been too easy for Daniel, I'm afraid. He'd always had everything his own way. And what makes him so depressed these days is wounded vanity—nothing more. He never stirs outside the garden, never goes to Paris. Why? Because he's ashamed of being seen in his present condition. He can't reconcile himself to the idea that his day is over, that he can no longer lead the life of a young man-about-town—the weak and filthy life he was leading before the war."

"You're terribly severe, Jenny!"

She threw a quick glance at Antoine. He was smiling. She waited for the smile to die away before speaking again.

"You see, I'm afraid—for my son." There was a vicious edge to her voice.

"For Paul?"

"Yes. Jacques made me understand . . . oh, heaps of things! And now I feel half stifled in my present surroundings; I'm not at home here any more. And I can't bear the idea that little Paul will have to grow up in this tainted atmosphere."

Antoine made a vague gesture as if he had not quite understood.

"I'm telling you all this," she said, "because I trust you. Because I shall need your advice later on. I've a very deep affection for Mamma. I respect her courage and her fine attitude to life. Nor can I forget all she has done for me. But—there's no help for it; we haven't a single idea in common. I admit I'm very different from what I was in 1914. But Mamma, too, has changed tremendously. As you know, she's been in charge of her hospital for the last four years. For those four years she has been organizing, making decisions, giving orders right and left, and she's got used to being obeyed, looked up to. She's come to like authority. She—well, she's become quite different, I assure you."

Antoine's expression betrayed a certain incredulity.

"Mamma used to be so easy-going," Jenny went on. "Of course she was always very religious, but she never tried to force her views on anybody. But nowadays—well, if you could hear her lecturing her patients! And it's always the men who play up to her most who get the longest sick-leave."

"You're terribly severe," Antoine said again. "And, I suspect, unjust."

"Perhaps! Yes, I dare say you're right. I suppose I oughtn't to be telling you all this. I wonder how I can make you understand what I mean. Here's an example. Mamma always says 'our brave boys' and 'the Huns.' "

"So does everyone else."

"No, not in quite that way. All the crimes that have been committed during the last years in the name of patriotism, Mamma condones them. She actually approves of them. She's convinced that justice and decency are exclusively on the Allies' side; that the war must go on till Germany is crushed out of existence; that those who don't think as she does are traitors to their country; and that those who ascribe the war to its true causes and see that capitalism's at the root of everything that's happened are . . ."

He listened in amazement: these revelations of Jenny's present state of mind, her outlook on life, and the new scale of values she had taken over wholesale from Jacques interested Antoine far more deeply than the changes which had come over Mme. de Fontanin's character. He felt inclined to say, in his turn: "I'm afraid—for little Paul!" For, though convinced that Jenny's "conversion" to these views was mainly on the surface and factitious, he could not help anxiously wondering if it might not expose his little nephew to a dangerous atmosphere; more dangerous, in any case, for the formation of a growing mind than the example of “Uncle Dan’s” laziness or the grandmother’s narrow patriotism.

They were entering an open space where several roads met; beyond a stretch of sunlight, the entrance-gates of the Thibaults’ country house were coming into view. Antoine’s attention wandered from his companion to the scene before him; he had the impression of revisiting a place known to him in an infinitely far-off past, a previous existence.

Yet everything had remained immutably the same: the broad vista of the avenue, flanked by grassy riding-tracks and abutting on the stately frontage of the château; the little square, ringed with white railings, the round pool in its midst, the fountain that played on Sundays only, the trim box-bordered lawns. And in the distance he discerned, half hidden by the low branches of the trees in his father’s garden, the tradesmen’s entrance where Gise, as a little girl, had used to stand, watching for him to come home. Here anyhow, it seemed, the war had left no mark.

Before crossing the square Jenny halted.

“For three years Mamma has been living in daily contact with the beastliness of war. And one would think she’d lost the capacity for pity, that all her decent feelings have been blunted by the degrading occupation she has taken up.”

“By hospital work, you mean?”

“No.” Her voice was stern. “By the occupation which consists in nursing young men back to health with the sole object of enabling them to return to duty and be killed. Like the wretched horses used by the picadors in bull-fights that are sewn up and sent back again and again into the bull-ring.” She stared at the ground, then suddenly, in a belated access of shyness, asked: “Do I shock you?”

“No!”

Antoine was himself taken aback by the promptness of this “No!”; it was a discovery to him to recognize that he was far more in sympathy with the outspoken indignation of a girl like Jenny than with the patriotism of a Mme. de Fontanin. And, thinking of his brother, he told himself yet once again: “How much better I could appreciate him now than in the past!”

They had reached the gate. Jenny sighed, regretful that their walk was over, and turned to him with an affectionate smile. “Thank you. It’s so nice, for once in a way, to be able to speak one’s heart out.”

X

THE massive iron gates stood open. The gilding of their showy monogram “O.T.” was hardly tarnished at all, but the drive was in a sorry state. The wheels of ambulances had scored deep ruts, and not a trace was left of the fine gravel that M. Thibault used to have raked and rolled out daily when he was in residence. Most of the windows, too, stood open, shaded by brand-new red-striped awnings that made a brave display of colour behind the leafage.

They came to the old stables. “It’s here,” Jenny said, “the linen-store where I ‘do my bit,’ as Mamma would say. I’ll have to leave you now. Her office is the first door on the right, after crossing the veranda.”

Left to himself, he paused for some moments to take breath. And as his gaze lingered on the scene before him, each shrub, each winding garden-path lit up a facet of the past. By fits and starts there came to him the tinkle of a piano, and a picture formed before his eyes of Gise, perched on a high stool, her pigtail dangling, practising scales under the dual control of old Mademoiselle and a loudly ticking metronome.

Beyond the shrubbery, in front of the house, was an animated scene: a number of young men in grey flannels and forage-caps were seated in tiers on the front steps, basking in the sun and chattering to each other; others, seated round garden-tables, were playing cards or reading the papers. Two privates, coatless, in blue breeches and puttees, were mowing the lawn; Antoine recognized as a bugbear of his youth the nerve-racking din of his father’s old lawn-mower. Farther off, half a dozen convalescents had installed the old quoits set under the beech tree; the air rang with the jingle of quoits hitting the metal hob.

The men sprawling on the steps rose to their feet and saluted as Antoine approached and made his way between them. The veranda had been enclosed with windows on all sides, to form a solarium, and the air was warm and stuffy as in a hothouse. It was used as a recreation-room by patients who were not yet fit enough to venture out of doors. On the left was the piano—the selfsame yellowish-brown piano that Gise had learned on as a child. A soldier was seated at it, picking out with an unprenticed finger the tune of “La Madelon.”

The piano fell silent, hands rose to foreheads to salute the passing officer. Antoine entered what had been the drawing-room; it was empty at this hour and had the look of a hotel lounge, with four card-tables well in view and chairs of all shapes and sizes grouped round them.

The door of M. Thibault's study was closed. A card affixed to it with drawing-pins bore the inscription: *Staff*. There seemed at first sight to be nobody in the room. The furniture had not been changed; the big oak table, armchair, and bookcases lorded it in the old familiar places. However, the far end of the study had been screened off. At the sound of the opening door a typewriter stopped clicking and a youngster's head peeped over the screen. No sooner had he set eyes on the visitor than he gave a joyful exclamation. "Oh, sir! It's nice to see you, sir!"

Antoine smiled uncertainly; he could make nothing of this greeting. Then he decided that this tall young man, whose face seemed totally unfamiliar, must be Eddie, the younger of the two orphan boys who used to live together in the Rue de Verneuil, the child on whom he had operated years ago for a boil on the arm. When leaving Paris at the beginning of the war he had asked Clotilde and Adrienne to keep an eye on the youngsters, and he had a vague impression of having been told that Mme. de Fontanin had taken them on her staff at the hospital.

"By Jove, you *have* shot up!" he exclaimed. "How old exactly are you now?"

"Just turned eighteen, sir."

"And what's your job here?"

"I started off as post orderly. Now I'm typist."

"Where's your brother?"

"On the Champagne front, sir. He was wounded last April—didn't you know about it? In the hand. Near Fismes, it happened. He'd joined up in 1916. They had to take off those two fingers. Lucky it's the left hand, isn't it?"

"And he's gone back to the front? How's that?"

"Oh, there ain't no flies on Robbie! He got himself assigned to the Weather Bureau. He's having a soft time now—no risks and easy work." Eddie gazed at Antoine with pitying curiosity. "You were gassed, sir, weren't you?"

"Yes." Noticing a small armchair, upholstered in red velvet and garnished with gilt studs, that recalled to him his childhood, he sank into it wearily.

"Filthy stuff, gas!" Eddie remarked, wrinkling his nose. "It didn't ought to be allowed, it's like hitting below the belt. I can't think . . ."

“Isn’t Mme. de Fontanin here today?” Antoine cut in.

“She’s upstairs. I’ll let her know you’ve come, sir. We’re expecting a new batch today, and extra beds are being fixed up.”

Antoine sat on alone . . . alone with his Father. For the strong personality of M. Thibault seemed still to dominate the room. It emanated from everything, from the very place allotted to each object as easiest of access—from the silver-topped inkpot, from the desk-lamp, the hand-blotter, the penwiper, and the barometer hanging on the wall. So tenacious was that personality that the shifting of an article of furniture to a new place or the addition of a screen could not dispel an atom of it. It remained firmly rooted in this room, where for half a century it had wielded uncontested sway. Antoine had only to glance at that tall door of imitation oak to hear in his mind’s ear the creak it used to make opening and closing—a curiously unforgettable sound like a subdued grunt, malevolent and derisive. He had only to look at the worn strip on the carpet to see at once his father stumping to and fro between the bookcase and the fireplace, his coat-tails flapping, his big, puffy hands locked behind him on his buttocks. And it was enough to gaze for a moment at the copy of Bonnat’s *Christ* hung on the wall and, beneath it, the big desk-chair with his father’s initials stamped on its leather back—in a flash he had resuscitated M. Thibault’s burly form solidly ensconced in it, his shoulders hunched forward. He seemed to see his father perking up his small, pointed beard toward some unwanted caller; then, before speaking, taking off his pince-nez and, with measured movements that brought to mind a man crossing himself, lowering his arm and bestowing the glasses in a vest pocket.

The click of the door-latch brought him to his feet. Mme. de Fontanin had come. She was in the same uniform as her assistants, except that her hair, which had gone quite white, was uncovered. Her cheeks were pale and wasted. A thought came, unbidden, to Antoine’s mind. “That’s a cardiac complexion; I don’t give her long to live.”

She clasped both Antoine’s hands and had him sit down, then settled into the big monogrammed chair at the far end of the table. Obviously, Antoine judged, this was “the Huguenot’s” usual place. (“If the old master could come back . . . !” as Clotilde would say!)

She led off the conversation with an inquiry about his health. The short wait had rested him, and he smiled. “If I’d had to stay out there, it would all have been over months ago. I’m pulling through. Luckily I’ve a sound constitution.”

He went on to ask about the hospital, how she was faring in her new life. She grew animated at once.

"It's been a great success—but the credit isn't due to me. I've such a splendid staff. Nicole is in charge. She's a fully certified nurse, you know, and the dear girl has been such a wonderful help. Yes; I couldn't wish for better helpers. They're girls and young married women living here at Maisons, so all my rooms are free for patients. And, as they're voluntary helpers, I can keep within my budget, though the government allowance is wretchedly small. But everybody's been so generous, from the very first day. The local people are kindness itself. Just think! All the beds and bedding, crockery and linen, are supplied by residents at Maisons. Today, for instance, we're expecting a new batch of patients. Well, Gise and Nicole have just gone out to collect the extra bedding, and I'm certain they'll have no difficulty in getting all we need." Her upward gaze, her radiant smile, aglow with trust and gratitude, seemed rendering thanks to the All-Highest for having peopled the world, and in particular Maisons-Laffitte, with helpful souls and hearts of gold.

She described in detail the changes which had been made in the house and those she had in mind for the future. The idea that the war might end some day, and with it her career as matron of a hospital, did not seem to cross her mind. Cheerfully she bade him: "Come and see!"

All indeed was changed. The billiard-room had become a first-aid room, the kitchen a consulting-room, the bathroom a surgical dressing-room. The greenhouse had been fitted with heating and converted into a ward with ample space for the twelve beds installed in it.

"Let's go upstairs now."

Each of the bedrooms, empty at this hour, served as a miniature sick-ward. Fifteen patients were housed on the first floor, ten on the second, and there were half a dozen emergency beds available in the attics.

Antoine was seized by a desire to have a look at his old bedroom, but the door was locked. It was due to be visited by the disinfecting staff; the room had been occupied by a paratyphoid case, and the man had just been transferred to the Saint-Germain hospital.

Mme. de Fontanin went from room to room, flinging doors open with the air of one in high authority, casting a keen, inspectorial glance at everything, checking, as she passed, the temperature of the radiators, the cleanliness of the basins, even the titles of the books and magazines lying on the tables. Now and then she raised her arm and read the time on her wristwatch; this gesture had evidently become an unconscious habit of hers.

Antoine followed, a little out of breath with all this walking; Clotilde's exclamation was still echoing in his mind: "If the old master could come back . . . !"

They were on the second floor. As Mme. de Fontanin was showing him into a large room with a gay, flowered wallpaper and a window opening on the high branches of two chestnut trees, a rush of memories swept over him and he halted on the threshold.

"Jacques's bedroom!"

Suddenly his eyes filled with tears. Mme. de Fontanin stared at him in surprise, then tactfully walked over to the window and shut it. It seemed that this unlooked-for incursion of the past had given her the desire for a more intimate conversation with him.

"Now," she said, "I'll take you to the stables—that's where I've set up my G.H.Q.—and we can have a quiet talk."

They went down the stairs in silence. To avoid having to walk across the veranda, they entered the garden by the back door. In the shade four men were putting a coat of white paint on some iron bedsteads. Mme. de Fontanin went up to them.

"Hurry up, boys! That paint has got to be dry by tomorrow morning. . . . What are you up to, Roblet? Come down at once!" Mounted on the scullery roof a man was fastening to the wall the branches of a clematis. "The day before yesterday you were in bed and today you're climbing ladders! I never heard of such a thing!" The culprit, a bearded young man, belonging, Antoine guessed, to a territorial regiment, grinned sheepishly but complied at once. As soon as he was on the ground she went up to him, undid two buttons of his coat, and felt his ribs. "Just as I expected. Your bandage has come loose. Go to the infirmary and have it seen to." She called Antoine to witness. "Just think! A lad who had an operation less than three weeks ago!"

As they walked round the lawn on their way to the stables, the men they passed gave friendly glances to Mme. de Fontanin and raised their forage-caps civilian-wise.

"My room's upstairs," she said as she opened the door.

The ground floor, where the stabling had been, was occupied by carpenters' benches, and the floor was strewn with shavings.

"The boys call this their workshop," she exclaimed as she led the way up the narrow corkscrew staircase leading to what had been the coachman's quarters. "I never have to send out to get jobs done nowadays. The boys do all my repairs—plumbing, carpentry, electric fittings, and so on."

There were two rooms on the upper floor, one of which she had converted into a little private office. Into this she now showed Antoine. The furniture consisted of two garden-chairs and a table, stacked with files and ledgers. A threadbare mat lay on the tiled floor. The moment he entered, Antoine recognized the lamp standing on the table; it was *his* lamp—the old pot-bellied oil-lamp with a green cardboard shade under which, on so many a hot summer night loud with the hum of moths, he had read himself tired, preparing for examinations.

On one of the newly whitewashed walls was pinned a group of photographs: a portrait of Jerome as a young man, willowy and elegant, resting a languid arm on the back of an armchair; one of Daniel as a small boy in an English sailor-suit; a snapshot of Jenny with her hair flowing over her shoulders, a tame pigeon perched on her outstretched wrist; and another of her, much more recent, in mourning, with her baby on her knees.

A fit of coughing compelled Antoine to sit down brusquely without waiting to be asked. When he looked up, he saw Mme. de Fontanin gazing earnestly at him, but she made no comment on his health.

“I’ll take this chance of getting on a bit with my mending, if you don’t mind.” There was a hint of coquetry in the laugh accompanying the remark. “I’ve hardly ever time these days to do a stitch.” She pushed aside a black Bible lying on the table to make place for her work-basket. After another glance at her wristwatch she sat down.

“Has Daniel talked to you about himself at all? Did he let you have a look at his leg? I suppose not.” She stifled a sigh. Daniel had never let her see his mutilated limb.

“No. But he’s told me all his troubles. I advised him to try a course of graduated exercises. They can do wonders if one has a little perseverance. Anyhow, he admits himself that he can walk with hardly any difficulty now that he has this new artificial limb.”

She did not seem to have heard. Her hands resting on her lap, her face turned to the window, she was gazing pensively at the sunlit foliage of the garden. Suddenly she swung round. “Has he told you what happened here on the day that he was wounded?”

“No. What was it?”

“God in His mercy forewarned me,” she said gravely. “At the very instant when Daniel was wounded I had a message from Above.” Her hand rose slowly and she paused, thrilled by the memory of that strange experience. When she continued speaking, it was with a certain solemnity, despite the studied simplicity of her tone—the voice she would have used when quoting a passage from the Scriptures; evidently she saw it as a sacred duty to make known to all the miracle that had befallen her.

"It was a Thursday. I woke up suddenly at daybreak. I felt God's presence near, and I tried to pray. But a sudden fit of faintness came over me; it was the first time since the hospital started that I'd been ill, and I haven't had a moment's illness since. I tried to open my window to call one of the night nurses. But I couldn't keep on my feet. Luckily, as I didn't put in an appearance at the usual hour, one of the nurses came to see what was the matter. She found me in bed, incapable of moving. Whenever I tried to rise, I went quite dizzy and sank back onto the pillow. I felt as if all my blood had flowed away through a wound and I had no strength left. And all the time Daniel was in my thoughts. I prayed to God. But I got worse and worse as the morning went on. Jenny brought the doctor to visit me several times. They gave me ether. I could hardly speak. At last, at half-past eleven, just after the first lunch bell had rung, I gave a sudden, involuntary cry and fainted. I came back to consciousness almost at once, and felt better. So much so that by the end of the afternoon I was strong enough to get up and go down to the office, sign the sick-lists, and attend to the mail. . . . I was all right again."

She had spoken in a level, somewhat restrained tone. She made a short pause before continuing.

"Well, Antoine, it was that Thursday at daybreak that Daniel's regiment got the order to attack. All that morning my dear boy fought like a hero without being wounded once. But a few minutes after half-past eleven a shell-splinter struck his thigh and shattered it. He was carried to the first-aid station, and from there an ambulance took him to the field hospital, where his leg was amputated some hours later. His life was saved." She slowly nodded several times, looking at him fixedly. "Needless to say, I knew nothing of all that till ten days later."

Antoine said nothing. What, indeed, could he have said? Her experience, it struck him, was of the same order as the apparently miraculous cure effected by Pastor Gregory when Jenny in early youth was dying, as it seemed, of meningitis. And he recalled one of Dr. Philip's remarks: "People always have the experiences they deserve."

Mme. de Fontanin had picked up her needlework and was silent for some moments. But before beginning to sew she pointed with the spectacles she had just taken from their case to the photograph of Jenny and her baby son.

"You haven't told me yet what your impression is of our little one."

“A splendid little fellow!”

“Isn’t he!” she exclaimed proudly. “Daniel brings him here occasionally, on Sundays. And each time I see him he seems more developed, more robust. Daniel’s always complaining about his disobedience and wilfulness. But need we be surprised if the child has a mind of his own? That’s how a growing boy should be—strong-willed, bubbling over with energy. You, I’m sure,” she added with a twinkle in her eye, “won’t say No to that! It’s a trial for me, seeing him so seldom. But, of course, he needs me less than my patients do. . . .” And, like a stream that after a brief deflection resumes its natural course, she went on talking about her hospital.

He nodded approval now and then, but, fearing to bring on his cough, refrained from speech. With her spectacles she looked an old woman. And again it struck him: “That’s a cardiac complexion.” Sitting very straight in her chair, plying her needle without haste, she cut a queenly figure, but with a redeeming touch of homeliness, as she expounded to him the administrative methods she had introduced and the thousand and one responsibilities devolving on her.

“It’s an ill wind . . .” Antoine mused. “This war has proved a godsend to women of her type: an opportunity for public service, for making themselves useful, and at the same time giving a run to their domineering instincts, in an atmosphere of gratitude and admiration.”

And he almost fancied she had guessed his thoughts when she remarked: “Oh, I’m not complaining of my task. It’s terribly exacting, but I couldn’t live without it now. I can’t imagine myself going back to the life I led before the war. No, I can’t be happy nowadays unless I feel that I’m being useful.” She smiled. “I’ve an idea! Later on, you must start a private hospital for your patients—and put me in charge of it as matron.” At once she added: “With Nicole and Gisèle on the staff, of course. And perhaps Jenny, too. . . . Why not?”

Complaisantly he echoed: “Why not, indeed?”

There was a short pause before she spoke again. “Yes, Jenny, too, will need an occupation in life.” She sighed; then, without trying to convey the association of ideas behind the words, went on: “Poor Jacques! I’ll never forget that last time I saw him.”

Again she fell silent. Her return journey from Vienna just after mobilization began had come back to her mind. But she had a happy knack of promptly effacing disagreeable memories. Raising her hand, she pushed back a wisp of snow-white hair that had fallen across her forehead.

However, she was determined to discuss with Antoine certain matters she had at heart.

"We must trust in the wisdom of Divine Providence," she began in that amiably authoritative tone of hers which implied that she was not to be interrupted. "We must accept the events that God has surely willed. Your brother's death was one of those events." She meditated for a while before pronouncing judgment. "Yes, inevitably their love would have brought them—both of them alike—nothing but unhappiness. . . . You must forgive me for talking like this."

"I entirely agree with you," Antoine put in promptly. "If Jacques had lived, their life together would have been . . . impossible!"

She cast him an approving glance, nodded slowly several times, and resumed her sewing. After another pause, she spoke again in the same tone. "I won't conceal from you, Antoine, that I was terribly distressed by . . . all that. And the day I learned my Jenny was going to have a baby . . ." She paused.

He had often thought of her in that connexion. And, noticing her eyes intent on him, he indicated by a slight flutter of the eyelids how fully he understood her feelings.

"Oh," she exclaimed at once, fearing he might have failed to catch her meaning, "it wasn't because of the . . . the irregularity of her motherhood. No, not so much on that account. What horrified me most of all was the thought that this dreadful affair was to leave an after-effect, a perpetual reminder, in our lives. I can talk to you quite frankly, can't I? I said to myself: 'There's Jenny's future ruined beyond redress. It's a judgment on us both. . . . So be it!' Well, Antoine, I was wrong; I was lacking in faith. God moves in a mysterious way. His purpose is hidden from us, and His mercy infinite. What I had taken for a trial, a punishment, has proved, on the contrary, a blessing from Above. A sign of pardon. A source of happiness. And why, when all is said and done, should God have punished us? Was it not known to Him, still better than to us, that evil had played no part in their lapse, that the hearts of these two young people had remained pure and chaste, even in the act of sin?"

Antoine thought: That's curious! By rights all this should get intensely on my nerves. But not a bit of it! There's something in her that compels respect. More than respect—affection. Her goodness of heart, perhaps. . . . And of course it's extremely rare, goodness of heart, the real thing—the kind she has, the *natural* kind.

“Jenny has every reason to be thankful,” Mme. de Fontanin continued in her strong, musical voice, still plying her needle. “She now has in her heart a precious memory that will ennoble her whole life, a memory of the world well lost, a marvellous moment; one which, moreover—and how rare that is!—has not been followed by any sordid disillusionment.”

Some people, Antoine mused, manage to build up for themselves, once for all, a satisfying theory of the Scheme of Things. After which it’s all plain sailing. Yes, that’s just the metaphor; their lives are like a pleasant cruise in summer weather, with a favouring wind behind them all the way . . . right up to the last landfall.

“And now she has before her the noblest of tasks: the upbringing of ——”

Antoine interrupted her almost brusquely. “I found her much changed, quite a different person, in fact. She has matured. No, that’s not the word. I mean, she’s . . .”

Mme. de Fontanin had placed her sewing on her knees and taken off her spectacles. Now she bent toward him. “I’m going to let you into a secret, Antoine. It’s this: I believe Jenny’s *happy*. Yes, happy as she’s never been before. As happy as it’s possible for her to be, for Jenny wasn’t born to happiness. Even as a child, she was always moping, and no one could do anything about it; melancholy was engrained in her. Worse still, self-hatred; she could never manage to appreciate herself, to love, in herself, one of God’s creatures. And, alas, she was never religious-minded; her soul has always been an empty temple. And now, see how the Holy Spirit is always working in us and about us! Every sorrow has its recompense; every discord adds to the Universal Harmony. Today grace has come to her. Today I know—my intuition tells me—that the dear child has found, in her present lot of widowhood and motherhood, the utmost she can get of human happiness, the utmost tranquillity and well-being of which her nature is capable. . . .”

“Aunt!” a voice cried from the garden.

Mme. de Fontanin rose from her chair. “Ah, there’s Nicole back.”

“The Mayor is here, Aunt,” the voice continued. “He wants to talk to you.”

Mme. de Fontanin was already outside the door. Antoine heard her calling cheerfully from the top of the stairs: “Come up to my room, darling, and keep company to . . . to somebody you know.”

The door opened. Nicole stopped short on the threshold and stood staring at Antoine as if she were not sure of recognizing him.

A sudden discouragement came over him; he said in a low voice: "Yes, I look a dreadful wreck. No wonder you can't recognize me!"

She blushed, then, mastering her embarrassment, began to laugh. "Of course I recognize you. Only—I never dreamt of meeting you here."

They had not seen each other yet, as Nicole had not come back to the hostel on the previous evening; preferring not to leave the paratyphoid patient to the night nurse, she had spent the night at his bedside.

Unlike Antoine, Nicole seemed to have taken a new lease of youth. A sleepless night had not impaired the natural freshness of her complexion or dulled the sheen of her grey-blue eyes.

He asked her about her husband, whom he had met twice in the course of the war.

"Just now he's with his motor-ambulance unit on the Champagne front." As she spoke she darted this way and that her sparkling gaze, in which schoolgirl innocence and the deliberately sensual appeal of experienced womanhood were indistinguishably mingled. "He's worked off his feet. But he still finds time to write for the *Medical Review*. He's sent me an article to type this week. It's about the technique of applying tourniquets, or something of the sort."

A sunbeam, skimming the soft curve of a shoulder outlined beneath the close-fitting blouse, flickered along the trailing folds of her nurse's veil each time she moved, lighting up the golden down of a bare forearm and, when she smiled, flashing white upon her teeth. Antoine suddenly thought: "She must play the devil with the hearts of the young fellows sent here from the front."

"I was awfully sorry not to be able to get back to the hostel last night," she said. "What sort of evening did you have? Was Daniel in a good humour? Did you manage to get him out of his shell a bit?"

"Oh, yes. . . . Why do you ask?"

"He's so grumpy, such an old grouch nowadays."

Antoine could not help protesting. "After all, poor fellow, he has good reasons for being like that."

"But it's bad for him. Something should be done to shake him out of it, to make him take up his painting again." Her tone was earnest, as if this were a problem of extreme importance to her and Antoine's visit were the heaven-sent opportunity she had been waiting for to solve it. "The life he's leading here can't be allowed to go on indefinitely. He's mouldering away, he's becoming an utter waster!"

"I see no signs of it," Antoine said with a smile.

"But it's true. Ask Jenny. He's really quite impossible. Either he goes up to his bedroom the moment we get back—is it ill-humour or just unsociability? I haven't an idea—or else he stays with us, but never opens his mouth. When he comes into a room the temperature seems to go down with a rush! His presence makes us all uncomfortable. I assure you, you'd be doing him a great service if you could make him see it's up to him to start work again, go back to Paris, mix with people, come back to real life."

Antoine merely gave a non-committal nod and murmured again: "Poor fellow!" An instinctive suspicion kept him on his guard; though he could not account for it, he had an impression that Nicole was actuated by some secret motive which she was careful to conceal.

His intuition was not wholly at fault. Since a certain night of the previous winter, she had had her own ideas regarding Daniel. That night, after Jenny and Gise had gone upstairs, Nicole, who had some work she wanted to finish, had stayed on late in the drawing-room, sitting opposite her cousin, in front of the fire. Suddenly he had said: "Stay that way, Nico! Don't move!" and, picking up a sheet of paper which happened to be lying on the floor beside him, had begun to make a pencil sketch of Nicole's face in profile. She had fallen in willingly enough with his whim. But, some moments later, a vague presentiment had caused her to turn and throw a quick glance at him. Daniel, who had stopped drawing, was devouring her with his eyes, and their expression was revolting: a mingling of sensual desire and baffled rage, of shame and something akin to hatred. At once he had looked down, crumpled up the paper, and tossed it into the fire. Then, without a word, he had left the room. "So that's it," Nicole had murmured in consternation. "He's still in love with me!" For it was still fresh in her memory, that far-off period of her youth when she was living with her aunt in Paris, and Daniel, then hardly more than a boy, had been so desperately infatuated with her, dogging her steps at every turn, following her into every corner of the apartment. She had regarded this frantic, unavailing passion as definitely of the past; but it seemed that their life together at the hostel had stirred to life again the ashes of that bygone ardour. And that night all had become plain to Nicole; Daniel's love for her explained everything: his fits of sulkiness, his taciturnity and fretfulness, his obstinate determination not to leave Maisons and to persist in his present hermit-like existence of idleness and continence—so alien to his temperament and previous mode of life.

"Let me tell you what I think," Nicole continued. She had no idea of the suspicions her insistence roused in Antoine. "Daniel's to be pitied; there I quite agree with you. But it's not his . . . his infirmity that's at the root of the trouble. Women have intuitions about these things, you know. No; there's something else, something more subtle preying on his mind. Quite likely it's a trouble of a sentimental order, a hopeless passion."

Suddenly she feared she had betrayed her secret, and a faint blush rose to her cheeks. But Antoine was not looking at her. A picture had risen in his mind of Daniel sprawling in his chair under the plane trees, chewing his gum, dull-eyed, his hands folded behind his neck.

"Who can say?" he murmured innocently.

Reassured, she broke into a laugh. "Why, you know as well as I do the life that Daniel used to lead in Paris before the war. . . ."

She stopped speaking, listened. There was a sound of footsteps on the landing.

Mme. de Fontanin entered, a sheaf of papers in her hand. "I'm afraid I'll have to rush off again at once. So sorry!" She held up the correspondence—letters and long official envelopes—she had brought. "You'd never believe all the daily reports we have to send in to the authorities, in duplicate or triplicate! It's appalling! My afternoon mail alone gives me a couple of hours' work each day."

Antoine rose. "I'll be off now."

"You must come again. Will you be staying long with us?"

"Afraid not. I'm going back tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? You can't mean it!" Nicole exclaimed.

"I'm due back at Le Mousquier on Friday."

The three walked down the rickety stairs together.

Mme. de Fontanin glanced at her wristwatch. "Anyhow, I'll come with you as far as the gate."

"And I must leave you," Nicole said. "See you tonight."

When Nicole was out of earshot, Mme. de Fontanin, without stopping, asked in an anxious voice: "Nicole talked to you about Daniel, didn't she? . . . My poor son! He is never far from my thoughts, and I pray for him without ceasing. It's a heavy cross that has been laid on his young shoulders."

"At least you have the assurance that he will be spared to you. And in times like these that's no small consolation."

Antoine could see that the remark was lost on her; that was not the angle from which she viewed such things. They took a few steps in silence; then she said: “All day alone . . . alone with his infirmity. Alone with that regret which he will share with no one, not even with me. Poor boy!”

Antoine stopped short in the middle of the drive, and now his look was frankly questioning.

“One can enter so well into his feelings,” Mme. de Fontanin went on, in the same level tone of sorrowful composure, “when one considers his temperament—so passionate and so high-minded. Think what it means to him to feel so fit and full of energy and to see his country invaded, in grave peril! And to feel he can no longer do anything to help!”

“Do you really think it’s that?” Antoine blurted out. This explanation of Daniel’s moodiness was so unexpected that he was unable to conceal his scepticism.

She straightened herself up to her full height; a self-confident smile, with a hint of pride in it, settled on her lips. “There’s no mystery about what’s wrong with Daniel and, alas, no remedy for it. Daniel’s heart-broken at being no longer fit to do his duty.” And noticing that Antoine seemed still not quite convinced, she added with a look at once ecstatic and austere: “If you want a proof of what I’m saying, here it is. If Daniel shrinks from coming to the hospital, it’s not so much that, as he professes, the walk here tires him. No, it’s because he can’t bear to mix with these young fellows of his own age who, like him, have been wounded but, unlike him, will very soon be going back to do their duty at the front.”

Antoine made no reply. In silence they walked on. A few yards from the entrance-gate Mme. de Fontanin halted. “Only God knows when we shall see each other again.” She gazed at Antoine with emotion, and when he held out his hand kept it pressed between her palms for a moment. “May all go well with you, my friend.”

XI

AS ANTOINE walked across the stretch of open ground in front of the gates, he pondered on the “enigma” which everyone he had talked to seemed to find in Daniel. Each of those women, he reflected, tried to make me accept her pet solution. And, likely as not, there isn't any enigma at all!

Somewhat tired, but surprised and pleased to find he was not more so, he made his way slowly toward the Fontanins' house. It was a relief to be alone. The spacious avenue, flanked by lime trees, stretched before him up to the outskirts of the forest. It was four o'clock, and already the declining sun was tangled in the tree-trunks, marking the grass with level shafts of light. Now and again, remembering the dusty roads of the Riviera, he sniffed luxuriously the keen and sparkling air, rife with the vernal fragrance of the green, unspoilt countryside encircling Paris.

But there was a melancholy undertone to his content; his visit to Maisons had evoked too many memories of the past. And this glimpse of his old country home had conjured up a host of phantoms that dogged his loitering steps: his youth, his robust health of earlier years, his father, Jacques. During the last twenty-four hours Jacques's presence had been constantly beside him. Never before had he felt so poignantly that Jacques's death had robbed him of one who could never be replaced: an only *brother*. For the first time he was fully aware of the irretrievability of his loss. He went so far as to reproach himself for the belatedness of his mood, this tardy access of genuine despair. What had prevented him from feeling thus before? The pressure of circumstances, perhaps; the war. . . .

He clearly recalled the moment when a letter had come to him from Rumelles, a letter that clinched the matter, extinguished the last spark of hope. It had been handed to him in the ambulance parking-lot at Verdun, only a few hours before his division moved on to the Eparges sector. He had been busy preparing for the move, and later on, in the confusion of settling in, had not had time to give way to emotion. Nor indeed, in the following fortnight; hurrying from one point to another through mud and deluges of rain, struggling to carry on as best he could in the ruined villages of the Woëvre district, worked off his feet, he had had no time to spare for personal afflictions. Subsequently, during a quiet spell, he had read the letter again, answered Rumelles, and gradually become inured to his bereavement, without having ever given it much thought.

