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C. E. MONTAGUE

Essays of To-day and Yesterday

First Volumes

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ESSAYS OF
TO-DAY AND YESTERDAY

C. E.
MONTAGUE



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE true delight of travel . . . seems to prefer to come as a thief in the night, and not at the hours you specially fix for its entertainment." So Mr C. E. Montague, in the ripe wisdom produced by keen observation and long experience, would save us from the bitterness of disillusionment. He is, indeed, the sanest and most helpful of travel-companions. One of the happy band that answered the call of the Alps before Switzerland was overrun and commercialized, he is able, in pages of apt and pithy description, to convey something of that delight to a rather *blasé* generation.

The secret of his style lies in the fact that he is one of our ablest and most sensitive critics, and that he is more severely critical of his own work than of any other. Nobody but the sternest of self-critics could write as he does. Every word tells. He never fumbles. So we get the exquisite vignettes, the delicate allusiveness, and the fine examples of word-economy that make his pages a joy to read. There is, however, an attendant disadvantage to be lamented. The Bibliography at the end of this volume will show how limited has been Mr Montague's output. The appearance of a new book by him has been a rare event watched for long and eagerly by those who know how to appraise the value of his work. He is one of the few writers whose work one would fain see quadrupled.

He was born in 1867 and educated at Oxford. In

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1890 he joined the staff of the *Manchester Guardian*, from which he has recently retired.

Thanks are due to Messrs Chatto and Windus for permission to reprint "Overture" and "Up to the Alps," from *The Right Place* ; "In Hanging Garden Gully," from *Fiery Particles* ; and "The Vision" and "Autumn Comes," from *Disenchantment*.

F. H. P.

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OVERTURE

Sun, and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the cheerful glass, and candle-light, and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and irony itself—do these things go out with life ?

LAMB

YOU may wonder how it will feel, to find you are old, and able to travel no more. Perhaps to sit out, with your legs up, in an invalid chair on a lawn when the warm weather comes, and to finger a book of timetables for trains, and to think how at this hour the day express from Paris is probably nearing Mulhouse and the evening freshness of air that has blown across snow is coming in at the windows; soon the train will be slowing to clank into the station at Bâle just when the first lamps are lit in the town and look gay in the twilight. How the Rhine must be swishing along, a plashing, glimmering coolness heard more than seen, below the balconied windows of rooms at the Three Kings Hotel, where the blest, who have just come from England, are giving a sigh of content as they throw their dusty gloves down on a bed.

Perhaps to lie awake, as the old do, through English August dawns, remembering many past awakenings in trains when day was breaking over Delémont or Porrentruy, and houses half seen through the blenching windows seemed to have taken wide eaves upon themselves during the night; brooks, silent all across France, had begun to make little jovial noises, and clouds had

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come down from the sky to tumble about on the fields. To live with dim ghosts—quite kindly ghosts, but dim—of the warm-blooded hours of old autumn journeys to Italy, up to meet the bleaching chill that creeps in October from Goeschenen down to Lucerne; and then the plunge into the tunnel's murmurous darkness under the very hub, the middle boss of all Europe, the rocky knot in which all her stone sinews are tied at their ends into one central bunch; and then the emergence, translating you out of a Teuton into a Latin world, from grizzled wintry tonelessness to burnished lustre, all the lingering opulence of sun-fed brown and yellow, purple and crimson and rose—Airolo, Bellinzona, Lugano, all aglow and deep-hearted, like rubies or wine, in that Giorgionian champaign of olive and mulberry.

II

The blasphemies that have been written and talked! I do not mean so much the irreligious rubbish about a hell after this life. Man, as a whole, has learnt reverence enough to withdraw that grossest of all the slurs which he put, in his moody, ignorant youth, on the goodness of God. Much of his talk about heaven itself has been sacrilegious enough. When the Claudio of *Measure for Measure*, the poor little gluttonous sheep that had fattened himself for the butcher, was wriggling and swerving away from the knife, his bleating was all about positive post-mortem pains that he had heard tell of. Burning and freezing were much on his mind, and blowing about, round the world, in the grip of high winds, and rotting without anæsthetics. He knew by heart the pick of all the cruel freaks that men made after

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the image of beasts used to impute to a god that they had made after the image of themselves. But if the terrified weakling had had any brains he might have been almost as deeply disturbed by a review of the set of sensations commonly advertised in his time as amenities laid up in heaven to crown the just and the forgiven.

Some of these subtler terrors of death survive in a few unfortunate minds to this day. The last has yet to be heard of the flavourless heaven of tireless limbs and sexless souls, tearless eyes and choirs of effortless and infallible intonation. Imagine eternal youth with no impulse to walk in the ways of its heart, and in the sight of its eyes, and deposed for ever from its august and precarious stewardship of the clean blood of a race! Conceive the light that never was on sea or land, no longer caught in broken gleams through visionary forests, but blazing away like the lamps on common lodging-house stairs; and the peace that passeth all understanding explored and explained, to the last letter, inside and out! Think, if you can bear to do it, what your existence would be without wonder, or any need for valiant hope, or for resolution unassisted by hope, a life no longer salt with savoursome vicissitudes; all the hardy, astringent conditions of joy, and the purchase-money of rapture, abolished for ever. No, better not think of it. "It is too horrible."

Life must have been pretty hard in some of the ages, that any prospect so dreadful should have illuded people's minds as a compensation or a deliverance. Perhaps if one's body were chained for life to an oar in a galley, or sold into some darksome underground slavery, like a pit pony, one might, without positive meanness or impudence, put in a claim upon God for some portion

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of pleasure and ease hereafter in lieu of all that one had missed. But you and I—! We that grew up by the Thames among roses and apples, and walked home from school of an evening down the nave of St Paul's and through the courts of the Temple, and heard the chimes from Oxford towers at midnight and lived elately in the rhythms of her jocund choruses and racing oars! We that have failed and thriven and been rich and poor, on our little scale, and have been happy in our love and found work after our hearts and rambled in sun and mist over Pennine and Cumbrian hills and seen sunset and dawn from great peaks of the Alps and across several seas and over lost battles and victories—what sort of peasant-slaves should we be to come full from the feast with a whine for victuals more savoury? Away to Mrs Gamp, wheresoever she be, with talk of vales of tears, and life's dull round, and stony places of pilgrimage. There is no hiding it—we like the stones, and always did, and the round has been a merry-go-round, and against the whole vale there is not one serious word to be said.

Perhaps a proper canniness, a sound business instinct, ought to keep men and women from owning how good a time they have had since they were set down on the earth. Early man dealt pretty shrewdly with his gods; he drove hard bargains with them; he even starved or beat them when they had not done as well as they might. And some traces of this prudent instinct are still astir in mankind. Careful souls seem still to whisper to themselves that there may be much to come yet; the great 'deal' has only begun; were it not rash to let out how pleased and astonished you are with the terms you have hitherto got? For if you do that in a market

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the other party sees daylight at once; he thinks what a fool he has been to offer so much, when less would have done: and so he stiffens his terms. And no doubt there is some very respectable warrant for viewing your soul's relations with God as strict business matters.

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee
Repaid a thousandfold will be;
Then gladly will we give to Thee.

It sounds like good sense. And yet a sneaking doubt will creep in. We cannot feel so sure about that dour driver of bargains, against whom we are advised to take these sagacious precautions. Another God we can conceive; but not, with any vividness, a God with whom you have to be careful lest He see what a soft thing He has given you.

And then there is another doubt. Haggle we never so wisely, is there any tremendous coup left for our arts to bring off? Heaven is here already; no flaming swords keep from the gate the man that knows how to value the garden. "I am in love with this green earth; the face of town and country; the unspeakable rural solitudes and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacle here." Of what avail to bargain further, when you have got all? Why not give yourself away, as that heaven gives itself, and recklessly confess the amenity of your condition ever since you first shivered and grinned with a small boy's delight in the feel of a pavement through the thin rubber soles of your shoes, and snuffed up queer and engaging fumes of romance with the mixed smell of engines and fog under the resonant roof of Waterloo station?

From "The Right Place"

UP TO THE ALPS

To reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice!
Measure for Measure, III, i, 124

I

THE evil that wars do may live on long after the good has been duly interred at Versailles or some other seemly necropolis. Here, as I write, is another August slipping away to its close; morning and evening, sure as dayspring and Vesper, a boat train is steaming away out of Victoria station. "And I not there! And I not there!" as "Ionica" Cory sang of the fun that would still be going when he was dead. The gods or devils that rule over dollar and sterling and mark, as wanton boys over flies, killing one for their sport and preserving and fattening another, have once more settled our hash. Supreme as the roll of this planet, that stonily keeps down the rations of comfort for marmots and men, some remote Force to which we have not been wittingly rude has posted Cherubims to head us off from the Alps. It feels as if the earth had taken a heavy list to one side so as not to hold us up the right way to the sun.

This morning, if currencies had not gone to the dogs, partner and self might have been ringing the bell, so to speak, at the front door of heaven. The jocund dawn might have seen us leap from the train at Pontarlier, Vallorbes—the very names of the junctions are tuneful and fair; like Fontarabia, Vallombrosa, Bendemeer,

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they set horns blowing; they make roses swing in your mind. Our material part would be flinging itself in force on the buffet's thick-lipped white cups of hot coffee, our subtler essences would be drinking as deep of the outward-rippling folds of the forested Jura all round us, its pines kneaded up with the clouds; in the slow expulsive puffs of our engine, now shunting the Berne or Bâle bit of the train away from the other bit, a new *timbre* would make itself heard, a kind of percipient sniff, a salute to the nimble high air. Lives there a man with nose so dead that, on one of those fine scenting mornings on which a holiday always begins, he could not smell the Alps from Mulhouse or Grenoble? The very engines of this world would shame him.

And then those lobbies and anterooms of the mansion of joy—the Swiss towns.

