CHAPTER THE FIFTH

THE COMING OF THE DAY

Section 1

It was quite characteristic of the state of mind of England in the summer of 1914 that Mr. Britling should be mightily concerned about the conflict in Ireland, and almost deliberately negligent of the possibility of a war with Germany.

The armament of Germany, the hostility of Germany, the consistent assertion of Germany, the world-wide clash of British and German interests, had been facts in the consciousness of Englishmen for more than a quarter of a century. A whole generation had been born and brought up in the threat of this German war. A threat that goes on for too long ceases to have the effect of a threat, and this overhanging possibility had become a fixed and scarcely disturbing feature of the British situation. It kept the navy sedulous and Colonel Rendezvous uneasy; it stimulated a small and not very influential section of the press to a series of reminders that bored Mr. Britling acutely, it was the excuse for an agitation that made national service ridiculous, and quite subconsciously it affected his attitude to a hundred things. For example, it was a factor in his very keen indignation at the Tory levity in Ireland, in his disgust with many things that irritated or estranged

Indian feeling. It bored him; there it was, a danger, and there was no denying it, and yet he believed firmly that it was a mine that would never be fired, an avalanche that would never fall. It was a nuisance, a stupidity, that kept Europe drilling and wasted enormous sums on unavoidable preparations; it hung up everything like a noisy argument in a drawing-room, but that human weakness and folly would ever let the mine actually explode he did not believe. He had been in France in 1911, he had seen how close things had come then to a conflict, and the fact that they had not come to a conflict had enormously strengthened his natural disposition to believe that at bottom Germany was sane and her militarism a bluff.

But the Irish difficulty was a different thing. There, he felt, was need for the liveliest exertions. A few obstinate people in influential positions were manifestly pushing things to an outrageous point....

He wrote through the morning--and as the morning progressed the judicial calm of his opening intentions warmed to a certain regrettable vigour of phrasing about our politicians, about our political ladies, and our hand-to-mouth press....

He came down to lunch in a frayed, exhausted condition, and was much afflicted by a series of questions from Herr Heinrich. For it was an incurable characteristic of Herr Heinrich that he asked questions; the greater part of his conversation took the form of question and answer, and his thirst for information was as marked as his belief that German

should not simply be spoken but spoken "out loud." He invariably prefaced his inquiries with the word "Please," and he insisted upon ascribing an omniscience to his employer that it was extremely irksome to justify after a strenuous morning of enthusiastic literary effort. He now took the opportunity of a lull in the solicitudes and congratulations that had followed Mr. Direck's appearance--and Mr. Direck was so little shattered by his misadventure that with the assistance of the kindly Teddy he had got up and dressed and come down to lunch--to put the matter that had been occupying his mind all the morning, even to the detriment of the lessons of the Masters Britling.

"Please!" he said, going a deeper shade of pink and partly turning to Mr. Britling.

A look of resignation came into Mr. Britling's eyes. "Yes?" he said.

"I do not think it will be wise to take my ticket for the Esperanto Conference at Boulogne. Because I think it is probable to be war between Austria and Servia, and that Russia may make war on Austria."

"That may happen. But I think it improbable."

"If Russia makes war on Austria, Germany will make war on Russia, will she not?"

"Not if she is wise," said Mr. Britling, "because that would bring in

France."

"That is why I ask. If Germany goes to war with France I should have to go to Germany to do my service. It will be a great inconvenience to me."

"I don't imagine Germany will do anything so frantic as to attack Russia. That would not only bring in France but ourselves."

"England?"

"Of course. We can't afford to see France go under. The thing is as plain as daylight. So plain that it cannot possibly happen.... Cannot.... Unless Germany wants a universal war."

"Thank you," said Herr Heinrich, looking obedient rather than reassured.

"I suppose now," said Mr. Direck after a pause, "that there isn't any strong party in Germany that wants a war. That young Crown Prince, for example."

"They keep him in order," said Mr. Britling a little irritably. "They keep him in order....

"I used to be an alarmist about Germany," said Mr. Britling, "but I have come to feel more and more confidence in the sound common sense of the mass of the German population, and in the Emperor too if it comes to

that. He is--if Herr Heinrich will permit me to agree with his own German comic papers--sometimes a little theatrical, sometimes a little egotistical, but in his operatic, boldly coloured way he means peace. I am convinced he means peace...."

Section 2

After lunch Mr. Britling had a brilliant idea for the ease and comfort of Mr. Direck.

It seemed as though Mr. Direck would be unable to write any letters until his wrist had mended. Teddy tried him with a typewriter, but Mr. Direck was very awkward with his left hand, and then Mr. Britling suddenly remembered a little peculiarity he had which it was possible that Mr. Direck might share unconsciously, and that was his gift of looking-glass writing with his left hand. Mr. Britling had found out quite by chance in his schoolboy days that while his right hand had been laboriously learning to write, his left hand, all unsuspected, had been picking up the same lesson, and that by taking a pencil in his left hand and writing from right to left, without watching what he was writing, and then examining the scrawl in a mirror, he could reproduce his own handwriting in exact reverse. About three people out of five have this often quite unsuspected ability. He demonstrated his gift, and then Miss Cecily Corner, who had dropped in in a casual sort of way to ask about Mr. Direck, tried it, and then Mr. Direck tried it. And they could all

do it. And then Teddy brought a sheet of copying carbon, and so Mr. Direck, by using the carbon reversed under his paper, was restored to the world of correspondence again.

They sat round a little table under the cedar trees amusing themselves with these experiments, and after that Cecily and Mr. Britling and the two small boys entertained themselves by drawing pigs with their eyes shut, and then Mr. Britling and Teddy played hard at Badminton until it was time for tea. And Cecily sat by Mr. Direck and took an interest in his accident, and he told her about summer holidays in the Adirondacks and how he loved to travel. She said she would love to travel. He said that so soon as he was better he would go on to Paris and then into Germany. He was extraordinarily curious about this Germany and its tremendous militarism. He'd far rather see it than Italy, which was, he thought, just all art and ancient history. His turn was for modern problems. Though of course he didn't intend to leave out Italy while he was at it. And then their talk was scattered, and there was great excitement because Herr Heinrich had lost his squirrel.

He appeared coming out of the house into the sunshine, and so distraught that he had forgotten the protection of his hat. He was very pink and deeply moved.

"But what shall I do without him?" he cried. "He has gone!"

The squirrel, Mr. Direck gathered, had been bought by Mrs. Britling for

the boys some month or so ago; it had been christened "Bill" and adored and then neglected, until Herr Heinrich took it over. It had filled a place in his ample heart that the none too demonstrative affection of the Britling household had left empty. He abandoned his pursuit of philology almost entirely for the cherishing and adoration of this busy, nimble little creature. He carried it off to his own room, where it ran loose and took the greatest liberties with him and his apartment. It was an extraordinarily bold and savage little beast even for a squirrel, but Herr Heinrich had set his heart and his very large and patient will upon the establishment of sentimental relations. He believed that ultimately Bill would let himself be stroked, that he would make Bill love him and understand him, and that his would be the only hand that Bill would ever suffer to touch him. In the meanwhile even the untamed Bill was wonderful to watch. One could watch him forever. His front paws were like hands, like a musician's hands, very long and narrow. "He would be a musician if he could only make his fingers go apart, because when I play my violin he listens. He is attentive."

The entire household became interested in Herr Heinrich's attacks upon Bill's affection. They watched his fingers with particular interest because it was upon those that Bill vented his failures to respond to the stroking advances.

"To-day I have stroked him once and he has bitten me three times," Herr Heinrich reported. "Soon I will stroke him three times and he shall not bite me at all.... Also yesterday he climbed up me and sat on my

shoulder, and suddenly bit my ear. It was not hard he bit, but sudden.

"He does not mean to bite," said Herr Heinrich. "Because when he has bit me he is sorry. He is ashamed.

"You can see he is ashamed."

Assisted by the two small boys, Herr Heinrich presently got a huge bough of oak and brought it into his room, converting the entire apartment into the likeness of an aviary. "For this," said Herr Heinrich, looking grave and diplomatic through his glasses, "Billy will be very grateful. And it will give him confidence with me. It will make him feel we are in the forest together."

Mrs. Britling came to console her husband in the matter.

"It is not right that the bedroom should be filled with trees. All sorts of dust and litter came in with it."

"If it amuses him," said Mr. Britling.

"But it makes work for the servants."

"Do they complain?"

"No."

"Things will adjust themselves. And it is amusing that he should do such a thing...."

And now Billy had disappeared, and Herr Heinrich was on the verge of tears. It was so ungrateful of Billy. Without a word.

"They leave my window open," he complained to Mr. Direck. "Often I have askit them not to. And of course he did not understand. He has out climbit by the ivy. Anything may have happened to him. Anything. He is not used to going out alone. He is too young.

"Perhaps if I call--"

And suddenly he had gone off round the house crying: "Beelee! Beelee! Here is an almond for you! An almond, Beelee!"

"Makes me want to get up and help," said Mr. Direck. "It's a tragedy."

Everybody else was helping. Even the gardener and his boy knocked off work and explored the upper recesses of various possible trees.

"He is too young," said Herr Heinrich, drifting back.... And then presently: "If he heard my voice I am sure he would show himself. But he does not show himself."

It was clear he feared the worst....

At supper Billy was the sole topic of conversation, and condolence was in the air. The impression that on the whole he had displayed rather a brutal character was combated by Herr Heinrich, who held that a certain brusqueness was Billy's only fault, and told anecdotes, almost sacred anecdotes, of the little creature's tenderer, nobler side. "When I feed him always he says, 'Thank you,'" said Herr Heinrich. "He never fails." He betrayed darker thoughts. "When I went round by the barn there was a cat that sat and looked at me out of a laurel bush," he said. "I do not like cats."

Mr. Lawrence Carmine, who had dropped in, was suddenly reminded of that lugubrious old ballad, "The Mistletoe Bough," and recited large worn fragments of it impressively. It tells of how a beautiful girl hid away in a chest during a Christmas game of hide-and-seek, and how she was found, a dried vestige, years afterwards. It took a very powerful hold upon Herr Heinrich's imagination. "Let us now," he said, "make an examination of every box and cupboard and drawer. Marking each as we go...."

When Mr. Britling went to bed that night, after a long gossip with Carmine about the Bramo Samaj and modern developments of Indian thought generally, the squirrel was still undiscovered.

The worthy modern thinker undressed slowly, blew out his candle and got

into bed. Still meditating deeply upon the God of the Tagores, he thrust his right hand under his pillow according to his usual practice, and encountered something soft and warm and active. He shot out of bed convulsively, lit his candle, and lifted his pillow discreetly.

He discovered the missing Billy looking crumpled and annoyed.

For some moments there was a lively struggle before Billy was gripped. He chattered furiously and bit Mr. Britling twice. Then Mr. Britling was out in the passage with the wriggling lump of warm fur in his hand, and paddling along in the darkness to the door of Herr Heinrich. He opened it softly.

A startled white figure sat up in bed sharply.

"Billy," said Mr. Britling by way of explanation, dropped his capture on the carpet, and shut the door on the touching reunion.