Today, however, with everything around him bringing back his home life of the pre-war years, at last regret took concrete form, the sense of loss struck home with an intensity he had not known before. Even here, in the road leading to the forest, every detail of the landscape was charged with memories of Jacques. Those white hurdles, for instance—despite their difference in age, he and Jacques had often vaulted them together, in friendly contest; side by side they had sprawled in that green meadow, just before haymaking time; one clay they had amused themselves dislodging with a pointed stick the nests of those flat-backed insects which still swarmed on the mossy roots of the limes and which they had named “soldiers” because of their scarlet shells quaintly patterned with black chevrons. Together, on afternoons like this, they had roamed beside those hedges and palings, plucking as they passed sprigs of early lilac or laburnum; often and often they had cycled along this very road with a bathing-suit or racket strapped to the handle-bars. And, yonder, a gateway shadowed by acacias brought back to him that year when, still a schoolboy, he had gone for private lessons during the vacation to an old pedagogue who was spending the summer at Maisons. Often at nightfall Mademoiselle and Jacques had come to meet him there, so that he should not have to come home by himself across the park. And he seemed to see his brother, then a three-year-old child, freeing his hand from Mademoiselle’s, running to meet him, clinging to his arm and prattling away about the small adventures of his afternoon.

He was still following the same train of thought when he reached the hostel. And when, as he pushed open the little gate leading into the garden, he saw Paul let go of Uncle Dan’s hand and rush up to him, he seemed to see Jacques running toward him—the same shock of reddish-brown hair, the same bold, decided movements. More deeply stirred than he cared to show, he caught up the child in his arms, as he used to do with his brother, and was about to give him a kiss. But Paul, who could not bear any sort of restraint, even by way of an embrace, struggled and kicked so violently that Antoine, laughing and breathless, had to put him down again.

Daniel had watched the little scene, his hands in his pockets.

“What strength the young ruffian has!” Antoine exclaimed with almost fatherly pride. “The way he wriggles! It’s like trying to hold an eel you’ve just pulled out of the water.”

Daniel smiled, and his smile betrayed a pride exactly similar to Antoine’s. Then he pointed skyward. “Gorgeous day, isn’t it? . . . Another summer beginning.”

Slightly exhausted by his tussle with Paul, Antoine had seated himself on the border of the path.

“Going to stay here for a bit?” Daniel inquired. “I’ve been on my feet for quite a while, and my apology for a leg needs a rest. Do you mind looking after the kid?”

“Not a bit.”

Daniel turned to the child. “You’ll come in presently with Uncle Antoine. Are you going to be good?”

Paul looked down without replying. He shot Antoine a quick sidelong glance, then followed Daniel’s retreating form with his eyes, evidently in half a mind to follow him. But just then a cockchafer came blundering by and crashed upon its back. Forgetting all about Uncle Dan, Paul squatted on the ground and fell to watching the insect’s vain struggles to right itself.

Antoine decided that the best method of making the child get used to him would be to seem to take no notice. He remembered a way he used to have of amusing Jacques, when he was of Paul’s age. Picking up a thick piece of pine-bark from the ground beside him, he began to whittle it into the shape of a boat.

Paul, who had been secretly observing him, very soon came up. “Oo’s knife?” he asked.

“Mine. Uncle Antoine’s a soldier, so he has to have a knife to cut his bread and meat.”

The explanation was obviously of no interest to Paul. “What’s you doing?”

“Can’t you see? I’m making a little boat—a little boat for you. When your mummy bathes you, you can put the boat into the bath and, you’ll see, it’ll float on the water like a real ship.”

The child listened, his brows wrinkled with the strain of mental concentration. In the frown there was a certain discomposure too; his uncle’s weak, hoarse voice affected him unpleasantly.

And, strangely enough, he appeared to have understood nothing of what Antoine had said. Could it be that he had never seen a boat? . . . He gave a sigh, then seizing upon the one point which had struck him by its glaring inaccuracy, hastened to set it right. “Mummy don’t bathe me. Uncle Dan bathes me.” Then he returned to his cockchafer, completely indifferent to Antoine’s work of art.

Antoine accepted the rebuff, and, throwing away the boat, put the knife down beside him.

After a moment Paul came back. Antoine made another effort to catch his interest. “Have you done anything nice today? Have you been for a walk in the garden with Uncle Dan?”

The child, after groping, it seemed, in the depths of his memory, nodded.

“Have you been good?”

He nodded again, but almost immediately ran up to Antoine and after a brief hesitation confided gravely: “Me not quite sure.”

Antoine could not help smiling. “What? You’re not sure whether you’ve been good or not?”

“Yes! Me been good!” Paul cried indignantly. Then the same odd doubt came over him again. He wrinkled up his nose comically and, lingering on each word, repeated: “But me not quite sure.”

He made as if to go away, but, as he was passing behind Antoine, made a sudden grab at the knife, which was lying on the ground. “No!” Antoine remonstrated, covering the knife with his hand. “Leave it alone!”

The child stood his ground, looking daggers at him.

“Mustn’t play with that,” Antoine said. “You’ll cut yourself.” He shut the knife and put it in his pocket. Paul glared at him in high dudgeon. Antoine tried to make peace, and smilingly held out his hand. The blue eyes flashed; then lifting the outstretched hand toward his lips as if to kiss it, the child dug his small sharp teeth into the little finger.

“Ow!” Antoine gasped, so staggered by the outrage that it did not even occur to him to be angry. “Paul is very naughty,” he said, rubbing his finger where the small teeth had nipped it. “Paul has hurt poor Uncle Antoine.”

The boy looked at him inquiringly. “Very much hurt?” he asked.

“Very much.”

“Very much hurt,” Paul repeated with obvious satisfaction. Then, turning on his heel, he scampered off across the terrace.

The child’s conduct puzzled Antoine. Was it simply a desire for revenge? he wondered. Hardly that. What then? An action like that may mean all sorts of things. It’s quite possible that, when he found he couldn’t disobey my orders not to touch the knife, the realization of his own helplessness came over him with a rush and carried him away. Perhaps when he bit my finger like that it wasn’t so much to hurt or punish me. His nerves may have been so strung up that he was bound to find some relief for them—it was an irresistible physical impulse, in fact. In any case, if we’re to judge a reaction of that sort, we need first to be able to estimate exactly the forces actuating it. The impulse to grab that knife may have been more imperative than an adult could possibly suspect.

Remembering his duty to keep an eye on Paul, he glanced toward the terrace. Oblivious of the world, the little fellow was trying to clamber up a mound of earth some ten yards away.

Jacques, Antoine told himself, would certainly have been quite capable of an equally vindictive reaction. But would he have gone so far as actually to bite me?

He appealed to his memories for better understanding. He could not resist the temptation of identifying past and present, father and son. The glance Paul had flung at him had revealed the first stage of tendencies he knew only too well: spite, defiance, a thirst for revolt, and pride—aloof, ungovernable pride; he had seen them all before, many a time, in his brother's eyes. It seemed so striking an analogy that he was impelled to carry it still further, so far as to persuade himself that behind this child's rebellious attitude lay hidden the same high qualities as had been always latent beneath Jacques's outbursts of revolt: a rare integrity of purpose, extreme sensitiveness, and a wealth of affection always misunderstood.

Fearing to catch cold, he was about to rise when his attention was caught by the extraordinary gymnastic feats in which the little fellow was indulging. The mound he was trying to storm was something like six feet high; the right and left sides rising gently from the level were easy of ascent, but in the middle the gradient was stiff—and it was precisely this face that the child was set on scaling. Several times in succession Antoine saw him take a run, scramble half-way up the slope, lose footing, and roll back to the ground. He could not hurt himself very much, as the fall was broken by a carpet of pine-needles. He appeared completely absorbed in the feat he had set himself; apart from it the world did not exist for him. With every attempt he came nearer the summit; the height from which he tumbled was greater each time. After each fall he rubbed his knees and began again.

That's the true Thibault spirit coming out, Antoine thought, not without satisfaction. The spirit that made Father so tyrannical and domineering, Jacques so headstrong and rebellious, and in my case took the form of dogged perseverance. This little fellow has obviously the same driving force within him. What form, I wonder, will it take later on?

Once more the little boy charged up the mound and this time so fiercely, so recklessly, that he all but reached his goal. But then he lost foothold in the crumbling soil; he was on the point of toppling over once again when he grasped a tuft of grass, managed to keep his balance, and with a final effort hoisted himself to the summit.

Antoine thought: I bet he'll look round now to see if I've been watching!

He was wrong. The boy kept his back turned and took no notice of his uncle. He stood for a moment, his small feet squarely planted in the turf. Then, satisfied no doubt, he walked composedly down one of the more gradual inclines, without even casting a backward glance at the scene of his triumph. Leaning against a tree, he took off one of his sandals, shook out the pebbles, and painstakingly put it on again. Then, knowing he could not button the strap himself, he went up to Antoine and held out his foot without a word. Antoine smiled and did the necessary, without comment. Then he said: “Now let’s go indoors, Paul.”

“No.”

Antoine thought: He has a way that’s all his own of saying No. Jenny’s right; it isn’t so much that he wants to get out of doing the particular thing one asks of him, but he’s determined to say No to everybody; he won’t give up an atom of his independence for any reason whatsoever.

“Now, then, Paul,” he said, rising to his feet, “be a good boy. Uncle Dan’s waiting for us. Come along!”

“No.”

Conscious that the management of unruly children was not his forte, Antoine endeavoured to turn the difficulty. “You show me the way. Which path do we go along? This one or that one?” He tried to take the child’s hand. But Paul put his hands resolutely behind his back.

“Me say No!”

“All right,” Antoine replied. “So you want to stay there all by yourself? Well, stay, then.” And with deliberate steps he walked off toward the house, whose pink walls glowed across the trees, lit up by the setting sun.

Before he had gone very far he heard Paul running up, full tilt, behind him. He decided to say some friendly word when the child caught up with him, as if nothing had happened. But Paul ran by him without stopping and, as he passed, flung out insolently: “Me going in—’cause me wants to!”

XII

DINNER at the hostel was as a rule a fairly cheerful function, thanks to the flow of small talk kept up by Gise and Nicole. Glad to be through with their day’s work—and perhaps, too, at feeling free from the control of Mme.

de Fontanin, who with all her motherliness was something of a martinet—they discussed in the frankest terms the happenings of the day, compared notes regarding newcomers to the hospital, and with schoolgirl zest exclaimed upon the trivial incidents of their respective daily rounds.

Though feeling rather limp, Antoine was tickled by the assurance with which, in studiously technical terms, they discussed certain treatments and passed judgment on the competence of the various doctors. On several occasions they appealed to him for an expert opinion, which he furnished smilingly.

Busy looking after her son, who was having his dinner with the grown-ups, Jenny paid little heed to what was said. Daniel, though taciturn as usual *vis-à-vis* Nicole and his sister, now and then addressed a remark to Antoine.

Nicole had brought an evening paper, in which there was mention of the long-range bombardments of Paris. Several buildings in the central districts had recently been hit; five persons, including three women and a small baby, had been killed. The baby's death had provoked a unanimous denunciation of German barbarity in the Allied press.

The fact that such atrocities were possible in modern times revolted Nicole. "Those Huns!" she cried "They're absolute brutes! Their poison gas and flame-throwers were bad enough. But this slaughtering of mere civilians, innocent children, it's simply monstrous, it's inconceivable! They must have lost every spark of decency, every human feeling, to behave like that!"

"Does the slaughter of innocent civilians," Antoine suggested, "really strike you as much more inhuman, more immoral, more monstrous, than the butchery of young soldiers at the front?"

Nicole and Gise stared at him, open-mouthed.

Daniel had laid down his fork and was looking down in silence at his plate.

"Don't forget this," Antoine continued. "Any attempt to impose rules on war, to restrict it, organize it—'humanize' it, as they say—to declare that this or that is 'barbarous' or 'immoral,' implies that there's another way of making war, a gentlemanly way, a way that's perfectly humane and moral." He paused and tried to catch Jenny's eye. But she was holding a mug to her son's lips and seemed intent on her maternal task.

"What is it that's so monstrous?" he went on. "Is it really that it's more cruel to kill men in one way rather than another? Or that certain people are the victims rather than others?"

Jenny stopped feeding the child and set down the mug so violently that the milk splashed on the tablecloth. “What is monstrous,” she said through her clenched teeth, “is the apathy of the masses. They have the numbers, they have the last word. No war can be carried on against their will. Why don’t they *do* something? They have only to say No, and the peace which they’re all eager for will follow instantly.”

Daniel’s eyebrows lifted and he shot a quick, enigmatic glance at her.

There was a short silence. Then Antoine summed up in a calm, confident tone. “What’s monstrous isn’t any particular form of war. The monstrous thing is *war itself.*”

Some minutes passed before anyone dared to resume the conversation.

Antoine was pondering on Jenny’s last remark. Was it true that the masses set such store by peace? Doubtless, he told himself, they clamour for it, once a war is on. But no sooner do they get it than their mutual intolerance and fighting instincts come into play again, and peace is once more imperilled. It’s true enough that the various governments and their international policies are responsible for wars. But we must not forget that human nature has a large share in that responsibility. . . . In fact, at the base of every form of pacifism lies a belief in the ethical progress of mankind. I have that belief or, rather, I’ve an emotional need to feel it; I can’t bring myself to admit that human nature isn’t perfectible *ad infinitum*. I *need* to believe that one day man will contrive to bring order out of chaos and institute upon this planet a reign of universal brotherhood. But, to bring this about, it’s not enough that an enlightened few should consecrate their efforts and their lives to this ideal. No, centuries of evolution are needed; thousands of years, perhaps. What hope is there of anything really fine emerging from twentieth-century man? And the trouble is that, try as I may, I can’t discover in so remote a prospect anything to console me for being obliged to live among the ravening beasts that are the human race today. . . .

He noticed that the others were still silent. The atmosphere at the dinner-table was still tense, charged with hostile currents. Conscious of his responsibility for this state of things and regretting it, he tried to give the conversation a new direction, and turned to Daniel. “By the way, have you heard anything of that eccentric friend of yours, the pastor? What’s he up to, these days?”

“Pastor Gregory, you mean?”

The name was enough to bring a twinkle of amusement to the eyes of all the young people at table.

In a mournful tone, contrasting quaintly with the smile that hovered on her lips, Nicole said: “Aunt Thérèse is dreadfully worried about him. He’s been in a sanatorium at Arcachon since last Easter.”

“The last news we had,” Daniel added, “was that he was confined to his bed.”

Jenny put in a word, mentioning that the pastor had been at the front since the beginning of the war. Then the conversation flagged again. . . . To keep it up, Antoine inquired: “Did he join up?”

“Well,” Daniel said, “he tried his best to go on active service, but his age and health made it impossible. So he joined an American ambulance section. He spent the whole of that terrible winter of 1917 on the British front. He had attack after attack of bronchitis. Then he started spitting blood. But he wouldn’t quit until they forced him to. Only—then it was too late.”

“The last time we saw him was in 1916,” Jenny said. “He was on leave and came to visit us here.”

“He looked quite changed already,” Nicole added. “An absolute ghost. With a big Tolstoyan beard. Like an old magician in a fairy-tale.”

“Did he still refuse to employ medicines?” Antoine asked. “And insist on treating diseases with his mumbo-jumbo?”

Nicole burst out laughing. “He was crazier than ever! You should have heard the things he said to us when he was here. For two years he’d been conveying dying men in his ambulance, and he kept on calmly telling us: ‘There is no death!’ ”

“Nicole!” Gise exclaimed. It distressed her that the pastor should be held up to ridicule, especially before Antoine.

“Of course,” Nicole explained, “the word ‘death’ rarely crosses his lips. He calls it ‘the mortal illusion,’ whatever that may signify.”

“And in his last letter to Mamma,” Daniel said with a smile, “there was a real gem. This is about what he wrote: ‘My life will soon depart onto the plane of the invisible.’ ”

Gise cast a reproachful look at Antoine. “Don’t laugh, Antoine. I know he seems absurd, but he’s a really saintly man.”

“I dare say you’re right, Gise,” Antoine admitted. “He may be a saint. But I can’t help thinking of all the poor wounded Tommies who were unlucky enough to fall into his saintly clutches. And nothing will convince me that as an ambulance-man he wasn’t a public danger.”

They had finished dessert. Jenny helped Paul down from his chair and rose. The others followed her example and walked after her into the drawing-room. She did not stay, however, but went upstairs at once to put the child to bed; they had sat at table longer than usual that evening.

While Gise, in a low chair some distance from the light, settled down to knitting (she always presented her soldier-patients with a pair of socks knitted by herself when, on recovery, they left the hospital to rejoin their regiments), Daniel took a volume of *Round the World* from the piano on which it was lying and went over to the sofa behind the big circular table on which was placed the only light in the room, an oil-lamp.

Watching the young man poring over his book with the application of an industrious schoolboy, Antoine wondered if he were really interested in its old-fashioned illustrations or whether this were not a habit Daniel had developed to keep himself in countenance.

He went up to the fire place, where Nicole, kneeling on the hearthrug, was kindling a fire.

"It's ages since I last saw a log-fire," he remarked.

"The nights are still a bit chilly. And, anyhow, it makes the room more cheerful." She straightened up and turned to him. "Do you know, it was here, at Maisons, we met for the first time? I can remember it ever so well. How about you?"

"Yes, I remember it too."

That far-off summer evening, how clearly it came back to him, when, yielding to Jacques's insistence, he had accompanied him to the "Huguenots' " house, despite their father's veto! He recalled his surprise at meeting there his friend Félix Héquet, a young surgeon some years his senior. Pictures formed before his eyes of Jenny and Nicole walking side by side in the rose-alley; of Jacques, then a student, fresh from his success in the Ecole Normale examination; and himself, a budding medical practitioner whom Mme. de Fontanin was alone in addressing punctiliously as "Doctor." Days remote, indeed! Then all of them were young, rejoicing in their youth and prospects of the future, without an inkling of what lay ahead—the cataclysm the statesmen of Europe were preparing for them behind the scenes, which was ruthlessly to sweep away all their petty personal ambitions, to cut short the careers of some and change completely those of others, to pile ruin on ruin, bereavement on bereavement, throwing the whole world into chaos—for how many years yet?

"I'd just got engaged," she went on in a pensive voice, in which there was an undertone of melancholy. "Félix had brought me here in his car. We had a breakdown on the way back, I remember, in the Sartrouville woods, and it was past midnight when we got back to Paris."

Daniel’s eyelids lifted and he shot a rapid glance in their direction which Antoine intercepted. Was he listening? Did this recall of happier days stir him with faint longings, with regrets? Or was it merely, Antoine wondered, that their foolish chatter got on his nerves? Daniel fell to perusing his magazine again. But, a few minutes later, stifling a yawn, he rose, closed the volume, walked stiffly up to them, and said good night.

Gise put down her knitting. “Going upstairs, Daniel?”

In the dim light her hair seemed woollier, her complexion darker than ever, the whites of her eyes still more lustrous. The glow from the burning logs made the bent form on the low chair seem like an evocation of the African wild—a native woman squatting beside her jungle campfire.

She rose. “I think your lamp has been left in the kitchen. Come along, I’ll light it for you.”

They went out of the room together. Antoine followed them with his eyes, then, turning back to Nicole, noticed her gaze intent on him. An odd little smile formed on her lips. “Daniel ought to marry her,” she murmured.

“What?”

“I mean it. Don’t you think it would be a perfect match?”

Antoine was so taken aback that he halted where he stood, staring at her, his eyebrows lifted. Tossing her head back, she burst into a peal of deep, full-throated laughter. “Sorry! I’d no idea I was saying anything so outrageous!”

She drew a chair up to the fire and sank into it, crossing one leg over the other. There was something deliberately alluring in her languorous grace as she looked him over in silence. He sat down beside her.

“Do you really think there’s anything between them?”

“I didn’t say that,” she hastened to reply. “I’m pretty sure that Daniel, at any rate, hasn’t dreamt of such a thing.”

“Neither has Gise!” he exclaimed impulsively.

“No, probably Gise hasn’t either. But you can see she’s interested in him. She’s always the one who runs his errands, and gets him his papers and chewing-gum. And, what’s more, it’s pretty plain that he likes it. I suppose you’ve noticed that she’s the only one of us who doesn’t have to bear the brunt of his fits of bad temper.”

Antoine made no reply. His first reaction had been one of repugnance for the suggestion that Gise might marry; he could not wholly forget the past or the part that Gise had played in his life for a little while. On second thought, however, he could not see any objection that would hold water.

The corners of Nicole's mouth were still dimpling with silent laughter. But her gaiety seemed forced and overdone, somehow; so much, so that Antoine wondered if by any chance she were in love with her cousin.

"Now really, doctor, you must admit it isn't such a wild notion as all that," she persisted. "Gise could devote the rest of her existence to him, and I can't think of any way in which a girl of her type has a better chance of making something of her life. And as for Daniel . . ." Slowly she let her head sink back till the coils of fair hair were pillowed on the cushions. Between the moist, parted lips Antoine caught for a moment the white gleam of her teeth. Then, lowering her eyelids, she shot a quick, deliberately meaningful glance at him. "You know, Daniel's the kind of man who likes being doted on."

On the other side of the wall the old oak staircase creaked; she started, made a slight, almost imperceptible grimace, then, with a deftness in deception that Antoine found almost perturbing, changed the subject. "That reminds me of the paratyphoid case I was sitting up with last night. He was an oldish man, in the forties; a Savoyard, I imagine." At this point Jenny came in, followed by Gise, and Nicole immediately speeded lip her flow of conversation. "Anyhow, he raved all night in some queer dialect—I couldn't understand any of it, except one word. Now and again he'd cry out 'Mummy!' in a voice like a baby's. It was absolutely heart-rending."

Antoine took up his cue with a promptness that gave him an absurd feeling of pride. "Oh, yes, I've heard that often enough myself. But actually it's not quite what it seems. I'm glad to say it's no more than a meaningless cry, a return of the subconscious mind to a childhood habit. I've heard a lot of dying men cry out 'Mother!' but I don't believe many of them were really thinking of their mothers."

Jenny, who had brought in a bundle of brown wool to be wound into balls, asked: "Who's going to help me tonight?"

"I'm dreadfully sleepy, I confess," Nicole said, smiling lazily, with a glance at the clock. "Why, it's twenty to ten!"

Gise said: "I will."

Jenny shook her head. "No, darling; you're fagged out too. Go and have a good sleep."

Nicole kissed Jenny, then turned to Antoine. "I hope you'll excuse me. We have to be up and about at seven in the morning, and I didn't sleep a wink last night."

Gise came up next. Her heart was aching with the thought that Antoine was leaving the next day, that his visit was to end without their having been together again; she yearned to recapture the delightful intimacy of their talk in Paris. But she dared not voice her regrets for fear of bursting into tears; without speaking, she offered her cheek for a kiss.

"Good-bye, dear little Blackie." There was a deep tenderness in his voice.

Promptly she was convinced that he had guessed her thoughts and that he too felt the pang of parting; and, now that she was sure of his sympathy, the parting suddenly became more bearable.

Avoiding his eyes, she followed Nicole out of the room. It struck Antoine that she had not said good night to Jenny, but, before he had time to wonder whether any misunderstanding had arisen between them, Jenny hurried across the room and laid a detaining hand on Gise's shoulder just as she was going out.

"I'm not sure that Paul has enough bedclothes on him. Would you mind putting something over his feet?"

"The pink blanket?"

"The white one's warmer."

Again, Antoine noted, Gise had omitted to say good night to Jenny on leaving her.

He had remained standing. "What about you, Jenny?" he asked. "Aren't you going to bed? You mustn't stay up for me, you know."

"I'm not a bit sleepy," she assured him, settling herself in the chair Nicole had just left.

"Well, then, to work! Hand me over one of those hanks of wool—I'm going to take Gise's place."

He helped himself to a skein and squatted in the low chair. Jenny smiled and gave in.

"There you are!" he laughed, after several false starts. "It's running like clockwork now."

His unaffected friendliness filled her with surprise and delight. She was ashamed of having so long misunderstood him, and she saw him now as a tower of strength, dependable and valiant. When a fit of coughing compelled Antoine to stop helping her, she thought: If only he could get well again, if only he could be once more the man he used to be! For her son's sake it was important that Antoine should regain his health.

When the cough had abated, he set to work again and, coming straight to the point, said: "You know, Jenny, I'm very relieved to see you like this—I mean, so . . . so settled, so calm."

Jenny looked down at the ball she was winding, and repeated meditatively: “Calm. . . .”

Yes, in spite of everything, it was true. She was sometimes astonished herself at this peace which had come to her, deadening her grief. As she pondered over Antoine’s remark, she compared her present state of mind with the inner turmoil, the agonizing feeling of emptiness, that had been hers three and a half years ago. She saw herself as she was in the early months of the war, without news of Jacques and fearing the worst; now up in arms against the world, now prostrated by her sense of loneliness and yet unable to hear the company of others, shunning both her mother and her home. It was as if she were clutching at something she could not do without, and which ever slipped through her fingers. She remembered how she used to wander for whole afternoons in that unfamiliar wartime Paris, making indefatigable pilgrimages to the places she had visited with Jacques: the Gare de l’Est, St. Vincent de Paul’s close, the Rue du Croissant, the cafés around the Bourse where she had so often waited for him, the side-streets of Montrouge and that meeting-hall where, one memorable night, Jacques had roused an audience to a wild demonstration against the war. Then, when nightfall and her exhaustion forced her to return home, desperately she would fling herself, sobbing her heart out, onto the bed where she had once lain in Jacques’s arms and fall into a fitful sleep, only to awaken once more in the grey, hopeless dawn to the prospect of another desolate day. Yes, indeed, in comparison with that early phase her present life was wonderfully calm. In the past three years everything had changed around and within her—even her memories of Jacques. How strange, she mused, that even the most heart-felt love cannot escape the ravages of time! When she thought of Jacques nowadays she never visualized him as he would be today, or even as he was in July 1914. No, the Jacques she saw with her mind’s eye was not the changeable, nerve-ridden being she had known; she saw a seated figure, statue-still, one hand resting on his thigh, the light from a high studio window falling on his forehead, the Jacques, in fact, of the portrait which was before her eyes night and day.

Suddenly a new thought waylaid her, an appalling realization. She had just pictured what would happen were Jacques unexpectedly to return, and her reaction was one of embarrassment quite as much as of joy. Yes, the truth had to be faced: if the Jacques of 1914 were to come back, if by some miracle he were to appear in flesh and blood before the Jenny of today, well, she could not possibly restore to him the place in her heart which until now, as she believed, her faithful devotion had kept intact, inviolate for ever.

She gazed earnestly at Antoine, her eyes dark with distress. But he noticed nothing; his attention was all on keeping the skein taut between his outstretched fingers and guiding the movement of the thread by leaning alternately right and left. He dared not take his eyes off the wool slipping as if by magic from his fingers. He felt rather foolish. His shoulders were cramped and aching, and he cursed himself for his silliness in offering to help. The continual raising of his arms was making his breathing more difficult every moment and he foresaw that, after having stayed so close to the fire on the low chair, he would probably catch cold undressing.

She would have liked to talk to him about herself, about Jacques and the child, as she had done that morning in her bedroom. That unwonted burst of expansiveness had given her a sense of well-being which had lasted on throughout the day. But tonight the “pent-up” feeling had come back, the words would not rise to her lips. There lay the tragedy of her inner life: she was incapable of pouring out her heart to others, doomed to inarticulateness. Even with Jacques she had never been able to “let herself go” wholeheartedly. How often had he accused her of being “enigmatic”! The memory of it rankled still, and cruelly as ever. How would things be, she wondered, in years to come, between her and her son? Was it not all too likely that, try as she might, her seeming aloofness and reserve would raise a barrier between them?

Both looked up simultaneously as the clock struck, and only then did they become aware of how long they had been silent.

“Pity we can’t manage all the wool.” Jenny smiled. “Let’s finish off this skein, anyhow. . . . I really must be going up.” She began to wind the ball more quickly. “Otherwise I may find Gise asleep and it would be a shame to wake her when she’s just dropped off. She really does need a rest.”

He remembered, then, the twin beds he had seen and knew why Gise had not said good night to Jenny. They shared that room, they slept there together beneath Jacques’s portrait, one on each side of Paul’s cot. As he thought of Gise’s childhood in M. Thibault’s apartment, a rush of joy came over him. The poor child has found a real home at last, he thought. Nicole Héquet’s remark that Gise should marry Daniel came back to his mind. Though he could not have said why, he did not think that likely. And, anyhow, why need she marry? She could achieve happiness and make the utmost of her life by casting in her lot with Jenny and little Paul. In these two, Jacques lived for her again and on them she could lavish all the boundless affection and doglike fidelity that had lacked an outlet hitherto. And she would settle down into a dear, dusky, grey-haired old creature, Paul’s “nice old Auntie Gi.”

The last thread slipped from Antoine’s fingers. Jenny got up, put away the remaining skeins, and, after banking with ashes the logs in the hearth, took up the big lamp from the table.

“Let me carry it,” Antoine suggested rather half-heartedly. But his breathing was so laboured that Jenny preferred to spare him all exertion. “Don’t bother, thanks; I’m used to it. I’m always the last to go to bed.”

In the doorway she looked back to make sure everything was in order. Her gaze wandered round the old family living-room, then settled on Antoine. “I’m going to bring up my child,” she said determinedly, “far away from all this. Once the war’s ended, I shall make a complete change in my life and settle down somewhere else.”

“What do you mean, somewhere else?”

“I intend to say good-bye to all this,” she went on in the same firm, decided tone. “I want to get away.”

“Where will you go?” Something prompted him to add: “To Switzerland, I suppose.”

She gazed at him in silence for some moments. Then, “No,” she said. “I thought of it of course. But since the revolution last October, all Jacques’s friends—the sincere ones, anyhow—have moved to Russia. I, too, thought of Russia at one time. But I believe it would be better for Paul to be brought up as a Frenchman. So I shall stay in France. But I must get away from Mother and Daniel, and live my own life. Perhaps I’ll settle down somewhere in the country, with Gise. We’ll work hard, and try to bring up Paul as he ought to be brought up—as Jacques would have wished him to be.”

“Listen, Jenny!” Antoine exclaimed impulsively. “I’ve every reason to expect that by then I shall have taken up my practice again and, in that case, you must let me bear the expenses. . . .”

“No, thank you, Antoine,” she cut in, with a shake of her head. “I wouldn’t hesitate to accept your help if it were really necessary. But I’m quite determined to earn my own living. I want Paul to have an independent woman for his mother, a woman who has won by hard work the right to have her own opinions and to act as she thinks best. Don’t you approve?”

“Of course!”

She smiled her gratitude. It seemed that she had said all she wanted him to know, for she opened the door at once and began walking up the stairs. She led the way to his room, put down the lamp, and made sure he had all he needed. Then, as she held out her hand, she said: “I’ve a confession to make to you, Antoine.”

“Yes?” he said encouragingly.

“Well . . . I haven’t always . . . felt toward you . . . as I do now.”

“Same here.” He smiled.

Seeing his smile, she hesitated. Her hand still lay in Antoine’s, and she gazed at him with earnest eyes. At last she spoke. “But now, when I think of my child’s future, I . . . You understand, don’t you? I feel so much braver when I think you’ll always be there, and that Jacques’s son won’t be a stranger to you. I’ll need your advice, Antoine. I want Paul to have all his father’s good qualities without . . .” She could not bring herself to complete the sentence. But immediately she braced herself up—he could feel the small hand quivering between his fingers—and, like a rider putting a stubborn horse over a high fence, went resolutely on. “I wasn’t blind to Jacques’s faults, you know.” She swallowed hard and fell silent again. After a while she added, gazing into space, and the words seemed to escape her, despite herself: “Only, the moment I was with him, I forgot them.”

Her eyelids quivered. She was vainly trying to collect her thoughts. Then she asked: “You’re not going until after lunch, are you? In that case . . .” She tried to force a smile to her lips. “In that case we’ll see a bit of each other in the morning, won’t we?” Then she withdrew her hand, saying in a low voice: “Now, try to get a good night’s rest,” and moved away toward her room.

XIII

“DR. THIBAULT, sir.” There was a joyous ring in the old butler’s voice.

Philip, who had been seated at his desk, writing letters, scrambled hurriedly to his feet; then, with the ungainly, shambling stride so characteristic of him, walked up to Antoine, who had halted on the threshold. Before gripping his hands, he gave him one of those keen glances of his that seemed to strike blue fire between the fluttering eyelids. Slowly wagging his head, and with the bantering smile he used for hiding his feelings when deeply moved, he said: “Congratulations, my dear fellow. You look stunning in your field uniform! . . . And how are you?”

Antoine thought: How he has aged! The old professor’s stoop was more pronounced than ever, the lanky body still more unsteady on the spindle legs. The shaggy eyebrows and goatee had gone snow-white, and yet the eyes and smile had a youthful vivacity, a mischievous elation, which in the worn old face struck an incongruous, almost a jarring, note.

He was wearing red army trousers of an antiquated pattern with black stripes up the side and a morning coat with sagging tails, and this hybrid attire might have been devised to typify his twofold functions, half military, half civilian. Toward the close of 1914 he had been appointed chairman of a committee for the reorganization of the army medical service. From that time on, he had devoted all his energies to combating the inherent vices of a system which, from the outset, had seemed to him disgracefully inadequate. His eminence in the medical world gave him an exceptional freedom of action. He had slashed through red tape, exposed abuses, and moved the powers that be to action. The salutary, if belated, reforms introduced during the past three years were largely due to his courage and pertinacity.

Philip was still holding Antoine’s hands, pumping them up and down and making little hissing noises with his lips. “Well, well! It’s good to see you again. Tell me, how are you?” He shepherded Antoine toward his desk. “We’ve so many things to say to each other, one hardly knows where to begin.” He had ensconced Antoine in the big armchair in which his patients sat. But, instead of taking his usual place behind his desk, he made a long arm, drew Up a light chair, seated himself astride it, close to Antoine, and gazed at him earnestly.

“Now, my dear fellow, let’s have a talk about yourself, this mustard-gas complication. How exactly do things stand?”

Antoine felt suddenly ill at ease. That expression of attentive gravity on Philip’s face, his professional look, he had seen it a hundred times before, but this was the first time its focus was—himself!

“I’m looking a bit of a wreck, Chief, isn’t that so?”

“A trifle thinner. But that was only to be expected.”

Philip took off his glasses, wiped them, replaced them carefully, then bent forward, and, smiling said: “Now, then, out with it!”

“Well, Chief, I’ve been what they call, with bated breath, ‘severely gassed.’ And it’s no joke, I assure you.”

Philip made a slight gesture of impatience. “Quite so! Quite so! Now let’s begin at the beginning. Your first wound—has it healed all right?”

“It would have practically disappeared, if the war had ended for me last summer, before my brush with mustard gas. Still, I inhaled very little of it, and I shouldn’t be in the state that I’m in now. But it’s obvious that the lesions caused by the gas in the right lung have been aggravated by the fact that it had not expanded fully after that first wound.”

Philip made a wry face.

“Yes,” Antoine continued in a thoughtful tone, “there’s no getting away from it, the lung is seriously affected. Of course I’ll pull through, but it’ll be a long business. And”—a fit of coughing silenced him for some moments—“and I’ll be a bit of an invalid, most likely, for the rest of my days.”

Philip cut in abruptly: “You’re staying to dinner, I hope?”

“With pleasure, Chief. Only, as I told you in my letter, I’m on a diet.”

“Denis has been told, and he’s laid in a supply of milk. . . . Now, then! As you’re dining here, we’ve lots of time before us. Let’s begin at the beginning. How exactly did it happen? I thought your job kept you in the back areas.”