Ten years! And to my waking eye
Once more the roofs of Berne appear!

If only they did! Or those of Lucerne or of Interlaken! Give us any of the veriest seat of the "tourist industry"—whichever may be its Black Country's champion black diamond, its counterpart of our Widnes or Wigan. "Just let me get up again on to the earth," says a distinguished dead person in Homer; "better a sweated farm-hand on a poky farm there than king of all the dead that ever died." Faint and far the Jangfrau snows may be, as seen from the terrace at Berne; yet they are there; the beloved, if not in the room, is still in the house, a presence diffused and irradiant, animating the air of its chambers. But give us, if any choice between the dear seats of Philistine joy be permitted us, the Lake of Geneva. "Without my William," the

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enamoured maiden asks, in Scott's early poem, "what were heaven?" A gap even greater than Williamlessness—because it affects the happiness of a large number of persons—is to be noted in many extant descriptions of Paradise. Nothing is said of a site for the Lake of Geneva. If this be no false alarm many good Britons are in for a serious disappointment. On some the blow will have fallen already.

You may have seen the lake first on your way to Zermatt or Arolla, or some other seat of the inner and major joys of the Alps. Perhaps you were apt at the time, in the pride of your youth, to speak a little cavalierly of Nyon and Vevey, Clarens and Montreux, with their Babylonish hotels, their *pensionnaires* and dress-baskets, and cohorts of counts disguised as hall-porters, and iron garden-chairs beyond number, scrunching the dry greyish pebbles of terraces hot with massed magnolias and dahlias. Still, the train journey from Paris that day had been dusty and long: now, your first holiday dinner consumed, you possessed your soul in cool freshness and peace, smoking perhaps in the garden, lately laid waste, where Gibbon completed his stout attempt to put up something as durable as the opposite hills of Savoy. With a good show of stars overhead, and the glow-worms alight in the grass all around, and the lake, far below, all a-twinkle with lights fixed or shifting, it seemed pretty good to be there, even then. Or you had climbed hard for a month and came back, with all your exultant fitness astir in your muscles and mind, to eat your last Swiss meal at one of the balconied restaurants on the Grand Quai du Lac at Geneva, over the lapping water, before the train swallowed you up. Or you had half a day on your hands and passed it in

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cruising along the lake shore in one of the fat and inexpensive *bourgeois* steamers, dear to right-thinking men as the old Thames "péniboat" was to the wise Vicomte de Florac, and contemplated in comfort the vestiges left by Ruskin, Voltaire, and Rousseau. A goodly place, a goodly time.

II

Outer edges of old holidays, the marginal bits that you may have looked upon at the time as mere unavoidable salvage—these have a trick of waxing almost poignantly pleasant in recollection. The true delight of travel, the one that is going to print itself unaccountably and indelibly on you, seems to prefer to come as a thief in the night, and not at the hours you specially fix for its entertainment. You make an appointment, as did Leslie Stephen, to meet it at sunset upon the top of Mont Blanc; or on the roof of Milan Cathedral at dawn; or you take a gondola far out on the lagoon at Venice, to look up and see sunrise strike the whole chain of the Alps; and, after all, the wayward spirit may only come at some moment and place that have seemed, till he does come, to have little distinction about them. Like other brands of happiness, this one can only be caught by hunting something else. Make for whatever thing seems to you best and this other will come by the way, if it chooses; the best-laid of holiday plans are rather like trees that you grow on the chance that a bird may sing, some day, on one of them.

This kind of indirect trapping of joy has always gone famously on by the Lake of Geneva. For one thing, the place is a portal; not, for the active traveller, a goal,

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but a means of entry to all the more strenuous and illustrious joys of the Alps and of Italy. Eagerness seldom does justice to portals at first. It is too keen to get through them. Only after some years of the sifting and reassessing that always go on in your memory does it come out that the gate may be almost the best part of some other things besides certain Cambridge colleges. And then it may be that, all unbeknownst, you are a better sheet of paper, for printing visions upon, during your first and last hours of holiday. Mornings of coming home from school, mornings of starting on leave in the War, were times when the human spirit seemed to have feelers as long as an elephant's trunk compared with their common nose-like extension.

And then, again, the Lake of Geneva is really, objectively, quite a delectable place, however much our haughty youthful hearts may have sneered at the tourist who never got any farther. Approached clemently and humanely, all the lacustrine devices of wooden piers in all sizes, ingenuous groves and grottoes, bathing-sheds, frowning 'castles,' smiling *cafés*, all indescribably neat, have a winning, leisurely air; no flurried, hustling, competitive age betrays itself here; everything seems as if healthy and happy retired mariners, or the right sort of boys, must have made it, and kept it going, for love. Wherever you look, there is no break in this ingenuous trimness. Unlike the Alpine glaciers, which Mark Twain reported to be so much more soiled by detritus in the Catholic cantons than in the Protestant ones, the Catholic southern shore has just the same expression of ardent dapperness as the Lutheran coast on the north.

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III

Look upon Ouchy, "the port of Lausanne"; consider its pleasantness. The moment the traveller about to commit himself to the lake steamer at Ouchy alights from the little funicular train that has lowered him down the steep slope from Lausanne, and launches forth on the wide paved space that remains between him and the pier, he sees on his left a castellated pile. It looks, on the whole, as though it might have seen some forty summers, and imbibed two coats of paint in each preceding spring. In a certain measure it scowls, as a good castle should. And yet it almost audibly assures you that you must not take its scowl too seriously—you need not fear, for example, that it would disdain to receive you, *en pension*, towards the end of October, on terms unthinkable during the summer heats. This clement stronghold is the Hôtel du Château; here slept, in the winter of 1922-23, the massed diplomacy of the Allies and of Turkey, then trying once more to adjust for a time the ever imperfect understanding between the Crescent and the Cross, or their several lay connections.

The Château, though still in the heyday of youth, and yet simulating the sterner graces of age, cannot fairly be called a whole and unqualified humbug. A bit of it is an authentic relic of the Middle Age. You can read it up in the venerable *Dictionnaire Historique du Canton de Vaud*. About the end of the twelfth century the bishop of the diocese seems to have piled up on the spot a kind of provincial Bastille. It was a wise pastor's precaution. He had some reason to fear that, if he lived too much in the open, the sheep of his flock

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might take to butting him, in requital for certain exactions, the perquisites of a shepherd. This safety appliance included a puissant donjon keep, a moat, and an outer fortification garnished with towers. Safety first was the good prelate's care, and, thus firmly entrenched, he and his successors collected harbour dues, fish, and the like temporalities with unbroken success for over three centuries more. Then a stiff-necked laity grew weary of these tranquil fiscal relations. Concurring in a wide movement of the European mind, they cast their diocesan out of his citadel in 1536. *Moutons enragés* are proverbially dangerous.

Thenceforth the castle mouldered, serving divers base secular uses. Most of it fell to bits, but ancient prints of various dates show the donjon tower sticking up manfully among the ruins, right into the second half of the last century. Then at last it was restored, fearfully and wonderfully, to serve as a kind of patent of antiquity for the castellated hotel, which is built on the old castle's site. So there are quite enough blocks of twelfth-century stone in the building to give the susceptible tourist lawful vibrations of conscious contact with the Dark Ages—"those darling bygone times, Mr Carker, with their delicious fortresses, and their dear old dungeons, and their delightful places of torture, and their romantic vengeance, and their picturesque assaults and sieges, and everything that makes life truly charming."

Wisdom was justified of her children. The Swiss are inspired hotel-keepers. Some centuries since, when a stranger strayed into one of their valleys, their simple forefathers would kill him and share out the little money he might have about him. Now they know better.

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They keep him alive and writing cheques. He has risen in economic value from the status of a hare or a wild pigeon to that of a milch cow—or, at the lowest, a good laying hen. And, to keep up his average yield, they diet not only body but soul; they melt heart-strings and purse-strings alike with cheap and cheery semi-gammon about Prisoners of Chillon, Tell's apple, the jousting of cows for the championship of the pasture, the prevalence of ghosts on the Matterhorn, and so on, till the lapse of coin from the wandering alien becomes almost spontaneous. The Swiss genius, at once intelligent, acquisitive, and respectable, is fitly symbolized in an affair like the Château Hotel, where a little bit of the quite genuine thing is made to go an admirably long way in the stimulation of sentiment and custom. There, on the site where it took a mediæval bishop—and he a baron besides—hundreds of armed men, a moat, and thousands of tons of masonry to collect a modest living from the neighbourhood, a competent hotel-keeper sits at ease to-day in an unfortified *bureau*. He is unpolluted with other blood than that of innumerable chickens and calves. And every summer liner from New York is almost an argosy of his own. It wafts him treasure unaccompanied by risk. It brings against his castle no beleaguers but such as are mild and auriferous.

The Castle of Ouchy may well have become a somewhat cosmopolitan place while the recent peacemakers of Europe and Asia were earning their due beatitude in its beds and at its tables. It was not so in one old August of golden memory. Then it was wholly Columbian; at least, the exceptions were insignificant. An Englishman or two strayed in at times to eat, sleep, and take flight. And the waiters, perhaps,

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were the grave German diplomatists that they looked. And the physical air could, no doubt, be called Swiss. But in all the higher senses of the word the atmosphere was an import; the smoke-room an enclave of free American soil; the *salle à manger* richly endued, like an embassy, with the attribute of extra-territoriality; every saloon a detached snippet of some authentic Saratoga. Most of the English, ever enamoured of the carnal blessing of fresh air, affected the ampler garden and more windy bedrooms of the neighbouring Beau-rivage. But still at each archaic casement of the Château a likely heroine for Henry James ate gums under the buff sunblind; the small American boy, of the kind that is raised as a guest in the hundred best hotels of two continents, ranged throughout the public rooms, reducing you to a gaping rustic with his devastating knowledge of life; and the liberal parents of these notables gave bread to some of the last specimens observable in Europe of the old-time travelling courier.