Section 3

A day was to come when Mr. Britling was to go over the history of that sunny July with incredulous minuteness, trying to trace the real succession of events that led from the startling crime at Sarajevo to Europe's last swift rush into war. In a sense it was untraceable; in a sense it was so obvious that he was amazed the whole world had not

watched the coming of disaster. The plain fact of the case was that there was no direct connection; the Sarajevo murders were dropped for two whole weeks out of the general consciousness, they went out of the papers, they ceased to be discussed; then they were picked up again and used as an excuse for war. Germany, armed so as to be a threat to all the world, weary at last of her mighty vigil, watching the course of events, decided that her moment had come, and snatched the dead archduke out of his grave again to serve her tremendous ambition.

It may well have seemed to the belligerent German patriot that all her possible foes were confused, divided within themselves, at an extremity of distraction and impotence. The British Isles seemed slipping steadily into civil war. Threat was met by counter-threat, violent fool competed with violent fool for the admiration of the world, the National Volunteers armed against the Ulster men; everything moved on with a kind of mechanical precision from parade and meeting towards the fatal gun-running of Howth and the first bloodshed in Dublin streets. That wretched affray, far more than any other single thing, must have stiffened Germany in the course she had chosen. There can be no doubt of it; the mischief makers of Ireland set the final confirmation upon the European war. In England itself there was a summer fever of strikes; Liverpool was choked by a dockers' strike, the East Anglian agricultural labourers were in revolt, and the building trade throughout the country was on the verge of a lockout. Russia seemed to be in the crisis of a social revolution. From Baku to St. Petersburg there were insurrectionary movements in the towns, and on the 23rd--the very day of

the Austrian ultimatum--Cossacks were storming barbed wire entanglements in the streets of the capital. The London Stock Exchange was in a state of panic disorganisation because of a vast mysterious selling of securities from abroad. And France, France it seemed was lost to all other consideration in the enthralling confrontations and denunciations of the Caillaux murder trial, the trial of the wife of her ex-prime Minister for the murder of a blackmailing journalist. It was a case full of the vulgarest sexual violence. Before so piquant a spectacle France it seemed could have no time nor attention for the revelation of M. Humbert, the Reporter of the Army Committee, proclaiming that the artillery was short of ammunition, that her infantry had boots "thirty years old" and not enough of those....

Such were the appearances of things. Can it be wondered if it seemed to the German mind that the moment for the triumphant assertion of the German predominance in the world had come? A day or so before the Dublin shooting, the murder of Sarajevo had been dragged again into the foreground of the world's affairs by an ultimatum from Austria to Serbia of the extremest violence. From the hour when the ultimatum was discharged the way to Armageddon lay wide and unavoidable before the feet of Europe. After the Dublin conflict there was no turning back. For a week Europe was occupied by proceedings that were little more than the recital of a formula. Austria could not withdraw her unqualified threats without admitting error and defeat, Russia could not desert Serbia without disgrace, Germany stood behind Austria, France was bound to Russia by a long confederacy of mutual support, and it was impossible

for England to witness the destruction of France or the further strengthening of a loud and threatening rival. It may be that Germany counted on Russia giving way to her, it may be she counted on the indecisions and feeble perplexities of England, both these possibilities were in the reckoning, but chiefly she counted on war. She counted on war, and since no nation in all the world had ever been so fully prepared in every way for war as she was, she also counted on victory.

One writes "Germany." That is how one writes of nations, as though they had single brains and single purposes. But indeed while Mr. Britling lay awake and thought of his son and Lady Frensham and his smashed automobile and Mrs. Harrowdean's trick of abusive letter-writing and of God and evil and a thousand perplexities, a multitude of other brains must also have been busy, lying also in beds or sitting in studies or watching in guard-rooms or chatting belatedly in cafés or smoking-rooms or pacing the bridges of battleships or walking along in city or country, upon this huge possibility the crime of Sarajevo had just opened, and of the state of the world in relation to such possibilities. Few women, one guesses, heeded what was happening, and of the men, the men whose decision to launch that implacable threat turned the destinies of the world to war, there is no reason to believe that a single one of them had anything approaching the imaginative power needed to understand fully what it was they were doing. We have looked for an hour or so into the seething pot of Mr. Britling's brain and marked its multiple strands, its inconsistencies, its irrational transitions. It was but a specimen. Nearly every brain of the select few that counted in this

cardinal determination of the world's destinies, had its streak of personal motive, its absurd and petty impulses and deflections. One man decided to say this because if he said that he would contradict something he had said and printed four or five days ago; another took a certain line because so he saw his best opportunity of putting a rival into a perplexity. It would be strange if one could reach out now and recover the states of mind of two such beings as the German Kaiser and his eldest son as Europe stumbled towards her fate through the long days and warm, close nights of that July. Here was the occasion for which so much of their lives had been but the large pretentious preparation, coming right into their hands to use or forgo, here was the opportunity that would put them into the very forefront of history forever; this journalist emperor with the paralysed arm, this common-fibred, sly, lascivious son. It is impossible that they did not dream of glory over all the world, of triumphant processions, of a world-throne that would outshine Caesar's, of a godlike elevation, of acting Divus Caesar while yet alive. And being what they were they must have imagined spectators, and the young man, who was after all a young man of particularly poor quality, imagined no doubt certain women onlookers, certain humiliated and astonished friends, and thought of the clothes he would wear and the gestures he would make. The nickname his English cousins had given this heir to all the glories was the "White Rabbit." He was the backbone of the war party at court. And presently he stole bric-à-brac. That will help posterity to the proper values of things in 1914. And the Teutonic generals and admirals and strategists with their patient and perfect plans, who were so confident of victory, each within a busy skull must

have enacted anticipatory dreams of his personal success and marshalled his willing and unwilling admirers. Readers of histories and memoirs as most of this class of men are, they must have composed little eulogistic descriptions of the part themselves were to play in the opening drama, imagined pleasing vindications and interesting documents. Some of them perhaps saw difficulties, but few foresaw failure. For all this set of brains the thing came as a choice to take or reject; they could make war or prevent it. And they chose war.

It is doubtful if any one outside the directing intelligence of Germany and Austria saw anything so plain. The initiative was with Germany. The Russian brains and the French brains and the British brains, the few that were really coming round to look at this problem squarely, had a far less simple set of problems and profounder uncertainties. To Mr. Britling's mind the Round Table Conference at Buckingham Palace was typical of the disunion and indecision that lasted up to the very outbreak of hostilities. The solemn violence of Sir Edward Carson was intensely antipathetic to Mr. Britling, and in his retrospective inquiries he pictured to himself that dark figure with its dropping under-lip, seated, heavy and obstinate, at that discussion, still implacable though the King had but just departed after a little speech that was packed with veiled intimations of imminent danger...

Mr. Britling had no mercy in his mind for the treason of obstinate egotism and for persistence in a mistaken course. His own temperamental weaknesses lay in such different directions. He was always ready to

leave one trail for another; he was always open to conviction, trusting to the essentials of his character for an ultimate consistency. He hated Carson in those days as a Scotch terrier might hate a bloodhound, as something at once more effective and impressive, and exasperatingly, infinitely less intelligent.

Section 4

Thus--a vivid fact as yet only in a few hundred skulls or so--the vast catastrophe of the Great War gathered behind the idle, dispersed and confused spectacle of an indifferent world, very much as the storms and rains of late September gathered behind the glow and lassitudes of August, and with scarcely more of set human intention. For the greater part of mankind the European international situation was at most something in the papers, no more important than the political disturbances in South Africa, where the Herzogites were curiously uneasy, or the possible trouble between Turkey and Greece. The things that really interested people in England during the last months of peace were boxing and the summer sales. A brilliant young Frenchman, Carpentier, who had knocked out Bombardier Wells, came over again to defeat Gunboat Smith, and did so to the infinite delight of France and the whole Latin world, amidst the generous applause of Anglo-Saxondom. And there was also a British triumph over the Americans at polo, and a lively and cultured newspaper discussion about a proper motto for the arms of the London County Council. The trial of Madame Caillaux filled

the papers with animated reports and vivid pictures; Gregori Rasputin was stabbed and became the subject of much lively gossip about the Russian Court; and Ulivi, the Italian impostor who claimed he could explode mines by means of an "ultra-red" ray, was exposed and fled with a lady, very amusingly. For a few days all the work at Woolwich Arsenal was held up because a certain Mr. Entwhistle, having refused to erect a machine on a concrete bed laid down by non-unionists, was rather uncivilly dismissed, and the Irish trouble pounded along its tiresome mischievous way. People gave a divided attention to these various topics, and went about their individual businesses.

And at Dower House they went about their businesses. Mr. Direck's arm healed rapidly; Cecily Corner and he talked of their objects in life and Utopias and the books of Mr. Britling, and he got down from a London bookseller Baedeker's guides for Holland and Belgium, South Germany and Italy; Herr Heinrich after some doubt sent in his application form and his preliminary deposit for the Esperanto Conference at Boulogne, and Billy consented to be stroked three times but continued to bite with great vigour and promptitude. And the trouble about Hugh, Mr. Britling's eldest son, resolved itself into nothing of any vital importance, and settled itself very easily.

Section 5

After Hugh had cleared things up and gone back to London Mr. Britling

was inclined to think that such a thing as apprehension was a sin against the general fairness and integrity of life.

Of all things in the world Hugh was the one that could most easily rouse Mr. Britling's unhappy aptitude for distressing imaginations. Hugh was nearer by far to his heart and nerves than any other creature. In the last few years Mr. Britling, by the light of a variety of emotional excursions in other directions, had been discovering this. Whatever Mr. Britling discovered he talked about; he had evolved from his realisation of this tenderness, which was without an effort so much tenderer than all the subtle and tremendous feelings he had attempted in his--excursions, the theory that he had expounded to Mr. Direck that it is only through our children that we are able to achieve disinterested love, real love. But that left unexplained that far more intimate emotional hold of Hugh than of his very jolly little step-brothers. That was a fact into which Mr. Britling rather sedulously wouldn't look....

Mr. Britling was probably much franker and more open-eyed with himself and the universe than a great number of intelligent people, and yet there were quite a number of aspects of his relations with his wife, with people about him, with his country and God and the nature of things, upon which he turned his back with an attentive persistence. But a back too resolutely turned may be as indicative as a pointing finger, and in this retrogressive way, and tacitly even so far as his formal thoughts, his unspoken comments, went, Mr. Britling knew that he loved his son because he had lavished the most hope and the most imagination

upon him, because he was the one living continuation of that dear life with Mary, so lovingly stormy at the time, so fine now in memory, that had really possessed the whole heart of Mr. Britling. The boy had been the joy and marvel of the young parents; it was incredible to them that there had ever been a creature so delicate and sweet, and they brought considerable imagination and humour to the detailed study of his minute personality and to the forecasting of his future. Mr. Britling's mind blossomed with wonderful schemes for his education. All that mental growth no doubt contributed greatly to Mr. Britling's peculiar affection, and with it there interwove still tenderer and subtler elements, for the boy had a score of Mary's traits. But there were other things still more conspicuously ignored. One silent factor in the slow widening of the breach between Edith and Mr. Britling was her cool estimate of her stepson. She was steadfastly kind to this shock-headed, untidy little dreamer, he was extremely well cared for in her hands, she liked him and she was amused by him--it is difficult to imagine what more Mr. Britling could have expected--but it was as plain as daylight that she felt that this was not the child she would have cared to have borne. It was quite preposterous and perfectly natural that this should seem to Mr. Britling to be unfair to Hugh.