Antoine made a fretful gesture. “It was my own damned folly! At the end of last October I was having an easy time of it at Epernay, where I’d been assigned to organize, as the irony of fate would have it, a gas casualty clearing station. We’d just taken La Malmaison and I was struck by something I’d observed about the gas cases sent to me after the fighting in the Chemin-des-Dames sector: that among them were a large number of Red Cross men and stretcher-bearers. The proportion was unduly high, and I suspected that the protection against gas in the dressing-stations was insufficient, or the men were getting careless. I happened to know slightly the medical officer in charge of the sector and, bursting with misguided zeal, I rushed off to him and got a permit to make an inspection on the spot. It was coming back from that jaunt that I let myself get nabbed, like a damned fool. Just as I was turning my back on the front line, the Boches launched a gas attack; that was my first piece of bad luck. My second was the weather: the air was warm and muggy, unseasonably so. You know, of course, that moisture in the air develops the lethal properties of mustard gas owing to the increased ionization.”

“Go on,” Philip said. He was resting his elbows on his knees, his chin between his hands, and gazing intently at Antoine.

“I was hurrying as much as I could to get back to the car I’d left at divisional headquarters and I tried to keep clear of the communication trenches, as I knew they would be full of men—a new company was taking over the front line. I thought I'd found a short-cut. It was pitch-dark. Well, I'll skip the details . . ."

"Didn't you have a gas mask?"

"Certainly. But it was a borrowed one. And I must have adjusted it badly. Or too late. I'd only one idea: to get back to the car. When at last I reached headquarters, I jumped into the car and we started off at once. I'd have done better to stop at the divisional dressing-station and have a thorough gargle with bicarbonate."

"Yes . . . obviously."

"But I'd no notion that I'd been caught. It was only an hour later that I began to feel a tickling sensation on my neck and under my arms. We got back to Epernay at midnight. I swabbed myself thoroughly with argyrol at once and went to bed. I still thought I'd only had a whiff of it. But the bronchi were more seriously involved than I'd suspected. Wasn't it absurd! I'd gone there to make sure that the necessary precautions were being taken, and like a fool I didn't take them myself!"

"What next?" Philip cut in, and, unable to resist the temptation of showing he had some acquaintance with the subject, added: "Next day I suppose you had trouble with your eyes, digestion, and so on?"

"Not a bit of it. There were hardly any symptoms the next day. Only a slight erythema of the armpits. And a mild irritation of the skin, which did not alarm me in the least. No vesication whatever. But there were deep-seated, insidious affections of the bronchi which weren't detected till some days later. You can guess the sequelæ. A series of attacks of laryngitis. Severe bronchitis, followed by sloughing of the tracheal mucous membrane. In fact, the usual effects of the vapour on the respiratory tract. And it's been like that for the last six months."

"And the vocal cords?"

"In a shocking state. You can hear that for yourself. If I'm fairly audible this evening it's because I've been treating my throat all day. Often I have complete aphonia."

"Inflammatory lesions of the vocal cords?"

"No."

"Nervous lesions?"

"No. The aphonia's due to œdema of the inflamed ventricular folds."

"Yes, obviously that would prevent phonation. Did they give you strychnine?"

"As much as a thirtieth of a grain t.i.d. It didn't do the slightest good. But it gave me some gruesome bouts of insomnia."

"How long have you been in the South?"

"Since the beginning of the year. From Epernay they sent me to the base hospital at Montmorillon, then to the place where I am now, Le Mousquier, near Grasse. That was at the end of December. The lung lesions seemed to be healing at that time. But at Le Mousquier they found fibrosis of the lung. My dyspnœa soon became extremely painful and acute. For no apparent reason my temperature jumped up all at once to 103 or 104 and dropped equally suddenly to 99.5. In February I had an attack of dry pleurisy with bloody sputum."

"Do you still have these bouts of pyrexia?"

"Yes."

"To what do you attribute them?"

"To pulmonary infection."

"Remittent infection, you mean?"

"Yes, but it may well be chronic, for all I know."

Their eyes met. In Antoine's flickered an unuttered question. Philip raised his hand. "No, no, Thibault. If *that* is what you're thinking of, you're worrying yourself quite needlessly. There exists no ascertainable connexion between gassing and tuberculosis, so far as I'm aware. You must know that even better than I. A mustard gas case never develops phthisis unless there was a pre-existing tuberculous condition. And you," he added, drawing himself up, "may count yourself one of the lucky ones; you have no pathological background of that nature to contend with, so far as your lungs are concerned."

He beamed on Antoine, who gazed at him in silence for a moment, then gave his old teacher an affectionate look and returned his smile. "Yes, I know. I'm in luck in that respect."

"Then, too," Philip continued in the tone of one thinking aloud, "pulmonary œdema, which, I am told, is a common after-effect of lung-irritant gases, rarely follows the inhalation of mustard gas. In that respect, too, you're lucky. There's something else. Pulmonary sequelæ due to mustard gas are less common and, I believe, less serious as a rule than those due to other poison gases. I read an excellent article on the subject the other day."

"Achard's article?" Antoine made a dubious gesture. "The general belief is that, unlike the asphyxiants, mustard gas attacks the small bronchi rather than the alveoli, and has a less serious effect on the absorption of oxygen. But my personal experience, and such observations as I've made of other cases, don't altogether bear this out. The truth is, I'm sorry to say, that lungs affected by mustard gas develop all sorts of complications, most of which are resistant to treatment and tend to become chronic. Worse still, I've seen some mustard-gas cases in which intra-alveolar sclerosis combined with peribronchial fibrosis was followed by collapse of the lung."

There was a short silence.

"And how's the heart?" Philip asked.

"So far, it's held out—more or less. But for how long can one count on it? It would be folly to expect the myocardium not to show signs of fatigue, when for months it's been bearing the brunt of a fight against toxæmia. In fact, I'm beginning to wonder if the toxæmia isn't already affecting the muscular tissues and nervous system. During the past few weeks I've noticed cardio-vascular dysfunction."

"Noticed? In what way."

"Well, I haven't yet been able to arrange for an X-ray examination, and my doctors assure me that they can hear nothing amiss. But how do I know? There are other ways of finding out—by taking my pulse and my blood-pressure, for instance. Well, last week I observed bouts of tachycardia of up to 120 and 135, without a rise in temperature of over 101.3 or 102.2. I shouldn't be surprised if there's some connexion between this rise and the beginning of pulmonary œdema. Don't you agree?"

Philip evaded the question. "Why not make the work of the heart lighter by the frequent use of wet-cups, and even bloodletting now and again?"

Antoine did not seem to have heard. His eyes were riveted on his old teacher. Philip smiled and drew from his vest pocket the fat gold hunter without which Antoine had never seen him. Then he bent forward and—more as if acting from inveterate habit than out of a real desire for information—closed his fingers on Antoine's wrist.

A tedious minute passed. Philip remained unmoving, his eyes fixed on the second hand. Suddenly Antoine started slightly; the sight of that earnest enigmatic face poring over the watch-dial had called back to his memory a long-forgotten incident. One morning at the hospital, in the early days of his intimacy with Philip, as they were leaving a consulting-room where the Chief had just had to deliver a particularly embarrassing diagnosis, in a burst of unwonted expansiveness he had clutched Antoine's arm and said: "Here's a tip for you, my boy. . . . When he's up against a critical problem, what a doctor needs above all is a moment to himself to think things out. Well, here's a dodge to get it—and it's never been known to fail. Out with your watch! A doctor should always have something really striking in that line, something big as a saucer, that catches the eye. That watch is his salvation. He can have an anxious family flustering round him, he can be attending the victim of a street accident with the usual crowd of people pestering him with questions—well, if he wants to get a breathing spell, he has only to make that magic gesture, fish out his turnip and take the patient's pulse. A dead silence falls at once; he can ruminate in peace. So long as he keeps his eye glued on the dial, he can weigh pros and cons, think out his diagnosis, as composedly as if he were sitting in his consulting-room, his chin propped on his hand. . . . So, my dear boy, take my tip—and make haste to buy a large, impressive timepiece."

Philip had not noticed Antoine's slight start. He released the wrist and slowly straightened up. "The pulse is rapid, obviously. And a bit irregular in force. But the rate is steady."

"Just now, perhaps. But some days—especially toward bedtime—it's thready, feeble, almost impalpable. How do you account for that? And whenever the lung condition gets worse, the pulse rate goes up. Paroxysmally as a rule."

"Have you tried pressing on your eyeballs?"

"No use. It doesn't make any difference."

There was another silence. Then Antoine remarked with a forced smile: "I'm already labelled 'pulmonary debility.' The day when I'm labelled 'heart debility' too . . . !"

Philip cut him short with a wave of his hand. "Nonsense! Hypertension and tachycardia are quite often mere defensive reactions—that's common knowledge, isn't it? For instance, in slight cerebral embolisms—you know it as well as I do—it's by hypertension and tachycardia that the heart puts up a successful fight against the obstruction of the pulmonary circulation. Roger pointed that out first, and it's been confirmed by many subsequent observers."

Antoine made no reply, choked by another paroxysm of coughing.

"What treatments?" Philip asked, but without seeming to attach much importance to his question.

As soon as Antoine got his breath back, he said wearily: "All sorts. We've tried everything. No opiates, naturally. Sulphur . . . and arsenic. And then sulphur . . . and arsenic, again and again."

His voice was hoarse, muffled, spasmodic. The strain of talking for so long had been too much; he relapsed into silence. Closing his eyes, he remained motionless for some moments, his head flung back, his shoulders pressed against the rungs of the chair. When he opened his eyes, he perceived Philip's gaze lingering affectionately on him. There was a great gentleness in that look, and Antoine found it more profoundly disturbing than any definite token of anxiety. "You didn't expect to see me looking such a wreck!" he exclaimed impulsively.

"On the contrary," Philip put in at once with a laugh. "After what you told me in your last letter, I didn't expect to see you so far on the road to recovery." Then, rising, he said: "Now I'd like to listen a bit to what is going on inside."

Antoine struggled to his feet and took off his coat.

"We'll do it in the best professional manner, if you don't mind," said Philip cheerfully, pointing to the couch covered with a white sheet on which he had his patients lie.

Antoine complied. Kneeling beside the couch in silence, Philip carried out a thorough auscultation. Then abruptly he rose to his feet. "Well, well!" He adroitly avoided meeting Antoine's anxious gaze. "Certainly there are a few moist rales at various spots. A little fibrosis maybe, and some congestion right up to the apex of the right lung." At last he brought himself to look Antoine in the face. "But you knew that already, didn't you?"

"Yes." Antoine slowly sat up on the couch.

"Obviously." Philip moved with his quick, jerky step to his desk and sat down at it. Mechanically he took a fountain-pen from his pocket, as if about to write a prescription. "There's emphysema undoubtedly. And, to speak quite frankly, I expect the mucous surfaces will give trouble for some time to come." He was fiddling with his pen and, his eyebrows arched, examining absent-mindedly the various objects on the table. "But that's all there is to it," he concluded, closing with a decisive slam the telephone-book which had been lying open on the table.

Antoine rose from the couch, then, resting his palms on the edge of the desk, gazed down earnestly at his old friend. Philip put the cap on his pen, replaced it in his pocket, and, raising his eyes, summed up, weighing his words. "It's an infernal nuisance, my dear boy, I grant you. . . . But no worse than that."

Antoine drew himself up without a word, then walked to the mirror above the fireplace, and began putting on his collar.

Two discreet taps sounded on the door.

"Dinner's ready," Philip announced briskly. He was still sitting at the desk.

Antoine went up to him and again bent forward, resting his hands on the table. “I assure you, Chief,” he said in a weary voice, “I do everything that’s humanly possible. Everything. I’ve given all the known treatments a thorough trial. I study my case clinically as if I were one of my own patients; I’ve kept up a case-history from the very beginning. And I’ve had dozens of X-ray examinations, blood-tests, and the rest of it. I think of nothing but my health—how to avoid risks, how to make the most of every treatment.” He sighed. “All the same, there are days when one can’t help feeling utterly disheartened.”

“Nonsense! You tell me yourself that you’ve noticed signs of improvement.”

“Signs of improvement? But I’m far from sure of having noticed any!” Antoine had spoken without thinking, on the spur of the moment. And unconsciously he had raised his voice. No sooner were the words uttered than a sensation of discomfort came over him; it was as if they had suddenly released a lurking thought that he had never yet allowed to reach the level of consciousness. Small beads of sweat formed on his upper lip.

There was no telling if Philip had noticed his friend’s discomfiture or guessed what anguish lay behind it. The old professor always kept his feelings well in hand; might not this now account for the unruffled serenity of his look? However, what lingering suspicions Antoine might have as to Philip’s candour were effectively dispelled when he saw his shoulders lift in amiable derision and heard him say cheerfully in his high-pitched, ironical voice: “Do you want to know exactly how I feel about it, my dear boy? Well, I’m vastly relieved to find your progress is so slow.” He paused to relish for a moment Antoine’s bewilderment. “Listen! There have been six young men who studied under me whom I’d come to look on almost as my sons; three have been killed, two are maimed for life. And, selfish as it sounds, I don’t deny I’m glad to know the sixth is now in safety, nearly a thousand miles from the front, and obliged to stay many months more in the South of France. I haven’t the slightest wish to see you cured before the war is over. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, my boy! If you hadn’t been gassed last October, who knows if we’d be able to dine together tonight? Which reminds me”—he rose briskly to his feet—“dinner’s waiting for us in the next room.”

His old friend’s cheerfulness was infectious, and Antoine thought, as he followed him out: He’s right. My constitution’s sound as a bell, and it’ll see me through. . . .

A plate of soup was steaming on the table. For many years Philip’s dinner had consisted of soup and stewed fruit only.

A cup and a jug of milk stood in front of Antoine's seat.

"Denis hasn't warmed your milk, but he can heat it up in a moment, if you like."

"No, I always drink it cold, thanks."

"Sugar?"

A paroxysm of coughing prevented Antoine from replying; he merely shook his head. Philip refrained from looking at him. He judged it best to take no notice, and, at the first opportunity, to give their conversation a new turn. Meanwhile, waiting for the coughing fit to end, he stirred his soup meditatively. At last, to end a silence that was getting on the nerves of both, he began speaking, in a tone as natural as he could make it. "I've spent another strenuous day wrangling with our Hygiene Service. You'd never believe the muddle they are in, our official regulations for typhoid immunization."

Antoine smiled, and drank some milk to ease his throat. "Still, Chief, you've put in some grand work in that department during the last three years."

"It was uphill work, I can assure you!" He groped for another topic, failed to find one, and continued. "Yes, uphill work, indeed! When I was asked in 1915 to reorganize the Army Medical Service, you simply can't imagine the state of things I found!"

"Oh, yes, I can!" Antoine all but exclaimed. "I was in the thick of it!" But he was careful to avoid talking as far as possible, and confined himself to listening with an understanding smile.

"At that time," Philip went on, "casualties were evacuated in ordinary trains, which had brought up troops or supplies to the line. Often as not in cattle-cars! With my own eyes I saw poor devils who had had to wait twenty-four hours in a freezing railway-car because there weren't enough casualties to make up a train of the regulation length. For food they usually had to depend on what the people of the locality provided. Their wounds were dressed by well-meaning ladies with the most rudimentary ideas of first-aid work or by aged local pharmacists. And when at last the train got under way they often had two or three days of it, before they were finally lifted off their straw beds. You can guess the percentage of tetanus cases we had in almost every trainload. Those who survived were bundled into overcrowded hospitals, which were short of everything: antiseptics, bandages, and, needless to say, rubber gloves."

"I remember seeing, two or three miles behind the lines"—Antoine had difficulty in getting the words out—"operating-stations . . . in which they boiled the forceps . . . in dirty old saucepans . . . over a wood fire.”

“Well, that could be passed over, in a pinch.” Philip gave one of his short, whinnying laughs. “They were run off their feet. The supply was greater than the demand, the war was not conforming to official forecasts and overdoing its ravages. But what was inexcusable”—his voice was serious again—“was the way in which the mobilization of our medical men was planned and conducted. From the first day the army had available a great number of really first-rate medical officers. Well, when I did my first round of inspection I found such eminent practitioners as Deutsch and Hallouin serving as second-grade orderlies in ambulance units commanded by army medical officers thirty years old or less. The men at the head of our principal medical services were perfect ignoramuses. One had the impression they’d never used the knife on anything more serious than a whitlow, but simply because they were colonels they’d order and, worse still, perform the most serious operations. On the vaguest grounds they’d insist on amputation, and refuse to listen to the advice of the civilian medical men—even hospital surgeons of wide experience—whom they had under their orders. Yes, we had our work cut out, I and my colleagues! It took us months to get the least reform made in the system. We had to move heaven and earth to get the regulations amended so that the wounded should be treated by professional doctors. Equally hard it was to dispose of that absurd practice of filling the most distant hospitals to start with, regardless of the severity and urgency of individual cases. They thought nothing of entraining men with cranial injuries to Bordeaux or Perpignan; naturally gangrene or tetanus finished most of them off *en route*—poor fellows who might have been saved in nine cases out of ten, if they’d been trephined within twelve hours of being wounded.”

Suddenly his anger subsided and he smiled. “You’ll never guess who helped me when I started my campaign! One of your patients, my dear boy. You know, the mother of that little girl we put in plaster years ago, you and I, and sent to Berck. . . .”

“You mean—er—Mme. de Battaincourt?” Antoine said in some confusion.

“Yes. You wrote to me about her—don’t you remember?—in 1914.” It came back to Antoine that, on learning that Mary, Huguette’s English governess, had left her charge abruptly and returned to England on the outbreak of war, he had asked Philip to keep an eye on his little patient. Philip had gone to Berck, and formed the opinion that there was now no risk in her returning to a more less normal life.

"I saw Mme. de Battaincourt on several occasions about that time. That woman seems to know all the bigwigs in Paris. Within twenty-four hours she'd fixed up for me an interview that I'd been vainly trying to arrange for during the previous six weeks; what's more, thanks to her, I was able to talk freely to the great man himself, to show him through the documents I'd brought and generally to have things out with him. That interview took the best part of two hours—and it proved a turning-point."

Antoine said nothing. He was staring at his empty cup with a quite uncalled-for earnestness; suddenly aware of this, he made haste to replenish it with milk.

"She's grown into a very pretty girl, has your young protégé," said Philip, who was surprised that Antoine had made no inquiries about Huguette. "I've kept in touch with her. She comes to see me every three or four months."

Still uncomfortably wondering if Philip knew of his liaison with Huguette's mother, Antoine knew that it was up to him to say something. "Is she living in Touraine?" he asked.

"No, in Versailles, with her stepfather. Battaincourt's settled there so as to be near Paris. Châtenaud is treating him. Rotten luck he's had, poor Battaincourt!"

No, Antoine thought, he doesn't know, or he'd have avoided talking of his rotten luck.

"Did you hear," Philip went on, "how he got wounded?"

"Only vaguely. It happened when he was on leave, didn't it?"

"He'd put in two years in the front line, without a scratch. And then one night, when he was travelling to Paris on forty-eight hours' leave, his train stopped at the sorting station, Saint-Just-en-Chaussée. Just at that moment, some Boche planes came over and dropped their bombs on the station. When they hauled him out of the wreckage his face was cut to pieces, one eye gone and the other in a very bad way. Châtenaud is doing all he can for him; he's practically blind, you know."

Antoine recalled Simon's clear, forthright gaze and the impression it had made on him when they had met at his place just before the war started; it was that meeting which had led him to break with Anne. "Do you know"—his voice was so weak that Philip had to lean toward him—"do you know if Mme. de Battaincourt is living with them?"

"No. She's in America."

"Really?" He was surprised at his feeling of relief on hearing this news.

Philip, smiling to himself, watched Denis place on the table a bowl of stewed cherries. Then he slowly helped himself, keeping silent till the servants had left the room. “The mother . . . a queer sort of creature, by all accounts.” He paused, his spoon in air. “What’s your idea of her?”

Again Antoine asked himself: “Does he know . . . ?” Tongue-tied, he conjured up a fleeting smile. In Philip’s company he always lost his self-assurance, became once more the young medical student overawed by his professor.

“Yes,” Philip went on, “she’s in the States. Last time I saw Huguette she said: ‘Mamma’s going to live in New York; she has lots of friends there.’ From information I’ve picked up in various quarters, I gather she was sent there on a ‘special mission,’ for propaganda work of sorts. And that this ‘special mission’ synchronized exactly with the recall to the U.S.A. of a certain American officer who’d held a post at the Paris embassy for some time.”

No, Antoine decided, he certainly doesn’t know. . . .

Philip spat out some cherry-stones, wiped his beard, and continued: “That, anyhow, is what Lebel told me. Lebel, you know, is running the hospital that Mme. de Battaincourt built on her estate near Tours; I understand she still continues to subsidize it—most handsomely. But one must take what Lebel says with a grain of salt. Rumour has it that he too, for all his grey hair, was once a very intimate collaborator of the lady’s. That would explain why he threw everything up and went and buried himself in Touraine soon after the outbreak of war. . . . Won’t you finish your milk?”

“Thanks, two cups are the most I can manage,” Antoine smiled. “I hate milk, really!”

Philip did not insist, folded his napkin clumsily, and rose. “Let’s go back to my sanctum!” He linked his arm affectionately in Antoine’s and, as he led him back to the study, went on talking. “You saw the peace terms imposed on Rumania by the Central Powers? Significant, eh? It means that they’re supplied with all the oil they need. Oh, they’re in velvet just now. Why should they want to make peace?”

“For the good reason that the American army is coming into action.”

“I wouldn’t bank too much on that! If they don’t bring off a decisive victory this summer—which is unlikely, though it’s thought they mean to make another drive on Paris—well, by next year they’ll have Russian troops and war material to offset the American troops and war material. And what is to be expected when there are two approximately equal forces pitted against each other, neither of which is strong enough to crush the adversary?

Only one thing is possible: they'll go on fighting until both sides are equally and utterly exhausted."

"How about Wilson? Don't you think anything will come of his very sensible proposals?"

"Wilson might be living in another planet for all he knows about this war! And, anyway, at present there's not the slightest sign that anyone in England or in France wants peace. (I'm speaking of the leaders.) In Paris and in London they're out for *victory* at all costs; any talk of peace is branded treachery. People like Briand are under a cloud, and so will Wilson be—if he isn't already!"

"Still, peace may be forced on them." Antoine was thinking of what Rumelles had said.

"I don't believe Germany will ever be in a position to impose peace on us. No, I repeat, in my opinion, the opposing forces are more or less equally matched, and I don't see any other issue of the war than complete exhaustion on both sides."

He had seated himself again in his chair behind the desk, after amiably waving Antoine toward the couch, on which he stretched himself only too readily.

"We may live," Philip continued, "to see the end of the war. But what we shall not live to see is—peace. I mean a stability in European relations that can be counted on to last." Slightly flustered, he caught himself up. "I said '*we*,' young though you are, because, to my thinking, it will take several generations to achieve that stability." Again he paused, shot a discreet glance at Antoine, stroked his beard abstractedly, then went on, with a gesture of discouragement: "Is a stable peace even to be thought of under present conditions? This war has been a nasty blow for the democratic ideal. Sembat was right: democracies aren't made for war; they melt, like wax in an oven, when a war breaks. And the longer the war lasts, the less chance Europe has of remaining, or becoming, democratic. One can easily picture such men as Clemenceau or Lloyd George playing the despot in their respective countries when the war is over. The people won't protest; they're broken in to martial law. And gradually they'll surrender even their pet 'republican' pretensions to sovereignty. Just look at what's happening in France: the distribution of foodstuffs is state-controlled, consumption is rationed, officialdom's rampant in every field of action, in trade and industry; it controls private enterprise with the moratorium and freedom of thought with the censorship. We put up with all these things as emergency measures; we persuade ourselves they're unavoidable in wartime. To my mind they're premonitory symptoms of the total servitude that's coming; and once people are well inured to the yoke, there'll be no shaking it off."

"Did you ever meet Studler, 'the Caliph,' as we called him, one of my collaborators?"

"That Jew, you mean, with a big Assyrian beard and a mahatma's eyes?"

"Yes. He was wounded, and now he's somewhere on the Salonika front. From which he sends me now and then prophetic homilies, in his peculiar vein. Well, Studler declares that the war will lead inevitably to Revolution with a capital R. First in the vanquished countries, then in the victorious ones. Whether by force or gradually, Revolution's bound to spread, he says, to every nation."

Philip gave a non-committal grunt.

"He predicts," Antoine continued, "a breakdown of the modern world, the collapse of capitalism. He, too, thinks the war will go on till Europe's exhausted. But when everything's been swept away or levelled flat, a better world, he says, will come into being. From the ruins of our civilization he sees a new order arising, a sort of world confederation, which will organize collectively all the life on our planet, on an entirely new basis."

He had had to force his voice toward the end of this long bout of talking. A fit of coughing doubled him up. Philip, without seeming to take notice, observed each movement.

"Anything may happen!" He always enjoyed giving his imagination a run, and there was a glint of amused interest in his eye. "After all, why not? Perhaps the simple faith of '89 which led us to fly in the face of every biological fact and claim that all men are absolutely equal and should be treated as such by the laws—perhaps that simple faith, which saw us through a century, has worked itself out and is destined to give place to some other damn-fool notion, equally attractive and equally absurd! A new ideology which in its turn will inspire thinkers and reformers, and with which humanity will dope itself—till further notice. Till the wheel comes full circle once again."

He kept silent for some moments while Antoine went on coughing. When he spoke again there was an undertone of irony in his voice. "It's not impossible. But I'll leave these roseate dreams to your oriental friend. The future which I foresee is much nearer and much less roseate. I don't believe any government will be ready to give up the absolute power that this war has granted it. And I'm afraid the age of liberalism is over and will not return for many a long year. Which, I admit, is a hard blow for men of my generation. We were so absolutely sure that it had come to stay, our democratic freedom, and that such questions could never be reopened. But every question, at every time, can be reopened. Perhaps we too were dreamers. Perhaps at the close of the nineteenth century we took our dreams for durable realities because we had the good luck to be living in an exceptionally calm and prosperous period of history.”

He was speaking in the jarring, rather nasal voice which was so apt to disconcert his hearers; his elbows were resting on the arms of his chair, his long, reddish nose pointing toward his linked hands, and his eyes fixed on his fingers, which he was clasping and unclasping in nervous little jerks. He seemed to be talking to himself.

“We thought mankind had cut its wisdom teeth. We fancied we were nearing an age in which common sense, moderation, and mutual forbearance would at last prevail throughout the world; in which intelligence would control the evolution of the social organism. Who knows if, in the years to come, historians won’t write us down as a generation of fools and simpletons who gulled themselves with wishful thinking, with illusions about man and his capacity for civilization? Perhaps we deliberately shut our eyes to certain innate qualities of the race. For instance, it may well be that the destructive instinct, a periodically recurring impulse to smash to pieces all we have laboriously built up, is one of the fundamental laws that limit the creative possibilities of human nature—one of those mysterious and disheartening first principles which the sociologist has to take into account and reckon with. . . . But it’s a far cry from that viewpoint to the forecasts of your friend the Caliph!” he added with a chuckle. Antoine, he noticed, was still worried by his cough: “Sure you wouldn’t like a drink? A glass of water? A dose of codeine?”

Antoine shook his head. After two or three minutes, during which Philip paced the room in silence, he felt a little better. Then, straightening up, he wiped away the tears which were rolling down his cheeks and forced his mouth into a smile. His features were drawn and darkly suffused with blood, his forehead beaded with sweat.

“I think . . . I’ll be going . . . Chief,” he panted; each word rasped his throat like fire. “Sorry . . .” He smiled again, and with an effort rose to his feet. “I’m in a damned bad way . . . you can’t deny it!”

Philip did not seem to have heard. “This habit of prophesying!” he exclaimed. “I may jeer at your Caliph, but I’ve been going on exactly like him. It’s a fool’s game, anyhow. Everything we’ve seen happening during the last four years has been absurd. And whatever these absurdities lead us to predict is equally absurd. One can criticize, I grant you. One can even damn the state of things. (That, anyway, isn’t absurd.) But as for predicting what is going to come of it—it's mere waste of breath. Don't forget this, my dear boy, there's no getting away from it: the only—I was going to say 'scientific' method, but let's be more modest—the only rational method, the only one that doesn't play you false, is the tracking down of error, *not* the search for truth. It's none too easy to discern what's false, but it *can* be done; and it's the utmost, literally the utmost, one can do. All the rest is . . . moonshine."

Noticing that Antoine was on his feet and listening absently, he too rose. "When shall I see you again? When are you leaving?"

"Tomorrow morning at eight."

Philip gave a slight start. He waited a moment to be sure his voice was steady before murmuring: "So soon!"

As he followed Antoine out of the room, his eyes were fixed on the bent back, the lean, scraggy neck emerging from the coat-collar. And he was seized with fear, fear of betraying himself, of the silence that had fallen on them, of his own thoughts. Hastily he jerked out a string of questions: "Anyhow, are you satisfied with the hospital? Is the staff efficient? Do you think the climate agrees with you?"

"For the winter, nothing could be better," Antoine replied, still walking ahead. "But I dread the summer there. So much so that I think I'll apply for a transfer. What I need is the country. A brisk climate, without humidity. Somewhere in the pines, perhaps. Arcachon might do, only it's so hot. How about some place in the Pyrenees—one of the spas, Cauterets or Luchon, for instance?"

He had entered the hall and was reaching toward the hat-peg, when he turned round rather abruptly and asked: "What do you advise, Chief?" And suddenly, gazing at that face on which, during the ten years they had worked side by side, he had learned to read as in an open book each fleeting change of mood, he had a glimpse in the small grey eyes, blinking behind the glasses, of an involuntary avowal—a vast compassion. Philip's look, his whole expression, seemed to be saying: "What's the good? What difference can it make where you spend the summer? Your case is hopeless—and there is no escape."

"Good God!" Antoine all but cried aloud, so brutal was the shock. But then he told himself: 'Way down deep I too knew it: I knew there was no hope.'

"Quite so . . . Cauterets," Philip mumbled nervously; then, pulling himself together: "Or why not simply Touraine? Or Anjou, for that matter?"

Antoine was staring at the floor; he dared no longer meet the eyes in which he had read his death-sentence. How false the Chief's voice rang! he thought. Horrible!

With a trembling hand he put on his service-cap, then walked to the door, without looking up. His one idea now was to cut short their leave-taking, to be left alone—alone to grapple with the thing of dread within him.

"Yes, Touraine. Or Anjou," Philip repeated feebly. "I'll make inquiries. I'll write to you. . . ."

His eyes still downcast under the cap-peak, whose shadow hid the discomposure of his face, mechanically Antoine held out his hand. The old doctor grasped it; a watery little click came from his lips. Freeing his hand, Antoine opened the door and hurried out.

Leaning over the banisters, Philip quavered after him: "Yes. Why not try Anjou . . . ?"

XIV

OUTSIDE, the city was plunged in darkness. Hooded street-lamps, few and far between, cast pools of bluish light upon the sidewalk. The streets were almost empty. Now and then, but rarely, a car glided cautiously by, honking insistently.

Walking unsteadily, hardly knowing where he was, Antoine crossed the Boulevard Malesherbes and entered the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas. His shoulders sagged, his breath came in short gasps, his head seemed hollow and full of echoes, like a sounding-box. He walked so close alongside the house-fronts that at times he scraped the walls with his elbow. A vast indifference had settled on him; a respite of no thoughts, no pain.

When he grew conscious of his whereabouts, he found he was under the trees in the Avenue des Champs-Elysées. In front of him, beyond the tree-trunks, lay the Place de la Concorde, dimly lit but bathed in the starry radiance of the soft spring night and criss-crossed by the moving shapes of cars that slunk out of the shadows like animals with glowing eyes and receded into darkness. Noticing a bench, he went toward it; instinctively, before sitting down, he checked himself. “Mustn’t catch cold!” Only to retort forthwith: “What can that matter—now?” The presage he had glimpsed in Philip’s eyes, in a flash of cruel insight, possessed his mind; more than that, it had invaded his body, too, and like a monstrous parasitic growth, a gnawing tumour, was driving out all else before its vast proliferation.

His back propped against the hard boards, his arms locked on his chest as if to constrict this foreign body lodged within him and eating out his life, he ran over in his mind the incidents of the past few hours. He saw the Chief straddling his chair, heard his opening remark: “Let’s begin at the beginning. Your first wound—has it healed all right?” and methodically recapitulated the answers he had made. But gradually the words he heard himself using became slightly different from what he had actually said; he now set forth his case in its true light, with the precision and detachment that had been lacking in his previous version. In all their inexorable reality he described his successive attacks, the ever-shortening periods of remission, and the relapses more serious every time. He made clear the steady, irremediable aggravation of his malady. And with his mind’s eye he saw how, as his narrative proceeded, the anxiety on his old friend’s face grew more and more apparent till plain as a spoken word it voiced a clear prognosis: death. . . . Antoine’s breath was coming in laboured gasps; his face was clammy with sweat; drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, he mopped his brow.

Suddenly in the distance a long-drawn ululation rose and fell across the silent darkness; but he heard it vaguely, as in a dream.

He was visualizing himself on the couch, the examination ended, rising laboriously to the sitting position and shaking his head with feigned resignation. “No, Chief, you see it for yourself, I haven’t a dog’s chance!” And Philip stared at the floor without replying.

To shake off the stifling oppression that was gaining on him, he scrambled to his feet. And as he stood unmoving in the darkness there crossed his mind, like a waft of purer air from the abyss, a consoling thought: “We doctors, anyhow, always have a way out—a means of cutting short suspense and suffering.”

His legs were giving way beneath him; he sat down again.

Two shadowy forms, two women, dashed out from underneath the trees. A second later all together all the sirens of the city were blaring in a shrill cacophony, and the few lights dotting the Place de la Concorde went out abruptly.

“The crowning touch!” He smiled to himself sardonically.

He listened attentively. A faint drumming filled the air. From the paths behind him came sounds of hurrying feet, of scared, excited voices; suddenly a little group of frightened people ran by helter-skelter and vanished into the night. Cars, all lights out, were speeding down the Avenue Gabriel, hooting loudly. A police squad doubled past. He remained seated, his shoulders hunched, staring into the darkness, lost in a dream, indifferent to all human concerns.

Some minutes passed before his mind began to march again. The dull thuds of distant explosions, followed by an intermittent roll of gunfire, roused him from his coma. “Those must be the batteries on Mount Valérien,” he thought. . . . It came back to him that Rumelles had mentioned an air-raid shelter not far away, in the Admiralty building.

The boom of guns persisted in the distance. Rising, he began to walk toward the Concorde, but halted at the sidewalk’s edge. The night sky of Paris had waked to vivid life; from all points of the compass searchlights were playing on the zenith, peopling the blue, star-strewn vault with wraithlike gleams that swerved and clashed and circled in a mazy dance—sometimes pausing suddenly to peer, like questing eyes, into a nook of darkness, then swinging off again upon their wayward course.

He could not bring himself to step off the sidewalk onto the road, but remained gazing up till his neck ached with the strain. If only I could lie down, he thought, and close my eyes! Might take a sleeping-powder. Yes . . . sleep! But an invincible lassitude weighed on him; his limbs seemed paralysed. Better be getting back. A taxi? No; the huge square was lifeless, empty, plunged in darkness. Now and again as a searchlight raked the sky overhead, it emerged momentarily from the gloom, and he had a fleeting glimpse of balustrades, palely glimmering statues, the Obelisk and fountains, ringed by tall, spectral lampposts; and he seemed to be gazing on the city of a dream, a place on which a curse had fallen, leaving it for ever desolate; an ancient capital lost in the desert sands.