IV

Let it not cast a chill on light-hearted youth if a passing mention be made of some few of the "historical and literary associations" to which the late Sir Frederick Treves, the arch-anti-appendicist of a generation ago, has done so much readable justice. From one extremity of the lake Calvin cast his reductive shadow over the naturally high spirits of Scotland. The little "New Town" at the other end must have entertained in its day some redoubtable custom, from Charlemagne downwards. About the middle of the northern shore Byron and Shelley put up at an inn which still wears

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the white lily of Baedeker's asterisk. At some other salubrious spot on the littoral Lenin remembered in exile some of the necessary parts of a practicable government, and forgot others. Among the delphiniums of Coppet the burning Mme de Staël loved and sang, or at least got herself painted, by Vigée Lebrun, grasping a lyre amain with ostentatiously lyric intent. An inordinate number of dispossessed princes and kings, of pretenders unlikely to start, or sure, if they did, to start at long odds; of fallen statesmen, prima donnas retired, and runaway husbands and wives possessing some sort of distinction have cooled their heels and allowed their airy notions to mix beneficially with earth along the entire margin of the lake. An excellent place for the purpose, the whole of the foreground scenery being of the emollient or lenitive kind, as distinct from the inflammatory types—the Vesuvian or the notorious landscape of cypress and myrtle. But all this bookish part of my strain can be easily skipped by cheerful illiterates. “Jouk and let the jaw go by,” as the Scots ballad says. Or all this associational side of the place may be kept pleasantly vague in the mind, as a sort of dim background not to be studied in too close detail, like the agreeably murmurous presence of numerous bees, no one of which you desire to handle more intimately. The Castle of Chillon can readily be avoided.

Turning over topographical prints and tasting the pangs of desire, one feels the old apprehension returning. “Heaven seems vara little improvement on Glesga,” a good Glasgow man is said to have murmured, after death, to a friend who had predeceased him. “Man, this is no heaven,” the other replied. But what if the real abodes of the blest should admit of no looking south,

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as you swim in the warm shallows off Morges, to the Arctic snows basking in tropical haze on high shelves of the distant Mont Blanc? Not to walk again among the terraced vines of the Vaud, nor slide down the silent 'string' railway between the rose-gardens of Jordils; not to see any more the Chinese lanterns lightly swinging, each in its own surrounding bower of brightened green, among the acacia-trees of Geneva quay gardens! —Vara little improvement on Glesga.

V

How long that beguiling lake can detain you, now as of old! But thought and desire run on to sunset tomorrow—the first bivouac at the edge of the snow, under the peak that my comrade and I had marked down as the next, just when the War came. For the five hottest afternoon hours we should have grunted and sweated up a vertical mile of turf and shale, boulder and snow, bent under our fardels of food and camp kit and fuel, maledictions no doubt on our lips and deep joy in our hearts. Now, our supper cooked and consumed, our tinware cleaned up and bestowed, our fire sunken into a quiet low glow, we should each be worming himself into his snug sleeping-bag, his boots deliciously off, his woollen helmet drawn over his head, neck, and ears. There like the gods we should lie at our ease, with twilight Europe laid out below us. Up and up the snows of an opposite slope the edge of a field of rose-coloured light would swiftly withdraw. Five thousand feet under our perch a few bleared lights would begin to blink into sight, marking the highest habitations of man. Out of the darkling valley the

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sound of a big torrent down there would come up to us clearer and clearer as all the small day noises subsided; but round us the tiny head-streams would be all falling silent, held up by the frost, infant Danubes or Rhines going quickly to sleep for the night under that muting touch. I think the night would be still, but very minute winds, clean and austere beyond words, would be leaping and pushing about here and there, making an infinitesimal whistling, and pressing the lightest finger-tips on the face. In the Great Bear, midway on his autumn slant down to the north, the starry minutiae of head, foot, and tail would be flashing with frosty sparkle.

Our bodies aglow with their husbanded warmth in the sacks, our faces glad of the cold like a skater's, these waking joys would pass into others. "He is not dead, but sleepeth"—can you quite truthfully say it of anyone who sojourns by night in a kind of death-chamber or vault, so curtained and stilled that its darkness is flat and toneless and all the right nightly procession of delicate sounds and skyey changes and modulations of light and of taste in the air comes to a dead stop as though the man were all but under an elm lid already? Sleep under the sky is seldom that utter withdrawal from life. Through some sort of film, some sort of feeler within you is still aware of the rhythmic murmur of existence; some unspecified part of your system keeps watch and reports to the rest that all's well; and yet you sleep all the more deeply, as infants will do when boughs wave overhead and the mail-cart is wheeled. Even if you should dream of the devil and wake in a fright you awake to things more fundamentally reassuring and guarding than that artificial black hush of indoors in which you strike matches and see the

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hands of your watch point to queer, half-credible places: Orion's sword is still hanging aright from his belt, as you and your million direct forefathers have known it; the moon has crossed, since you saw it, a normal, expressive stretch of the sky; all's right with the world.

Next morning the world would seem all frozen stiff in one piece, a single casting of iron—whenever a patch of ice in the nearest glacier, squeezed past endurance, made a desperate push to get on, the whole region would creak as if the great globe were breaking. And then, after that hard, that undeniably hard early meal—oh, we give you scoffers the horrors of breakfast at that Arctic dawn—would come the active joys of the climb, the renewal of youth, the solution of care, the bath of sore souls, balm of hurt minds. Only one of the great writers seems to have known:

Carry your fever to the Alps, you of minds diseased; not to sit down in sight of them ruminating, for bodily ease and comfort will trick the soul and set you measuring our lean humanity against yonder sublime and infinite; but mount, rack the limbs, wrestle it out among the peaks; taste danger, sweat, earn rest; learn to discover ungrudgingly that haggard fatigue is the fair vision you have run to earth, and that rest is your uttermost reward. Would you know what it is to hope again, and have all your hopes at hand? Hang upon the crags at a gradient that makes your next step a debate between the thing you are and the thing you may become. There the merry little hopes grow for the climber like flowers and food, immediate, prompt to prove their uses, sufficient if just within the grasp, as mortal hopes should be. How the old lax life closes in about you there! You are the man of your faculties, nothing more. Why should a man pretend to be more? We ask it wonderingly when we are healthy. Poetic rhapsodists in the vales below

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may tell you of the joy and grandeur of the upper regions; they cannot pluck you the medical herb. He gets that for himself who wanders the marshy ledge at nightfall to behold the distant Sennhüttchen twinkle, who leaps the green-eyed crevasses, and in the solitude of an emerald alp stretches a salt hand to the mountain kine.

VI

Among mountains miracles happen with ease; the sun can stand still in the heavens and the dawn be undone and the sun that has set return to the sky. We went up through deepening twilight one midsummer evening to sleep at the hut beside the Orny Pass. Two hours' walk below the pass the sun said good-night. Far down behind us darkness filled the depths of the wooded Val Ferret. At nine o'clock we topped the Orny Pass to find time had turned back and the full pomp of sunset was burning russet and crimson before us, across the snowfield of Trient. I went the other way a few days after, leaving the hut on the pass at five in the morning. Up there the rocks and ice already glared in hot light; stones had begun to fall, for the lashings and bindings the frost had made fast for the night were being untied by the sun. As I glissaded down the glacier and the glen below it, the snow hardened under my feet, the sun passed out of sight, the village of Orsières, below, was still involved in semi-night; I looked down upon unvanishing mist and obscurity and descended, as the hour advanced, into a pit of twilight that thickened and grew colder.

Why should such passages fill one's mind with so quick a rush of delight? Heaven knows. Perhaps they are Romance; it has been called the addition of strange-

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ness to beauty. But why, indeed, should any of these sudden ravishments befall us, at the instance of things that we see? You know that swift, abrupt flood of enchantment:

Look! under that broad beech-tree I sat down, when I was last this way a-fishing. And the birds in the adjoining grove seemed to have a friendly contention with an echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in a hollow tree, near to the brow of that primrose hill. There I sat viewing the silver streams glide silently towards their centre, the tempestuous sea; yet sometimes opposed by rugged roots and pebble-stones, which broke their waves, and turned them into foam. And sometimes I beguiled time by viewing the harmless lambs; some leaping securely in the cool shade, whilst others sported themselves in the cheerful sun—and saw others craving comfort from the swollen udders of their bleating dams. As I sat thus, these and other sights had so fully possess my soul with content, that I thought, as the poet has happily expressed it:

I was for that time lifted above earth,
And possess joys not promised in my birth.

Why, for the matter of that, should we fall in love, men with women and women with men, in whom most other people can see nothing to make any fuss about? Many, no doubt, will think what sorry gush these rhapsodies of the amateur mountaineer are; mere lover's rant. And yet every true lover has got hold of something of which he who has never had it can scarcely guess the worth. No lover has ever yet got it across the footlights to him who was never in love. To be rightly in love, to explore a new world, to discover Shakespeare—really discover him for yourself—to find yourself in the practice of an art, to achieve total absorp-

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tion in some purpose not mean: these are the infeasible good things of life; but also they are its incommunicables. To achieve any one of the list is to be shut up alone with a glorious secret you want to tell every one else. But all you can do is to wait and watch the divine spark falling on somebody, just here and there, by some sort of chance, far beyond your control, and not falling on others.

What could young Porphyro impel
To venture in the foeman's den?
What lore makes clear to us the spell
That sped the feet of Imogen?

Words fail you? So the mountaineer
Loves yon majestic dome of snow—
To him 'tis passionately dear,
As Juliet was to Romeo.

Who knows, fond questioner, how soon
On thee shall fall the sacred fire,
And thou on some great peak at noon,
Feeling, shalt need not to inquire.