Edith's home was more prosperous than Mary's; she brought her own money to it; the bringing up of her children was a far more efficient business than Mary's instinctive proceedings. Hugh had very nearly died in his first year of life; some summer infection had snatched at him; that had tied him to his father's heart by a knot of fear; but no infection had

ever come near Edith's own nursery. And it was Hugh that Mr. Britling had seen, small and green-faced and pitiful under an anaesthetic for some necessary small operation to his adenoids. His younger children had never stabbed to Mr. Britling's heart with any such pitifulness; they were not so thin-skinned as their elder brother, not so assailable by the little animosities of dust and germ. And out of such things as this evolved a shapeless cloud of championship for Hugh. Jealousies and suspicions are latent in every human relationship. We go about the affairs of life pretending magnificently that they are not so, pretending to the generosities we desire. And in all step-relationships jealousy and suspicion are not merely latent, they stir.

It was Mr. Britling's case for Hugh that he was something exceptional, something exceptionally good, and that the peculiar need there was to take care of him was due to a delicacy of nerve and fibre that was ultimately a virtue. The boy was quick, quick to hear, quick to move, very accurate in his swift way, he talked unusually soon, he began to sketch at an early age with an incurable roughness and a remarkable expressiveness. That he was sometimes ungainly, often untidy, that he would become so mentally preoccupied as to be uncivil to people about him, that he caught any malaise that was going, was all a part of that. The sense of Mrs. Britling's unexpressed criticisms, the implied contrasts with the very jolly, very uninspired younger family, kept up a nervous desire in Mr. Britling for evidences and manifestations of Hugh's quality. Not always with happy results; it caused much mutual irritation, but not enough to prevent the growth of a real response on

Hugh's part to his father's solicitude. The youngster knew and felt that his father was his father just as certainly as he felt that Mrs. Britling was not his mother. To his father he brought his successes and to his father he appealed.

But he brought his successes more readily than he brought his troubles. So far as he himself was concerned he was disposed to take a humorous view of the things that went wrong and didn't come off with him, but as a "Tremendous Set-Down for the Proud Parent" they resisted humorous treatment....

Now the trouble that he had been hesitating to bring before his father was concerned with that very grave interest of the young, his Object in Life. It had nothing to do with those erotic disturbances that had distressed his father's imagination. Whatever was going on below the surface of Hugh's smiling or thoughtful presence in that respect had still to come to the surface and find expression. But he was bothered very much by divergent strands in his own intellectual composition. Two sets of interests pulled at him, one--it will seem a dry interest to many readers, but for Hugh it glittered and fascinated--was crystallography and molecular physics; the other was caricature. Both aptitudes sprang no doubt from the same exceptional sensitiveness to form. As a schoolboy he exercised both very happily, but now he was getting to the age of specialisation, and he was fluctuating very much between science and art. After a spell of scientific study he would come upon a fatigue period and find nothing in life but absurdities and a

lark that one could represent very amusingly; after a bout of funny drawings his mind went back to his light and crystals and films like a Magdalen repenting in a church. After his public school he had refused Cambridge and gone to University College, London, to work under the great and inspiring Professor Cardinal; simultaneously Cardinal had been arranging to go to Cambridge, and Hugh had scarcely embarked upon his London work when Cardinal was succeeded by the dull, conscientious and depressing Pelkingham, at whose touch crystals became as puddings, bubble films like cotton sheets, transparency vanished from the world, and X rays dwarfed and died. And Hugh degenerated immediately into a scoffing trifler who wished to give up science for art.

He gave up science for art after grave consultation with his father, and the real trouble that had been fretting him, it seemed, was that now he repented and wanted to follow Cardinal to Cambridge, and--a year lost--go on with science again. He felt it was a discreditable fluctuation; he knew it would be a considerable expense; and so he took two weeks before he could screw himself up to broaching the matter.

"So that is all," said Mr. Britling, immensely relieved.

"My dear Parent, you didn't think I had backed a bill or forged a cheque?"

"I thought you might have married a chorus girl or something of that sort," said Mr. Britling.

"Or bought a large cream-coloured motor-car for her on the instalment system, which she'd smashed up. No, that sort of thing comes later.... I'll just put myself down on the waiting list of one of those bits of delight in the Cambridge tobacco shops--and go on with my studies for a year or two...."

Section 6

Though Mr. Britling's anxiety about his son was dispelled, his mind remained curiously apprehensive throughout July. He had a feeling that things were not going well with the world, a feeling he tried in vain to dispel by various distractions. Perhaps some subtler subconscious analysis of the situation was working out probabilities that his conscious self would not face. And when presently he bicycled off to Mrs. Harrowdean for flattery, amusement, and comfort generally, he found her by no means the exalting confirmation of everything he wished to believe about himself and the universe, that had been her delightful rôle in the early stages of their romantic friendship. She maintained her hostility to Edith; she seemed bent on making things impossible. And yet there were one or two phases of the old sustaining intimacies.

They walked across her absurd little park to the summer-house with the view on the afternoon of his arrival, and they discussed the Irish pamphlet which was now nearly finished.

"Of course," she said, "it will be a wonderful pamphlet."

There was a reservation in her voice that made him wait.

"But I suppose all sorts of people could write an Irish pamphlet. Nobody but you could write 'The Silent Places.' Oh, why don't you finish that great beautiful thing, and leave all this world of reality and newspapers, all these Crude, Vulgar, Quarrelsome, Jarring things to other people? You have the magic gift, you might be a poet, you can take us out of all these horrid things that are, away to Beautyland, and you are just content to be a critic and a disputer. It's your surroundings. It's your sordid realities. It's that Practicality at your elbow. You ought never to see a newspaper. You ought never to have an American come within ten miles of you. You ought to live on bowls of milk drunk in valleys of asphodel."

Mr. Britling, who liked this sort of thing in a way, and yet at the same time felt ridiculously distended and altogether preposterous while it was going on, answered feebly and self-consciously.

"There was your letter in the Nation the other day," she said. "Why do you get drawn into arguments? I wanted to rush into the Nation and pick you up and wipe the anger off you, and carry you out of it all--into some quiet beautiful place."

"But one has to answer these people," said Mr. Britling, rolling along by the side of her like a full moon beside Venus, and quite artlessly falling in with the tone of her.

She repeated lines from "The Silent Places" from memory. She threw quite wonderful emotion into her voice. She made the words glow. And he had only shown her the thing once....

Was he indeed burying a marvellous gift under the dust of current affairs? When at last in the warm evening light they strolled back from the summer-house to dinner he had definitely promised her that he would take up and finish "The Silent Places."... And think over the Irish pamphlet again before he published it....

Pyecrafts was like a crystal casket of finer soil withdrawn from the tarred highways of the earth....

And yet the very next day this angel enemy of controversies broke out in the most abominable way about Edith, and he had to tell her more plainly than he had done hitherto, that he could not tolerate that sort of thing. He wouldn't have Edith guyed. He wouldn't have Edith made to seem base. And at that there was much trouble between them, and tears and talk of Oliver....

Mr. Britling found himself unable to get on either with "The Silent Places" or the pamphlet, and he was very unhappy....

Afterwards she repented very touchingly, and said that if only he would love her she would swallow a thousand Ediths. He waived a certain disrespect in the idea of her swallowing Edith, and they had a beautiful reconciliation and talked of exalted things, and in the evening he worked quite well upon "The Silent Places" and thought of half-a-dozen quite wonderful lines, and in the course of the next day he returned to Dower House and Mr. Direck and considerable piles of correspondence and the completion of the Irish pamphlet.

But he was restless. He was more restless in his house than he had ever been. He could not understand it. Everything about him was just as it had always been, and yet it was unsatisfactory, and it seemed more unstable than anything had ever seemed before. He was bored by the solemn development of the Irish dispute; he was irritated by the smouldering threat of the Balkans; he was irritated by the suffragettes and by a string of irrational little strikes; by the general absence of any main plot as it were to hold all these wranglings and trivialities together.... At the Dower House the most unpleasant thoughts would come to him. He even had doubts whether in "The Silent Places," he had been plagiarising, more or less unconsciously, from Henry James's "Great Good Place."...

On the twenty-first of July Gladys came back repaired and looking none the worse for her misadventure. Next day he drove her very carefully over to Pyecrafts, hoping to drug his uneasiness with the pretence of a

grand passion and the praises of "The Silent Places," that beautiful work of art that was so free from any taint of application, and alas! he found Mrs. Harrowdean in an evil mood. He had been away from her for ten days--ten whole days. No doubt Edith had manoeuvred to keep him. She hadn't! Hadn't she? How was he, poor simple soul! to tell that she hadn't? That was the prelude to a stormy afternoon.

The burthen of Mrs. Harrowdean was that she was wasting her life, that she was wasting the poor, good, patient Oliver's life, that for the sake of friendship she was braving the worst imputations and that he treated her cavalierly, came when he wished to do so, stayed away heartlessly, never thought she needed little treats, little attentions, little presents. Did he think she could settle down to her poor work, such as it was, in neglect and loneliness? He forgot women were dear little tender things, and had to be made happy and kept happy. Oliver might not be clever and attractive but he did at least in his clumsy way understand and try and do his duty....

Towards the end of the second hour of such complaints the spirit of Mr. Britling rose in revolt. He lifted up his voice against her, he charged his voice with indignant sorrow and declared that he had come over to Pyecrafts with no thought in his mind but sweet and loving thoughts, that he had but waited for Gladys to be ready before he came, that he had brought over the manuscript of "The Silent Places" with him to polish and finish up, that "for days and days" he had been longing to do this in the atmosphere of the dear old summer-house with its distant

view of the dear old sea, and that now all that was impossible, that Mrs. Harrowdean had made it impossible and that indeed she was rapidly making everything impossible....

And having delivered himself of this judgment Mr. Britling, a little surprised at the rapid vigour of his anger, once he had let it loose, came suddenly to an end of his words, made a renunciatory gesture with his arms, and as if struck with the idea, rushed out of her room and out of the house to where Gladys stood waiting. He got into her and started her up, and after some trouble with the gear due to the violence of his emotion, he turned her round and departed with her--crushing the corner of a small bed of snapdragon as he turned--and dove her with a sulky sedulousness back to the Dower House and newspapers and correspondence and irritations, and that gnawing and irrational sense of a hollow and aimless quality in the world that he had hoped Mrs. Harrowdean would assuage. And the further he went from Mrs. Harrowdean the harsher and unjuster it seemed to him that he had been to her.

But he went on because he did not see how he could very well go back.

Section 7

Mr. Direck's broken wrist healed sooner than he desired. From the first he had protested that it was the sort of thing that one can carry about in a sling, that he was quite capable of travelling about and taking

care of himself in hotels, that he was only staying on at Matching's Easy because he just loved to stay on and wallow in Mrs. Britling's kindness and Mr. Britling's company. While as a matter of fact he wallowed as much as he could in the freshness and friendliness of Miss Cecily Corner, and for more than a third of this period Mr. Britling was away from home altogether.