With an effort he overcame his torpor and, moving mechanically like a sleepwalker, set out across this city of the dead, heading straight for the Obelisk, so as to reach the angle formed by the Tuileries Gardens and the bank of the Seine. It seemed interminable, this lonely walk across a lunar landscape under a sky seething with livid light. A group of Belgian soldiers dashed past him. Then an elderly couple, arms locked clumsily round each other’s waist, blundered across his path, flotsam drifting through the night. The man shouted: “There’s a shelter in the subway station. Over there!” It did not occur to him to answer till they were out of sight.

The air was pulsing with the sounds of unseen engines merged into one vast, clangorous roar. To the east an anti-aircraft barrage was in full blast and the sky full of bursting shells; every minute or so another battery, nearer each time, was coming into action. The veering shafts of light made it impossible to see the shell-bursts. Suddenly he heard, between the crashes of the guns, a rattle of machine-guns. . . . He decided to make a move in the direction of the Pont Royal.

Not a vehicle was in sight as he groped his way along the embankment. Not a light. Not a living being. Under the frenzied sky the world lay void as a dead planet. He was alone—alone with the wide, calm river, softly, serenely luminous as a quiet country stream under a starry sky.

As for a moment he halted, a new thought pierced the twilight of his mind. "I've known it all along; I *knew* quite well that I was doomed." Then he walked on again, unthinking, like an automaton.

The din had grown so incessant that there was no distinguishing the nature of the sounds. Then suddenly the dull thud of an explosion drowned all other noises. More followed. Bombs, he thought. They've got through the barrage. In the far distance, toward the Louvre, black rows of chimney-pots leaped into view against a pink glow spreading up the sky. Looking round, he saw other fires kindling—in the Levallois and Puteaux suburbs, he judged by the direction. "The whole city's ablaze." He had forgotten his own affliction. Under the vague, unseen menace brooding in the heavens like the blind wrath of a vindictive god, a morbid exhilaration set the blood coursing in his veins, a rush of fierce resentment gave him back his strength. Quickening his pace, he soon came to the bridge, crossed the Seine, and turned into the Rue du Bac. In the inky darkness of the narrow street, he tripped over a refuse-box, and the sharp effort he had to make to right himself sent a stab of pain through his chest. Stepping off the sidewalk, he set his course by the ribbon of light-swept sky above, between the house-tops.

There was a sudden clangor in the streets behind; he had just time to spring back to the sidewalk before two monstrous engines hurtled by, without lights and followed by a car flying a pennon. A voice beside him said: "The fire brigade." Antoine saw the dim form of a man sheltering in a doorway. Every few seconds he craned his neck forward and glanced up at the sky, as if to see whether a shower was ending.

Without a word Antoine started on his way again. His weariness had come back, and he struggled painfully ahead, like a man towing a barge, laden with his obsession. "I knew it. I've known it all along." In his distress was no surprise; he was more like a man staggering beneath a heavy load than one who has just been dealt a blow. That intimation of the worst had found a niche all ready for it in his mind; what he had read in Philip's eyes had done no more than lift a tacit embargo, set free a thought that had been lurking, full formed, for many a month in the secret places of his consciousness.

At the corner of the Rue de l'Université, a few steps from his house, a sudden apprehension gripped him, a panic fear of the solitude awaiting him at home. He hesitated, on the brink of flight. Unthinkingly he had lifted his eyes toward the lurid sky while searching his mind for someone with whom he could take refuge, someone to bestow the solace of a pitying glance.

Then, "No one . . . !" he murmured.

For several minutes he remained thus, leaning against a wall, while the boom of guns, the drone of aeroplanes, crashes of bursting bombs, beat on his weary brain—pondering on the inexplicable fact that he had not a friend on earth. Yet he had always been sociable, obliging; he had won the liking of his patients, been popular with fellow-students and appreciated by his teachers. More, there had been women in his life who had loved him passionately. And yet he had not a friend, had never had one. Not even Jacques. . . . "Jacques died before I'd learned to make a friend of him."

Suddenly his thoughts turned to Rachel. How good it would have been to have her now with him, in this black hour, and to hear, close in his ears, her voice tender and soft as a caress, whispering: "My Toine . . . my darling!" Where was she? What had become of her? The necklace . . . he had it at home. A desire came over him to fondle it between his palms and feel the honey-golden beads grow warm under his touch, like living flesh, and, drinking in their fragrance, dream she was nestling in his arms.

With an effort he drew away from the wall and stumblingly covered the few yards between it and his door.

A BATCH OF LETTERS

Maisons, May 16, 1918.

> The shell which smashed my leg did more; it made of me—a sexless being. I couldn't bring myself to tell you this when you were here. But, being a doctor, you may have guessed it. When we were talking about Jacques and I told you I envied his lot, you looked at me in a curious way.

Please burn this letter; I don't want anyone to know, and I'd loathe being pitied. I've saved my skin, and my pension gives me enough to live on; many would say I'm one of the lucky ones, and I dare say they'd be right. So long as Mother lives, I'll stick it out; but if, later on, I decide to disappear, you will know why, and you'll be the only one to know it.

Always yours,

D. F.

Maisons-Laffitte, May 23.

DEAR ANTOINE,

This isn't a reproach, but we are getting rather anxious; you promised to write, and a whole week has gone by without a line from you. I cannot help fearing the long railway journey may have proved more trying than we expected.

I would like to tell you all that your visit and our talk together meant to me. But I don't know how to say that sort of thing—just as I cannot show my feelings at such moments. So I'll say only this: since you left, it seems to me that I am lonelier than ever.

Very affectionately yours,

JENNY.

Maisons-Laffitte, Saturday, June 8, 1918.

DEAR ANTOINE,

The days are passing, three weeks have gone by since you left Maisons—and still not a line from you. I am beginning to be seriously alarmed; I can attribute this long silence only to the state of your health; please write and tell me exactly how things stand.

Little Paul has had an attack of tonsillitis with high fever for several days; he is getting better but still has to stay in bed—which rather complicates life at the hostel. Just imagine, everyone here says he has grown much taller during the week in bed! That's hardly possible, is it? I have an impression, too, that his intelligence has developed during his short illness. He makes up all sorts of stories to explain the pictures in his picture-books and the sketches Daniel makes for him. Please don't laugh—I wouldn't dare to say it to anyone else—but I really think Paul is exceptionally observant for a child of his age and that he will be very intelligent later on.

Otherwise we've no news. Orders have been sent to the hospital to evacuate as many convalescents as possible to make room for newcomers, and we have had to send away a number of poor fellows who had been reckoning on another ten days' or a fortnight's peace and quiet. New cases are pouring in daily; Mamma has got the English people who own the little house next door—the one with the wistaria on the porch—to lend it to her. That means another twenty beds, perhaps more. Nicole has had a letter from her husband; his motor-ambulance unit has left Champagne and been transferred to the Belfort sector. He says that our losses on the Champagne front were simply appalling. How long will it go on? Will this nightmare never end? Some friends of ours at Maisons who go to Paris daily say that the repeated bombardments are beginning to tell on the morale of the population.

Dear Antoine, even if your news is of a serious relapse, do please tell me the truth, and don't leave us any longer in this dreadful uncertainty.

Your friend,
JENNY.

Grasse, 6/11/18.

State of health unsatisfactory, but so far no definite aggravation. Will write in a few days.

Affectionately,
THIBAULT.

Le Mousquier, 6/18/18.

At last, my dear Jenny, I bring myself to write to you. You were right in fearing the long journey had been too much for me. No sooner was I back than I had a rather serious relapse, with alarming fluctuations of temperature. New and drastic methods of treatment seem to have staved off the progress of the disease once more. For the last week I've been up and about again, and gradually getting back to my old way of life.

But my silence was not due to this relapse. You ask me to tell you the truth. Here it is: something has happened to me, something terrible and unforeseen; I've learned, I've realized, that my case is *hopeless*. Definitely hopeless. I shall probably linger on a few months more. But, whatever is done, I cannot possibly recover.

One has to have been through the mill to realize what that means. And, faced with such a certitude, one feels the whole world crumbling under one's feet.

Forgive me for having told you this so bluntly. But when a man knows he is going to die, everything else becomes so trivial, so . . . irrelevant.

Not up to writing any more today. Will write again soon.

Affectionately yours,

ANTOINE.

P.S. Would you please keep this news strictly to yourself.

Le Mousquier, 6/22/18.

No, my dear Jenny, it is not as you think (or pretend to think); what I am up against is not a sick man's fancy. I should have given more details—but I did not feel up to it. Today I'll try to be more explicit.

What I am facing is something very real; a certainty. It forced itself upon me the day I left you, the last day I spent in Paris, in the course of a visit to my old teacher Dr. Philip. I suppose it was his presence that led me suddenly to look at my case for the first time from a strictly professional viewpoint, and to make an impartial, logical diagnosis, as I would have done for a patient. And then, like a lightning-flash, the truth forced itself upon me.

During my railway journey I had only too much time to review my case. I had with me the daily notes I have been making from the start, and they enabled me to trace day by day, through its recurrent ups and downs, the steady worsening of my condition. I also had with me the digest I compiled last winter of almost all the clinical observations and case-reports, French and English, that have appeared in technical reviews since gas was first used in warfare. I knew it all already, but suddenly I saw things in a new light. Everything pointed to the same conclusion. Once I was back here, I discussed my case with the specialists who are treating it. Not, as formerly, from the viewpoint of a patient who thinks himself on the way to recovery and snatches at every favourable symptom, but as a competent, well-informed colleague who is no longer to be fobbed off with kindly lies. It did not take me long to corner them; I very soon had them shirking direct answers, making partial admissions, or relapsing into a silence which told me more than words.

My prognosis, now, is solidly established. Given the progress of the toxæmia during the past ten months, and the mischief it has done, I have no longer any chance, none whatever, of recovery. Not even of staying in an intermediate, chronic state which would keep me an invalid for the rest of my days. No, I'm like a ball set rolling down a hill that can't help rolling quicker and quicker till it reaches the bottom. Isn't it absurd that I, a doctor, should have humbugged myself like that, and for so long! I can't fix a time-limit—that depends on future attacks (there's no preventing them) and their severity, and on my periods of respite. This business of dying by degrees may last from two months to a year, at the most; it is a matter of chance, according to my relapses and the temporary relief I get from different treatments. But it will all come to the same thing in the end; and the end is near. In some cases there exists a hope of what you'd call a miracle; in my case, none. At its present stage of development, the science of medicine is unable to do anything for me. Please understand that I am not writing this as an invalid who puts his chances at their blackest in the hope of provoking a comforting rejoinder; no, I am writing as a clinician who knows his subject and has detected a malady definitely recognized as fatal. If I can write in this calm, detached manner, it is because . . .

June 23—I resume this letter at the point where I broke off yesterday. I haven't yet got myself sufficiently in hand to keep my attention fixed on anything over a long period. I cannot remember how I meant to end that phrase. I wrote "calm, detached." That relative calmness in the face of the inevitable—a far from stable calm, unfortunately—has come to me only after a phase of appalling mental agony.

Day after day, night after night—sleepless, interminable nights—I lived in an abyss of horror, endured the torments of the damned. Even to think of it now makes me break out in a cold sweat, sends shudders down my spine. Nobody can imagine what it's like. How does one manage to keep one's reason? And how, by what mysterious processes, does one succeed in forcing one's way through that tempest of revolt and anguish, and reaching the state of resignation I am in now? Explanation is beyond me. It would seem that, once a fact is proved, a rationalist mind cannot but yield to it, unconditionally. And it seems, too, that the capacity of human nature for adapting itself to circumstance must be prodigious to enable a man to get used even to the idea that he is going to be done out of life before he has had time to live, doomed to vanish from the earth before he has realized a fraction of the vast possibilities that he believed were his.

But I cannot now recall the various stages of this change that gradually came over me. It was a long process. Presumably the paroxysms of utter despair alternated with phases of prostration; otherwise they would have been unbearable. This transition period covered several weeks, during which physical pain and the worries of looking after my health were the only things that took my mind off the other, the *real*, suffering. Little by little the stranglehold relaxed. There was nothing stoical, heroic, or in the least like resignation, in my new state of mind. It was rather that my capacity of feeling had been exhausted, bringing on an enfeeblement of my responses, a growing indifference or, more precisely, anæsthesia. My reason played no part in this. Nor did my will. The only use to which I've put my will has been (during these last few days) to try to prolong this state of apathy. Just now I am doing all I can to pick up, one by one, the broken threads of normal life. I am renewing contact with the people around me. I force myself to have my meals with the others; I keep out of my bedroom as much as possible. Today for quite a while I watched some of the men here playing bridge. And this afternoon I find I can write to you without too much effort. With, indeed, a new and curious zest. I've come out of doors to finish this letter and am sitting in the shade of a row of cypress trees, behind which the hospital orderlies are at their usual Sunday game of bowls. I had imagined that their proximity, the noise they make—laughing, squabbling, etc.—would be too much for me. But I made up my mind to stick it out, and I've succeeded. So, you see, I am on the way (apparently) to a new mental equilibrium.

All the same, I admit these efforts have exhausted me a bit. I'll write to you again. As far as my mind is capable of being interested in others, all my thoughts are for you and your little son.

ANTOINE.

Le Mousquier, 6/28/18.

I’ve read your letter several times this morning, my dear Jenny. It’s not merely simple and delightful. It is exactly as I would have wished it. As I would have wished *you* to be; as I had always felt you were. I have waited till night came, till all was silence in the hospital, to write to you. At this hour the treatments are over, the night orderly has made his last round, and one is alone—alone with the prospect of another sleepless night, alone with one’s ghosts. . . . Thanks to you I feel I have more—I was going to write “courage.” But courage isn’t what I mean, nor do I need it. What I need, perhaps, is a presence at my side; I need to feel less utterly alone in these long months of mental stock-taking that seemingly lie ahead. And, strange as it may sound, I can face them now without wishing them a day shorter. I’m surprised at myself. As you may guess, the means of putting an end to it are always at my disposal—but I am reserving that for later on. For the present, I accept the respite; in fact, I cling to it. Queer, isn’t it? The truth is, I suppose, that when a man has been so passionately in love with life as I was, it’s hard for him to break with it—and especially so when he feels life slipping through his fingers. In a tree struck by lightning, the sap goes on rising for several successive springs, the roots take years to die.

But, Jenny, there was one thing I missed in that delightful letter: news of your little one. You mentioned him only once, in a previous letter. When I got it I was still in a state of such utter despondency and indifference to everything that I left it unopened for a day or more. When I did open it, my eyes fell on the lines where you talked of Paul, and for the first time I managed for a moment to shake off my obsession, to break the vicious circle of my thoughts and direct my interest to something outside myself—to regain contact with the world of men. And since then Paul has been often in my mind. At Maisons I saw him, touched him, heard him laugh—I can still feel his little muscles throbbing under my fingers. I need only think of him to conjure up his presence. And round him certain notions are crystallizing, plans for the future. It’s curious, the craving a man feels, even when a sentence of death has been passed on him, to make plans and to foster hopes. I need only remind myself that this child exists, stands on the threshold of tomorrow with a brand-new life before him, and suddenly all sorts of vistas, forbidden ground to me, open up before my eyes. A sick man’s fancies, perhaps. No matter;

nowadays I’ve less aversion than I used to have for “sentimentalizing.” (That, assuredly, is an effect of illness!) I sleep so little. And I don’t want to have recourse to drugs yet awhile; I shall need them only too sorely, later on.

I am systematically pursuing my efforts to readapt myself. They involve a training of the will, which in itself is beneficial. I have started reading the newspapers again. The war news; von Kühlmann’s speech in the Reichstag. He says—very properly, to my mind—that peace will never be feasible between people who persist in regarding every proposal made by the enemy as a “trap,” an attempt to undermine “morale.” Once again the Allied press is giving public opinion a wrong lead. The speech is not a bit “aggressive”; quite the contrary, it’s conciliatory—and significant.

(There is a touch of affectation in that comment on the war. It’s true that my interest in the war has not quite petered out, and I suppose I shall go on having it up to the end. All the same, I had to force myself somewhat to write those lines.)

Here I stop. It has done me good, this little “talk” with you, and I shall resume it very soon. We shall never have known each other very well, Jenny, but your letter has been a great comfort and I’ve a feeling you are my only friend in all the world.

ANTOINE.

Le Mousquier, 6/30/18.

I am going to give you a surprise, my dear Jenny. Guess how I employed my afternoon yesterday! In looking through old papers, making up accounts, and writing business letters. For some days past I’d had it on my mind. A sort of itch to square up certain material problems and be able to tell myself I was leaving my house in order when the time came to leave it. Quite soon I’ll be incapable of efforts of that kind. So it seemed best to take advantage of the fleeting interest I still can muster up in such matters.

Please forgive the businesslike tone of this letter. But, since all I possess will go to Paul, it’s obviously up to me to let his mother know exactly how I stand financially.

I have not much to leave. Nothing, I expect, will remain of the investments my father left me. The alterations to my Paris house made a large inroad on them, and I was rash enough to transfer what remained into Russian bonds, which are most unlikely ever to recover. I count myself lucky to have saved from the wreck my home in the Rue de l'Université and the house at Maisons-Laffitte.

As for the former, it can be let or sold. In either case it should provide enough for you to live on in a simple way and give our little one a decent education. It won't mean luxury for him, and so much the better. But he will not suffer, either, from the soul-deadening constraints of poverty.

As for the Maisons house, I advise you to sell it after the war. It may tempt the fancy of some *nouveau riche*, and it deserves no better fate. I gathered from Daniel that your mother's house is heavily mortgaged. I have always had an impression that your mother and you, too, were greatly attached to it. It might be a good idea to devote the money raised by selling the Thibault house to paying off the mortgage. Thus your parents' country place would, in effect, belong to Paul. I will consult my lawyer as to the ways and means of arranging this.

As soon as I have a rough estimate of my estate, I will fix the amount of the little annuity I want to provide for Gise. I'm afraid, my poor Jenny, that all the bother of administering these funds will fall on you till your son comes of age. I think you will find Beynaud, my lawyer, a help; he is a worthy man, rather timid and a stickler for formalities, but trustworthy and, on the whole, a sound adviser.

Well, that is what I set out to write to you. It's a relief to have done with it. I shall not refer to the subject again until I am in a position to give you the final details. But for some days another plan has been hovering at the back of my mind, and it concerns you personally. The trouble is—it's of an extremely delicate order. I don't feel up to writing about it now, but one day I shall have to.

I have just spent a couple of hours under the olive trees, reading the papers. What is brewing, I wonder, behind the present lull in the activity of the German armies? Our stand between Montdidier and the Oise seems to have checked their advance. And the failure of the Austrians must have been a blow to their High Command. If the Central Powers fail to bring off some decisive victories in the course of the summer before the American army takes the field, a definite turn of the tide will follow, I imagine. But will I still be here to see it? The appalling slowness (from the individual's viewpoint) of the events that make history is something which has often been brought home to me during the last four years. And when a man has only a short time to live, he notices it even more.

However, I must admit that I seem just now to be in for a spell of better health. Is it the effect of the new injections? My choking fits are less painful and the bouts of fever less frequent. So much for my physical state. As for my "morale"—to employ the time-honoured expression used by the High Command to appraise the passivity of the troops sent to their death—it, too, has improved. You may have noticed it in the general tone of this letter. Its length, anyhow, shows the pleasure I have in these little "talks" with you. My only pleasure. But I must cut it short. I'm due now for a treatment.

Your friend,
A.

P.S. I submit to this treatment as conscientiously as ever. Queer, isn't it? There has been a curious change in the doctor's attitude toward me. Just now, for instance, though he certainly detects an improvement, he no longer dares to call my attention to it, and he spares me remarks beginning: "There you are! I told you so!" and so forth. But he comes to see me oftener, brings me newspapers and phonograph records, and does all sorts of little friendly services. . . . That is by way of answer to your question. This place suits me quite as well as any—for waiting for the end.

Hospital No. 23, Royan, June 29, 1918.

DEAR DR. THIBAULT,

I left French Guinea in the autumn of 1916, and your favour of May 30 has only just reached me here, where I am working as a nurse in the surgical ward. Yes, I remember sending off the parcel you speak of, but it was so long ago that I fear I cannot give you much in the way of information. I had very few dealings with the lady who asked me to post the parcel to you. She was brought to the hospital in a very bad way, with an attack of yellow fever that carried her off after a few days, though Dr. Lancelot did his best for her. It was in the spring of 1916, I think. I remember that she had been put on shore from a mail-steamer calling at Konakri. One night when I was on duty she gave me the article and your address; it was during one of the short spells when her mind was clear, for she was delirious most of the time. I am quite sure, though, that she did not ask me to write anything to you. She must have been travelling by herself when the boat called in, as no one came to see her during the two or three days she lay dying. I think she was buried in a pauper's grave in the European Cemetery. You might write to the house physician, Dr. Fabre; if he is still there, he could look up the register and give you the lady's name and date of decease. I am so sorry not to remember more; please excuse me.

Very truly yours,
LUCIE BONNET.

P.S. I have just remembered something and open my letter to tell you about it. I am almost sure it was that lady that had with her a big black bulldog she called Hurt or Hirsch or some such name. She asked for it each time she recovered consciousness, but we couldn't have it in the wards because it's against the rules and anyhow it was always biting people. One of the other nurses wanted to adopt it, but it gave her no end of trouble and in the end she had to have it shot.

ANTOINE'S DIARY

July 2, 1918—Had a dream of Jacques just now, when I'd dozed off, in the small hours. Already it's gone blurred; impossible to piece it together again. But I know the scene was the little ground-floor apartment where Jacques and I lived together in the old days. One memory stands out especially: the day Jacques joined me there, after leaving the reformatory. It was I myself who arranged for him to come to me, so as to get him out of Father's clutches. But I couldn't repress a rather ugly, selfish feeling of annoyance at his coming. I remember quite well saying to myself: "He can live here, that's settled, but I won't have him interfering with my programme of work, messing up my career." My career! All my life long I've been obsessed by that idea; it was my watchword during fifteen strenuous years. Today, for Antoine Thibault lying in this bed, what irony is in that word "career"!

Yesterday I got the hospital clerk to buy me this notebook at the local stationer's. An invalid's whim, perhaps, keeping a diary under these conditions. Still, something to be said for it. Have noticed each time I wrote to Jenny the relief I found in writing down my thoughts, "getting it off my chest." Never kept a diary before; not even when I was sixteen and so many of my schoolmates—Fred, Gerbron, and the rest—were fervent diarists. A bit late to start! But this isn't to be a regular diary; I shall merely jot down, when I feel like it, the ideas simmering in my brain. Sound, from a medical point of view, undoubtedly. Every thought tends to grow into an obsession in the brain of an invalid or of a man suffering from insomnia. Writing it purges it away. Also it's a diversion, helps to kill time. (To think that I, who always used to find the available time too short for all I had to do, should talk now of "killing" it! Even at the front, even last winter in the hospital, I lived at high pressure, oblivious of the lapse of time. It's only since my days are numbered that the hours have grown interminable.)

A fairish night. Temp. this morning: 99.8.

Evening—The fits of oppression have come back. Temp.: 101.8. Intercostal pains. Pleural complications setting in?

Let's lay my "ghosts," by getting them down on paper.

Haunted all day by this business of making my will. Must *organize* my death. (Curious, this mania I still have for planning! But this time it's not on my own behalf; it's for *them*, for little Paul.) Must have worked through the figures ten or a dozen times: sale of the Maisons property, lease of my house in the Rue de l'Université, sale of my laboratory equipment. Might be possible to get a chemical manufacturer to take the place on a long lease. Studler could scout round for one. Otherwise must have the apparatus taken down and sold.

Studler—mustn't forget him; after the war he'll be out of a job, practically penniless, poor fellow. Will leave instructions for him and Jousselin, explaining how to deal with the case-histories and records of experiments. (Present them to the library of the medical school?)

July 3—Lucas has shown me the results of the blood-test. Thoroughly bad. Even Bardot could not help admitting, in that drawling voice of his: "Not too good." My fine healthy blood of former years! When recovering from my first wound, how confident I felt in my physical fitness; how proud of the quality of my blood when I saw how quickly the wound was healing! . . . Jacques, too. Our Thibault blood.

Put it straight to Bardot about the pleural complications. "An abscess—that would be the last straw, eh?" He shrugged derisively, but gave me a thorough looking over. Nothing to fear on that score was his verdict.

Thibault blood! Paul has it; my healthy blood of early days, our birthright, is flowing still—in the little fellow's veins.

During the war, never once did I acquiesce in dying, never even for ten seconds did I mentally give up my life. And now, too, I refuse to relinquish it. Of course I can't hoodwink myself any longer; I have to recognize and face the irremediable; but I won't *agree* to it, I won't play the meek, consenting victim.

Afternoon—I know well what reason, not to say my sense of dignity, would urge: somehow to regain my faculty of looking on the outside world and its incessant flux *objectively*. Not through the distorting medium of my personality, across the shadow of death. To remind myself that I am but a tiny fragment of the universal Whole. And damaged goods at that! What matter? What is this tiny "I" in comparison with the rest, that will continue after me!

Tiny, yes; but how all-important I used to think it!

Still—it's worth trying.

A golden rule: Never let yourself be hypnotized by the *individual*.

July 4—A nice letter from Jenny this morning. Charming details about her son. (Couldn't help reading bits to Goiran, who is crazy about his two kids.) Must get Jenny to have him photographed. Another thing I must do, that's write to her the Letter (with a capital L!). A difficult job. Better wait till I've had a good night's rest before tackling it.

What a miracle it is—there's no other word for it—the coming of this child at the precise moment when the two families from which he springs were on the point of dying out without having given anything worthwhile to the world! I wonder what elements of his heredity on the maternal side he has in him. The best, I hope. But one thing I know for certain, even at this stage: he is truly of *our* blood. Strong-willed, intelligent, uncompromising. Jacques's son. A Thibault! Have ruminated all day on that theme. That seemingly haphazard uprush of the sap which at a given point has produced a new branch on the old Thibault trunk. Is it mere nonsense to surmise that something lies behind it, that it corresponds to some creative plan? Family pride, perhaps. Still, why shouldn't this child be the one predestined from all time, that fine flower of the Thibault species which our family has been trying to produce, generation after generation? The masterpiece which nature owed it to herself to achieve, sooner or later, and of which my father, my brother, and myself were mere rough drafts? And why should the dynamism, the latent energy, that was in us before him, not find an outlet this time in a genuinely creative impulse?

Midnight—Insomnia. Phantoms to be "exorcized."

For a month and a half, seven grim weeks, I've known I was a hopeless case. How familiar those words I have just written, "a hopeless case," and everyone fancies he understands them! But nobody except a man condemned to death knows what they *really* mean. And that knowledge comes in a flash of revelation, driving all before it, leaving one dazed, an empty shell.

Yet as a doctor, living in constant touch with death, I should have known. With death? With others' deaths! Have often tried to trace the causes of that physical impossibility of envisaging my own death. Due, perhaps, to some special quality of my life-instinct (a thought that comes to me tonight for the first time).

That vitality I used to have, the zest I brought to everything I did, keeping the ball of action rolling, so to speak, I attribute largely to the craving I had to perpetuate myself by creative acts; to "survive." An instinctive dread of disappearing. (Fairly common, that, no doubt. But in very different degrees.) In my case a hereditary trait. Have been thinking a lot about Father. He was haunted by a desire to attach his name to all sorts of things: his charitable societies, prizes for moral excellence, that huge institution of his at Crouy. A desire he realized by having his name blazoned on the façade of the reformatory—THE OSCAR THIBAULT FOUNDATION. Significant, too, was his wish to impose his Christian name (the only strictly personal part of his designation), hyphenated, on his descendants; and that mania he had for flaunting his initials everywhere, on his crockery, on the garden-gate, even on the backs of his leather chairs. There was much more to it than the proprietary instinct (or, as I used to think, mere ostentation). It was something finer—a craving to leave some trace behind him, not to be utterly blotted out by death. (Evidently the Christian after-life he looked for was not enough.) And I've inherited that craving from him. I, too, have a secret hope of associating my name with something that will outlast me; a discovery, for instance.

The moral: no man can escape his father!

Seven weeks, fifty days and fifty nights, facing a certainty, without a fleeting doubt or glimmer of illusion. And yet (this is what I want to put on record), curiously enough, I find that there are respites from obsession; brief spells, not of forgetting, but when the fixed idea retreats. It sometimes happens—oftener as the days go by—that I have periods of from two or three to (at most) fifteen or twenty minutes during which the certainty of dying before the year is out ceases to hold the foreground and sinks into relative quiescence. During these periods I suddenly find myself capable of doing things, of reading attentively, of writing, listening, joining in discussions—in a word, of taking an interest in matters not concerned with my health, much as if I had shaken off my obsession. Yet it is never absent, I am always conscious of it lurking on the threshold, biding its time. Even in my sleep I somehow feel that it's there, in ambush.

July 6—Have felt better ever since Thursday. The moment I suffer less, the world seems an almost cheerful place. Reading in the morning papers an account of the Italian successes in the Piave valley, I had, a sensation that I'd quite forgotten—a little thrill of pleasure. A hopeful sign.

Wrote nothing yesterday. Discovered, when I was out of doors, that I'd left my diary in my room. Too lazy to go upstairs for it, but all afternoon I hankered after it. So it's beginning to grow on me, this diary-keeping itch!

Not much time for "diarizing" today, however. Too many clinical observations to write up in the black notebook. Since buying the diary I seem to have gone rather slack about my case-history. Too scrappy, the notes I've been writing in it lately. Still, it's the case-history that really matters, and it must come first. Must make a clean-cut separation: the diary for my "ghosts," the notebook for everything relating to my health—temperatures, treatments, effects of remedies, secondary reactions, progress of toxæmia, discussions with Bardot and Mazet, etc. Without wanting to set too high a value on them, I firmly believe that these daily notes, recorded from the start by a gas victim who is also a doctor, will comprise a set of clinical observations that in the present state of medical knowledge may be of very great service. Especially if I go on with it *up to the end*. Bardot has promised to see that it is published in the *Medical Review*.

Yesterday fat Delahaye left. On convalescent leave. Thinks he's definitely cured. (And may be, for all I know.) He came upstairs to say good-bye. Pretended to be in the devil of a hurry; obviously ill at ease. Didn't say: "See you again one of these days," or anything like that. Which Joseph, who was tidying the room, must have noticed, for he turned to me the moment the door closed behind D., and said: "There, sir, you see some people get over it!"

Just now I almost wrote: "If I am still alive, it's for the sake of my case-history." I should clear up the question of *suicide*. And admit, belatedly, that the case-history has never been anything but a pretext. The way one throws dust in one's own eyes! Curious, how I hate admitting to myself that I've never really wanted to end my life. No, not even in my blackest hours. If I'd really meant to make the plunge, I'd have done so in Paris the morning when I bought the ampules. It crossed my mind again just before I took the train; and it was that morning that I began bamboozling myself with this idea of a case-history. Pretending I had a last duty to perform before the end, a "major work" to complete. As if the importance I set on these clinical notes could have possibly outweighed, frustrated, the temptation! Cowardice? No, I swear it wasn't that. Had the temptation been a real one, fear would not have restrained me. What was lacking was not courage, but the desire. The truth is that I merely dallied with the idea of suicide, and had no trouble in brushing it aside when I'd had enough of it. Only too glad of the excuse of the case-history to keep up—and calling it "strength of mind"!

And yet—unless I die suddenly, and there's no likelihood of that, worse luck!—I know I shall not wait for a natural end. (No make-believe about that, I'm positive!) Yes, the time to act will come, that's certain; I've only to let it come. I have the stuff ready; nothing could be easier. A consoling thought, when all is said and done.

Later—When we were on the veranda before lunch, Goiran brought a Swiss paper giving a full report of Wilson's latest speech. He read it out aloud—one could tell that he was deeply moved, as, indeed, we all were. Each of Wilson's messages is like a gust of fresh, pure air sweeping over Europe. Makes one think of the oxygen they pump in after an explosion in a coal-mine so that the poor devils buried in the pit can stave off suffocation, till rescue comes.

July 7, 5 a.m.—The fixed idea. Like a brick wall against which I run my head perpetually. I rise to my feet, charge at it once more, stagger—and start again. Sometimes (but without believing it for a moment) I try to persuade myself that it isn't true, that I've still the ghost of a chance. Only to give myself a pretext for mustering afresh the host of arguments which always, inevitably, launch me once more at the brick wall.

Afternoon, out of doors—Read Wilson's message again. Much more explicit than previous ones. It defines his ideas as to the terms of peace, lays down the conditions which are essential if the settlement is to be "definitive." A nobly inspiring programme: (1) the suppression of all political systems likely to bring about new wars; (2) before any change of frontier or annexation, the opinion of the population involved to be taken; (3) all nations to subscribe to a code of international law and to bind themselves to abide by its terms; (4) the establishment of an international committee acting as a court of arbitration, on which *all* the nations of the civilized world, without discrimination, shall be represented.

(I enjoyed writing the above, setting it down in black and white! Had the impression of endorsing it, lending a hand. . . . Childish, perhaps, but how satisfying!)

Everyone here is talking about Wilson's peace plans. Gleams of hope on every face. And how thrilling to think that in all the cities of Europe and America people are feeling the same way! And to picture the excitement over that message in every dugout on the front lines, in every rest-camp! All of them on both sides so sick of slaughtering each other for four dreary years. (Four years? They've been at it for centuries, egged on by their rulers.) The world was waiting for that appeal to reason. Will the powers that be pay heed to it? Let's hope that this time the good seed will strike root in every land. What Wilson's aiming at is so clear, so sensible, so well in keeping with man's truest instincts, with the trend of human progress. Of course all sorts of difficulties will crop up when it comes to carrying out his plan; it may mean years of uphill going. But how can one doubt that this is the one and only path that must be followed, hard though it be, by the world of tomorrow? Four years of warfare have brought nothing but wholesale slaughter, disaster everywhere. Surely the most fervent addicts of the "fruits of victory" are forced to own today that modern war—however you look at it, from a national or an individual viewpoint—spells unmitigated ruin, without any hope of compensating gain. That being so, once the futility of war, on every count, has been proved by experience, and once we find that the conclusions of political and economic experts bear out the instinctive belief the masses have in pacifism, what earthly obstacle can there be to the organization of perpetual peace?

After lunch, a choking fit. Had an injection. Then lay down on a beach-chair under the olives. Too fagged to write the letter to Jenny, though I'm very anxious to get it off my mind.

Listened to a discussion between Goiran, Bardot, and Mazet—about Wilson's governing idea, a committee of international arbitration. No one stands to lose by it; rather, every nation stands to gain. Another point which is not stressed as it should be is that the procedure of this Supreme Court would humour the national susceptibilities and self-esteem which have given rise to so many wars. However apt to take offence over questions of prestige a nation, a government, or even a monarch may be, each would feel less humiliated at having to bow to the verdict of an International Court that bases its decisions on the collective interests of all nations than at having to yield to a neighbour's threats or the pressure of a hostile coalition. Goiran observed that this tribunal should be constituted the moment hostilities cease and *before* the loser nation is called to account. Thus it would be possible to discuss the peace terms not in an acrimonious spirit, as between enemies, but calmly, under the auspices of a league of all nations, which would take a broad view of the controversy, deal impartially with questions of war guilt, and pronounce an equitable judgment.