That is to say, if those disordered exchanges should ever take a good turn. They say that the frequency of marriages has decreased tragically in England since Europe's business affairs fell into confusion. "Jack hath not Jill." So is it, too, with the snowy-robed Juliet of Mr Yeld's excellent verse. One Romeo, to my knowledge, has not the fare to Verona.

From "The Right Place"

IN HANGING GARDEN GULLY

TO climb up rocks is like all the rest of your life, only simpler and safer. In all the rest of your life, any work you may do, by way of a trade, is a taking of means to some end. That end may be good. We all hope it is. But who can be sure? Misgiving is apt to steal in. Are you a doctor—is it your job to keep all the weak ones alive? Then are you not spoiling the breed for the future? Are you a parson or politician or some sort of public improver, always trying to fight evil down? May you not then be making a muff every day of somebody else who ought to have had his dragon to fight, with his own bow and spear, when you rushed in to rob him and the other little St Georges of discipline and of victory? Anyhow, all the good ends seem a good long way off, and the ways to them dim. You may be old by the time you are there. The salt may have lost half its savour.

No such dangers or doubts perplex the climber on rocks. He deals, day by day, with the Ultimate Good, no doubt in small nips, but still authentic and not watered down. His senses thrill with delight to find that he is just the sum of his own simple powers. He lives on, from moment to moment, by early man's gleeful achievement of balance on one foot out of four. He hangs safe by a single hand that learnt its good grip in fifty thousand years of precarious dodging among forest boughs, with the hungry snakes looking up from the ground for a catch, like the expectant fieldsmen in the slips. The next little ledge, the object of all human

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hope and desire, is only some twelve feet away—about the length of the last leap of that naked bunch of clenched and quivering muscles, from whom you descend, at the wild horse that he had stalked through the grass. Each time that you get up a hard pitch you have succeeded in life. Besides, no one can say you have hurt him.

Care will come back in the end: the clouds return after the rain; but for those first heavenly minutes of sitting secure and supreme at the top of Moss Ghyll or the Raven Crag Gully you are Columbus when he saw land from the rigging and Gibbon when he laid down his pen in the garden-house at Lausanne. It's good for you, too; it makes you more decent. No one, I firmly believe, could be utterly mean on the very tip of the Weisshorn. I could, if I had known the way, have written a lyric about these agreeable truths as I sat by myself in the tiny inn at Llyn Ogwen, where Telford's great London-to-Holyhead road climbs over a pass between three-thousand-foot Carneddys and Glyders. I was a convalescent then, condemned still to a month of rest cure for body and mind. But it was June, and fine weather. Rocks had lately become dry and warm.

There are places in Britain where rock-climbing cannot honestly be called a rest cure. I mean, for the body. Look at the Coolin—all the way that a poor invalid must tramp from Sligachan southward before he gets among the rough, trusty, prehensile gabbro, the best of all God's stones. Think of Scawfell Crag, the finest crag in the world, but its base cut off from the inn by all that Sisyphean plod up the heart-breaking lengths of Brown Tongue. From Ogwen you only need walk half an hour, almost on the flat, and then—

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there you are, at the foot of your climb. The more I considered the matter, the more distinctly could I perceive that my doctor, when saying, "Avoid all violent exercise," meant that if ever I got such an opening as this for a little "steady six-furlong work," as it is called in the training reports, I ought to take care not to miss it.

But I was the only guest at the inn. And to climb alone is counted a sin against the spirit of the sport. All the early fathers of climbing held the practice heretical. Certainly some of them—Whymper, Tyndall, and others—climbed by themselves when they had a mind to. Thus did King David, on distinguished occasions, relax the general tensivity of his virtue. But these exceptions could not obscure the general drift of the law and the prophets of mountaineering. Then came another pause-giving reflection. If, as the Greeks so delicately put it, anything incurable happens while you are climbing alone, your clay is exposed, defenceless and dumb, to nasty *obiter dicta* during the inquest. "Woe unto him," as Solomon says, "who is alone when he falleth!" Insensate rustic coroners and juries, well as they may understand that riding to hounds in a stone-wall country is one of the choicer forms of prudence, will prose and grumble over extinct mountaineers. Their favourite vein is the undesirable one of their brother, the First Clown in *Hamlet*, who thought it a shame that Ophelia (she seems to have slipped up while climbing a tree) "should have countenance in this world to drown or hang herself, more than her even Christian."

No mean impediments these to a sensitive, conscientious nature's design for seeking health and joy among the attractive gullies and slabs that surround Llyn

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Idwal. Against them I marshalled all that I could remember of St Paul's slighting observations on the law; also any agility that I had gained in the Oxford Greats school in resolving disagreeable discords into agreeable higher harmonies. Black was certainly not white. Still, as the good Hegelian said, black might, after all, be an aspect of white. In time it was duly clear to my mind that sin lies not in the corporal act, but in the thoughts of the sinner. So long as the heart sincerely conversed with the beauty of the truths on which rested the rule of never climbing alone it mattered little what the mere legs did: your soul was not in your legs. One of casuistry's brightest triumphs had been fairly won, my liberty gained, my intellectual integrity saved, my luncheon sandwiches ordered for eight in the morning—when somebody else arrived at the inn.

He stood confessed a botanist—he had the large green cylindrical can of the tribe, oval in section and hung by a strap from the shoulder, like the traditional *vivandière's* little cask in French art. He was also, I found while we smoked through that evening together, a good fellow. He had, too, a good leg, if one only. The other was stiff and unbendable at the knee. He had broken it last year, he said, and the bones seemed to have set only too hard, or else Nature had gracelessly grudged to the mended knee-joint of her lover a proper supply of whatever substitute she uses for ball-bearings.

His name was Darwin. "No relation, really," he humbly assured me. His father was only some obscure squire. The son's Christian name had been Charles at the font, but on coming of age the dear fellow had felt it immodest to prey any more than he need upon his eponymous hero's thrice-honoured names. So he

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had meekly converted the Charles by deed-poll into Thomas. This lowly and beautiful gesture convinced me, as you may suppose, that here was the man to go climbing with. He was indeed one of the innocent, one-thoughted kind that wake up happy each day and never turn crusty, and always think you are being too good to them.

One lure alone had drawn him to these outworks of Snowdon. Some eccentric flower grew on these heights, and a blank page in one of his books of squashed specimens ached for it. Was it so lovely? I asked, like a goose. He was too gentle to snub me. But all that fellow's thoughts shone out through his face. Every flower that blew—to this effect did his soul mildly rebuke mine—was beauteous beyond Helen's eyes. All he said was: "No, not fair, perhaps, to outward view as many roses be; but, just think!—it grows on no patch of ground in the world but these crags!"

"It is not merely better dressed," said I, "than Solomon. It is wiser."

It was about then, I think, that the heart of the man who had gone mad on the greenstuff and that of the man who knew what was what, in the way of a recreation, rushed together like Paolo's and Francesca's. What had already become an *entente cordiale* ripened at tropical speed into alliance. Darwin had found a second, half invalided perhaps, but still the holder of two unqualified legs, for to-morrow's quest of his own particular Grail. To me it now seemed to be no accident that Darwin had come to the inn: it was ordained, like the more permanent union of marriage, for a remedy against sin, and to avoid climbing alone.

We got down to business at once. A charming

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gully, I told him, led right up to the big crag over Cwm Idwal. Not Twll Du, the ill-famed Devil's Kitchen. That, I frankly said, was justly *detestata matribus*—wet and rotten and lethal, and quite another affair. Mine was the place for town children to spend a happy day in the country: the very place also for starting the day's search for the object of Darwin's desire. In saying this, too, I was honest. Lots of plants grow in some gullies; ferns, mosses, grasses, all sorts of greens flourish in a damp cleft, like hair in an armpit; why not one kind of waste rabbit-food as well as another? You see, I had not been a casuist merely, before Darwin came. I had used the eyes heaven gave me, and reconnoitred the gully well from below, and if any flower knew how to tell good from bad, in the way of a scramble, it would be there. I ended upon a good note. The place's name, I said impressively, was Hanging Garden Gully, no doubt because of the rich indigenous flora.

His eyes shone at that, and we went straight to the kitchen to ask Mrs Jones for the loan of a rope. I had none with me that journey: the sick are apt to relinquish improvidently these necessities of a perfect life. Now, in the classics of mountaineering the right thing in such cases of improvised enterprise is that the landlady lends you her second-best clothes-line. Far happier we, Mrs Jones having by her a 120-foot length of the right Alpine rope, with the red worsted thread in its middle. It had been left in her charge by a famous pillar of the Scottish Mountaineering Club till he should come that way again. "The gentleman," Mrs Jones told us, "said I was always to let any climbing gentlemen use it." Heaven was palpably smiling upon our attempt.

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The sun smiled benedictively, too, on the halt and the sick as they stood, about nine the next morning, roping up at the foot of their climb. "A fisherman's bend," I took care to explain, as I knotted one end of the rope round Darwin's chest.

"The botanical name," he replied—"did I tell you?—is *Lloydia*." How some men do chatter when they are happy! Can't carry their beans.

We were not likely to need the whole 120 feet of the rope. So I tied myself on at its middle and coiled the odd 60 feet round my shoulder. "A double overhand knot," I confessed, as I tightened it round me. "A bad knot, but for once it may do us no harm."

"The vernacular name," said the garrulous fellow, "is spiderwort."

"Tut, tut!" I inwardly said.

The lower half of that gully was easier than it had looked: just enough in it to loosen your muscles and make you want more. Higher up, the gully grew shallow and had greater interest. The top part of all, as I remember it now, might be called either a chimney or crack, being both. In horizontal section it was a large obtuse angle indented into the face of the crag. The crag at this part, and the gully's bed with it, rose at an angle of some 60 degrees. Now when you climb rock at an angle of 60 degrees the angle seems to be just 90. In early mountaineering records the pioneers often say, "Our situation was critical. Above us the crag rose vertical," or, "To descend was impossible now. But in front the rocky face, for some time perpendicular, had now begun to overhang." If you take a clinometer to the scenes of some of those liberal estimates you blush for your kind. The slope of the

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steepest—and easiest—ridge of the three by which the Matterhorn is climbed is only 39 degrees. But this, though not purely digressive, is partly so. All that strictly had to be said was that an upright and very obtuse-angled trough in smooth rock that rises at 60 degrees cannot be climbed.