Mr. Direck, it should be clear by this time, was a man of more than European simplicity and directness, and his intentions towards the young lady were as simple and direct and altogether honest as such intentions can be. It is the American conception of gallantry more than any other people's, to let the lady call the tune in these affairs; the man's place is to be protective, propitiatory, accommodating and clever, and the lady's to be difficult but delightful until he catches her and houses her splendidly and gives her a surprising lot of pocket-money, and goes about his business; and upon these assumptions Mr. Direck went to work. But quite early it was manifest to him that Cecily did not recognise his assumptions. She was embarrassed when he got down one or two little presents of chocolates and flowers for her from London--the Britling boys were much more appreciative--she wouldn't let him contrive costly little expeditions for her, and she protested against compliments and declared she would stay away when he paid them. And she was not contented by his general sentiments about life, but asked the most direct questions about his occupation and his activities. His chief occupation was being the well provided heir of a capable lawyer, and his activities in the light of her inquiries struck him as being light

and a trifle amateurish, qualities he had never felt as any drawback about them before. So that he had to rely rather upon aspirations and the possibility, under proper inspiration, of a more actively serviceable life in future.

"There's a feeling in the States," he said, "that we've had rather a tendency to overdo work, and that there is scope for a leisure class to develop the refinement and the wider meanings of life."

"But a leisure class doesn't mean a class that does nothing," said Cecily. "It only means a class that isn't busy in business."

"You're too hard on me," said Mr. Direck with that quiet smile of his.

And then by way of putting her on the defensive he asked her what she thought a man in his position ought to do.

"Something," she said, and in the expansion of this vague demand they touched on a number of things. She said that she was a Socialist, and there was still in Mr. Direck's composition a streak of the old-fashioned American prejudice against the word. He associated Socialists with Anarchists and deported aliens. It was manifest too that she was deeply read in the essays and dissertations of Mr. Britling. She thought everybody, man or woman, ought to be chiefly engaged in doing something definite for the world at large. ("There's my secretaryship of the Massachusetts Modern Thought Society, anyhow," said Mr. Direck.) And

she herself wanted to be doing something--it was just because she did not know what it was she ought to be doing that she was reading so extensively and voraciously. She wanted to lose herself in something. Deep in the being of Mr. Direck was the conviction that what she ought to be doing was making love in a rapturously egotistical manner, and enjoying every scrap of her own delightful self and her own delightful vitality--while she had it, but for the purposes of their conversation he did not care to put it any more definitely than to say that he thought we owed it to ourselves to develop our personalities. Upon which she joined issue with great vigour.

"That is just what Mr. Britling says about you in his 'American Impressions,'" she said. "He says that America overdoes the development of personalities altogether, that whatever else is wrong about America that is where America is most clearly wrong. I read that this morning, and directly I read it I thought, 'Yes, that's exactly it! Mr. Direck is overdoing the development of personalities.'"

"Me!"

"Yes. I like talking to you and I don't like talking to you. And I see now it is because you keep on talking of my Personality and your Personality. That makes me uncomfortable. It's like having some one following me about with a limelight. And in a sort of way I do like it. I like it and I'm flattered by it, and then I go off and dislike it, dislike the effect of it. I find myself trying to be what you have told

me I am--sort of acting myself. I want to glance at looking-glasses to see if I am keeping it up. It's just exactly what Mr. Britling says in his book about American women. They act themselves, he says; they get a kind of story and explanation about themselves and they are always trying to make it perfectly plain and clear to every one. Well, when you do that you can't think nicely of other things."

"We like a clear light on people," said Mr. Direck.

"We don't. I suppose we're shadier," said Cecily.

"You're certainly much more in half-tones," said Mr. Direck. "And I confess it's the half-tones get hold of me. But still you haven't told me, Miss Cissie, what you think I ought to do with myself. Here I am, you see, very much at your disposal. What sort of business do you think it's my duty to go in for?"

"That's for some one with more experience than I have, to tell you. You should ask Mr. Britling."

"I'd rather have it from you."

"I don't even know for myself," she said.

"So why shouldn't we start to find out together?" he asked.

It was her tantalising habit to ignore all such tentatives.

"One can't help the feeling that one is in the world for something more than oneself," she said....

Section 8

Soon Mr. Direck could measure the time that was left to him at the Dower House no longer by days but by hours. His luggage was mostly packed, his tickets to Rotterdam, Cologne, Munich, Dresden, Vienna, were all in order. And things were still very indefinite between him and Cecily. But God has not made Americans clean-shaven and firm-featured for nothing, and he determined that matters must be brought to some sort of definition before he embarked upon travels that were rapidly losing their attractiveness in this concentration of his attention....

A considerable nervousness betrayed itself in his voice and manner when at last he carried out his determination.

"There's just a lil' thing," he said to her, taking advantage of a moment when they were together after lunch, "that I'd value now more than anything else in the world."

She answered by a lifted eyebrow and a glance that had not so much inquiry in it as she intended.

"If we could just take a lil' walk together for a bit. Round by Claverings Park and all that. See the deer again and the old trees. Sort of scenery I'd like to remember when I'm away from it."

He was a little short of breath, and there was a quite disproportionate gravity about her moment for consideration.

"Yes," she said with a cheerful acquiescence that came a couple of bars too late. "Let's. It will be jolly."

"These fine English afternoons are wonderful afternoons," he remarked after a moment or so of silence. "Not quite the splendid blaze we get in our summer, but--sort of glowing."

"It's been very fine all the time you've been here," she said....

After which exchanges they went along the lane, into the road by the park fencing, and so to the little gate that lets one into the park, without another word.

The idea took hold of Mr. Direck's mind that until they got through the park gate it would be quite out of order to say anything. The lane and the road and the stile and the gate were all so much preliminary stuff to be got through before one could get to business. But after the little white gate the way was clear, the park opened out and one could get

ahead without bothering about the steering. And Mr. Direck had, he felt, been diplomatically involved in lanes and by-ways long enough.

"Well," he said as he rejoined her after very carefully closing the gate. "What I really wanted was an opportunity of just mentioning something that happens to be of interest to you--if it does happen to interest you.... I suppose I'd better put the thing as simply as possible.... Practically.... I'm just right over the head and all in love with you.... I thought I'd like to tell you...."

Immense silences.

"Of course I won't pretend there haven't been others," Mr. Direck suddenly resumed. "There have. One particularly. But I can assure you I've never felt the depth and height or anything like the sort of Quiet Clear Conviction.... And now I'm just telling you these things, Miss Corner, I don't know whether it will interest you if I tell you that you're really and truly the very first love I ever had as well as my last. I've had sent over--I got it only yesterday--this lil' photograph of a miniature portrait of one of my ancestor's relations--a Corner just as you are. It's here...."

He had considerable difficulties with his pockets and papers. Cecily, mute and flushed and inconvenienced by a preposterous and unaccountable impulse to weep, took the picture he handed her.

"When I was a lil' fellow of fifteen," said Mr. Direck in the tone of one producing a melancholy but conclusive piece of evidence, "I worshipped that miniature. It seemed to me--the loveliest person.... And--it's just you...."

He too was preposterously moved.

It seemed a long time before Cecily had anything to say, and then what she had to say she said in a softened, indistinct voice. "You're very kind," she said, and kept hold of the little photograph.

They had halted for the photograph. Now they walked on again.

"I thought I'd like to tell you," said Mr. Direck and became tremendously silent.

Cecily found him incredibly difficult to answer. She tried to make herself light and offhand, and to be very frank with him.

"Of course," she said, "I knew--I felt somehow--you meant to say something of this sort to me--when you asked me to come with you--"

"Well?" he said.

"And I've been trying to make my poor brain think of something to say to you."

She paused and contemplated her difficulties....

"Couldn't you perhaps say something of the same kind--such as I've been trying to say?" said Mr. Direck presently, with a note of earnest helpfulness. "I'd be very glad if you could."

"Not exactly," said Cecily, more careful than ever.

"Meaning?"

"I think you know that you are the best of friends. I think you are, oh--a Perfect Dear."

"Well--that's all right--so far."

"That is as far."

"You don't know whether you love me? That's what you mean to say."

"No.... I feel somehow it isn't that.... Yet...."

"There's nobody else by any chance?"

"No." Cecily weighed things. "You needn't trouble about that."

"Only ... only you don't know."

Cecily made a movement of assent.

"It's no good pretending I haven't thought about you," she said.

"Well, anyhow I've done my best to give you the idea," said Mr. Direck. "I seem now to have been doing that pretty nearly all the time."

"Only what should we do?"

Mr. Direck felt this question was singularly artless. "Why!--we'd marry," he said. "And all that sort of thing."

"Letty has married--and all that sort of thing," said Cecily, fixing her eye on him very firmly because she was colouring brightly. "And it doesn't leave Letty very much--forrader."

"Well now, they have a good time, don't they? I'd have thought they have a lovely time!"

"They've had a lovely time. And Teddy is the dearest husband. And they have a sweet little house and a most amusing baby. And they play hockey every Sunday. And Teddy does his work. And every week is like every other week. It is just heavenly. Just always the same heavenly. Every Sunday there is a fresh week of heavenly beginning. And this, you see,

isn't heaven; it is earth. And they don't know it but they are getting bored. I have been watching them, and they are getting dreadfully bored. It's heart-breaking to watch, because they are almost my dearest people. Teddy used to be making perpetual jokes about the house and the baby and his work and Letty, and now--he's made all the possible jokes. It's only now and then he gets a fresh one. It's like spring flowers and then--summer. And Letty sits about and doesn't sing. They want something new to happen.... And there's Mr. and Mrs. Britling. They love each other. Much more than Mrs. Britling dreams, or Mr. Britling for the matter of that. Once upon a time things were heavenly for them too, I suppose. Until suddenly it began to happen to them that nothing new ever happened...."

"Well," said Mr. Direck, "people can travel."

"But that isn't real happening," said Cecily.

"It keeps one interested."

"But real happening is doing something."

"You come back to that," said Mr. Direck. "I never met any one before who'd quite got that spirit as you have it. I wouldn't alter it. It's part of you. It's part of this place. It's what Mr. Britling always seems to be saying and never quite knowing he's said it. It's just as though all the things that are going on weren't the things that ought to

be going on--but something else quite different. Somehow one falls into it. It's as if your daily life didn't matter, as if politics didn't matter, as if the King and the social round and business and all those things weren't anything really, and as though you felt there was something else--out of sight--round the corner--that you ought to be getting at. Well, I admit, that's got hold of me too. And it's all mixed up with my idea of you. I don't see that there's really a contradiction in it at all. I'm in love with you, all my heart's in love with you, what's the good of being shy about it? I'd just die for your littlest wish right here now, it's just as though I'd got love in my veins instead of blood, but that's not taking me away from that other thing. It's bringing me round to that other thing. I feel as if without you I wasn't up to anything at all, but with you--We'd not go settling down in a cottage or just touring about with a Baedeker Guide or anything of that kind. Not for long anyhow. We'd naturally settle down side by side and do ..."

"But what should we do?" asked Cecily.

There came a hiatus in their talk.

Mr. Direck took a deep breath.

"You see that old felled tree there. I was sitting on it the day before yesterday and thinking of you. Will you come there and sit with me on it? When you sit on it you get a view, oh! a perfectly lovely English

view, just a bit of the house and those clumps of trees and the valley away there with the lily pond. I'd love to have you in my memory of it...."

They sat down, and Mr. Direck opened his case. He was shy and clumsy about opening it, because he had been thinking dreadfully hard about it, and he hated to seem heavy or profound or anything but artless and spontaneous to Cecily. And he felt even when he did open his case that the effect of it was platitudinous and disappointing. Yet when he had thought it out it had seemed very profound and altogether living.