A League of Nations—The only certain way of making future wars impossible. For no sooner would a nation be attacked or threatened by another than automatically all the other nations would join in against the aggressor, paralyse his activities, and force him to submit his claim or grievances to arbitration. And, taking a still longer view, one may expect the League of Nations to revise the economic systems of the world on international lines and organize a planned co-operation of all peoples, truly world-wide at last. And thus human progress would enter on a new, decisive phase.

Goiran made a lot of very sensible remarks on the subject. I used to take rather too harsh a view of Goiran; the truth is that his air of knowing everything used to get on my nerves. He never lets one forget his academic qualifications. Even his tone of voice is that of the history professor he is in civil life lecturing his pupils. But it’s a fact, he really does know a great many things. And follows the march of events with a discerning eye. He reads eight or ten dailies and gets a bundle of Swiss newspapers and magazines regularly each week. A well-balanced mind, in short, and I’ve always had a weakness for such mentalities. The effort he makes to take a long view of this war and judge it from the historian’s angle is most refreshing. Voisenet, too, was present. (Bardot once said to me: “Goiran and Voisenet are the only men here who have their vocal cords almost intact—and they never let you forget it!”)

Not too bad a day. Should say this relative well-being is due quite as much to Wilson as to the injection.

A postscript to the above remarks. The institution of a League of Nations might well cause something absolutely new to spring from the ruins this war will leave behind: a world conscience. By grace of which humanity may make a decisive stride toward an era of liberty and justice.

11 p.m.—Skimmed the newspapers. Hollow verbiage, disgusting pettiness. Really, Wilson seems the only statesman capable today of taking a broad view. The democratic ideal at its noblest. Beside him our French and British demagogues strike one as the merest pettifoggers. All of them are carrying on, more or less, the same imperialist traditions which they affect to damn in the enemy countries.

Talked to Voisenet and Goiran about America. Voisenet lived in New York for a few years. He made us understand the stability and security of the United States. Goiran in great form. Waxing prophetic, he predicted that in the twenty-first century Europe would be invaded by the yellow races; the future of the whites would be restricted to the American continent.

2 a.m.—Insomnia. Dozed off for a few minutes, during which I dreamt of Studler. In the back lab in Paris. The Caliph had a surgeon's coat on, plus a forage-cap; his beard was cut shorter. I'd been enthusiastically holding forth to him about something: Wilson, probably, and the League. He looked round at me over his shoulder, with his big, moony eyes. "How the hell does that concern *you*, Thibault? You'll be dead by then."

Still thinking about Wilson (the Caliph notwithstanding!). Wilson strikes me as the right man for the task before him. If the end of this war is to be the end of War, the coming peace must be the work of a "new" man, an "outsider," who bears no grudges; someone who has not, like our European statesmen, lived four years in the thick of it with one idea in mind—to crush the enemy. Wilson, the man from overseas. Representative of a land that stands for brotherhood in peace and freedom. And he has behind him a quarter of the population of the world. Obviously every sensible American must be saying to himself these days: "If we have managed to build up and to preserve a stable and constructive peace between our States a century through, what's impossible in a United States of Europe?" Wilson is of the lineage of men like Washington. (Of which he's aware. Allusions to it in his speech.) Washington hated war, but waged it to free his country from war. Always with the thought at the back of his mind (Goiran said this) that by the same token he would bring freedom to the world; that if he succeeded in combining all those small hostile States into a vast, pacific Federation, the Old World would be drawn irresistibly to follow his lead. (But it's taken us more than a century to grasp this obvious truth!)

As I write, the clock-hands turn their sleepless round. Wilson's helping me to keep my "ghosts" at bay!

Exciting problems, even for a man under sentence of death. For the first time since coming back from Paris I'm able to take an interest in the future. The future of the world which, when the war ends, will be cast into the melting-pot. All will be jeopardized—and for heaven knows how long!—if the peace that's coming doesn't remould, reconstruct, and, above all, unify, this stricken Europe of ours. Yes, if armed force is to go on being the principal instrument of policy as between nations, if each nation is to go on regarding itself as sole judge of its conduct and free to indulge its appetites for "expansion" as and when it chooses, if the Federation of European States does not bring about an *economic* peace, as Wilson desires, with world-wide free trade, the suppression of customs barriers, and so forth—in short, if the age of international anarchy isn't cut violently short and the nations don't compel their governments to submit at last to a regime of justice equal for all and consented to by all, this war will have served no purpose, all the blood that has been shed will have been shed in vain.

But just now—there is no limit to one's hopes. . . . (I write of this "better world" that's coming, as if I were going to be here to see it!)

July 8—Thirty-seven today. My last birthday.

Waiting for the lunch bell to ring. The washerwoman and her daughter have just walked by under the veranda, their bundles on their shoulders. Felt a queer emotion the other day watching the younger woman pass, and noting how she walked, with a slight effort and a certain stiffness at the hips. Recognized the signs. Pregnant. Hardly perceptible yet; only a vague fullness at the waist. Three and a half months, four at most. A poignant emotion in which mingled awe and pity, jealousy and something of despair. For one who has none, what mystery in that future, made visible to my eyes, almost tangible! In that being still in limbo, with a whole uncharted life before him! That birth which my death will not prevent!

Out of doors—Wilson still in everybody's mind. For once the bridgers have knocked off—even the company sergeant-major's "club"; they've been palavering for the last two months, their cards untouched.

The papers, too, full of comments. This morning Bardot pointed out how significant it was that the censorship was allowing people to foster these dreams of peace. A fine article in a Swiss paper. The writer recalls Wilson's message of January 1917. "Peace without victory," and the progressive reduction of armaments, ending in general disarmament. (January 1917. Recalls to me that village where we camped, behind Hill 304. The vaulted roof of the cellar where we messed. Discussions about disarmament with Payen and poor Seiffert.)

Mazet came just now to tell about the test. Diminution of the chlorates, and especially the phosphates.

Exhausting weather, thunder in the air. Dragged myself to the Persian wheel to listen to the rippling water. I find it harder and harder to read coherently, to fix my attention on someone else's thoughts. On my own, still possible. This diary is a great standby. Which won't last indefinitely. Must make the most of it, meanwhile.

That 1917 speech of Wilson's. Disarmament. The supreme thing to aim at. At lunch all agreed on this, except Reymond. Today one hears people coming out with things no one'd have dared to say, even to think, only two years ago. E.g.: An army is a cancer feeding on the nation's vitals. (A striking metaphor, for popular consumption; that way every workman employed in munition factories is written down a parasite living at the public expense.) A nation the third of whose budget is swallowed up by military expenditures is heading inescapably for bankruptcy or war. The present cataclysm is the necessary consequence of forty years' systematic armament. Without general disarmament no lasting peace is feasible. A truism that's been enunciated time after time. In vain, for an obvious reason. It is idle to hope that governments convinced that might prevails over right, deeply committed to an armament race, and, what's more, always ready to fly at each other's throat—it's folly to hope such governments will ever agree among themselves to reverse steam and simultaneously return to sanity. But all that may change in a twinkling, when peace is declared. For every European nation will have gone back to zero. A clean sweep. Arsenals depleted, finances ruined by the war. A fresh start will have to be made, on a wholly new basis. Yes, an unprecedented, glorious new day is breaking, the dawning possibility of world-wide disarmament. And Wilson's grasped that. That idea of disarmament he has broadcast to the world cannot but be welcomed enthusiastically by public opinion everywhere. These four years have paved the way, fortified men's instinctive hatred of war, whetted their desire to see an international moral code inaugurated that will at last replace the duel of opposing armies in deciding conflicts between nations.

What is needed now is for the vast majority of peace-loving men to compel the tiny minority whose interest it is to foment wars to bow to the will of a strong organization, capable of imposing peace and order on the world—a League of Nations having at its disposal an international police force, if needed, and endowed with such authority as to rule out definitely any recourse to arms. Only let the various governments refer the matter to a plebiscite—there can be no doubt as to the result.

It goes without saying that today at lunch Major Reymond was the only one of us to wax indignant and call Wilson a "visionary fanatic" completely ignorant of the realities of the European situation. The line, in fact, that Rumelles took at Maxim's. Goiran stood up to him. "If the peace that's coming isn't a genuine reconciliation, and if those who make it aren't actuated by an ideal of justice and the desire for a united Europe—well, that peace which millions of poor devils have paid for with their lives will be no more than a snare and a delusion, another arbitrary treaty that the losers, thirsting for revenge, will tear up at the earliest opportunity.” Reymond retorted: “It’s common knowledge what those ‘Holy Alliances’ amount to, and how long they last.” Rashly I chipped in, drawing on myself this retort (not so silly, perhaps, on second thought, and less paradoxical than it sounds): “Obviously, Thibault, a confirmed realist like you was bound to fall for the charms of such utopian fancies.” (Worth thinking over that remark.)

Some drops of rain. Let’s only hope the storm will give us a cool night.

July 9, dawn—A bad night. Choking fits. Not two hours’ sleep, all told, and in tiny scraps.

Thought of Rachel. In these sultry nights the perfume of the necklace is overpowering. She, too, had a stupid end, in a hospital bed. Alone. But one’s always alone, dying.

Just had this thought: that this morning at this very hour somewhere in the trenches thousands of wretched men are awaiting the order to attack. Tried, cynically, to extract a grain of comfort from it. In vain. I’m more jealous of them for being fit enough to take their chance than able to sympathize with them for having to go over the top.

In the book of Kipling’s I am trying to read I lit on the epithet “juvenile.” Made me think of Jacques. It fits him so well. He never really grew up. (See medical handbooks for characteristics of adolescence. He had them all: enthusiasm, a way of rushing to extremes, pure-mindedness, temerity combined with shyness, a taste for abstract ideas, a loathing for half-measures, and the charm that comes of an incapacity for scepticism.) Had he lived to maturity, would he ever have been anything but a grown-up boy?

Just read again what I wrote last night—Reymond’s remark about “utopian fancies.” No, I’ve always fought shy—unnecessarily so, perhaps—of the lures of the imagination. Have always held by the maxim (I forget where I read it): “The worst mental derangement is the habit of believing what one *wishes* to be true.” No, decidedly no! When Wilson declares that what he wants is a world made pure of heart, my scepticism is up in arms. But when he goes on to talk of a world made safe for all peace-loving nations, I’m with him every time! I haven’t enough illusions as to the perfectibility of human nature to believe that any man-made world can ever become “pure of heart.” But there is nothing utopian about a world made safe for peace. Organized society has succeeded in getting private persons to submit their differences to courts instead of taking the law into their own hands. Why should not governments be prevented from launching nations at each other’s throat when some difference crops up between them? War is "natural" to man, they say. So is disease. Human progress has been one long struggle against pernicious "natural" forces. The leading European nations have managed gradually to achieve their national unity. Why should not that process be carried a stage further and the Continent achieve a similar unity? Another forward step, another victory of the social instinct. "What about the patriotic instinct?" the major would ask. But it isn't the natural instinct we call patriotism that causes war; it is an acquired, artificial emotion, "nationalist" passion. Affection for one's native soil, a patois, regional traditions, does not involve any violent hostility toward one's neighbours (e.g., Picardy and Provence, Brittany and Savoy). In a European confederation the patriotic instinct would be no more than affection for one's "local habitation." "Utopian"—that is obviously the term with which they all will decry Wilson's programme. Irritating to see that even the newspapers most favourable to it talk of him as a "great visionary," "the evangelist of a new age," and so forth. They're wide of the mark, to my mind; on the contrary, what strikes me is his common sense. His ideas are simple, at once new and very old, a logical conclusion of all the theories and experiments of former ages. Tomorrow Europe will stand at the crossroads, faced by two alternatives: either reorganization on federal lines or a return to the old system of periodic wars—until all nations are utterly worn out. Supposing that for some fantastic reason Europe rejects the opportunity of concluding the eminently reasonable peace proposed by Wilson—the only lasting peace, based on complete disarmament—she will soon discover (and at what a cost!) that she is once more up against the old insoluble problems and plunged again into the shambles. Happily there's little likelihood of that.

Evening—A trying day. Black despair again. Impression of having fallen down an open manhole. I didn't deserve this. I deserved (pride?) the "fine career" my teachers and friends predicted for me. Then suddenly, at the corner of that trench, the whiff of gas! The death-trap set by fate.

3 a.m.—Too short of breath to sleep. Can breathe only in the sitting position, propped up on three pillows. Have turned on my light to take my drops; and to write this:

I have never had the time or the (romantic) inclination to keep a diary. I regret it. If I could hold between my hands today, in black and white, all my past life since my fifteenth year, I'd have a better impression of having lived. My life would have specific bulk and form—historical concreteness. It wouldn't be the shapeless, shadowy thing it is, vague as a half-remembered dream. (In the same way the course of an illness is recorded, and takes concrete form, on the temperature chart.)

I started this diary with the aim of laying my "ghosts." I believed that was my motive. But there were a lot of less avowed reasons, too, behind it; it was a pastime and a form of self-indulgence—an attempt to salvage some fragment of the life and personality, now on the point of foundering, of which I was so proud. To "salvage"—for whom, to what end? It's absurd, really, for I know I shall not have time or respite to read again what I have written. For whom is this diary, then? *For the child*, obviously. For Paul. . . . This flashed on me a moment ago, through the haze of insomnia.

A fine little fellow, robust, promising grandly—with all the future, mine, the world's, implicit in him. Since my first sight of him he has never left my thoughts, and the idea that *I* can't be in *his* worries me preposterously. No, he will never have known me or anything about me; I leave next to nothing: a few photographs, a little money, and just a name, "Uncle Antoine." Nothing. That thought's unbearable at times. If during these months of reprieve I had perseverance enough to write daily in this diary—why not? Perhaps one day, little Paul, you will feel moved to dip into these pages and try to find a trace of me, a vestige, the last footprints of a man who is departing from the scene. And thus "Uncle Antoine" will come to mean to you something more than a name, a photo in an album. I know well that this self-portrait can hardly have much likeness; how changed from the man I used to be is the bedridden invalid I am today! Still, it will be better than nothing, perhaps; I cling to this hope.

Too tired. Feverish. The night orderly saw my light. Had him give me an extra pillow. Those drops have ceased to have any effect. Must tell Bardot to try something else.

A bluish glimmer on my windowpane. Moonlight still? Or daybreak already? How often, after dozing off for some period I could not determine, have I switched on the light, only to see the clock-face leer at me, 11:10 . . . 11:20 . . . or some such ghastly hour!

Four-thirty-five now. Not the moon, then. The pale light heralding the dawn. At last!

July 11—The bitter, exasperating languor of these days of vague suffering in this bed! Just finished lunch. Never-ending, these meals served on a small bed-table, the spells of waiting that exhaust one's patience and kill what little appetite one may have had. Every ten minutes, enter Joseph carrying a tray with a diminutive "course" on it—in a saucer! Follows from noon to three a lull, three empty hours, when the afternoon borrows its silence from the night. A calm broken only by coughs in neighbouring rooms; and at each cough I find myself naming the cougher, as one does for a familiar voice. Three o'clock brings the thermometer; then Joseph, noises in the passage, chatter in the garden . . . Life.

July 12—Two dismal days. X-rayed yesterday. The knots of bronchial ganglions have increased again. As I suspected.

Von Kühlmann, who made that admirably moderate speech in the Reichstag the other day, has had to vacate his seat. A discouraging symptom of the spirit prevailing in Germany. On the other hand, the news of an Italian advance in the Piave valley is confirmed.

Night—Stayed in bed. Still, a less trying day than I'd anticipated. Managed to talk to some visitors: Darros and Goiran. Long consultation this morning: at Bardot's request, Sègre was present. No particularly alarming change for the worse detected by them. Everyone I come in contact with is full of hope. And, though I warn myself against taking wishes for realities, I can't help yielding to this wave of optimism. Obviously we are gaining ground. At Villers-Cotterets, Longpont, etc. The Fourth Army. (If good old Thérivier is still with it, he must have his hands full these days!) Obviously, too, the Austrians have had a crushing defeat. And there's the new eastern front, with Japan. But Goiran, who is often well informed, asserts that the recent bombardments of Paris have badly shaken our morale; even at the front the men are horrified at the thought that their families are exposed to the same perils as themselves. He gets a lot of letters. "We've had enough of it." "Stop the war, no matter on what terms." And perhaps it *will* end soon, thanks to the Americans. I see one good thing in that: if our governments let America finish off the war, they'll be obliged to let her fix up the peace—an American peace; Wilson's, not the one our generals are out for.

If this improvement persists tomorrow, I shall at last write the letter to Jenny.

July 16—In great pain these last few days. No energy, no interest in anything. Diary within arm's reach, but no desire to open it. Could hardly bring myself to make the usual entries in my case-history each evening. Seemingly better this morning. Longer intervals between choking fits, shorter attacks, cough less violent and racking. Wonder if the arsenic treatment I started again on Sunday accounts for it. Have I staved off a relapse once again?

Poor Chemery's more to be pitied than I. Septicæmia setting in; gangrenous bronchopneumonia with diffused inflammation. Done for.

And Duplay, suppurating phlebitis of the right leg. And Bert and Cauvin. . . .

What ugly things lurk in one's mental underworld! All those unsuspected tendencies that the war, for instance, has led me to detect within myself. Even possibilities of hatred and violence, not to say cruelty. Contempt for weaklings. And . . . fear! Yes, war has brought to light in me the foulest instincts, the worst side of human nature, and I'd be able now to understand all the lapses, even the crimes of others—now that I have found the germs of these things in myself.

Wednesday, July 17, night—Undoubted improvement. How long will it last? Seized this opportunity for writing *the letter*. This afternoon. Several drafts. Difficult to strike the right note. Had thought at first of leading up to it gradually. Finally decided on direct methods: a single letter, complete, explaining everything. Direct methods, if she is the woman I think she is, are certainly best. Great hopes of persuading her. Tried to present the project as a mere formality, indispensable for the child's welfare.

Too late to catch the evening mail. So I have till tomorrow morning to rewrite my letter and decide whether to post it.

Germans attacking on the Champagne front. Rochas must be in the thick of it. Is this the first move of their famous plan: to push through to the Marne, make a drive at Saint-Mihiel, surround Verdun, and swing round westward in the direction of the Seine? They're making progress already north and south of the Marne. Dormans is threatened. (A picture in my mind of the little town: the bridge, the church square, an ambulance drawn up outside the porch.) How far away die end seems yet! No chance of my seeing even the first signs of it. At the best possible going, 1919 will be the year of the American debut, their prentice year; 1920, a year of big, decisive battles; 1921, capitulation of the Central Powers, Wilson's peace, demobilization.

Read my letter again for the last time. Tone satisfactory; no possibility of misunderstanding; my arguments put at their strongest. Surely she cannot fail to understand; can't say "No."

July 18, morning—Just had a glimpse of Sègre in his shorts! No longer in the least like M. Thiers!

Afternoon, in the garden—More to record about this morning's glimpse. I'd risen earlier than usual so as to get my letter off with the housekeeper's car. As I was letting down my blind, I noticed one of the windows in No. 2 Building a little open and had that memorable sight of Sègre, our eminent Prof. Sègre, at his toilet. Bare from the waist up, the tight-fitting shorts cruelly revealing loins scraggy as an old dromedary's, one wisp of hair plastered on his bald cranium, he was cleaning his teeth with finical intentness. Am so used to seeing him under his "M. Thiers" aspect—as he lets us see him, stiff and starched and solemn, eking out every inch of his short stature, his chin jutting forward and a handsome wig perched on his head—that at first I didn't recognize him. I watched him spit some soapy water into the basin; then, bringing his face close to the mirror, he stuck his fingers into his mouth, fished out his false teeth, and, after scanning them with an anxious air, proceeded to sniff them (it reminded me of an animal on the scent!). At that moment I stepped back hastily from my window; I felt not only embarrassed, but emotionally affected in a very odd way. Yes, I experienced suddenly a fellow-feeling almost amounting to affection for the pompous old martinet.

It's not my first experience of that kind. I had been seized by the same feeling for others, if not for Sègre. For months now I have been living in daily contact, rubbing shoulders with this group of people: doctors, orderlies, and patients. I have come to know their figures, gestures, mannerisms, so well that I can promptly and positively identify, at quite a distance, the shoulders protruding over the back of an armchair, a hand emptying an ashtray out of a window, the voices I overhear behind the kitchen-garden wall. But, though I cannot be accused of being "stand-offish," there's always a barrier of reserve that keeps me from real intimacy. Even when I was like other men, sociable, without a care in the world, I always felt cut off from them by that barrier; a stranger among strangers. How is it that this sense of isolation can suddenly break down and give place to a rush of something like affection when I catch one of them unawares, at a moment when he is alone? Time and again a fleeting glimpse—in a mirror or through a door left ajar—of one of my fellow-patients engaged in one of those humble acts that a man performs only when he feels sure of being unobserved (poring over a photo he has stealthily drawn from his pocket, crossing himself before getting into bed, or, more trivial still, smiling to himself over some secret thought with a vaguely sheepish air) has been enough for me to discover instantaneously in him a comrade, a being like myself whom for a spellbound moment I long to make my friend.

And yet I haven't the least knack of making friends. I have no friend. Have never had one. How I envied Jacques his gift for friendship!

Once more writing is a pleasure. A marked improvement in my health these last few days.

Evening—At lunch today, war memories. (When peace comes, war stories will usurp the place of hunting-yarns.) Darros told us about a patrol in Alsace at the start of the war. One night he was walking through an evacuated village with a few men. The moon was shining; nobody about. Suddenly he spotted three German soldiers lying sound asleep on the sidewalk, their rifles beside them. "Close up like that," he said, "we somehow couldn't think of them as Boches; they were just poor dog-tired fellows like ourselves. I hesitated a bit, then decided to pretend not to notice them. And the eight men behind me did the same thing. We walked past the sleeping Germans without turning our heads. And never after that did any of us make the least allusion to what we'd done that night by a sort of tacit agreement."

July 20—An "inspection" of the hospital yesterday. On the visiting "commission" were all the big bugs of the neighbourhood. For two days Sègre, Bardot, and Mazet had worked like demons, getting things in trim. It revived horrid memories of barrack life in the early days; in the back areas war has brought no change.

Lots might be said about "discipline"—the "making of an army," as they say. I wonder! Regular army doctors like Brun are definitely inferior to civilian medical officers. Why? Because they've had a sense of army hierarchy drilled into them for years. And this habit of obedience seems to limit the freedom of their diagnoses, their sense of responsibility, to the number of stripes on their sleeves!

Military discipline. I remember Paoli, the orderly at the Compiègne infirmary. A holy terror! Bloodshot eyes, the face of a pimp. Still, human under the surface, quite likely; every evening he would trot off to the river-bank to get hempseed for his pet starling. He was a "re-enlisted sergeant," one of that detested and detestable class of veterans known to the men as "old sweats." Why did he re-enlist? Probably because he had discovered that soldiering gave him unique opportunities for bullying and terrorizing. The medical officers had detailed him to register the names of the young soldiers reporting sick at the infirmary. From my office I could hear them knocking at his door. He always put the same question: "Now, then, out with it! Playing sick, ain't you, you lousy little swine?" I could picture the youngster tongue-tied, staring in terror at the sergeant. “Nothing to say, my lad? In that case—clear out!” And without more ado, the wretched youth about-faced and decamped. But the medical officer thought very highly of Paoli. “Thanks to him,” he told me, “I’m not bothered with shirkers and malingerers.”

Father used to say that the army is a nation’s training school, and always hounded his Crouy lads to the recruiting-offices.

Sunday, July 21—This week’s tests show steady loss of phosphorus and mineral salts in spite of all our efforts.

War news good. An advance south of the Ourcq; another toward Château-Thierry. Movement extending from the Aisne to the Marne. Have always heard that Foch was biding his time for switching from the defensive to the offensive. Has that time come?

The major spends his days moving his flags forward on the map. Heated discussions about Malvy’s “treachery” and the High Court judgment. Politics comes into its own again the moment things go better at the front.

July 22, night—Kérazel had a visit today from his brother-in-law, deputy from the Nièvre. He lunched with us. Belongs to the Radical-Socialist Party, I gathered. Only a different label, anyhow; all parties have fallen into line as regards the war, and repeat the same dreary platitudes. Intensely boring conversation. One point, however; referring to the Austrian peace proposals transmitted to the French government by Sixte de Bourbon in the spring of last year, Goiran waxed indignant at our turning them down. Seems that old Ribot was the most intransigent, and he worked Poincaré and Lloyd George round to his view. One of the reasons put forward in French political circles was, it seems, that there could be no question of considering peace proposals transmitted to the Republic by a member of the House of Bourbon. It would be giving the royalists a trump card for their propaganda, and that would never do! The regime might even be imperilled. Especially now, with all the power in the hands of the military clique. . . . Unbelievable!

July 23—That deputy yesterday—a fine specimen of modern restlessness. Came by the night express from Paris to save a day. Kept glancing at his watch. A bundle of nerves. Gave the impression of being slightly tipsy; his hand shook as he poured out his wine. One felt his brain wobbling, too, when he tried to handle ideas.

He takes travel for activity, and his aimless activity for work. And grandiloquence for logic. And a blustering tone for a sign of competence. In conversation he takes anecdotal details for general ideas; in politics, a lack of vision for a proof of sturdy realism. Takes his good health for mental vigour, and the satisfaction of his desires for a philosophy of life. And so on.

Perhaps he also took my silence for spellbound approbation!

Night—Jenny's letter just received.

Sorry now not to have written to her mother first, as I'd originally intended. Jenny says: "No." Gently but firmly: "No." She claims for herself, not without dignity, full responsibility for what she did. She gave herself freely to Jacques. His child must have no other father—even if merely in the eyes of the law. Jacques's wife should not remarry. She has no reason to apprehend her son's reproaches. And so forth.

Obviously my common sense proposals, far from convincing her, struck her as quite irrelevant, not to say narrow-minded. She doesn't say this in so many words, but several times alludes to "social conventions" and "old-fashioned prejudice," with evident disdain for all who stand by them.

Naturally I shan't leave it at that. Will try again, taking another line. If social conventions are negligible, why rebel against them? Surely that's ascribing to them an importance they do not possess. Above all, must stress this point: that it's not she but little Paul who is involved. I grant that the stigma still attaching to illegitimacy is absurd. But it exists. Once I can make her grasp that fact, she cannot hesitate to take my name and let me assume paternity of the child. The circumstances are exceptional; my impending disappearance makes it all so easy!

No time to waste. Will try to answer her today.

Silly, too, not to have given her more detailed explanations, showing how simple it would be. She probably foresaw trouble, embarrassing moments. Must put it quite plainly: "All you have to do is to take the Riviera express one night. I'll meet you at Grasse. All will have been fixed up at the Registry Office. Two hours later you will take the train back to Paris, with everything shipshape."

July 24—Glad I wrote yesterday; did well not to leave it till today. Feeling rotten; this new treatment is most exhausting.

Absurd to think that all that's needed to save the child a host of troubles in later life is a couple of brief entries in an official register! Can't believe it possible Jenny won't come round to my view.

July 25—Newspapers. We have occupied Château-Thierry. A German defeat, or a strategic retreat? The Swiss press asserts that Foch's push hasn't started yet, and what he's after now is merely to make things difficult for the Germans when they fall back—a theory which is borne out by the immobility of the British front.

Choking fits more frequent and alarming. Sharp fluctuations of temperature. Prostration.

Saturday, July 27—Bad night. Bad morning mail; Jenny is obdurate.

Afternoon—Injection; two full hours' respite.

Jenny's letter. She *will not* understand. To her mind this business of making a few entries in a register would be an act of apostasy. Typically feminine, her attitude! She writes: "I have not the slightest doubt that, if I could consult Jacques, he would be against any such concession to the most ignoble prejudices. I should feel I was betraying him . . ." And more in the same vein.

Irritating, all this time wasted in discussion. The longer she postpones her consent, the less fit I'll be to cope with all the preliminaries (collecting documents, arranging for the marriage to take place here, putting up the banns, etc.).

Not up to writing to her today. Have decided that, when I do, I shall follow her example and appeal to her feelings. Point out, for instance, how much easier in mind I'll be once I am definitely assured that little Paul will be spared needless handicaps in his career. Might even exaggerate my apprehensions, beg Jenny not to refuse me this last joy, and so forth.

July 28—Letter written and sent. Writing it a great strain.

July 29—Newspapers. Progress all along the line. The enemy dislodged from the Marne. From Fresnes, the La Fère wood, Villeneuve, and Rouchères, and Romigny, and Ville-en-Tardenois. How well I can remember all those places!

In the garden—This is the scene before my eyes. On all sides lie other gardens resembling ours, with orange trees like small green balloons, lemon trees, olive trees, eucalyptuses with slashed, scarred trunks, feathery tamarisks, broad-leafed plants of the rhubarb species, and urns pouring out cataracts of roses and geraniums. A blaze of colour; all the hues of the rainbow. Each of the houses within sight is limewashed a different tint, pink, mauve, orange-red, or merely white, and glistens in the sunlight across the cypress-hedges. The red tiles strike a vivid contrast with the blue of the sky. Wooden verandas painted brown, violet, or dark green add a gentler touch of colour. The nearest house, just on the right, is ochre-yellow with bright-blue shutters; another house near by, a garish white with apple-green sunblinds, and the one wall in shadow, purplish blue.

How good it would be to have one's home, a long life before one, in this pleasant place!

In the black file of cypress trees, a vagrant sunbeam, striking the insulating-cups of a telegraph-pole, kindles a blaze of almost blinding light.

July 30, evening—Went downstairs again this morning. Had not been able to do so for the last two days.

Felt all at sea, bewildered. Now that I am cut off from the future, I look on life and on those around me with new eyes, the eyes of one for whom the world of man has become something amazing and incomprehensible.

Our advance, it seems, is held up. And, to crown all, Russia (Lenin) has declared war on the Allies.

Later—A memory. After Father's death I took his notepaper to my flat. Three months later, when I was writing to the Chief, on turning the sheet, I found the beginning of a letter in Father's hand. “Monday. Dear Sir, Your letter reached me this morning only, and . . .” A shock that gave me! As if I had trodden on the heels of death! His tiny, meticulous handwriting, those few posthumous words, that busy life becalmed for ever . . . !

August 1—Our offensive in Le Tardenois still in progress. Victory in sight at last? But what is it costing us in lives? Big advance between Soissons and Reims. Bardot has had a letter from a friend on the Somme front; he says preparations are being made for another Franco-British push east of Amiens. (Amiens in August 1914. What a muddle everywhere! I turned it to account, anyhow. The quantity of cocaine and morphine I managed to swipe, with young Ruault's help, from the base hospital dispensary, to replenish our first-aid station! And how handy it came in, a fortnight later, during the Battle of the Marne!)

The Chamber has voted to call up the eighteen-year-olds; among them Eddie, I suppose. Poor boy, he has still more reason to wish himself back at the Fontanin Hospital!

August 2—No hope left of overcoming Jenny's scruples. This time her "No" is final. A short letter, very affectionate, but irrevocably firm. Can't be helped. (The days when I refused to know when I was beaten are far away. Am beaten now, and know it!) She represents her refusal as a matter of principle, and, what's more, revolutionary principle! Goes so far as to write: "Paul is a bastard. He will remain a bastard, and if his illegitimacy brings Jacques's child into conflict with society at an early age, so much the better. His father would not have wished a better start in life for his son." (It may be so. Anyhow, so be it! And may the spirit of revolt that inspired Jacques in his lifetime triumph after his death!)

August 3, night—The time I like best for writing. I feel more clear-headed than by day; more alone with my thoughts.

Jenny's letters. Leaving aside the notions underlying them, I am bound to recognize they form a perfectly coherent whole. They lack neither forcefulness nor dignity; they inspire respect.

These lines for Paul:

Some day, my boy, you may be moved to read the "posthumous papers" of Uncle Antoine, and you will wonder at these letters. As for the difference of opinion between your mother and myself, you will unhesitatingly take her part, I know. So be it. All the courage, the magnanimity, is on her side, not on mine. And yet I ask you to try to understand, to see that in my insistence there was something more than a feeble surrender to "bourgeois" prejudice or to sordidly "practical" considerations. The rising generation—yours—will have, I fear, to grapple with tremendous difficulties of every order, which may well, for a long while, prove insuperable. Compared with which the difficulties we were up against, your father and myself, were mere child's-play. This prospect, my dear Paul, fills me with dismay; as does the knowledge that I shall not be there to give you a helping hand. That is why it would have been a great consolation to feel that I had done something, what little I could, to help you through. To be able to tell myself that, by enabling you to use my name, your father's name, I had cleared your path of one of the obstacles that lie before you, the only one that it was in my power to remove—and of which I should like to think, as your mother does, that I am somewhat exaggerating the importance.

August 4—Soissons retaken. They had held it since the end of March. So now we are on the Aisne and the Vesle, facing Fismes. (Fismes, too, calls up memories. It was there I ran into Saunders's brother, who was going up the line—and never returned.)

A wise speech by old Lansdowne. Will he be listened to? By the way things are going I should say (Gorain thinks so too) a peace move will be made before the winter. But Clemenceau will turn a deaf ear so long as he has not played his last card—the Americans.

In Russia, too, events seem to be moving fast. There has been an Allied landing at Archangel; the Japs are at Vladivostok. But so little information is let through that it's impossible to make head or tail of what is happening in Russia.

Night—Sègre back from Marseille. At G.H.Q. they say that the first phase of the Allied counter-offensive, begun on the 18th, is drawing to a close. All objectives have been reached; the Oise-Meuse front is straightened out, so that no salient is now exposed to a surprise attack. Are we going to dig ourselves in on this new line and stay there all winter?

August 5—Should I congratulate myself on the effects of Mazet's new sedative? No effect on my insomnia. But my pulse has steadied down; my nerves are in a much calmer state. Mentally, too, there is improvement; I can think much more lucidly. (Or so it seems to me.) Sleepless nights, but, to tell the truth, almost pleasant ones compared with others I recall. And propitious for "diarizing."

Joseph has gone on leave. Replaced by old Ludovic. Dreadfully garrulous; talks one's head off! When he comes to do my room, I bolt! But this morning, having to stay in bed for a cauterization, I was at his mercy. His conversation was all the more tiresome because interspersed with hiccups, grunts, and gasps, owing to the fact that, in an access of unwonted zeal, he had set to polishing my floor. With polishing-pads strapped to his feet, he performed a sort of sailor's jig around the room, gabbling away all the time.

Described his childhood in Savoy. Kept on repeating: "Those were the good days, sir!" (Yes, Ludovic old boy, I know all about that! I say the same thing to myself each time some memory of the past, even a disagreeable one, crosses my mind.)

He uses colourful expressions, like Clotilde, but of a different type, less rustic. One of the things he told me was that his father had been a "piece-fitter." This, I learn, is the name given in wholesale tailoring establishments to the workman who trims and fits together the pieces of cloth roughed out by the cutter. A good term. Lots of people (people like Jacques) would do well to call in a piece-fitter for their thoughts, to co-ordinate the scraps of knowledge they have amassed.

In one of her last letters Jenny speaks of Jacques and his "doctrine." No term could be less apt. I haven't the least intention of starting a discussion with her on the subject. But it strikes me as rather ominous for little Paul's upbringing that she should regard as a doctrine the more or less disconnected views Jacques may have aired when he was with her and which she now remembers more or less correctly!

If ever, Paul, you read these lines, please don't run away with the notion that your Uncle Antoine regarded your father's theories of life as incoherent. I merely wish to say that your father, like all impulsive people, gave an impression of having divergent, often contradictory ideas, which he found it none too easy to reconcile. This much I know: he never quite succeeded in shaping them into a logical, clearly formulated system or in giving them a well-defined direction. Similarly, his personality was composed of diverse, conflicting tendencies, all equally imperious (that was what gave it its extraordinary many-sidedness); and he found it hard to choose between them, never could weld them into a harmonious whole. That was the reason for his unceasing "mental strife," the feverish unrest which characterized him.