But in the very bed of our trough there had been eroded, from top to bottom, a deepish irregular crack in the rock. Into this crack, at most parts, you could stick a foot, a knee, or an arm. Also, the sides of the large obtuse angle, when you looked closely, were not utterly smooth. On the right wall, as we looked up, certain small wrinkles, bunions, and other minute but lovable diversities in the face of the stone gave promise of useful points of resistance for any right boot that might scrape about on the wall in the hope of exerting auxiliary lateral pressure, while the left arm and thigh, hard at work in the crack, wriggled you up by a succession of caterpillarish squirms. This delectable passage was 80 feet high, as I measured it with my experienced eye. An inexperienced measuring-tape might have put it at fifty. To any new recruit to the cause—above all, to one with a leg as inflexible as the stoniest stone that it pressed—I felt that the place was likely to offer all that he could wish in the line of baptisms of fire. Still, as the pioneers said, to descend was impossible now: the crack was too sweet to be left. And Darwin, thus far, had come up like a lamp-lighter, really. I told him so, frankly. Alpine guides are the men at psychology. Do they not get the best out of the rawest new client, in any hard place, by ceasing to hide the high estimate that they have formed of his natural endowment for the sport? "*Vous êtes*

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—je vous dis franchement, monsieur—un chamois! Un véritable chat de montagne! ”

I was leading the party. I was the old hand. Besides, I could bend both my knees. Desiring Darwin to study my movements, so that he presently might—so far as conformity would not cramp his natural talents—copy them closely, I now addressed myself to the crack. When half-way up I heard the voice of a good child enduring, with effort, a painful call upon its patience. “Any Lloydia yet?” it wistfully said. Between my feet I saw Darwin below. Well, he was certainly paying the rope out all right, as I had enjoined; but he did it “like them that dream.” His mind was not in it. All the time he was peering hungrily over the slabby containing walls of the gully, and now he just pawed one of them here and there with a tentative foot—you know how a puppy, when first it sees ice, paws the face of the pond. “These botanists!” I thought. “These fanatics!” You know how during a happy physical effort—a race or a hunt, a fight or a game—you think, with a sort of internal quiet, about a lot of old things. There came back to my mind the old lines that I had once had to make Latin verse of:

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
And their incessant labours see
Crowned from some single herb or tree.

Meanwhile I took a precaution. I first unroped myself. Then I passed the rope, from below, through the space behind a stone that was jammed fast in the crack. Then I roped myself on again, just at my old place on the rope. A plague of a job it was, too, with

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all those 60 feet of spare rope to uncoil and re-coil. But you see how it worked: I had now got the enthusiast moored. Between him and me the rope went through the eye of a needle, so I could go blithely on. I went. In the top of the crack I found a second jammed stone. It was bigger than number one: in fact, it blocked the way and made you clamber round outside it rather interestingly; but it, too, had daylight showing through a hole behind it. Sounds from below were again improving my natural stock of prudence. You can't, I thought, be too safe. Once more I unroped, just under this chockstone, and pushed the rope up through the hole at its back. When the rope fell down to me, outwards over the top of the stone, I tied on again, just as before, and then scrambled up over the outer side of the stone with an ecstatic pull on both arms, and sat on its top in the heaven that big-game hunters know when they lie up against the slain tiger and smoke.

If you have bent up your mind to take in the details, you will now have an imposing vision of the connections of Darwin and me with each other and with the Primary or Palæozoic rocks of Cambria. From Darwin, tied on to its end, the rope ran, as freely as a bootlace runs through the eyelets, behind the jammed stone 30 feet above his head, and then again behind my present throne of glory at the top; then it was tied on to me; and then there were 60 feet, half its length, left over to play with.

Clearly Darwin, not being a thread, or even a rope, could not come up the way that the rope did, through the two needle-eyes. Nor did I care, he being the thing that he was, to bid him untie and then to pull up

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his end of the rope through the eyes, drop it down to him clear through the air, and tell him to tie on again. He was, as the Irish say of the distraught, "fit to be tied," and not at all fit for the opposite. If he were loose he might at any moment espy that Circe of his in some place out of bounds. There seemed to be only one thing to do. I threw down the spare 60 feet of the rope, and told him first to tie himself on to its end, and then, but not before, to untie himself from the other. I could not quite see these orders obeyed. A bulge of rock came between him and my eyes, but I was explicit. "Remember that fisherman's bend!" I shouted. Perhaps my voice was rather austere; but who would not forgive a wise virgin for saying, a little dryly, to one of the foolish, "Well, use your spare can"? As soon as he sang out "All right" I took a good haul on what was now the working half of the rope, to test his knot-making. Yes, he *was* all right. So I bade him come up, and he started. Whenever he looked up I saw that he had a wild, gadding eye; and whenever he stopped to breathe during the struggle he gasped, "I can't see it yet."

He came nearly half-way, and then he did see it. He had just reached the worst part. Oh, the Sirens know when to start singing! That flower of evil was far out of his reach, or of what his reach ought to have been. Some twelve feet away on his right it was rooted in some infinitesimal pocket of blown soil, a mere dirty thumbnailful of clay. For a moment the lover eyed the beloved across one huge slab of steep stone with no real foothold or handhold upon it—only a few efflorescent minutiae small as the bubukles and whelks and knobs on the nose of some fossil Bardolph. The whole

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wall of the gully just there was what any man who could climb would have written off as unclimbable. Passion, however, has her own standards, beyond the comprehension of the wise:

His eye but saw that light of love,
The only star it hailed above.

My lame Leander gave one whinny of desire. Then he left all and made for his Hero.

You know the way that a man, who has no idea how badly he bats, will sometimes go in and hit an unplayable bowler right out of the ground, simply because the batsman is too green to know that the bowler cannot be played. Perhaps that was the way. Or perhaps your sound climber, having his wits, may leave, at his boldest, a margin of safety, as engineers call it, so wide that a madman may cut quite a lot off its edge without coming surely to grief. Or was it only a joke of the gods among themselves over their wine? Or can it be that the special arrangements known to be made for the safety of sailors, when in their cups, are extended at times to cover the case of collectors overcome by the strong waters of the acquisitive instinct? Goodness knows! Whatever the powers that helped him, this crippled man, who had never tried climbing before, went skating off to his right flank, across that impossible slant, on one foot and one stilt, making a fool of the science of mountaineering.

I vetoed, I imprecated, I grew Athanasian. All utterly useless. As soon could you whistle a dog back to heel when he fleets off on fire with some fresh amour. I could only brace myself, take a good hold of the rope in both hands, and be ready to play the wild salmon

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below as soon as he slipped and the line ran out tight. While I waited I saw, for the first time, another piquant detail of our case. Darwin, absorbed in his greed, had never untied the other end of the rope. So he was now tied on to both ends. The whole rope made a circle, a vicious circle. Our whole caravan was sewn on to the bony structure of Wales with two big stitches, one at each jammed stone.

You see how it would work. When Darwin should fall, as he must, and hang in the air from my hands, gravitation would swing him back into the centre of the chimney, straight below me, bashing him hard against the chimney's opposite wall. No doubt he would be stunned. I should never be able to hoist his dead weight through the air to my perch, so I should have to lower him to the foot of the chimney. That would just use up the full 60 feet of rope. It would run the two 60-foot halves of the rope so tight that I should never be able to undo the bad central knot that confined me. Could I but cut it when Darwin was lowered into provisional safety, and then climb down to see him! No; I had lost my knife two days ago. I should be like a netted lion, with no mouse to bite through his cords: a Prometheus, bound to his rock.

But life spoils half her best crises. That wretch never slipped. He that by this time had no sort of right to his life came back as he went, treading on air, but now with that one bloom of the spiderwort in his mouth. Apologizing for slowness, and panting with haste, he writhed up the crack till his head appeared over the chockstone beside me. Then he gave one cry of joy, surged up over the stone, purring with pleasure, and charged the steep slope of slippery grass above the

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precipice we had scaled. "You never told me!" he cried; and then for the first time I noticed that up here the whole place was speckled with Lloydia. The next moment Darwin fell suddenly backwards as if Lloyd himself or some demon gardener of his had planted a very straight one on the chin of the onrushing trespasser in his pleasance. You guess? Yes. One of his two tethers, the one coming up from behind the lower jammed stone, had run out; it had pulled him up short as he leapt upon the full fruition of his desire.

He was easy to field as he rolled down the grass. But his tug on the rope had worked it well into some crevice between the lower jammed stone and the wall of the crack. We were anchored now, good and fast, to that stone, more than three fathoms below. What to do now? Climb down and clear the jammed rope? Leave that lame voluptuary rioting upon a precipice's edge? Scarcely wise—would it have been? Puzzled and angry, I cast away shame. I knew well that as Spartan troops had to come back with their shields or upon them, or else have trouble with their mothers, a climber who leaves his tackle behind in a retreat is likely to be a scorn and a hissing. Still, I cast away shame. Ours was no common case; no common ethics would meet it. I untied us both, and threw both ends of the rope down the chimney; then I let Darwin graze for a minute; then I drove him relentlessly up the steep grass to the top of the crag, and round by the easy walking way down.

As we passed down the valley below I looked up. The whole length of our chimney was visibly draped with the pendant double length of that honest Scots mountaineer's rope. "I don't really know how to

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thank you enough," Darwin was babbling beside me, "for giving me such a day!"