"You see one doesn't want to use terms that have been used in a thousand different senses in any way that isn't a perfectly unambiguous sense, and at the same time one doesn't want to seem to be canting about things or pitching anything a note or two higher than it ought legitimately to go, but it seems to me that this sort of something that Mr. Britling is always asking for in his essays and writings and things, and what you are looking for just as much and which seems so important to you that even love itself is a secondary kind of thing until you can square the two together, is nothing more nor less than Religion--I don't mean this Religion or that Religion but just Religion itself, a Big, Solemn, Comprehensive Idea that holds you and me and all the world together in one great, grand universal scheme. And though it isn't quite the sort of idea of love-making that's been popular--well, in places like Carrierville--for some time, it's the right idea; it's got to be followed out if we don't want love-making to be a sort of idle,

troublesome game of treats and flatteries that is sure as anything to lead right away to disappointments and foolishness and unfaithfulness and--just Hell. What you are driving at, according to my interpretation, is that marriage has got to be a religious marriage or else you are splitting up life, that religion and love are most of life and all the power there is in it, and that they can't afford to be harnessed in two different directions.... I never had these ideas until I came here and met you, but they come up now in my mind as though they had always been there.... And that's why you don't want to marry in a hurry. And that's why I'm glad almost that you don't want to marry in a hurry."

He considered. "That's why I'll have to go on to Germany and just let both of us turn things over in our minds."

"Yes," said Cecily, weighing his speech. "I think that is it. I think that I do want a religious marriage, and that what is wrong with Teddy and Letty is that they aren't religious. They pretend they are religious somewhere out of sight and round the corner.... Only--"

He considered her gravely.

"What is Religion?" she asked.

Here again there was a considerable pause.

"Very nearly two-thirds of the papers read before our Massachusetts

society since my connection with it, have dealt with that very question," Mr. Direck began. "And one of our most influential members was able to secure the services of a very able and highly trained young woman from Michigan University, to make a digest of all these representative utterances. We are having it printed in a thoroughly artistic mariner, as the club book for our autumn season. The drift of her results is that religion isn't the same thing as religions. That most religions are old and that religion is always new.... Well, putting it simply, religion is the perpetual rediscovery of that Great Thing Out There.... What the Great Thing is goes by all sorts of names, but if you know it's there and if you remember it's there, you've got religion.... That's about how she figured it out.... I shall send you the book as soon as a copy comes over to me.... I can't profess to put it as clearly as she puts it. She's got a real analytical mind. But it's one of the most suggestive lil' books I've ever seen. It just takes hold of you and makes you think."

He paused and regarded the ground before him--thoughtfully.

"Life," said Cecily, "has either got to be religious or else it goes to pieces.... Perhaps anyhow it goes to pieces...."

Mr. Direck endorsed these observations by a slow nodding of the head.

He allowed a certain interval to elapse. Then a vaguely apprehended purpose that had been for a time forgotten in these higher interests

came back to him. He took it up with a breathless sense of temerity.

"Well," he said, "then you don't hate me?"

She smiled.

"You don't dislike me or despise me?"

She was still reassuring.

"You don't think I'm just a slow American sort of portent?"

"No."

"You think, on the whole, I might even--someday--?"

She tried to meet his eyes with a pleasant frankness, and perhaps she was franker than she meant to be.

"Look here," said Mr. Direck, with a little quiver of emotion softening his mouth. "I'll ask you something. We've got to wait. Until you feel clearer. Still.... Could you bring yourself--? If just once--I could kiss you....

"I'm going away to Germany," he went on to her silence. "But I shan't be giving so much attention to Germany as I supposed I should when I

planned it out. But somehow--if I felt--that I'd kissed you...."

With a delusive effect of calmness the young lady looked first over her left shoulder and then over her right and surveyed the park about them. Then she stood up. "We can go that way home," she said with a movement of her head, "through the little covert."

Mr. Direck stood up too.

"If I was a poet or a bird," said Mr. Direck, "I should sing. But being just a plain American citizen all I can do is just to talk about all I'd do if I wasn't...."

And when they had reached the little covert, with its pathway of soft moss and its sheltering screen of interlacing branches, he broke the silence by saying, "Well, what's wrong with right here and now?" and Cecily stood up to him as straight as a spear, with gifts in her clear eyes. He took her soft cool face between his trembling hands, and kissed her sweet half-parted lips. When he kissed her she shivered, and he held her tighter and would have kissed her again. But she broke away from him, and he did not press her. And muter than ever, pondering deeply, and secretly trembling in the queerest way, these two outwardly sedate young people returned to the Dower House....

And after tea the taxicab from the junction came for him and he vanished, and was last seen as a waving hat receding along the top of

the dog-rose hedge that ran beyond the hockey field towards the village.

"He will see Germany long before I shall," said Herr Heinrich with a gust of nostalgia. "I wish almost I had not agreed to go to Boulogne."

And for some days Miss Cecily Corner was a very grave and dignified young woman indeed. Pondering....

Section 9

After the departure of Mr. Direck things international began to move forward with great rapidity. It was exactly as if his American deliberation had hitherto kept things waiting. Before his postcard from Rotterdam reached the Dower House Austria had sent an ultimatum to Serbia, and before Cecily had got the letter he wrote her from Cologne, a letter in that curiously unformed handwriting the stenographer and the typewriter are making an American characteristic, Russia was mobilising, and the vast prospect of a European war had opened like the rolling up of a curtain on which the interests of the former week had been but a trivial embroidery. So insistent was this reality that revealed itself that even the shooting of the Dublin people after the gun-running of Howth was dwarfed to unimportance. The mind of Mr. Britling came round from its restless wanderings to a more and more intent contemplation of the hurrying storm-clouds that swept out of nothingness to blacken all his sky. He watched it, he watched amazed and incredulous, he watched

this contradiction of all his reiterated confessions of faith in German sanity and pacifism, he watched it with all that was impersonal in his being, and meanwhile his personal life ran in a continually deeper and narrower channel as his intelligence was withdrawn from it.

Never had the double refraction of his mind been more clearly defined. On the one hand the Britling of the disinterested intelligence saw the habitual peace of the world vanish as the daylight vanishes when a shutter falls over the window of a cell; and on the other the Britling of the private life saw all the pleasant comfort of his relations with Mrs. Harrowdean disappearing in a perplexing irrational quarrel. He did not want to lose Mrs. Harrowdean; he contemplated their breach with a profound and profoundly selfish dismay. It seemed the wanton termination of an arrangement of which he was only beginning to perceive the extreme and irreplaceable satisfactoriness.

It wasn't that he was in love with her. He knew almost as clearly as though he had told himself as much that he was not. But then, on the other hand, it was equally manifest in its subdued and ignored way that as a matter of fact she was hardly more in love with him. What constituted the satisfactoriness of the whole affair was its essential unlovingness and friendly want of emotion. It left their minds free to play with all the terms and methods of love without distress. She could summon tears and delights as one summons servants, and he could act his part as lover with no sense of lost control. They supplied in each other's lives a long-felt want--if only, that is, she could control her

curious aptitude for jealousy and the sexual impulse to vex. There, he felt, she broke the convention of their relations and brought in serious realities, and this little rift it was that had widened to a now considerable breach. He knew that in every sane moment she dreaded and wished to heal that breach as much as he did. But the deep simplicities of the instincts they had tacitly agreed to bridge over washed the piers of their reconciliation away.

And unless they could restore the bridge things would end, and Mr. Britling felt that the ending of things would involve for him the most extraordinary exasperation. She would go to Oliver for comfort; she would marry Oliver; and he knew her well enough to be sure that she would thrust her matrimonial happiness with Oliver unsparingly upon his attention; while he, on the other hand, being provided with no corresponding Olivette, would be left, a sort of emotional celibate, with his slack times and his afternoons and his general need for flattery and amusement dreadfully upon his own hands. He would be tormented by jealousy. In which case--and here he came to verities--his work would suffer. It wouldn't grip him while all these vague demands she satisfied fermented unassuaged.

And, after the fashion of our still too adolescent world, Mr. Britling and Mrs. Harrowdean proceeded to negotiate these extremely unromantic matters in the phrases of that simple, honest and youthful passionateness which is still the only language available, and at times Mr. Britling came very near persuading himself that he had something of

the passionate love for her that he had once had for his Mary, and that the possible loss of her had nothing to do with the convenience of Pyecrafts or any discretion in the world. Though indeed the only thing in the whole plexus of emotional possibility that still kept anything of its youthful freshness in his mind was the very strong objection indeed he felt to handing her over to anybody else in the world. And in addition he had just a touch of fatherly feeling that a younger man would not have had, and it made him feel very anxious to prevent her making a fool of herself by marrying a man out of spite. He felt that since an obstinate lover is apt to be an exacting husband, in the end the heavy predominance of Oliver might wring much sincerer tears from her than she had ever shed for himself. But that generosity was but the bright edge to a mainly possessive jealousy.

It was Mr. Britling who reopened the correspondence by writing a little apology for the corner of the small snapdragon bed, and this evoked an admirably touching reply. He replied quite naturally with assurances and declarations. But before she got his second letter her mood had changed. She decided that if he had really and truly been lovingly sorry, instead of just writing a note to her he would have rushed over to her in a wild, dramatic state of mind, and begged forgiveness on his knees. She wrote therefore a second letter to this effect, crossing his second one, and, her literary gift getting the better of her, she expanded her thesis into a general denunciation of his habitual off-handedness with her, to an abandonment of all hope of ever being happy with him, to a decision to end the matter once for all, and after a decent interval of

dignified regrets to summon Oliver to the reward of his patience and goodness. The European situation was now at a pitch to get upon Mr. Britling's nerves, and he replied with a letter intended to be conciliatory, but which degenerated into earnest reproaches for her "unreasonableness." Meanwhile she had received his second and tenderly eloquent letter; it moved her deeply, and having now cleared her mind of much that had kept it simmering uncomfortably, she replied with a sweetly loving epistle. From this point their correspondence had a kind of double quality, being intermittently angry and loving; her third letter was tender, and it was tenderly answered in his fourth; but in the interim she had received his third and answered it with considerable acerbity, to which his fifth was a retort, just missing her generous and conclusive fifth. She replied to his fifth on a Saturday evening--it was that eventful Saturday, Saturday the First of August, 1914--by a telegram. Oliver was abroad in Holland, engaged in a much-needed emotional rest, and she wired to Mr. Britling: "Have wired for Oliver, he will come to me, do not trouble to answer this."

She was astonished to get no reply for two days. She got no reply for two days because remarkable things were happening to the telegraph wires of England just then, and her message, in the hands of a boy scout on a bicycle, reached Mr. Britling's house only on Monday afternoon. He was then at Claverings discussing the invasion of Belgium that made Britain's participation in the war inevitable, and he did not open the little red-brown envelope until about half-past six. He failed to mark the date and hours upon it, but he perceived that it was essentially a

challenge. He was expected, he saw, to go over at once with his renovated Gladys and end this unfortunate clash forever in one striking and passionate scene. His mind was now so full of the war that he found this the most colourless and unattractive of obligations. But he felt bound by the mysterious code of honour of the illicit love affair to play his part. He postponed his departure until after supper--there was no reason why he should be afraid of motoring by moonlight if he went carefully--because Hugh came in with Cissie demanding a game of hockey. Hockey offered a nervous refreshment, a scampering forgetfulness of the tremendous disaster of this war he had always believed impossible, that nothing else could do, and he was very glad indeed of the irruption....