Perhaps all of us are, to a varying extent, in a like case. By "us" I mean those who have never accepted a cut-and-dried system, those who, at a certain stage of their development, have neglected to adopt once for all an organized philosophy or a religion—a stable bedrock for their mental processes. The result is that people of our type are constrained to revise periodically all the fundamentals of their thinking and rebuild it as best they can on makeshift bases.

August 6, 7 p.m.—Old Ludovic. The same fat fingers that have just inserted and withdrawn the thermometer for No. 49, and cleaned the spittoons of Nos. 55 and 57, now drop a lump of sugar into my lime-blossom tea, after being plunged into the sugar-bowl. And I say: “Thank you, Ludovic. . . .”

A poorish day. But I’ve lost the right to grumble.

This evening, an injection. Respite.

Night—Insomnia. Little pain, however.

A trifle off the mark, what I wrote yesterday for you, Paul—so far as it concerns myself. You might gather that my life was a constant struggle to achieve mental stability. Quite otherwise. Thanks, presumably, to my profession, I always felt at peace with myself, had little use for “soul-searchings.”

About myself:

Fairly early (during my first year as a medical student, in fact) I managed to adjust my various tendencies, to shape my life and thought in a congenial mould, and accept (while adhering to no religious dogma or philosophic system) a sort of private moral code. The mould in which I shaped my life was, perhaps, restricted, but I did not feel cramped in it. Rather, it gave me a certain peace of mind. I came to look on living contentedly within the limits it imposed as a precondition of making good in my profession. Thus, at quite an early age, I settled down to the observance of set principles (I call them “principles,” forced and pretentious as the term may sound, for want of a better word) which tallied with my natural predilections and my medical career. Mine was, in sum, the rather rudimentary “philosophy” of a typical “man of action,” based on a cult of energy, will-power, and the like.

For the pre-war period of my life, anyhow, all this is strictly true. True, too, for the war period up to the time when I got my first wound. Then only (during my convalescence at the Saint-Dizier Hospital) I began to question certain lines of thought and conduct which had ensured for me so far a relative stability of outlook, and enabled me to get the last ounce out of myself when the occasion called for it.

Tired. Reluctant to carry on with this attempt at self-analysis. Lack of training. The further I proceed, the more I realize that what I’ve said about myself is questionable; I’m throwing dust in my own eyes.

For instance, I cast my mind back to some of the most important acts of my life, and I find that the ones I embarked on most spontaneously were in flagrant contradiction with my famous “principles”! At each of those crucial moments I took a line that my “ethics” did not justify. Some secret force within suddenly impelled me to take that line—a force that overrode all preconceived ideas, my plan for living. The result being usually that I came to feel less sure of my "ethics" and of myself. I even caught myself wondering if I really were the man I thought myself to be. Still, I must admit, those moods of self-questioning passed almost instantaneously and did not prevent me from resuming my stand on my old ground.

Reviewing these things tonight, in solitude and in perspective, I see pretty clearly that these rules of life and my practice of abiding by them tended to warp my personality and that, though I had no wish to do so, I had made of them a sort of mask. And the habit of wearing it had gradually modified my natural temperament. In the normal course of my existence (which allowed me little time for introspection) I adapted myself easily enough to this artificial self I had concocted. But at certain critical moments, when I was moved to act spontaneously, the steps I took were obviously reactions of my authentic self which, throwing off the mask, revealed the man within.

(Glad to have cleared up that point—at last!)

I expect it is the same with many people. From which it follows that, if we want to discover a man's true character, we should observe, not his normal conduct, but those unthinking acts—seemingly inexplicable and occasionally scandalous—which he does "in spite of himself." For only at these moments does a man betray his real self.

Am inclined to think that Jacques's case was the opposite of mine. In his case it was the innermost, authentic self that as a general rule directed the course of his life. Which would explain the striking instability of his temperament, the difficulty one had in foreseeing his reactions, and their seeming incoherence.

A glimmer of dawn on the windowpane. Another night gone; one night less. Will try to doze off now. (For once I hardly regret the sleepless hours.)

August 8, out of doors—82.5° in the shade. Intense, but dry, invigorating heat. Wonderful climate. Could never understand why so great a part of mankind has settled in the bleak, inhospitable North. Just now, at lunch, listened to them talking over their plans for the future. They all think, or make believe they think, that a man who has been gassed isn't handicapped for life. And they also think they can resume their lives at the exact point where they left off when mobilized. As though peace would be the signal for the world to slip back automatically into its soft pre-war groove. Poor fellows, I'm afraid they're in for a rude awakening!

But what amazes me most is the way they talk about their "jobs" in civilian life. Never as a man does who has chosen a career because he likes it and it suits him. No, they talk as schoolboys talk about their lessons; sometimes, indeed, as an ex-convict might talk about a sentence of hard labour. A pity, to my thinking. There's nothing worse than starting life without feeling drawn to a vocation. (Or only one thing worse: starting out with the wrong vocation.)

For Paul:

Beware of choosing the wrong vocation. So many wasted lives, so many cases of a soured old age, are due to missed vocations!

I picture you in adolescence, sixteen or seventeen. The age when, above all, the mind is in a ferment. The age when your intellect will awake, take stock of itself, and form the wildest estimates of its capacities. The age when your heart too, perhaps, will begin to make its voice heard, and its wayward emotions will be difficult to control. The age when, dazed and dazzled by the new horizons opening before it, your mind will be at a loss to choose among so many glorious possibilities. And this is the age when youth, weak still but thinking itself strong, and "hot for certainties," for guide-marks in the maze of life, embraces eagerly the first assurance that presents itself. But—beware! For this, too, is the age (though you may not suspect it) when your imagination will be most apt to distort reality, even to lead you into mistaking the false for the true. You will tell yourself: "I know . . ."; "I feel definitely convinced . . ."; and so forth. But don't forget that a youngster of seventeen is often like a pilot steering by a badly regulated compass. He is absolutely certain that his adolescent impulses are flashes of pure insight, that he may take them as sure guides and set his course accordingly. He never suspects that as a rule he is being led haphazard by caprices of the moment and that the ideas which seem to him so startlingly original are usually secondhand—a farrago of notions picked up in chance encounters from people he has known or books that have come under his eyes.

Will you steer clear of these pitfalls? I must admit I fear for you! And I wonder if you will listen to my advice. . . .

To begin with, I hope you will not be too much inclined to brush aside impatiently the opinions expressed by your teachers, by those who are near and dear to you. They may seem not to understand you, yet quite likely they may know you better than you know yourself. And if their homilies get on your nerves, don't forget the reason may be that deep in your heart you feel they are well founded!

But especially I ask you to be on your guard against yourself. Always have in mind the risk of forming wrong ideas about your character and being misled by appearances. Practise sincerity at your own expense; that's the best way of keeping your wits alert and serviceable. Another thing you should try to bear in mind is this: in the case of young men of your stamp (I mean the educated type, whose minds are shaped to a great extent by books and heart-to-heart conversations with intelligent companions of their own age) theories on life and the human sentiments always precede experience. Their imagination enables them to conjure up mentally a host of sensations with which, so far, they have had no direct personal contacts. But this they fail to realize; they mistake *knowing for experiencing*. They believe that they personally experience cravings and emotions which they merely *know that others feel*.

Next there's this business of a vocation. When you were ten or twelve, I dare say, you believed you were cut out for a sailor or explorer—because you had been thrilled by adventure stories you had read. Older and wiser now, you smile at those childish fancies. But at sixteen or seventeen one is apt to make very similar mistakes. Take my advice, and fight shy of sudden enthusiasms; don't be in a hurry to believe yourself an artist, or a man of action, or the hero of a unique romance, just because you have been moved to admire, in books or real life, great poets, men who have "done things," or splendid lovers. No, it is a long, weary task discovering one's real bent, and I advise you to go about it patiently, methodically. Many make the discovery too late; some never at all. Therefore, you should take your time, refuse to let yourself be "rushed." A lot of exploratory work is needed before one can find out *who* one really is. But the moment you have found yourself, discard without delay everything in your make-up that is not truly yours. Take yourself as you are, with all your failings and limitations, but spare no pains in developing your potentialities on normal, healthy lines along their appropriate channels. For self-knowledge and self-acceptance do not mean taking the line of least resistance or ceasing to improve oneself. Quite the contrary; they give a man the best chance of getting the utmost out of himself, for his energies are thus canalized in the right direction and all his efforts increasingly serve a purpose. One should enlarge one's frontiers as far as possible—but only after making sure that they are one's *natural* frontiers. The man who, so the phrase goes, makes a mess of his life is usually someone who, starting off with a wrong conception of his personality, chooses a path of life which is unsuitable for him; or else one who, having started in the right direction, has not been able, or has lacked the self-discipline, to keep within the bounds assigned to him by nature.

August 9—An optimistic speech by Lloyd George. The note of optimism exaggerated probably for reasons of expediency. All the same, what has been happening on the French front during the last three weeks exceeds our wildest hopes. (Brings back my talk with Rumelles in the spring.) Yesterday, it seems, we took the offensive in Picardy. And the Americans are coming into action. Pershing's plan appears to be to let Foch straighten up our front line and put Paris out of danger; then, while the French and British armies hold the old front, to make a big American drive toward Alsace, with a view to crossing the frontier and invading Germany. That day, rumour goes, the war will come to a rapid end, thanks to a new gas which can be employed only in enemy territory as it destroys everything, makes it impossible for the land to produce for several years, and so forth. (General jubilation in the mess—all these unhappy gas-victims, many of whom will never recover, crowing over the possibilities of this new gas!)

August 10—Have regained somewhat my taste for reading; find I can concentrate pretty easily on what I read, especially at night. Just finished an excellent article by an English physician on the after-effects of mustard-gas poisoning as compared with those of other gases. His observations bear mine out in many respects (e.g., as to secondary infections tending to become chronic). Was tempted to write to him, enclosing some pages of my case-history. But I would rather not embark on an exchange of letters; too uncertain of being able to keep it up. Still, since the 1st I have felt definitely better. No real improvement, of course, but I have been suffering less. A lull. Compared with that of the preceding weeks my present state is fairly tolerable—if it weren't for the exhausting treatment every morning, my difficulty in breathing (especially acute at sunset), and my insomnia. Still, I find the insomnia less trying when I am up to reading, as during the last few nights. Thanks, also, to this diary.

Forenoon—Standing at my window. Most impressive, the landscape spread out before me, with its majestically rolling hillsides terraced with narrow strips of cultivated land. The green slopes are ribboned with parallel line of chalky white, the dry-stone walls between the terraces. And high above stands sharp against the sky a rugged diadem of rocks, pumice-grey, faceted with gleams of mauve and orange-red. In the far distance, rather lower, where the green merges into grey, is a little village stepped along a gorge, like a handful of white pebbles lodged in a furrow. And just now big fleecy clouds are passing overhead, chequering the vivid green expanse with slowly moving drifts of shadow. . . . How many weeks are left to me for gazing at all this beauty?

August 11—Mazet is a doctor of the same persuasion as Major Dezavelles the medical officer at Saint-Dizier, who refused to have anything to do with men whom he had "sensed" as hopeless cases. "A good leech," he once said to me, "needs flair. He must spot the exact moment when a patient ceases to be 'interesting.' "

Am I still "interesting" from Mazet's point of view? And if I am, how long shall I remain so? Since Langlois developed his abscess, Mazet has ceased going to see him.

The Somme offensive is shaping up well. The English, it seems, are set on doing their bit. The Santerre plateau has been recaptured, the Paris-Amiens line placed out of danger. A battle is in progress at Montdidier. (What memories of 1916 are linked up for me with those names, Montdidier, Lassigny, Ressons-sur-Matz, etc.!)

Goiran very optimistic. Insists that the tide is now flowing steadily in our favour. I agree. (What's happening must be a considerable surprise to quite a number of people—our leaders, military and civil, to begin with, who know how close a shave we had last spring. Well, they're holding their heads high again these days, we may be sure. Let's only hope they're not holding them *too* high!)

August 12, night—Spent the afternoon copying certain portions of my case-history to send with my letter to that English doctor.

War news. The British are nearing Péronne. Poor Péronne! What's left of it today? Remember so well the 1914 evacuation, the town deprived of light, hand-lanterns flitting along the streets, the cavalry in retreat—the men half dead with fatigue, the horses limping. And that row of stretchers laid on the ground floor of the Town Hall and extending onto the sidewalk.

August 13, night—Breathing more troublesome today. However, have finished the notes I am sending to England.

This perusal of my case-history has left me with a good—not to say excellent—impression of it. The progress of the disease is clearly traced, as on a graph. A factual record of considerable importance. Unique, I should imagine. It may come to be regarded as authoritative and used as a basis for research for many years to come. Must fight down the temptation of cutting things short prematurely. It’s up to me to wait as long as I possibly can, so as to continue my analysis up to the final stage. Thus I shall leave behind me something of use, anyhow: a full clinical history of a case of this rare type, regarding which so little is known at present.

There are times when this thought is a great standby. But there are others when it’s all I can do to find a tiny grain of comfort in it.

1 a.m.—Curious, the tricks that memory plays on one. It’s interesting, when one’s embarked on a train of thought, to call a sudden halt and retrace the sequence of associated ideas up to the starting-point. For instance, this evening just as Ludovic came in with the dinner-tray, the metal cap of the salt-cellar dropped off and fell tinkling onto the plate. I hardly noticed it at the time. But all evening, during my treatment, while I was getting ready for the night, and even when I was copying out my clinical notes, my mind was full of thoughts of Father.

A host of old, half-effaced images came crowding back upon me: gloomy dinners at our house in the Rue de l’Université, Mlle. de Waize’s little hands resting on the tablecloth, our Sunday lunches at Maisons-Laffitte with the windows open and the garden bathed in sunlight. Why? I know the reason now. The tinkle of the metal cap falling on the plate had automatically recalled a noise I used to hear regularly at the beginning of each family meal, when, as Father settled heavily into his chair, his eyeglasses swinging on their ribbon hit the rim of his plate.

I feel I should set down some notes on Father, for Paul’s benefit. No one is ever likely to speak to him about his father’s father.

Father was little loved—even by his sons. He was a very difficult man to love. I judged him with much harshness and, I suspect, did him less than justice. Today it seems to me that what made him so unlovable was an insistence on the less attractive side of certain rugged virtues and a moral inflexibility carried to excess. I cannot quite bring myself to write that his life compelled one’s admiration, and yet, viewed from one angle, it was obviously devoted wholly to doing good, as he saw it. His defects set everyone against him and his very real virtues won no liking. In fact, the way he put them into practice roused more antipathy than the worst shortcomings would have done. I believe he was aware of this and that the knowledge of his isolation made him suffer terribly.

Some day, my dear Paul, I must make an effort to explain to you the sort of man your grandfather Oscar Thibault was.

August 14, morning—More, gossip from old Ludovic. Just now, placing his fat paw on his moustache, he mumbled confidentially; "Would you believe it, sir? Lieutenant Darros ain't nothing but a faker!"

Naturally I protested. Ludovic took on a knowing air. "I got eyes in my head, sir." And he proceeded to explain that, when Darros was staying in the annex, he had caught him faking his temperature. He always took a good quarter of an hour's violent exercise before inserting the thermometer, and when marking up his temperature on the chart added a degree or so.

I protested, but . . . ! Have myself noticed some suspicious circumstances. In the inhaling-room, for instance, Darros is always very slack about his treatment. Stops it the moment Bardot's back is turned. Usually shirks the exercises he is supposed to do by himself. Such remissness all the stranger as Darros is always worrying about his health and often asks me what I think of his chances of recovery, about which he himself is definitely pessimistic. Darros has no lesions, but his bronchi are in a bad state and show no sign of improvement.

Late afternoon—In the kitchen-garden. I like being here. Shadows of the cypresses on the paths. Trim grass borders. Wattle fences. Tinkle of the Persian wheel. Pierre and Vincent moving to and fro with watering-cans.

Still obsessed by Ludovic's "revelations." Suppose they're true? Suppose Darros is a malingerer—what then? Is he acting in a disgraceful way?

No easy problem. All depends on the angle from which one views it. For Ludovic, whose two sons have fallen in the war, it's obviously disgraceful; worse, a crime, an act of desertion. I've no doubt he thinks Darros should be court-martialled. To Darros's father, too, such conduct would probably seem disgraceful. (I know him slightly. He sometimes comes to see his son. A clergyman in Avignon; a patriotic old puritan. Forced his youngest son to enlist.) Yes, certainly for Darros senior it's a wicked thing to do. But for Bardot, for instance? He has been treating Darros for the last four months and has grown to like him. Suppose he noticed something, would he take action or shut his eyes? And Darros himself—if he is really guilty of malingering, has he the feeling he is doing wrong?

And I, how do I feel about it? Is it a rotten thing to do? Certainly I can't approve of it. Have an instinctive aversion for the fakers one comes across in hospitals who do all they can not to get well. But I can't bring myself to say outright that such conduct is "wrong."

A queer business. Might be interesting to try to clarify my ideas on the subject. . . . Right or wrong?

First I note this: even if I found him guilty of malingering, I should go on liking Darros. He is intelligent, cultivated, gentle-minded, and I regard him as a thoroughly decent young fellow. In fact, I respect him, even if he is (as Ludovic would have it) a “faker.” He has often spoken about himself to me with the utmost frankness; told me about his father, his childhood days, and his Protestant upbringing—so appallingly puritanical on the sexual side. About his married life too. I well remember the description he gave of his experiences at Lyon on the eve of mobilization. He and his wife were on their way back from Avignon, where they had been on vacation. Darros was due to rejoin his regiment on the following day at dawn. After much searching they found a room in a small, squalid hotel. The whole town was in a state of feverish excitement. I can still hear his voice when he said to me: “Thérèse was trembling with fear, gritting her teeth to keep from breaking down. I spent the night in her arms, sobbing like a child. Never shall I forget those tragic hours. She gently stroked my hair but could not bring herself to speak. And all night long there was an infernal din in the street outside, artillery trains clattering over the cobbles without a moment’s break.”

A malingerer, perhaps; but not a coward. Forty months’ active service in the infantry, cited three times in dispatches, twice wounded and finally gassed at Les Hauts-de-Meuse. Married six months before the outbreak of war. A delicate wife. A child. No private means. An ill-paid schoolteaching job at Marseille. He was gassed (slightly) in February last. At a convalescent home in Troyes to begin with; his wife came and joined him there, and married life began again for them (a fact which, to my mind, has its relevance). After a month or so they transferred him here, hundreds of miles from the front. How well I can picture his feelings when he found himself back in the South, in this genial climate, under these blue skies! If he finally resolved to do all he could to protract his convalescence as long as possible —and who can tell whether peace may not be nearer than most of us imagine?—I feel sure that a Protestant of the best stamp such as Darros must have had the matter out with his conscience before deciding on such a course. If finally he chose to save his skin at all costs (even at the risk of letting his disease grow worse through neglect), was he doing wrong or was he right?

Who can say?

No, even if he is malingering, I decline to think less of him.

Midnight—Insomnia. Dark hours teeming with interminable meditations. A sort of instinct of self-preservation enables me, whenever this is not utterly impossible, to divert my attention from myself, from my "ghosts."

Darros again. Rather serious, this Darros business, when one looks into it. Serious, I mean, *for me*. For it conjures up problems affecting me personally.

Incidentally, I find that I no longer believe in responsibility.

Did I ever really believe in it? Yes, as far as it's possible for a medical man to do so. For us doctors the frontiers of responsibility are never situated quite at the same point as that assigned by public opinion. (I remember the arguments on the subject I used to have at Verneuil with a medico-legal expert, serving as assistant medical officer in a local regiment.) We doctors know only too well that men's acts are the outcome of character and environment. Are we responsible for our heredity or upbringing, for the examples given us in our youth, or its conditions? Most obviously not.

Still, I have always acted as if I fully believed in my personal responsibility. And I had a very strong sense (due to a Christian education?) of merit and demerit. With lapses, however. I had a tendency to hold myself relatively irresponsible when I had done wrong and to claim the full merit of my good deeds.

A lot of inconsistencies in all this.

For Paul:

Don't worry overmuch about inconsistencies. They are vexatious, but a healthy sign. I have noticed that it was precisely when my mind was tossed this way and that by contradictory ideas that I felt nearest that Truth, with a capital T, which always lies just around the corner.

Could I have another lease of life, I'd like to live it under the sign of Doubt.

The biological viewpoint: during the early years of the war I yielded—disgustedly, it is true—to the temptation of treating its moral and social issues as mere biological data. A crude method, leading me to such observations as: Man is a bloodthirsty brute by nature; a rigid social system is needed to check his depredation; nothing better can be hoped of him. I even carried about in my haversack one of old Fabre's natural-history books (unearthed in a bookshop at Compiègne). Found a gloomy satisfaction in regarding men, myself included, as large, ferocious insects equipped for carnage, for attack and defence, conquest and internecine slaughter. Told myself ragefully: "Anyhow, let this war open your eyes, you sentimental fool, and teach you to see things as they are. The universe: a complex of blind forces fighting their way to equilibrium by destruction of the weaker elements. Nature: a shambles in which individuals and species, antagonized by instinct, prey on each other *ad infinitum*. No good or evil, no right or wrong. No more for man than for the weasel or the bird of prey.”

How can a man whose duty keeps him in an ambulance packed with wounded deny that might triumphs over right? (More definite memories. A nightfall in Le Cateau. The hour I passed crouching behind a wall during the attack on Péronne. The first-aid station at Nanteuil-le-Haudouin. The death-agony of those young fellows from the Rifle Brigade in a barn between Verdun and Calonne.) I recall times when, in sheer desperation, I bemused myself with this biological view of human life.

A short-sighted view. The sense of utter hopelessness which possessed me at those moments should have served as a warning that such thoughts drag a man down into an abyss whence there is no escaping.

Will turn out the light now, and try to sleep a bit.

1 a.m.—Sleep definitely “off” tonight. That nice fellow Darros (little he suspects it!) is responsible for the fact that I’ve been racking my brain with “moral problems” for the last fifteen hours—more time than I’ve given to them in my whole previous life.

Quite literally I had no time for such problems. Good and evil were for me conventional terms, counters which served in conversation, but to which I attributed no real value. And devoid of all imperative significance for me. I subscribed to the code of traditional morality—for others. I subscribed to it in this sense: that if some successful revolutionary group were proposing to abolish them and did me the honour of asking my advice, I should probably have urged the unwisdom of sapping all at once these tried foundations of the social order. They seemed to me quite arbitrary, but of great practical service for regulating the dealings of my fellow-men among themselves. As for myself, however, in my dealings with myself, I totally ignored them.

(I can’t help wondering how I should have summed up my personal rule of life, had I been asked to do so—a summing up for which I never had the leisure or, indeed, the inclination. I imagine that I would have kept to some rather elastic formula on these lines: “All that stimulates the life-force within me and promotes my development is good; everything that hinders me from making the most of my capacities is evil.” But I’d need to define exactly what is meant by “life-force” and “making the most of my capacities.” I give it up!)

Actually the people (if any) who have watched my way of living—Jacques or Philip, for instance—have had few opportunities of observing the almost complete freedom I accorded myself in theory. For in my acts I have always (though without giving a thought to it) kept to the path of what is known as respectability, the line of conduct followed by all "decent people." Nevertheless, on certain occasions—rare, I grant; not more than two or three in fifteen years—at certain critical moments of my private or professional life, I have suddenly grown aware that my emancipation from convention was not merely theoretical. On these exceptional occasions I found myself transported, as it were, onto a plane where the rules of conduct that I normally observed were a dead letter; a plane on which even reason ceased to function, instinct and intuition reigned supreme. It was a region of what might be called transcendent chaos, its atmosphere was pure and bracing, and in it I felt gloriously alone, masterful, sure of myself. Above all, sure of myself. For I had an extraordinarily vivid impression of having suddenly come very near to . . . Hard to finish this sentence; let's say . . . to what would be, for a God, absolute Truth. (Capitalized again!) Yes, at least three or four times to my knowledge I have consciously and deliberately violated the most widely accepted rules of morality, and never felt the least twinge of remorse. I still look back on those incidents with complete detachment, without a shadow of regret. In any case, I can truly say that remorse is something outside my experience. I account for this by an innate disposition to regard my thoughts and acts, whatever they may be, as so many natural phenomena. And, as such, legitimate.

Feel particularly in the mood for writing tonight. And splendidly clear-headed. If I have to pay for it with a bad day tomorrow, so be it!

Have read the above remarks again and spent some time pondering over —and around—them.

Among others, put this question to myself: In the case of the average person, who gets through life without committing any signal breaches of the accepted moral code, what is it that restrains him from doing so? For hardly any normal man escapes the temptation of committing acts now and then that pass for "immoral." Obviously I do not have in mind believers, all such as deep religious faith or a philosophic creed enables to resist the "Tempter's wiles." But how about the others? What is it holds them back? Timidity, fear of the law or of getting a bad name, apprehension of the possible repercussions of such acts on their private or public lives? All these factors operate, I do not doubt, and are formidable safeguards of morality, which a great many of the "tempted" are not disposed to challenge. But all these are obstacles of a material order. Were there no others, none of a spiritual order, it might be urged that all that keeps the average man (assuming he has thrown off the yoke of religion) in the narrow path is fear of the policeman or, anyhow, of ill-repute. From which it would follow logically enough that every unbeliever tempted to "do wrong," provided he felt quite sure of not being found out and that he ran no risk of punishment, would promptly yield to the temptation and might even feel a certain zest in "scoring off" the moral code. Which is tantamount to saying that for the unbeliever there exist no considerations of a moral order capable of restraining him from wrongdoing; that for a man who does not subscribe to any God-given law, to any religious or philosophical belief, there exists no valid moral interdiction.

By way of parenthesis: this would seem to bear out the view of those who explain the moral sense (conscience) and the distinction that we all draw spontaneously between what one ought and what one ought not to do—between right and wrong—as being the survival in modern man of a self-discipline, inculcated in the first instance by religion and carried on from generation to generation till it has become second nature. That may well be so. But it seems to me that those who uphold this theory overlook one important fact: that "God" is ultimately a man-made hypothesis. And thus it cannot be God, a product of the human mind, who in the first instance imposed this distinction between right and wrong; on the contrary, it is man who has fathered it on God and promoted it to a divine ordinance. In short, when we say the moral law has a religious origin, we merely mean that at some early stage of his development man thought fit to ascribe it to his Creator. And therefore that he had it in himself to start with. Indeed, the sense of right and wrong must have been most profoundly rooted in his nature for him to have felt that impulse to endow it with the highest, most absolute authority.

What, then, is the solution?

4 a.m.—Overcome by weariness midway in my "parenthesis." Two solid hours' sleep. I owe them to this diary—and to my philosophic divagations.

Have forgotten what I was leading up to. "What, then, is the solution?" What, indeed! Still, I had the impression (illusion?) that I was groping my way toward one. Only, on waking, I can't pick up the thread of my ideas.

The problem of conscience and its origin. Why should it not be the survival of a social habit? (Quite likely this explanation is as old as the hills, and no discovery of mine. No matter; it's new to me.)

I am quite unable to accept the theory that human conscience derives from some divine commandment, and far more inclined to take the view that, having originated at an early stage of man's existence, it has survived the causes which brought it into being and now, by virtue of tradition and heredity, is firmly rooted in us. I see it as a relic of the experiments primitive human groups were led to make when organizing communal life and settling relations among their members. A survival, in fact, of a rough-and-ready penal code. And it is rather flattering for one's human self-esteem to be able to tell oneself that this distinction we make between good and evil, the "voice of conscience"—a voice which often gives ridiculous orders and yet somehow compels us to obey them, which on occasion guides our conduct when reason balks and falters, and leads the wisest of us to do things which reason, called to judgment, could not justify—I find it rather attractive to regard what we call conscience as the survival of an instinct necessary and peculiar to the "social animal" that is man. An instinct that has persisted since the dawn of civilization and thanks to which mankind progresses steadily toward a perfect state.

August 15, in the garden—Glorious weather. Bells ringing for vespers. Everywhere a holiday atmosphere. Almost blatant, this gaiety of nature: of dazzling sky and flowers, horizons shimmering in the heat-haze. One has a spiteful impulse to shake one's fist at all this beauty, invoke disaster, shatter it! No, rather to escape from it, to shrink back into oneself, one's suffering self!

A great council of war is taking place at Spa; the Kaiser and his Chiefs of Staff in conference. Three lines in a Swiss paper. Nothing in the French papers. Yet this well may be an epoch-making date, one that schoolboys will have to memorize, a turning-point in the Great War.

Goiran says that many of the Foreign Office high officials are predicting the war will be over before next winter.

Not much in the communiqué. The suspense weighs on one like a brooding storm.

10 p.m.—Read just now my elucubration of last night. Surprised, not to say shocked, by its prolixity. It brings out all too plainly my limitations. (But it shows, too, a weakness of the vocabulary we poor humans have built up. We employ the language of emotion, not of logic, however much we try to "rectify" it.)

For Paul:

Please remember, my dear Paul, that these desultory jottings are the work of an invalid, and you should not judge your Uncle Antoine by them. In any case, he never felt at ease in the byways of ideology; at the first step he went astray. I remember when I was working for my finals in philosophy at Louis-le-Grand—the only examination I did not pass at my first try—how mortified I often felt. Like a coal-heaver juggling with soap-bubbles! And I realize that even the imminence of death has not sharpened my wits; I shall leave this world without having been able to overcome my utter incapacity for abstract speculation.

Just at midnight—Vigny's *Journal* which I am now reading does not bore me, yet every moment my attention wanders and the book slips from my fingers. An effect of insomnia on the nerves. My thoughts turn in a sad circle: death, the petty thing a life is, the petty thing a man; mysteries against which the mind comes up, on which it founders, trying to understand. And always that unanswerable question: What lies behind it all?

What lies behind the fact that a man like myself, emancipated from all moral codes, should have led a life which I may call exemplary, when I remember how my days were spent, all I gave up for my patients' sake, the pains I took in carrying out my duties?

(I'd vowed to keep clear of these problems, which I know my mind is not equipped to tackle. But now I doubt the wisdom of that course—if I want to get them out of my system.)

What motive lay behind those unselfish emotions, my conscientiousness and devotion to my work? . . . But one might as well ask for what motive a wounded lioness lets herself be shot down rather than abandon her cubs, or sensitive plants retract their leafage, or the white corpuscles make their amœboid movements, or metals oxidize.

No "motive," nothing lies behind these things. Merely to state the question is to beg the question in such cases, to assume there is "something behind everything," to blunder into the spider's web of metaphysics. No, we must accept the limits of the knowable. The wise man dispenses with the whys, contents himself with the hows. (And has a full life's work coping with them!) Above all, one should cure oneself of the childish desire for everything to be explainable, to "fit in." Thus, in my case, I must give up trying to explain myself to myself as if I were a self-consistent unity. (For a long time I thought I was. Our Thibault pride? No; personal vanity.)

All the same, among the various attitudes feasible, there is one which I prefer: that of accepting the conventional moral standards without being taken in by them. One may approve of "order" and stand by it without necessarily regarding it as a moral obligation and without losing sight of the fact that it is no more than a practical necessity for collective life, the condition of a certain social welfare. I write "order" to avoid using such terms as "virtue" or "good conduct."

It's an irritating thing to feel that one is *under orders* all the time and yet make neither head nor tail of the system governing one's life! For a long while I imagined that some day I would hit on a solution of the mystery.

Now I know that I must die without having found out anything to speak of—either about myself or about the outside world.

A believer would retort: “But it’s so simple. . . .” Not for me!

Another access of exhaustion—but impossible to sleep. The hellish thing about insomnia is the combination of intense physical fatigue, a desperate craving for rest, with an uncontrollable mental activity which keeps sleep at bay. Have been tossing about on my bed for the last hour, during which time this thought has been running in my head: I’ve stood for optimism all my life; it would be absurd for me to die in a mood of doubt and gloom.

Optimism! Yes, that was the keynote of my life. A fact of which I may not have been conscious at the time, but which now I realize most vividly. That cheerfulness and brisk self-confidence which always buoyed me up came originally, I suspect, from my dealings with science and was stimulated daily by them.

Science is something more than mere knowledge. It is a desire to come to terms with the universe, whose laws it glimpses. And those who follow that path find it leads them to a wonderland infinitely vaster and more thrilling than the mystic’s wildest visions. Science enables one to feel in close contact and in harmony with nature and her secrets.

A religious sentiment, this? The term, I own, grates on me, and yet—why not?

Faith, hope, and charity. One day Abbé Vécard pointed out to me that actually I practised these eminently Christian virtues! Naturally I protested. In a pinch I might own to hope and charity, but faith—absurd! I wonder now. If today I tried to justify this never-flagging zeal that kept me going at high pressure for fifteen years, and hit on an explanation of the indomitable confidence I had in my “mission,” that explanation might well sound uncommonly like religious faith. But faith in what? Perhaps in the infinite capacities for progress of all forms of life. I believe in a universal movement toward ever-higher planes. Does this mean that, without my knowing it, I believe in a final cause “shaping our ends”? No matter. In any case, that is the only kind of teleology I can accept.

August 16—High temperature; respiration difficult, more wheezing. Had to fall back on the oxygen cylinder several times. Got out of bed, but did not go downstairs.

A visit from Goiran, who brought some newspapers. He still thinks the war will end next winter. Defends his views with much skill and vigour.

Comic, the contrast between the cheerful theories he puts forth and the look of settled gloom he always wears—due to the small, close-set, vacillating eyes, the long, lean nose, and face grotesquely elongated like a greyhound's muzzle. Coughing and spitting all the time. Talked of his profession as though it bored him. Hardly believable. Teaching history of the Lycée Henri IV should not be a thankless task—far from it! Talked to me too of his student days at the Ecole Normale. The man is a confirmed carper; too fond of finding fault to take a just view of anything. Sometimes I feel his mind has been warped by too much intelligence or, rather, by a certain type of intelligence, indulgent to itself, but callous and ungenerous where others are concerned. Witty enough, however, on occasion.

Witty? There are two forms of wit: one comes from the thought that lies behind the sentiment expressed (e.g., Philip); the other from the way it's put. Goiran is one of those people who pass for witty though they really have nothing much to say. He gets his effects by tricks of elocution, by stressing unlikely words, by shifts of tone, by the use of epigrammatic, rather cryptic turns of speech, and by an ironic twinkle in his eye that hints at hidden meanings. One can repeat a remark of Philip's and it loses nothing of its originality and savour; it makes good every time. But if one repeated a sally of Goiran's it would fall flat, often as not.

August 17—More and more dyspnœa. Had myself X-rayed. The plates showed that there is practically no movement of the diaphragm in deep respiration. Bardot is away on three days' leave. Feel ill, damnably ill, and can't think of anything else.

August 19—Bad days and still worse nights. Mazet is trying a new treatment in Bardot's absence.

August 20—Terribly knocked out by the new treatment.

August 21—Feel marvellously fitter this morning. Thanks to last night's injection, slept nearly five hours! Breathing definitely easier. Read the papers.

Night—Dozed all afternoon. This attack seems definitely staved off. Mazet delighted.

Haunted by memories of Rachel. Is it a symptom of decline, the hold that memories are getting on me nowadays? When I was “alive,” I never indulged in them—I had no use for the past.