But I felt as if I were one of the villains in plays who compromise women of virtue and rank by stealing their fans and leaving them lying about in the rooms of bad bachelors. Much might be said for climbing alone, no matter what the authorities thought. A good time it would be, all to myself, when I came back to salvage that rope.

From "Fiery Particles"

THE VISION

NOW that most of our men in the prime of life have been in the Army we seem to be in for a goodly literature of disappointment. All the ungifted young people came back from the War to tell us that they were "fed up." That was their ailment, in outline. The gifted ones are now coming down to detail. They say that a web has been woven over the sky, or that something or other has made a goblin of the sun—about as full details of a pain as you can fairly expect a gifted person to give, although he really may feel it.

No doubt disenchantment has flourished before. About the year 1880 nearly all the best art was wan and querulous; that of Burne-Jones was always in trouble; Matthew Arnold's verse was a well-bred, melodious whine; Rossetti was all disenamourment and displacement. Yet you could feel that their broken-toy view of the world was only their nice little way with the public. Burne-Jones in his home was a red, jovial man; Arnold a diner-out of the first lustre; Rossetti a sworn friend to bacon and eggs and other plain pleasures. The young melancholiasts of to-day are less good at their craft, and yet they do give you a notion that some sort of silver cord really seems to them to have come loose in their insides, or some golden bowl, which mattered to them, to have been more or less broken, and that they are feeling honestly sour about it. If they do not know how to take it out of mankind by writing desolatory verses about ashes and dust in the

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English Review, at least they can, if they be workmen, vote for a strike: they thus achieve the same good end and put it beyond any doubt that they don't think all is well with the world.

II

The higher the wall or the horse from which you have tumbled, the larger, under Nature's iron law, are your bruises and consequent crossness likely to be. Before we try shaking or cuffing the disenraptured young Solomons in our magazines and our pits it would be humane to reflect that some five millions of these, in their turns, have fallen off an extremely high horse. Of course, we have all fallen off something since 1914. Even owners of ships and vendors of heavy woollens might, if all hearts were laid bare, be found to have fallen, not perhaps off a high horse, but at least off some minute metaphysical pony. Still, the record in length of vertical fall, and of proportionate severity of incidence upon an inelastic earth, is probably held by ex-soldiers and, among these, by the volunteers of the first year of the War. We were all, of course, volunteers then, undiluted by indispensable Harry's later success in getting dispensable Johnnie forced to join us in the Low Countries.

Most of those volunteers of the prime were men of handsome and boundless illusions. Each of them quite seriously thought of himself as a molecule in the body of a nation that was really, and not just figuratively, "straining every nerve" to discharge an obligation of honour. Honestly, there was about them as little as there could humanly be of the coxcombrity of self-

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devotion. They only felt that they had got themselves happily placed on a rope at which every one else, in some way or other, was tugging his best as well as they. All the air was ringing with rousing assurances. France to be saved, Belgium righted, freedom and civilization rewon, a sour, soiled, crooked old world to be rid of bullies and crooks and reclaimed for straightness, decency, good-nature, the ways of common men dealing with common men. What a chance! The plain recruit who had not the gift of a style said to himself that for once he had got right in on the ground floor of a topping good thing, and he blessed the luck that had made him neither too old nor too young. Rupert Brooke, meaning exactly the same thing, was writing:

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary. . . .

Of course, it is easy to say to any such simpleton now: "Well, if you were like that, what could you expect? *Vous l'avez voulu, George Dandin*. You were rushing upon disillusionment." Of course he was. If each recruit in 1914 had been an à Kempis, or even a Rochefoucauld, he would have known that if you are to love mankind you must not expect too much from it. But he was not, as a rule, a philosopher. He was a common man, not much inclined to think evil of people. It no more occurred to him at that time that he was the natural prey of seventy-seven separate breeds of profiteers than it did that presently he would be overrun by less figurative lice. When Garibaldi led an infantry

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attack against the Austrians it was said that he never looked round to see if his men were following; he knew to a dead certainty that at the moment when he reached the enemy he would feel his men's breath hot on the back of his neck. The early volunteer in his blindness imagined that there was between all Englishmen then that oneness of faith, love, and courage.

III

Everything helped, for a time, to keep him the child that he was. Except in the matter of separation from civilian friends his daily life was pretty well that of the happiest children. The men knew nothing and hoped for wonderful things. Drill, to the average recruit, was like some curious game or new dance, various and rhythmic, and not very hard: it was rather fun for adults to be able to play at such things without being laughed at. Their lives had undergone an immense simplification. Of course, an immense simplification of life is not certain to be a wholly good thing. A Zulu's life may be simpler than Einstein's and yet the estate of Einstein may be the more gracious. If a boatload of men holding the Order of Merit were cast away on a desert island they might, on the whole, think the life as beastly as Touchstone found the life in the Forest of Arden. Yet some of those eminent men might find a soul of good in that evil. They might grill all the day and shiver all night, and be half starved the whole of the time. But their minds would get a rest cure. While they were there they would have to settle no heartrending questions of patronage, nor to decree the superannuation of elderly worthies. The brutal

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instancy of physical wants might be trying; but they would at least be spared, until they were rescued, the solving of any stiff conundrums of professional ethics.

Moulding the pet recreations of civilized men you find their craving to have something simple to do for a change, to be given an easy one after so many twisters. People whose work is the making of calculations or the manipulation of thoughts have been known to find a curiously restful pleasure in chopping firewood or painting toolsheds till their backs ache. It soothes them with a flattering sense of getting something useful done straight off. So much of their 'real' work is a taking of some minute or indirect means to some end remote, dimly and doubtfully visible, possibly—for the dread thought will intrude—not worth attaining. The pile of chopped wood is at least a spice of the Ultimate Good: visible, palpable, it is success; and the advanced and complex man, the statesman or sociologist who has chopped it, escapes for the moment from all his own advancement and complication, and savours in quiet ecstasy one of the sane primeval satisfactions.

A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acre's tilled, he's right enough;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzen's done, she's unco weel.

The climber of mountains seeks a similar rapture by going to places where he is, in full exertion, the sum of his physical faculties, little more. Here all his hopes are for things close at hand: ambition lives along one arm stretched out to grasp a rock eighteen inches away; his sole aim in life may be simply the top of a thirty-foot cleft in a steep face of stone. At home, in the thick of his work, he had seemed to be everlastingly threading

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mazes that no one could thread right to the end; here, on the crags, it is all divinely simplified; who would trouble his head with subtle questionings about what human life will, might, or ought to be when every muscle and nerve are tautly engaged in the primal job of sticking to life as it is?

To have for his work these raptures of play was the joy of the new recruit who had common health and good-humour. All his maturity's worries and burdens seemed, by some magical change, to have dropped from him; no difficult choices had to be made any longer; hardly a moral chart to be conned; no one had any finances to mind; nobody else's fate was put in his hands, and not even his own. All was fixed from above, down to the time of his going to bed and the way he must lace up his boots. His vow of willing self-enslavement for a season had brought him the peace of the soldier, which passeth understanding as wholly as that of the saint, the blitheness of heart that comes to both with their clarifying, tranquillizing acquiescence in some mystic will outside their own. Immersed in that Dantean repose of utter obedience the men slept like babies, ate like hunters, and rediscovered the joy of infancy in getting some rather elementary bodily movement to come right. They saw everything that God had made, and behold! it was very good. That was the vision.

The mental peace, the physical joy, the divinely simplified sense of having one clear aim, the remoteness from all the rest of the world, all favoured a tropical growth of illusion. A man, says Tennyson, "imputes himself." If he be decent he readily thinks other people are decent. Here were hundreds of thousands

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of quite commonplace persons rendered, by comradeship in an enthusiasm, self-denying, cheerful, unexacting, sanely exalted, substantially good. To get the more fit to be quickly used men would give up even the little darling vices which are nearest to many simple hearts. Men who had entertained an almost reasoned passion for whisky, men who in civil life had messed up careers for it and left all and followed it, would cut off their whisky lest it should spoil their marching. Little white, prim clerks from suburbs—men whose souls were saturated with the consciousness of class—would abdicate freely and wholeheartedly their sense of the wide, unplumbed, estranging seas that ought to roar between themselves and Covent Garden market-porters. Many men who had never been dangerous rivals to St Anthony kept an unwonted hold of themselves during the months when hundreds of reputable women and girls round every camp seemed to have been suddenly smitten with a Bacchantic frenzy. Real, constitutional lazy fellows would buy little cram-books of drill out of their pay and sweat them up at night so as to get on the faster. Men warned for a guard next day would agree among themselves to get up an hour before the pre-dawn winter *Réveillé* to practise among themselves the beautiful symbolic ritual of mounting guard in the hope of approaching the far-off, longed-for ideal of smartness, the passport to France. Men were known to subscribe in order to get some dummy bombs made with which to practise bomb-throwing by themselves on summer nights after drilling and marching from six in the morning till five in the evening. How could they not have the illusion that the whole nation's sense of comradeship went as far as their own?

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Who of all those who were in camp at that time, and still are alive, will not remember until he dies the second boyhood that he had in the late frosts and then in the swiftly filling and bursting spring and early summer of 1915? The awakening bird-notes of *Réveillé* at dawn, the two-mile run through auroral mists breaking over a still inviolate England, the men's smoking breath and the swish of their feet brushing the dew from the tips of the June grass and printing their track of darker green on the pearly grey turf; the long, intent morning parades under the gummy shine of chestnut buds in the deepening meadows; the peace of the tranquil hours on guard at some sequestered post, alone with the sylvester midnight, the wheeling stars, and the quiet breathing of the earth in its sleep, when time, to the sentry's sense, fleets on unexpectedly fast and life seems much too short because day has slipped into day without the night-long sleeper's false sense of a pause; and then jocund days of marching and digging trenches in the sun; the silly little songs on the road that seemed, then, to have tunes most human, pretty, and jolly; the dinners of haversack rations you ate as you sat on the roadmakers' heaps of chopped stones or lay back among buttercups.