Section 10

For days the broader side of Mr. Britling's mind, as distinguished from its egotistical edge, had been reflecting more and more vividly and coherently the spectacle of civilisation casting aside the thousand dispersed activities of peace, clutching its weapons and setting its teeth, for a supreme struggle against militarist imperialism. From the point of view of Matching's Easy that colossal crystallising of accumulated antagonisms was for a time no more than a confusion of headlines and a rearrangement of columns in the white windows of the newspapers through which those who lived in the securities of England looked out upon the world. It was a display in the sphere of thought and print immeasurably remote from the real green turf on which one walked,

from the voice and the church-bells of Mr. Dimple that sounded their ample caresses in one's ears, from the clashing of the stags who were beginning to knock the velvet from their horns in the park, or the clatter of the butcher's cart and the respectful greeting of the butcher boy down the lane. It was the spectacle of the world less real even to most imaginations than the world of novels or plays. People talked of these things always with an underlying feeling that they romanced and intellectualised.

On Thursday, July 23rd, the Austro-Hungarian minister at Belgrade presented his impossible ultimatum to the Serbian government, and demanded a reply within forty-eight hours. With the wisdom of retrospect we know now clearly enough what that meant. The Sarajevo crime was to be resuscitated and made an excuse for war. But nine hundred and ninety-nine Europeans out of a thousand had still no suspicion of what was happening to them. The ultimatum figured prominently in the morning papers that came to Matching's Easy on Friday, but it by no means dominated the rest of the news; Sir Edward Carson's rejection of the government proposals for Ulster was given the pride of place, and almost equally conspicuous with the Serbian news were the Caillaux trial and the storming of the St. Petersburg barricades by Cossacks. Herr Heinrich's questions at lunch time received reassuring replies.

On Saturday Sir Edward Carson was still in the central limelight, Russia had intervened and demanded more time for Serbia, and the Daily Chronicle declared the day a critical one for Europe. Dublin with

bayonet charges and bullets thrust Serbia into a corner on Monday. No shots had yet been fired in the East, and the mischief in Ireland that Germany had counted on was well ahead. Sir Edward Grey was said to be working hard for peace.

"It's the cry of wolf," said Mr. Britling to Herr Heinrich.

"But at last there did come a wolf," said Herr Heinrich. "I wish I had not sent my first moneys to that Conference upon Esperanto. I feel sure it will be put off."

"See!" said Teddy very cheerfully to Herr Heinrich on Tuesday, and held up the paper, in which "The Bloodshed in Dublin" had squeezed the "War Cloud Lifting" into a quite subordinate position.

"What did we tell you?" said Mrs. Britling. "Nobody wants a European war."

But Wednesday's paper vindicated his fears. Germany had commanded Russia not to mobilise.

"Of course Russia will mobilise," said Herr Heinrich.

"Or else forever after hold her peace," said Teddy.

"And then Germany will mobilise," said Herr Heinrich, "and all my

holiday will vanish. I shall have to go and mobilise too. I shall have to fight. I have my papers."

"I never thought of you as a soldier before," said Teddy.

"I have deferred my service until I have done my thesis," said Herr Heinrich. "Now all that will be--Piff! And my thesis three-quarters finished."

"That is serious," said Teddy.

"Verdammte Dummheit!" said Herr Heinrich. "Why do they do such things?"

On Thursday, the 30th of July, Caillaux, Carson, strikes, and all the common topics of life had been swept out of the front page of the paper altogether; the stock exchanges were in a state of wild perturbation, and food prices were leaping fantastically. Austria was bombarding Belgrade, contrary to the rules of war hitherto accepted; Russia was mobilising; Mr. Asquith was, he declared, not relaxing his efforts "to do everything possible to circumscribe the area of possible conflict," and the Vienna Conference of Peace Societies was postponed. "I do not see why a conflict between Russia and Austria should involve Western Europe," said Mr. Britling. "Our concern is only for Belgium and France."

But Herr Heinrich knew better. "No," he said. "It is the war. It has come. I have heard it talked about in Germany many times. But I have never believed that it was obliged to come. Ach! It considers no one. So long as Esperanto is disregarded, all these things must be."

Friday brought photographs of the mobilisation in Vienna, and the news that Belgrade was burning. Young men in straw hats very like English or French or Belgian young men in straw hats were shown parading the streets of Vienna, carrying flags and banners portentously, blowing trumpets or waving hats and shouting. Saturday saw all Europe mobilising, and Herr Heinrich upon Teddy's bicycle in wild pursuit of evening papers at the junction. Mobilisation and the emotions of Herr Heinrich now became the central facts of the Dower House situation. The two younger Britlings mobilised with great vigour upon the playroom floor. The elder had one hundred and ninety toy soldiers with a considerable equipment of guns and wagons; the younger had a force of a hundred and twenty-three, not counting three railway porters (with trucks complete), a policeman, five civilians and two ladies. Also they made a number of British and German flags out of paper. But as neither would allow his troops to be any existing foreign army, they agreed to be Redland and Blueland, according to the colour of their prevailing uniforms. Meanwhile Herr Heinrich confessed almost promiscuously the complication of his distresses by a hitherto unexpected emotional interest in the daughter of the village publican. She was a placid receptive young woman named Maud Hickson, on whom the young man had, it seemed, imposed the more poetical name of Marguerite.

"Often we have spoken together, oh yes, often," he assured Mrs. Britling. "And now it must all end. She loves flowers, she loves birds. She is most sweet and innocent. I have taught her many words in German and several times I have tried to draw her in pencil, and now I must go away and never see her any more."

His implicit appeal to the whole literature of Teutonic romanticism disarmed Mrs. Britling's objection that he had no business whatever to know the young woman at all.

"Also," cried Herr Heinrich, facing another aspect of his distresses, "how am I to pack my things? Since I have been here I have bought many things, many books, and two pairs of white flannel trousers and some shirts and a tin instrument that I cannot work, for developing privately Kodak films. All this must go into my little portmanteau. And it will not go into my little portmanteau!

"And there is Billy! Who will now go on with the education of Billy?"

The hands of fate paused not for Herr Heinrich's embarrassments and distresses. He fretted from his room downstairs and back to his room, he went out upon mysterious and futile errands towards the village inn, he prowled about the garden. His head and face grew pinker and pinker; his eyes were flushed and distressed. Everybody sought to say and do kind and reassuring things to him.

"Ach!" he said to Teddy; "you are a civilian. You live in a free country. It is not your war. You can be amused at it...."

But then Teddy was amused at everything.

Something but very dimly apprehended at Matching's Easy, something methodical and compelling away in London, seemed to be fumbling and feeling after Herr Heinrich, and Herr Heinrich it appeared was responding. Sunday's post brought the decision.

"I have to go," he said. "I must go right up to London to-day. To an address in Bloomsbury. Then they will tell me how to go to Germany. I must pack and I must get the taxi-cab from the junction and I must go. Why are there no trains on the branch line on Sundays for me to go by it?"

At lunch he talked politics. "I am entirely opposed to the war," he said. "I am entirely opposed to any war."

"Then why go?" asked Mr. Britling. "Stay here with us. We all like you. Stay here and do not answer your mobilisation summons."

"But then I shall lose all my country. I shall lose my papers. I shall be outcast. I must go."

"I suppose a man should go with his own country," Mr. Britling reflected.

"If there was only one language in all the world, none of such things would happen," Herr Heinrich declared. "There would be no English, no Germans, no Russians."

"Just Esperantists," said Teddy.

"Or Idoists," said Herr Heinrich. "I am not convinced of which. In some ways Ido is much better."

"Perhaps there would have to be a war between Ido and Esperanto to settle it," said Teddy.

"Who shall we play skat with when you have gone?" asked Mrs. Britling.

"All this morning," said Herr Heinrich, expanding in the warmth of sympathy, "I have been trying to pack and I have been unable to pack. My mind is too greatly disordered. I have been told not to bring much luggage. Mrs. Britling, please."

Mrs. Britling became attentive.

"If I could leave much of my luggage, my clothes, some of them, and particularly my violin, it would be much more to my convenience. I do

not care to be mobilised with my violin. There may be much crowding. Then I would but just take my rucksack...."

"If you will leave your things packed up."

"And afterwards they could be sent."

But he did not leave them packed up. The taxi-cab, to order which he had gone to the junction in the morning on Teddy's complaisant machine, came presently to carry him off, and the whole family and the first contingent of the usual hockey players gathered about it to see him off. The elder boy of the two juniors put a distended rucksack upon the seat. Herr Heinrich then shook hands with every one.

"Write and tell us how you get on," cried Mrs. Britling.

"But if England also makes war!"

"Write to Reynolds--let me give you his address; he is my agent in New York," said Mr. Britling, and wrote it down.

"We'll come to the village corner with you, Herr Heinrich," cried the boys.

"No," said Herr Heinrich, sitting down into the automobile, "I will part with you altogether. It is too much...."

"Auf Wiedersehen!" cried Mr. Britling. "Remember, whatever happens there will be peace at last!"

"Then why not at the beginning?" Herr Heinrich demanded with a reasonable exasperation and repeated his maturer verdict on the whole European situation; "Verdammte Bummelei!"

"Go," said Mr. Britling to the taxi driver.

"Auf Wiedersehen, Herr Heinrich!"

"Auf Wiedersehen!"

"Good-bye, Herr Heinrich!"

"Good luck, Herr Heinrich!"

The taxi started with a whir, and Herr Heinrich passed out of the gates and along the same hungry road that had so recently consumed Mr. Direck. "Give him a last send-off," cried Teddy. "One, Two, Three! Auf Wiedersehen!"

The voices, gruff and shrill, sounded raggedly together. The dog-rose hedge cut off the sight of the little face. Then the pink head bobbed up again. He was standing up and waving the panama hat. Careless of

sunstroke....

Then Herr Heinrich had gone altogether....

"Well," said Mr. Britling, turning away.

"I do hope they won't hurt him," said a visitor.

"Oh, they won't put a youngster like that in the fighting line," said Mr. Britling. "He's had no training yet. And he has to wear glasses. How can he shoot? They'll make a clerk of him."

"He hasn't packed at all," said Mrs. Britling to her husband. "Just come up for an instant and peep at his room. It's--touching."

It was touching.

It was more than touching; in its minute, absurd way it was symbolical and prophetic, it was the miniature of one small life uprooted.

The door stood wide open, as he had left it open, careless of all the little jealousies and privacies of occupation and ownership. Even the windows were wide open as though he had needed air; he who had always so sedulously shut his windows since first he came to England. Across the empty fireplace stretched the great bough of oak he had brought in for Billy, but now its twigs and leaves had wilted, and many had broken off

and fallen on the floor. Billy's cage stood empty upon a little table in the corner of the room. Instead of packing, the young man had evidently paced up and down in a state of emotional elaboration; the bed was disordered as though he had several times flung himself upon it, and his books had been thrown about the room despairfully. He had made some little commencements of packing in a borrowed cardboard box. The violin lay as if it lay in state upon the chest of drawers, the drawers were all partially open, and in the middle of the floor sprawled a pitiful shirt of blue, dropped there, the most flattened and broken-hearted of garments. The fireplace contained an unsuccessful pencil sketch of a girl's face, torn across....

Husband and wife regarded the abandoned room in silence for a time, and when Mr. Britling spoke he lowered his voice.

"I don't see Billy," he said.

"Perhaps he has gone out of the window," said Mrs. Britling also in a hushed undertone....