For Paul:

Morality. The moral life. It is for each of us to find out where his duty lies, to define its quality and scope. To decide on his *attitude*, abiding by his personal judgment and to this end engaging in a ceaseless quest, a continuous search. Patience and discipline are needed. For, without losing sight of reality, he must steer his way between the relative and the absolute, the possible and the desirable, while listening to the voice of elemental wisdom that is in all of us.

He must safeguard his personality. He must not be afraid of making mistakes and contradicting himself time and again. He must take stock of his deficiencies so as to gain an increasing insight into himself and ascertain the task that fits him—his duty.

In the last analysis, one’s only duty is toward oneself.

August 21, morning—Newspapers. The English making little progress. We are hardly doing better, despite some small local advances. (I write “small local advances,” following the communiqué, but I can picture what those words mean for the men making them; I see them crawling up the communication trenches, shells bursting round them in no-man’s land, first-aid stations packed with wounded.)

Got up for my treatment. Shall try to go down for lunch.

Night—Am writing by the light of a dim bedside lamp. Hoped to get a little sleep. Yesterday my temp. was down to almost normal. But it’s near daybreak, and I’ve not had a wink of sleep, not a moment’s unconsciousness. Still—a good night on the whole.

August 22, morning—A failure of the electric light prevented me from writing, as I’d intended, of the gorgeous display of shooting-stars we had last night.

It was so hot that at about one I rose and pulled up the blind. Back in bed, I feasted my eyes on the marvellous spectacle of the night sky streaming with tiny cataracts of golden fire, stars raining down in all directions. A celestial barrage! It brought to my mind the Somme offensive, those nights of 1916 in the Maréaucourt trenches; falling stars and English rockets meeting and crossing in the sky, like a fantastic firework display.

Suddenly it struck me—and I'm certain I was right—that an astronomer, whose spiritual home lies in the interplanetary spaces, must find dying a much less painful process than it is for other men.

Meditated for a long while on these things, gazing up at the sky, the boundless firmament that always recedes a little farther as our telescopes grow stronger. A wonderfully soothing meditation. That fathomless immensity in which a host of stars like our sun run their slow courses, and our sun itself—a million times, if I'm not mistaken, larger than the earth—is no more than a tiny unit of an untold multitude.

The Milky Way, stardust, a cloud of suns, round which wheel billions of planets, hundreds of millions of miles distant from one another. And all the nebulæ from which new broods of suns are born. And the discoveries of astronomers that all this teeming mass of worlds is a mere drop in the ocean of infinite space, in an all-pervading ether traversed by radiations, waves of energy, of which we know absolutely nothing.

Merely to write about it makes one's mind dizzy. A healthful dizziness. Last night for the first time (perhaps the last) I managed to think about my death with a sort of serenity, with vast, superb indifference. All regrets fell away, and I felt already free of the frail husk of life that is my body. And saw myself as a minute, utterly insignificant particle of matter.

Resolved to gaze at the sky each night to recapture this serenity.

Dawn is breaking. Another day.

Afternoon, in the garden—An absurd thrill of gratitude toward this diary as I open it again. Never has it seemed to serve so well its purpose—of exorcizing my "ghosts."

Am still under the spell of last night's star-gazing! The human animal, too, is an isolated unit. We, too, follow our lonely orbits without meeting or ever merging together. Each going his own gait. Each sealed hermetically apart, aloof, in his soft shell of flesh. Stumbling through life and disappearing. Men passing away every moment, new ones coming; a dingdong round. In the world someone born each second; sixty a minute. Try to picture it! More than three thousand new-born every hour; as many dead. Every year some thirty million people make way for thirty million new lives. Once a man really grasps it, lets these figures sink into his mind, how can he possibly feel an egocentric concern for his private fate?

6 p.m.—I float on wings today! Marvellously buoyant. A particle of living matter fully conscious of its *atomy*.

Recalled a thrilling conversation that took place one evening in Paris when Zellinger brought round his friend Jean Rostand to see me. It's a singular position man holds in this immense universe. And today I can perceive it quite as clearly as I did that night, listening to Rostand's cool, unemotional voice as he defined it with the cautious precision of the scientist and yet imparted to his summing up the lively imagery, the lyrical sweep of a poet. The nearness of death gives such thoughts a particular appeal for me just now. I handle them with reverence. Can it be that I have found in them an antidote for my distress?

Instinctively I fight shy of metaphysics and its castles in the air. Never did annihilation seem to me more certain. I envisage it with loathing, all my instincts are up in arms against it, but I do not feel the slightest temptation to take refuge in preposterous hopes.

Never before have I been so keenly aware of my insignificance. . . . Yet what a stupendous trifle! Standing back from myself, I contemplate that prodigious mass of molecules which for a brief while yet is "I" and watch, or pretend to watch, the secret processes which, for thirty years and more, have been going on incessantly within me, the activities of the billions of cells of which I am composed. All the mysterious chemical reactions and transformations of energy which are proceeding, unbeknown to me, in the grey matter of my brain and make me the thinking, writing animal I am at this moment. My will, my faculties of thought, all that "brain-power" of which I used to be so proud—what are all these but an interplay of reflexes independent of myself, a natural phenomenon and nothing more, and an unstable one at that, since a few minutes' cellular asphyxia will put a stop to it for ever?

Evening—Back in bed. Mentally alert, even a bit light-headed.

Still musing on Man and Life. Just now was struck with wonder, almost awe, at the thought of the vast organic lineage that lies behind me; the hundreds of thousands of centuries, all the successive forms of life that have gone into my making. And, at the origin of all—that inexplicable, perhaps accidental, chemical combination which took place æons ago somewhere on the earth's charred and crumbling surface or in the depths of a steaming tropical sea, gave rise to the vital protoplasm, the basic stuff of life, and started off the process culminating in the strange, complex animal, endowed with consciousness and a capacity for abstract concepts such as the laws of reason and the ideal of justice, that is Man—a man like Descartes or Woodrow Wilson.

And then another idea crossed my mind, startling, yet plausible enough: that other forms of life capable of evolving into beings infinitely superior to man may have been destroyed at their inception by some cosmic cataclysm. In fact, when one comes to think of it, it seems almost miraculous that the chain of life, the last link of which is modern man, should have managed to persist unbroken through the ages up to our time, should have survived successfully the countless geological upheavals of the earth's crust, escaped the blind destructiveness of natural forces.

How long will this miracle continue? What ineluctable conclusion awaits our species in the days to come? Will it become extinct like the mastodons, the giant scorpions, the reptiles and sea-beasts of prehistoric ages? Or will the human race have better luck, survive all the catastrophic changes that may befall our planet, and go on progressing? Till when? Till the sun grows cold and life becomes impossible? And what new forward strides will our race have made before vanishing from the earth? One gets lost in such speculations.

But *what* new forward strides?

I cannot bring myself to believe in a cosmic plan in which the human animal plays a favoured part. I have come up against too many absurdities and inconsistencies in the scheme of things to admit the existence of an Immanent Will. No God has ever deigned to answer man's appeals or questionings. What he (man) takes for an answer is merely an echo of his own voice. His universe is self-contained, limited by his limitations. The most he can aspire to is to adapt this limited field of action as best he can to his requirements; it may seem to him an immense field compared with his own littleness, but it is small indeed in relation to the universe. Perhaps at last science will teach him to be satisfied with it, even to find his happiness, his peace of mind, in the awareness of his limitations. A not impossible feat; science is far from having said its last word, and it may even reconcile man with being the small and trivial thing he is, the product of one of nature's "accidents." It may lead him to feel permanently the great peace that has fallen on me tonight as I contemplate almost placidly the non-being which is to be mine so soon—into which all things ultimately lapse.

August 23—Just woke up after a longer, rather deeper sleep than usual. Feel rested. Would have little to complain of but for the secretions which clog my throat and make my breathing wheezy as a broken bellows!

Fell asleep in a sort of rapture; a desperate rapture, but grateful, none the less. All the gloomy thoughts that came back in full force this morning seemed then of no account; non-existence and my impending death were facts of a strictly natural order, against which there could be no question of rebelling. It wasn't exactly fatalism; rather a feeling of sharing, even as to disease and death, in the common lot of all things. What would I not give to recapture my last night's mood!

Later—On the veranda, before lunch. Conversations. Newspapers. The phonograph.

Fighting going on near Noyon and along the whole front between the Oise and the Aisne. More than two miles' advance in twenty-four hours. Lassigny occupied by us. The English have retaken Albert and Bray-sur-Somme. (It was at Bray, just behind the curé's house, that poor Delacour came to such a sordid, stupid end: hit by a stray bullet in the latrines.)

Night—Trying to regain my peace of mind. At dinnertime had a violent, very prolonged choking fit, which has left me utterly prostrated.

August 26—Almost constant pains at the back of my chest since yesterday morning. Last night they became unbearable. Accompanied by vomiting.

August 27, 7 p.m.—Have drunk a little milk. Joseph due to return presently, before leaving for the night. Am listening for his footsteps. Plenty of important things for him to do: tuck in the sheets, shake out the pillows, let down the mosquito-net, pour out my medicine, empty the spittoon, place within easy reach my glass of water, bottle of drops, the lamp-switch, and the push-button of my electric bell. "Good evening, sir." "Good evening, Joseph." Then a long wait. At 8:30 Hector, the night orderly, will look in. Never speaks. Just opens the door eight or ten inches and pokes his head in. As if to say: "I'm at my post. All's well. You've nothing to worry about!"

Then solitude; another interminable night beginning.

Midnight—Courage failing. Going to pieces mentally. All my thoughts hark back miserably to myself—i.e., my end. If I think of anyone I knew in the old days, promptly I catch myself reflecting: "Someone else who doesn't know I am dying" or: "I wonder what he'll say when he hears of my death."

August 28—Pain seems to be diminishing. Perhaps it will disappear as unaccountably as it set in. X-ray bad. Proliferation of the fibrous tissue developing more rapidly since the last examination. Especially in the right lung.

August 29—Definitely in less pain. But very exhausted after these four bad days.

War news. The latest offensive (between the Scarpe and the Vesle) seems to be going well. The English advancing on Noyon. We have occupied Bapaume.

For Paul:

Proud, that you will be. It's in our blood. Take yourself as you are, and be proud—deliberately. Humility, that parasitic "virtue," lowers a man. (And is, often as not, no more than a secret recognition of incompetence.) Neither vanity nor modesty. Know yourself strong, to be it.

Parasites, too, the blandishments of self-denial, the desire to abase oneself, to take orders; the smug satisfaction of obedience, the dread of freedom. Parasites that sap a man's vitality, reduce him to inertia. One should cultivate the virtues that uplift, and the greatest of these is—energy. For it is energy that makes the man.

And the price he pays for it is loneliness.

August 30—We have advanced beyond Noyon. What has it cost in lives?

Surprised that the press is allowed to go on saying that the end of the war is in sight. If America has taken the field, it is not with the object of a merely military victory or an army-made peace. Wilson's aim is to decapitate politically Germany and Austria, to wrest from them the tutelage of Russia. But even at the rate things are going it's surely overoptimistic to expect a breakdown of the Teutonic empires and the establishment of solidly republican governments, with which we can negotiate to good purpose in Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg within six months or so.

Half a dozen tightly stretched telegraph-wires score the rectangle of blue sky framed in my window, like scratches on a photographic plate. On rainy days an endless string of tiny drops of water slithers along each wire, all racing in the same direction, an inch or two apart, never catching up with one another. Impossible to look at anything else, to concentrate on anything else, when this is happening.

September 1—Another month beginning—shall I see the end of it?

Have started going downstairs again. Lunched in the mess.

Since I stopped shaving (in July) have had little occasion to look at myself in the mirror above my basin. Unexpectedly just now in the office I caught sight of my face. And all but failed to recognize that gaunt, bloodless, bearded face as mine. "A bit run down," Bardot conceded. "At death's door" would be nearer the mark. At best, only a few weeks more to go.

The English have retaken Mount Kemmel. We are attacking along the canal, the Germans falling back on the Lys.

Night—Thinking of Rachel. Why Rachel? Those long, drooping eyelashes that veiled her eyes in a sort of golden mist. Her gaze so full of ripe experience, the way she sometimes laid her hand upon my eyes to prevent my seeing the passion on her face. The firm pressure of her fingers that suddenly relaxed at the same instant as her lips and all the muscles of her body.

September 2—A slight breeze. Chose a place to leeward of the building. Behind me, on the veranda, I heard Goiran, Voisenet, and the company sergeant-major comparing notes about their student days in Paris. The Latin Quarter, its cafés and dance-halls, pretty ladies and the rest. Listened for a while, then withdrew to the lounge in a thoroughly bad temper. But curiously stirred as well.

Don't be afraid, my dear Paul, of wasting your time. . . . No, that isn't quite what I meant to say. Rather, be convinced that man's life is terribly short, that you have very little time before you to make the utmost of your possibilities.

But, all the same, I advise you to squander a little of your youth. Your Uncle Antoine, who is dying, cannot forgive himself for never having squandered an hour or two of his.

September 3—First glimmer of the dawn. I dreamt of you last night, Paul. I was sitting in the garden here and you stood beside me; I had my arm around you, pressing you to my side, and the life-force I felt surging in your sturdy little body brought to mind a young sapling thrusting up bravely toward the sun. And somehow you were at once the child I held on my knees some weeks ago, the growing lad I was, and the doctor I have become. On waking, for the first time this thought flashed through my mind: "Perhaps he'll be a doctor!"

I let my fancy play with the notion. And I've a mind to leave you some big bundles of notes, the record of ten years' clinical experience and research, and various projects I had hoped to carry out. If, when you are twenty, you personally have no use for them, please turn them over to some young doctor.

But no, I won't give up my dream so lightly; I see—this morning I insist on seeing—the young doctor who is to carry on where I left off as *you*, and not another.

Noon—I suspect that I was wrong to drop the re-education of my larynx and cut short my breathing-exercises. During the past couple of weeks I have been going steadily downhill and my condition this morning necessitated galvano-cautery treatment.

Spent the morning in bed.

Read Wilson's Labour Day message several times. It is at once idealistic and rich in common sense. Wilson repeats that a lasting peace must be something more than a mere readjustment of the balance of power in Europe. This war, he says unequivocally, is another "war of emancipation." We must not slip back into the old rut, but make a clean sweep of the follies of pre-war Europe, when peaceful, industrious peoples let themselves be ruined by armaments and spent their days guarding frontiers with fixed bayonets. The nations must unite in peace and amity. The end of the war must bring the Old World that sense of security which gives the U.S.A. its unique stability. The coming peace must not humiliate the vanquished, must leave no itch for revenge behind it, nothing that could foster a recrudescence of the war spirit.

Wilson lays down clearly the prime condition of such a peace. Autocratic governments must be destroyed. That is essential. There can be no security for Europe so long as German imperialism has not been uprooted. So long as the Austro-German bloc has not made a decisive move toward democracy. So long as we have not sterilized that hotbed of false ideals (false because inimical to the general welfare of mankind) which consists of a mystic faith in imperialism, the ruthless glorification of brute force, the Germans' claim that, being superior to all other races, they have a right to rule them (e.g., the Kaiser and his satellites who regard this as a holy war, and each German as a crusader whose mission it is to impose German hegemony on the world).

Night—Goiran and Voisenet dropped in after dinner. Very pleasant. Talked about Germany. Goiran maintained that the Germans' odious cult of violence is less a product of the imperial regime than an innate national and racial propensity, an instinct rather than an acquired character. The usual counter-arguments. Germany isn't only Prussia, and so forth. Even Goiran had to admit that there exist in Germany the makings of a peaceful, liberal-minded nation. And even supposing that the German "evangelism" (as he called it) is a racial instinct, what then? Obviously an autocratic government fosters, develops, and exploits it. It depends on us (if we win this war), on the nature of the peace terms we impose and on our attitude to the defeated nation, whether this maleficent spirit is or is not to persist in post-war Germany. The schooling in democracy which Wilson desires the Germans to undergo should soon reduce its virulence or divert it into other channels. Provided, of course, that the peace treaty leaves no rankling grievance in the German mind. Fifteen years should see this "reformation" through. Am very hopeful, and pretty well convinced that after the year 1930 there will be a republican, patriarchal, industrious, peace-loving Germany—one of the most solid guarantees of a United Europe.

Voisenet reminded us of November 1911. Very properly. Why should the Franco-German agreement arranged by Caillaux have merely put back the war? Because it did not modify the German political system. Because the aims of Germany, Austria, and Russia continued being identical with those of their emperors, statesmen, and the military party. Wilson has grasped this. Merely to defeat the Kaiser will serve no purpose if we fail to break the domination of the Prussian spirit and put an end to its Pan-German ambitions, the lust for world conquest. Yes, the underlying causes must be extirpated if we are to feel sure that Prussianism will not rear its ugly head again. Only thus will lasting peace be ensured.

A fact to remember: it was the Kaiser's government, alone against the rest of Europe, that wrecked the Hague Conference. Goiran gave us details. An agreement had been reached for the limitation of armaments, a pact of which great things were expected had been drawn up. On the eve of its execution the German representative received orders from his government not to sign. That day the German Empire dropped the mask. If the principle of arbitration and the limitation of armaments had been accepted by Germany as by the other powers, the European position in 1914 would have been quite different and war most probably averted. Facts which we must not forget. So long as a government imbued with the doctrine of Pan-Germanism holds absolute sway over seventy million subjects whose national pride it deliberately keeps at boiling-point there can be no peace in Europe.

September 4—Very acute twinges of pain in the side, flitting from point to point—in addition to all the rest.

The communiqué announces the capture of Péronne. This is the first time, I believe, that we have been allowed to know we lost it during the August fighting.

A short letter from Philip. In Paris they are saying Foch intends to launch three simultaneous offensives: toward Saint-Quentin, along the Aisne, and, with the Americans, along the Meuse. As Philip says, “More ‘bloodletting’ in prospect.” Is it really necessary that so many lives should be lost before the powers accept Wilson’s “points”?

Night—Goiran looked in. Fuming with indignation. Described the argument at dinner regarding Wilson’s latest message. Almost everyone held that the League of Nations should be, above all, an instrument for maintaining, after the war, a coalition of the whole civilized world against Germany and Austria. According to Goiran this opinion, which is already firmly rooted in the French official mind (from Poincaré and Clemenceau downward), may be summed up as follows: for the establishment of a durable peace in Europe it is a *sine qua non* that the Boches should be excluded from the League. They are a race apart, a blot on civilization, incurably war-minded. If they are given a free hand, good-bye to peace! Therefore, Germany must be kept down by every means, made incapable of aggression.

Horrible notions! If what Goiran says of the “official” view is correct, it is nothing short of a betrayal of Wilson’s plan. To exclude peremptorily from a so-called Universal League a third of Europe, on the pretext that the nations thus excluded are responsible for the war and can never be trusted again, is tantamount to nipping in the bud the project for an international jurisprudence, to setting up a mere parody of a League of Nations, to confessing that our real war aim is to keep Europe under the Anglo-French hegemony, and to sowing broadcast the seeds of future wars.

Fortunately Wilson is too shrewd to fall into this nationalistic trap!

September 5, Thursday—Can hardly keep on my feet today. It took me five minutes to walk down the stairs, struggling like a drowning man against asphyxia.

Slowly but steadily going downhill. Last night remembered Father’s death-agony. That nursery-song he kept on singing to himself, about the “pretty pony” and riding to the tryst:

Then clinkety and clankety
Along the lanes we go. . . .

(Must get down to writing those notes about Father which I want to leave to Paul.)

How often when I had a few days behind the lines in a rest-camp, and was revelling in the joys of a real bed to sleep in, did I lie and meditate for hours on the things I'd do once the war was over! The childish dreams I dreamt of the new life—more useful, more diligent—I was going to lead. "After the war"—the words seemed charged with magic.

Death. No "after the war" for me. The fixed idea returns. A foreign body lodged in my brain, a festering, malignant growth. Everything might be changed if I could reconcile myself to death. But, for that, I'd need to fall back on some metaphysical belief. Outside my range.

Curious that a mere relapse into non-existence should go so cruelly against the grain. Cannot help wondering how I'd feel if I believed in Hell and was sure of being doomed to eternal torments. . . . I doubt if even that could be much worse.

Night—The major has just sent up (by Joseph) a magazine with a marker in it. Opening it at the marked page, I read: "Wars have all sorts of pretexts, but only one cause—the army. Abolish armies and you abolish war. But how are armies to be abolished? By suppressing autocratic government." A quotation from one of Victor Hugo's speeches. Reymond has noted in the margin: "Peace Congress, 1869."

Well, he can ironize to his heart's content! But the fact that the suppression of autocratic regimes and the limitation of armaments were already mooted as far back as fifty years ago, is that a reason for abandoning hope that at long last men will learn wisdom?

Sputum more copious these last few days. The amount of debris has increased (sloughs of tracheal mucus and membranous casts).

September 6—Had a letter this morning from Mme. Roy. She writes to me every year on the anniversary of her son's death.

(Lubin often reminds me of young Manuel Roy.)

What would be Roy's attitude, were he alive today? I can picture him messed up (like Lubin), but game as ever, eager to recover quickly and go back to the front.

I often wonder, Paul, what will be your ideas about the war in the years to come—say, in 1940, when you are twenty-five. You will be living, no doubt, in a very different Europe, a Continent made safe for peace. Will you even be able to understand what was meant by "nationalism" or the fine enthusiasm of the young men who were your age, twenty-five, in 1914, and went to fight for their country, proud and glad to do so, as was Manuel Roy. He was a very lovable young man, Paul, and I hope you will not be unjust but try to understand. Make no mistake about the heroism of these youngsters; they had no wish to die, but France was in peril and they were quite prepared to lay their lives down for her. Not all of them were mere hotheads; many, like Manuel Roy, were ready to make that supreme sacrifice because they believed that by so doing they were ensuring for the rising generation (your generation, Paul) a better, happier future. There were many such, I can assure you. Your Uncle Antoine vouches for them.

War news good. We have crossed the Somme and reached Guiscard. Another advance, north of Soissons; Coucy recaptured. Will we be able to stop the Germans from digging themselves in behind the Escaut and the Saint-Quentin canal?

September 7, night. For Paul—Still thinking of the future. Your future. Those better, happier times to which young men like Manuel Roy looked forward. Happier? I hope so for your sake. But we are bequeathing to you a world that's sadly out of joint. I fear your start in life will take place in a period of great unrest, in a world of divided purposes, jarred by the clash of warring principles, the new and the old. Lungs of steel will be needed to cope with that polluted atmosphere, and a young man's life will be far from a bed of roses!

Usually I refrain from prophesying. But to glimpse the Europe of tomorrow needs no special foresight. Obviously all nations will be impoverished; social conditions everywhere in turmoil. Morally there will be a violent break with the past, and all the old standards will be scrapped. The world will pass through a phase of growing pains, with bouts of fever, convulsions, sudden improvements and relapses; and reach a new equilibrium in the end, but only after many, many years. It will be a hard birth, the birth of your New World.

And you, Paul, how will you fare in those tempestuous times? You will find it none too easy to form your own ideas, with everybody (as always in such periods) vaunting his pet world-saving nostrum, and imagining he has the Truth in his pocket! Goiran foresees an era of sheer anarchy. That I doubt. Or if there is a spell of anarchy, it will be on the surface only and will not last long. For the whole trend of human progress is in the other direction. All history vouches for it. Any permanent breakdown of civilization is unthinkable. Inevitably there will be setbacks, but the human race is bound to move toward greater and greater organization. In fact, this war will register most probably an emphatic forward stride, if not toward fraternity, at least toward a mutual understanding between nations. Wilson's peace will broaden the European outlook; notions of human fellowship, of civilization as a common heritage, will take the place of nationalism.

In any case, you will see tremendous changes in the shape of things. And what I wanted to say is this: it seems to me that in the days which are coming public opinion and the directive ideas behind it will have a much greater, indeed, a preponderant influence on world affairs. The future will be more malleable than was the past; the individual will carry much more weight. Under the new conditions a man of worth will have a far better chance of getting a hearing, winning acceptance of his views, and taking a share in the reconstruction of society.

To be a "man of worth"—that is the thing to aim at; to develop a personality that compels recognition, and to mistrust the ideologies of the moment. There is always such a temptation to shirk the strain of thinking for oneself, to let oneself be caught up in a great wave of collective enthusiasm, to embrace some comforting doctrine because it makes things easy. Will you be able to resist that temptation? You will find it none too simple. For it is precisely when his mind is most beset with doubts that a man is liable, in his desire to find an escape at all costs from perplexity, to clutch at any ready-made creed that offers reassurance. Any fairly plausible answer to the problems he has been brooding over, and cannot solve unaided, will strike him as a heaven-sent solution—especially if it bears the seeming guarantee of being endorsed by the majority. There, indeed, lies your greatest danger, and I advise you to turn a deaf ear to slogans of the day. Refuse to become a "party man"! Better endure the torments of uncertainty than enjoy the specious peace of mind that doctrinaires induce in their adherents. Granted that groping in the dark, alone, may be unpleasant, but it's the lesser evil. Beware of following blindly the false leads of others; nothing could be worse. In this respect, my dear Paul, your father's life may serve you as a model. In his independence, his refusal to pin his faith to any hide-bound creed, his isolation, you have a rare example of loyalty to oneself, of conscientiousness, of strength of mind and dignity.

Daybreak. Another sleepless night is ending.

(I detect a tendency to "preach" when I write for Paul's benefit. Must myself beware of using that word "Beware!"—and of imperatives in general!)

Writing to Paul about the "man of worth," I see I overlooked only one thing—the formula.

The "men of worth" I have come in contact with were mostly members of the medical profession. Still, I am inclined to think that the attitude of the good citizen toward events, when dealing with the realities and unforeseen contingencies of social life, must more or less parallel that of the doctor toward disease. The main thing is to bring an open mind to every situation. It is common knowledge that in medicine what one gets out of books rarely enables one to cope with the special problems presented by each individual case. Every illness—and, by the same token, every social crisis—presents itself as a new type of disorder without a precedent exactly tallying, as an exceptional case, in fact, for which a new method of treatment has to be devised. Much imagination goes into the making of a man of social worth.

Sunday, September 8—On waking this morning I coughed up a piece of tissue nearly four inches long. Gave it to Bardot for analysis.

Have reread what I wrote last night. Amazed at my ability now and then to take an interest in the future, in those who will come after me. Is it only for Paul's benefit? Thinking it over, I find this interest wholly spontaneous and less intermittent than I supposed. On the contrary, it is my surprise at feeling this interest which calls for mental effort, an act of conscious introspection. In reality, thinking of the future is second nature with me; I'm always doing it. Odd!

Before lunch—A conversation I had with Philip long ago—one of our first non-professional conversations, when I had just begun working under him—has come back to me. It related to an item in the morning's news which had caught his eye. A man about to be executed, as the executioner's assistants seized him and were placing his neck under the guillotine, had started struggling, turned and shouted to the warden: "Don't forget to send my letter!" He had learned, when in the death cell, that his mistress had taken another lover, and just before being led to execution had written to the public prosecutor, confessing to another crime which had gone undetected and in which the woman had played an active part.

Both of us were at a loss to understand how a man could, at the very last moment of his life, be so exclusively preoccupied with mundane matters. Philip saw in it a proof of the impossibility it is for most men to "visualize" their non-existence.

The story does not surprise me now so much as it did then.

September 9—A foul taste in my mouth. What's the use of this added infliction? Never had any faith in this new creosote preparation, which recalls the dentist's chair and spoils one's appetite.

Afternoon, out of doors—This morning, writing in the date, September 9, I suddenly remembered. Today is the second anniversary of "Reuville."

Night—Have spent the day thinking of that experience. We had reached Reuville on the previous evening and set up our first-aid station in the crypt of the village church. The place was in ruins, shelled out of recognition. A pitch-black night lit now and then by Very lights. The colonel (acting brigadier) had set up headquarters in what remained of a big house—three broken stumps of walls. Seventy-fives banging away in a wood close by. The edges of the pond strewn with fallen gables. A red eiderdown quilt lying in the street; I was to stop a bullet next day just beside it. Underfoot, mud and rubble, churned up by the wheels of battery-wagons. Looking out through the splintered windows of the crypt one saw, just beyond the village, a range of low hills, from which the wounded men came down in bunches, white with dust, hobbling along with that curious air of mild, resigned bewilderment they all had. I can still see the crestline of those hills etched black upon the flaming sky, fretted with barbedwire posts all leaning over the same way as if a great gale had swept them. . . . On the left, a windmill lay spreadeagled on its wings, like a broken toy. (I take an odd pleasure in depicting this scene. I wonder why. To rescue it from oblivion? And for whom? Is it for Paul to know that one morning years ago at Reuville . . . something happened to his Uncle Antoine?) The crypt was crowded from nightfall on with wounded men, groaning and cursing. At the far end was a layer of straw on which they dumped the dead alongside the dying and severely wounded. A hurricane-lamp on the altar; candles stuck in bottles on the floor. On the vaulted roof our shadows danced a weird fandango. I seem to see once more the makeshift operating-table—some planks propped on two barrels—the piles of lint. I can see it all as clearly as if I'd had time to pause and contemplate it. As a matter of fact, I was frantically busy, buoyed up by the joy of feeling I was doing my job, and doing it well; in a state of feverish activity. The energy I had in those days! One had to act quickly, keeping one's wits about one all the time and nerves keyed up to their highest tension, till one seemed to feel the will-power tingling along one's arms to the fingertips. And with it all a sort of anguish, blunted, however, by an incapacity for feeling, a machinelike automatism. What kept a man going was the work in hand; he had to give his whole mind to it, shut his eyes and ears to everything else. Each essential gesture had to follow in due order, rapidly, without haste but without wasting a second, whether a wound had to be asepticized or an artery ligated, a fractured limb set. Then—"Next patient, please!"

I can visualize less clearly that shed or stable on the far side of the little street in which they laid the wounded brought in on stretchers. But I remember very well the street itself—one had to slither along it, hugging the walls—with bullets whizzing by and flaking off the plaster. And the furious expression of that little bearded major, with his right arm in a sling, flapping his unwounded hand in front of his face as if he were being pestered by a swarm of insects. "Too many damned flies about! Infernal nuisance!" And suddenly another bearded face rises before me—the rather sinister face of that elderly volunteer who was in our ambulance unit at Longpré—and I can hear his gruff voice as he shifted a wounded man off his stretcher: "Off ye go, lad! Doctor's orders!"

All that night we kept at it till we dropped, never suspecting that the Germans had worked their way round the village. At dawn a liaison officer rushed up, told us the enemy was on our flank, the covered sap by which we had come was now "unhealthy," and there was nothing to be done except to make a dash across the village square, which was being raked by machine-guns, and try to reach the nearest communication trench. Never had, even for a moment, the idea that I was risking my life. Falling, I had a glimpse of the red eiderdown, one last clear thought: "Lung punctured. . . . Heart intact. *I'll pull through.*"

Curious how things pan out! If that morning I'd been wounded in an arm or leg, I wouldn't be where I am now. The whiff of mustard gas I inhaled two years later wouldn't have had such disastrous effects if I'd had both lungs intact.

September 10—Since yesterday haunted by memories of the war.

Will set down for Paul's benefit an episode in my war service, owing to which I was kept at the front much longer than most of my colleagues from the hospitals. It took place in the winter of 1915. I was still attached to my regiment, which was then up the line on the northern front. But a rotation-roll had been drawn up between the various battalion medical officers by virtue of which each of us took a short spell of duty, every fortnight or so, at a small casualty clearing station (twenty beds) some four miles behind the lines. On coming there one night I found eighteen men lying in a sort of cellar. All were running temperatures, some as high as 104°. By the light of a hand-lamp I examined them. No possible mistake; all had typhoid fever. Now typhoid cases were "forbidden" at the front; there was a standing order the gist of which was that we must never diagnose typhoid fever. I rang up my commanding officer at once and told him that my eighteen “patients” were suffering from gastrointestinal troubles of a paratyphoid nature. (I was careful to avoid using the word “typhoid” or its equivalent “enteric.”) I also informed him that I was convinced that if these eighteen poor fellows were not evacuated forthwith they would die in the said cellar, and that, as a matter of conscience, I refused to take over the so-called clearing hospital. Early on the following morning a car came to fetch me and I was put on the carpet at divisional headquarters. I stood my ground against the brass hats—and to such effect that they consented to having the men evacuated at once. But that brush with authority left a black mark on my service record, which held up my promotion till the day when I was wounded.

Night—Thinking over my relations with the other men here. A promiscuity which, on the face of it, recalls that of the front. Actually quite different. Here one rubs shoulders; nothing more. At the front the humblest cook’s helper is a brother.

Thinking, too, of the men with whom I was intimate. Melancholy retrospect! Almost all killed, disabled, invalided out, or “missing.” What’s become of Carlier, Lambert, that nice fellow Dalin, and Huart and Mulaton? And funny little Nops? And the rest—how many of them will see the war through unscathed?

Am thinking of the war just now in a new way. Daniel talked to me at Maisons, I remember, of the war as forging a unique bond of friendship between men. (But how brittle a bond, and forged at what a cost!) In a way he was right, however; war does bring out sentiments of compassion, of generosity and mutual affection. In the shadow of death, nothing subsists but certain primitive reactions, common to all. Officers, N.C.O.’s, and other ranks, all endure the same constraints, hardships, agonies of boredom, the same hopes and fears; often they share the same food and the same newspaper. There is less pettiness, less backbiting, less desire to put one over on the other fellow than in civil life. Each stands in such dire need of his neighbour; one comes to help and love him, so as to be helped and loved in return. Personal grudges and rivalries die out in the front line. Hatred, too. One doesn’t hate even the Boche in the trenches opposite, a victim like oneself of the world-wide madness.

Another point: by the sheer force of things, wartime is a time of *meditation*. For the uneducated man as well as for the educated. A crude sort of meditation, but profound. Which, too, is more or less the same for everyone. Perhaps it is the constant peril of death that compels even the least contemplative to start thinking. (Hence this diary!) There’s not one of the men in my battalion whom I didn’t catch unawares, at some time or other, lost in thought. In that mood of rapt, remote meditation, the need for which came now and again and which one tried to conceal. The only corner of oneself one shut against the world. In the enforced depersonalization of army life, meditation was the last refuge of the personality.

What will the men who escape death in the war retain of all these musings? Very little, perhaps. In any case, a passionate desire to enjoy life in their own way and a loathing for sterile self-sacrifice, for high-sounding slogans, heroism. (Some, however, may regret the “virtues” of the front.)

September 11—The fragment I coughed up the other morning has been histologically identified. Not a false membrane but a mucous cast.

Night—As a matter of fact, I think almost as often of my past life as of my death. Am always harking back to the past. I rummage in it like a ragpicker exploring a garbage-can. And now and again fish up a scrap which I examine, pore upon, and weave interminable dreams about.

A man’s life is such a little thing. I do not say this because my own has been cut short—it’s true of every life. A platitude, of course! But how few, when they repeat such phrases as “a brief candle in the eternal night,” realize what that really means. How few men feel the tragic truth behind such verbiage!

Impossible to rid one’s mind wholly of the futile desire to find a “meaning” in life. Even I, reviewing my career, often catch myself wondering: What was the point of it?