When you think of the youth that you have lost, the times when it seems to you now that life was most poignantly good may not be the ones when everything seemed at the time to go well with your plans, and the world, as they say, to be at your feet; rather some few unaccountable moments when nothing took place that was out of the way and yet some word of a friend's, or a look on the face of the sky, the taste of a glass of spring water, the splash of laughter and oars heard across mid-

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summer meadows at night raised the soul of enjoyment within you to strangely higher powers of itself. That spirit bloweth and is still: it will not rise for our whistling nor keep a time-table; no wine that we know can give us anything more than a fugitive caricature of its ecstasies. When it has blown free we remember it always, and know, without proof, that while the rapture was there we were not drunk, but wise; that for a moment some intervening darkness had thinned and we were seeing further than we can see now into the heart of life.

To one recollection at least it has seemed that the New Army's spring-tide of faith and joyous illusion came to its height on a night late in the most beautiful May of 1915, in a hut where thirty men slept near a forest in Essex. Nothing particular happened; the night was like others. Yet in the times that came after, when half of the thirty were dead and most of the others jaded and soured, the feel of that night would come back with the strange distinctness of those picked, remembered mornings and evenings of boyhood when everything that there was became everlastingly memorable as though it had been the morning or evening of the first day. Ten o'clock came and Lights Out, but a kind of luminous bloom still on the air and a bugle blowing Last Post in some far-away camp that kept worse hours than we. I believe the whole hut held its breath to hear the notes better. Who wouldn't, to listen to that most lovely and melancholy of calls, the noble death of each day's life, a sound moving about hither and thither, like a veiled figure making gestures both stately and tender, among the dim thoughts that we have about death the approaching extinguisher—

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resignation and sadness and unfulfilment and triumph all coming back to the overbearing sense of extinction in those two recurrent notes of Lights Out ? One listens as if with bowed mind, as though saying " Yes ; out, out, brief candle." A moment's silence to let it sink in and the chaffing and laughter broke out like a splash of cool water in summer again. That hut always went to bed laughing and chaffing all round, and, though there was no wit among us, the stories tasted of life, the inexhaustible game and adventure. Looker, ex-marine turned soldier, told us how he had once gone down in a diving-suit to find a lost anchor and struck on the old tin lining out of a crate, from which some octopian beast with long feelers had reached out at him, and the feelers had come nearer and nearer through the dim water. " What did you do, Filthy ? " somebody asked (we called Looker " Filthy " with friendly jocoseness). " I 'opped it," the good fellow said, and the sane anti-climax of real life seemed twice as good as the climax that any Hugo or Verne could have put to the yarn. Another described the great life he had lived as an old racing ' hen,' or minor sutler of the sport of kings. Hard work, of course. " All day down at Epsom openin' doors an' brushin' coats and shiftin' truck for bookies till you'd make, perhaps, two dollars an' speculate it on the las' race and off back 'ome to London 'ungry, on your 'oofs." Once a friend of his, who had had a bad day, had not walked—had slipped into the London train, and at Vauxhall, where tickets were taken, had gone to earth under the seat with a brief appeal to his fellow-travellers: " Gents, I rely on your honour." The stout narrator could see no joke at all in the phrase. He was rather scandalized by our great

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roar of laughter. "'Is honour! And 'im robbin' the comp'ny! 'Nough to take away a man's kerrikter!" said the patient walker-home in emergency. It made life seem too wonderful to end; such were the untold reserves that we had in this nation of men with a hold on themselves, of hardy uprightness; even this unhelped son of the gutter, living from hand to mouth in the common lodging-houses of slums, a parasite upon parasites, poor little animalcule doing odd jobs for the caterpillars of the commonwealth—even he could persist in carrying steadily, clear of the dirt, the full vase of his private honour. What, then, must be the unused stores of greedless and fearless straightness in others above us, generals and statesmen, men in whom, as in bank-porters, character is three parts of the trade! The world seemed clean that night; such a lovely unreason of optimist faith was astir in us all,

We felt for that time ravish'd above earth
And possess'd joys not promised in our birth.

It seems hardly credible now, in this soured and quarrelsome country and time, that so many men of different classes and kinds, thrown together at random, should ever have been so simply and happily friendly, trustful, and keen. But they were, and they imagined that all their betters were too. That was the Paradise that the bottom fell out of.

From "Disenchantment"

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I

IN the autumn of 1917 the War entered into an autumn, or late middle age, of its own. "Your young men," we are told, "shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." The same with whole armies. But middle-aged armies or men may not have the mists of either morning or evening to charm them. So they may feel like Corot, when he had painted away, in a trance of delight, till the last vapour of dawn was dried up by the sun; then he said, "You can see everything now. Nothing is left," and knocked off work for the day. There was no knocking off for the army. But that feeling had come. A high time was over, a great light was out; our eyes had lost the use of something, either an odd penetration that they had had for a while, or else an odd web that had been woven across them, shutting only ugliness out.

The feeling was apt to come on pretty strong if you lived at the time on the top of the little hill of Cassel, west of Ypres. The Second Army's Headquarters were there. You might, as some Staff duty blew you about the war zone, be watching at daybreak one of that autumn's many dour bouts of attrition under the Passchendaele Ridge, in the mud, and come back, the same afternoon, to sit in an ancient garden hung on the slope of the hill, where a great many pears were yellowing on the wall and sunflowers gazing fixedly into the sun that was now failing them. All the corn of French Flanders lay cut on the brown plain under your eyes,

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from Dunkirk, with its shimmering dunes and the glare on the sea, to the forested hills north of Arras. Everywhere lustre, reverie, stillness; the sinking hum of old bees, successful in life and now rather tired; the many windmills fallen motionless, the aureate light musing over the aureate harvest; out in the east the broken white stalks of Poperinghe's towers pensive in haze; and, behind and about you, the tiny hill city, itself in its distant youth the name-giver and prize of three mighty battles that do not matter much now. All these images or seats of outlived ardour, mellowed now with the acquiescence of time in the slowing down of some passionate stir in the sap of a plant or the spirit of insects or men, joined to work on you quietly. There, where the earth and the year were taking so calmly the end of all the grand racket that they had made in their prime, why not come off the high horse that we, too, in that ingenuous season, had ridden so hard? It was not now as it had been of yore. And why pretend that it was?

II

One leaf that had gone pretty yellow by now was the hope of perfect victory—swift, unsoured, unruinous, knightly: St George's over the dragon, David's over Goliath. Some people at home seem to be still clinging hard to that first pretty vision of us as a gifted, lithe, wise little Jack fighting down an unwieldy, dastardly giant. But troops in the field become realists. Ours had seen their side visibly swelling for more than two years, till Jack had become a heavier weight than the giant and yet could not finish him off. We knew that

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our allies and we outnumbered the Germans and theirs. We knew we were just as well armed. We had seen Germans advancing under our fire and made no mistake about what they were worth. Our first vision of victory had gone the way of its frail sister dream of a perfect Allied comradeship. French soldiers sneered at British now, and British at French. Both had the same derisive note in the voice when they named the "*Brav' Belges*." Canadians and Australians had almost ceased to take the pains to break it to us gently that they were the "storm troops," the men who had to be sent for to do the tough jobs ; that, out of all us sorry home troops, only the Guards Division, two kilted divisions, and three English ones could be said to know how to fight. "The English let us down again "; "The Tommies gave us a bad flank, as usual"—these were the stirring things you would hear if you called upon an Australian division a few hours after a battle in which the lion had fought by the side of his whelps. Chilly, autumnal things; while you listened the War was apparelled no longer in the celestial light of its spring.

An old Regular colonel, a man who had done all his work upon the Staff, said, at the time, that "the War was settling down to peace conditions." He meant no bitter epigram. He was indeed unfeignedly glad. The War was ceasing to be, like a fire or shipwreck, a leveller of ranks which, he felt, ought not to be levelled. Those whom God had put asunder it was less recklessly joining together. The first wild generosities were cooling off. Not many peers and heirs-apparent to great wealth were becoming hospital orderlies now. Since the first earthquake and tidal wave the disturbed social waters had pretty well found their old seemly levels

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again; under conscription the sons of the poor were now making privates; the sons of the well-to-do were making officers; sanity was returning. The Regular had faced and disarmed the invading hordes of 1914. No small feat of audacity, either. Think what the shock must have been—what it would be for any profession, just at the golden prime of rich opportunity and searching test, to be overrun of a sudden by hosts of keen amateurs, many of them quickwitted, possibly critical, some of them the best brains of the country, most of them vulgarly void of the old professional habits of mind, almost indecently ready to use new and outlandish means to the new ends of to-day.

But now the stir and the peril were over. The Old Army had won. It had scarcely surrendered a single strong point or good billet; Territorials and New Army toiled at the coolie jobs of its household. It had not even been forced, like kings in times of revolution, to make apparent concessions, to water down the pure milk of the word. It had become only the more intensely itself; never in any war had commands been retained so triumphantly in the hands of the cavalry and the Guards, the leaders and symbols of the Old Army resistance to every inroad of mere professional ardour and knowledge and strong, eager brains. When Sir Francis Lloyd relinquished the London District Command a highly composite mess in France discussed possible successors. "Of course," said a Guards colonel gravely—and he was a guest in the mess—"The first point is—he *must* be a Guardsman." Peace conditions returning, you see; the peace frame of mind; the higher commands restored to their ancient status as property, 'livings,' perquisites, the bread of the children,

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not to be given to dogs. At home, too, peace conditions were taking heart to return. The scattered coveys of profiteers and job-hunters, almost alarmed by the first shots of the War, had long since met in security; "depredations as usual" was the word; and the mutual scalping and knifing of politicians had ceased to be shamefaced; who could fairly expect an old Regular Army to practise a more austere virtue than merchant princes and statesmen?