"Well," said Mr. Britling abruptly and loudly, turning away from this first intimation of coming desolations, "let us go down to our hockey! He had to go, you know. And Billy will probably come back again when he begins to feel hungry...."

Section 11

Monday was a public holiday, the First Monday in August, and the day consecrated by long-established custom to the Matching's Easy Flower Show in Claverings Park. The day was to live in Mr. Britling's memory with a harsh brightness like the brightness of that sunshine one sees at times at the edge of a thunderstorm. There were tents with the exhibits, and a tent for "Popular Refreshments," there was a gorgeous gold and yellow steam roundabout with motor-cars and horses, and another in green and silver with wonderfully undulating ostriches and lions, and each had an organ that went by steam; there were cocoanut shies and many ingenious prize-giving shooting and dart-throwing and ring-throwing stalls, each displaying a marvellous array of crockery, clocks, metal ornaments, and suchlike rewards. There was a race of gas balloons, each with a postcard attached to it begging the finder to say where it descended, and you could get a balloon for a shilling and have a chance of winning various impressive and embarrassing prizes if your balloon went far enough--fish carvers, a silver-handled walking-stick, a bog-oak gramophone-record cabinet, and things like that. And by a special gate one could go for sixpence into the Claverings gardens, and the sixpence would be doubled by Lady Homartyn and devoted next winter to the Matching's Easy coal club. And Mr. Britling went through all the shows with his boys, and finally left them with a shilling each and his blessing and paid his sixpence for the gardens and made his way as he had promised, to have tea with Lady Homartyn.

The morning papers had arrived late, and he had been reading them and re-reading them and musing over them intermittently until his family had insisted upon his coming out to the festivities. They said that if for no other reason he must come to witness Aunt Wilshire's extraordinary skill at the cocoanut shy. She could beat everybody. Well, one must not miss a thing like that. The headlines proclaimed, "The Great Powers at War; France Invaded by Germany; Germany invaded by Russia; 100,000 Germans march into Luxemburg; Can England Abstain? Fifty Million Loan to be Issued." And Germany had not only violated the Treaty of London but she had seized a British ship in the Kiel Canal.... The roundabouts were very busy and windily melodious, and the shooting gallery kept popping and jingling as people shot and broke bottles, and the voices of the young men and women inviting the crowd to try their luck at this and that rang loud and clear. Teddy and Letty and Cissie and Hugh were developing a quite disconcerting skill at the dart-throwing, and were bent upon compiling a complete tea-set for the Teddy cottage out of their winnings. There was a score of automobiles and a number of traps and gigs about the entrance to the portion of the park that had been railed off for the festival, the small Britling boys had met some nursery visitors from Claverings House and were busy displaying skill and calm upon the roundabout ostriches, and less than four hundred miles away with a front that reached from Nancy to Liège more than a million and a quarter of grey-clad men, the greatest and best-equipped host the world had ever seen, were pouring westward to take Paris, grip and paralyse France, seize the Channel ports, invade England, and make the German Empire the master-state of the earth. Their equipment was a

marvel of foresight and scientific organisation, from the motor kitchens that rumbled in their wake to the telescopic sights of the sharp-shooters, the innumerable machine-guns of the infantry, the supply of entrenching material, the preparations already made in the invaded country....

"Let's try at the other place for the sugar-basin!" said Teddy, hurrying past. "Don't get two sugar-basins," said Cissie breathless in pursuit. "Hugh is trying for a sugar-basin at the other place."

Then Mr. Britling heard a bellicose note.

"Let's have a go at the bottles," said a cheerful young farmer. "Ought to keep up our shooting, these warlike times...."

Mr. Britling ran against Hickson from the village inn and learnt that he was disturbed about his son being called up as a reservist. "Just when he was settling down here. It seems a pity they couldn't leave him for a bit."

"'Tis a noosence," said Hickson, "but anyhow, they give first prize to his radishes. He'll be glad to hear they give first prize to his radishes. Do you think, Sir, there's very much probability of this war? It do seem to be beginning like."

"It looks more like beginning than it has ever done," said Mr. Britling.

"It's a foolish business."

"I suppose if they start in on us we got to hit back at them," said Mr. Hickson. "Postman--he's got his papers too...."

Mr. Britling made his way through the drifting throng towards the little wicket that led into the Gardens....

He was swung round suddenly by a loud bang.

It was the gun proclaiming the start of the balloon race.

He stood for some moments watching the scene. The balloon start had gathered a little crowd of people, village girls in white gloves and cheerful hats, young men in bright ties and ready-made Sunday suits, fathers and mothers, boy scouts, children, clerks in straw hats, bicyclists and miscellaneous folk. Over their heads rose Mr. Cheshunt, the factotum of the estate. He was standing on a table and handing the little balloons up into the air one by one. They floated up from his hand like many-coloured grapes, some rising and falling, some soaring steadily upward, some spinning and eddying, drifting eastward before the gentle breeze, a string of bubbles against the sky and the big trees that bounded the park. Farther away to the right were the striped canvas tents of the flower-show, still farther off the roundabouts churned out their music, the shooting galleries popped, and the swing boats creaked through the air. Cut off from these things by a line of

fencing lay the open park in which the deer grouped themselves under the great trees and regarded the festival mistrustfully. Teddy and Hugh appeared breaking away from the balloon race cluster, and hurrying back to their dart-throwing. A man outside a little tent that stood apart was putting up a brave-looking notice, "Unstinted Teas One Shilling." The Teddy perambulator was moored against the cocoanut shy, and Aunt Wilshire was still displaying her terrible prowess at the cocoanuts. Already she had won twenty-seven. Strange children had been impressed by her to carry them, and formed her retinue. A wonderful old lady was Aunt Wilshire....

Then across all the sunshine of this artless festival there appeared, as if it were writing showing through a picture, "France Invaded by Germany; Germany Invaded by Russia."

Mr. Britling turned again towards the wicket, with its collectors of tribute, that led into the Gardens.

Section 12

The Claverings gardens, and particularly the great rockery, the lily pond, and the herbaceous borders, were unusually populous with unaccustomed visitors and shy young couples. Mr. Britling had to go to the house for instructions, and guided by the under-butler found Lady Homartyn hiding away in the walled Dutch garden behind the dairy. She

had been giving away the prizes of the flower-show, and she was resting in a deck chair while a spinster relation presided over the tea. Mrs. Britling had fled the outer festival earlier, and was sitting by the tea-things. Lady Meade and two or three visitors had motored out from Hartleytree to assist, and Manning had come in with his tremendous confirmation of all that the morning papers had foreshadowed.

"Have you any news?" asked Mr. Britling.

"It's war!" said Mrs. Britling.

"They are in Luxemburg," said Manning. "That can only mean that they are coming through Belgium."

"Then I was wrong," said Mr. Britling, "and the world is altogether mad. And so there is nothing else for us to do but win.... Why could they not leave Belgium alone?"

"It's been in all their plans for the last twenty years," said Manning.

"But it brings us in for certain."

"I believe they have reckoned on that."

"Well!" Mr. Britling took his tea and sat down, and for a time he said nothing.

"It is three against three," said one of the visitors, trying to count the Powers engaged.

"Italy," said Manning, "will almost certainly refuse to fight. In fact Italy is friendly to us. She is bound to be. This is, to begin with, an Austrian war. And Japan will fight for us...."

"I think," said old Lady Meade, "that this is the suicide of Germany. They cannot possibly fight against Russia and France and ourselves. Why have they ever begun it?"

"It may be a longer and more difficult war than people suppose," said Manning. "The Germans reckon they are going to win."

"Against us all?"

"Against us all. They are tremendously prepared."

"It is impossible that Germany should win," said Mr. Britling, breaking his silence. "Against her Germany has something more than armies; all reason, all instinct--the three greatest peoples in the world."

"At present very badly supplied with war material."

"That may delay things; it may make the task harder; but it will not

alter the end. Of course we are going to win. Nothing else is thinkable. I have never believed they meant it. But I see now they meant it. This insolent arming and marching, this forty years of national blustering; sooner or later it had to topple over into action...."

He paused and found they were listening, and he was carried on by his own thoughts into further speech.

"This isn't the sort of war," he said, "that is settled by counting guns and rifles. Something that has oppressed us all has become intolerable and has to be ended. And it will be ended. I don't know what soldiers and politicians think of our prospects, but I do know what ordinary reasonable men think of the business. I know that all we millions of reasonable civilised onlookers are prepared to spend our last shillings and give all our lives now, rather than see Germany unbeaten. I know that the same thing is felt in America, and that given half a chance, given just one extra shake of that foolish mailed fist in the face of America, and America also will be in this war by our side. Italy will come in. She is bound to come in. France will fight like one man. I'm quite prepared to believe that the Germans have countless rifles and guns; have got the most perfect maps, spies, plans you can imagine. I'm quite prepared to hear that they have got a thousand tremendous surprises in equipment up their sleeves. I'm quite prepared for sweeping victories for them and appalling disasters for us. Those are the first things. What I do know is that the Germans understand nothing of the spirit of man; that they do not dream for a moment of the devil of

resentment this war will arouse. Didn't we all trust them not to let off their guns? Wasn't that the essence of our liberal and pacific faith? And here they are in the heart of Europe letting off their guns?"

"And such a lot of guns," said Manning.

"Then you think it will be a long war, Mr. Britling?" said Lady Meade.

"Long or short, it will end in the downfall of Germany. But I do not believe it will be long. I do not agree with Manning. Even now I cannot believe that a whole great people can be possessed by war madness. I think the war is the work of the German armaments party and of the Court party. They have forced this war on Germany. Well--they must win and go on winning. So long as they win, Germany will hold together, so long as their armies are not clearly defeated nor their navy destroyed. But once check them and stay them and beat them, then I believe that suddenly the spirit of Germany will change even as it changed after Jena...."

"Willie Nixon," said one of the visitors, "who came back from Hamburg yesterday, says they are convinced they will have taken Paris and St. Petersburg and one or two other little places and practically settled everything for us by about Christmas."

"And London?"

"I forgot if he said London. But I suppose a London more or less hardly

matters. They don't think we shall dare come in, but if we do they will Zeppelin the fleet and walk through our army--if you can call it an army."

Manning nodded confirmation.

"They do not understand," said Mr. Britling.

"Sir George Padish told me the same sort of thing," said Lady Homartyn. "He was in Berlin in June."

"Of course the efficiency of their preparations is almost incredible," said another of Lady Meade's party.

"They have thought out and got ready for everything--literally everything."

Section 13

Mr. Britling had been a little surprised by the speech he had made. He hadn't realised before he began to talk how angry and scornful he was at this final coming into action of the Teutonic militarism that had so long menaced his world. He had always said it would never really fight--and here it was fighting! He was furious with the indignation of an apologist betrayed. He had only realised the strength and passion of

his own belligerent opinions as he had heard them, and as he walked back with his wife through the village to the Dower House, he was still in the swirl of this self-discovery; he was darkly silent, devising fiercely denunciatory phrases against Krupp and Kaiser. "Krupp and Kaiser," he grasped that obvious, convenient alliteration. "It is all that is bad in mediævalism allied to all that is bad in modernity," he told himself.

"The world," he said, startling Mrs. Britling with his sudden speech, "will be intolerable to live in, it will be unendurable for a decent human being, unless we win this war.

"We must smash or be smashed...."