It had no “point.” None whatever. If we find it so hard to admit that obvious fact, the reason is simply that we have eighteen centuries of Christianity in our blood. But the more one thinks, the more one observes the outside world and one’s own mind, the more apparent it becomes that life is pointless, “signifying nothing.” Millions of beings take form on the earth’s crust, live their little hour, procreate, and pass away, making room for other millions, which likewise in their turn will pass away. Their brief appearance has no significance; life no meaning. And nothing matters—except, perhaps, to get through this short lease of life with the minimum of suffering.

A fact which is neither so disheartening nor so fatal to activity as it might seem. The feeling of having made a clean sweep of all the illusions cherished by those who insist on finding a meaning in life has much to be said for it; it gives one a sense of power and freedom, and a marvellous serenity. And, if one knew how to take it, it might be a first-rate tonic for the mind.

A memory has just come to me of mat playroom on the ground floor of the hospital annex which I walked through every day at lunchtime, on my way out. It was always full of children on all fours playing with building-blocks. Some were convalescent, others incurable cases; there were backward children, half-witted children, and some remarkably intelligent ones. A world in miniature. Humanity viewed through the wrong end of a telescope. Many contented themselves with shifting to and fro the blocks in front of them, turning them over and looking at the different sides. Others, whose wits were brighter, set out the blocks in rows, matching the colours, or arranged them in geometrical patterns. Bolder spirits amused themselves building rather tottery little houses. And now and then one saw an exceptionally inventive and ambitious child who had set himself a difficult task and succeeded after several vain attempts in building an obelisk, a foot-high pyramid, or a bridge. When playtime was over, all these edifices were knocked down; all that remained was a litter of blocks on the linoleum floor ready for the next day’s play-hour.

A very apt illustration, in its small way, of human life. Each of us, with no other aim but play (whatsoever lofty pretexts he alleges to himself), assembles according to his fancy the elements which life provides—the many-coloured blocks he finds around him when he is born. The most gifted try to make of their lives a complicated edifice, a real work of art. One should try to be among the gifted, for it is they who get the most fun out of the game.

Chance supplies the blocks, which each of us assembles as best he can. . . . And is it really of much importance whether the pyramid or bridge he builds is a success?

Night—Sorry, Paul, to have written as I did today. If you read that entry it will revolt you. “An old man’s ideas,” you will say, or: “A dying man’s.” You will probably be right. There are other, less negative, answers to the question you are putting yourself: “To what end, and for the sake of what, should a man live and work and do his best?”

For the sake of the past and of the future. For your father’s sake, and for your sons’. As a link in a chain, it is for you to ensure its continuity. To bequeath your heritage—transmit it bettered and increased.

Perhaps, when all is said and done, that is the “point” of life.

September 12, forenoon—Have never risen above mediocrity. With average capacities, suited to what life required of me. Average brains, plus a good memory and a knack of assimilating ideas. Character, too, mediocre. All the rest—camouflage.

Afternoon—Health and happiness are blinkers. Illness removes them. I am convinced that the most favourable condition for a sound knowledge of oneself (and of one's fellow-men) is *to have been through* an illness and recovered one's health. Half inclined to write: The man who "has never known a day's illness" is bound to be a fool.

No, I've been an average man, and nothing more. With no real culture; my stock of ideas was purely professional, restricted to my calling. The really great man does not abide by such restrictions. Great doctors, mathematicians, statesmen, do not confine themselves to medicine, mathematics, or politics. They have far-ranging minds and feel at home in other fields of knowledge.

Night—More about myself. Really, I am little more than a man who has had luck. I managed to hit on the career in which I was best fitted to make good. (This, however, proves a certain horse sense!) My intellect was not above the average; just shrewd enough to make the most of favourable conditions.

I was always blinded by pride. I persuaded myself that I owed everything to my brains and enterprise; that I had built up my career and *earned* the success that came to me. I regarded myself as a very fine fellow because I had managed to make others, less gifted than myself, consider me such. Window-dressing. And it took in even Philip!

But one cannot fool oneself, or others, all the time, and I suspect life had some bitter disillusionments in store for me.

I shall never have been more than "quite a good doctor"—one of the ruck.

September 13—Pink sputum this morning, 11 a.m. Waiting for Joseph to appear with the cupping-glasses.

This ugly little world I live in, this bedroom—how well, how sickening well, I know each detail of it! Not a nail, not a hole left by a drawn nail, not a scratch on the brick-red walls, on which my eyes have not rested thousands of times. And, stuck above the looking-glass, those eternal girls flaunting their silly legs at me! (Yet—who knows?—if one day I had them removed, I might miss them.)

All the days and days I have passed lying in this bed—I who was once so active!

Active! More than merely active. I made a fetish of activity—like the young nincompoop I was. No, I mustn't be too hard on my orgies of activity. All I've learned I owe to it; I was schooled by action, by the daily hand-to-hand tussle with realities. Even in this hellish war—if I managed to face it so efficiently, that was because at every moment it called for action.

Afternoon—Really, I was cut out to be a surgeon. I brought a surgeon's temperament to the exercise of my profession. To be a first-rate doctor one needs a gift for contemplation, which I lack.

Night—Still thinking of the "man of action" I used to be. With a certain severity. I can see now that there was an element of play-acting in it all. A pose. More to impress myself than to impress others. (Or if not more, anyhow as much.)

My besetting weakness: a constant need for approbation. (If you knew, Paul, what that avowal cost me!)

Have repeatedly noticed that others had to be present for me to get the best out of myself. The sensation of being watched, appraised, admired, was a fillip to my energies; I felt capable of anything, sure of myself, and prepared to run any risks, with others looking on. (e.g., my conduct during the bombardment of Péronne, at the first-aid station in Montmirail, in the attack on the Brûlé wood, etc. In civil life, too, I was far shrewder in my diagnoses and bolder in prescribing treatments when I was giving my consultations at the hospital, under my colleagues' eyes, than when I was alone in my consulting-room at home, dealing with a private patient.)

I realize today that true moral strength is of a different order; it dispenses with onlookers. Not so in my case. Left alone on Crusoe's island, I should probably have killed myself. But Friday's coming would have roused me to feats of heroism.

Night—Develop your will-power, Paul. Nothing's impossible, if you can will it strongly enough.

September 14—A relapse. Retrosternal pains on top of all the others. Paroxysms of retching, for which I can't account. Impossible to keep anything down. Have to stay in bed today.

Goiran has brought some newspapers. In Switzerland they talk about Austro-Hungarian peace proposals; also of an underground revolutionary movement in Germany. Wonder if there's anything in it. Can it be that, thanks to Wilson's messages, democratic ideals are beginning to gain ground over there?

Authentic, anyhow, is the news of an American advance toward Saint-Mihiel. Meaning we are on the way to Briey and Metz. But soon we shall come up against the Hindenburg line, said to be impregnable.

September 16—A shade better. No more vomiting. But very weak after two days' fast.

Just read Clemenceau's reply to the Austrian peace move. It leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. The tone is that of a cavalry colonel—worse, a Pan-Germanist! So our recent successes in the field are already having their effect. No sooner does a nation fancy it is getting the upper hand than it unmasks ulterior motives—always of an imperialistic order. Wilson will have his work cut out holding his own against our statesmen, unless the Allied victory is exclusively America's work. Here was a golden opportunity for the Entente to make a frank statement of their intentions. But no, our spokesmen preferred to bluff, to demand more than they expect to get, so as to make sure of squeezing the maximum out of the losers when peace is declared. As Goiran said, "A handful of successes, and already the Entente is flushed with victory."

September 17—They may say what they like, but such recurrent attacks of bronchopneumonia have always been regarded as a sign of smouldering bacterial infection.

September 18—Bardot gave me a thorough examination, followed by a consultation with Sègre. He diagnosed "marked dilatation of the right ventricle of the heart, with a low blood-pressure and cyanosis." I've been expecting this for weeks. Remembered the old adage: "When the lungs go wrong, support the heart."

Specialties of a medical orderly: never to be on tap when one needs him urgently, and to linger on and on when his presence is an infernal nuisance.

September 19, night—Life and death, spanned by the endless chain of germination. . . . A train of thoughts started this afternoon when Voisenet and I were studying a map of the Champagne front.

Suddenly a memory flashed up in my mind of that spot, somewhere to the north-east of Châlons, where we halted in the middle of a vast, white, arid plain for a hasty meal. (It was in June 1917, just after my transfer.) The soil had been ripped to pieces by successive bombardments—so thoroughly that not a blade of grass was sprouting. Yet the season was early summer, we were well behind the front line, and all the land around had been brought back under cultivation. Near where we halted, in the centre of the chalky waste, was a little green oasis. Going up to it, I found a German graveyard. Above the shallow graves hidden in the tall grass, over the young corpses, was a profusion of wild flowers and weeds, a cloud of butterflies.

Commonplace enough. And yet today the memory stirred emotions unfelt at the time. All evening I have been musing on the blind extravagance of nature, and so forth. . . . But without being able to give shape to my thoughts.

September 20—Progress on the Saint-Mihiel front. Successful advance toward the Hindenburg line. Successes in Italy. In Macedonia. Successes everywhere. And yet . . .

And yet I think of all the lives these victories have cost.

And of something else. How not feel alarm at the change that has come over the Allied press since the tide turned in our favour? Alarming, too, the peremptory way in which Balfour, Clemenceau, and Lansing have rejected the Austrian proposals. And, I suspect, forced Belgium to turn down Germany’s.

A visit from Goiran. No, I can’t believe the end of the war so near as he supposes. It will take us long months yet, perhaps years, to bring into being a German Republic and set solidly on its feet again the tottering Russian mammoth. And the more victorious we are, the less disposed we shall be to make a non-vindicative peace, the only lasting peace.

A futile, irritating discussion with Goiran about “progress.” “So you don’t believe in progress?” he remarked. Of course I believe in it. Only—it’s a miserably slow process. Nothing much is to be hoped of man for thousands of years yet.

September 21—Lunched in the mess. Widely different as are their views, Lubin, Fabel, and Reymond resemble each other in one respect: all are equally impervious to argument. Voisenet once said of the major: “I shouldn't be surprised to learn that his brain-pan's empty and all the grey matter's run down into his spinal cord!"

For Paul:

No truth is more than a stepping-stone. I can recall the days when it was thought that antiseptics had solved every problem. "Kill the microbe!" was the order of the day. Since then we have discovered that, in killing the microbe, we killed living cells as well.

One should feel one's way ahead, not rush to conclusions. All paths in the long run prove to be blind alleys. (Instances of this are frequent in medical research. Have seen men of equal mental calibre and inspired by an equal zeal for truth, after a careful study of the same phenomena, come to different, often diametrically opposite, conclusions, based on identically the same data.)

The earlier in life one gives up hankering after certainties, the better.

September 22—The twinges in my side have become so acute that, once I have settled down anywhere, I dread making a move. Bardot spoke very highly of an ointment containing ethyl para-amino-benzoates. Have tried it. Quite ineffective.

September 23—My chest is so covered with scars that it's all they can do to find a new place on it for the cauterizer.

September 25—Yesterday I began to run a swinging temperature. Made an attempt to get downstairs, however. But I nearly fainted on the stairs; had to go back to bed.

How sick I am of this poky little room and these hideous walls! I keep my eyes shut, not to see them.

Thinking of pre-war days, my past life, my youth. The driving force of my career was a profound, unshakable belief in the future. No mere expectation, but real certainty. And now, where my guiding light was, all is gloom. A fog that never lifts; the Valley of the Shadow.

Nausea. Bardot had to stay downstairs attending to three new patients. So it was Mazet who came to see me twice this afternoon. His uncouth manners and ugly mug are more than I can stand just now. Reeking of sweat, as usual. My gorge rose.

Thursday, September 26—A bad night. They have discovered new patches of moist rales.

Night—The injection has given me slight relief. For how long?

A short visit from Goiran left me exhausted. Franco-American offensive, Anglo-Belgian offensive. Germans falling back all along the line. On the Balkan front, too, Allied successes. Bulgaria asking for an armistice. Goiran said: “Peace with Bulgaria is the beginning of the end—like the moment in a pregnancy when the ‘pains’ begin.”

And inside Germany, too, trouble’s brewing. The Socialists have stated the exact terms on which they are prepared to enter the Cabinet. That widespread discontent exists in Germany is obvious; there are frank allusions to it in the Chancellor’s speech.

Things are going almost too well, events moving at a pace that makes one apprehensive. With Turkey crushed, Austria and Bulgaria on the verge of capitulating, with victories on every front, peace will take us unawares—a leap in the dark. For I doubt if Europe is ripe for a *real* peace.

At the Grand Hotel in Grasse an American has bet a thousand dollars to twenty francs that the war will be over before next Christmas.

Can’t help envying those who have a next Christmas to look forward to!

September 27—Debility increasing. Dyspnœa. Since Monday, complete aphonia. Sègre came to see me at Bardot’s request. Made a thorough examination. Less distant than usual. Worried about me?

Night—Sputum examination: pneumococci present, but still more streptococci, steadily multiplying in spite of the antistreptococcal serum; all the characteristics of infective complication.

Am to be X-rayed tomorrow morning.

September 28—Marked signs of general infection. Bardot and Mazet come to see me several times a day. Bardot has decided, after X-raying me, to do an exploratory puncture. What does he suspect? An abscess in the lung tissue?

October 6—A terrible week. . . .

Still not up to writing much. Half asleep. A mild pleasure in picking up this diary again, even in being back in this room, even in reviewing my chorus girls! The simple pleasures of the sick!

Another reprieve.

October 7—Strength gradually returning. My temperature has fallen back to normal in the mornings; 100°-100.5° at night.

They all thought I was a goner. Wrong, this time!

On Monday, the 30th, was moved to the Grasse hospital. Mical operated on me in the afternoon. Sègre and Bardot present. A big abscess in the right lung. Well defined, luckily. Five days later was fit to be brought back here.

Why didn't I kill myself on the 29th, after the puncture? Never thought of it. (Literally true!)

October 8, Tuesday—Less weak today. I suppose I really ought to feel annoyed that they pulled me through. But I don't regret it. In fact, I welcome this new reprieve with a sneaking satisfaction!

The break in my reading of the papers has made them difficult to follow. For instance, I didn't know the German Cabinet had resigned. That there have been grave happenings over there is evident. According to the Swiss press, the new Chancellor has been appointed so as to facilitate peace negotiations.

October 9—Feeling rather humiliated. I never had the least inclination to kill myself, did not even think of it, till I was back in this room. Between the discovery of the abscess and the operation I had only one idea—that the operation should take place at the earliest moment . . . and succeed.

Still more humiliating. While in the hospital at Grasse, I never ceased regretting having left the amber necklace here. I even made a resolution to hand it over to Bardot as soon as I got back and extract a promise from him to place it in my coffin. Amazing!

Doubtful now if I shall do this. A dying man's whim—mere silliness! Yet, my dear Paul, if I yield to this caprice, please don't be in too much of a hurry to write your uncle down as a sentimental fool. The associations of this necklace may concern a paltry love-affair, but, when all is said and done, that paltry love-affair was about the best thing in my paltry life!

October 10—A visit from Mical.

October 11, Friday—The surgeon's visit yesterday exhausted me. He gave me full details. It was a large abscess, well walled off by a network of tough fibrous tissue. Thick pus, of the consistency of cream. Had to admit there was marked pulmonary congestion. Bacteriological examination gives cultures of streptococci.

Mical was interested by my case; such cases are relatively rare. In seventy-nine mustard-gas casualties treated in the last year there were only seven cases of *simple* abscess (mine included). Four were successfully operated on. As for the other three . . .

Still rarer, happily, are cases of *multiple* abscesses. Never operable. There were only three such cases; all fatal.

So I'm in luck. . . . I wrote that without thinking; had I stopped to think, I would certainly have refrained from talking of my "luck." Still, now it's written, let it stand. Obviously I'm not yet sufficiently indifferent to life to describe a prolongation of my sufferings as bad luck.

October 12—Started getting up again yesterday. My weight has gone down still more. Lost five pounds since September 20.

Heart still flagging. Digitalis and drosera twice a day. Profuse sweats. Feverishness, sudden loss of strength, a dry cough, fits of choking—all simultaneously. And whenever someone asks me these days how I am getting on, I reply: "Not too badly!"

October 13—The Swiss papers report, plausibly enough, that the new German government is approaching Wilson by indirect channels with a view to opening negotiations. They even say that a request for an armistice has been actually made. This is borne out by the Chancellor's latest speech before the Reichstag; it contains a frank proposal of peace. What a change from the German arrogance of only yesterday!

Let's hope the Allies keep their heads and resist the temptation of overdoing their triumph. Already, everywhere, they are crowing like a jockey who has just won the Derby at long odds. Even Rumelles, I expect, has quite forgotten that last spring he was prepared for the worst; today, most likely, none of our conquering heroes is more intransigent than he.

Scandalous, the way that word “joy” crops up persistently in the French papers; our feeling should be one of deliverance, not of joy. How can they forget so soon the load of distress that weighs on Europe? Nothing, not even the end of the war, can alter the fact that grief, not joy, is paramount today and will remain so for years to come.

October 14, night—Insomnia again. I find myself regretting the lethargy I felt during my relapse. My mind is empty. I am helpless, at the mercy of my “ghosts.” Just conscious enough to suffer *thoroughly*.

Had intended to make this diary a portrait of the man I was. For Paul. But even when I began it my power of concentration, ordering my thoughts, was on the downgrade. . . . Another hope gone west.

What does it matter? Every day I feel more indifferent, more aloof from everything.

October 15—The “big push” is progressing. Successes all along the line. It looks as if the fact that peace-talks have begun has spurred our High Command to force the pace and make the most of their last opportunity. The final round.

Feeling a little better today. In the mood for writing.

Voisenet dropped in. His flat face, eyes set wide apart in shallow sockets, and the thick, sleek eyelids like the petals of certain fleshy flowers (e.g., magnolias, camellias), remind one of the Buddha’s face in Chinese busts. A large mouth; full, sluggish lips. A face of ancient wisdom, restful to contemplate, stamped with a placid, thoroughly Far Eastern fatalism.

He claims to have inside information as to the state of mind prevailing in military circles. What he says is alarming. Now that they feel they can draw indefinitely on the American reserve of manpower (said to be “inexhaustible”), losses have ceased to count. And there’s an undercurrent of hostility to an early peace. The idea is to reject all proposals for an armistice, to invade Germany, and conclude peace in Berlin. And so forth. As Voisenet says, “Victory, not the end of the war, is all they think about.” They are becoming more and more antagonistic to Wilson. Already declaring that the Fourteen Points represent only Wilson’s personal views and have never been endorsed officially by the Entente. Voisenet pointed out, too, that since July (when the tide turned in our favour) the press, controlled of course by the censorship, has entirely ceased to speak of a “United States of Europe,” though it still occasionally refers to a League of Nations.

Night—Voisenet left with me some copies of the *Humanité*. Struck by the sorry figure cut by our Socialists—when one has read and appreciated the American messages. Their tone is that of narrow party men. Nothing really fine can come of such ideas, or of people professing them; these Socialist demagogues are survivals from the pre-war age, and must be swept away like so much other refuse.

Socialism. Democracy. I can't help wondering if Philip was not right; the victorious governments may well refuse to give up the virtual dictatorship they have been exercising during the last four years. That republican brand of imperialism for which Clemenceau stands will, I suspect, die hard! Perhaps it is in conquered Germany that the true, the coming, socialism will strike root first. Precisely because it's a defeated country.

October 16—Have felt somewhat better during the past week.

Goiran has procured for me the report of Wilson's last message. While adding little to the previous ones, it defines his peace aims more explicitly. It announces that the war has paved the way for a "new order," an association of all nations—the only guarantee of collective security. When I consider the effect such words produce on a man at death's door like myself, I can picture what they must mean for the millions of combatants, for their wives and families. Impossible that such hopes should be raised in vain! Whether or not the Allied leaders are sincere in their adherence to Wilson's "Points" hardly matters now; things have reached a stage where the pressure of public opinion will make it impossible, when the hour strikes, for any European politician to withhold the peace that all desire.

I am thinking of Paul. Of you, my dear Paul. With infinite relief. A new world is coming to birth. You will witness its consolidation and play a part in it. Steel your resolve, to play a *worthy* part.

October 17, Thursday—A stern response from Wilson to the first German advances. He insists that, before any proposals can be entertained, the imperialist regime must be abolished, the military caste excluded from power, and a democratic system instituted. Obviously this may delay the coming of peace. Still, he was fully justified in taking a firm line. We must not lose sight of our essential aims. What we are after is not a peace at any price, or even a capitulation by the Kaiser. Our aim is general disarmament and European federation. Neither is feasible unless *imperial* Germany and Austria cease to exist.

Goiran much chagrined. I stood up for Wilson against him and the others; compared W. to a doctor who knows his job and drains an abscess before putting on the dressing.

Talking of abscesses—my big friend Bardot made it very clear that an abscess of the lung is never a *direct* result of gassing by mustard-gas vapour. The abscess is always caused by secondary bacterial infections, for which, however, the lesions following exposure to the gas have paved the way.

October 18—Have the greatest difficulty today in overcoming my fatigue. Not up to reading anything except the papers.

Incredible, the tone they take, gloating over our "famous victories"! Like Hugo romanticizing the Napoleonic saga! There's nothing epic, no heroic glamour, about this war (or any war, for that matter). It has been a brutal, sickening business and is ending, like a nightmare, in a cold sweat of remembered dread. Whatever deeds of heroism it called forth were submerged in horror. In the shambles of the trenches, in blood and filth. Men fought with the courage of despair. With the loathing men feel when a dirty job has been assigned them and they have to see it through. It will leave none but odious memories. All the pageantry of war—its bugle-calls, parades, saluting of the colours, and so forth—cannot redeem its beastliness.

October 21—Two bad days. Last night had an intertracheal injection of niaouli. Fibrosis and hyperæsthesia of the larynx made the injection a tricky business; it was all the three of them could do to manage it. I saw beads of perspiration standing out on poor Bardot's forehead. But I had fully three hours' sleep and feel some relief today.

October 22, Wednesday—The new dosage of digitalis seems more effective. I notice that, when my voice is not completely gone, I stammer more than usual. Formerly I rarely stammered, and only in moments of great mental stress. Now, I suppose, it is merely a symptom of physical decay.

Read the papers. The Belgians are at Ostende and Bruges; the British at Lille, Douai, Roubaix, and Tourcoing. The whole front is going forward and nothing can stop it. But the exchange of notes between Germany and America is a desperately slow business. Yet it seemed that Wilson's preliminary conditions, a reform of the imperial constitution and the adoption of universal suffrage, had been accepted. That, if true, would be a great step forward. The next step is the Kaiser's abdication. Will that come at once, or only in six months' time? The press makes much of Germany's domestic troubles. No use hoodwinking ourselves, however; a revolution in Germany might speed things up, but it would lead to complications. For Wilson seems determined not to treat with any but a stable government.

October 24—No, I don't envy the ordinary patient his ignorance, his wishful illusions. Much nonsense has been talked about the "cruel lucidity" of the doctor watching himself die. On the contrary, I believe that this lucidity has kept me going so far, and will, perhaps, help me through the last phase. Knowledge is no handicap, but a source of strength. I *know*. I know what's going on inside me. I can *see* my lesions. They interest me. I watch Bardot trying out his treatments. And up to a point this interest in my state is a great standby.

Wish I could analyse this matter to more effect. I'd like to write to Philip about it.

Night—Had a fairish day. (Have no longer the right to be exacting.) To lay my "ghosts," I fall back on this diary.

It is 3 a.m. I have spent the long sleepless hours pondering on all that each man's death consigns irrevocably to oblivion. At first I let this idea fill me with despair—I took its truth for granted. I was mistaken. Death consigns little, almost nothing, to oblivion.

Applied myself to delving in my memory. Recalled all sorts of strictly personal details: mistakes I'd made, little shabby things I'd done, affairs with women. Regarding each I asked myself: "Will it be blotted out of existence along with me? Has it really left no trace whatever, except in my own life?" For the best part of an hour I struggled to recall some incident of my past, some out-of-the-way act, of which I could feel sure that absolutely nothing had survived outside my own awareness—not the slightest after-effect, no moral or material consequence, no seed of thought that might strike root eventually in another's mind. And there was not one incident in my life of which I did not wind up by discovering that some witness might conceivably exist, someone who knew about the matter or might have had an inkling of it—someone who, perhaps, was still alive and, after my death, might by some fluke of memory be led to recall it. I turned my head on my pillow this side and that, racked by a preposterous regret, a sense of mortification, for it seemed to me that, if I failed to discover something of the sort, my death would be a fiasco, I should not have even the small solace (for my pride) of taking with me into not-being something exclusively, uniquely mine.

Suddenly I hit on it! That incident at the Laënnec Hospital; the little Arab girl.

So at last I have a memory which I know for certain is shared with no one on earth. Of which nothing, absolutely nothing, will survive the moment I have ceased to breathe.

Daybreak. Utterly worn out, but still unable to sleep. The moment I doze off, a fit of coughing rouses me.

Wrestled all night long with that phantom of the past. Torn between the temptation of recording my "confession" in this diary so as to preserve from extinction that rather squalid incident and, on the other hand, the jealous desire to keep it to myself and have this one small secret to take with me to the grave.

No, I shall write nothing. . . .

October 25, noon—Is it delirium setting in, or merely nervous exhaustion? Since last night I can think of my death only in terms of my "secret." Death, in fact, has come to mean for me the passing of that memory from the world. (Joseph looked in to talk about the prospects of peace. "Seems we'll be demobilized soon." "Soon, Joseph," I replied, "I shall be dead." Inwardly I thought: "Soon *nothing* will survive of that business with the little Arab girl.")

It's as if all of a sudden I had become master of my fate. Thanks to my "secret," I now have the whip-hand over death, since it depends on me, on a note I choose to write or a remark I choose to drop, whether that secret is or is not saved from oblivion.

Afternoon—When Goiran was here just now, could not refrain from alluding to it. Gave nothing definite away, of course. Did not even mention the Arab girl or the name of the hospital. Just like a child who's bursting with a secret. "I know something, but I won't tell!" Goiran gave me a queer, rather startled look. Must have wondered if my brain was going. But I, for the last time most likely, felt a tremendous thrill of pride.

Night—Tried to rest my mind by reading the papers. In Germany, too, the military clique is intriguing against peace. It seems that Ludendorff is at the head of a movement against the Chancellor, whom he charges with treachery for having proposed negotiations with America. But the forces working for peace have prevailed. And Ludendorff has been compelled to resign his post of Commander-in-Chief. A healthy sign.

Balfour’s latest speech rather perturbing; the British are beginning to “ask for more,” and there’s talk of annexing the German colonies. Goiran reminded me that only last year Lord Robert Cecil, speaking in the House, reiterated that it was with no idea of territorial expansion the British had gone into the war. (They’ll not go out of it, I fear, as they came in.)

Fortunately there’s Wilson to be reckoned with. A champion of the right of self-determination for all nations. I trust he will not let the victors parcel out the black races like so much livestock.

Goiran very strong on the colonial problem. Showed very clearly what a shocking blunder the Allies would be making if they yielded to the temptation of annexing the German colonies. This is a unique opportunity for reviewing the whole question of colonization. Under the auspices of the League all the resources of the world should now be pooled for the common use. The surest guarantee of peace.

October 26—A sudden turn for the worse. Stifling fits all day.

October 27—My choking fits tend to take a new form—spasmodic and extremely painful. My larynx gets stenosed, as if it were gripped in a clenched fist. I have a feeling of being slowly strangled.

Spent nearly an hour recording in my case-history the progress of the disease. Doubt if I shall be able to keep up the case-history much longer.

October 28—Young Marius has just brought up the newspapers. The sight of his pink cheeks, bright eyes, the “panoply of youth”—his marvellous *unconcern* about his health—had a most distressing effect on me. Nowadays would rather see old men and invalids only. Can well understand a prisoner condemned to death flinging himself on the guard and strangling him, just to rid his eyes of the man’s blatant freedom.

The physical machine is breaking down more and more quickly. Can’t believe my mind is going the same way, but perhaps already it is too enfeebled to realize what is happening to it.

October 29—Would I find these self-communings less painful if I had what novelists would call a "great love" to look back on? I still think about Rachel. Quite often. But from a sick man's self-centred viewpoint. I tell myself it would be wonderful to have her here and die in her arms.

What a thrill I felt when I found her necklace in my room in Paris, and how I longed for her! . . . But that's all over now.

Did I "love" her? Nobody else, in any case. No other woman more, and none as much. But whether I was what they call "in love" with her I've no idea.

Night—For two days now digitalis has taken no effect. Bardot is coming presently to try an injection of camphorated ether.

October 30—Visitors. Active, busy people. What has life in store for them? Very likely it is I who am the lucky one!

Tired. Sick and tired of everything. So tired that my one wish is for it all to be ended.

I could see I startled them. Obviously I have changed a lot during these last few days. Sinking rapidly. I must have the face of an asphyxiated man, the staring, horror-stricken eyes; I know what that looks like—nothing could be ghastlier.

October 31—The chaplain let me know he wanted to visit me. He came on Saturday, but I was in too much pain to see him. Let him have his way today. Very boring. He started in about my "Christian upbringing," etc. I said: "Not my fault if I was born with an itch for understanding and an incapacity for believing." Wanted to bring me some "good books." I said to him: "Tell me: why don't the churches make a stand against war? Why do your French and German bishops bless the flags, and sing Te Deums to thank God for a bloody butchery?" To which he made the amazing (but orthodox) rejoinder: "A *just* war removes the Christian ban on murder."

A studiously cordial conversation, however. But he couldn't hit on an angle from which to tackle me. Said to me as he went out: "Oh, come now! Surely a man of your calibre can't admit that he will perish—like a dog!" I replied: "What can I do about it if I'm an unbeliever—like a dog?" He stopped at the door and threw a curious look at me; a mixture of severity, surprise, and sadness, with (it seemed to me) a hint of affection. "Why malign yourself, my son?" I don't think he'll come again.

Night—Could bring myself to do it if I thought it would give anyone pleasure. But nobody that I can see would be the happier if I pretended to die a Christian death.

Austria is asking Italy for an armistice. (Goiran has just come in with the news.) Hungary's proclaimed her independence, and a republic. Peace at last?

November 1, morning—The month of my death. Loss of hope is worse than the pangs of thirst. In spite of all, life still throbs within me. So strongly that sometimes I forget. For a while I am the man I was, that others are, and start—of all things—making plans! But then an icy wind sweeps down on me, and again I *know*.

Mazet comes to see me less often: a bad sign. And when he comes, he talks on every subject except (as far as possible) myself.

Am I going to regret old Mazet with his air of a prison-guard and his thick, square head?

Night—Hardly believable that, beyond the threshold of this room, the world of living men continues. How utterly remote from it I feel already! No living man could realize that isolation.

November 2—Have ceased getting up. For the last three days have not taken even the three steps between my bed and the armchair.

Never again. Never again shall I sit at that window. Or any window. Never again see those tall cypresses posted like sentinels against the evening sky. . . . Can it be true—that I shall never again see that garden, or any garden?

I write "never again," but catch only faint glimpses of the horror of great darkness behind those words.

Night—How will death come? How many times a night and for how many nights have I been asking myself that question! There are so many possible ways. A sudden, sharp laryngeal spasm, as was the case with young Neidhart. Or a gradually increasing one as in Silbert's case. Or will it be cardiac failure and syncope—the end of Monvielle and Poiret?

November 3, morning—The worst form of death was poor Troyat's: asphyxia. A ghastly end! I shall not wait for it.

Evening—Felt so ill this afternoon that I sent for Bardot twice. He is coming back toward midnight. Absent-minded. Left his tracheotomy set on my table.

They say: "Death is nothing; it's dying that hurts." I have the means of cutting it short; why do I go on suffering, putting it off? Yet I *do* go on—incorrigibly!

November 4—Armistice signed between Italy and Austria-Hungary.

The chaplain has tried to see me again. Had him told I was too weak to see him. But it's a warning; high time to make the plunge.

November 5—All that I hoped to do, all I should have liked to do, all I have failed to do—you, my dear Paul, must do for me some day.

November 6—An armistice any moment now, Goiran says. Yet on all fronts there's fighting going on. Why?

Complete aphonia; unable to utter a word.

November 7—The vocal cords have almost ceased to move. Paralysis of the arytenoids setting in? Bardot reticent.

Morphine.

November 8—German plenipotentiaries have crossed our lines. The end. Anyhow, have lived to see it.

November 9—Sharp turn for the worse. Swinging temperature again. (99° to 103.8°.) The pulmonary congestion has come back; no new symptoms, but a general recrudescence.

Asked them (Why? I wonder) to take another X-ray, and find out if there is a new septic focus. Afraid another abscess is forming. This fluctuating temperature is a sure sign of deep-seated suppuration.

November 10—Right lung more and more painful. Morphine all the day, orally. Bardot doesn't think there's a new abscess. No pathognomonic symptom.

Sputum rather less copious.

Revolution in Berlin. The Kaiser gone. In the lines everywhere men are full of hope, breathing again. And I . . . !

November 11—A horrible day. Intense burning pains at certain points, always the same, on my right side.

Why didn't I do it sooner, before my strength failed? And now—what am I waiting for? Each time I tell myself: "The moment has come," I . . . No. Not true. Never yet thought "has come." Only "is near." So I wait on. . . .

November 12—Bardot detects an area of consolidation surrounded by a zone of localized (?) moist rales.

Noon—X-ray shows semi-opaque area, without precise limits, at the right apex. Diaphragm does not move. Generalized diminution of translucency, increase of lung stroma, but no detectable abscess. If another abscess had formed, there would be complete opacity in the affected area, with a sharply defined edge. What can it be, then? The signs are still too vague to justify an exploratory puncture. If it's not another abscess forming, what can be the explanation?

November 13—Bouts of highly localized œdema persistently recurring at the same points. Obviously the infection is becoming generalized. Profuse, pungent sweats.

Night—Can it be a patch of miliary abscesses—widely distributed? *Multiple* abscesses? (Bardot must have considered this possibility.) In that case, nothing can be done; the abscesses being scattered through the lung tissue, no operation is possible, and asphyxia will bring the end.

November 14—Burning pains in both sides. The left lung, too, is now œdematous; the abscesses must be spreading through both lungs. As a last chance will they try inducing a fixation abscess?

Night—In the depths of discouragement, utter indifference. A letter from Jenny and one from Gise have been lying in my drawer since yesterday.

Another from Jenny came this evening. All unopened. Leave me alone. Nothing left for anyone.

Keep on repeating to myself words I now comprehend for the first time: *De profundis clamavi*.

November 15—Perhaps was wrong to dread it so much; may not be so terrible as I thought. Perhaps the worst is over. Have figured out the end so often; too weak now for that. But everything's ready, within arm's reach.

November 16—Nothing came of the fixation abscess. Did they really try it or only pretend?

Written nothing in the case-history for two days. Too much pain.

Must decide *when*. Hard to tell oneself "Tomorrow" or "This evening."

November 17—Morphine. Solitude, silence. Hourly more aloof, cut off from everything. Can still hear them talking, but listen no longer. Almost impossible now to cough up the necrotic tissue.

How will it come? Would like to keep my head clear and go on writing, up to the last moment.

Not resignation. Indifference. Exhaustion crushing out revolt. What must be, must. Surrender to pain.

Peace.

Have done with it. . . .

November 18—Œdema spreading to the legs. High time—or my strength may fail. All's ready; I need only steel my will, reach for the syringe.

Struggled all last night.

High time.

Monday, November 18, 1918.

37 years, 4 months, 9 days.

Simpler than one thinks.

Good-bye, Paul.

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 *Summer 1914* by Roger Martin du Gard]