III

Even in trenches and near them, where most of the health was, time had begun to embrown the verdant soul of the army. "Kitchener's Army" was changing. Like every volunteer army, his had sifted itself, at its birth, with the only sieve that will riddle out, even roughly, the best men to be near in a fight. Till the first of the pressed men arrived at our front, a sergeant there, when he posted a sentry and left him alone in the dark, could feel about as complete a moral certitude as there is on the earth that the post would not be let down. For, whatever might happen, nothing inside the man could start whispering to him "You never asked to be here; if you do fail it isn't your doing."

Nine out of ten of the conscripts were equally sound. For they would have been volunteers if they could. The tenth was the problem; the more so because there was nothing to tell you which was the tenth and which were the nine. For all that you knew, any man who came out on a draft, from then on, might be the exception, the literal-minded Christian who thought it wicked to kill in a war; or an anti-nationalist zealot who thought us all equally fools, the Germans and us,

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to be out there pasturing lice, instead of busy at home taking the hide off the *bourgeois*; or one of those drift wisps of loveless critical mind, attached to no place or people more than another, and just as likely as not to think that the War was our fault and that we ought to be beaten. *Riant avenir!* as a French sergeant said when, in an hour of ease, we were talking over the nature of man, and he told me, in illustration of its diversity, how a section of his had just been enriched with a draft of neurasthenic burglars.

These vulgar considerations of military expediency never seemed to cross the outer rim of the consciousness of many worthies who were engaged at home in shooing the reluctant into the army. If a recalcitrant seemed to be lazy, spiritless, nerveless, if there was every sign of his making a specially worthless and troublesome consumer of rations in a trench, then a burning zeal to inflict this nuisance and danger on some unoffending platoon in France seemed to invade the ordinary military tribunal. Report said that the satisfaction of this impulse was called, by the possessed persons, "giving Haig the men," and sometimes, with a more pungent irony, "supporting our fellows in the trenches." *Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis*. Australia's fellows in the trenches were suffered to vote themselves out of the risk of getting any support of the kind. Australia is a democracy. Ours were not asked whether they wanted to see their trenches employed as a penal settlement to which middle-aged moralists in England might deport, among other persons, those whom they felt to be morally the least beautiful of their juniors. So nothing impeded the pious practice of "larning toads to be toads." For the shirker, the 'kicker,' the 'lawyer,'

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for all the types of undesirables that contribute most liberally to the wrinkled appearance of sergeants, those pious men had the nose of collectors. Wherever there was a spare fifty yards of British front to be held, they, if anyone, could find a man likely to go to sleep there on guard, or, in some cyclonic disturbance of spirit, to throw down his rifle and light out for the coast, across country.

Such episodes were reasonably few. The inveterate mercy that guards drunken sailors preserved from the worst disaster the cranks who had made a virtue of giving their country every bad soldier they could. And the abounding mercy of most courts-martial rendered few of the episodes fatal to individual conscripts. Nor, indeed, was the growth in their frequency after conscription wholly due to the more fantastic tricks played before high heaven by some of the Falstaffs who dealt with the Mouldies, Shadows, and Bull-calves. Conscription, in any case, must be dilution. You may get your water more quickly by throwing the filter away, but don't hope to keep the quality what it was. And the finer a New Army unit had been, to begin with, the swifter the autumnal change. Every first-rate battalion fighting in France or Belgium lost its whole original numbers over and over again. First, because in action it spared itself less than the poor ones; secondly, because the best divisions rightly got the hard jobs. Going out in the late autumn of 1915, a good battalion with normal luck might have nearly half its original volunteer strength left after the battle of the Somme. Drafts of conscripts would fill up the gap, each draft with a listless or enigmatic one-tenth that volunteering had formerly kept at a distance. The battle of Arras

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next spring might leave only twenty per cent. of the first volunteers, and the autumn battles in Flanders would pretty well finish their business. Seasons returned, but not to that battalion returned the spirit of delight in which it had first learnt to soldier together and set foot together in France and first marched through darkness and ruined villages towards the flaring fair-ground of the front. While a New Army battalion was still very young, and fully convinced that no crowd of men so good to be with had ever been brought together before, it used to be always saying how it would keep things up after the War. No such genial reunions had ever been held as these were to be. But now the few odd men that are left only write to each other at long intervals, feeling almost as if they were raising their voices in an empty church. One of them asks another has he any idea what the battalion was like after Oppy, or Bournon Wood, or wherever their own knock-out came. Like any other battalion, no doubt—a mere G.C.M. of all conscript battalions; conscription filed down all special features and characters.

Quick waste and renewal are said to be good for the body; the faster you burn up old tissues, by good sweaty work, the better your health; fresh and superior tissue is added unto you all the more merrily. Capital, too, the economists say, must be swiftly used up and reborn, over and over again, to do the most good that it can. And then there is the case of the phoenix—in fact, of all the birds and all the beasts too, for all evolution would seem to be just the dying of something worse, as fast as it can, in order that something better may live in its place. No need for delay in turning your anthro-poid apes into Shakespeares and Newtons.

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But what if you found, after all your hard work, that not all the deceased cells of your flesh were replaced by new cells of the sort you would like? If some of your good golden pounds should have perished only that inconvertible paper might live? If out of your phoenix's ashes only a commonplace rooster should spring? If evolution were guyed and bedevilled into retrovolution, a process by which the fittest must more and more dwindle away and the less fit survive them, and species be not multiplied but made fewer? Something, perhaps, of the sort may go on in the body in its old age, or in roses in autumn. It must go on in a volunteer army when it is becoming an army of conscripts during a war that is highly lethal.

IV

The fall of the leaf had brought, too, a sad shortage of heroes—of highly placed ones, for, of course, every company had its own, authenticated beyond any proof that crosses or medals could give. A few very old Regular privates would say, "Ah! if we had Buller here!" Sir Redvers Buller has always remained, in lofty disregard of conclusive disproof, the Cæsar or Hannibal of the old Regular private, who sets little store by such heroes of Whitehall and Fleet Street as Roberts and Kitchener. But the chiefs of to-day left men cold, at the best. The name of at least one was a byword. Haig was a name and no more, though a name immune in a mysterious degree from the general scoffing surmise about the demerits of higher commands. Few subalterns or men had seen him. No one knew what he was doing or leaving undone. But some

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power, not ourselves, making for charity, seemed to recommend him to mercy in every one's judgment; as if, from wherever he was, nameless waves of some sort rippled out through an uncharted ether, conveying some virtue exhaled by that winning incarnation of honour, courage, and kindness who, seen and heard in the flesh, made you wish to find in him all other excellent qualities too. The front line gave him all the benefit of every doubt. God only knew, it said, whether he or somebody else would have to answer for Bullecourt and Serre. It might not be he who had left the door lying open, unentered, for two nights and days, when the lions had won the battle of Arras that spring, and the asses had let the victory slip till the Germans crept back in the dark to the fields east of Vimy from which they had fled in despair. But slowness to judge can hardly be called hero-worship: at most, a somewhat sere October phase of that vernal religion.

One of the heavenly things on which the New Army had almost counted, in its green faith, was that our higher commands would have genius. Of course, we had no right to do it. No X has any right to ask of Y that Y shall be Alexander the Great or Bach or Rembrandt or Garrick, or any kind of demonic first-rater. As reasonably send precepts to the Leviathan to come ashore. Yet we had indulged that insane expectation, just as we had taken it for granted that this time the nation would be as one man, and nobody "out to do a bit for himself on the quiet." And now behold the falling leaf and no Leviathan coming ashore in response to our May-day desires.

Certainly other things, highly respectable, came. The Second Army Staff's direction of that autumn's

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almost continuous battles was of a competence passing all British precedents. Leap-frogging waves of assault, box barrages, creeping barrages, actions, interactions, and counteractions were timed and concerted as no Staff of ours had done it before. The intricate dance which has to go on behind a crowded battle-front, so that columns moving east and west and columns moving north and south shall not coincide at crossroads, was danced with the circumstantial precision of the best ballets. An officer cast away somewhere in charge of a wayside smithy for patching up chipped guns felt that there was a power perched on the top of the hill at Cassel which smelt out a bit of good work, or of bad, wherever anyone did it. Sense, keenness, sympathy, resolution, exactness—all the good things abode in that eyrie which have to be in attendance before genius can bring off its marvels; every chamber swept and garnished, and yet——

Foch tells us what he thinks Napoleon might have said to the Allied commands if he could have risen in our black times from the dead. "What cards you people have!" he would have said. "And how little you do with them! Look!" And then, Foch thinks, within a month or two he "would have rearranged everything, gone about it all in some new way, thrown out the enemy's plans and quite crushed him." That "some new way" was not fated to come. The spark refused to fall, the divine accident would not happen. How could it? you ask with some reason. Had not trench warfare reached an *impasse*? Yes; there is always an *impasse* before genius shows a way through. Music on keyboards had reached an *impasse* before a person of genius thought of using his thumb as well as

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his fingers. Well, that was an obvious dodge, you may say, but in Flanders what way through could there have been? The dodge found by genius is always an obvious dodge, afterwards. Till it is found it can as little be stated by us common people as can the words of the poems that Keats might have written if he had lived longer. You would have to become a Keats to do that, and a Napoleon to say how Napoleon would have got through to Bruges in the autumn that seemed so autumnal to us. All that the army knew, as it decreased in the mud, was that no such uncovenanted mercy came to transmute its casualties into the swiftly and richly fruitful ones of a Napoleon, the incidental expenses of some miraculous draught of victory.

Nothing to grouse at in that. The winds of inspiration have to blow the best way they can. Prospero himself could not raise them; how could the likes of us hope to? And yet there had been that illogical hope, almost reliance—part of the high unreason of faith that could move mountains in 1914 and seems to be scarcely able to shift an anthill to-day.

From "Disenchantment"

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