His brain was so busy with such stuff that for a time he stared at Mrs. Harrowdean's belated telegram without grasping the meaning of a word of it. He realised slowly that it was incumbent upon him to go over to her, but he postponed his departure very readily in order to play hockey. Besides which it would be a full moon, and he felt that summer moonlight was far better than sunset and dinner time for the declarations he was expected to make. And then he went on phrase-making again about Germany until he had actually bullied off at hockey.

Suddenly in the midst of the game he had an amazing thought. It came to him like a physical twinge.

"What the devil are we doing at this hockey?" he asked abruptly of Teddy, who was coming up to bully after a goal. "We ought to be drilling or shooting against those infernal Germans."

Teddy looked at him questioningly.

"Oh, come on!" said Mr. Britling with a gust of impatience, and snapped the sticks together.

Section 14

Mr. Britling started for his moonlight ride about half-past nine that night. He announced that he could neither rest nor work, the war had thrown him into a fever; the driving of the automobile was just the distraction he needed; he might not, he added casually, return for a day or so. When he felt he could work again he would come back. He filled up his petrol tank by the light of an electric torch, and sat in his car in the garage and studied his map of the district. His thoughts wandered from the road to Pyecrafts to the coast, and to the possible route of a raider. Suppose the enemy anticipated a declaration of war! Here he might come, and here....

He roused himself from these speculations to the business in hand.

The evening seemed as light as day, a cool moonshine filled the world.

The road was silver that flushed to pink at the approach of Mr. Britling's headlight, the dark turf at the wayside and the bushes on the bank became for a moment an acid green as the glare passed. The full moon was climbing up the sky, and so bright that scarcely a star was visible in the blue grey of the heavens. Houses gleamed white a mile away, and ever and again a moth would flutter and hang in the light of the lamps, and then vanish again in the night.

Gladys was in excellent condition for a run, and so was Mr. Britling. He went neither fast nor slow, and with a quite unfamiliar confidence. Life, which had seemed all day a congested confusion darkened by threats, became cool, mysterious and aloof and with a quality of dignified reassurance.

He steered along the narrow road by the black dog-rose hedge, and so into the high road towards the village. The village was alight at several windows but almost deserted. Out beyond, a coruscation of lights burnt like a group of topaz and rubies set in the silver shield of the night. The festivities of the Flower Show were still in full progress, and the reduction of the entrance fee after seven had drawn in every lingering outsider. The roundabouts churned out their relentless music, and the bottle-shooting galleries popped and crashed. The well-patronised ostriches and motorcars flickered round in a pulsing rhythm; black, black, black, before the naphtha flares.

Mr. Britling pulled up at the side of the road, and sat for a little

while watching the silhouettes move hither and thither from shadow to shadow across the bright spaces.

"On the very brink of war--on the brink of Armageddon," he whispered at last. "Do they understand? Do any of us understand?"

He slipped in his gear to starting, and was presently running quietly with his engine purring almost inaudibly along the level road to Hartleytree. The sounds behind him grew smaller and smaller, and died away leaving an immense unruffled quiet under the moon. There seemed no motion but his own, no sound but the neat, subdued, mechanical rhythm in front of his feet. Presently he ran out into the main road, and heedless of the lane that turned away towards Pyecrafts, drove on smoothly towards the east and the sea. Never before had he driven by night. He had expected a fumbling and tedious journey; he found he had come into an undreamt-of silvery splendour of motion. For it seemed as though even the automobile was running on moonlight that night.... Pyecrafts could wait. Indeed the later he got to Pyecrafts the more moving and romantic the little comedy of reconciliation would be. And he was in no hurry for that comedy. He felt he wanted to apprehend this vast summer calm about him, that alone of all the things of the day seemed to convey anything whatever of the majestic tragedy that was happening to mankind. As one slipped through this still vigil one could imagine for the first time the millions away there marching, the wide river valleys, villages, cities, mountain-ranges, ports and seas inaudibly busy.

"Even now," he said, "the battleships may be fighting."

He listened, but the sound was only the low intermittent drumming of his cylinders as he ran with his throttle nearly closed, down a stretch of gentle hill.

He felt that he must see the sea. He would follow the road beyond the Rodwell villages, and then turn up to the crest of Eastonbury Hill. And thither he went and saw in the gap of the low hills beyond a V-shaped level of moonlit water that glittered and yet lay still. He stopped his car by the roadside, and sat for a long time looking at this and musing. And once it seemed to him three little shapes like short black needles passed in line ahead across the molten silver.

But that may have been just the straining of the eyes....

All sorts of talk had come to Mr. Britling's ears about the navies of England and France and Germany; there had been public disputes of experts, much whispering and discussion in private. We had the heavier vessels, the bigger guns, but it was not certain that we had the preeminence in science and invention. Were they relying as we were relying on Dreadnoughts, or had they their secrets and surprises for us? To-night, perhaps, the great ships were steaming to conflict....

To-night all over the world ships must be in flight and ships pursuing; ten thousand towns must be ringing with the immediate excitement of

war....

Only a year ago Mr. Britling had been lunching on a battleship and looking over its intricate machinery. It had seemed to him then that there could be no better human stuff in the world than the quiet, sunburnt, disciplined men and officers he had met.... And our little army, too, must be gathering to-night, the little army that had been chastened and reborn in South Africa, that he was convinced was individually more gallant and self-reliant and capable than any other army in the world. He would have sneered or protested if he had heard another Englishman say that, but in his heart he held the dear belief....

And what other aviators in the world could fly as the Frenchmen and Englishmen he had met once or twice at Eastchurch and Salisbury could fly? These are things of race and national quality. Let the German cling to his gasbags. "We shall beat them in the air," he whispered. "We shall beat them on the seas. Surely we shall beat them on the seas. If we have men enough and guns enough we shall beat them on land.... Yet--For years they have been preparing...."

There was little room in the heart of Mr. Britling that night for any love but the love of England. He loved England now as a nation of men. There could be no easy victory. Good for us with our too easy natures that there could be no easy victory. But victory we must have now--or perish....

He roused himself with a sigh, restarted his engine, and went on to find some turning place. He still had a colourless impression that the journey's end was Pyecrafts.

"We must all do the thing we can," he thought, and for a time the course of his automobile along a winding down-hill road held his attention so that he could not get beyond it. He turned about and ran up over the hill again and down long slopes inland, running very softly and smoothly with his lights devouring the road ahead and sweeping the banks and hedges beside him, and as he came down a little hill through a village he heard a confused clatter and jingle of traffic ahead, and saw the danger triangle that warns of cross-roads. He slowed down and then pulled up abruptly.

Riding across the gap between the cottages was a string of horsemen, and then a grey cart, and then a team drawing a heavy object--a gun, and then more horsemen, and then a second gun. It was all a dim brown procession in the moonlight. A mounted officer came up beside him and looked at him and then went back to the cross-roads, but as yet England was not troubling about spies. Four more guns passed, and then a string of carts and more mounted men, sitting stiffly. Nobody was singing or shouting; scarcely a word was audible, and through all the column there was an effect of quiet efficient haste. And so they passed, and rumbled and jingled and clattered out of the scene, leaving Mr. Britling in his car in the dreaming village. He restarted his engine once more, and went

his way thoughtfully.

He went so thoughtfully that presently he missed the road to Pyecrafts--if ever he had been on the road to Pyecrafts at all--altogether. He found himself upon a highway running across a flattish plain, and presently discovered by the sight of the Great Bear, faint but traceable in the blue overhead, that he was going due north. Well, presently he would turn south and west; that in good time; now he wanted to feel; he wanted to think. How could he best help England in the vast struggle for which the empty silence and beauty of this night seemed to be waiting? But indeed he was not thinking at all, but feeling, feeling wonder, as he had never felt it since his youth had passed from him. This war might end nearly everything in the world as he had known the world; that idea struggled slowly through the moonlight into consciousness, and won its way to dominance in his mind.

The character of the road changed; the hedges fell away, the pine trees and pine woods took the place of the black squat shapes of the hawthorn and oak and apple. The houses grew rarer and the world emptier and emptier, until he could have believed that he was the only man awake and out-of-doors in all the slumbering land....

For a time a little thing caught hold of his dreaming mind. Continually as he ran on, black, silent birds rose startled out of the dust of the road before him, and fluttered noiselessly beyond his double wedge of light. What sort of bird could they be? Were they night-jars? Were they

different kinds of birds snatching at the quiet of the night for a dust bath in the sand? This little independent thread of inquiry ran through the texture of his mind and died away....

And at one place there was a great bolting of rabbits across the road, almost under his wheels....

The phrases he had used that afternoon at Claverings came back presently into his head. They were, he felt assured, the phrases that had to be said now. This war could be seen as the noblest of wars, as the crowning struggle of mankind against national dominance and national aggression; or else it was a mere struggle of nationalities and pure destruction and catastrophe. Its enormous significances, he felt, must not be lost in any petty bickering about the minor issues of the conflict. But were these enormous significances being stated clearly enough? Were they being understood by the mass of liberal and pacific thinkers? He drove more and more slowly as these questions crowded upon his attention until at last he came to a stop altogether.... "Certain things must be said clearly," he whispered. "Certain things--The meaning of England.... The deep and long-unspoken desire for kindliness and fairness.... Now is the time for speaking. It must be put as straight now as her gun-fire, as honestly as the steering of her ships."

Phrases and paragraphs began to shape themselves in his mind as he sat with one arm on his steering-wheel.

Suddenly he roused himself, turned over the map in the map-case beside him, and tried to find his position....

So far as he could judge he had strayed right into Suffolk....

About one o'clock in the morning he found himself in Newmarket. Newmarket too was a moonlit emptiness, but as he hesitated at the cross-roads he became aware of a policeman standing quite stiff and still at the corner by the church.

"Matching's Easy?" he cried.

"That road, Sir, until you come to Market Saffron, and then to the left...."

Mr. Britling had a definite purpose now in his mind, and he drove faster, but still very carefully and surely. He was already within a mile or so of Market Saffron before he remembered that he had made a kind of appointment with himself at Pyecrafts. He stared at two conflicting purposes. He turned over certain possibilities.

At the Market Saffron cross-roads he slowed down, and for a moment he hung undecided.

"Oliver," he said, and as he spoke he threw over his steering-wheel towards the homeward way.... He finished his sentence when he had

negotiated the corner safely. "Oliver must have her...."

And then, perhaps fifty yards farther along, and this time almost indignantly: "She ought to have married him long ago...."

He put his automobile in the garage, and then went round under the black shadow of his cedars to the front door. He had no key, and for a long time he failed to rouse his wife by flinging pebbles and gravel at her half-open window. But at last he heard her stirring and called out to her.

He explained he had returned because he wanted to write. He wanted indeed to write quite urgently. He went straight up to his room, lit his reading-lamp, made himself some tea, and changed into his nocturnal suit. Daylight found him still writing very earnestly at his pamphlet. The title he had chosen was: "And Now War Ends."

Section 15

In this fashion it was that the great war began in Europe and came to one man in Matching's Easy, as it came to countless intelligent men in countless pleasant homes that had scarcely heeded its coming through all the years of its relentless preparation. The familiar scenery of life was drawn aside, and War stood unveiled. "I am the Fact," said War, "and I stand astride the path of life. I am the threat of death and

extinction that has always walked beside life, since life began. There can be nothing else and nothing more in human life until you have reckoned with me."

BOOK II